

## **LOVE AND LONELINESS**



**LOVE AND LONELINESS**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Love and Loneliness* explores some of my early memories of my childhood lived in the backyard of my mother's house. Going back in time, my artwork connects to my roots representing the time when I started shaping the personality and character of the person who I am nowadays. Furthermore, as a contemporary realist painter, I am a researcher who studies the depths of human emotions. To that end, I produce representational oil paintings from an aesthetic and intellectual perspective. My work represents through detailed paintings the atmosphere of the scenarios where some of my highly emotional events were imprinted in my deep memories, which became later, components of my intuition.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this thesis to my mother, Maria Coradi Ferrandini, who showed me all the ways to live a worthy life as well as to my wife, Ivana Bonaccorsi, who has offered her unconditional support, encouragement, and love along my artistic education journey.

**EPIGRAPH**

*Life is the art of drawing without an eraser.*

*-John W. Gardner*

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## LOVE AND LONELINESS

My thesis work is the representation of some emotional events that occurred during my childhood that are still recorded and fresh in my memory as well as the two main feelings involved in that period of my life: love and loneliness. My mother is the main character in my life, and she represents the best definition of unconditional love. Her appreciation for gardening also represents love in the context of my thesis body of work. Loneliness is present in the backyard's environment, the place where I lived most of my childhood, and the stage for my solitary adventures. Moreover, the representation of my recollections from childhood is depicted not only through the photographic realism of the environment in which I grew up and the vital person surrounding me, but also by my interpretation of the feelings of love and loneliness in my early days. My thesis work is about the way I experienced emotions in my childhood.

### DESCRIPTION

Representing love through painting a portrait of someone can be more than an expression of feelings, it can be a tribute. As a tribute, my purpose of painting not only the portrait of my mother, *Dona Maria* (2019), but also the portrait of my aunt, *Tia Inês* (2019) was to show all my gratitude, respect, and admiration for both people who surrounded me in my childhood (Figure 1) (Figure 2). The primary intention of the painting, *Dona Maria*, is a recognition of my mother's unconditional love. Her presence in my childhood is the most vivid memory I have about feeling safe at such a young age. Primarily, the way I painted the



Figure 1: Emerson L. Ferrandini, *Dona Maria*, 2019, Oil on canvas, 12 in x 12 in., Collection of the artist.

background is directly related to the main figure. The background was intentionally painted flat without details to avoid diverting attention from the primary subject. The highest values are focused on my mother's face, and I painted the eyes more refined than the other parts to emphasize the focal point. Secondly, the lighting is coming from right to left, and the darkest area is located on the left side of the painting. Catrin Gibson, who is a PhD candidate in Philosophy at the University of Oxford, wrote an article titled, "Love and The Mother-Child Relationship," in which she affirms that "...the authentic relation between mother and child is one of authentic love, due to its generous acceptance of the other's contingency" (72). It is undeniable that raising a child is a decision to deal with unpredictability, and I am sure that the love my mother feels for me is unconditional regardless of the characteristics of my personality, and vice-versa. Respect and gratitude are intrinsic in this painted tribute.

Still having the love as a subject of the development of my paintings, another portrait that I made as a tribute was the painting called, *Tia Inês*. A



Figure 2: Emerson L. Ferrandini, *Tia Inês*, 2019, Oil on canvas, 12 in. x 12 in., Collection of the artist.

person who was not as vital as my mother during my childhood but was also present and a prominent presence in my childhood. My aunt was an important person surrounding my mother and me, so I grew up witnessing the love between two sisters who lived very close not only physically but also sharing the challenges and joys of raising their kids. The composition of the portrait *Tia Inês* starts using the principle of no more than three distinctive values, represented by the dark background, middle values on the face, and high values on the shirt. Again, replicating

the same approach that I used on my mother's portrait, the most refined brushstrokes were concentrated in the eyes' area.

In both paintings, the intention of concentrating the details in the eyes' area was to emphasize the power of the communication through facial expression. As the image moves away from the eye's area, the accuracy and the sharpness of the brush strokes diminish in order to lead the viewer's attention to the eyes. The dark background contributes to the composition emphasizing her face in the portrait even more. One of the reasons for painting *Tia Inês* was the positive effect her constant presence in the house where I grew up had on me. I feel privileged to have been raised in such a loving environment, which she also made part of.

