

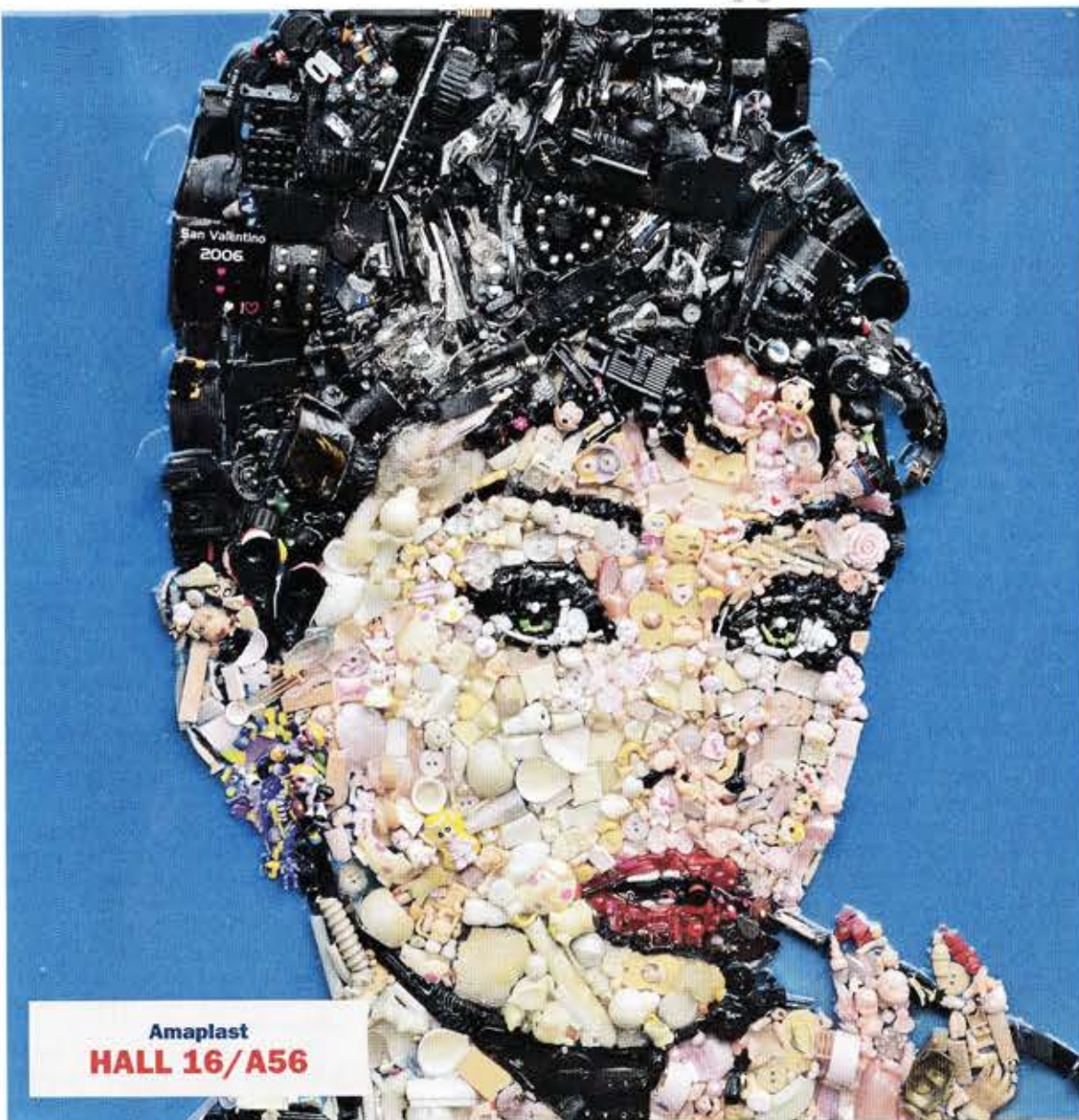


# Plastics News

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Amaplast  
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Lady Be has a prolific portfolio of polymer portraits inspired by political, historical, cinematic and scientific leaders like Andy Warhol, Mona Lisa, Nelson Mandela, Nikola Tesla and Audrey Hepburn.

Lady Be photos.

"Through my art, I want to send a message in support of recycling and sustainability, making people who work at the head of the plastics industry aware of the fact that everything can have a second life and can be recycled in many ways, and that even garbage, the most humble matter, can become the thing that more than anything else elevates us spiritually: art."

## How she does it

Lady Be keeps a stockpile of old toys on hand for her work. She cuts up Barbie dolls for flesh colors. She tucks tiny pink plastic flowers into the face of Audrey Hepburn posing with a long cigarette, remnants of yellow rubber duckies in the blond locks of Marilyn Monroe and white badminton shuttlecocks in the mopy hair of Andy Warhol.

Cutting plastic objects is part of her creative process.

"It's a choice that I don't use already crushed pieces of plastic or microplastics," Lady Be said. "I model the objects by cutting strategically to give them a wholelike aspect, and I also focus attention on some details I want to show, often related to the subject of the work. For example, on a portrait of a racing driver, I like to put some little cars or gadgets that recalls the sponsors."

Lady Be stores several kilograms of plastic shapes in bins divided by color and shade. It's a "full palette," she said. She has sorted out a variety of black, white, red and yellow plastic pieces for the K show.

