

Showcasing International Artists and Writers • Interviews with Two Visual Artists

ArtAscent

Art & Literature Journal 24 April 2017



FEATURE:
Bliss



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Bliss

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Foreword and Artist Profiles

Zuleika Murat is a professional Art Historian, with a PhD in History of Art from the University of Padua. A recipient of many post-doctoral research fellowships, she has published several studies on different aspects of Northern Italian visual culture between the 13th and the 15th centuries.

Alexis Culotta holds a PhD in Art History and currently works with several arts organizations in Chicago. She is also an arts writer and enjoys any opportunity to promote today's artists for tomorrow.



On The Front Cover

Bloom/Nest

by Larissa Monique Hauck



On The Back Cover

Indigo Orchid Buddha

by Clare Haxby



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ArtAscent

Art & Literature Journal

Showcasing outstanding
artists and writers from around the world



bliss

Foreword

An inherent quality of the human experience is the quest for happiness. Once we find it, we strive to keep it with us, never wanting to let it go; we cling to it as if it is a golden treasure, something we'll cherish as a source of positivity for the inevitable rainy days of negativity in the future. Because of this, we chose to focus our 24th volume of ArtAscent Art & Literature Journal on the theme of bliss.

One of the most essential and enduring forms of happiness comes from the feeling of being connected to the people around us or to the larger universe. An embrace from a loved one or a gaze into the waters of a sandy shore can make us feel as if we are part of something larger, and that sense of belonging often leaves us with a feeling of joy, a feeling of connection with the world around us. We cannot hold on to that joy forever because life doesn't work that way. Instead, each of us experiences times in our lives when we are unhappy and must live through rainy times in our lives. And, it is living through these darker, rainy times that make the light of happiness all the more resplendent and replenishing.

Come now. Join our artists in this issue as they explore the bounds of happiness and present both sides of it... the bliss of connectivity with humanity or spirituality and the struggle with finding it again when that bliss slips away. Celebrate with them in both the joy and the struggle, in the peace and the pain, as they offer powerful reminders of the intense dynamisms of life. Doing so helps us recall that we too share similar paths, and perhaps that reminder will help you find or return to your place of bliss.

By Alexis Culotta, PhD

Jie Xu

<https://www.jiexudesign.com/>



The Charm of ZEN

Glass fiber reinforced plastics sculpture | 11 x 11 x 11" x 6 | NFS



Artist

A Chinese proverb says *“Remain essentially the same despite all apparent changes. Change ten thousand times without departing from the original aim or stand or principle.”* Jie Xu aims at giving visible form to this concept by creating artworks that are changeable in form but unchangeable in their meaning.

Jie's activity as an artist reflects his strong desire to create and give material form to his feelings and emotions. All his creations are harmonious and beautiful, and aim at communicating a philosophical approach to life which has much in common with Zen thought.

Jie is keen in experimenting with new methods to produce art. His current technique consists of creating a rapid sketch on paper of his envisioned concept. From this, he creates a clay model which can be modified and remodeled until his original idea reaches its final form. Then a glass fiber is applied to the clay model to create the final product.

Jie's most favourite artist and source of inspiration is Le Corbusier, a Swiss-French architect interested in the concept of urban planning as a way to create a harmonious place in which to live. Jie is also interested in this.

Jie also admires great thinkers such as Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844–1900) and the Chinese Taoist philosopher, Chuang-Tzu, who lived in the 4th century. Nietzsche was a radical critic against reason and truth and was in favour of perspectivism. Chuang-Tzu developed a philosophy of relativistic scepticism.

Jie's work, *The Charm of Zen* represents all these concepts; it is based on the idea of Taoism's freedom and Buddhism's mercy. It is not a simple artwork. It is a meditation and awareness path that consists of the six heads of Buddha which can be moved and arranged in different ways. Yet there is a precise order in this configuration as the heads show different stages of the meditative process from “shape” to “meaning” or from exteriority to interiority. While the first head presents the viewer with a clearly recognizable feature of Buddha, the following ones simplify the form and reduce Buddha's features to essential lines. Yet, although deeply different in form, each is still a Buddha, although in an internalized version. Little birds resting atop the six heads of Buddha symbolize that the sculptures are akin to resting nests; a point of reflection for many people.

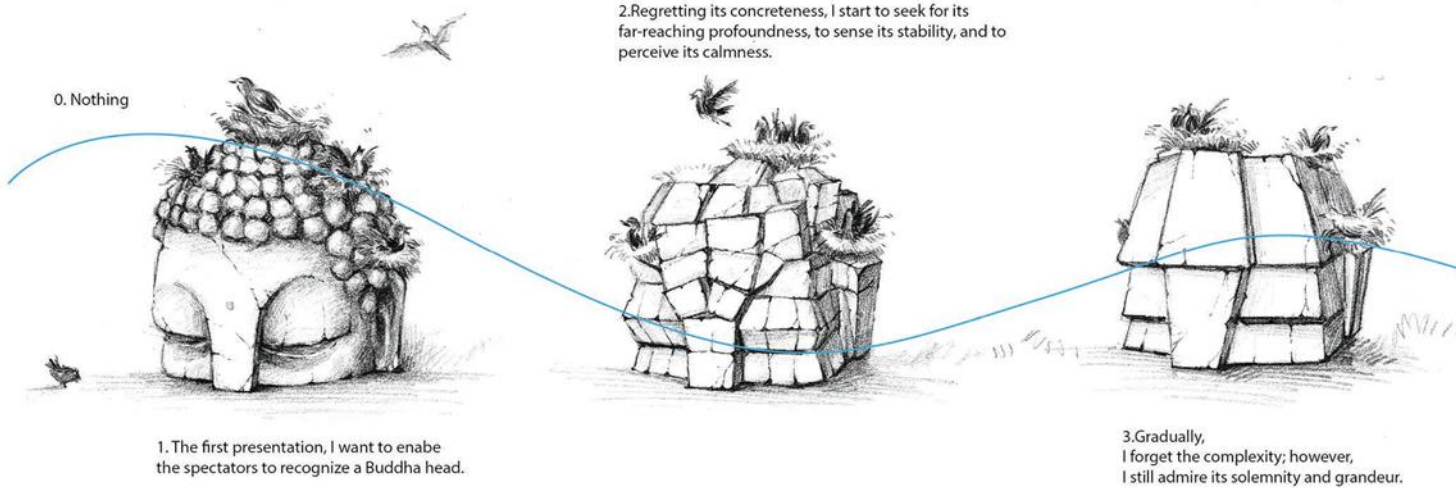
In addition to being an artist, Jie Xu is also an architect, landscaper, and urban designer. He graduated at the China Academy of Art (BA 2010) and at the University of Pennsylvania (MA 2016). He has been the recipient of International fellowships and scholarships, including the Lewis Dales Fellowship (2015). He has worked for many design firms in Rotterdam and San Francisco, and has been involved in several International landscape projects such as the West Kowloon Cultural District Park, Hong Kong. His artistic activity is mainly focused on sculpture, both digital and real.

By Zuleika Murat

Jie Xu

The Charm of ZEN

Glass fiber reinforced plastics sculpture | 11 x 11 x 11" x 6 | NFS

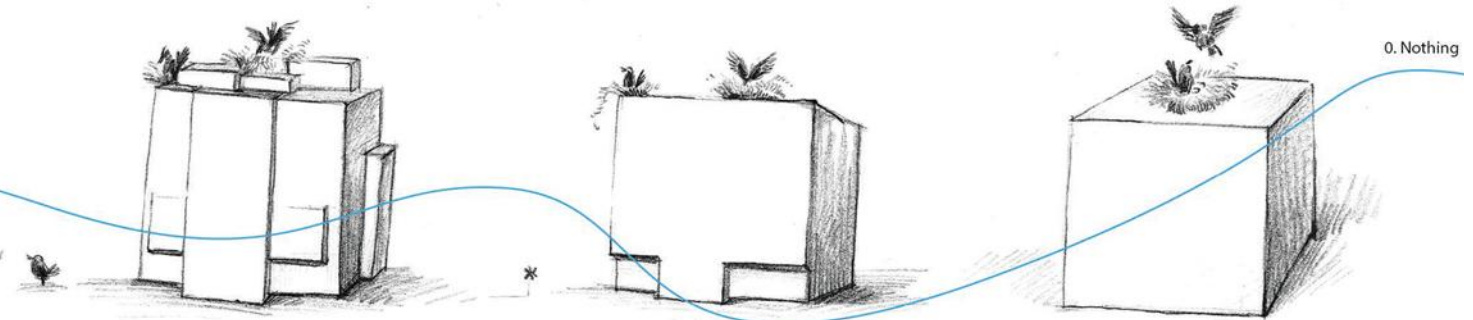


Artist



4. And then, the scars left by passing time healed up gradually, I begin to get a glimpse of the interest of Zen.

Finally, I realized what haunted me previously is the untied knot in my heart.



Suddenly, I was deeply touched by its kindness, its elegance, its mellowness without affectation.

0. Nothing

Gold

Akin to a painter, Malina Douglas uses her words as if they are strokes of paint, artfully blending them into compelling compositions that both accept and challenge tradition. Her poem, *The Place Beyond Grey*, resonates with this artful quality as she creates images filled with magic and mystery.

Malina's inspiration for this poem stemmed from the leftover scraps of an earlier work. When she returned to these fragments, Malina was struck by a simple combination of words: "Shining surfaces glitter, bright colours confuse." She used them as the ideal entrée into her newer work, *The Place Beyond Grey*, to lead her readers into a world of fantasy.

As her thoughts wandered, she began to envision a daring journey into the unknown where the thrill of discovery was tempered by a fear of what could materialize. Through passionate prose and beautiful metaphor, Malina investigates the tension in the space between black and white through passionate prose and beautiful metaphor. Her goal in creating such a striking poem was to invigorate the reader and to encourage the unraveling of everyday monotony into a circuitous yet captivating journey of self-reflection. Malina's words force the reader into a deep state of introspection which she complements with choices of words that are truly meaningful.

Her writing is reminiscent of the vibrant prose of the great 19th-century writer, Lewis Carroll, whose imagined realms were expressed in masterworks such as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (commonly shortened to *Alice in Wonderland*) (written in 1865) or *The Jabberwocky* (1871), Malina's imagery leads the reader into a wonderful realm of exploration. The reader is no longer merely reading, but truly experiencing the mental images Malina creates as she writes.

At the same time, and perhaps tempering the lighthearted allusions to Lewis Carroll, Malina digs deep into visceral sensations, exposing at times a rawness akin to the brutal reality of paintings by famed contemporary artist Jean Michel Basquiat. As part of this reality, Malina also works to leave the readers of her poem with a sense of confusion; there is no real conclusion to the journey this poem's protagonist takes. Malina reinforces this by repeating – yet reversing – the final two lines. It is in this confusion, though, that Malina transmits the beauty of her writing since the absence of closure allows the reader to revel in the mystery of her words.

Malina Douglas is a writer and artist based in Western Australia. She holds a degree in Contemporary Art and Social Sciences and has enjoyed the publication of her work in myriad publications. Highlights of her publication list are *Indigo*, *Every Second Sunday*, and on the website, *The Jungle Age*. She is also a regular contributor to the Out of the Asylum Writers Group (OOTA).

By Alexis Culotta, PhD



The Place Beyond Grey

Shining surfaces glitter,
bright colours confuse.
Like a parakeet's plumage
her bright skirt is swishing.
With every smooth movement,
I watch her, enraptured,
from the cramped upper terrace
walled by wrought iron railing.
Bored of grey trench coats, grey stockings, grey suits
tired of black sweaters, black waistcoats, black boots
I watch her weave lightly,
on her feet, beaded sandals,
her embroidered top swaying,
arms of bracelets that jangle.
I watch her;
she pauses
At a striking shop window.
What lures her?
What pulls her?
Not this—
she walks onwards.
I wear black to dissolve
In the press of wraiths, marching,
But for her I wear orange—
unfamiliar feeling.
I pace at the corner where she often is sighted,
pretend to browse windows
but my heartbeats are jingling.
At the daily black figures I sigh and gaze dully—
I long for reprieve,
her oasis of colour.