My mother taught me that love is in the details. For example, she cultivated the details in gardening, such as soil preparation, the right source and amount of light, cleaning leaves, and the use of the appropriate tools to take care of the plants and flowers. All of these details showed me the love she feels for these subjects. Consequently, my mother always felt delighted every time she saw small plants germinating and blooming as a result of her grafting techniques. She always said that beauty and love are in the details, and she devoted to the small plants the same attention she gave to the big ones. Thus, there are many types of plants in the backyard of the house where I grew up, and roses are one of them.

My mother always showed her passion by witnessing the germination process, and each rose was a reason for contemplation and fulfillment. She had a passion and preference for white roses, and that was one of the reasons for representing this passion and her love for plants through a painting of a white rose. The main intention of the *White Rose* (2018) is to emphasize the white of its petals because, among all the colors and species of flowers in the backyard, white roses were the ones that my mother always showed preference toward (Figure 3). Moreover, the

green background works not only representing the predominance of the green color surrounding the backyard but also as the complementary color of red. I am aware that her perception of how significant and beautiful the subtle differences of the colors of the leaves has influenced me in the way I make my realistic paintings. Consequently, the same love and care she devotes to gardening by making sure the flowers and plants in her garden always look their best I transfer to my canvas. By depicting a wide range of colors and refinement of individual leaves, I give life to my artwork.



Figure 3: Emerson L. Ferrandini, *White Rose*, 2018, Oil on canvas, 10 in. x 10 in., Collection of the artist

In the same environment in which I grew up, I lived moments of feeling love and loneliness. The feeling of loneliness is present in my early memories in some ways. As an example of it, by depicting my physical loneliness playing in the backyard of my mother's house for hours and hours with nobody nearby. Since my brothers were at school and my father was working, the only person who was around was my mother. Day by day, she divided her attention between taking care of the plants and flowers and staying with me. By realistically painting my mother's portrait as well as parts of the backyard and plants, I seek to convey the same love and care. It is clear in my mind how much love my mother put into her gardening activities, and all the details I am going to represent in my paintings are related to her depth of emotion. Even though I lived in a big family with two older brothers and one sister, the feeling of being alone was highly present in my life. According to the characteristics of a family, the youngest child sometimes has difficulty in being accepted by the rest of the siblings.

The painting called, *Three or Four* (2019), represents this feeling of not being part of a group of people (Figure 4). The paint partially shows in its foreground three trees, and the background is made by the shadows of four trees projected on the wall. Notably, there are three trees in the painting, but four shadows on the wall. The coconut trees were painted metaphorically representing my three brothers, but the shadows projected on the wall represent four children. It is possible to identify the presence of four elements, but the way that the composition shows the content, one of them is not part of the group - the one shown in the background.

Furthermore, this painting demonstrates another approach I took to depicting loneliness; I have never established a deep connection with most of my relatives, mainly because they are not artists and also based on their personalities. In fact, engineer researcher, entrepreneur, and



Figure 4: Emerson L. Ferrandini, *Three or Four*, 2019, Oil on panel, 18 in. x 30 in., Collection of the artist.

neuroeducation teacher are the profession of my siblings. It was very common for me to not feel integrated as being part of the family when the subject and content in almost every conversation were about rules, formulas and logical definitions instead of feelings, emotions and all things subjective. It was not too difficult to conclude that my family does not see the world the same way I do as an artist. I believe that in order to establish a deep connection in relationships, the concept of complicity must be involved. When there is no complicity, there are shallow relationships, and consequently, individuals are not truly connected. Unfortunately, this lack of

connection with my siblings was part of my history that I could not ignore, and this feeling of loneliness is expressed in my paintings mainly through the composition.

Some experiences that we have at a very young age can generate intense emotions that will remain in our memories and will be carried out throughout our entire lives. My thesis is about the way I experienced the feelings of love and loneliness in the past, moments that are still fresh in my conscience. Working in my body of work, I established an even deeper relationship with these two feelings, which generated findings regarding love and loneliness. In my opinion, true love is such a profound feeling that we actually feel loved when it is genuine, regardless of the words and attitudes. I experienced loneliness not by not having people around me, but rather by not developing a strong connection with most people who were part of my childhood. I use the memories of some of my childhood moments as a starting point to design my images, and the process of building paintings incorporates a logical sequence of steps, which are ideation, composition, values, and coloring.

