“Decoration in The Modern World”

By
Angelina N. Reale

Purchase College
State University of New York

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Over the course of my college career, my creative practice has evolved into a distinct language. In recent years, I have begun to establish a set of criteria for the various qualities my work should embody in order for me to view it as successful.

Art, for me, is a form of self-expression and a way for myself to deal with the difficult aspects of life. Throughout my life, I have dabbled in all aspects of the arts: painting, drawing, crafting, singing, and playing instruments, etc. Being raised by my mom, a pianist and professional singer with a love for classical music, I was introduced to artists like the

Impressionists, Broadway music, and Beethoven. I developed my love for a more traditional side of art through high school up until college.

Transitioning into a college that focused on contemporary art was like a reality shock. I wasn't used to this type of art, and I wasn't sure I liked it. However, I grew to appreciate it and my own work began to change throughout the process. My work is very process-driven, sometimes even automatic. I don't assign my work grand concepts or backstories. I create art to create it, to have an outlet, to express my emotions through the brush strokes and the colors. I don't plan a work with a specific palette and layout. I feel the urge to make something, and immediately need to see it come to fruition. When beginning a piece, I rarely second-guess myself and tend to rely on my intuition. Towards to middle of my process, I often begin to edit my initial decisions by small touch ups, and minor marks that don't seem as if they will affect the overall outcome, but sometimes the smallest change or mistake can spark an idea in my mind. Working on my own, I make art to experience the personal psychological benefits without much concern for how it will be perceived by the public. I experiment with different styles and designs based on how I'm feeling or where I am in life. I probably will never have a set "style" or a specific way of painting; I am addicted to experimentation.

Most if my work is based on natural and organic references. Plants and animals, anything that naturally occurs within the universe. Growing up I lived in a small ranch house surrounded by trees, wild animals, and a town that can literally be described as "the middle of nowhere". This aboracious and critter abundant area, was home to my traditional Catholic family, which resulted in a pretty uneventful childhood, masked by my active imagination. The worlds I created in my mind stuck with me as I grew up. Even now I create such worlds in my paintings. I use these as an outlet to escape into just as readers escape into the worlds of books. I appreciate my upbringing, because it gave me a strong sense of identity and the ability become an independent person.

Painting is therapeutic for me; I often use painting and drawing to divert my thoughts onto a page or canvas. When I can't focus or when I can't seem to get out of a bad mind set, I come to my studio and pour my feelings into my work. Other than needing it as an outlet, I have

to be in the mood to paint, and feel inspired. When the urge to paint comes along, I have to find a paint brush right away before I lose the ambition. When I am without a studio space, like say when I am home at my parents, I work differently. I work slower and longer, majorly on large works. Working at home my paintings are even smaller in scale than I want them to be. At school I have enough space to express myself with large scale works that can be up to 10 feet long. Without the ability to work large, be messy, and experiment, my small paintings do not fulfill my satisfaction, and aren't nearly to my best ability.

Throughout my college career, people have told me that my work is very "decorative", and I could never tell if they meant that as a good thing or bad thing. Most of the time it didn't come across as "Your work is decorative! I love it!" it was more along the lines of "Your work is kind of decorative…why is that?" Why is decoration and pretty things frowned upon in the art community? Why is it when I paint that way it's not considered real art? Even the word "pretty" isn't a term used in critiques to describe something. It is as if people are afraid of pretty things or afraid to have their work described as such. Standard definitions about the decorative arts are limited to arts and crafts whose object is the design and manufacture of objects that are both beautiful and functional, mainly involving interior design. Fine Art is considered a visual object with no purpose except to be admired and contemplated as an aesthetic object. Decorative Art is known to be visual and aesthetically pleasing, but serves as a useful function like a piece of furniture, tableware, textiles, and wallpaper. Those artists who work within the Decorative Art world, are still artists, but are considered craftsman/women. They are focused in their craft but need to produce functional works of art. Those that fit within the category of decorative art include: woodworking, metalwork, textiles, and ceramics. Anything that serves a purpose in the home it seems, is placed in the category of decoration. Things like candlesticks, furniture, carpets, pottery, etc, are all things you can find within the home. When thinking back, throughout history anything dealing with the home is under the influence of the women. A wife is to take care of the inside of the house, make it suitable for company, and to decorate it. Progressing forward, all these aspects dealing with the interior of the home became related to decorative art. Even now, when searching decorative art, you get a characterization of arts & crafts.

A big movement that affected my work, the Pattern and Decoration art movement. Started in the mid 1970s and can also be known as The New Decorativeness. It was influenced by many outside sources of fine art, but was mainly about blurring the lines between art and design. The artists apart of this movement mimicked patterns from wallpapers and fabrics. Many other cultures influenced them, with geometric patterns in Islamic tile, and North African florals. Before I even knew about the Pattern and Decoration movement, I found myself doing similar things as these artists. I was looking at Islamic textile and windows, and fabrics in Africa, as well as other places.

