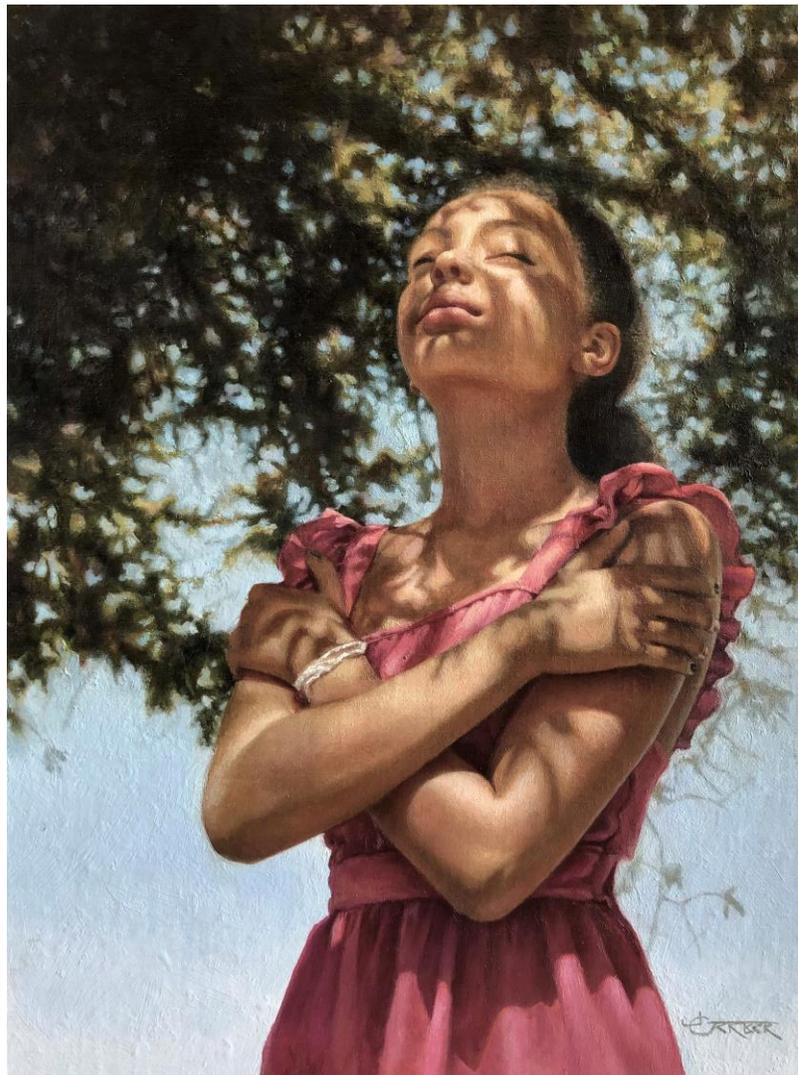


AGE OF INNOCENCE



AGE OF INNOCENCE

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by

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ABSTRACT

Age of Innocence celebrates a special time of life. In my oil paintings, I explore the quiet moments in childhood. As a child, I remember the freedom I felt—the freedom to play and dream. Children have an incredible ability to forgive completely and love endlessly. They possess the gift of innocence that can either be protected or taken away. Remembering the apprehension young girls experience as they face challenges approaching adolescence, I use nature as a place of solace, giving the girls a place to escape and feel protected. For those whose innocence was ripped from them and their childhood taken away, I weep for the gift they have lost. Like a bird being locked in a cage and crying out for help, the song they sing can be misunderstood. It is my hope that someone will notice and set them free.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this to my husband and children who endlessly support me in all that I do. Without you, none of this would be possible. You continue to be my greatest teachers, reminding me to love unconditionally and live with a purpose.

EPIGRAPH***Caged Bird***

*The free bird leaps
on the back of the wind
and floats downstream
till the current ends
and dips his wings
in the orange sun rays
and dares to claim the sky.*

*But a bird that stalks
down his narrow cage
can seldom see through
his bars of rage
his wings are clipped and
his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing.*

*The caged bird sings
with fearful trill
of the things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.*

*The free bird thinks of another breeze
and the trade winds soft through the sighing trees
and the fat worms waiting on a dawn-bright lawn
and he names the sky his own*

*But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams
his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream
his wings are clipped and his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing.*

*The caged bird sings
with a fearful trill
of things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.*

- Maya Angelou

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AGE OF INNOCENCE

DESCRIPTION

I have finally figured out how to speak. As a child, I looked at the mountains and watched with wonder. I saw the trails as an obstacle course waiting to be conquered and considered the insects, creatures and wildlife as friends. The trees that sheltered me were a canopy of protection. Then I slowly learned of dangers that lurked around the corner like predators, bullies, and so-called friends. As my childhood was coming to an end and my sense of adventure diminishing, I struggled to figure out what was happening to me and the safe world I had known. I needed to communicate this without knowing how.