## **RESEARCH**

As a fine artist, I consider myself a researcher who studies the depths of human emotions. To that end, I produce representational oil paintings from an aesthetic and intellectual perspective. My current body of work depicts scenes related to my childhood. In that work, I primarily take a realistic approach using figures as my secondary subject. In my opinion, most people understand *realism* in the art movement to be a mere reproduction of reality or as an imitation of what is visible. In contrast, I do not interpret *realism* in this way. I use *realism* to represent subjects that were part of my early memories as a child, and I also use it to express emotions and feelings I have about those subjects. There is no reality to reference per se in my

artwork, but that reality my memory can recreate. The representations of my subjects are references to real people in real settings that are visible, and I paint them in a manner that can be defined as realistic. However, the references I use are composed in a way that conveys the certainty of feelings that are not visible. In brief, I am a representational painter who uses realism, figures, and narrative to convey emotions I have about memories of my childhood.

Experiencing life through my feelings and representing it in my painting drove me to an aesthetic perspective related to *realism* especially because I have a desire to bring memories back to life, and to represent impartially and objectively the real world as it is. Furthermore, the aesthetic analysis of my artwork is based on the principles of Gestalt, which helps viewers to interpret forms. According to the book written by the Brazilian designer and researcher João Gomes Filho, *Gestalt do Objeto, Sistema de Leitura Visual da Forma*, "factors such as balance, clarity and visual harmony constitute the pregnancy of the form, working as sensitive and rational support for visual reading" (17). The painting called *Self-Portrait* (2019) illustrates my attention in applying these concepts (Figure 5). I always try to apply as much as possible in my paintings' composition the laws of Gestalt, such as unity, segregation, unification, closure, continuity, proximity, similarity, and pregnancy of form. All the elements involving composition, physical properties of paint, and the fidelity of the representation of the objects result in an aesthetic perspective related to what is considered real in my intangible memory.

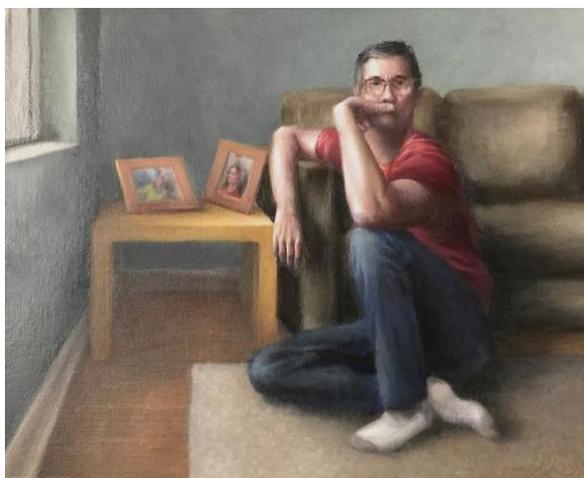


Figure 5: Emerson L. Ferrandini, *Self-Portrait*, 2019, Oil on canvas, 20 in. x 24 in., Collection of the artist.

As an example, there are leaves and plants working as a representation of the atmosphere where I lived many intense emotional moments that became crystallized in my memory.

The stories in my art are significant to me, and thus as an artist, I am narrating the reality of these significant events that happened in my childhood with an intellectual perspective as well as an aesthetic perspective of my artwork. Even though the memory I am painting is often singular to me, the content of my body of work represents a more pluralistic cultural context of my childhood in Brazil more than forty-five years ago. The memories I recreate from the record of my consciousness were emotionally strong enough to be never forgotten; that was my first criteria for deciding which ones to paint. However, rather than static images, each memory evolved into a short story or vignette in my visual interpretation. Therefore, the narratives that I tell in my paintings serve the intellectual perspective to balance the emotion.

