Hello! You are listening to *Curator on the Go Podcast*! Today I have a pleasure of speaking to Toronto based artist Nik Torres.

Born in Colombia and raised in Canada, Nik takes as inspiration her life experiences of migration and self-discovery. She finds ways through color and texture to create an abstract narrative that allows her to reconcile with her own mental health and constant emotional state. ​

Nik’s work is born out of an urge, not only to create but to attempt to appease inner insecurities regarding her identity as an immigrant who is nor from here nor there. Throughout the years, her work has evolved into a much deeper emotional practice with a goal to bring the viewer into a personal comfortable and serene place where they can aim to appease their own internal battles. Nik wants to use her work as a visual anchor and reminder that life has serene moments even in darkness.

**Curator on the Go:** Hi Nik, thank you so much for joining me today. I am so excited to learn more about your unique story. Welcome!

**Nik:** Thank you so much for having me, Liza! I am really excited to be here!

**Curator on the Go:** Thank you so much! Let’s go back and talk about your background, how did you start and why did you decide to work as an artist?

**Nik:**Of course! I’ve been interested in art really my whole life. I’ve always had a creative outlet since I was young. I honestly can’t even remember. Grade 1, I guess, I took art seriously. It’s always been a passion of mine. As I’ve mentioned, I took it seriously at high school, through my undergrad and it’s was always part of my life. I’ve always used different creative outlets. I’ve

done painting, I’ve done photography, I’ve done poetry. So, whatever I was able to do at that point.

**Curator on the Go:** Amazing!Can you tell me more about your art practice where you use color and texture to create abstract narratives and bring visual harmony to the viewers?

**Nik:**Yes, definitely! Painting is my main creative outlet I would say. What I focus the most is color harmony! So, the first thing I do before I start a painting, I take a lot at what my color pallet is going to be. I never use random colors. I always have a vision of what my pallet is going to be. And then from then, I choose the composition, and then the texture goes as I create a piece of art. Sometimes I like to work with really smooth surfaces, but for the most part, I really enjoy thick textures as I work in large formats. The paint is able to build itself and through those colors, everything just comes together.

**Curator on the Go:** Amazing! So, before the interview, I spent some time exploring your website and the first thing that caught my attention on your home page was a quote “Change Brings Happiness.” It’s true for many people, including myself, that the minute you accept and act towards changing your life - you become happier. What changes did you take in your life that brought you happiness?

***Nik:*** Yes, actually this is a quote that my mom came up with. My mom is a really big role model in my life, and I’ve been in the education field in many years, but, as I’ve mentioned, I had art as an outlet. But lately with the issues with my mental health, with my physical health that I’ve decided to make pivotal change in my life and focus on art as my career. And that was one of the things my mom actually said. I was really wondering what steps to take improving my overall health and she said: “Nik, Nicole, change brings happiness and I am happy that you are taking these steps in your life to not really only take care of yourself, but find what you are eventually going to be happy with.” And I’ve always made radical changes in my life. I’ve traveled a lot and lived in many countries and I feel that these big changes or things that can help you with your own happiness and self-growth and realization of who you are and where you want to get at certain points in your life.

**Curator on the Go:** Absolutely! What a unique story! So, another cool feature of your website, that I don’t see very often, is the members section. It is very important to create your “tribe” and with this members section, you invite people to create a community, follow each other, leave comments and do many other things. How did you come up with this idea and why you decided to include it on your website?

**Nik:**Yes, as you’ve mentioned, I believe that as an artist you do have to have that business aspect even if this is something not a lot of artists may have. Having that tribe and having that following I do believe it is really important for people not to follow you necessarily as a person but your vision. And yea, that’s exactly what I want to build. I want to build a community of people that feel supported not only visually, by having beautiful aesthetic pieces of work, but also knowing that color and color pallets and harmonious narratives as I do in my work can bring snippets of serenity when perhaps you are not having a great day. There is a lot of darkness in our life sometimes. So, having some light in what can seem as darkness is also really important to me and that I also want to portray to my viewers.

**Curator on the Go:** I know you are working on a shop section on your website. The artist I talked on my previous episode, Sylvia Cohen, mentioned that if you don’t have prices on your website – it becomes another gallery like your Instagram and that artists need to give their potential clients some idea of what they charge for your works. What is your opinion on this?