She nears me;
Eyes widen—
I flush
and look downward.
She speaks and I freeze,
like a voiceless stone statue.
Repeating the question,
she asks: "Are you lost?"
I nod quickly, not trusting
my own threadbare voice;
those slippery words,
not appearing when summoned.
"What are you seeking?"
But how can I tell her?
I stammer, evasive
"A reprieve, the bright colours...
the place beyond grey."
She smiles widely, teeth gleaming.
Half skipping, she leads me
down the streets that oppress me
through a zig-zag of alleys,
through a labyrinth of street names.
Till the old falls away like a frayed, greying sweater,
till quotidian edges
fray and blur,
till the skies clear.
To a rickety building,
red brick, boarded windows,
door scrawled with graffiti.
She knocks thrice,
and we enter.

The Place Beyond Grey (continued)

I gaze, jaw wide open—
every surface is covered
with intricate patterns,
overlapping, fluorescent,
impossible creatures—
three-armed sheep, bearded fishes,
furred dragons, winged foxes
flocks of bright jewel-toned birds
rising up to the ceiling
others, winged women
bearing lyres,
hair streaming,
walls of strange layered faces,
indecipherable letters,
vast dim space,
once a warehouse,
now littered with cushions.
Half a dozen low lamps glow
in tucked-away corners,
strewn with tables and sofas
of various sizes
hodgepodge and mismatched,
their surfaces painted,
in between, many alcoves
crammed with brushes and canvas,
a man in striped trousers
slinging paint in quick movements.
"Amazing," I stammer.
My words feel impoverished.
She appraises me softly,
chestnut eyes with strange fires.
"I see art in you, churning,
beneath your smooth surface."
"If there is,"
I say, doubtful,
"Then how to release it?"

"By doing, not thinking," she shrugs.
"Paint your feelings."
As her rosy lips move,
bronze bird earrings are swinging.
She guides me;
I follow,
heart rapidly beating.
At an alcove she pauses,
shrugs, modest;
"My paintings."
I draw breath;
meet a dozen
strange colourful gazes,
unfamiliar faces,
layered gold, turquoise, saffron.
"I'm honoured," I murmur.
She smiles; says nothing.
I am mesmerised.
She watches.
My cheeks bloom like roses.
Absorbed in the gazes—
eyes that shine,
secret smiles,
hair of flames,
or of starlight
or cascading water.
Bright robes trail,
iridescent,
like the plumage of peacocks,
crowns of flowers,
hands uplifted,
or stretched out,
inviting.
In between complex layers,
metallic paint glistens.

She asks,
 "What do you dream of?"
 I panic.
What answer?
 My mind is in fragments,
 grasping for something.
 "Flocks of tropical birds
 and... of mangos,"
 I manage.
 She smiles the same grin
 as the painting beside me,
 a sapphire-crowned goddess
 astride a winged lion.

Footsteps echo;
 door opens,
 bright room disappearing,
 winding out of the labyrinth
 same bland street,
 sudden sadness.
 Quick jeweled words of parting,
 a haze
 and I'm blinking.
Was this real,
 I wonder,
 as the old life continues.

A hundred grey days pass,
 in familiar stupor.
 Gazing out from my terrace,
 finding only grey figures.
 Pacing puzzles of alleys,
 not finding the doorway.
 Thoughts flitting like toucans
 over steep inner valleys.
 Yet I feel the changes,
 marks of paint on my being.
 Growing hunger for colour,
 seeking objects that glimmer.

My paintings are shaky,
 barely worth being looked at.
 I hide them in piles,
 under beds,
 behind cabinets.
 Deny their existence,
 hide attempts with red brushstrokes.

I forgot why I walked there—
 new club open?
 or some gig—
 what I saw stopped me dead.
 On a seldom-walked side-street—
How long had it been there?
 Those familiar eyes gazing,
 the tight lips, the sharp chin,
 the doubtful expression.
 The bland face made brilliant
 by shades of vermillion
 layered with purple
 and yellow and cinnamon.
 Ringed by plumed parrots
 and holding a mango,
 stringy hair,
 garbed in orange,
 my own face,
 reflected.

Joy expanding like sunbeams,
 seed unfurled to fruition—
 at last a creation
 that does not make me sicken.
 I pick up the canvas,
 bring it out to the terrace,
 let it rest by the window,
 by the wrought iron railing.

I hope and I wander,
 I search and I scribble;
 Bright colours confuse,
 shining surfaces glitter.

Vanessa Aegirsdottir

<http://www.facebook.com/v.aegirsdottir>



Matanuska River III

Handspun wool | 9 x 20" | \$900



In Greek Mythology, the Parcae were three-sister deities who were female personifications of destiny. Each had a specific task in determining the lifespan and specific time of death of all individuals. By spinning a thread, measuring its length, and then cutting the thread, they created an allegorical version of each person's lifespan.

Like a modern Parca, Vanessa Aegirsdottir is an artist who works with fiber and textile. By extracting and replicating the colours of the landscapes she loves, she creates a textile version of the North, capturing in colours the elements that compose the natural world.

She has developed a very peculiar way of working. First she takes photographs of landscapes and then uses Photoshop to extract the colours from each photo. Once she has obtained the palette of each image, she dyes the fabrics accordingly to illustrate the landscape.

Each piece of fabric is created with Canadian-grown wool, spun by hand, and dyed to match the tones found in the hills and valleys of where she lives. Vanessa lives in both Northern Canada and Iceland. Since her childhood, she has been fascinated by the landscapes of these two countries.

Vanessa processes the fleece by hand, skirts, washes and dries it, cards and spins it, then dyes and weaves it.

When she weaves with hand-spun yarns, Vanessa never knows how the rows and bumps will behave. She approaches each project with no expectations and just allows the materials to dictate the outcome.

Her pieces relate to the theme of "Bliss" in that, according to Vanessa, Northern Canada and Iceland are among the most beautiful places in the world and their beauty brings happiness.

Each piece that Vanessa creates is imbued with emotions. Far from being a mere replication of landscapes, each piece (each view) captures and communicates feelings that act as triggers on the emotions of the beholder.

Matanuska, with its combination of colours, replicates what is visible around the Matanuska river, and its view triggers the viewer's emotions.

Hraun ("lava" in Icelandic) is an homage to a wild Icelandic landscape. The colours reflect the look of the landscape (they are dark with shades of colour from grey to black) and communicate the emotions that one might feel when viewing the landscape.

Vanessa is inspired by Maryanne Moodie's work as she designs and creates woven wall hangings which are displayed and exhibited to the public. Maryanne applies unexpected colour combinations to her nostalgic designs and is inspired by the intricacies of vintage textiles, traditional costuming, modern art, and the natural world. In all these respects, Maryanne and Vanessa are similar. However, Vanessa is more fascinated by the natural world and the landscapes that can trigger emotions on the viewer.

Vanessa Aegirsdottir is a dyer, hand spinner, knitter, pattern designer, and embroiderer. She started working with textiles in her childhood; she was inspired by her mother's creations. Vanessa has attended artist residencies at the Icelandic Textile Centre. Her works have been exhibited in temporary exhibitions both in Iceland and in Canada.

By Zuleika Murat

Vanessa Aegirsdottir

Hraun

Handspun wool

RIGHT PAGE: Bleikur

Handspun wool





Clare Haxbywww.clarehaxby.com

Bronze

My Beautiful Ginger Lilies

Mixed media on canvas | 48 x 48 x 1.5" | \$3,700



Artist

Clare Haxby is an artist who has dedicated her career to doing what makes her happy. The result of her journey is a spectacular amount of work that mixes media and global references. Her works featured in this issue include examples from her *Motherhood*, *Buddha*, and *Ginger Lilies* series which depict the calm contemplation one can find in a state of pure bliss.

Clare's fascination with colouristic expression began in her student days when she was fortunate to receive a scholarship to study in South America. This was a fortuitous occurrence that awoke her love of travel and also helped her refine her artistic approach. During her travels, Clare realized she had a passion for vibrant, expressive colour and organic forms, a theme she carried home to her English studio.

This theme is still alive and doing well in her recent work, yet one can also sense the additional influence of the East Asian artistic tradition. Clare has spent a good portion of her recent years traveling. From 2007 to 2015 she relocated to Singapore and devoted time to traveling through Southeast Asia. Thus, her works from this period resonate with the washes of colour and compositional arrangement akin to East Asian prints and paintings. At the same time, though, Clare updates this historic tradition with her own contemporary flair.

Bright colours and drips of paint that cascade through some of her works, such as *My Beautiful Ginger Lilies* remind the viewer that Clare is still connected to the contemporary world in her reference to the expressive styles originating among 20th-century masters. Indeed, her lush colours remind the viewer of masters such as Henri Matisse. The drips, however, harken back to the action paintings of 20th-century Abstract Expressionists Jackson Pollock or Willem De Kooning, whose works were overrun with such drips that the artists considered a document of the painting's creation.

In this regard, Clare uses her drips in a similar manner to Matisse, Pollock, and De Kooning in that they remind the viewer of the presence of the artist. The soothing aura of Clare's work replaces the violence of abstract expressionist action painting. The drips in Clare's work, in other words, remind us of the beauty of the subtle imperfections of life, an element echoed in Claire's *Motherhood* paintings. These paintings, alongside works such as *Indigo Orchid Buddha*, emanate a feeling of calmness.

The *Indigo Orchid Buddha* is a work of spiritual contemplation while Claire's *Motherhood* painting is one of connectivity with humanity and the mother's role in creation of new life. These different feelings are conveyed with distinct colour palettes. Claire's Buddhas are in lush shades of green and blue while her mothers are in warm and luxurious shades of pinks and red tones.

A native of Yorkshire, England, Clare Haxby's early training was in Derbyshire and in London. She received a BA in Fine Art Printmaking at Kingston upon Thames University, UK. Claire has sold some of her work to the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, England, and has also enjoyed the exhibition of her paintings (with accompanying sales) in various prestigious locations in Singapore.