Even though representational art is a very broad term, it still suits me. Aleksandr Georgievich Gabrichevskii (1891 – 1968), a soviet historian of the plastic arts wrote that “...representational arts [visual arts] itself characterizes the dominant role of representation in spatial arts.” As such, it is “...most closely connected to visible reality.” because it is an “optical” art that gives “form to a real, visible thing” and “directly reproduces the appearance of the object being represented” (91). There are many momentary sequences in my memory; however, as a representational artist, I represent through an image a freeze-frame moment I lived. Even though the most reliable memories I have about my childhood are emotions; the plants, the people, and scenarios remain alive and present in the same backyard in the same house.

Therefore, under the umbrella of representational art's definition, my artwork also incorporates concepts of *realism* in my narrative and figurative genres. Representing these subjects using realism is a way to induce the viewer to feel and see the same scenes and subjects I lived in the past as close as possible. According to Susan Lyons, editor of the periodical, *American Artist*: "...defining *realism* is a two-part process that must address the subject matter of the piece and the way in which the artist portrays that subject." She goes on to say that "...first, a realist image is one that depicts life as it is, rather than an idealized or stylized vision. Second, the piece should be accurately rendered..." (6). Lyon's definition of *realism* treats the subject as a reproduction. I treat realism narratively. As I previously mentioned, one part of my thesis art is narrative. *The Illustrated Dictionary of Art Terms: A Handbook for the Artist and Art Lover* defines Narrative Art as "...art, which illustrates or tells a story (93)." It goes on to say that it "...usually describes self-explanatory events from daily life or those drawn from a text, well-known folk tale, or myth." In most of my paintings, though, I am not retelling a well-known story, I am revisiting a moment where my relationship with the events surrounding me appeared to be bigger and more intense due to my perspective as a child. I am creating an autobiographical narrative to which I believe others can relate.

Likewise, nineteenth-century American artist, Winslow Homer, captures this upward point of view in his painting, *Palm Trees, Bahamas*



Figure 6: Winslow Homer, *Palm Trees, Bahamas*, 1886, Watercolor over graphite on heavy white wove paper, 21 1/8 in. x 15 in., Harvard Art Museum.

(1886) (Figure 6). To a child, plants, trees, and the surrounding world seemed to be frighteningly



Figure 7: Emerson L. Ferrandini, *Ego*, 2018, Oil on cardboard, 18 in. x 22 in., Collection of the artist.

big. Similarly, I express my recollection of realizing the immensity of the universe in my painting, *Ego* (2018) (Figure 7). Because my work utilizes narrative, my paintings carry a tone. Two of the tones which I am conveying involve interpretations of love and loneliness. Then, another part of my thesis art is figurative. The reality I perceive in front of me, the mindfulness I have about

my relationships, the attitudes I possess towards figures as subjects, and the awareness I have gained from interpreting my feelings on the canvas all define the theme of my body of work.

Virginija Šidlauskienė, an associate professor from Siauliai University wrote that the "personal creative process of fine art students

should echo the perception of society, attitudes, culture, social relations, reality, interdisciplinarity, analysis, and

synthesis" (63). Even for those who are not familiar with my narrative, personal subjects can transport the viewer to my childhood. Thereby, I am using realism to represent my recollection of infancy, the

environment in which I grew up as well as the vital person who surrounded me at that time.

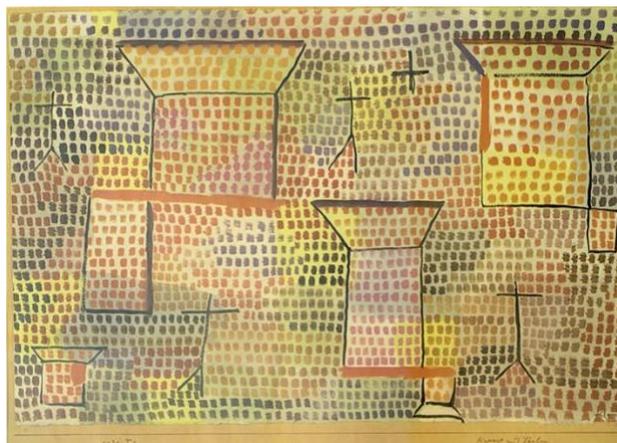


Figure 8: Paul Klee, *Crosses and Columns*, 1931, Watercolor on paper mounted on Card. 38 cm. x 53 cm., Bavarian State Painting Collections, State Gallery of Modern Art