I discovered my missing voice through my painting. This discovery happened over time and continues to mature as I develop as an artist. I prefer spending my day painting while lost in thought. As the painting stares back at me, there is a mutual understanding of what I am trying to say. I consider painting as a form of communication. As a figurative realist painter, I portray contemporary life for viewers to reflect on. Painting has become my preferred language.

Art is an avenue to escape into my thoughts without distraction. That experience is similar to the mesmerizing waves of the ocean on what I refer to as the “perfect day.” On this day, I stood on the beach at the Oregon Coast listening to the waves crashing, my feet covered by the cold ocean water. I could hear the seagulls cry as the wind blew, tossing my hair in all directions. I watched my family nearby digging in the sand for a unique seashell. Breathing in the fresh coastal air, I enjoyed a place of renewal. This day was repeated several times while living in the Pacific Northwest. I find it a mystery how a place with abundant life

and activity is where I feel complete solitude and peace. I try to portray these feelings in my paintings.

Creativity and imagination started when I was young. I wished to learn the fundamentals of art. As an adult my desire intensified, yet I was convinced the opportunity of finishing my college degree had passed. A thought came to my mind, “Don’t let age deter you from anything.” This resonated with me. I felt encouraged to not let others decide what I am capable of accomplishing. Despite my trepidation, I returned to college earning a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at Dixie State University. Portraiture and figurative art became a focus after taking classes from my professor and mentor, Del Parson. He helped me develop a keen eye, enabling me to implement small subtleties in my paintings and left me wanting to learn more.

I had the incredible opportunity during my undergraduate program to do a study abroad in Rome. I was enthralled by the lifelike sculptures of the figure that I saw there. The architecture and other mediums of art from tapestry to paintings were fascinating. I am inspired by Classical art and the revival of it during the 18th-19th centuries—coined as Neoclassicism. During this Age of Enlightenment, European art students made the Grand Tour and their rediscovery of Greco-Roman ideals was spread throughout Europe. The artists’ high level of awareness of the human body and their skill allows these works to communicate to their audience. Like the artwork I viewed in Rome, my art can communicate a message to others through my personal connection with the subject matter.

My experiences with art in Rome led me to Laguna College of Art and Design for a Master of Fine Arts degree. My current subject matter centers on young girls as they mature through adolescence. Children obviously own the gift they possess. It cannot be bought,

earned or reclaimed. This gift is innocence and only belongs to them. For some, it passes out of reach quickly. For others, a light slowly dims until gone. I believe a child's innocence is a treasure worth protecting. I am drawn to this theme because of the enjoyment I experienced as a child. Today I still yearn for the security I felt during this time. I am a child at heart, and each painting I make allows me to climb into this ephemeral innocent period for a time.

Emphasizing the importance of preserving children's innocence, my paintings focus on changes in life, giving the viewer an opportunity to stop time and remember what was lost as they transitioned from childhood. To some it may be a memory of purity; for others it could be understood as the start of autonomy. I represent children in their naive state, encouraging others to see the seriousness of defending a crucial time in life. My representational paintings portray the subject organically, leaving the interpretation open to the viewer, based on their own experiences. As I paint girls in a natural environment, I find myself wishing for the days of innocent oblivion. My daughter is a source of inspiration for my work. Whenever I look at a photograph of her as a child taken on a day at the beach, I am reminded of her playful and carefree spirit and my own reality as a child.

My paintings open the opportunity for dialogue about the issues surrounding human trafficking. I have taken the opportunity to interview a survivor of sexual abuse and trafficking. As a child, she felt the responsibility to protect her younger sister. In doing so, she received the abuse, so her sister did not have to suffer. Her capacity to love is beyond what most people can understand. The experience left me weeping for a woman who was abused more than twenty years ago. As she bravely talks about what she endured, it not only brings attention to these issues, but it allows her to begin to heal and become whole again. While the events that some girls endure are of great concern to me, in this body of work my

focus is on the positive or contemplative moments of childhood. Perhaps it shows a glimpse of how it could be and brings hope to those providing for the life of a child.

