

Your first memory of painting...

I don't have any clear memories of my first experience with a paintbrush, but I'm sure it was the standard house with sun and garden artwork in kindergarten! My earliest memories were more to do with dance and theatre, as that was my main exposure to the arts until my teenage years. But I do remember always making and creating however I could; from whatever scraps of wood and nails I found in the backyard, to stitching together materials, writing stories, drawing, etc...

How did you decide to become a painter?

It was a very long and twisted path I took to get here. The art room was always where the magic was felt during school, but I became quite frozen with choice when it came to choosing a path after. I knew it was something creative but didn't know what exactly, so after a couple of false starts I finally landed on photography. I also took painting classes and this was always my favourite part of the week, but I never seriously considered this as an option. I was never given the impression that it was possible to earn a living from art, and growing up in a working class family where Mum went without to ensure I had a good education, I had a strong drive to earn a solid income for myself.

And so I jumped straight into working life and took many sideways steps trying to find a job that made me happy; from marketing in an art museum, to producing commercial photography, to overseeing digital user experiences, to teaching... After awhile I always felt a bit miserable that I couldn't flex my creative muscle as I wanted, and having to deal with the politics of people was really draining. Eventually I discovered weaving textiles as a way to channel my creativity and manage anxiety levels, and ended up picking up a brush to help me in the design stage of this. But once I did, I immediately put the loom aside and kept going with the brush. For me the joy is all about creating, rather than the act of painting as such... But I've found that this is the best way to execute my ideas – and keep up with them.

Did any artist particularly inspire you?

When I was first discovering art, my inspiration was limited to whatever we were focusing on in class, or what I could find at the library – so I'm sure it would be a different story today! But I really loved the work of René Magritte, Roy Lichtenstein, Brett Whiteley, and not so much the art, but the story of Frida Kahlo. I think she was the only female I'd come across in the books!

Do you need to understand to love a painting?

Definitely not. My favourite works are those that I simply feel... However, understanding more about a work or an artist definitely helps me appreciate a work more.

Is there a work for which you said to yourself “This is exactly what I wanted to do”?

Mmmm... When I look at a lot of Jenny Watson's works, I think to myself 'I wish I'd done that'. I love the personal, autobiographical elements and unashamedly girlish nature of them.

The famous work that you don't like...

Nothing iconic jumps out, but I detest any kind of art that involves animal cruelty. I find Damien Hirst's ethics questionable.

What is essential for your creation?

Time alone. Even just for 5 minutes. I can only really generate new concepts when I have time for deep thinking.

What is your relationship to recognition?

Annoyingly I'm someone who frequently self-doubts, so sometimes a bit of recognition or validation can give me the confidence I need to continue with an idea or take the next step.

If tomorrow you could no longer be a painter, what would you do?

I might turn to writing or sculpture. I think I would always find other ways to create.

Your artistic dream...

Knowing how to physically create anything I could dream up – and have the budget to do it – so I could create a little universe for people to step into and be fully immersed. Basically an artist version of Walt Disney ;)