


# Symbols, Gardens, and Imagination: The Evolving World of Helene Kristensen



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Helene Kristensen, born in 1971, is a Danish artist whose creative journey is shaped by a rich blend of cultural influences and diverse life experiences. From a young age, her passion for drawing and sketching led her to explore art classes and workshops both in Denmark and the Middle East.

Kristensen's life has been a continuous quest for balance—between the technical and the emotional, the logical and the imaginative, and the personal and the universal. This pursuit of harmony is at the core of her artistic practice, resulting in a body of work that is deeply personal yet widely relatable, blending both introspective exploration and universal resonance.



## **The Roots of Aesthetic Expression**

Helene's artistic sensibilities were shaped in her childhood, where she was "covered and surrounded with beautiful things." Her father, a filmmaker and illustrator, instilled in her a deep appreciation for aesthetics, while her mother, an avid gardener with a vast knowledge of trees, cultivated in her a love for the botanical world. This unique combination of influences—the visual arts from her father and the natural world from her mother—is a duality that she has carried into adulthood. Even today, her personal life is a testament to this, with her home, garden, and surroundings meticulously designed to be a calm and beautiful space.

Despite her innate artistic talent and vivid imagination, Helene was directed toward a "proper" career. She became a psychiatric nurse, a profession that gave her twelve years of experience in the medical world. This career, seemingly disconnected from art, would later become a crucial part of her artistic identity. In her free time, she pursued her creative interests, including a brief career as a model in Denmark. This experience exposed her to the dynamic and imaginative world of fashion, where she learned that creativity has "no limit." The contrast between her work as a nurse and her experiences in the modeling world gave her a unique perspective on the human condition—one grounded in both the reality of medical science and the fantasy of creative expression.

Later, she explored a different intellectual path, studying Egyptology at the University of Copenhagen. While a career in this field was not feasible, her passion for ancient symbols, like the ankh and the winged scarab beetle, became a defining feature of her art. Her father, with whom she shared this passion, was a filmmaker who had created several films and lectures on the subject, cementing it as a core influence in her life.

## **A Global Palette of Inspiration**

Helene's art is a direct result of her extensive global travels. Having visited over 40 countries, she has absorbed a wealth of cultural and visual influences. From the serene statues of Buddha in Sri Lanka to the ancient temples of Thailand, she seeks out and finds inspiration in sacred spaces, ruins, and natural wonders like mountains and craters. Living as an expat gave her a unique opportunity to immerse herself in different cultures, exposing her to diverse religions and ways of life that she incorporates into her work.

In her early artistic journey, she began to formalize her skills. While living in Bahrain in 2008, she attended art classes with a Dutch artist named Zita, who taught her the fundamental techniques she still uses today. However, she believes that the true evolution of her style came from continuous exploration. Upon returning to Denmark in 2016, she made a significant step toward her professional career, selling her first piece, titled "Blue Bird No. 1" in 2019. This sale solidified her belief that her artistic path was meant to be.

Helene's deep knowledge of garden design also finds its way onto the canvas. With over two decades of experience and as a member of the Danish Gardening Society, she sees a clear parallel between designing a garden and creating a painting. She understands the contrast between spaces, shapes, and textures—principles she applies to her art to create a three-dimensional effect, as seen in her Greenlandic mountainside piece where she used paper to create texture.

## The Duality of Style and Vision

Helene sees herself as an artist of duality. She has a bold and dynamic side that expresses itself in strong, powerful colors like black, red, and blue. At the same time, she possesses a poetic side, a softer touch that balances the powerful energy. She often combines these two sides, using abstract elements within naturalistic paintings to spark the viewer's imagination and allow for a sense of fantasy. This is a core part of her artistic "DNA," a blend of influences she attributes to both her parents—her mother's botanical sensitivity and her father's grand aesthetic vision.

She enjoys challenging the viewer's perspective by playing with scale and proportion. In a piece titled "Butterfly Reigns," she made humans tiny and elevated butterflies to be the rulers of the world, a playful manipulation of reality. In "Under the Sea," also she plays with size and change of power. Her recent work, "The New World," is heavily influenced by science fiction, drawing inspiration from the Chinese trilogy, *Remembrance of Earth's Past* by Liu Cixin. Yet, even in this new, futuristic style, she incorporates elements from ancient Egypt, showing how all her life experiences are intertwined.

In works like *Millennium City* (2025) and *The New World* (2025), Kristensen layers fragmented cities and ancient architectural references to evoke a sense of global unity, while simultaneously questioning the detachment of modern civilization from nature and empathy.

## A Shared Journey and a New Direction

Helene believes that the process of creating art is a conversation between herself, the canvas, and the viewer. She does not begin with a fixed idea, preferring to allow the painting to develop over time. Her process is non-linear and she works on one piece at a time, often putting a painting aside and returning to it later. This is partly due to her tendency to become hyper-focused, an obsession that can be overwhelming but also leads to incredible results.

Her collaborative approach extends to her professional life. She and her husband John Kristensen, also an artist and a pilot, work side by side, offering mutual critique and inspiration. While he tends to use more muted colors and works with his fingers, she prefers bold tones and tools like palette knives and glue. This complementary relationship has been a significant support system, particularly when she first took the "big step" of working on large canvases, a move inspired by his example. Together, they have opened their own gallery, giving them the freedom to create whatever they please.

One of Helene's greatest joys is witnessing the subjective nature of art. She loves having "art talks" with her audience, particularly when a customer sees something in her work that she never intended. She recounts a story about a piece called "The Wolf," where a customer saw a wolf in an unfinished painting. This revelation gave her a new sense of direction and showed her how people's unique histories and personalities shape their perception of art. This experience strengthened her belief that her paintings should provide lasting pleasure and allow people to keep exploring them for years.

Helene's professional journey is not without its challenges. She notes the difficulty of being an artist in Denmark without formal training from the Danish Art Academy and the pressure to conform to either an abstract or naturalistic style. Yet, she remains steadfast in her commitment to authenticity, believing that being true to herself is her most important artistic principle.

In a move that brings her entire life experience full circle, Helene has embarked on a new, three-year education to become an art therapist. This new path will allow her to combine her twelve years as a psychiatric nurse with her artistic skills, using art as a therapeutic tool to help people access deeper, unconscious emotions. This new chapter is the ultimate expression of her philosophy: to use her art not just for personal expression but to connect with and help others on their own journey of discovery.

### Achievements

Helene Kristensen's artistic achievements continue to shine through her groundbreaking exhibitions and notable inclusions in prestigious platforms. Her greatest accomplishment, being exhibited in an international group exhibition *Cultural Symphony: Echoes of Contemporary Art in China*, held at the Hong Art Museum in Chongqing from November 26, 2024, to February 28, 2025, through the organization of Pashmin Art Consortia, marks a significant milestone in her career, showcasing her ability to bridge cultural divides with her powerful artistic expression.

Her work has also been recognized in Denmark through her selection for the publication *101 Kunstnere 2025*, the prominent annual compilation of Danish artists edited by Tom Jørgensen, who praises her paintings "which connect millions of years of evolution with the split second of the present moment and link human beings with nature, the animal world, and the plant world. One cannot help but be impressed by both the strength and the poetry in these dynamic and expressive works. Helene Kristensen is an artist who has intention and ability. Her understanding of material, of color, and of composition – both dynamic and monumental – is remarkable."

Her participation in a prominent exhibition at the Borglum Kloster Museum (2025) further solidify her place in the contemporary art scene. Kristensen's journey is a testament to the profound impact of her work, resonating on both a personal and global scale.

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