

Inga Guzyte's Artist Statement

I created "Little Fires" to celebrate the artist and activist Patrisse Cullors. "Little Fires" is part of my "Kindred Spirits" series - where I chose to portrait female artists, who have important stories to tell - adding my own personal twist. The stories that inspire my work are the stories of fierce women. I see my work as an extension of the voices that fight hard to be heard and I also give their voices a face to underline the social justice issues we urgently need to address.

Born in Lithuania, I was mostly raised in west Germany, and migrated alone to the USA. I am coming from a place where I was rejected by my father because I was born a girl. That just filled me with determination to prove myself. Ironically, every world I chose was male-dominated - from skateboarding to woodworking and sculpture. My experience gave me the motivation to fight for what I want, to take on challenges, and to strategically eliminate every obstacle in my way to reach my personal goals.

The techniques I am using to construct my sculptural-portraiture pieces are *self-taught*. The choice of material to express my intentions is rooted in my early teenage years growing up in Germany, where an unbreakable bond with the street culture of skateboarding was created. Having skateboarding in my life gave me a direction and a new family of friends when I needed them the most. Over the years, I learned to see the potential in old skateboards: old graphics, scrapes, scratches, letters, words, and marks that streets could only give you and stories that streets could only tell you.

My production process is straightforward. At first, I deconstruct the material with a scroll saw into the shapes and colors I need, and then I proceed to inlay every color piece into each other to create a dimensional quality to my work. All colors, scratches and marks are part of the original piece of material and all that is carefully and intentionally selected to be part of every subject I chose to create. Like other artists, I deal with different things in my life, so my personal experiences help me choose the stories I want to tell. My goal is to meld opposite worlds together to create work that makes you stop and think. At the same time, I want to empower women to think for themselves and to strive not for equality but for even better things.