My still life painting titled, *I Wished to Slow Time* (2019), signifies a fleeting childhood and the inability to gain control over the loss of innocence that comes with age (Fig. 1). I incorporated items of special significance to me. I believe just as a seashell uniquely holds a beauty of



Fig. 1. Jody Gerber, *I Wished to Slow Time*, 2019, Oil on ACM, 18 in. x 24 in.

its own, so does each person. For me, the transition to adolescence was challenging. I see a seashell as a gift from the ocean that represents a girl going through the process of change. Another important element I added is a dandelion spreading its seed, conveying hope as each young girl fights through the challenges of life. Since the flowers do not last forever, they slowly become dry, and the vigorous seeds get carried away. I included a vase, remaining solid, as if holding tightly to this last moment. The white ribbon implies the purity and innocence children hold. The ribbon separates the transition into adolescence and once crossed over, there is no going back. Phthalo blue oil paint applied using a palette knife represents the ocean as it cleanses with each wave of the incoming tide. This builds visual interest and aids in the appearance of the hard, stone table. I used delicate brushwork

bringing detail to the vase and magnifying the realistic subtle curves of the seashell. I lightly applied the seeds of the plant to make their flight believable.

My paintings are personal to me, yet they relate to universal experiences. I find inspiration from Maya Angelou's poem entitled *Caged Bird* in my epigraph. She compares the free bird's life with that of a caged bird. She is referencing racism, yet I imagine the free bird as a child, protected and loved, while enjoying the freedom of a carefree life. I see the caged bird as the girl who is abused, ignored, unloved, depressed or just caught up in the problems she faces. She feels trapped and sings out. Others see her singing and think she is okay. She is actually singing songs of sorrow and pain as she cries out for help. She may feel tainted and unclean, adding to her hopelessness and fear. The message I emphasize is the innocence of childhood may be lost, but the caged bird is set free.



Fig. 2. Jody Gerber, *Passage*, 2019, Oil on ACM, 20 in. x 16 in.

My painting *Passage* (2019) emphasizes that any permanence one hopes for is stolen away by the passage of time (Fig. 2). As a child, I spent a significant amount of time playing in the desert. The texture of the warm sand against my skin gave me a sense of comfort. Oblivious of the challenges ahead, I enjoyed these carefree moments. In this painting everything stops for a child to play, as if time is hers to control. Blissfully unaware

of her surroundings, she allows the sand to pass through her fingers like the never-ending flow of a waterfall.

I placed the figure in a setting of personal familiarity. Finding tranquility in the subtle movements of nature, I often played alone outside. When I look at this painting, I can feel the dryness in my mouth, as if inhaling the warm desert air. The clouds guard the sun, not letting it get too close. The color palette I chose reflects the way I remember my childhood. The soft cerulean blue is reminiscent of a gentle breeze touching my face. The warm yellow and orange hues radiate heat raising from the ground. I use playful brushwork which is indicative of her spirit. The seemingly barren landscape emphasizes the girl's detachment from the surrounding world. The road that leads into the distance is present but not of any concern for the young girl.

As an adult I connect with this setting. I am familiar with heartache, disappointment, sadness and pain. I imagine myself picking up a handful of sand. As I let it fall to the ground, I am checking to see where it settles. Does the sand land where I expect it to, or does the wind carry it away as a warning of the upheavals that lie ahead?

Sand fiercely scatters when the wind blows in the desert. Once everything settles again, the landscape appears to remain untouched. When looking into the eyes of a young girl, one cannot know where she has walked or where the road may take her. For me, time was nonexistent as a child. Just as the desert appears to stand still, so did my world.

The painting *Coreopsis* (2020) portrays a young girl unsure of what is ahead (Fig. 3). This painting shows a girl's vulnerability at the brink of adolescence. I remember the insecurities I felt at this age, the effects of peer pressure and the complications with depression. My inability to reach out to others for help only deepened problems with my

self-esteem. In constructing this painting, I placed the figure in a fetal position, protecting herself from the unseen trials ahead. Her uncertainty is manifested in her self-embrace. A girl needs to be strong as she blooms into the next phase of life—adolescence.

The robust coreopsis flower withstands the unknown, just as a girl bravely pushes forward into new territory. The composition helps circle the eyes of the viewer around the painting and emphasizes any uncertainty the portrayed girl may feel. The white flowers are placed on her dress in a somewhat whimsical manner, and the figure is painted with delicate brushwork.



Fig. 3. Jody Gerber, *Coreopsis*, 2020, Oil on Canvas, 20 in. x 16 in.