By Alexis Culotta, PhD

Bronze

Clare Haxby

Emerging Motherhood

Mixed media on paper | 10 x 10" | \$1,000



Artist

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ArtAscent

Motherhood

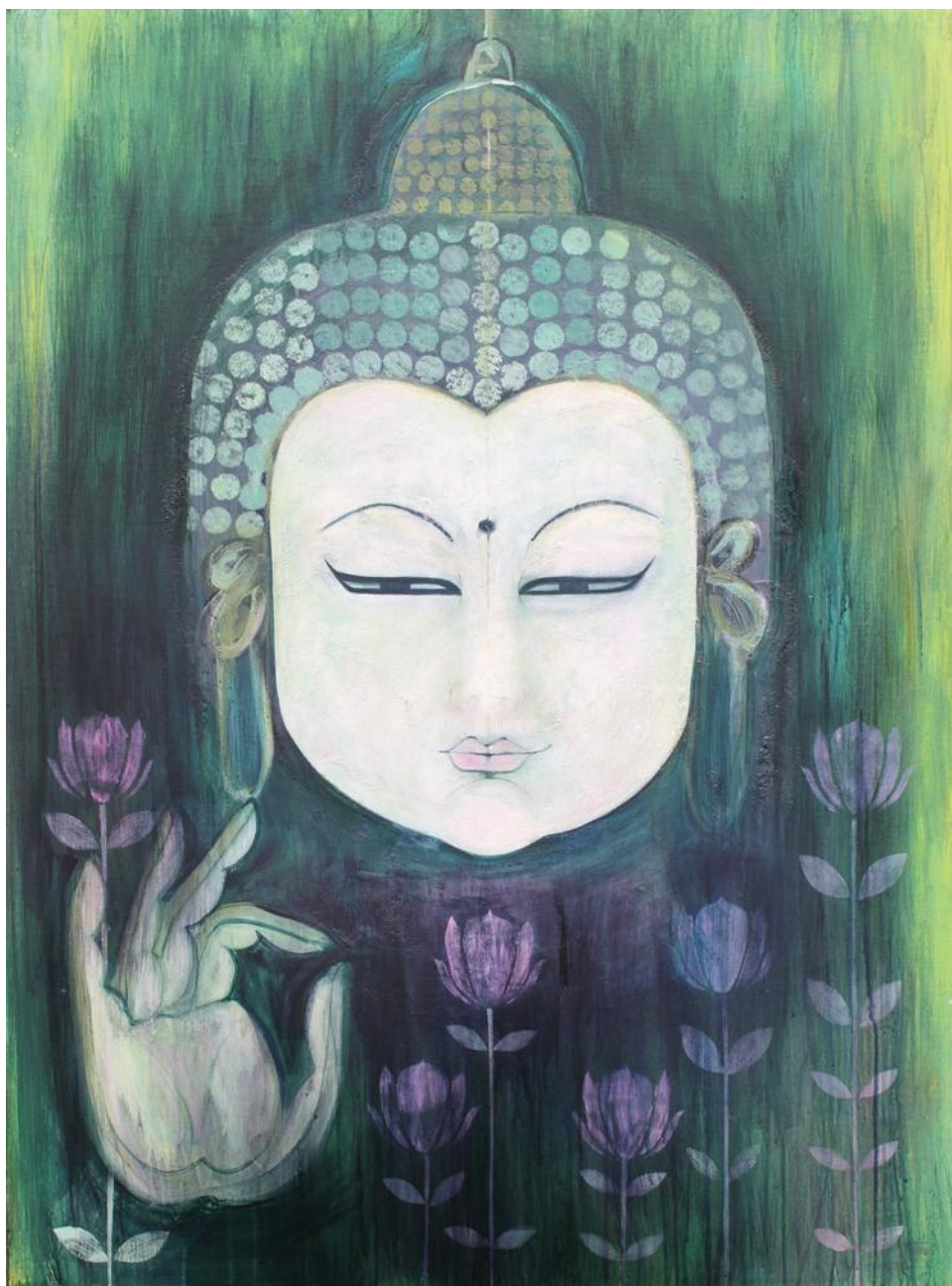
Mixed media on canvas | 39 x 39 x 1.5" | \$3,700



Clare Haxby

Emerald Lotus Buddha

Acrylic on canvas | 48 x 36" | \$4,900



Artist

25
ArtAscent

Sunbird

Acrylic on canvas | 39 x 39 x 1.5" | \$4,500



Liisa Ahlfors

<http://www.liisahlfors.com>



BOTH PAGES: Perler

Perler beads on dead wood | 118 x 59 x 59" | NFS





Mani Saemi

www.manisaemi.com



Today

Mixed technique | 48 x 60 x 2" | \$13,000



Love Dream
Mixed technique | 40 x 60 x 1.4" | \$11,000





Avalon

Molly sank into her mattress and watched the early-morning light bleed through the cracks in the blinds. One moment melted into the next, and her cat was stretching itself across one of the pillows, which had been tossed haphazardly down to the foot of the bed at some point in the night.

He purred and curled himself up into a ball against her shins.

Molly purred back through her closed lips, and reached down absently to scratch behind his ears with the tips of her fingers, again letting her eyes fall gracefully shut, the direct light casting the insides of her eyelids in a fuzzy orange-yellow, like a flickering projector screen, the blotted veins barely visible--lifeblood cast in light from the back of the theater, from where the occipital lobe of her brain projected mesmerizing patterns in a ponderous, whispering stream and interpreted little phantom squiggles across her eyes.

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna,

she repeated in her mind, like a little mantra from George Harrison— his guitar strumming and weeping heavenly somewhere in the back of her mind, each note like a soft shaft of light melting away one after the other. And then *Yes and Yes and Yes*, this time from James Joyce. It seemed like a good way to greet the day in her muddled brain which had just come to waking consciousness, from the depths of the sleepy dark:

she dreamt that she had helped a child find a copy of *Island* by Aldous Huxley in the bookstore that she worked in, which was apparently also her old high school library, and then *The Once and Future King* by T. H. White. The child was at first a total stranger, and then her little brother, which she didn't have in waking reality, then her big brother who appeared very little, which she also didn't have, she was an only child, then her son who was the reincarnation of her still-living cat.

So sleepy still, *Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna*, but in

a moment she would get up and burn some incense and pull out her yoga mat and read a few more chapters of *Dune* and eat breakfast and *Yes and Yes and Yes...*

Somewhere between showering and waking, her mind reached out towards an island at the edge of her awareness, she saw vibrant yellow flowers and twisting green vines, there were hues of violet and electric blue and some dashes of red and orange around the edges, she couldn't quite describe it rationally, but her imagination seemed to be reaching for a place; a place tinged by the phantom afterglows of creative impulse and populated by kaleidoscopic arrays of myth and archetype, that existed when she read things like *Ulysses*, with verses like quicksilver and gentle lightning, or listened to *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* and the musical arrangements clanged peacefully from one track to the next and the next and the next...

Molly's cat's name was Percy, his fur was dirty blonde, and he was named after the poet Shelley. Sometimes in her youth, and privately in adulthood, she liked to think about her passing resemblance to Mary Shelley, which was slight and imagined. She would see Mary in her lithe frame and dark brown hair, which she kept short, and her pale skin in winter, which admittedly moved to a more golden-brown shade in the summer.

Where, oh, where then was her Percy?

One day, after searching for years, she compromised and decided to get a cat, and give him the name, cut out the middleman. She was only twenty-five and had her entire life to ferret out her spiritual equal, even if Mary beat her to it by a good eight years.

She drove down the highway towards work that morning, watching light glint off of the shiny metal vehicles, and her eye caught the sun scintillating in explosions of light off of the glass windows of an office building overlooking the highway. The light shimmered down the side in rippling waves, and seemed to dissolve into gold across its surface, a shining cosmic object which, as she approached, conformed into a solid structure, a building, from out of pure blooms of glowing ether and magic.

Maybe her search for her own personal Shelley was a misconception, she thought, as the light bled away and the office building was left there, people going in and out, working, thinking, doing. Looking for the One, the One, never stopping to think that we are all One. Everyone always bustling to discover this connection in the eyes of another person and hang it there, rather than seeing infinity reflected in the glowing lids of their own closed eyes.

She wound the car around a bend and said *Yes and Yes and Yes* to whatever lay on its unseen end... day-dreaming at work she cradled her chin in the palm of her hand, elbow bent on the counter by the cash register. She closed her eyes for a moment, sun moving through the windows and against her face, skin turning gold from pale as the seasons changed these past few months, and reached for the island ephemeral somewhere in her mind's eye. She thought for a moment that she'd reached out and touched eternity, saw the infinite in the mundane, like Blake, but she was still ever-so-sleepy and had a whole day ahead of her yet.

