

# LAUNCH F18

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December 3, 2019



IN CONVERSATION

## RACHAEL TARRAVECHIA & CHRISTIN GRAHAM

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Leading up to LAUNCH F18's upcoming group exhibition, My Hollywood Mirror, Christin Graham sat down with Rachael Tarravechia, one of the

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exhibition's featured artists to discuss her influences, start as an artist, and love for La Croix and wasabi peas. Rachael is a Brooklyn based artist whose work draws from traditional painting techniques, pop culture references and James Rosenquest-esque compositions. Tarravechia is a bold and incredibly disciplined young painter, building a foundation of work that not only stands out amongst her fellow peers, but displays an incredible foundation of a long and lasting career.

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**CHRISTIN GRAHAM:** Let's start with a simple introduction – where are you from?

**RACHAEL TARRAVECHIA:** I am from Charlotte, North Carolina.

**CG:** You are a very talented, young, driven artist- tell me a little bit about your studio practice.

**RT:** Thank you! I try to be in my studio as much as possible! I primarily paint, although I'm becoming increasingly interested in sculpture as well. When I start a painting, I begin with a digital collage in Photoshop to lock down a composition. I draw the composition on the canvas, and then outline everything with cobalt blue paint. Next, I block in the base colors, and keep painting layers to build up pattern and implied texture until it's time to embellish with rhinestones and glitter!

**CG:** Cobalt blue- always? Can you tell me a little more about that?

**RT:** Always! I used to paint figures more often, and was really inspired by Alice Neel. She would often use cobalt blue for her outlines. It's such a rich, dark color, but still feels neutral surrounded by all of the bright colors I use, and is more interesting than using black. Although, sometimes I completely cover the outline when I'm painting the object. I like having the line weight change and sometimes have it disappear.

**CG:** How did you come to arrive in New York?

**RT:** I knew even before I had ever visited here that I was going to live here one day! Two weeks after I graduated from college I moved to Brooklyn!

**CG:** That's amazing, I love that determination, and now I'm sure you're here and it feels as though you always have been. What is your day time job? I feel like I'm cheating a little here...because I know the answer to this, but to accompany that question- I'm curious to know if your day time job has ever influenced your work?

**RT:** Definitely! The energy of the city is contagious and it really does make you feel like you're a part of it. I work as a studio assistant at KaiKai KiKi New York, which is the studio of Takashi Murakami. I have

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definitely noticed an influence in my work. I am much for conscious of color, and think that I am making more purposeful choices when it comes to that. Additionally, I think that my newer work also feels both more animated and collage inspired than before. And by collage inspired I mean the floating logos, cartoon characters, and text in my paintings!

**CG:** Your paintings and sculptures both incorporate numerous pop culture references and imagery, how did that come about?



Rachael Tarravechia. *Pocky Please*, 2019. Acrylic, glitter, rhinestones, and paper on canvas, 36 x 48 in

**RT:** Growing up in a middle class suburban home, I indulged in magazines such as Vogue, Glamour, and InStyle. I would rip through each one every month, page by page ranking the numerous purses, shoes, and outfits I wanted most. Eventually, I stashed a heart-shaped box under my bed, stuffed it with extra cash, and labeled it "Louboutin Fund." I've had name brands in front of my face since I was in middle school and they're still everywhere I look.

**CG:** I love that you are so conscious of that fact and use it to your advantage. With so much information being thrown at (our) younger generations, I find it exhausting. Can you share a specific method you have to keep up on current issues and trends? Personally, I feel like I'm behind if I don't go on Instagram for an hour. How do you find content to continuously progress your work?

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**RT:** I find it exhausting also! For current issues, I have a couple different podcasts I get news from. It's nice to feel like you're keeping up to date while you can also be working on something else at the same time. For trends, I mainly use Instagram! There are a few key accounts that keep me updated about trends, runway shows, and sneaker drops, but I can also spend an hour or two on the discover page looking at different accounts and products.

**CG:** What are some of those accounts you keep up with? When did you start to incorporate sculpture into your studio practice?

**RT:** Hypebae, Man Repeller, Untitledinspiration, Vfiles, Larslala, and Banana\_haruki are some of my favorites to keep up on trends and get inspiration from! I started incorporating sculpture into my studio practice about a year and a half ago. I had tons of LaCroix cans piling up in my studio because I was addicted to them, and thought they were too pretty to recycle. Since I painted La Croix cans often, it felt natural to embellish them and turn them into art as well! Since the cans, I've done solo cups, a banana, a triple layer cake and cake stand, and that toy that you wind up that looks like teeth chattering.

**CG:** I love that the embellishments weave in and out in all of your pieces. Which one do you like more: wasabi peas or La Croix?

**RT:** That's a tough one! But I think I'd have to go with wasabi peas! They're a staple snack in my studio.

**CG:** And so yummy! I know that you travel a lot for your job, does that influence your work in anyway?

**RT:** Definitely! My camera roll is full of pictures I've taken of patterned fabrics, architecture, furniture, food packaging, and even advertisements. I organize my favorite photos in albums so I can find them again quickly. I end of referencing a lot of these in my work. For example, there was this really awesome ad on the train in Tokyo of a couple of motorbikes with rainbows behind them! I ended up doing a few small paintings on paper of foreign sports cars inspired by that.

**CG:** Does music influence your work, in or outside of the studio? What are you listening to right now?

**RT:** To a certain extent. Since I use a lot of brand names and pop culture references in my work a lot of those same names pop up in songs. I have one painting with a Raf Simons sneaker in it, and I titled that piece after lyrics in the A\$AP Mob song "RAF." Currently I'm listening to a lot of My Favorite Murder, The Young Turks, Smino, and old Fall Out Boy!

**CG:** Yes! I can't live without Fall Out Boy either. Let's do three of three- can you name three of your favorite current trends?

**RT:** Chunky chains, monochromatic outfits, and tall, go-go inspired boots.

**CG:** Can you name three of your favorite trends that you wish were happening now or would come back?

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**Rachael Tarravechia.** *Louis La Croix.* 2018. La Croix box, La Croix cans, rhinestones, and glitter, 13.5 x 5.5 x 5.5 inches

**RT:** That's tough! If you wear anything with enough confidence I think it'll look trendy! Especially in New York.

**CG:** I love that answer, completely true. Final three, can you name three of your most influential artists?

**RT:** Jonas Wood, Andy Dixon, and Mickalene Thomas.

**CG:** I really like your selections, Mickalene Thomas is a true favorite of mine too. Lastly, what do you hope your viewers are able to take-away from seeing your work in person or in My Hollywood Mirror at LAUNCH F18 in December?

**RT:** How the work interacts with light. Seeing how the glitter and rhinestones glisten as you walk by makes the work feel more alive and like there's another dimension to them that can't be captured in a photograph.

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**Rachael Tarravechia** was born in 1995. She graduated with a BFA in Painting from Savannah College of Art and Design in 2018. Previous exhibitions include "While Supplies Last: Restock!," Amandine Bakeshop, Seattle, WA (2017); "FIX", Welmont Venues, Savannah, GA (2018); "The Shadowman Meets The Feminine," Contra Gallery, New York, NY (2018); and "Got It for Cheap," The Hole, New York, NY (2019). Previous solo exhibitions include "Thank You!!," (2017) and "All That Glitters," (2018), Chinatown Soup, New York, NY. Rachael lives and works in Brooklyn.