The inspiration for *Illusion* (2021) came as I was spending time in nature contemplating this past challenging year (Fig. 4). As dappled light shone down through the leaves of a tree, I saw how the interaction of light and dark revealed the form. I asked myself, “How do others see me?” *Illusion* is about stepping into the light and coming into view. Are we trapped in the illusion of worthlessness? Making ourselves vulnerable reminds us of the importance of accepting our imperfections. Are we conscious of our potential? Sometimes we may need to give ourselves permission to feel alive. I also question why the girl is hesitant. She is in plain sight, but is she completely invisible to others? Is she



Fig. 4. Jody Gerber, *Illusion*, 2021, Oil on linen, 24 in. x 18 in.

screaming inside for help, yet no one hears? *Illusion* is a reminder to be aware of the possible turmoil people are going through.

Attempting to make sense of the world around me, I use nature in my paintings to express the common bond among all humans. I agree with the biophilia hypothesis which claims that humans are genetically predisposed to be attracted to nature. As we seek these connections to living things, we kindle nurturing relationships. This tendency helps

increase our love of life and the desire to preserve it (Kellert and Wilson pp. 42-72). I find this true and as a child I felt comfort and protection in nature. In my paintings, I portray the girls in a raw and uninhibited scene, receiving a sense of security from direct contact with nature. My personal experiences as a child and spending time outdoors are constant influences on my artwork. Art helps me make sense of my feelings, both as a child and now as an adult. As children are just embarking on their life journey, they leave behind their innocence. Adults are drawn to images of children as a reminder to pause and look back on what they no longer possess. I create paintings to communicate the importance of protecting the special gift children hold.

RESEARCH

My attraction to nature during childhood was apparent. Observing it was not enough. Enthralled by the colors, smells, tastes, sounds and textures, I spent my happiest days in the warm desert sun playing in the sand or finding a mud puddle. On more than one occasion as a child, I wrote a note to my family, packed a suitcase with peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and headed out the door for an adventure. Oftentimes, I only went a few hundred yards and ended up in my backyard under a large tree, enjoying the getaway. These first memories of taking time to enjoy nature shaped my deep appreciation for it. Perhaps this is the reason I am drawn to representational art and Realism that so vividly captures the natural world.

Representational art is explained as art with a clearly identifiable representation of something that already exists, with varying levels of abstraction. Representational artists address their audience by using recognizable subjects and landscape. They use art to speak to the viewer and use “metaphorical terms such as language to describe their subject matter and their artwork’s effect on potential viewers” (Sullivan p. 517). The goal is to portray some aspects of reality. The Realism movement of the 19th century greatly influenced my work. Realism gives a “truthful, objective and impartial representation of the real world, based on meticulous observation of contemporary life” (Nochlin p. 13). This movement came about in France and Great Britain during the 19th century before becoming popular in the United States. Realism was described as a form of fine art that

must communicate in a similar way to spoken and written languages which have the uniquely human purpose of describing the world in which we live, and how we feel about every aspect of life and living. As a language it is like all of the hundreds of the

spoken and written languages, that are capable of expressing the enormous limitless scope of human thoughts, ideas, beliefs, values and especially our feelings, passions, dreams, and fantasies; all the varied and infinite stories of humanity. (Ross)

I use the philosophy of Realism described by Fred Ross in approaching the subject matter of my artwork.

Realism revolutionized painting by merging art and life during the mid-19th century. Bringing everyday life onto their canvas, painters connected with a broader range of people. Attempting to portray what is real, artists avoided appearing artificial by depicting the truth of people, the accuracy of their emotions and the



Fig. 5. Jules Bastien-Lepage, *October*, 1878, Oil on canvas, 180.7 cm. × 196 cm., National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

situations they may be placed in, without beautifying things as the artists of Romanticism did. For example, a painting by French artist Jules Bastien-Lepage titled *October* (1878) depicts rural life as the artist understood it (Fig. 5). The painting depicts peasants during the autumn potato harvest shown hard at work, while the painter continues to honor their dignity (National Gallery of Victoria). Like Bastien-Lepage, I make contemporary interpretations of my subjects and settings.

One of the main figures of Realism was Gustave Courbet. Courbet was a painter of landscapes, figures, seascapes and still lifes. His resistance to conformity intrigued his fellow

painters. He profoundly influenced the next generation of artists that followed (The Met, *Gustave Courbe*). He devoted a series of paintings to women in their natural settings. They were exhibited at the Salon of 1852, yet they were reviled by critics for things such as the women's common features compared to the idealized subjects of Romanticism (The Met, *Young Ladies of the Village*). I admire the Realists' belief "that the only valid subject for the contemporary artist was the contemporary world" (Nochlin 28). Insisting contemporary life was the only valuable thing to paint, Courbet stated, "...the art of painting can only consist of the representation of objects which are visible and tangible for the artist" (qtd. in Nochlin 25).