Christopher Owen Nelson

<http://www.chrisnelsonfineart.com>



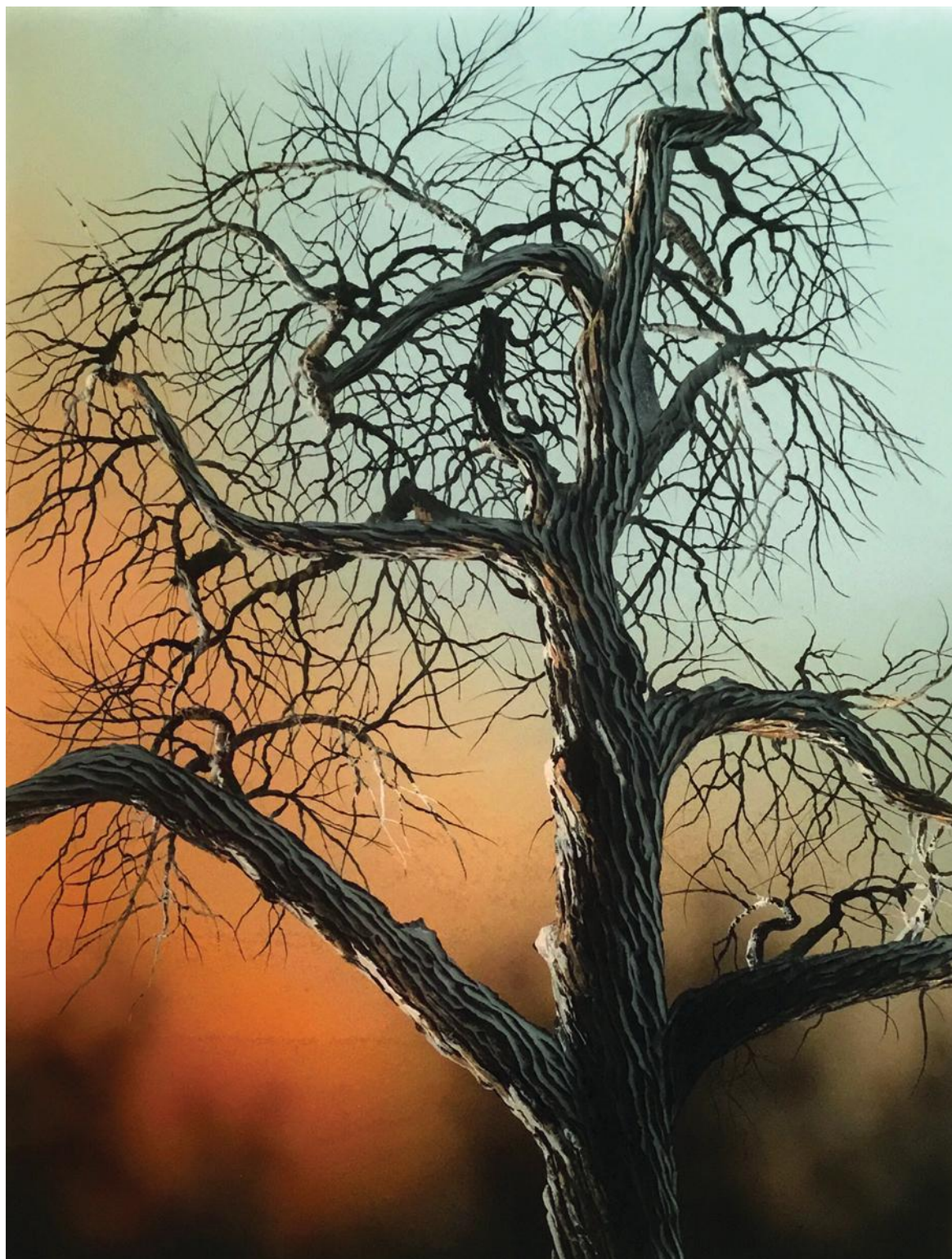
Arena

Carved and painted cast acrylic | 30 x 36" | \$6,600



Blush

Carved and painted cast acrylic | 24 x 18" | \$2,700



Larissa Monique Hauck

www.larissamoniquehauck.com



After Eden

Watercolour and ink on paper | 12 x 9" | \$130



Our Secret Place
Watercolour and ink on paper | 12 x 9" | \$130



Francie Griffin

www.franciegriffin.com

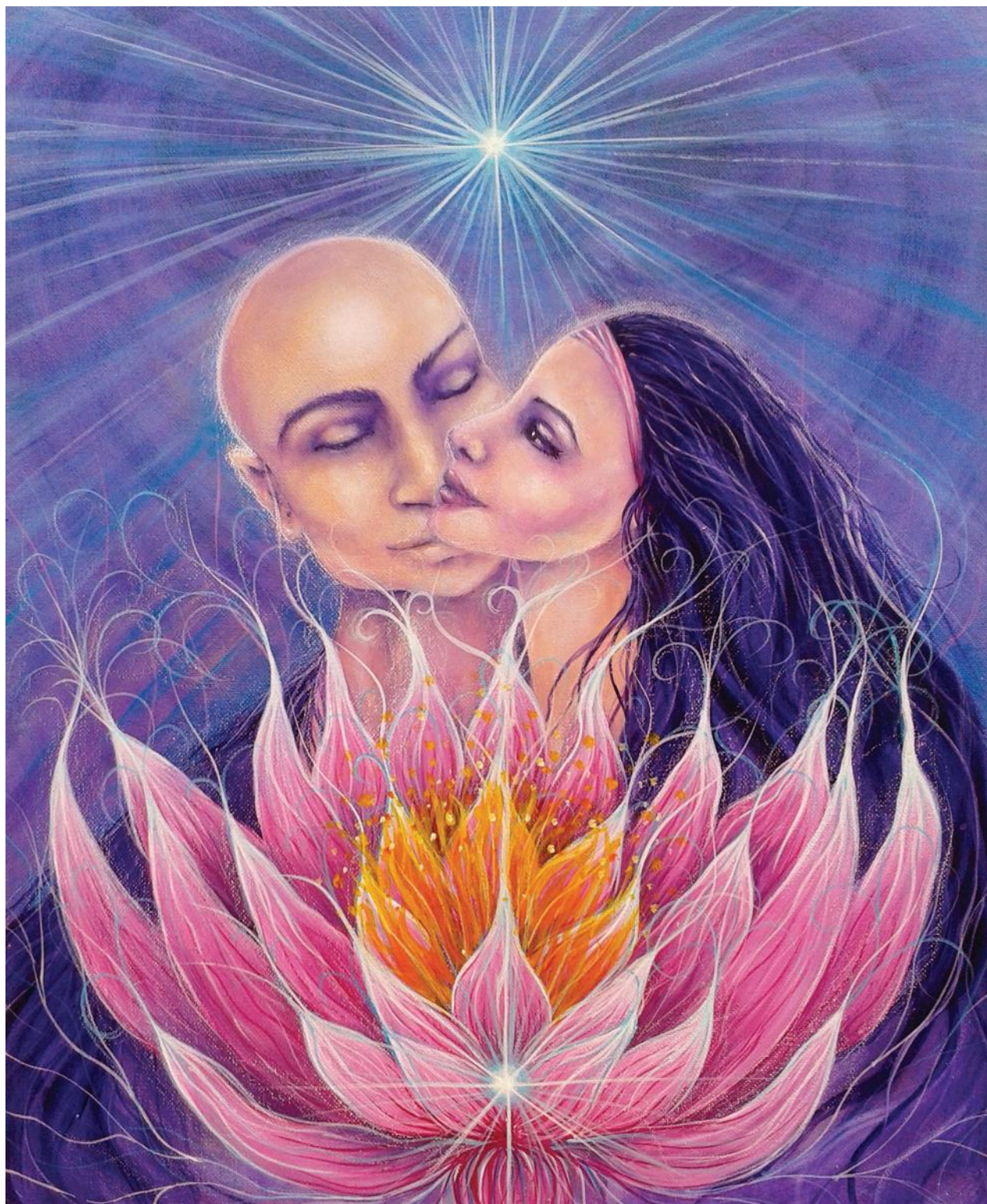


The Initiate

Acrylic on canvas | 30 x 24 x 1.25" | \$610



Twin Flame
Acrylic on canvas | 19.5 x 15.5 x 0.6" | \$230



Carel Schmidlkofer

<https://www.saatchiart.com/carel>



Purple Inspiration

Photograph on canvas | 44 x 60 x 1.5" | NFS



Ondular
Photograph on canvas | 45 x 60 x 1.5" | NFS



Janet Morgan

www.janetmorgan-art.net



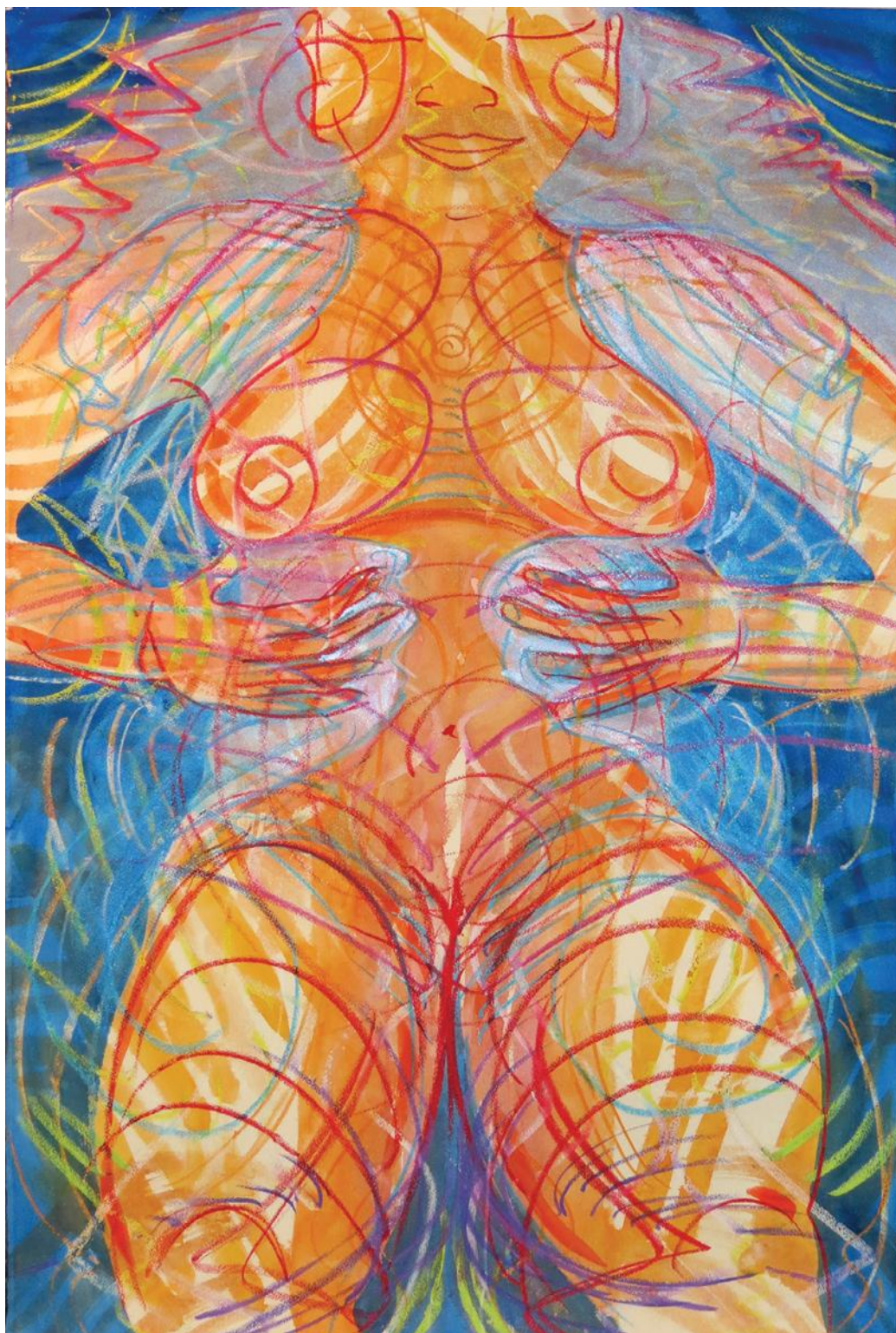
Focus

Watercolour and mixed media on paper | 40 x 26" | \$1,200



Ummhummm

Watercolour and mixed media on paper | 40 x 26" | \$1,200





Looking at the Same Thing

Singing on the back of your motorbike
through mountains, my favourite memories

surprise me. The return of love, like it never left,
you holding me in each and every bed,

except the ones without air-con to cool us,
where we laid like starfish, salty skin

and the heat is never something you can picture,
but this winter, I think back to summer shorts,

only wearing sleeves to show respect,
the land abundant with temples,

rice fields, motorbikes, smells
distinct to every country.

We were tested with con-men, swaying boats,
sea urchins, our own minds. Somehow

we coped, we survived and now we are back,
wanting to keep these memories alive. And sometimes

it's the snapshots of everyday, changing landscapes,
we walked through side-by-side, for the most part.

Rolling shrimp in rice-paper with satay dripping off,
the sweetest popcorn at the cinema.

At other times, it was like we were dropped
into a postcard, and I question reality

when I think of the blue of that water,
the kindness of strangers, the feeling

of swallowing beer in a hammock,
of tasting the food from the side of the road.

We are back now, but let's never stop
climbing mountains, taking in views,

plunging into unknown water.



