

# THE PENINSULA

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# Sharing SMILES

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IMAGES: COURTESY OF ELSA JEANDEDIEU STUDIO

*Recently launching a new initiative - Project Share a Smile - Hong Kong-based French muralist and visual artist Elsa Jean de Dieu and her team's latest mission is to spread happiness during this time of international turmoil through their vibrant wall murals which depict individuals smiling and to make a positive impact on people's lives, especially those in need.*



Hong Kong-based French muralist and visual artist Elsa Jean de Dieu has been spreading her creative talent throughout Asia since 2008, bringing her beautifully unique wall murals to spaces from the HKSAR to Shanghai and beyond. Her inspiring energy and creativity have resulted in commissioned wall design and artworks for a number of high-profile clients including Chanel, Galeries Lafayette in Paris, Robuchon au Dôme Macau, the French Embassies in Brussels and Oslo, and luxury art pieces for style icons Delphine Arnault of the LVMH Group and Caroline de Monaco, the Princess of Hanover.

Born in the artsy and historic city of Nîmes in the South of France, growing up, Jean de Dieu was always surrounded by art. "My great grandfather was an illustrator for a newspaper in Nîmes, and my grandmother was an artist who mainly painted on silk. When I was around 13 years old, my parents asked me what I wanted to do in life, and without hesitation, I told them I wanted to be an artist, which they totally supported."

Jean de Dieu started from scratch, first painting façades in Nîmes, before eventually going on to spend five formative years developing her craft at the prestigious *Atelier Lucien Tourtoulou* in Paris, where she specialised in the creation of unique textures and interior decorating for high-end clients.

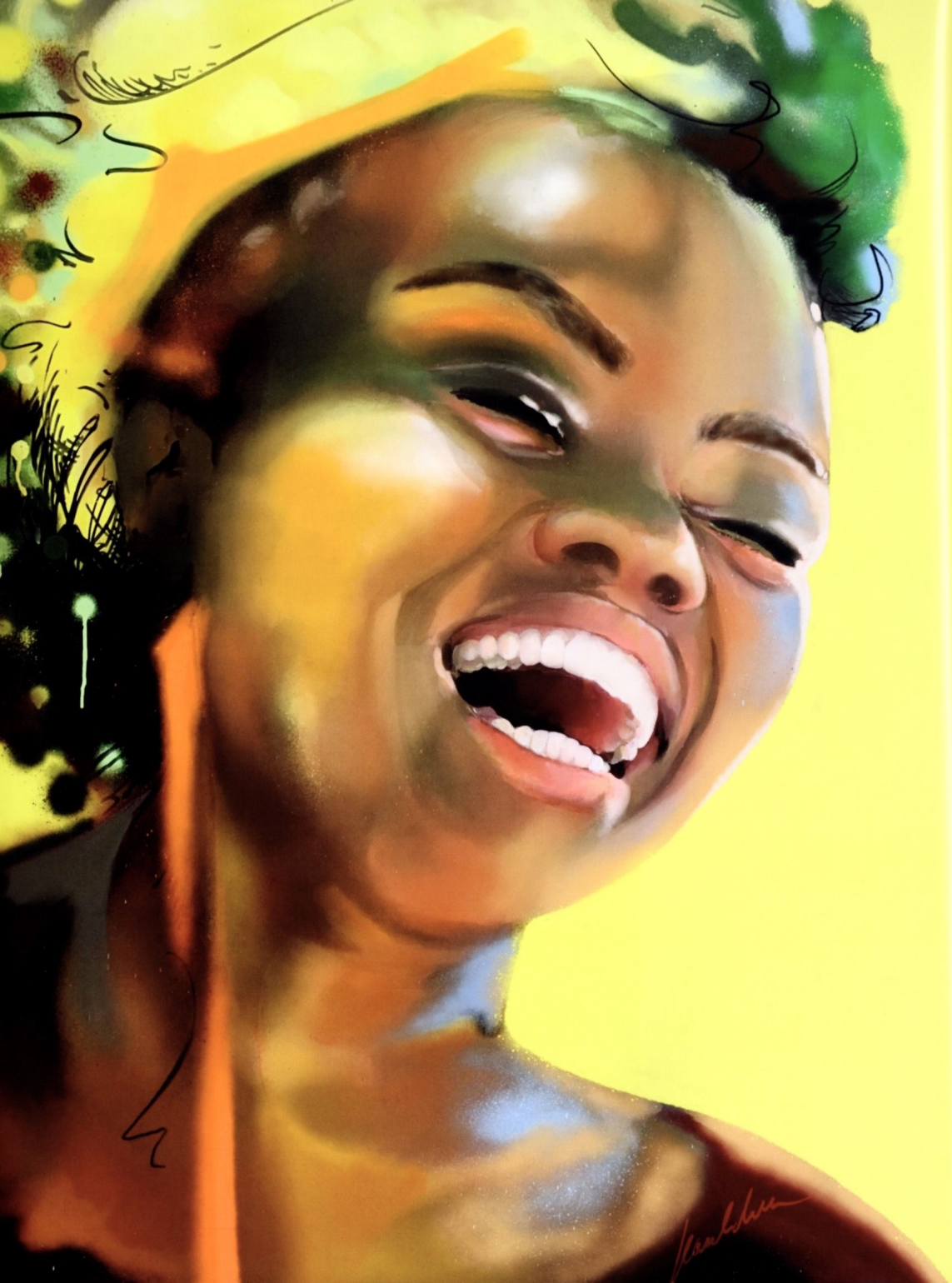
Looking for a new challenge, Jean de Dieu moved to Hong Kong in 2008 after being hired as Artistic Director for a local art company, where she brought her unique vision to clients in Asia. In 2015, with an impressive portfolio of high-profile projects under her belt, she launched her eponymous atelier, Elsa Jeandedieu Studio, where she now heads up an all-female team of dedicated artists.

