

Art Reveal magazine

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issue 59 / May 2021

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My creative process involves exploring a variety of media and techniques that test the boundaries of what defines contemporary art, including the blurring of the traditional lines dividing craft, commercial art, and fine art. My practice involves experimentation, refining and combining, and adding to my repertoire. I thrive on challenges and eliminating any limitations that threaten to confine my creative expression. As a passionate storyteller, my inspiration relies on the raw materials, experiences, and everyday observations that I collect.

Seeking to draw attention to sustainability and conservation issues, I reimagine overlooked and discarded items destined for landfills. Viewing objects from an aesthetic and narrative point-of-view, rather than solely for an intended functional purpose, I appropriate inherent meanings and rework them for entirely new interpretations. Sourcing these supplies often involves others and nurtures an environment of story-sharing with nostalgia and humor.

In order to circumvent language barriers and focus on the visual experience, I have created a language of graphic bars to represent words and punctuation. Viewers are able to fill-in-the-blanks with their individualized interpretations which interest me more than prescriptively spelling out the meaning.

As a recurring motif to humanize abstract matters, I stylize the female form in a minimalist way, choosing universal features to promote a sense of accessibility and relatability. Valuing diversity and inclusion, I address current topics, especially feminism, and more recently the natural world, with an intention to question standards and bring awareness to preconceptions.



It's your second time in our magazine, what changes since the 20th issue?

Thank you for the invitation and opportunity to reflect on the 4-1/2 years since the last interview! 2017 was the year of the most significant changes for me: beginning with my first two artist residencies, one in Zürich, Switzerland and the other in Mtskheta and Tbilisi, Georgia, and then my big move in December from Los Angeles to Hay Creek Ranch, 54,000-acres (218.53 square kilometers) in Central Oregon. The same remote ranch where I'd been traveling to yearly to create metal sculptures.

At the residency in a Zürich art gallery, I built a studio on one floor where I could be anonymously observed, photographed, and videoed, at work from windows at the street level and through the glass-block floor above me. Visitors also stopped by to talk to me as I worked. Previously, I'd preferred working in private so it was a new experience and challenge for me. Interacting while I worked created a more intimate environment that encouraged people not only to ask questions but some even came back to contribute objects for my mixed media paintings. The experience paved the way for my Georgian residency that took place outdoors in the Mtskheta town square where villagers intermingled with artists at work.

Ultimately, both residencies led to my heightened interest in installation and public art. That year I was awarded 2 public installations, one in Los Angeles (at Glendale's Adams Square Mini Park, "Venus of Adams Square") and the other in Watertown, Massachusetts ("Sunrise"). Since then, I've created temporary installations in Iceland ("Stories of Forgotten Fisherwomen"), Switzerland ("Parcoursvita"), and Oregon ("Oregon Sunshine" and "Wash Your Worries Away"). I've also been on Art in Public Places Rosters for the State of Oregon, Cities of Palo Alto, Sacramento, and San Antonio. The City of Seattle Office of Arts & Culture purchased my "Computer Memories" mixed media painting for their collection of portable works.

Living in LA there are artists from all over the world and the coveted venues only exhibit the work of top established artists. Although there are seemingly a great number of opportunities, I felt quite discouraged. The competition is tough and the cost of living is high. I had to leave LA to have more opportunities to exhibit my work, especially for solo shows. Since I moved to Oregon, I have had three solo exhibitions: two in 2018 ("Makeovers" and "Athletic... and

Princess"), and another in 2020 ("Sunrise, Sunshine" plus a duo ("A Crack in the Concrete Where A Wildflower Grows")) that's been postponed due to COVID-19. Also, the turnouts at the artist receptions are crowded and the uninhibited curiosity leads to interesting discussions. In LA it was more difficult to experience this type of intimacy.

Moreover, I was also lacking a feeling of community with so many people struggling to survive in LA and the consequent transient nature of the city. Living in a remote environment, I face other issues, such as the lack of exposure to diverse international cultures and artwork. As a result, I believe attending artist residencies around the world is essential for not feeling too isolated. In 2018 I attended one in the East Fjords of Iceland and another in Trélex, Switzerland. Stepping out of my environment has allowed for unexpected connections and new ways of thinking. For example, an Irish musician collaborated with me for my installation opening in Iceland by writing and performing a song. The artistic dialogue continues as I'm in contact with artists I've met at all of my residencies. I'm seeking out new collaborations, including my participation in the "Telephone" game with over 900 artists in 73 countries (<https://phonebook.gallery>).

Another transformative change occurred as a result of my move and residencies, I began exploring new motifs and themes. My artwork in LA was impacted by the body-centric culture and feminist topics were derived from relevant experiences. After living in a rural community, my focus has shifted to the natural world and environmental concerns. Wildflowers have replaced the street art in my surroundings. I've further simplified my stylized female form that has been my characteristic motif and subject matter, to the point of just two dots that now serve as my signature.

April 2020 - May 2021 has been an especially difficult time because of the postponed and canceled residencies and artist opportunities. Of course, there are Zoom webinars and meetings, online exhibitions and zines, Instagram, etc., but I truly prefer face-to-face encounters.

Are you glad you became a full-time artist?

My confidence as an artist has evolved over time allowing me to pursue opportunities rather than simply accepting invitations; speak publicly about my artwork, including sharing what had always seemed too personal; and dedicating myself to my creative practice even as it requires

increasing amounts of sacrifice. Now more than ever, I struggle with how to earn an income and the stress of not knowing where I'll be in the future. I moved to the ranch as a commitment to my art career but only as a temporary solution. On the ranch, I have a studio, office, huge shop, and 12-meter container for storage, luxuries for an artist. My neighbors are bald eagles, turkey vultures, and all sorts of other animals. Currently, I live between the ranch and the city of Bend, 88.5 kilometers away, in order to seek out more opportunities.