**Nik:**Yes, and that is something I’ve been really debating. So, what I am hoping to start first, as I’ve mentioned I am starting off my shop soon, I am going to start with prints first. So, I already have a tab for custom works, so people contact me if they want a specific custom piece, and I can quote them from there. But the way I am going to start my shop is going to be exclusively with prints. I also do some line work – so I am going to start with my print with of my sketches and my line work. And then I actually do believe that I left a comment under one of your pictures, I am really debating whether I should use my fine art and put it in a print and have specific work exclusively for prints and leave my fine art as originals. So, as it is, for now, I am going to do prints of linework and I will be pricing it.

**Curator on the Go:** Yea. A lot of artists what they do, they do an original and when they sell the original, they just start selling prints. Their goal is to sell the original first. For others, selling prints at the same time as the original is another source of income and why not to use it, you know?

**Nik:**Exactly! And it’s, of course, having a passive income of just prints being sold when you don’t need to constantly work on a new piece that’s, of cause, ideal.

**Curator on the Go:** Yes, absolutely! So, you will be selling works on your website. Do you work with galleries or with any other art professionals at this time?

**Nik:** So, actually right now, as I’ve mentioned, I’ve been in the education field for about nine years. So, it was this year when I’ve decided to take this to this next step. So, this year I’ve decided to make a career move to make my art career. So, right now I am at the point of my career where I reach to as many galleries as I can, reach out to as many people as I can. I’ve been applying to a lot of art calls. I’ve been applying to articles, galleries… So, I am really trying to get exposure out there and trying to emerge as an artist. I am kind of feeling I am starting from scratch, but I am comfortable with that!

**Curator on the Go:** Absolutely! What other platforms and strategies, aside from your website, do you use for building trust with your audience, and grow interested to your art practice?

**Nik:**In terms of social media, I use Instagram the most. Instagram is where you can go and you can see my every day. You can see how I create my art. You can see my everyday thoughts. You can see my processes. I do a lot of videos of work in progress so you can see how I paint. You can see how my paintings go from an empty canvas to a finished varnished piece. I also use Facebook, but I don’t use Facebook business as much as Instagram. I find it a little bit not as personable as Instagram is. And I network a lot in person! I always have my business cards with me and I am always talking about my art without being a pushy seller. If people inquire, I have my business card. I make sure that they are interested in my work and then I give them more information. I believe that the word of mouth is definitely really important.

**Curator on the Go:** So, you have a well-curated Instagram page and you are really good at presenting your work. Do you plan your posts in advance or just go with the flow and talk about what you feel/do at that day?

***Nik:*** I definitely plan my posts in advance. I curate my Instagram to ensure that it looks exactly how I want it to look and I use my stories section as my spontaneous thoughts. As for your stories, you don’t need to visually curate it as much as your feed. So, if I have something that really inspires me, a quote that really inspires me if someone shares my work – it needs a feature, I go ahead and share that. Everything in my stories is kind of my everyday thoughts and in my feed – I curate it a week in advance. I have about 12 posts that I know are going to go on that week.

**Curator on the Go:** So, for any artist – if you want to know how well-curated Instagram page is – go to Nik’s page and check it out.

**Curator on the Go:** I always advise artists that it is important to have different target markets and it’s also important to test different groups and types of potentials clients before making any assumptions of who will buy your work. How do you know how to select the correct people as your targeted audience?

***Nik:*** Yes, and that’s actually a great question because that is one of the hardest things in developing your business at the beginning. What is going to be your target market? And for the research that I have done, from what I want my art business to go – I want to have different target markets: I want collectors and I want galleries that want my fine art and large format pieces that are going to be original works – and that is exactly what they are getting, there will be no duplicates and double of the same. I also want to have more affordable works like a faster sketch that I can put into a print. I can have two completely different price ranges for people who want a postcard and they want artwork on it – I have that accessible one in my shop. That is what I am working on right now – on two separate target audiences based on the price range.

