



IMPULSE

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ILY2 Gallery Works from the Inside Out



The art world today, unsurprisingly, is not as philanthropic as we might wish it to be. Institutions talk of supporting more minority artists while making promises to reallocate resources to support marginalized communities. At the same time, institutions like the [Smithsonian and the National Gallery of Art](#) are turning their backs on these initiatives in the wake of the recently issued mandate to end Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion programs. While there has been a greater shift toward exhibitions highlighting themes of agency, inclusion, and voice, the art world has time and time again used this as a bandaid over the systemic wounds it profits from.

The Portland-based gallery [ILY2](#), standing for “I love you too,” is approaching things differently. Jeanine Jablonski, Senior Director, and Rosie Motley, New York Director of the gallery, discussed how changes are being implemented from the start. The women-owned gallery was founded by Allie Furlotti in 2020 when she saw that there was not enough direct access given to artists to pursue creative initiatives. Furlotti began the gallery with a focus on meeting artists where they are and helping them get to where they need to be. “The art world drips with privilege,” Jablonski told me, “and with that privilege comes responsibility.”

A core belief of ILY2 is that a thriving business comes from a thriving infrastructure. The dedication and care put toward their staff is just as vital as the care put toward their artists. Whether it be paid menstrual leave for their employees or their working towards the long-term goal of providing health care for all their artists, Jablonski and Furlotti have proven that in an industry that carries so much wealth, putting resources toward employees should be considered standard.

ILY2 works with a multi-generational group of emerging, mid-career, and underrepresented artists through feminist perspectives. I asked Jablonki and Motley what this feminist perspective looked like to them.

“What our first few waves of feminism have looked like, is equal opportunity, meaning that women have the ‘right to behave like men in the workplace,’” Motley tells me. “It feels tied into that kind of hustle culture, coming from a very capitalistic, corporate kind of environment.” In addition to giving agency to underrepresented artists, the shift in focus toward care, personal health, and emotional well-being is the exact radical change necessitated by the art world.



The various social movements of the past decade have called upon museums and galleries to make a serious effort to provide a safe space for representation. In turn, art institutions are ostensibly viewed as allies, but when the curtain is peeled back, support is rarely sustained past face value. While blue-chip galleries should be taking steps to increase representation, if the work isn't being done to make an artist feel truly supported beyond a commercial sense, artists can be undermined and stuck in a transactional relationship.

By fostering meaningful relationships with each of their artists, the intentions at ILY2 are clear; authentic representation can only happen when there is genuine trust between the gallery and its artists. "If we can't support the people in the way that they should be supported, then we aren't prepared to work with them yet," says Jablonski. "We know that they can come to any of us if they need something. Maybe it's clay, or maybe that they're like, 'oh shit, I can't pay my rent,' and we have to be able to take care of them as people." The trust and vulnerability between artists and galleries is what ultimately lets an artist tap into the most experimental parts of their craft.

In a time where Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives are being slashed daily, the art world has a responsibility to continue creating safe spaces for their artists amid political turmoil. The administration has already wiped any mention of gender, race, and diversity from federal websites, and cultural censorship will continue as institutions secede to pressure. ILY2 is committed to protecting trans, BIPOC, female, and underrepresented voices when odds are pitted against them.

"I think we're going to see creatives leading the charge [in the next few years]. We will continue to be subversive in public forums through creative voices", Jablonski tells me, "and if [the artists] are going to be taking the risks, then we have to create the scaffolding to support them."

We are living through a time where every news alert feels like a mini heart attack, and each day there is another attempt to subdue the existence of marginalized groups. Where acts of joy, softness, fragility, and care are our tools of resistance, ILY2 provides a vital space for artists to use those tools to access the most vulnerable parts of themselves and their work.



At their presentation at the [Felix Art Fair](#) in LA, the gallery showcased all five of their artists: Leena Similu, Bonnie Lucas, Sara Rahmanian, Melanie Flood, and Amanda Ross-Ho. In Room #1232 of the Roosevelt Hotel, they have transformed the bedroom suite into a “community zone,” presenting books, design objects, and ephemera of their artists. In response to the fires that have devastated the LA region, ILY2 will also be holding complementary talk therapy sessions, offering an opportunity for reflection and emotional support for the impacted community.

The women of ILY2 have proved that in a hustle culture and a cutthroat industry, the right care and attention is exactly what’s missing to bring an artist or staff member to the next level. Working from the inside out, the gallery builds a loving foundation for their staff and artists first, and the incredible art is what follows. “I can’t say too much,” Jeanine explains, “But I can just tell you to watch the space in 2025, we have some pretty rad stuff coming up.”