

New Exhibition Celebrates the Bond Between an Artist and Her Guide Dog

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SMART NEWS

Artist Emilie Gossiaux has been working with a 13-year-old lab named London for a decade



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Emilie Gossiaux's *Londons Dancing with Flowers* (2023) Emilie Gossiaux

After she lost her sight, artist Emilie Gossiaux developed a strong bond with her guide dog, London.

This week, Gossiaux opened a new solo exhibition at the Queens Museum in New York—and the English Labrador retriever is at its heart. The show, titled “Other-Worlding,” celebrates the duo’s interdependent relationship.

In 2010, when Gossiaux was an art student at the Cooper Union, she was hit by an 18-wheel truck while riding her bicycle in Brooklyn. The accident left her with a traumatic brain injury, a stroke and multiple fractures, and she ended up losing her vision, according to the New York Times’ Hilarie M. Sheets.

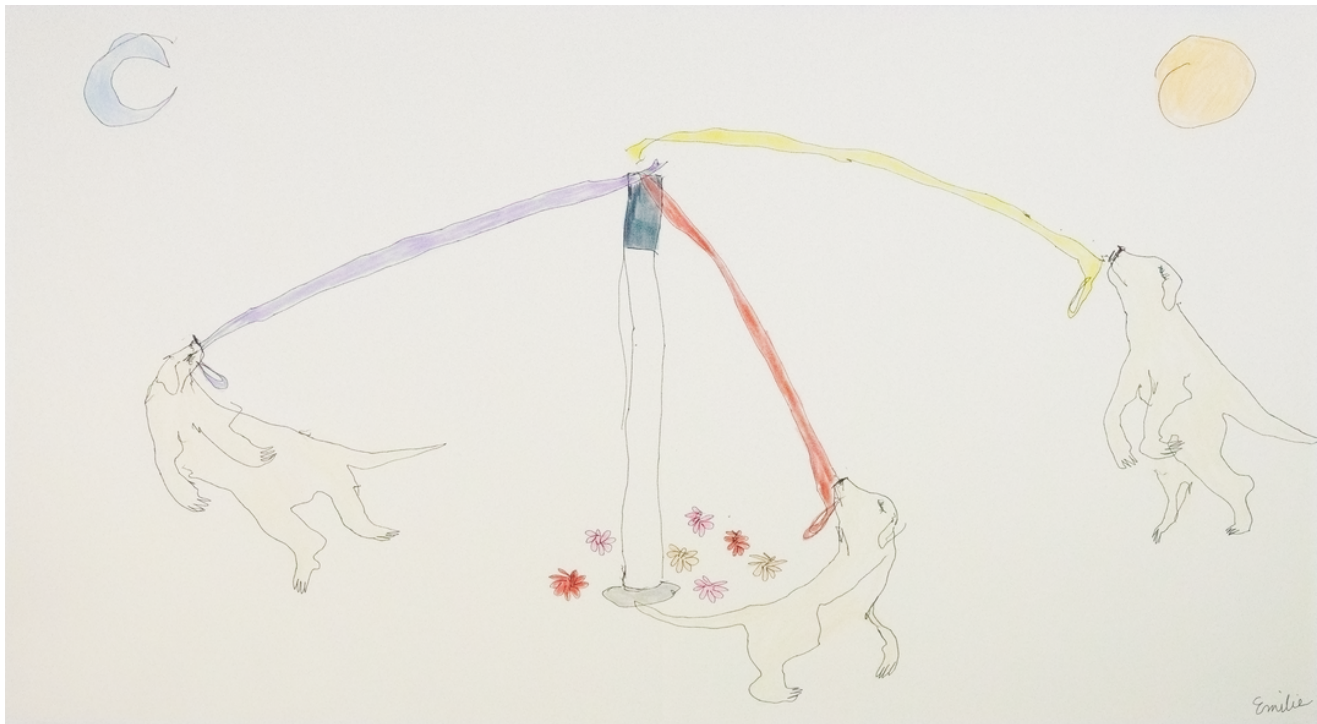
“I had to adjust that framework in my head of what it means to be an artist,” Gossiaux, now 34, tells the *Times*. She had been drawing and painting since childhood; after the accident, she learned to create using her sense of touch rather than her sense of vision. She explains, “I’m using one hand to ‘see,’ the other hand to carve or draw or manipulate.”

While recovering from the accident, Gossiaux met London. The two have now been working together for ten years.

“Since London and I first met, I have begun to understand the animal world more,” she tells ArtReview’s Emily McDermott. “Understanding how to communicate with a dog and get in the mind of a dog has taught me a lot about empathy—instead of getting frustrated, I empathize. And that bleeds into a lot of things, like empathy for other people and other relationships.”

The centerpiece of Gossiaux’s show is a 15-foot maypole resembling a large-scale white cane. Instead of ribbons, leashes twirl around it. Three human-sized papier-mâché “dog-women” sculptures dance around the pole, each holding one of the leashes.

“Paying homage to the white cane, the artist plays with scale to emphasize its importance in providing agency and independence, bestowing it with a much-deserved larger presence and societal awareness,” per the Queens Museum’s exhibition page.



Emilie Gossiaux's *Dancing, Again* (2023) Emilie Gossiaux

Gossiaux portrays the white cane as a symbol of freedom. Her own white cane, like her dog, provides her with the agency to move through the world.

In addition to the maypole sculpture, three connected drawings are also on view. Gossiaux has placed bright pink and red paper-mâché flowers around the installation. On the walls are trees adorned with hundreds of textured paper-mâché leaves, a flat sun and a crescent moon.

The term “Other-Worlding” comes from the feminist scholar Donna Haraway, who has written about cross-species relationships and dismantling hierarchies.

“There’s something about an animal walking upright, to me, that is very significant,” Gossiaux tells *ArtReview*. “I talk about hierarchies in relationships between animals and humans, and breaking down that hierarchy or at least blurring it, so that the animals and humans are both walking upright.”

Gossiaux has long been incorporating London into her art, often creating images of the dog dancing. She adds: “It’s about London having that movement, that action, of dancing and being so free. That’s also how I think about dancing personally: I love dancing. That freedom of movement is really significant to me.”

“Other-Worlding” is on view at the Queens Museum in New York City through April 7, 2024.

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