During a trip to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, I learned this museum had the world's largest exhibition of John Singer Sargent's paintings. He is recognized for his outstanding portraiture and his adeptness portraying figures and landscapes. The Boston MFA also displays his murals, watercolors, drawings and sculptures. As I entered a room filled with Sargent's paintings, I was captivated by his figurative work and my appreciation grew as I spent time viewing every inch of the canvas. His ability to make paintings interesting at a distance, yet equally as captivating at a closer look demonstrates his level of skill. For example, he paints the contour of a cheek with one bold brushstroke. Seeing the challenges of manipulating the paint in this manner is compelling to me. This experience helped solidify my desire to study portraiture and figurative work.

One of John Singer Sargent's large paintings particularly stood out to me titled *The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit (1882)* (Fig. 6). Commissioned by American expatriates living in Paris, Sargent's unconventional portraiture was desired by the parents of the young



Fig. 6. John Singer Sargent, *The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit*, 1882, Oil on canvas, 87 3/8 in. x 87 5/8 in., Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

girls in the painting. It is a work of portraiture and interior combined into one painting. The asymmetrical composition in an entryway of their home allows for a sense of modern everyday life in the 1880s. Each girl is represented, yet two of them are obscured, with a lack of connection between them all. This was going against normal portraiture. This

“unusual format was inspired by the art of both the past and the present, a

characteristic approach that Sargent employed to make paintings that seemed simultaneously traditional and modern” (Hirshler). The children did not appear strategically posed, instead they are in a natural setting. This painting relates to my work by capturing a moment in time.

Other works that inspire me are the portrait paintings of Rembrandt van Rijn. As I visited Harvard’s Fogg Museum, Rembrandt’s *Portrait of an Old Man* (1632) left me astounded (Fig. 7). I had never seen anything so life-like up until that point. This painting with dramatic lighting was done as a study soon after Rembrandt went to live in Amsterdam. He continued to create these studies throughout his career (*Harvard Art Museums*). After seeing this painting, I recognized the importance of capturing a realistic look in the face and eyes as essential components of making representational fine art paintings communicate with the viewer. I strive for the same level of detail in my own work.

William-Adolphe Bouguereau is the most considerable influence on my figurative work. The San Diego Museum of Art hosted an exhibit with nearly forty of his paintings. One that captured my attention is *Virgin of the Angels* (1881) (Fig. 7). In this elegant composition, the accomplished French painter depicts the life size baby Jesus in the arms of his mother being serenaded by angels. Bouguereau's work was extremely popular in France and the United States during the 19th century and in the beginning of the 20th century. Unfortunately, Modernism overshadowed this master's skills, and he was ignored and nearly forgotten about for approximately eighty years. With a new appreciation for Realism, Bouguereau's paintings are welcomed once again (SDMART). Bouguereau is classified as a Realist painter, yet "has little in common with other artists belonging to the Realist movement. Bouguereau himself regarded his tastes as eclectic, and his work indeed exhibits characteristics peculiar to Neo-Classicism, Romanticism, and Impressionism, as well as to Realism" (Walker). He was influenced by different movements, yet his individuality was apparent in his own style. I, too, am shaped by different art movements and artists. I can relate to this process of visually communicating specific content and using a combination of borrowed styles that naturally become my own.



Fig. 7. Adolphe-William Bouguereau, *Virgin of the Angels*, 1881, Oil on canvas, 72.8 in. x 112.2 in, Forest Lawn Museum.

I am also intrigued with color. Our minds decide what color we see through interpretation. When light shines on an object or the paint on a canvas, a chemical process provoking the electrons to rearrange causes a natural vibration (Finlay 4-8). What is not absorbed but reflected out from this process is what we interpret as color. Even without understanding the process that causes the brain to recognize something as color, people are drawn to the beauty it produces. The main characteristics of color are hue, intensity and value. Hue is the color, intensity describes the saturation or strength of that color and value defines the brightness. The “dark colors in a composition suggest a lack of light, as in a night or interior scene. Dark colors can often convey a sense of mystery or foreboding. Light colors often describe a light source or light reflected within the composition” (Getty Museum).



