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*"THE BEST ART IN THE WORLD"*  
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## **Now More Than Ever: Artist Peter Gronquist In Conversation With Noah Becker**

MENU



*Artist Peter Gronquist in the studio.*

**By NOAH BECKER** October, 2018

I've always thought about contrast as being the most powerful thing an artist can harness to make their work. Contrast is a skill and contrast is a gift - it creates magic and electricity and separates good art from great art. The best artists are masters of contrast. Peter Gronquist makes dramatic works of art that have this aspect of contrast that I'm talking about. It's like Billy Name saying Andy Warhol had the power to "Throw lightning" - some artists have this power, not all.

I thought for a while about Gronquist's work relating to other artists in terms of influence and style and I came to the conclusion that his work is deeply original. Gronquist's work also flips a range of psychological switches in viewer's brains. Experiencing a Peter Gronquist is an almost spiritual experience and the artist (though apparently non-religious), is ok with this aspect. It was at this point that I was eager to speak with Gronquist directly about his motivations for making art...

Noah Becker: Where were you born?

Peter Gronquist: Portland, Oregon.

Becker: Did you have an epiphany at some point and start making more ambitious pieces?

Gronquist: Yes actually. My daughter was stillborn 7 years ago. The experience changed my life, and completely altered my work.

Becker: In what way?

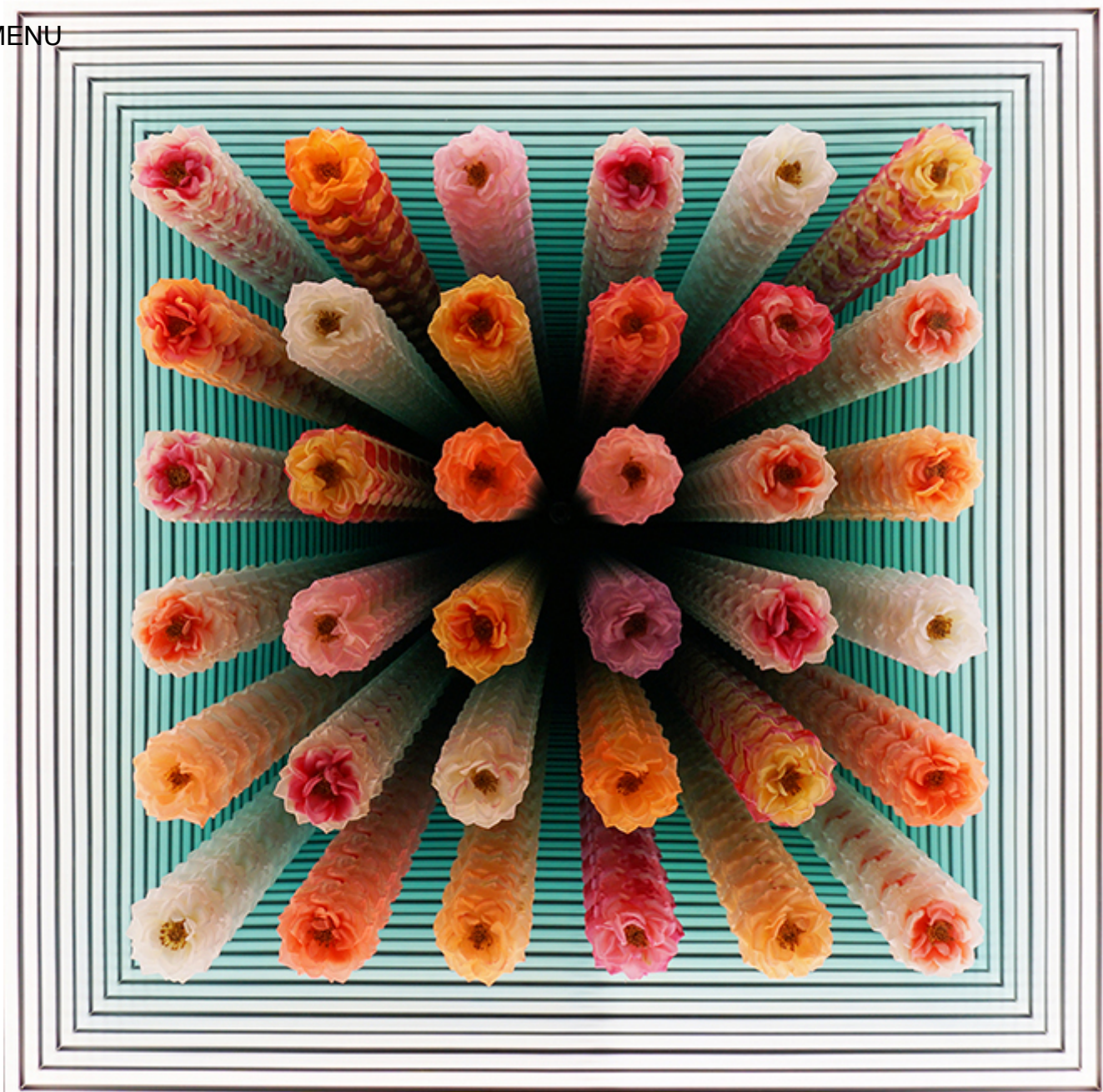
Gronquist: It made me search for what really mattered to me, and pushed me to make exactly what I wanted.

