

Becoming Gentle Thrills

Since 2010, Isa Beniston, a Los Angeles based graphic artist, has perfectly intertwined fine art and streetwear through her experiential design with airbrush and her cute, original characters. Her creative awakening started as an early child; “ My mom was creative and went to art school, so we always had art books in the house, and art supplies. As early as kindergarten, I was like ‘I’m gonna be a graphic designer,’ and then that changed later to artist...There was never a turning point for me. I was always going to go to art school; I’ve always drawn and my parents have always been supportive”,Isa stated.

Isa started her career out at UCLA her “background is in teaching” and expressed she was “lucky to get a lot of progressive training by the various arts education organizations that [she] had worked for over 6 years, and that [was] so helpful in running an independent small business”. After graduating she questioned whether

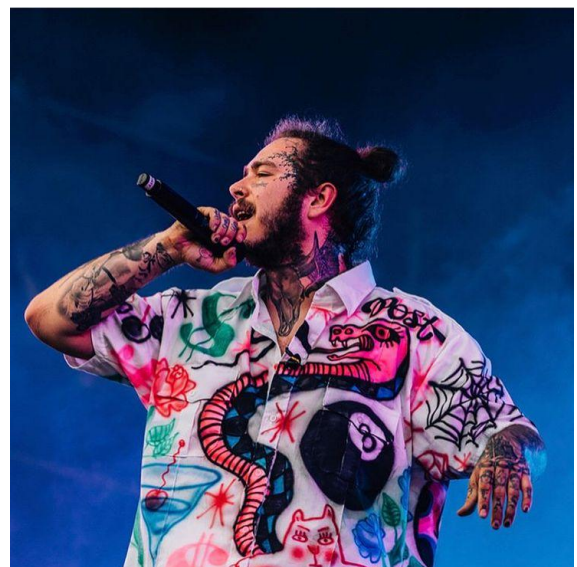


¹ Photos taken by Lau Ash (me)



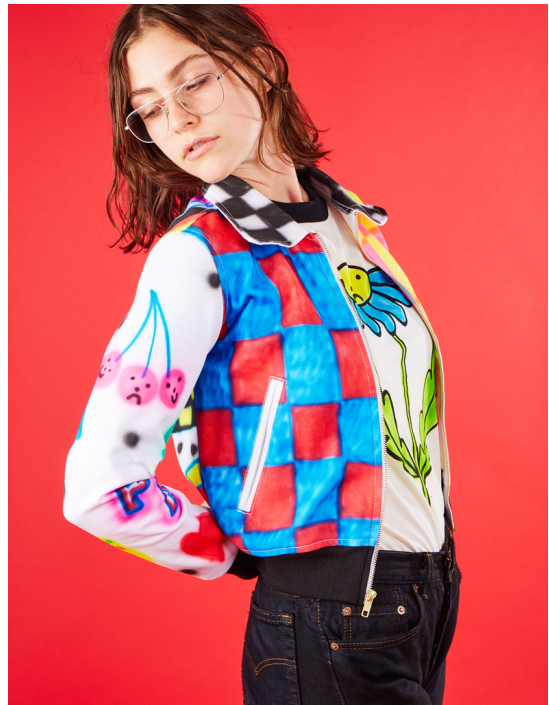
teaching was the right avenue for her. She went on a trip with her parents in the winter of 2014, where she received rewarding advice. Isa told me, “you know [teaching] doesn’t pay enough for how much time you put, like emotionally and physically. [My parents] told me that they believed my energy could be put toward more creative things, they told me that they would really like to invest in me, and so they gave me a

loan, I got a website, and made three products.” In 2009, Isa got her business name, and new identity from “ a billboard [she] saw in Tennessee”. She held onto the name Gentle Thrills, even before she thought of having a business, and had been going by it ever since on Tumblr. Isa’s “Gentle Thrills” wouldn’t be itself without its vivid colors and cute dog and ladyface characters. From an interview with *Valfre*, she explained that she pulls inspiration from her “love [of] cheap food/toy packaging, party supplies, dollar stores, and kitschy tchotchkes.” In regards to her color scheme she felt, “like bright colors don’t get a lot of love in the mainstream. Millennial pink was a gateway and visual social media outlets, like instagram[at that time, were] helping popularize bright colors because they’re photogenic but i still want to challenge the idea that colorful = tacky!”