Ali Pluss
www.alipluss.wordpress.com

Simplicity
Acrylic on canvas | 20 x 24 x 1.5" | \$1,000



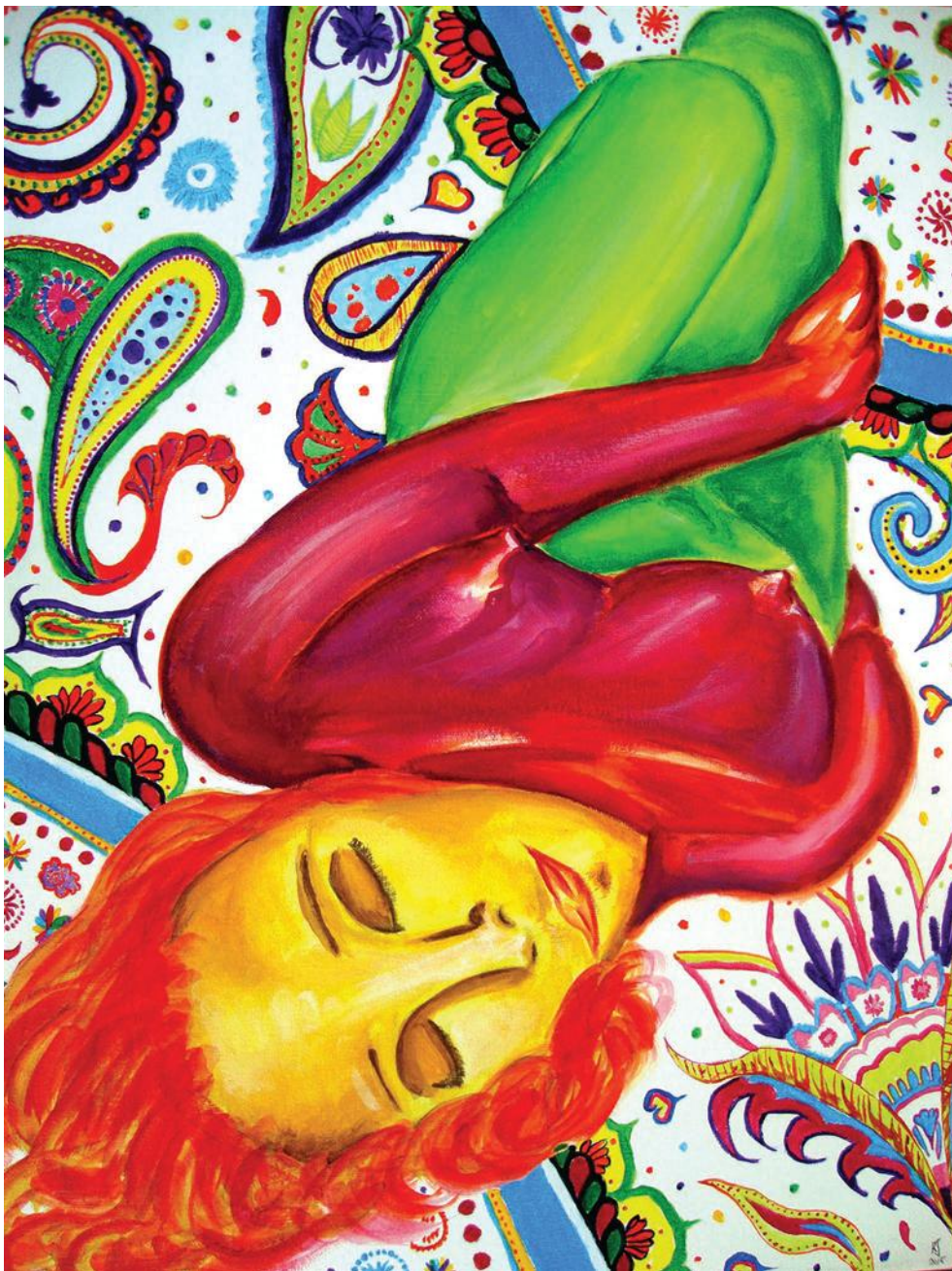
Kenesha Julius

www.facebook.com/KenJArts

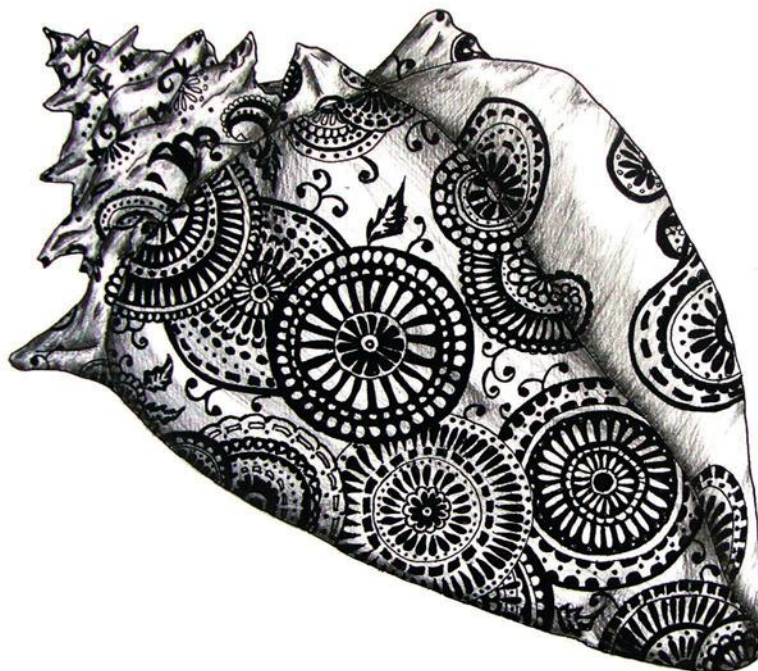


Sleeping Beauty

Acrylic on canvas | 16 x 20" | \$150



Happy Shell
Pen and pencil on paper | 9 x 12" | \$100



Jspired Art by Janna

www.jspiredart.com



The Dance

Acrylic on gesso hardboard | 16 x 20 x 2" | \$600



The Embrace
Acrylic on gesso hardboard | 16 x 20 x 2" | \$600





Inside the Fody's Nest

The nest of the fody was located on a branch of the litchi tree, nestled in between leaves and hidden from view. The litchi branch itself lay on top of the sloping roof of our house. I climbed the roof everyday starting from the day that the baby fodies, three of them, were hatched. It involved patience, plenty, having to wait for the parents and in particular for the mother to go out in search of food or for her other chores. The hatchlings were tiny and cute. Their little pointed beaks opened immediately and were persistently waiting for food when I peeped inside the nest. After two weeks, the young ones had grown into fledglings capable of flight.

I recall the day when it was raining and yet I climbed up the roof. Full of excitement, I could not wait for the fledglings to give a nip at my intruding finger. The roof was wet and slippery. And the fall: sudden and abrupt. The iron bolts protruding over the steel roof sheeting ripped open my back. But they also anchored me and prevented me from sliding and falling down the roof. The fall must have been loud, such as to cause a scare to the poor fledglings. One of them jumped out of the nest, landing next to me. It did not fly away. Neither did it try to move away. It looked at me tenderly, though

somewhat dazed. "You silly guy; why are you nosing around in the rain?" I heard it ask I was overwhelmed and ceased to feel the pain. Instead a feeling of bliss and warmth enfolded me.

I had probably passed out when I heard a voice so dear to me calling out my name. Only my late mother called me in this way, drawling on the last syllable. *Was I in heaven?* I thought, to which mother replied, "No, dear, but you could well have dropped dead from the roof. When you fell down, you gazed lovingly at the little fody. It transcended your pain. I have been sent to bring you back to consciousness and, as your mother, to reprove you of your impudent conduct. Be not so reckless, my son. You have a family to look after. Be humble and take heed of the little fody's warning." At this she left, promising to be back when the time is ripe.



Michelle Dinelle

<http://www.MichelleDinelle.com>

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ArtAscent

Passing Thru Blue

Acrylic on canvas | 30 x 40 x 1.5" | \$900



Michelle Dinelle

Blissfully Blue

Acrylic on canvas | 12 x 12 x 1.5" | Sold



Ruffled Feathers
Acrylic on canvas | 30 x 40 x 1.5" | \$900



Anman Cao

www.anmancao.com



Cheerful Mood

Acrylic on canvas | 20 x 20 x 2" | \$5,000



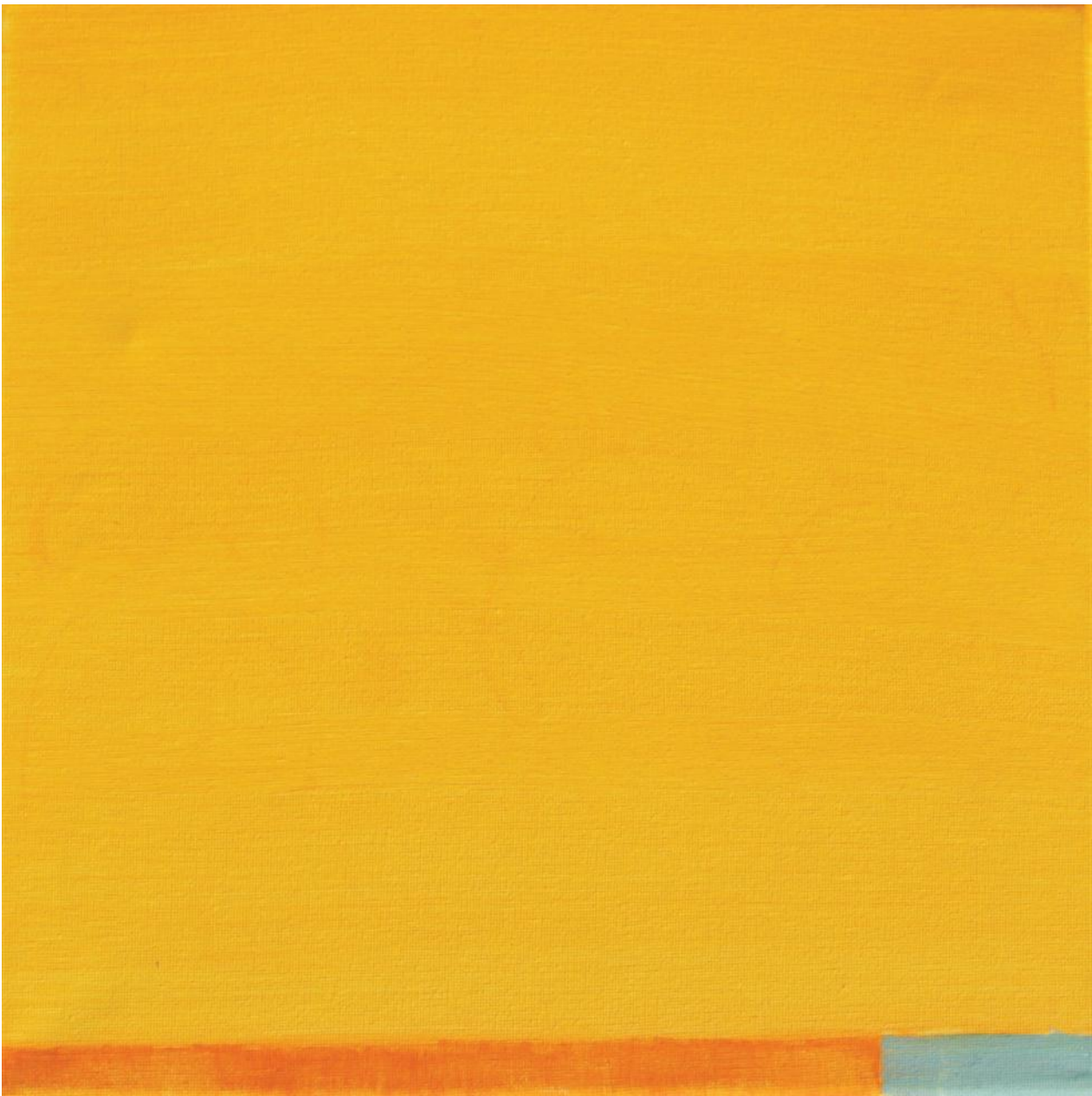
Blossom
Acrylic on canvas | 12 x 12 x 2" | NFS



Anman Cao

Untitled

Acrylic on canvas | 12 x 12 x 2" | NFS



My Heart Waves
Acrylic on canvas | 12 x 12 x 2" | \$2,500



Kirsten Hixson

www.kirstenhixson.com



Arrow



Monsoon Grass



Felice Simon
felicesimon.com



Bubbles

Archival pigment print | 10 x 15" | \$400



See Through #4
Archival pigment print | 10 x 15" | \$400





Bliss

Bliss lives on a cliffside in a glass house that glows silver blue whenever the sun shines. The ocean is Bliss's constant companion - in her mind, in her view, what she smells, what she hears and rapturously what she feels when she immerses her entire body into the cool, blue chill of its water.

Bliss believes in spirits and she knows they are there because they whisper in her ear - mostly in the quiet of the velvety navy blue night. The spirits tell Bliss that they know what she does. They know that she drifts in the still of night into the hearts and souls of the people. And they know that when she visits them she delivers to every one of them, just when the time is right, a tiny bubble of blissfulness - ready and waiting for the very moment when the bubble floats off out of their hearts and minds into the ether, creating the elation and the joy of each of their own very private bliss moments.

For some of the people that Bliss visits, their bliss moment is about their beloveds. Just simply seeing them, smelling them, touching them, their velvety skin, hearing them say their name - calling it out or whispering it just loud enough to know it's for them.

In some people's lives, bliss is felt as a moment of balance, a rare moment of feeling totally aligned, in harmony - a reality of calm and a moment - a split second of oneness with the universe. It might be spiritual, but it isn't always. Sometimes it's just recognising a moment of being completely connected with the now, and for a period of time just feeling content and at peace and knowing everything is as it should be. Or sitting quietly alone at the beach, with eyes closed in the morning sun.

Music brings bliss to some people - arousing them emotionally. Like lying flat in the dark listening to a violin concerto, or sitting with hundreds of people in a beautiful place while a gifted maestro weaves his magic, making them feel at one - with the music, with the people in the room, with the maestro.

Sometimes bliss can be as simple as finding that the guesthouse on the outskirts of the little town in India has great 24-hour hot running water and a good shower - luxury in such an unexpected place. Or an epiphany when an unknown piece of knowledge, a leap of understanding is delivered through an ordinary but striking occurrence.

Bliss certainly gets around.

The people who find it easiest to activate their bliss bubbles are those that connect readily to the deep and meaningful elements of life. People who are more focused on the spiritual, who are looking for that connection with the universe - perhaps through prayer, meditation, or mindfulness practice. For these people Bliss rarely has to visit. For these people are already on the bliss journey - with their focus on awareness, ever moving forward to their own nirvana.