Fig. 8. Joaquin Sorolla, *Children on the Seashore*, 1903, Oil on canvas, 37 7/8 in. x 51 3/8 in., Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Joaquin Sorolla was a Spanish Impressionist who used vibrant color, oftentimes emphasizing the bright sun shining on his subjects. In his painting titled *Children on the Seashore* (1903), he captures the movement of the children and the crashing waves (Fig. 8). Color

temperature is relative, and he understood the relationship of colors and the alterations of them close in proximity (Sorolla 67).

I study the paintings of Sorolla to better understand the interplay of color. Learning their effect on each other changes the way I make color choices when painting. “Color is always relational; its perception is influenced not only by neighboring colors but also by the surrounding light and atmospheric conditions” (Diaz 264). By simply looking at a color, people are not able to correctly memorize it. Seeing this relationship is more important than understanding the concept logically. I regularly use this approach in my paintings to communicate the connection of the environment with the figure.

Intrigued by all colors, the one I find the most interesting is gray. Something about the shades of gray leaves me perplexed. Abstract painter, Josef Albers, compared the relationship of gray to warm and cool colors. His experiment shows how colors are situational by placing a gray rectangle on a warm and cool background. The color is received differently depending on the background they are placed with. In the article, *The Ethics of Perception*, Diaz speaks of the phenomenon:

The ambiguity of the gray shade – lively in one instance, dull in another, and therefore utterly dependent on its immediate context for definition – reveals the extraordinary attention and subtlety every visual experience demands of viewers. Careful study of the discrepancy between optical trickery (they *appear* as two different colors) and material reality (they actually *are* the same) can activate a fresh awareness of the constructedness of all habits of meaning in the world as well as the ambition to redesign them conscientiously. (265)

Desaturating color with the use of gray helps utilize earth tones, bringing in an element of nature. I feel this aspect is helpful in unifying the composition while adding to the beauty of both the subject and the natural setting.

For me, using painting as a language is a meaningful way to communicate a message. Realist painters influenced my desire to depict the truth of people in their common surroundings. I want the viewer to be in the moment depicted in my painting. As I learn the fundamentals of art, expose myself to the work of the masters and gain an interest in portraiture and the human figure, I better understand the importance of color relationships to bring my paintings to life for viewers. Masters such as Sargent, Rembrandt, Bouguereau and Sorolla continue to influence my work with their adept ability to capture and animate their subjects. Painting gives me an additional voice to communicate a message through my art.

METHODOLOGY

Some things need to be experienced, not just viewed through a photograph. Visiting the Grand Canyon is a breathtaking adventure. I remember the feeling of awe as I hiked down the trail of this massive gorge. The photos I took that day did not capture the grandeur in the same way I remembered the scene. As a painter I have the opportunity to transform my subjects into a life of their own. As a Realist attempting to portray something true about places we are part of, I want to bring everyday life onto the canvas. Capturing moments of a young girl's life helps me return to a time of unrestrained creativity, inviting me to relive the joy I felt during childhood. As my artwork develops over time, so does my intent. I see how art and life are parallel. Each has unexpected turns, struggles and happy mishaps along the way. No matter the preparation or planning involved, unforeseen things must be resolved. Pushing through these moments helps build character. I find that each person wanders, to a

certain degree, trying to find their purpose while being refined and polished along the way. Over the past two years, I have examined techniques, styles and color schemes to help establish my own methods.

My creative process starts with observation. It is difficult to know when the idea for a painting begins, because I find myself constantly thinking about art. From the time I was young, I observed nature and its unique characteristics. Whether it was looking at clouds and trying to imagine shapes of animals or seeing the lines in the trunk of a tree, seeing abstracted shapes in nature helped me learn what attracts the human eye. Sometimes ideas flow like a trickling stream. At other times intermittent thoughts only come occasionally, like the drip



Fig. 9. Preliminary sketches for Untitled, 2021.

from leaves after morning rain. When starting a concept for a new painting, the ideas develop visually through abstraction. If the shape is not compelling, the end painting will not be either. As shown in Fig. 9, I start by sketching some abstract shapes and trying to imagine how the subject for my painting can fit within the contour of my drawing. Once I can conceptualize it in my mind, I make thumbnail drawings. In this process I make adjustments until I think it will make a successful image.

The next step is getting a reference for my idea. I choose models for my paintings who capture my attention. I prefer taking a photograph in nature with natural sunlight. I bring my thumbnail sketches so I can refer to them while taking the pictures. I explain to the model the position and emotion that I am looking for. After the photoshoot I edit the images in Photoshop. Eliminating the background, I cut out the figure so I can see the contour and emotion of the subjects. I experiment with several different environments. Each element included in the painting is carefully considered for its purpose and visual quality. When I am satisfied with an image, I make a sketch of it. The process helps me study the values and make a hierarchy of what lines and details are the most important to focus on.



