

An interview with a *Loving Vincent* painter-animator

Joanne Laurier
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Natalie Gregorarz worked on the production of *Loving Vincent* as a painter-animator. Gregorarz, 27, is a graduate of Wayne State University in Detroit with a Bachelor of Fine arts specializing in painting.

She recently spoke to the WSWS about her experience working on the film, an animated work about painter Vincent van Gogh.

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Joanne Laurier: How did you find out about this project?

Natalie Gregorarz: Five years ago, I saw the initial fund-raising trailer. After doing some research, I found out that it was being done in Poland, so I didn't even attempt to get involved.

Later when I was in Florida, I got an email from a friend who said that the filmmakers were looking for oil painters. In the US, oil painters are few and far between because art schools tend to teach mixed media, acrylic and collage. In Europe, they have more specialized fine arts programs.

I sent my résumé to Poland with a few paintings copying van Gogh—*Sunflowers*, *The Night Café*—and a few of my more realistic works. When I was in Chicago seeing a van Gogh exhibition at the museum, I got a phone call asking me to come to Poland and test for three days—plane fare and hotel at my own expense.

JL: Could you explain a little about what it was like when you started working on the film?

NG: The main studio was a warehouse in Gdansk, in northern Poland. It was the hub for [filmmakers] Dorota [Kobiela] and Hugh [Welchman], and the artists. There was a three-week training program, basically expanding on the three-day testing, learning computer programs—essentially how to work as animators.

They wanted to use oil paint, because it dries slowly and you could more easily manipulate the paintings. I worked for over five months, with an average daily output of 3.5 paintings. It was an incredible experience.

I first started in the Athens location with 20 other mostly Greek artists, but there were also some from Belarus, Serbia, the US and Canada. Also in Gdansk, the artists were from all over the world.

JL: Are you aware that van Gogh was concerned with the poor?

NG: He did focus on the lowliest of the low. He was very compassionate. When he first began, his paintings were dark and gloomy—Dutch peasants and workers. But then later on, his paintings were teeming with color and life. He wanted to paint life.

Initially, I was worried about the plot. But I think the visuals are so breathtaking. The movie is a good introduction to van Gogh because a lot of people of my generation don't know about him. In fact, a group of my friends who were not familiar with him went to the screening and got wrapped up in the detective story and the visuals.



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