William Morris was a big influence on my work in my third year in college. He was introduced to me when my work began to progress into its decorative state. Morris is known for his textile designs; pattern based, and floral wallpapers. He lived in the 1800s, and was a textile designer, poet, novelist, translator, and socialist activist associated with the British Arts and Crafts Movement. This movement, also known as the Arts and Crafts Movement, was an English aesthetic movement. It was created by Morris and others that were committed to evoking the spirit and quality of medieval craftsmanship. Since the Industrial Revolution, the arts, specifically decorative arts, lacked originality. So Morris and the group of interior decorators and manufacturers created the movement to bring back craftsmanship and handcrafted art.

Journeying through college and the various teachings of each professor, I found more artists I related to; in my work, and personally. The artist that inspired me to begin creating and studying art was Vincent van Gogh. I have loved his work and his story ever since my high school art teacher taught us about Van Gogh. I was fascinated by his short brushstrokes and textured detail. I have developed a similar way of painting; working with quick small brushstrokes, thick impasto paint, and bright colors. texture can create its own pattern; a short stroke on the canvas in one direction, and another in the opposite direction, creating a pattern across the picture plane. Letting nature and the world speak for itself, bright greens, light reflections on water and plants, and shadows of trees on the grass, I find solace in being able to discover, redirect, and control patterns found within nature.

I can be very spontaneous when painting. If I am starting a new painting, I will mix my gesso with a color and use that as a background. Then my process is very "trial and error" where I will paint whatever comes to mind, and if I change my mind later, I will just paint over it. This is one of the reasons I paint thin, because by the end when I am finished there are at least 4-6 layers of paint on the canvas. I do enjoy painting thick, but for the sake of saving paint, money, and time I work thin until I feel my painting has reached its potential. I like to capture the texture of the canvas underneath, so sometimes I won't sand the gesso, or I will use only 1-2 layers instead of the alternative 3-5 layers. I tend to lean towards making my gesso base with a warm red, pink or orange, because many of my recent works involve blues and greens. Very cool colors within my paintings, creating an overall feeling of gloom and dreariness. These works have an environment of a damp, wet forest or wetland. The light in such works are dark and dramatic. Pieces of the warm gesso base peek through in some areas and create a glowing effect.

Ever since high school though, my work has, as I see it, drastically changed. Looking back at many of my early paintings and sketch books, my skill set, and imagery of what I paint has transformed. Now the environment in many of my works have an eerie aspect to them, even if some of the colors are brighter than most. The overall theme/aspect to my paintings is one that depicts plants and nature, but most recently in darker tones. Something that creates a feeling that this place I created is cold, and damp, full of despair.

This dreary, dramatic piece, titled "The Damp Wood" is one of my most rece
works. I have been experimenting with dark blues and greens, mixing black a
white within shadow and light to express the theatrical lighting. Ideas of theat
backdrops, dark woodlands, and creepy animation were in the back of my mi
when painting this piece.

Only recently was the connection between me using my work as my own form of therapy to my want to further my studies into Art Therapy. Art therapy was the first thing on my mind going into college. Something I had real interest in doing after school. I've toggled between art therapy and teaching throughout my college career. Although I still consider teaching, art therapy is my final goal. Each career needs a Masters degree, and at this point in my life, I'm not sure I'm ready for that. I want to research more into the idea of art therapy; how the motions, and the colors of painting have an effect on the brain. Similar to the ideas of the fidget spinner and fidget cube, the motions of the brush create a soothing motion with my arm. Especially when working large scale and the sweep of the paint can cross from one end to another.

This piece, Untitled, is my largest painting I have ever done. At least o
average the scale is 8ft by 9ft, this work was my favorite to work on. T
paint the long tree trunks and branches, it took my whole body to stretc
my arm across the canvas. Starting at the bottom of the canvas, wigglin
the brush up and across the surface all the way to the top where at that
point I had to grab a chair to stand on. The fluid motions of a branch, a
the feeling of the thick paint on my brush, and slapping it on the sandec
gesso holds such satisfaction.

When painting a new work, I think of what the viewer will see, what they will get from it. Even if the viewer is only me, I want to feel the atmosphere. I find in my smaller works, that it is easier to translate the mood and atmosphere. When a work is big, I focus more on the brush stokes, long arm swings, and little detail.

You could say I'm trying to discover myself in my art. I want to find who I am as an artist through my works. Letting my paintings tell me what king of an artist I am. Dig deeper into my subconscious and discover what it is I want to do, and what I want to paint. I ask myself a lot when painting "Why do I like this?" "What is it I'm trying to tell myself?" It takes a secondary viewer to make connections for me. The urge to paint as my own therapy and coping method, related to my wish to go into the Art Therapy world. This took me 4 years of my college career to realized once someone else pointed it out to me.

"Art is a way of survival" – Yoko Ono

Biography

Fine Art vs. Decorative Arts, Susan Kendzulak, 2018, The Balance Careers, { https://www.thebalancecareers.com/fine-art-or-decorative-1295903}

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