Fig. 10. ACM, Linen, Heat press, 2021.

Before transferring the final drawing to the canvas, I cut a piece of Aluminum Composite Material which consists of two thin sheets of aluminum, enclosing a polyethylene core as shown in Fig. 10. This becomes the substrate for the canvas keeping it rigid and avoiding damage in the future. I attach double primed linen to this substrate with an archival sizing, Beva 371, using a heat press, also shown in Fig. 10. After pressed and cooled, I draw

the contours of the image onto the canvas using charcoal. I use a fixative spray to keep it from smudging and seeping through the paint that will be applied.



Fig. 11. Verdaccio Method, 2021.

As an underpainting, I use the Verdaccio method (Fig. 11). This technique was used during the early Italian Renaissance using Mars black, Yellow Ochre and White to establish the correct values. This step is essential because it allows me to solidify the details before applying the complications of other colors. I eventually increase my palette to other essential pigments and use a thicker application of paint. After

the painting is dry, I apply color glazes by adding walnut oil to the paint. Glazing creates a unique effect by visually modifying the underlying layers of paint. It provides a transparent layer that intensifies colors and gives an illuminous glow. This effect cannot be obtained by directly mixing paint.

When painting nature, I use a subtractive and additive method as shown in Fig. 12. By wiping away paint with various tools I can



Fig 12. Subtractive and Additive Method, 2021.

eliminate paint to mimic organic shapes, such as blades of grass, which helps create depth. After waiting for the paint to dry, I start the additive process of using brushes and a painting knife to apply paint until I get the desired effect and the painting is finished. This not only saves time, but it also gives variety to the painting. After trying different techniques during my years of academic training, certain ones connect with me. I enjoy the process of experimentation and expect my work to mature over time.

CONCLUSION

I look at this thesis as a beginning. From here, my paintings can go in many directions. Continuing this work of young girls opens my eyes to more possibilities. As I put deeper thought into my paintings, it adds more substance and purpose to what I do. The process of earning a Master of Fine Arts degree gave me an opportunity to evaluate my purpose, the content of my work and the methods I use to obtain my goals. This experience transformed me personally and artistically. Personally, I developed perseverance when challenges arose helping me gain a resilient spirit. Artistically, my mind was opened to the endless possibilities of creating. I am on a path that has no end, just side trails to explore and enjoy along the way.

Working on this thesis for the past two years gave me the opportunity to reminisce about my early life and mourn for those whose childhood was taken away. While raising my own children, I felt an instinctive desire to protect them. That tendency remains and naturally led me to this topic. Even though my work focuses on more positive aspects of growing up, I understand this is not the whole of every person's childhood experience. I applaud organizations such as *Operation Underground Railroad* that are dedicated to rescuing children from human trafficking and prosecuting the criminals who steal the childhood of

their victims. As I raise awareness about human trafficking and educate the public about this criminal act happening all around the world, I hope to give assurance to survivors and acknowledge their ability of becoming whole again. I plan to get more involved in helping these establishments.

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APPENDIX



Plate 1. Jody Gerber, *I Wished to Slow Time*, 2019, Oil on ACM, 18 in. x 24 in.



Plate 2. Jody Gerber, *Passage*, 2019, Oil on ACM, 20 in. x 16 in.



Plate 3. Jody Gerber, *Rain Dance*, 2020, Oil on ACM, 16 in. x 20 in.



Plate 4. Jody Gerber, *Coreopsis*, 2020, Oil on canvas, 20 in. x 16 in.



Plate 5. Jody Gerber, *Hidden*, 2020, Oil on linen, 14 in. x 24 in.