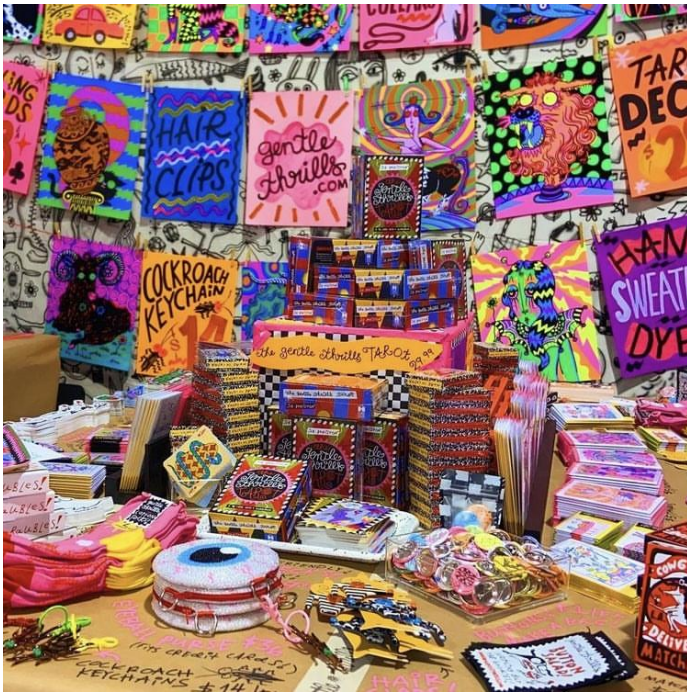
As Gentle Thrills grew, Isa had the opportunity to collaborate with prominent brands and celebrities. Her most notable custom work was for Post Malone. She has also done custom work for Brie Larson, Maria Bramford, and Orville Peck. Isa has collaborated with multiple brands, who highlighted her work through her own lines. Brands Isa has collaborated with include Lazy Oaf, Urban Outfitters, Teddy Fresh, Big Bud Press, and Jeffery Campbell.

On the subject of sustainability, growing at a constant rate is super important to Isa and her business model. She reiterated to me, “It’s so important, and I think it’s really underrated.” When explaining sustainability in the garment industry, Isa shared, “there are different attitudes in every sort of genre of production in LA. You just are really responding to what your customers want, and sometimes the customers have really unrealistic expectations. They want things to be made



next door to them and out of thin air and they want it to cost one dollar, it’s just not realistic. I’m just struggling because I can’t offer everything, I try, I really try.” Isa’s attention to the industry’s environmental issues guided her to finding the company, Everybodyworld, a sustainable basics, online clothing shop that she partnered with as her ‘blanks’ supplier. Isa’s support for sustainability and women owned, small businesses support her thoughts on other options for sourcing for her designs; “frankly I don’t like the shirts that Hanes and Gildan are making, they’re out of touch and not contemporary. Not to mention they’re made in China.”

Recently, Isa Beniston has been involved in a couple different shows. She participates in the West Coast Craft fair in San Francisco and Los Angeles, biannually. At the fair, she presents her newest products as well as one



of a kind pieces that she airbrushes, similar to the airbrushed tees you can purchase at the carnival, just more sophisticated. As seen on the left she also included a new development of hers, Gentle Thrills tarot cards and her beaded eye bags.

Isa's newest Gentle Thrills items have been her Shih Tzu beaded clutch and acrylic comb. Her website seems to be more directed towards

risograph cards and posters, as of late. Her latest collaboration was with Los Angeles streetwear company Teddy Fresh in November of 2022. She created four pieces for the brand, all covered in pink and blue airbrushed teddy bears.

Isa's distinct style and inventive characters make her stand out in the art world. Her attention to quality and sustainability is inspiring when considering the state of the fashion industry currently. Her drive to build up a business with no prior experience has driven her to work with countless



reputable streetwear and fashion brands and has her work stock online as well as 50 stores throughout the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom.

Sources:

<https://valfre.com/blogs/blog/girl-crush-artist-and-creator-of-gentle-thrills-isa-beniston>

<https://teddyfresh.com/collections/tf-x-gentle-thrills>

<https://www.instagram.com/gentlethrills/?hl=en>