

## Artists on Coping: Claudia Chaseling

During the Coronavirus pandemic, Art Spiel is reaching out to artists to learn how they are coping.



Claudia Chaseling in her Berlin studio in April 2020. In the background *mutopia 5* in progress.  
Photo: studio Claudia Chaseling

Claudia Chaseling is an international artist, living and working in Berlin and Canberra. She received a Master's degree in Visual Art, from the University of the Arts in Berlin and a Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy in Visual Art) from the Australian National University in Canberra (ANU).

Claudia is known for the practice of Spatial Painting, site-mutative biomorphic abstract murals covering walls, floors, and ceilings. These works are drafted from one particular viewpoint and optically distort, even dissolve the familiar geometry of the space, whilst carrying socio-political meaning. In 2013 she published the graphic novel *Murphy the mutant* that became an anchor for her work to follow.

She has exhibited her work in over sixty solo and group exhibitions, notably in the United States, Australia, and Europe. Among others, her work has been featured in the X-Border Biennial, Finland, the Luela Art Biennial, Sweden, and the Lorne Biennial,

Australia. Recent projects include solo exhibitions at Art Gallery Nadezda Petrovic, Cacak, Serbia; Wollongong Art Gallery, and Yuill Crowley Gallery, Sydney, Australia; Kunstverein Duisburg and Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, Germany; and at Art in Buildings, New York City and Milwaukee, USA.

Major grants and scholarships received continuously – including those of the German DAAD and Karl Hofer Award; the Australian Samstag Scholarship, OZCO, and artsACT Grants, IGNITE Career Fund, Harris&Hobbs Grant and the Postgraduate Award.

Claudia has taken part in various international visiting artists' programs and residencies, among others at Art Omi and the ISCP in New York, the Texas A&M University and she was granted a Fellowship at the Fenner School of Environment & Society, ANU. The Verlag für zeitgenössische Kunst und Theorie Berlin published her first extensive monograph in November 2016.

Official website: <http://www.claudiachaseling.com/>

*Murphy the mutant*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xqcr1Ev2FVc>

Research: <https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/handle/1885/173735>

**AS: How are you coping?**

**CC:**

I am working in my studio and I try to make something out of this situation.

It took me a while to realize what was happening because nearly everything changed so rapidly. Often it felt like being in a movie, but you cannot switch off this story.

My husband, artist Milovan Destil Markovic and I had just returned from the closing of his retrospective exhibition in Museum of Contemporary art in Banja Luka ((MSURS) at the end of February and suddenly most common occupations were on hold. Because of the fast-growing number of ill people we immediately took precautions like avoiding large events, etc.

Last year was demanding and extremely work intensely for me with 4 major solo projects in Australia, the US and Serbia, and several group exhibitions. I had thrown myself into this dense schedule and was all year "on tour". This year I felt the need to center myself to research and develop my methodology. I planned to spend time in Berlin and to focus on a new series of paintings on canvas. I urgently needed time in one place and now this time is forced upon me with no escape. So, my aim is now to realize Spatial Paintings on wall-size canvasses and my new work is progressing very well.

Here in Berlin, people can go outside and I go to my studio every day as usual when in Berlin. Everything is more or less relaxed.

Studio - home - studio - home. It is getting warmer every day. If we don't work into the night my husband and I meet in the evenings and we sit on the river Spree. Life is simple and good for us, but still: sometimes fear creeps up in me. I am concerned that this world pandemic will lead to more political tensions between countries.

Very helpful is the Berlin government who greatly supports artists and free-lancers. Artists determine this city and we are a respected entity. At the beginning of the pandemic crisis, the Berlin government offered support for artists and freelancers. Immediately the "bbk berlin" (Berufsverband bildender Künstler\*innen Berlin e.V.) send out info and offered advice. The "bbk berlin" was also a driving force in installing the support for artists and freelancers. Looking around the globe this is pretty unique and I am grateful to the Berlin government and the "bbk berlin" for their engagement and support. This support is for every free-lancer living in Berlin no matter what nationality. If you don't have your papers in order yet, because for example you just moved, you are invited to contact the "bbk berlin" and they will assist.



*mutopia 1*, 2019, gold leaf, PVC silver, pigments, MDM and oil on wall, floor, canvas and concrete, 600cm x 900cm x 600cm, SOAD Gallery, Canberra, Australia. Courtesy Yuill Crowley Gallery, Sydney. Photo: studio Claudia Chaseling

**AS: Have you had a show or other creative opportunities canceled?**



CC:

My two exhibitions that were supposed to be held in Australia and one residency for that Milovan and I had been invited as a collaborating team will be deferred, simply because international travel is dangerous and the public is advised to stay in one place.