Becker: And this is a different situation for you then in past years?

Gronquist: Yes, I was a figure painter my entire life. When she died I painted her portrait, then haven't painted anything representational since.



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*Orlane 36 (infinity mirror), 2017, Hand dyed silk flowers, mirrors, glass, LED's and aluminum frame, 60 × 60 × 8*

Becker: And how do you think about painting now?

Gronquist: I paint in only color now. My paintings have always been my most cherished and personal pieces, and now more than ever.

Becker: Were you always working in sculpture?

Gronquist: That started more in my early 20s. Before that I was mostly painting.

Becker: Tell me about how you start to think of materials for a piece?

Gronquist: Hard to say. I have thousands of notes of things I want to make.

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*Immortals 1, 2016, Porcelain, aluminum, 24 karat gold, 18 × 8 × 6 in; 45.7 × 20.3 × 15.2 cm*

Becker: That's a lot of ideas!

Gronquist: Yes for sure, I constantly have ideas that I don't know how to make. I have fallen in love with exploring new mediums.

Becker: So it kind of put you in a situation where you have to figure out how to make something.

Gronquist: Yes, I like problem solving.



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*Pink and Blue, 60"x60", acrylic, enamel and plexiglass. 2016*

Becker: Is there a narrative to the use of animals in your work?

Gronquist: I don't really want to talk about the taxidermy - I'm so far past it at this point.

Becker: Your work seems like it takes months of planning and preparation and sorting through all your ideas. How long does it take you to locate the right idea for a sculpture?



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Gronquist: I think what takes the most time is the figuring out the materials, there's a lot of r&d that goes into these series, usually years of perfecting them.