The people Bliss knows most about or feels most connected to are the people who get their bliss in the water. For Bliss is a water creature. That's why she lives beside the ocean and spends so much of her time in its embrace. These "water people" swim a lot too and always feel peaceful in the water. The weightlessness, that moment when their head first goes into the ocean or the feeling they get riding a wave - the slooshing sound of the water.

The bliss bubble once delivered takes off - as light as air enclosing something, and elevating - its length of existence and flight path unknown. But light, and rising at all times. And sometimes, just sometimes, one becomes more than one - and bliss becomes an interlocked experience. Like when, in one single moment, a mother beholds her child who beholds her kitten snuggled in her arms and in a split second all three are as one - in bliss.

Curiosity told Bliss that his friend, Knowledge, knew all about the bliss bubble that she delivered; that it is in fact a molecule - an organic molecule - something they call a "neurotransmitter." He said that this molecule is called "anandamide" - named after "ananda," the Sanskrit word for "joy, bliss or happiness"; and that when activated in the brain, it produces a state of heightened happiness and wellbeing.

He told her that they had found that the highest concentrations of anandamide are found not in the brain, but in the uterus just before embryo implantation. The researchers had identified a definite target for the uterus' anandamide signal - the embryo; one of the first communications that occurs between mother and child. Amazingly, the developing human child contains more bliss molecule receptors than any tissue known, including the brain.

Moments of bliss whilst always felt - even if only in the subconscious - are not always recognised or acknowledged. Bliss knows that sometimes people are so busy that stopping to "be in" or "be with" a state of bliss, although it happened and they felt it, can go unnoticed as they hurry on to the next part of their day and forget to wrap themselves in its warmth.

Bliss is working hard on a program right now to help people to consider, and then recognise the moments of bliss in their world. She knows that it will make a difference to their lives, and she hopes that she can get some assistance from her brother-in-law, Clever, to spread the word.

Sophie Hoad Halma

www.sophiehoadpaints.com



Public Pool Sun Worshipers

Oil on canvas panel | 16 x 24 x 0.5" | \$475

RIGHT PAGE: Please Donut Ever Stop Loving Me

Oil on canvas | 30 x 40 x 1" | Sold

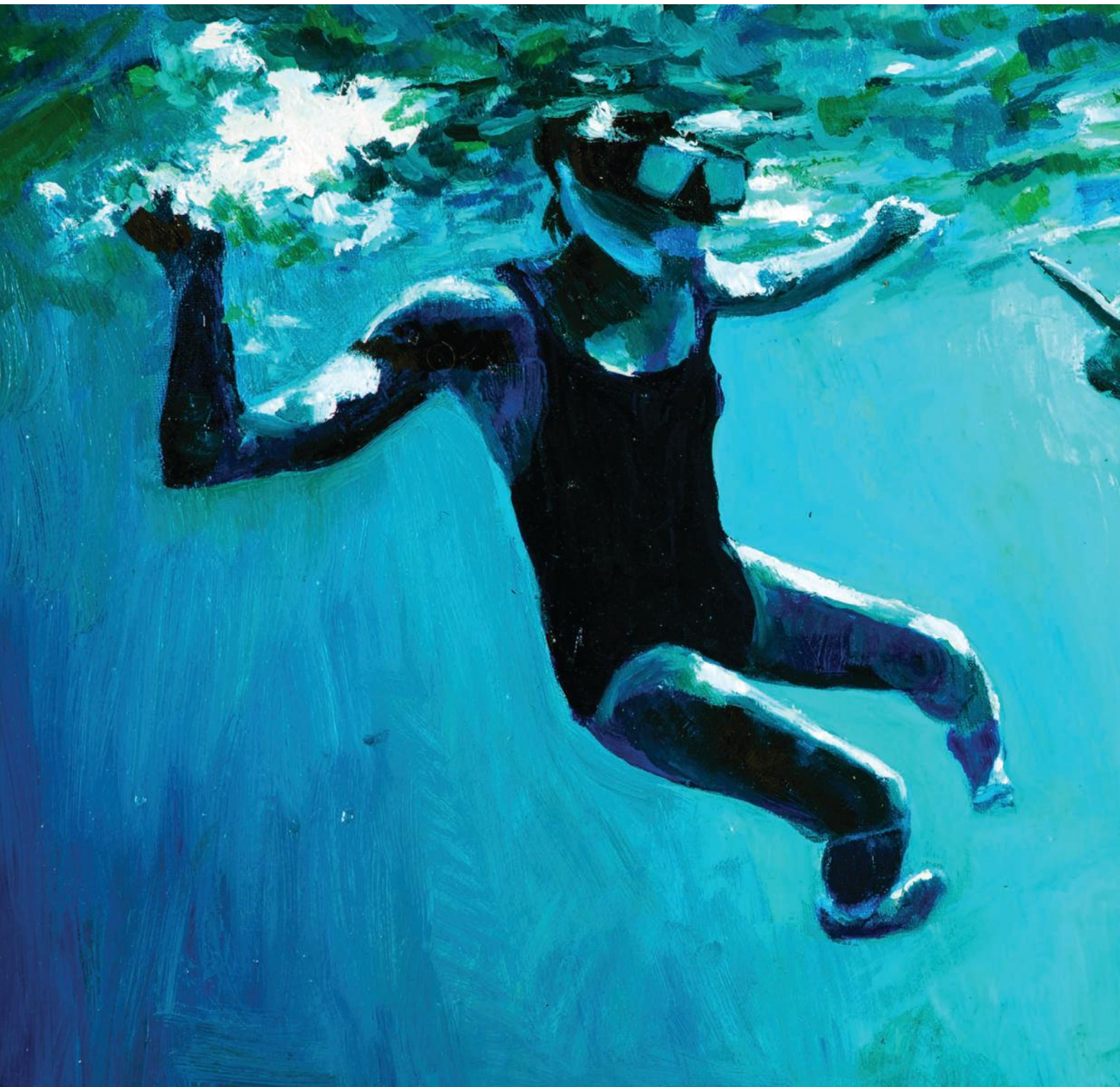




Sophie Hoad Halma

Quiet Wonder

Oil on canvas panel | 12 x 24 x 0.5" | \$475







Fog Bank Fox Trot

Fog drapes itself across a streetlight,

It's folds of grey

Sway below

The artificial glow.

Delicately it clings to the fixture

Dependent upon the metallic structure,

To give it form.

Harmony between nature and technology.

A streetlight

Lost in the fog

Is bound by a life of duty.

Unable to move

It casts a luminous projection

Into the swirling grey.

Dancing tendrils

Entwine with the hesitant glow,

Freeing the shackled

From its earthly tethers.

For a few fleeting seconds.

Distant fog shimmers,

Until the wind changes.

The streetlight now waits, for the fog to return,

To find its true form once more.



Timothy Harmon
timothyharmon.com

Berlin Bubbles
Black and white photography | 23 x 23" | \$850



Gaya Karapetyan

<http://GayaArtStudio.com>



Chains of Venus

Acrylic on canvas | 24 x 30" | NFS





Life Nights Singing

Baritone bass and trembling tenors ramble hum drums
on my reverberating tympanic membrane

High pitched chirps pierce through the low melodies
formulating tectonic quakes of new sound

So much chitter chatter it's almost deafening

While sitting on this hard cold metal perch viewing all
the different choruses erupting in song

Air crisply whistles its own tune while the moon twists
in a haze haloed by imagination and hiding in deception
amongst the ink-stained sleekness stretched above

Twinkles of colours refract off the glasses splashing
pink blue and green keeping pace with the shadows of
my quivering pen

Isolated in a corner illuminated only by the opaque
flicker of pastel colours bathing over my arms and
swirling silhouettes is my clear choice of poison

Smoke plays hide and seek between the leathered
coats and shiny zippers

It gleams off the edges of glasses sparking orange at
the tip of each finger tapping along to their own rhythm

Some flick it in swirls that encircle the vacant faces
casting ghostly images blurred behind vapid eyes

Others dance repetitiously in practiced moves of speech

Chills creep through the space in my brown soft boots,
beckoning for warmth, inching for movement inside

Empty glasses imprint memories of discussion once
wildly held above them yet, secret to those not included

Some shake and are stirred, tinkling lyrical ticks from
jingling ice, fighting their ultimate demise

Bodies separated by groups of few linger in sectioned
quadrants of the porch suspended together as a whole

Each table, rustic and worn, hold different stories
around circles of hosts leaning intimately to sprawled
out and lonely

Soft rumbles from the inside building quake the floor
beneath my toes bringing instant movement to my legs
and feet

Subtle bumps of heavy tones grumble alongside in a
serene and confident manner

The voice flutters gently above, suctioned to each
lingering tone receding out the doors as they sweep
open to breathe in fresh air

Leaking tunes of long before grooving and smooth-
ing every inch of the mind, stretching the thoughts to
vapors of blues and jazz

Swaying with the breeze tickling my ears and nuzzling
my hair

Yelps and yips escape the trances, perfuming the air
with intricate sounds complacent in themselves

Thus out of place, yet somehow complete in the tune

Stacy Lovejoy

www.stacylovejoy.com



The Good Friends

Acrylic, clay, epoxy resin and fabric on wood panel | 10 x 17" | \$1,500



The Only Way Is UP!

Clay, wood, plastic, foam, metal and acrylic | 10 x 8" | \$2,500



Dick Evans

<http://dickevansart.com>



Coming Light

Acrylic on clayboard panel | 12 x 12 x 2" | \$1,650



Vigil

Acrylic on clayboard panel | 24 x 24 x 2" | \$3,100



Yang Sichang

<http://164566558.wixsite.com/yangsichang>



Flow Series, Eye Piece

Silicone | 4.5 x 1.75 x 0.25" | \$200



Flow Series, Shoulder Piece
Silicone | 7 x 0.25 x 1" | \$200



Alexis Avlamis

alexisavlamis.com



Tales Around a Light Bulb

Acrylic on canvas | 36 x 37" | \$2,900



The Butterfly Effect
Acrylic on canvas | 40 x 40" | Sold



Peter Demers



Bliss

You were dreaming; you are awake. Your bed is cozy, eyelids are heavy, and you resent the fall of sunlight as it cakes upon your face. You do not want to go to work, you only want to lay still. Listless and braindead, you take an exceptional amount of time in the bathroom while you wait for the coffee to brew. There is no time for breakfast; you shove a cookie in your pocket, and take a travel mug. Bitter and groggy, you join the day beneath the blue sky, and concede that it is lovely.

A cool wind tickles your nose, and you smell pollen on the spring breeze. Well-dressed faces of fellow labourers pass you by on the way to the bus stop; you nod your acknowledgment, and they nod right back. You are among them—the morning people, adhering to the schedule of a social society, one whose work hours traverse in parallel with the arc of the sun. You regret not making time for a second cup of coffee. You regret skipping breakfast. You don't want to work. You blame capitalism, and feel sorry for yourself.

You get off your bus a stop early so you can make a side-quest to your favorite cafe, to treat yourself to a sugary somey-ummy-yummthing, feeling entitled to the detour. You are too groggy to get any work done; you deserve a treat.

You forgot: the cafe is closed today. You feel very much the victim. How insensitive of a coffee shop to close down on the one morning of the week where one would most need a tasty, sugary treat. You are in disbelief. You check your phone, and realize that your side-journey might have made you late for work. You cast a desperate look to the heavens, wondering why they've made you miserable.

Speed-walking to the office, you wish you could slow down time. Punctuality does not improve your performance, but it does send a message to your employer. Your subconscious conjures up a chorus of old teachers, scowling relatives and unlucky dates to lecture you on what it means to be late; you agree with every single one. You are a fraud. You reach your building, and spam the "up" button on the elevator, half hating yourself for taking so long to get up, half blaming the universe for conspiring against you. The doors open, you get inside, and spam the number for your floor. The doors close, and you exhale.