A great part of my art practice is taking place in Australia. This is unsettling because I cannot imagine how it will be possible to realize projects in Australia in the near future.

I had a public talk in Munich deferred as well, but one major project though is still taking place at the Australian Embassy in Berlin, for which I am working on a 290cm x 910cm (115" x 360") painting. The brave cultural team of the Australian Embassy and curator Rachel Rits-Volloch from *Momentum* just decided to keep track and go through with my exhibition "*mutopia 5*". It is fantastic to work in this extensive exhibition and to use this quarantine time now to establish a new system in painting.



*Radiationscape*, 2018, aluminum, egg tempera and oil on wall, floor and canvas, 360cm x 1000cm x 250cm, Art in Buildings 55 5th Ave Space, New York City, USA.

Photo: Sol Hashemi

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**AS: Has your routine changed?**

CC:

Usually, I spend more time not in my studio when in Berlin. I go swimming and we meet often with friends at dinner parties and exhibitions. This fun part is missing. Now really

all my time is spent in my studio. This is at times confronting but also extremely constructive and positive. When I returned to Berlin at the end of December I was longing for substantial studio time to think, develop ideas, research, and experiment. - Here it is, so plenty I could not imagine! If I get restless and feel restricted I remind myself that it is also a gift to have this time in my studio and in one place.

**AS: Can you describe some of your feelings about all this?**

**CC:**

It is difficult for me to comprehend yet. There is a sadness about losses of lives and suffering in so many countries. At the moment I can only say that it is a shock to the system. Humanity needs to pause and redefine its direction, possibly away from profit-driven and exploitive globalized capitalism.

In my opinion, Noam Chomsky pins the problem down: "We should think about the emergence of this crisis, why is there a coronavirus crisis? It's a colossal market failure. It goes right back to the essence of markets exacerbated by the savage neoliberal intensification of deep social-economic problems." (<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/04/noam-chomsky-coronavirus-pandemic-prevented-200403113823259.html>)

He states as well that after the pandemic is fought the serious problems could emerge such as brutal authoritarian states. Opposed to this a radical reconstruction of society and more humane terms concerned with human need and no private profit could be a new chance. And: the real problems are a possible nuclear war and global warming, not the coronavirus.

I hope that the pandemic will change the European Union to more humanitarian politics and a truly unified economy and not only to focus on a singular country's economic growth. Only recently I found out that seasonal workers from Rumania only get paid €60 (\$US 65) per day in Germany. I see this as appalling for a country with the supposing highest per capita income and a supposing minimum hourly wage of €9,35 (\$US 10,13). You can only imagine what an exorbitant high wage a very few others receive in this country, to result in this per capita income statistic.



room scapes of solo exhibition *mutopia 3*, 2019, Art Gallery Nadezda Petrovic, Cacak, Serbia.  
Photo: studio Claudia Chaseling





*mutopia 2*, 2019, gold leaf, aluminum, egg tempera, MDM and oil on wall and ceiling, 330cm x 1100cm x 3300cm, Art in Buildings 310W., Milwaukee, USA. Photo: studio Claudia Chaseling