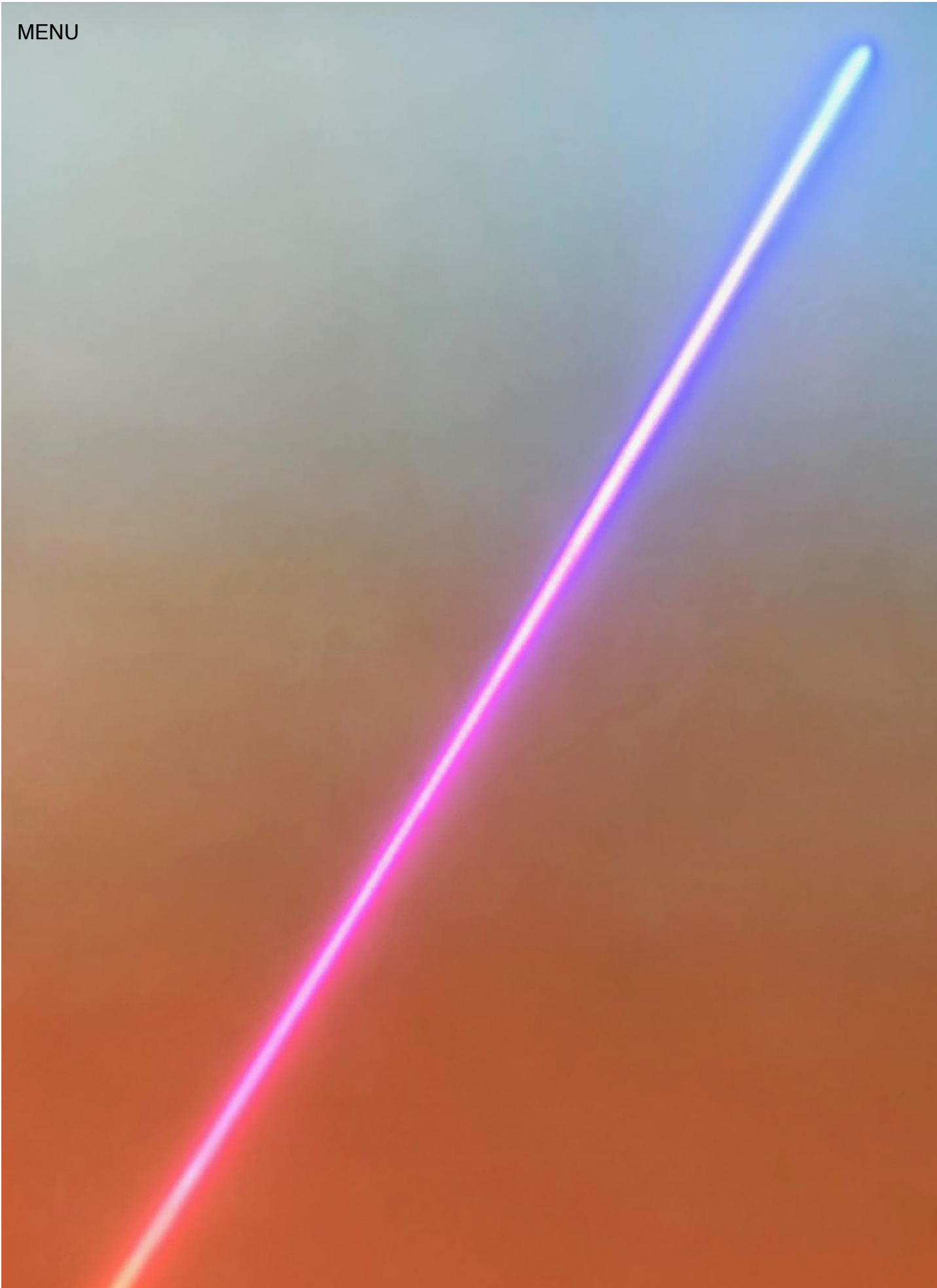
Becker: So you kind of wait for something to enter your consciousness?

Gronquist: Sometimes I'll have an idea that doesn't materialize for years.



*Scribble 2, 2017, Acrylic, enamel, plexiglass, 46 × 72 in; 116.8 × 182.9 cm*

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*Light vs. Paint 3, 72"x96" acrylic, enamel, LEDs, rubber and plexiglass. 2018*

Becker: I see.

Gronquist: For example, my *Immortals* series (exploded molten aluminum and ceramic sculptures), I've been dreaming about making for about a decade.

Becker: Are there other artists that inspire your work? Your work is very original and memorable; I couldn't compare it to other artists right away.

Gronquist: It's hard to say, especially since my work goes in so many directions. I would say with my paintings I'm influenced by Turrell and Rothko and somehow Flavin.

Becker: Solid influences...

Gronquist: Yes and my *Wind Memory* series obviously draws comparisons to Christo but I don't think it's really inspired by him. Subconsciously I'm sure many people inspire me.

Becker: What do you want the viewer to experience after seeing your work? Or are you not thinking of the effect your work has on audiences?

Gronquist: My paintings are supposed to overwhelm - they seem to vibrate in person, and your eyes can't focus on them.

Becker: In what way?

Gronquist: They can be disorienting. For me they are incredibly religious (I'm atheist otherwise) and calming.

Becker: That interesting that your work has that dichotomy.

Gronquist: Yes, but The question I'm asked most is "where do they plug in?" The answer is that they don't - except the ones that do. **WM**



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## NOAH BECKER

Noah Becker (<https://www.instagram.com/newyorkbecker>) shows his paintings internationally. A visual artist, saxophonist and the publisher and founding editor of Whitehot Magazine, Becker has also written freelance articles for many other major magazines. Becker's writing has appeared in The Guardian, VICE, Garage, Art in America, Interview Magazine, Canadian Art and the Huffington Post. He has also written texts for major artist monographs published by Rizzoli and Hatje Cantz. Becker directed the New York art documentary New York is Now ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w8Fw\\_CC0IR4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w8Fw_CC0IR4)) (2010) viewable on Youtube.

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