You spend this moment of weightlessness to consider your reflection in the mirrored walls of the elevator. You are surprised: stylish and work-appropriate, you look like a competent person after all. You were once worried that this new shirt was too ostentatious; now you think it might be your favorite. Seeing your waistline flattered by its fit, you realize that even in a state of groggy, bitter self-pity, your automatic getting-ready instincts have done well. You are a natural sartorialist, and a proper adult who is on time for work. You grin at your reflection, because you realize how silly you've been.

"Nice shirt," says the receptionist. Did she hear your thoughts? You thank her, realizing that all of your worrying has been overdramatic. You think too much, and panic too easily; you are doing okay, you goofball. Your coffee has got you through the hardest part, and you can easily find a muffin before the hunger returns. This is when your co-worker arrives with a box of donuts. You feel blessed to be alive.

Work still seems like the last thing you want to do, but with a honey cruller in hand, you are unstoppable. The hardest part is getting started, but once you do, the rest is easy. The work may not be fun, the way napping is fun, but it is diverting, and you are good at it. You take pride in your efficient management of workplace tasks, taking each new assignment in stride. You forget all about the time, and it passes you by.

It is the end of the day. In the elevator, you compliment your boss on her new glasses. She was worried that they were too ostentatious, but they're not. She smiles high, and laughs, and you feel like a marshmallow in hot cocoa. Every day that you show up to work on time, you make her job easier, and her day is that much better. You realize this is true for all your colleagues, and every one of your clients. As you step onto the bus with the other commuters, you realize that many of them, too, make other people's lives easier simply by consenting to wake up in the morning, participating in the daily chore of social commerce.

You are at home. Your feet feel like murder; you kick your shoes off, stretching your toes out on the rug. Your tummy grumbles. In your pocket, you notice a cookie. Who put it there? Was it God? Your boss? A cookie fairy? The chocolate tastes sweet. Somebody out there likes you, pal. You take your time eating it, having no place else to be. Life is a gift.

Eric Johnston

<http://www.ericjohnstonfineart.com>



Happy Hour

Acrylic on canvas | 10 x 10 x 2" | \$2,400



The Stranger

Acrylic on canvas | 30 x 36 x 2" | \$22,000

NEXT PAGE: Mind Over Matter

Acrylic, oil pastel, soft pastel and ink on paper | 22 x 30 x 2" | \$18,000







Bliss

I walk slowly across the street. I sniff the air as I walk, and my heart skips a beat. For me, there is no place that is more peaceful and sacred. Here, there are no judgments; there are no voices. I quicken my pace as I walk over the planks to get to my special place. Immediately, as my feet step off the plank, I feel the air rush through my mouth. I am home.

I walk slowly as I sink my toes serenely into the soft white, pristine sand. My body immediately relaxes as I feel my breaths becoming deeper now. I take my time to getting to the shore as I breathe the salty air deeply. My shoulders rise and fall with each breath; with each breath, I feel a little bit more of the tension seep away in the salty, damp air. I stop where the sand begins to get damp from the waves. I stand upright on the shore and gaze out at the water, slowly taking it all in. Inhaling deeply and exhaling slowly, letting the blissful sight in front of me wash over me. I stand there like that for a few minutes; it felt like hours. I enjoy that few minutes of peacefulness; no thoughts or emotions clamoring my mind for attention.

I turn slowly and survey my surroundings. It's early in the morning so it's a bit chilly. The sun hasn't fully risen yet so the sand is nice and cool against my toes. I slip my hands into the pockets of my sweatshirt and stare a little at the couple about a 100 ft. from me cuddled up on their blankets. They seem happy. I glance to my left and see a lone woman curled up with her book on her towel. They all seem peaceful. I glance down at my toes and wiggle them in the sand; the pure joy of something so silly makes me smile. I walk with my sandals in my hand back up the slope of the shore and perch on the soft sand and lean back on my hands with my face tilted up at the sky.

I think about my crappy week and how I couldn't wait for it to be the weekend so I get to come out here and forget about all of them. Out here, I am always reminded that no matter what has happened, there are always possibilities. No problem is bigger than this blue ocean. I am just a dot in the sand. So, I know this will get better. I smile to myself as I agree, yes, it will get better. I hate being unappreciated, and I know that I need to make better choices. I know all that. I try to think about what is holding me back. I lay back on the sand and stare up at the cloudy blue sky and think of what possibilities could lay out there for me. My breathing picks up, and I feel the fear seeping into me. And I know, this is what is holding me back. The vast array of possibilities is just too much; there are so many unknowns.

I remind myself where I am and close my eyes to regain control of my breathing. I want the rest of my life to be like it is here. When I am here, I am peaceful and happy. The minute, I step off that plank and onto that street, the thoughts and emotions come clouding back. This beach that I have grown up beside has become my sacred place. It is where I am me. How do I take this with me? I want to be happy all the time, not just here. But I already know one step I need to take, but fear holds me back like I've just seen. My job takes up 60 hours of my week, and I am miserable in it, but so unsure of the direction I need to go in. I resolve that I have nothing else planned for my day, so when I return home, I need to take some time to figure out what I want to do and who it is I want to be.

I only know two things. I am happiest out here. I am most miserable when I am there. The sun is coming up now, and I can feel the warm sunshine on my skin. I lay there, eyes closed and breathe in the warm, salty air. My body relaxes again. For a couple of hours, I lie there like that and enjoy peace and contentment that I have never known anywhere else.

Evangelea Seelye

evangelea-seelye.format.com



Companionship is Underrated
Pigment ink print | 12 x 18" | \$90

RIGHT PAGE: We Are The Sand
Pigment ink print | 5 x 7" | \$100







Life as a Pilgrim

The journey was long, and my body aches;
sickness, exhaustion.

The tears from the sky soak through to my bones.

I made a mistake, what am I doing?

Self-doubt, worry, and confusion

There's no one to lean on, just myself.

My strength feels dry, has every drop left me?

Guilt smoothers me for the loved ones I left at home.

I'm moving; my legs are taking me somewhere.

Each step is heavy with the unknown, the uncertainty.

The weight of gravity pulls on my heart.

Thoughts unbearable, I can't do this.

My breath has stopped, I've forgotten how.

Hope! The sun breaks through, and the panic starts to fade.

Emotions flood my existence,
excitement, sadness, nervousness

I need to disconnect; from last year;
from my own thoughts; from life.

Pain sets in, fatigued muscles and worn out feet.

I'm climbing, mentally, physically... mentally.

My body is strong and is learning to push through.

Every struggle is rewarded, self-worth, self-love, self-trust

The connection is forcible, minute by minute.

Listen to your body and listen to your heart.

Every moment presents opportunity.

With eyes wide open, The Way shows me what I need.

I mimic a snail, slow, steady, just my home on my back.

I feel liberated, vitalized, exhilarated.

Everything is a state of mind.

Our choices need to come without expectations.

Happiness happens from living my dreams.

Let's leave judgment at the door,
and allow a path of poppies to guide my way.

Always chasing my shadow, and never able to catch it

Control is difficult;

take a step of acceptance towards tranquility.

The sun shines behind me, lighting my way.

Tears flow uncontrollably, but differently from earlier.

My life is like a jigsaw puzzle,

now I'm enjoying putting it together.

The universe guides me piece by piece.

Look, listen, and learn.

Contemplation wonders if society flows as one river

down a mountain,

Fast, together, without thought.

Surviving is not living

With simplicity comes calm,

and with challenges comes rewards.

Each is their own sense of bliss.

Stay connected.

Peace arrives and I'm at one with the path.

Occasionally we need to leave something behind

to find something new.

Perspective can change depending on the circumstances.

Trust, participate, discover.

I arrive at my destination,

leaving confusion behind and gaining perspective.

Understanding

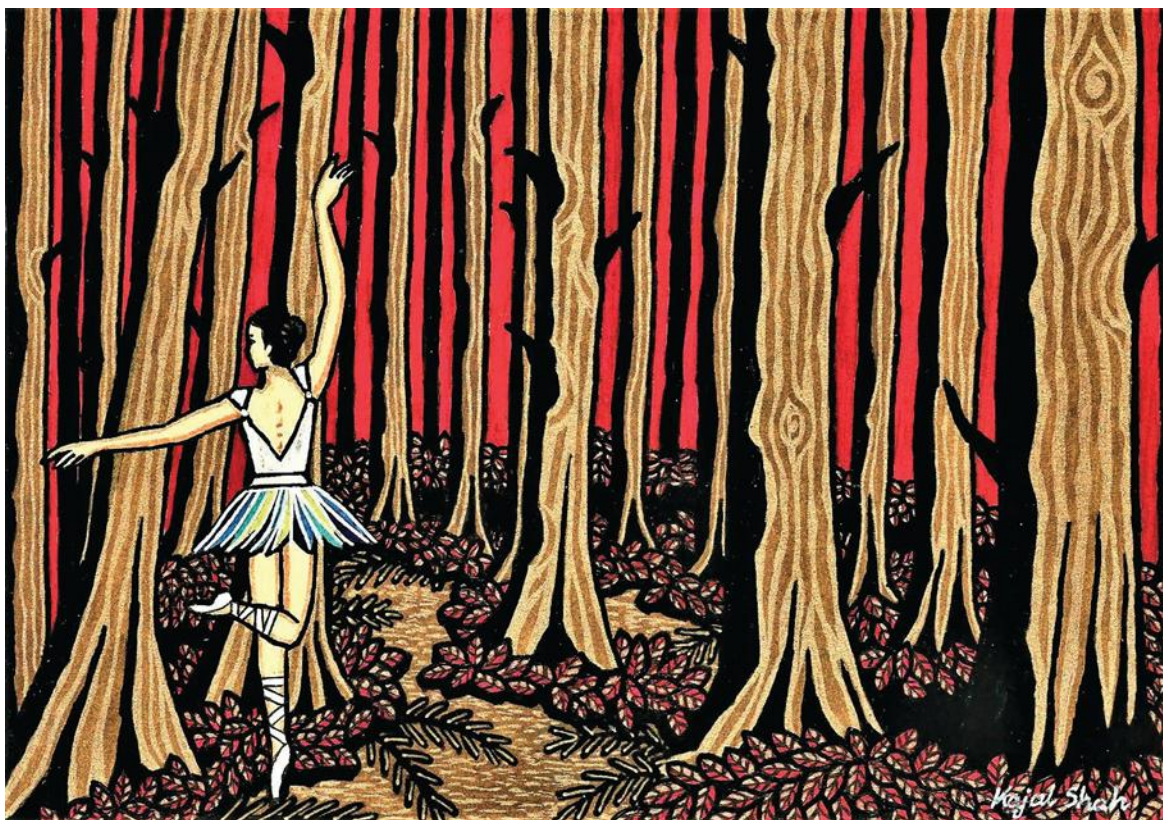
Only this chapter is written, not the book.

A blank page is waiting to mark my new steps.

The road doesn't end in Santiago.



Autumn Song
Acrylic and ink on fine grain, heavy weight paper | 5.8 x 8.2" | \$115



Charlotte Ashenden

charlotteashenden.com



Reminiscence

Decoupage watercolour on watercolour board | 6 x 8" | \$280

RIGHT PAGE: Gaze

Ink on watercolour board | 4.5 x 3" | NFS





Shannon Faber

www.ink-and-tea.com



A Study In Magic - Willow Rain

Chalk pastel on toned paper | 18 x 24" | \$2,500



A Study In Magic - Guinevere
Chalk pastel on toned paper | 18 x 24" | \$2,500

ArtAscent



Patrice Sullivan

www.patricesullivan.com



Hero

Oil on board | 5 x 7 x 1" | \$500



Family Snap
Oil on linen | 8 x 8 x 2" | \$500



Artist Interview

Bharna Misra



Become acquainted with perhaps a few unknown dimensions – thoughts, ambitions, wisdoms, life changing moments – of this inspiring artist.