Jean de Dieu works together with supporting artists Carol Bellese Choi and Claire Coutrel, and through their combined talent, they create unique wall murals, special paint finishes, surface textures and artworks using speciality paints to bring the character of a space to life, whether it be a restaurant, a retail shop, a yoga studio, or a private residence.

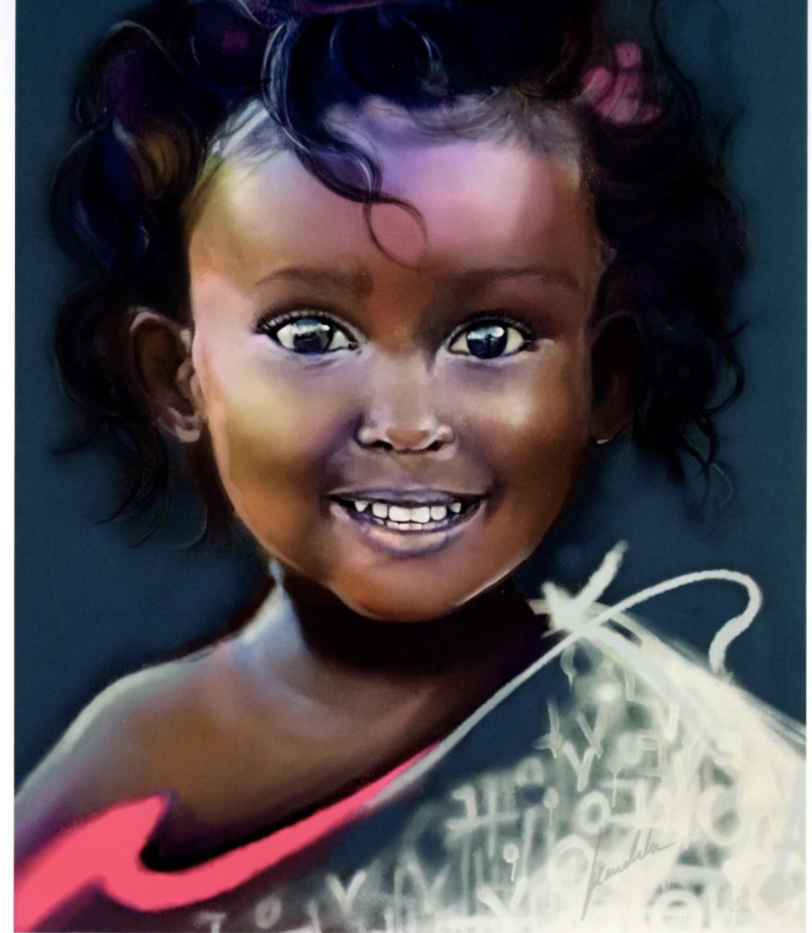
The trio finds inspiration everywhere - in nature, the elements, the colourful city streets of Hong Kong - and are constantly experimenting with materials to create new and visually striking paint effects.











Local Hongkongers will likely be familiar with some of Jean de Dieu's 'street art' murals, the most notable and recognisable one being for Central's *Uma Nota* restaurant on Peel Street. "That mural actually marked a major turn in my career," notes the artist. "It was my first experience of painting outside in Hong Kong, and it made me more aware of becoming connected with the local residents in the area and how my art really brought smiles to their faces."

As challenging circumstances began to take their toll on both Hong Kong and the world, Jean de Dieu and her team were moved to initiate a community-wide project under the banner of #shareasmilehk. The trio, using photographs and references of people of all ages, races and backgrounds smiling, went to work using two simple items – spray paint and canvas – to create a series of 1.5 metre x 1.2 metre artworks that they then donated to various charities, NGO's and non-profit organisations, including Love 21, a charity dedicated to bettering the lives of those living with Downs syndrome and autism in Hong Kong through physical activity and nutrition; ImpactHK, a registered NGO

that supports the pressing problem of the homeless in Hong Kong, as well as others.

"We are truly passionate about contributing to the community," says Jean de Dieu. "In a busy city like Hong Kong, we believe the power of a simple smile is capable of fostering human connections, empowering individuals, and bringing a little more joy to daily life. Smiles are contagious, and a single smile can create far-reaching ripples of happiness."

In addition to sharing their smiles with organisations in need, the trio then took their project to the next level by sharing the same with the general public through their street art posters pasted around various neighbourhoods throughout the city.

As she continues on her professional career journey, Jean de Dieu's personal mission remains simple. "We are very fortunate to be able to work with high profile clients, but I know that I am still disposable in that respect, so I believe that I should continue giving back to the community. My aim is to spread joy and happiness through our public wall murals, and to make a positive impact on the people who see my art."