

On View | The Kills' Alison Mosshart Reveals Her Artistic Side

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Ben Grieme

Alison Mosshart has spent more than a decade pulling rock-star moves as the frontwoman for the blues-punk duo **the Kills**. But when she's not onstage, she's usually making art. Right now, the singer is exhibiting what she calls "an oddball mix of works on paper, canvas and fabric" from the last few years as part of "Push It," a 21-person group show devoted to female artists, on view at **ArtNowNY** through April 26. It's the first time Mosshart has ever shown her art in public, but she doesn't plan on letting it be her last. She hopes to stage a solo show later this year in her hometown of Nashville, Tenn. — if she can steal enough time from recording the next Kills album in London, that is. Here, she reflects on her art-making and how it relates to her music.

MOSSHART, IN HER OWN WORDS: "I've been doing art most of my life, but the only thing that reaches the surface is music-related stuff: record artwork, posters, T-shirts, comic books, fanzines, photos and videos for the band. I went to school for art, but dropped out after two years to go on tour, and I never went back, because I'm still on tour.

"But I never stopped drawing and painting and working in every fathomable medium I could manage — on the bus, backstage, in hotel rooms, out of the trunk of a car. I did one of these pieces in a room at a Holiday Inn Express in Louisiana. A lot in L.A. in hotel rooms, a couple backstage between the sound check and the gig. There's a lot of time to burn each day when you're on the road, that four or five hours before showtime where you're bunkered in a basement with nothing to do but chain-smoke and drink pots of coffee and wait. So this is what I do — spill paint and ink in these temporary lodgings. By the end of the night there are usually four or five pieces laying around drying. A lot of it's messy and a lot of it's quick. But I look at them and I remember where I was. They have a bit of diary aspect to them, although they are pretty abstract. Various states of mind. Ten feelings at once — or at least two fighting one another.



A selection of works by Alison Mosshart, on view in the group show "Push It" at ArtNowNY. Photographs by Ben Grieme

"In the past two years I didn't tour a lot. I stuck around America more, driving around the country. When I wasn't doing that, I was painting in Nashville in my studio, which offers more space, or least more options than a backstage or hotel environment. So I learned a lot more, and I made a lot of work. I got obsessed. And instead of it being something that was always a way of passing time, it became more of a focus. And I guess we'll see where that goes.

"But for sure the rhythm will change when the Kills record gets going and I'm on the road again for long periods of time. The size of the work will shrink, its tempo will get transient, and the hangovers and the wear and tear will be depicted, along with the adrenaline and the rush. But it will keep asking that persistent question: 'Where to next?' It's meant to be rhetorical, because I'll be damned if there's ever a real answer."

"Push It" is on view through April 26 at ArtNowNYC, 548 West 28th Street, 2nd Floor, New York; artnowny.com.

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