When it comes to your art, explain what you do.

I am a full-time artist and art educator based out of the San Francisco, Bay area. I paint sun-washed, colourful local landscapes that surround me and motivate me. I also work in portraiture and still life. My work is an emotional response to what I observe and experience. Through my paintings that I create in oil and pastel, I attempt to present the colours in their pure brilliance without losing the balance of accuracy and expressionism.



What project are you working on now?

Currently I am painting figurative portraits for my upcoming solo show at Olive Hyde Art Gallery in Fremont, California. The focus is on ballet dancers and performance artists in motion, exploring the elegance and rhythm of human form and portraiture.

How has your practice changed over time?

Over time I have learned to become more organized. I have devised steps to utilise the available time efficiently and distribute it better between work and family.

Which place in the world do you find to be the most inspiring?

Any place that has space to rest my pad and time to draw is perfect for me. That's all I need to become inspired and to get started. I have a home-based studio that opens into the backyard. It has an all-windows wall that faces south so the room receives natural sunlight throughout the day. It is a well-lit, airy place that is perfect for making art.

What is your strongest childhood memory?

It has to be raising a bear cub. My father was a forest officer, and he routinely went on forest inspection tours. Upon his return from one such tour, he brought back a bear cub that had been separated from her mother. The cub was very young and would have died if it was left in the jungle. We fed milk to the baby with a bottle and took care of it just like other pets that we had at that time. The cub stayed with us until she was big enough to be sent to the local zoo.



What superpower would you like to have and why?

If I could have a superpower, it would be to be able to control time and travel through it. That way, there would be no lack of time to do what I like to do!

What are your hobbies?

In my spare time, I like to go for a run, a hike, or take pictures.

What is your pet peeve about the art world?

Art marketing! Putting a business perspective on artmaking somehow drives or hampers the creative process, and I sometimes find it annoying.

What is the best piece of advice you've been given?

"Create when you are inspired.
Create even when you are not!"

Bhavna Misra (continued)

What is your dream creative project?

My dream project is to be in a safari and paint wildlife and animals from life. When I worked on Circle of Animals – a zodiac, cycle-based, animal-portrait series, I had a chance to explore deeper into the lives of various wild animals. I painted animals from pictures that I took during my trips to the parks, farms, shelters, and zoos. It was a great aid to my process, but it was nowhere close to being what it would be if I could observe the animals close up in the comfort zone of their natural habitat. One day, I hope to be able to fulfill this dream.

Do you make a living off of your art?

Yes, I am a full-time independent artist. I work for the County Library as an art contractor where I offer art presentations and workshops. I sell artwork directly and through online galleries, accept commissioned art, and take part in local art shows and fairs.

What's the most indispensable item in your studio/practice?

A sharpened pencil. It is the magic tool with which I begin my art journeys, and it still is the most essential tool in all of my adventures. It's an inexpensive, low-maintenance, effective, and versatile piece that is a must-have for any artist.

Describe a real-life experience that inspired you.

I used to make portrait sketches as a hobby. During the summer, when I was about nine or ten, we had a visit from an out-of-town house guest who came to meet with my grandfather who lived with us. The guest was a professional artist and an art teacher. He viewed my work and told my grandfather that he saw natural talent in me. His words stayed with me and gave me the confidence to one day pursue art as a profession.

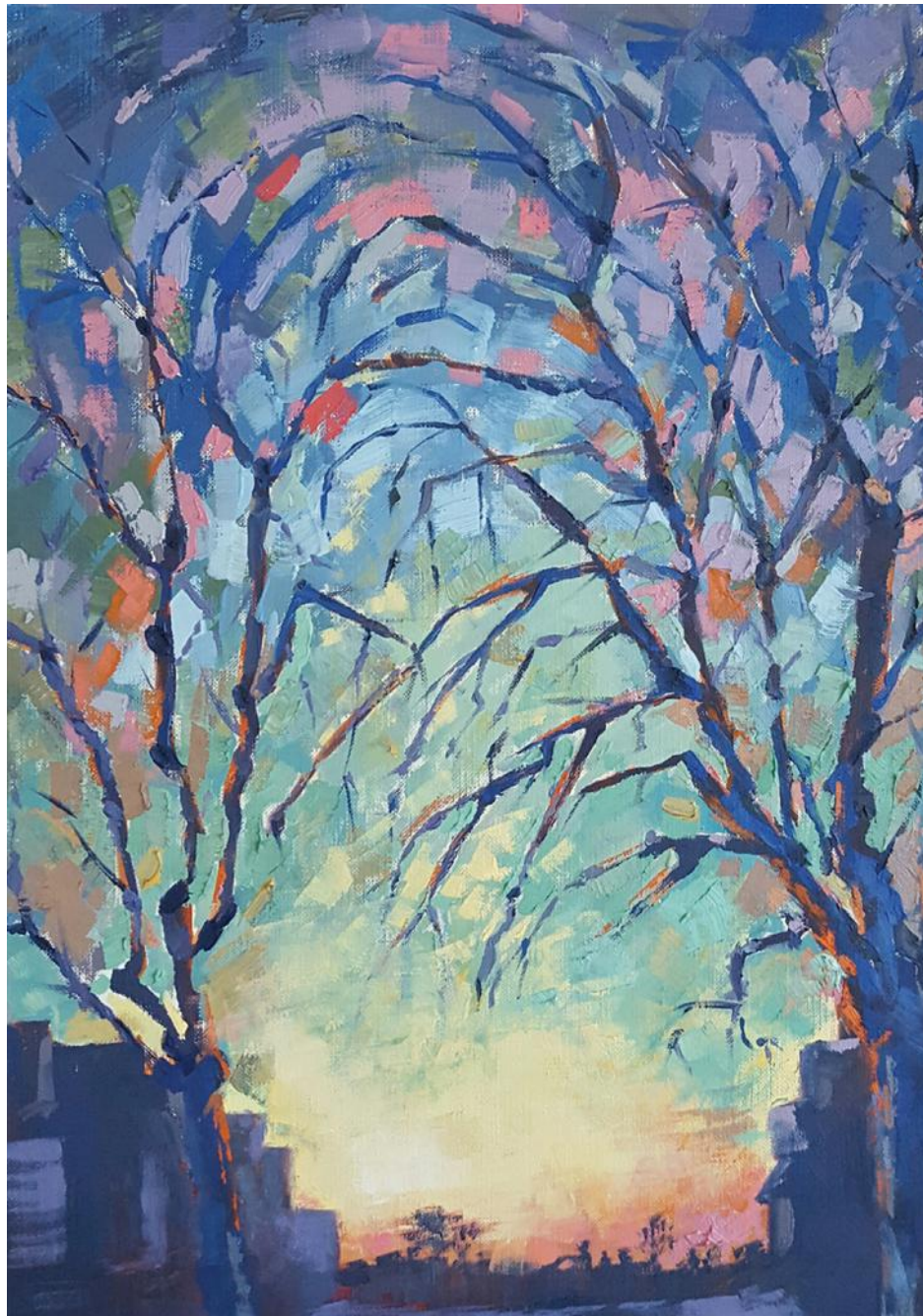
Why do you do what you do?

Because I have received the gift (the power) to translate ideas into illustration. Having received this gift, I find it my duty and purpose to share it with others. Doing so helps me learn every day and grow as a better person along the way.

By Bhavna Misra

Bhavna Misra is currently based in San Francisco, California.

Visit <https://bhavnamisra.com/>





Artist Interview

Liisa Ahlfors

Become acquainted with perhaps a few unknown dimensions – thoughts, ambitions, wisdoms, life changing moments – of this inspiring artist.

When it comes to your art, explain what you do.

I am a visual artist based in Tampere, Finland. My work is mainly inspired by the challenge of new environments. I am inspired by encounters with sites, situations, or objects, and I view each in its socio-political context; then I bind these stories together with simple shapes. I seek to separate the obvious things that attract my attention, disrupt the distinction between public and private space, and propose a temporal place where factual and sensitive realities coexist. Usually my works take a form of a durational installation made only for the space of its representation.

What project are you working on now?

Currently I am an Artist-in-Residence at SÍM, Reykjavík, Iceland. I am also working on a project with my friend and colleague, Anastasia Artemeva. We are collaborating on the shared cultural history of the Finnish and the Russians, and summer cottages and dachas. The project will be a participatory installation at Gallery Huuto in Helsinki, Finland, in the summer 2017.



Why do you do what you do?

I am challenged by each new environment. Rather than following a line of systematic production, I cultivate my ability to respond specifically to each new situation, space, or context. I see each new environment as a unique challenge, and I approach it accordingly because what may have worked in one environment does not always work in another. The on-going challenge of new environments keeps me going and doing what I do.

How has your practice changed over time?

I have studied at the Tampere University of Applied Sciences in Tampere, Finland, and graduated from the programme of Fine Arts in 2011. I also studied various practices from painting and drawing to photography. When I was in the Fine Arts programme, installation and environmental art were most appealing to me. I worked as an artist for a few years before entering my master studies at the Aalto University, School of Art, Design, and Architecture in Helsinki, Finland, in the programme of Environmental Art from which I graduated in 2015. There I reconsidered my relationship with the gallery space, and came to conclusion I am still "inside the white cube," even if my work is not. This conclusion took my work in a slightly different direction as I am now also working with the gallery spaces. Recently I made a large-scale, text-based installation, so using text is now what interests me, aside from a more material-based working method.

Describe a real-life experience that inspired you:

I used to dance a lot when I was younger. I even wanted to be a professional dancer one day. I have been thinking that this time-and-space-related practice I used to do for years, and from such a young age, is one of the reasons I turned to becoming an installation/environmental artist, why it is so important for me to do work that is related to one particular time and space/place, and why I value more of that particular experience rather than the object.



What superpower would you like to have and why?

Invisibility. I sometimes withdraw in social situations to observe. Observing would be much easier if I had the ability to become invisible!

What is your strongest childhood memory?

Long summer holidays of solitude and dwelling into literary worlds with my books.

Which place in the world do you find to be the most inspiring?

Any place can be inspiring. The time that I spend in a place develops my relationship with that place; through that relationship I become inspired and create my art works.

Liisa Ahlfors (continued)**What is your dream creative project?**

I would like to use a huge apartment house building (the façade or windows of it) as a site for my work.

What is your pet peeve about the art world?

For a long time the gallery and museum system was my pet peeve where the art world was concerned because I found it too limiting, too old-fashioned, and stiff. While this might still be true, I now consider "the white cube" as an interesting challenge and as something I have authorship to change.

Do you make a living off of your art?

Yes, at the moment I am funded by the Finnish Cultural Foundation.

What's the most indispensable item in your studio/practice?

The fact is... I do not have a studio. My works are always conceived on a site, so the environment, public space, or wherever the site exists is my studio. Creating ideas is more of a conceptual process for me, so I do my research at home. My work is divided into periods of research and other background work such as applying for funding and exhibitions, when I am mostly on my laptop writing. I am also into periods of more concrete artistic work which often takes place on the exhibition site. So my most indispensable items are my computer and my books since I would not do anything if I did not first do research on a topic.

What is the best piece of advice you've ever been given?

There is much art-related advice given to students from teachers and professors. To this day I still remember many of them and try to live up to them even after all of these years. I have always been encouraged by teachers and professors not to be limited to one technique, but to let the concept control the material and technique of each work. All my teachers and professors have also encouraged me to be the author of the system of practises of the art world as a whole, not solely an author of my own works.

What are your hobbies?

Reading, knitting, and second-hand shopping.

Creatively, where do you see yourself in the next five years?

I would like to be working on my PhD, perhaps at some university abroad. I would also like to be teaching instead of merely focusing on my own creative processes as I do now.

By Liisa Ahlfors

Liisa Ahlfors was born in 1985 in Finland and is currently based in Tampere, Finland. Visit <http://www.liisahlfors.com>





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