**Curator on the Go:** Absolutely! It’s very important to have different price ranges!

***Nik:***  I am part of and art incubator – its creativeuto. We meet once a month with a whole bunch of other creatives and we bounce off ideas. It’s really useful for us. Michael, the creator of this incubator, he said something that really resonated with me. He said: “In my home, I have a postcard on my wall of an artist I know one day I will be able to afford his work, but I am thankful that I can have at least a print of his work because it’s visually stunning to me. And I know one day I will be able to buy one of his originals!” So, that really resonated with me and that is why I am focusing on opening a print shop.

**Curator on the Go:** Yes! That’s amazing! I have the same thing. I really like an artist and I couldn’t afford to buy art as I was at school at that time and I bought her print. And now I’ve started collecting bigger pieces because I can afford them. I’ve started small and like any person who appreciates art will start small and they will come back as they have an attachment, the sentiment that you bought from an artist and you want to come back and see how he works and see what’s up for the projects and support him or her.

***Nik:***  Exactly!

**Curator on the Go:** One of the hot topics today is the importance of personal branding. Do you believe that artists need a brand or see themselves as creative entrepreneurs to be successful?

***Nik:***  One hundred percent! I think especially with social media everything being so accessible - everyone seeing business and before going to the website, they go through Instagram or through Facebook. I believe that you do have to show yourself – not necessarily as a sell-up brand but you do need to curate yourself as an artist and know what your purpose is. And I know that a lot of artists have their purpose, but it takes a lot of soul searching to really know what that purpose is and how you are going to channel it to an audience. I think it’s really important to brand yourself as an artist and have a focus on what is the purpose of your art to other people.

**Curator on the Go:** Absolutely! So, one of the topics you wanted to talk about is the art business 101. Tell me more about your version of the first steps of starting any art business.

***Nik:*** First of all, you need to have talent! I believe that once you have that talent, whether its photography, painting, sculpture, any kind of art…. as long as you have that in itself it’s your product. How do you market that product from scratch? And as you mentioned, you have to brand and put it together in a package that everything is concise. So, how do you sell yourself? Make sure that you put yourself on Instagram, on Facebook. Make sure that you market yourself on the website, word of mouth… in a way when you are selling your art at art fairs you have to be there and selling what it is at the end of the day your product as that is how you will be making a living.

**Curator on the Go:** Absolutely! What is your dream project and/or who is your dream client?

***Nik:*** To me, a dream client is someone who would like to decorate their home with large format pieces of mine. They will tell me “I have a new home or I am redecorating my home and these are the color pallets that I want, this is the aesthetic that I want to decorate my home…” And that to me will be the ideal client because I will be putting exactly what they want, their vision, in the most important and really safe environment that it is your home.

**Curator on the Go:** So, what one piece of advice would you give to emerging artists?

***Nik:*** Get yourself out there! Be confident in your work because no one will be as confident in your work as you are! If you don’t believe in your craft and what you do – it’s going hard for someone else to do that. So, be sure about what it is that you do and your purpose. Really do self-reflection and make you know why it is so important what you are doing.

**Curator on the Go:** What amazing advice! Do you have any exciting projects, collaborations or exhibitions coming up that you'd like to share?

***Nik:*** So, right now we are working, as I’ve mentioned earlier, with creativeuto. We are working on several, they are kind of art fairs, collaborations of artists together. There is one coming up in November, unfortunately, I wouldn’t be able to make it to that one because I will be in Columbia. But there is one coming up in May and we are working together as a group to market it, to bring out all the content – we will be on the street giving out flyers, and we are really helping each other as artists for this event. So, that’s the main thing that I have coming up now. I have applied for several magazines to be featured in articles and I’ll keep you posted if those come through soon.

**Curator on the Go:** Absolutely! Where my listeners can find you online?

***Nik:*** Yes. So, my Instagram is niktorresdesigns. That is my Instagram, my facebook and my website: niktorresdesigns.com. And I am active on all of these constantly. So, if you message me at any time – I will most likely answer within the hour.

**Curator on the Go:** Thank you very much for sharing your story today! I am excited to see your new works and projects and hope to meet you in person in the near future!

***Nik:*** Of course, Liza! Thank you so much for your time. I really appreciate your initiative. I love your podcast, and thank you so much for having me! I look forward to working with you in the future again!