

ARTIST ALLIES

KOKAB ZOHOORI-DOSSA

*Dispatch from the trenches! Friend of Cicada
Kokab Zohoori-Dossa shares straight talk on
the indie arts life.*

Kokab Zohoori-Dossa is an illustrator born and raised in Kingston, Jamaica, to an Iranian mother and a West African father. She studied visual communication at the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts. She has loved art all her life and is interested in topics such as female empowerment and African beauty, as well as identity. She loves all kinds of fiction and anything “nerd culture” from fantasy books to anime. She now lives and works in Auckland, New Zealand, as a freelance illustrator.

CIC: This piece looks like it has a story to tell. What is it saying about the future for Black women and girls?

KZD: This piece is basically about making connections of love and acceptance amongst Black women and girls. We live in an age of connections, where the internet puts so many things at our fingertips. Social media is one of the most prominent parts of today’s digital world, and our lives are impacted by it to some degree. If we can use these platforms in the future to build and spread positivity, love, and representation of Black people, we can have a huge impact on how future generations see themselves.

CIC: Sometimes the future can be based on what has come before. What textile patterns, found objects, history, and/or cultural objects do you use in your work?

KZD: A lot of my work in the past, and today, has used patterns and symbols from different African cultures. Most people know about the ankh and we see it used a lot these days, but there are so many other symbols we use in everyday life that have a deep and meaningful history. I never put a symbol in my work arbitrarily. I love triangles, as there are so

many meanings attached to that one shape. Certain patterns also have meanings. Semiotics has been used throughout history, and there’s no doubt that in the future, both near and far, symbols will only increase in usage. I mean, look at emojis! People can have whole conversations using emojis alone. I think that’s something we’ve unconsciously picked up from our predecessors: the use of signs and symbols to tell our stories, even without words.

CIC: We constantly draw, read, and write the future through different media. What other media do you work with?

KZD: Besides digital media and painting, I love to tell stories. Writing and reading has always been a huge part of my life, ever since I was a little girl. I’ve loved stories of all kinds, whether in written form, or on film, or in comics. Many of the things I write, I’m unfortunately not confident enough yet to share with a large amount of people, but it is my hope that one day I can write and tell the stories I would have liked to read growing up. Stories of adventure and fantasy and the future, where Black people play a large role, that take into account our stories, cultures, and histories.

CIC: If you could invent any piece of sci-fi tech, what would it be?

KZD: Oh man, there are so many! Right this moment though, I love the idea of teleporters and I really, really wish I could invent one. I recently moved across the world from my partner and being able to just teleport directly to him in the blink of an eye would be amazing. Also, you wouldn’t need to pay air fare prices! Warp drives and spaceships to see the farthest regions of the universe would be awesome, too. I fully believe there’s life in other places in this vast universe, and I can’t wait til humans get to explore more of it. 🐝

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