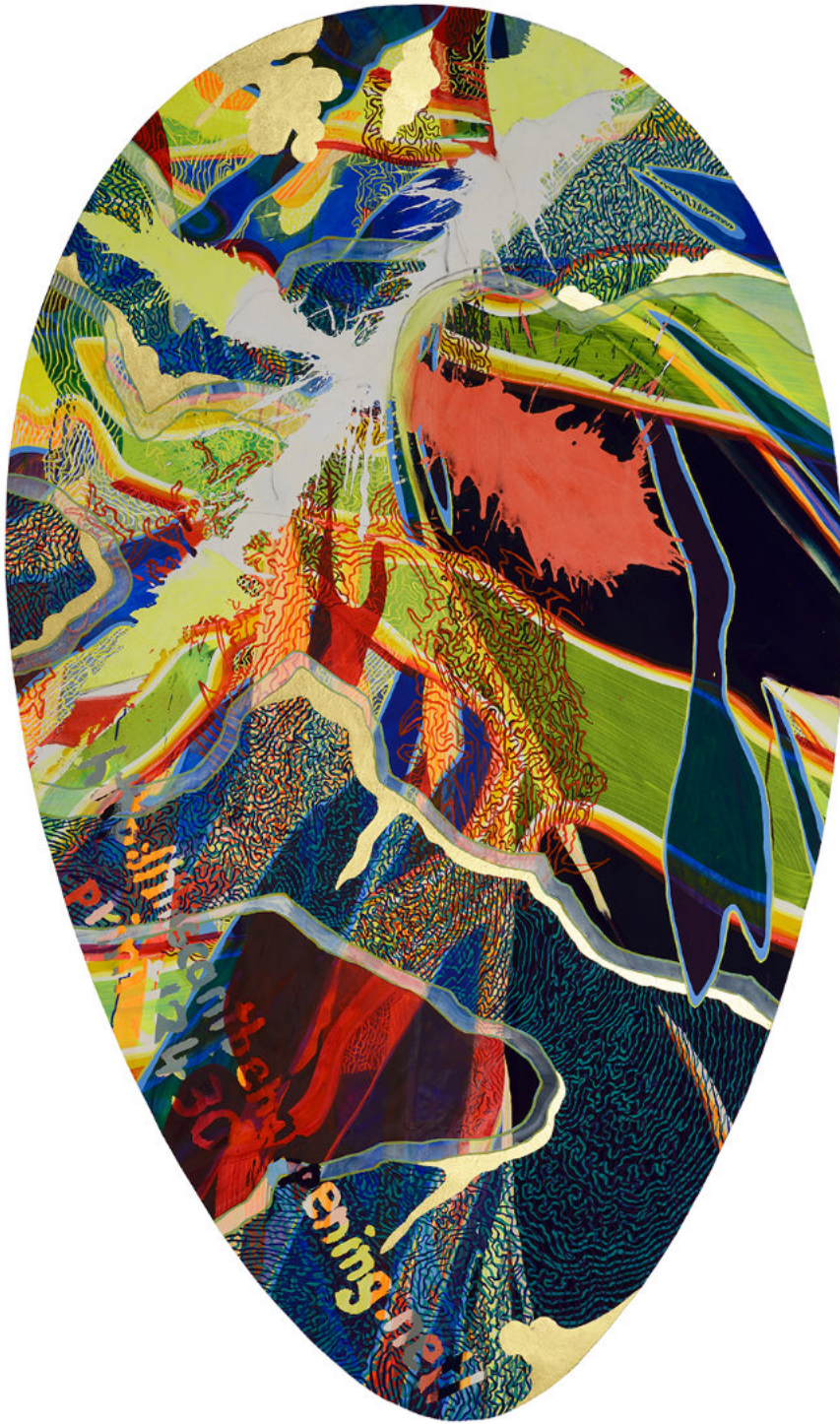
**AS: What matters most right now?**

**CC:**

For me personally, it matters most that lives worldwide will be saved. It is heartbreaking to read news from places like Spain for example.

Supporting each other (however it might be possible) is important, and to carefully reflect on the situation, the developments, and on all the various information one accumulates.

It is comforting to speak with friends and family. I am grateful for the wonderful relationship with my husband and this bond is the center of my life, now during the pandemic, and at all other times without such circumstance.



*threshold*, 2019, gold leaf, egg tempera and oil on canvas, ovoid 250cm x 150cm. Photo: studio Claudia Chaseling



**AS: Any thoughts about the road ahead?**

**CC:**

The world is heading into uncharted waters not only due to the pandemic. I try to be awake, alert, and alarmed. Hidden somewhere there might be a chance; - maybe a chance to rethink the main contemporary systems we live in and with.

But no matter what: artists will keep making art.

People will look at this art; writers will write about it, curators will put exhibitions together and our art will feed into the history of the future.

Nothing can stop art.



*Coding the Earth*, (Barcode: Sky\*Stars Capsules: Albert 1, Albert 2: monkeys sent into outer space in 1949, Gladys and Esmeralda: spiders sent into outer space in 2011) in collaboration with artist Milovan Destil Markovic, 2018, polycarbonate, pigment, MDM binder, aluminum leaf, concrete, wood and solar lights, 300 cm x 500 cm x 300 cm, Lorne Biennale, Victoria, Australia. Photo: studio Markovic & Chaseling



*Coding the Earth* at twilight, 2018. Photo: studio Markovic & Chaseling

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