To begin a new work, she makes a detailed preparatory drawing of her subject on a wood panel. Wearing gloves, she then glues the plastic pieces into place with a strong pasty acrylic generally used for PVC foam walls and polystyrene false ceilings.

While her art is closer to mosaic than to painting and sculpture, Lady Be said when she is creating it, she feels like she is painting.

"I have studied and I know how to create good figurative paintings, but for years now I have been replacing paints with plastic trinkets," Lady Be said. "With them, I can obtain shadows, lights, perspective, depth, distinct expressions and all the nuances and

chiaroscuro I could create using a brush, because the materials I use cover a whole range of colors."

## Finding inspiration

In her personal life, Lady Be said she avoids single-use plastics and buys plastic products that are biodegradable.

However, she acknowledges she has been drawn to plastic things going back to her teen years. She would keep the objects she found on beaches. She picked interesting items out of garbage cans. She looked for used toys at flea markets. And, her assortment of plastic needing to be repurposed grew.

"I liked to collect all my plastic pieces and waste, but I was worried that they didn't have a function anymore," Lady Be said. "I loved them even if they were only waste and I started to order them by color. It was a pleasure for me to see colored plastic objects and pieces into glass bowls. I used to keep every little thing because I am very attached to memories, but more importantly, because I have always been taught that things should not be thrown away, as long as they have a function."

One day when she was 19, Lady Be found a new function for the plastic bits in the face of Marilyn Monroe.

"The recycled material, that has lost its original function, in my works acquires the function of color and this way it earns a higher status as part of an art object," she said. "These are things that people throw away, one could say that they are rubbish, but at the same time they could be defined as 'pop,' since they are objects that we all know and recognize as part of our everyday life."

(Her artist name, Lady Be, also draws from the pop world, but of music. She is a huge fan of the Beatles and picked Lady Be for its association with the song "Let It Be.")

## Art world's response

While Lady Be likens her art process to painting, many critics and experts put it in the category of contemporary mosaics.

"But, undoubtedly, what makes this technique really current is the use of tiles not of marble or stone, not glass or ceramic, but plastic: perhaps the newest material of the contemporary world," wrote Adolfo Carozzi, an architect, researcher and scholar of Italian contemporary art. "Therefore built with the use of these synthetic fragments, the images of characters known in the field of art, cinema, music and politics [from Marilyn to Dali, from the Beatles to Picasso] reproduce a certain pop atmosphere, while reuse of materials, which have already had their own different existence, appears as a sort of revitalization according to the new intended use."

Another art writer suggests first looking at Lady Be's art from a distance, where the images do resemble paintings, and then approaching slowly to take in "all its materiality, its roughness, the rough complexity of its surface, born from the patient and manic combination of small objects, fragments of everyday life, shredded by consumption and time, which return, despite themselves, alive, in a work of art."

pose of."

At K 2019, Lady Be will finish her piece featuring Formula One racer Vettel, who drives for Scuderia Ferrari SpA, which is the racing division of the luxury Italian carmaker. Vettel, a four-time Formula One world champion, is regarded by many as one of the finest drivers in the history of the sport, while Ferrari has been a symbol of speed and luxury for 80 years.

With these two subjects, Lady Be gives a nod to the decades of driving, design and manufacturing skills of Germany and Italy, but she hopes K 2019 attendees see something more.

At K 2019, Italy is the second-largest exhibiting nation — behind only the host country — with almost 400 companies represented, including 330 machinery and plant manufacturers.

Germany is also one of Italy's principal trade partners, although the relationship is experiencing some financial bumps with the slowdown in Germany's industrial sector and global turbulence politically and economically, including problems related to the automotive sector and plastic's public image.

The supply of Italian machinery to German processors fell 26 percent year over year, while imports from Germany declined by a third, according to midyear statistics.

Lady Be is attending K 2019 as part of an Amaplast campaign to support and promote Italian exhibitors at a time when "current market conditions are not encouraging," according to Dario Previero, president of Amaplast.

One facet of the campaign is to raise awareness about the importance of recycling and environmental sustainability.

"My art was born not only as creative form, but as awareness to the problem of recycling," Lady Be said. "It's a warning to the actual and future world, a world ... that fights against the tendency to consumerism and waste [and] the accumulation of disposable things increasingly difficult to dis-



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By Catherine Kavanaugh  
Plastics News Staff

Italian artist Lady Be turns discarded plastic toys, pens and buttons into modern mosaic tiles that she configures into iconic portraits appreciated as both pop art and creatively reused plastics.

Formally known as Letizia Lanzarotti, the Rome-based artist first fashioned her palette of polymer pieces into the likeness of Marilyn Monroe when she was 19. Pleased with the process and the outcome, she gave up brushes and paints for an array of plastic fragments in all hues collected from beaches, friends and flea markets.

Now, at age 29, Lady Be has a prolific portfolio of polymer portraits inspired by political, historical, cinematic and scientific leaders like Andy Warhol, Mona Lisa, Nelson Mandela, Nikola Tesla and Audrey Hepburn. She will dedicate a piece to the plastics industry at K 2019, which she is attending Oct. 16-19 with Amaplast, an Italian association of plastics and rubber processing machinery and molds manufacturers.

"I will complete an artwork: the portrait of Sebastian Vettel, the German racing driver, with Ferrari, an Italian luxury sports car manufacturer based in Maranello," Lady Be told *Plastics News*. "I have chosen a subject that would be the perfect blending of Italian and German excellence."

## From trash to art, see plastic become mosaic portrait