As a full-time artist, I feel I lead a meaningful life fueled by my overpowering urge to create artwork as a catalyst for change, even by the incremental steps of stirring thoughts and questioning standards and preconceptions. I believe the stress of not doing what I want is greater than

the sacrifices I've made; I'm so passionate about what I do that I feel satisfied with living with less. When I was younger I made the career decision to pursue a creative profession in the commercial arts because I never wanted to depend on my art for an income, believing that would kill my passion. Now my mantra is "quality of life" and I'm surprised at how much happier I am as an artist than I was avoiding undertaking the (huge) commitment.

What has been the most touching moment you've experienced as an artist?

There are so many that stand out! The genuine interest and curiosity of others elicited by my work have led to interesting and unexpected discussions. In Zürich, a clergyman and scholar stopped by multiple times while I was working and we had discussions about the female form.

People of diverse ages and backgrounds have contributed to my projects, enriching them with a story-sharing experience. After visiting my "Makeovers" solo exhibition that included mixed media paintings with bottle caps, a woman began collecting bottle caps for me. Her husband delivered them and asked what I used them for so I described my stylized female form and it opened up a conversation about feminism. He told me that he was probably "the most conservative, whitest male" I had ever talked to. We never would have had that discussion if he hadn't delivered those caps. It was very rewarding to communicate my





views in a non-threatening, non-combative way. The day after my artist talk and reception for the "Sunrise, Sunshine" solo show, visitors brought me homemade cookies and a book on wildflowers of the Columbia Gorge as a gift. In Iceland, a fisherman posted a piece from my installation "Stories of Forgotten Fisherwoman" on his door. Most recently, through the COVID-19 pandemic, my multi-generational family has been truly supportive of my art career.

Tell us more about your recent artworks.

Over the years I have fixated on the human form to personalize abstract topics, especially the female form and namely for feminist issues. By keeping that variable constant, I was able to experiment with a variety of media and techniques without being overwhelmed by options. But then I began questioning this limitation, as well as the



fact that my abstract, stylized, minimalist female form, honoring and exaggerating curves, was controversial (in the US) especially in the realm of public art. I was surprised to discover that feedback from rejections of a project after project.

Out of frustration, I painted wildflowers over my "Sunrise" installation to create "Oregon Sunshine" as

a non-controversial subject matter. Then I continued creating wildflowers using different techniques, such as embroidery, crocheting, and sewing plastic produce bags. I also plasma-cut and welded scrap metal into wildflower sculptures. Wildflowers are in a sense "trash" because they are considered weeds on a farm, in contrast, in LA I found inspiration from trash on the streets and dumpster diving. As I built a new body of work with the wildflower motif,

my desire to address current issues became unavoidable. I built a series of anti-gun violence works using found shotgun shells and metal riddled with bullet holes. I exhibited the mixed media series in Jefferson County, which as of May 12th, is a 2nd Amendment sanctuary to support the gun rights of citizens, a counter movement to gun control.

The selected body of mixed media works for Art Reveal Magazine's 59th Issue is from my "Trees of Life" series created during the 2020 COVID-19 lockdown. When stores shut down I had to improvise for supplies, such as a local coffee shop donated burlap coffee bean bags when I ran out of canvas. Seeking to draw attention to sustainability and conservation issues, I have been reimagining overlooked and discarded items destined for landfills for many years. The new situation is that others are increasingly part of my collecting process by contributing items.

"Branching Out" represents the beginning of an exploratory path to rethink the focus of my work. On New Year's Eve of 2018, while at the Trélex residency, I began painting a tree on patches of canvas. Trees have been a fascination of mine since childhood, both for climbing and for artwork. The first black and white photos I took with my dad's camera on a grade school field trip were only of trees. My earliest acrylic paintings were of leafless trees. So I reached back to my creative roots to reflect on my future direction. After finishing "Branching Out" in 2020, I continued to create 10 more mixed media tree-motif paintings. "Oakland" is a cut, stretched burlap bag with embroidery and a gessoed section painted with acrylics. The title comes from both the name inscribed on the bag and the fact that the first female Vice President of the US is from Oakland. "Kinship" and "Family" are two layers of stretched canvas connected. I cut out and sewed knitted string onto one and wove and sewed string onto the other. "Midnight Blues" is on stretched canvas with

painted and cut canvas glued and woven into it. I found the wire fencing discarded on the ranch.

The world has been such a dark place with political divides and the uncertainty of COVID-19 that I wanted to focus on imagery from the natural world. The bars are a language I've created to represent words and punctuation, similar to mockups used to sketch ideas in commercial art. They reflect my interest in viewers' interpretations rather than my spelling out the meaning.

What are you working on right now?

The constant through all of my pivotal changes is my curiosity in experimenting and adding to my repertoire. One of my new passions is my 3D printer and using biodegradable filaments. In times of growing awareness of the alarming negative human impact on our environment, I'm seeking ways to rethink and transform my creative practice. I'm deepening my focus on sustainability and circular economy topics, recently auditing courses on environmental ethics, the circular economy, and nanotechnology.

I'm highly motivated to participate in two 6-month artist residencies that I applied to recently. Both would involve creating a series of mixed media works, including a biophilic-designed installation, inspired by the vein architecture of leaves. One would be part of interdisciplinary collaboration at a California university and the other is at a nature and technology themed-residency in Switzerland. I proposed researching and experimenting with biodegradable materials to create temporary installations.

Recently, in a conversation about gender inequality at tech companies, a mother of two daughters told me "you have to address this for us." I realized that my life work does have meaning.

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