

Amy Jackson

Artist Statement

Most of the time we are bombarded with a linear world that dulls our sense of beauty and perception of the unknown. Our awareness of the abstract, magical, and rare is deprived of stimulation. We get lost in our routines of daily living. There is so much more to us than what we sense every day. I seek to stimulate by expressing beauty in surprising ways, like photographs of broken car windows, industrial machinery, evocative layers of abstract lines and forms in a painting, the nonlinear form of a poem, a collage of sounds from the industrial world combined with primal drums and the sounds of birds. The pieces come from this world but are like other worlds or landscapes that help refresh our sense of reality.

With my art I strive for a sense of surviving beauty and surprise in our world, even though much of it seems so fragmented and lost. My study of Buddhism is making my artistic vision clearer, as studies in energy and unfolding layers closer to the source of life and the One. We seek order and cope with chaos. I try to bring the chaos forward in addition to the simplicity, so that we can see that both can be renewing and refreshing, as a part of the balance we seek. I want to encourage others to perceive the world as more whole, even in its processes of transformation.

Painting

I began painting in 1993, without formal training, as a way to express myself, due to chronic facial and jaw pain. I began to see forms in the paint and enhanced them, until I realized that I was a painter. I showed my paintings to friends and they encouraged me to continue. I explore my emotions and experiences via painting, as well as imagined natural and abstract landscapes, of the soul and of the real world. Sometimes using layers and layers of watercolor paint, I sculpt the colors and shapes into textures and forms that make sense for the world of the piece. I will sometimes use blocks of color to symbolize how the world makes me feel. Earlier paintings include many studies of clouds, energies and colors in motion. More recent paintings are studies of tropical and Natural landscapes, and studies of energy inspired by the tropics and music.

My body of work ranges from sublime cloud and floral themes to intense struggles between darkness and light – to mysterious and frolicking tree forms – across the color spectrum from exquisitely subtle pastels to vibrant and exotic earth tones. When I paint, it is an emotional experience and I get lost in the world of the painting. My goals as a painter include: to continue to more deeply explore emotional, mystical and natural realms with watercolor, acrylic and multimedia found objects.

Photography

A random drive by an industrial machine shop in 1993 sparked a fascination with all things rusty. Since then, I have followed my intuition and gotten closer to subjects that fascinate me visually, old buildings with cracking and peeling paint, industrial materials, broken glass, flowers, architecture, natural landscapes, vintage cars – getting closer and closer with a set of macro lenses, and beginning to explore a wider viewpoint with a new wide angle lens in 2005, changing over

to digital photography in 2009. I have learned to edit myself before I take a shot, knowing what will translate to a good photo after the fact. I get lost in the subject matter when taking photos, completely following my instincts to know where to move and when to click the shutter, for an exhilarating experience. I love the immediacy and clarity of the photographic medium, compared to the other media in which I work.

My photographs range from heartwarming and inspiring to vibrant and otherworldly, dreamlike abstracts – with a color palette from the countryside to the city -- to exciting bold metallics and teals. My goals for photography are to go on planned photo shoots around the world, as well as continuing to explore the unexpected beauty and textures closer to home.

Digital Art

I am able to create watery and dreamy landscapes, from ectoplasm and energy waves, to the reflection of the moon on water, to stained glass crystal balls. My goals are to create a new series of digital pieces and to experiment with combining my painting and photography with new digital textures.

Writing

I enjoyed studying English and Spanish poetry and literature in college, for my degree in Spanish in 1987, and am deeply inspired by Spanish and Latin American authors, such as Juan Rulfo, Pablo Neruda and Julio Cortazar. I particularly admire the “magic realism” movement in Latin American literature, for its ability to transform fiction into a more poetic medium, through the use of symbolism and inexplicable twists in plot. In 2000, I began collecting words on my travels educating on children’s healthcare in Tennessee, also jotting down snippets of poems and wordplay in French, Spanish and English. Two long poems came of this exercise, “Memiel” and “Summer Thicket,” both of which have now been set to music. My poetry can be very free form and playful and collagelike, and can often tell stories of love and emotional healing. I began writing a series of short stories in 2003, beginning with one about a young serviceman in Viet Nam who is mysteriously able to connect with his wife and son after his unfortunate death. I am working on several longer stories in screenplay format, and would one day like to explore creating films based on them.

I communicate a sense of mysticism and mystery in my writing, as well as heartwarming characters who are grounded in reality, but experience unusual circumstances which cannot be explained. Writing is a very emotional experience for me, because I get so close to the storyline, to the characters, that I forget my own reality while I am writing. My goals for writing include continuing to explore poetic wordplay in multiple languages, and to complete more short stories and screenplays.

Music

My musical inspirations began at a very early age, when my family said I used to dance to music on television in the sixties. I remember hearing jazz masters on public television at that time, from Louis Armstrong to Ray Charles. I am very eclectic in my musical inspirations: from tribal recordings, juju and modern African music, to classic rock, new age, Blues and swing artists, to jazz. I adore music and the way it makes me feel. When I was a child I realized how someone

like Mahalia Jackson could change my life with the way she expressed herself soulfully, spiritually and with determination to believe in a greater good. Other bands from the sixties like The Doors helped me realize a sense of primal sensuality.

I took piano lessons for 5 years before college, and sang in high school and church vocal groups. In college, I was a member of Joyful Noise, an integrated gospel group. In Washington, DC in 1993, I took a class from Sweet Honey in the Rock. From 2001-2003, as part of three tribute cd projects for Mike Doughty, former front man for Soul Coughing, I covered three of his songs, my first solo vocal recordings, along with my husband Jason and several musician friends. In 2002, Jason and I collaborated with composer Karl Straub to create a complex soundtrack for my poem, "Memiel", an experimental love poem mixing wordplay in French, Spanish and English. When I heard the PBS Blues series in 2003, I resonated deeply with the Blues I heard, as if I were transported back to my childhood, and Jason and I began work on a project to produce a Blues cd of half originals and half covers of classic and modern Blues songs. In 2005, I wrote the first song for this project, "Flood Plain," based on my poem of the same name, which is a mix of Blues and Gospel, about the determination of humankind to overcome repeated adversity, by affirming blessings and moving on.

My voice has a range from soft to sultry, from playful to mysterious. I find singing to be extremely cathartic and love the sense of becoming one with the music. When writing my first song, I found it to be the most emotional of all the media in which I work, coming perhaps from the deepest part of my being. My goals for music are to complete the Blues project and to continue to explore my vocal style and range by covering artists I love, such as Chris Whitley, Patti Griffin, Sam Phillips and others, and to write songs in other genres, based on existing and new poems.