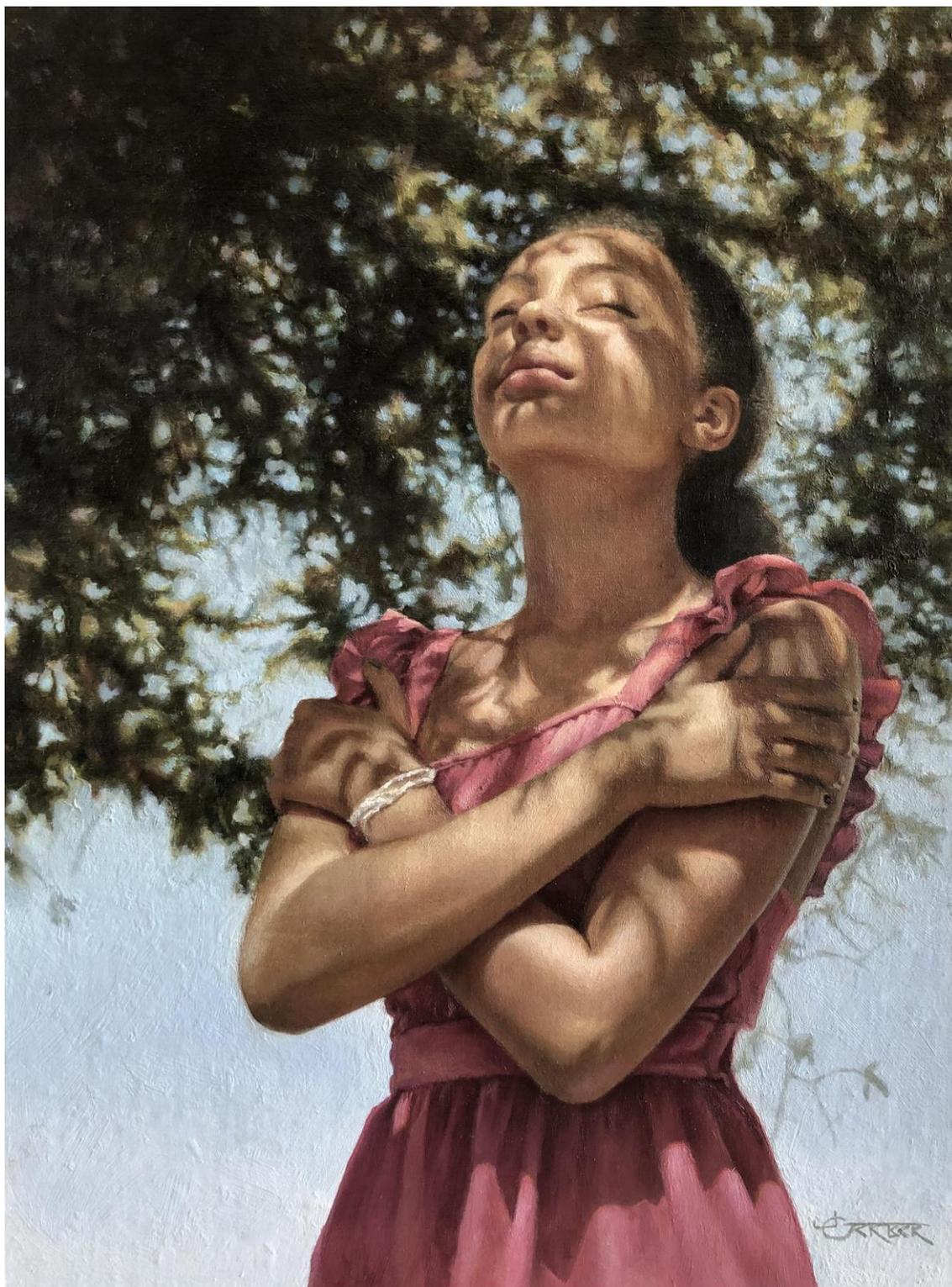


Plate 6. Jody Gerber, *Illumination*, 2021, Oil on linen, 16 in. x 12 in.



Plate 7. Jody Gerber, *Hesitation*, 2021, Oil on linen, 24 in. x 18 in.



Plate 8. Jody Gerber, *Illusion*, 2021, Oil on linen, 24 in. x 18 in., Laguna College of Art+Design.



Plate 9. Jody Gerber, *Untitled*, 2021, Oil on linen, 32 in. x 24 in.



Plate 10. Jody Gerber, *Untitled*, 2021, Oil on linen, 20 in. x 30 in.



Plate 11. Jody Gerber, *Untitled*, 2021, Oil on linen, 20 in. x 16 in.



Plate 12. Jody Gerber, *Set Free*, 2021, Oil on linen, 10 in. x 36 in.



Plate 13. Jody Gerber, *Taken*, 2021, Oil on linen, 12 in. x 12 in.

ARTIST'S NOTE

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Jody's inspiration comes from the places she calls home, the Pacific Northwest, the Southwest desert and the California coast. Before attending Laguna College of Art+Design, she graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts, magna cum laude, from Dixie State University. Through the process of gaining the necessary foundational knowledge of art, the MFA program helped her work evolve from simple portraits to meaningful figurative paintings. Jody credits her ability of reaching difficult goals to her strong determination and inherited stubbornness. With the completion of the MFA program, Jody looks forward to making more art and developing her skills through a lifetime of learning.