

Prepared for the “Art for Meat Tax” festival · Riga, Latvia · September 2026

Dana Ellyn is one of Washington, DC’s most established contemporary painters — and the reason both she and Matt Sesow are taking part in this festival. For more than two decades her bold, socially engaged work has put animals, food and ethics at its center, which places her squarely at the heart of what “Art for Meat Tax” is about. The thirteen sources below are the strongest, most quotable references on her work; every link was checked and is live. For the fullest overview, start with her press archive (No. 13).

Ready-to-use bio (55 words)

Dana Ellyn is a full-time contemporary painter in Washington, DC and a George Washington University graduate who left a corporate career in 2002 to paint. Since then she has created roughly 4,500 works. Her bold, thought-provoking art is widely collected and best known for its animal-advocacy and food-ethics themes — asking why we love some animals and eat others.

Key facts

- Washington, DC resident since 1989; full-time painter since 2002, when she left her corporate job. BA, The George Washington University.
 - ~4,500 original paintings since 2002 (~200 a year); paints almost daily from Mather Studios in downtown DC.
 - Signature theme: **animal advocacy & food ethics** — series such as “Look Me in the Eye and Tell Me I’m Delicious” and “Meet Your Meats,” and shows including SPECIESISM (2015), Meat-Free (2013) and VegFest (2015).
 - Museum exhibitions: American Visionary Art Museum (2012, 2016–17); Museum of Art, St. Petersburg, Russia (“Grotesque in Art,” 2018–19); American University Museum (“Women Artists of the DMV,” 2025).
 - 2008: painted portraits of every U.S. President and all the 2008 candidates — widely covered.
 - National news coverage over the years including CNN, USA Today, Huffington Post, NPR and The Washington Post.
 - Longtime collaborator with husband and fellow DC artist Matt Sesow — joint projects include “Defiled” and “31 Days in July.”
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MAJOR PRESS & NATIONAL MEDIA

1. Wikipedia — Dana Ellyn

Encyclopedic entry

The quickest credibility check: an American artist known for political and animal-welfare themes, with her museum shows, her 2008 Presidents series, and her national news coverage all summarized in one place.

■ en.wikipedia.org — Dana Ellyn

2. The Washington Post — “Giving Artists Space to Create” / “The Artful Lodgers”

By Eileen Rivers · The Washington Post · September 15, 2007 (photos: Mary Lou Foy)

A Washington Post feature on affordable artist housing that used Dana — four years into painting full-time, at her easel in her downtown Mather Studios live-work unit — as its example of the model working. Establishes her standing in the DC art scene, with follow-up coverage in The Express.

■ danaellyn.com — Washington Post feature (2007)

3. National coverage — CNN, USA Today, NPR & Huffington Post

National news coverage · 2009

Evidence of her national reach: a 2009 show drew coverage from CNN, USA Today, NPR and the Huffington Post. Cited here simply to show the scale of media attention her provocative work has attracted.

■ [danaellyn.com](#) — national press coverage (2009)

MUSEUM & INSTITUTIONAL

4. American University Museum — “Women Artists of the DMV” (2025)

Alper Initiative for Washington Art · Sept–Dec 2025 · curated by F. Lennox Campello

Dana was selected for the largest curated survey of living women artists in the nation — 400+ artists across 16 venues, anchored at the AU Museum. Covered by The Washington Post, Hyperallergic, NBC4 and WTOP.

■ [american.edu](#) — Women Artists of the DMV

5. American Visionary Art Museum — “Matt Sesow: Shock and Awe”

AVAM, Baltimore · May 2016 – May 2017

Dana’s painting *Duality* was the first work visitors saw — the introduction to Matt Sesow’s year-long solo show at the American Visionary Art Museum, curated by AVAM founder Rebecca Alban Hoffberger.

■ [avam.org](#) — Matt Sesow: Shock and Awe

6. Museum of St. Petersburg Art (Russia) — “Radical Fluidity: Grotesque in Art”

MISP Museum, St. Petersburg · 2018–2019

Dana’s painting *Baby Back Ribs* was shown in this 100+ artist international exhibition, where she and Matt Sesow were the only artists representing the United States — a strong international museum credential.

■ [sesow.com/russia](#) — the St. Petersburg exhibition

7. University of Massachusetts Boston — on “Defiled” (Ellyn & Sesow)

Academic feature · “...and the Recent Vocabulary of Popular Politics”

A university writeup of the two-person exhibition Dana created with Matt Sesow — helpful for framing their long artistic partnership and the political edge of their collaborative work.

■ [umb.edu](#) (archived) — ‘Defiled’

ANIMAL ADVOCACY & FOOD-ETHICS ART (the festival connection)

8. Animal Outlook (Compassion Over Killing) — interview with Dana Ellyn

Interview · national animal-protection organization

A dedicated interview about the animals-and-food heart of her practice — the closest match to this festival’s themes, and full of quotable lines about why she paints what she paints.

■ [animaloutlook.org](#) — interview with Dana Ellyn

9. The Sheppard Collection of Vegan Art (UK) — Dana Ellyn

Institutional collection of animal-advocacy art

Her work is held and profiled in this UK collection devoted to animal-rights art — an international marker of her standing in the field.

■ [sheppardcollection.org.uk](#) — Dana Ellyn

10. Vegan for Life Magazine — “Creative Vegan: Artist Dana Ellyn”

Six-page feature · Issue 1, Nov/Dec 2013 (pp. 32–37)

A six-page magazine profile of Dana’s path to full-time painting and her animal- and food-themed body of work — discussing paintings such as “Bacon,” “Matador,” “An American in Paris” and the “Goldilocks” trilogy.

■ [danaellyn.com](#) — Vegan for Life feature (2013)

11. One Green Planet — feature on Dana Ellyn

Feature · 2014

A feature from one of the largest food- and animal-focused platforms, spotlighting her paintings and the questions they raise about how we treat animals — well-aligned with this festival's audience.

■ [danaellyn.com](#) — One Green Planet (2014)

FEATURE & PORTFOLIO

12. Escape Into Life — Dana Ellyn

Art-magazine feature & portfolio

A clean online feature pairing images of her paintings with commentary — a good visual introduction to the range of her work.

■ [escapeintolife.com](#) — Dana Ellyn

THE MASTER REFERENCE (START HERE)

13. [press.danaellyn.com](#) — Press, Exhibitions & Interviews (2002–present)

The artist's own press archive, indexed by year

The definitive hub: two decades of exhibitions, interviews and publications, year by year, plus her full bio and exhibition history. The best single place for a writer to begin and to find still more material.

■ [press.danaellyn.com](#) — the press archive

■ [danaellyn.com/about](#) — bio & exhibition history

More interviews & work (optional extras)

■ [VeganOrigo](#) — interview with Dana Ellyn

■ [new.danaellyn.com](#) — newest available paintings

■ [paintings.danaellyn.com/projects](#) — her project series

■ [danaellyn.com/about/exhibitions.html](#) — complete exhibition history

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