Although I am a representational painter who uses realism, figures, and narrative to express some of my early memories, I always start designing the composition of my paintings from an abstract approach using Gestalt and Semiotics laws as well as the Golden Ratio principles to guide me. Paul Klee (1879-1940), and Jackson Pollock (1912-1956) were two abstract painters whose artworks have influenced me not only based on the images they produced but also some aspects of their investigation about their image-building process. In the article written by Richard Kirwan, the art writer says that "Klee's interest in the garden as a metaphor for continual growth and renewal is given a chance to establish its roots." Klee produced many paintings using arrows as part of the composition to indicate the flow that the viewer should follow. Again, in the painting *Crosses and Columns* (1931) he establishes rhythmic repetition of dots, which we can associate with two Gestalt laws called proximity and similarity (Figure 8). In the same way, in my thesis work, I am producing motives metaphorically as directions to my roots, such as leaves, plants, and the figure of my mother. Klee developed some

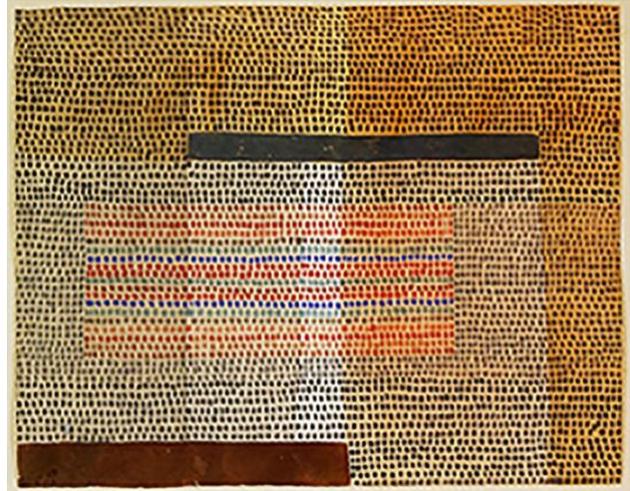


Figure 10: Paul Klee, *Two Accented Layers*, 1932, 10 in. x 12 in., Gouache and watercolor on Ingres paper mounted on card. The Menil Collection, Houston



Figure 9: Jackson Pollock, *Number 1A*, 1948, 68 in. x 8'8 in., Oil and enamel paint on unprimed canvas, Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

paintings using the garden as a metaphor for continual growth establishing its root. Another example of it is the painting, *Two Accented Layers* (1932) (Figure 9).

As a viewer, we can read images on multiple levels of conscious and unconscious. The logic and rational approach of our brain look for names, symbols or anything that it can classify as representational. The consequence of this is how abstract painting is labeled. Even though my paintings containing leaves, flowers, and trees as a subject is rationally a realistic representation of what there is in my family's backyard, there is an abstract aspect in this painting as well.

Jackson Pollock, who painted *Number 1A* (1948), was also considered an abstract artist (Figure 10). However, on some occasions, he declared himself as a representational painter. According to the article written by the professor of Art History Michael Leja titled, *Jackson Pollock:*

*Representing the Unconscious*, "...two months before he died in 1956, Pollock told an

interviewer: "...I'm very representational some of the

time, and a little all of the time. But when you are

painting out of your unconscious, figures are bound to

emerge" (542). In the same way that our mind works

consciously and unconsciously, we can read images on

multiple levels. As a matter of fact, even though

technically my painting, *Folhas* (2018) is considered a

representational painting based on the shape of the

leaves, stems and the caterpillar; the predominant

presence of the leaves repeatedly not only creates a visual pattern but opens the possibility for

more abstract image analysis (Figure 11). Therefore, there is an abstract aspect even in realistic

representational paintings.



Figure 11: Emerson L. Ferrandini, *Folhas*, 2018, 22 in. x 22 in., Oil on canvas, Collection of the artist.

My paintings represent and express through a realistic approach, the feelings of loneliness as well as love. However, some may disagree or have objections about the concept of my body of work. Any contestation that someone expresses when analyzing my art, I use for the development and strengthening of my artistic approach. For instance, some contestation I had to deal with while I was developing my body of work was why I use *realism* since it is an art movement that was surpassed by other styles? Are not these images of early memories just exercises in nostalgia? Why to apply logic concepts in my composition process, like the golden ratio? It is undeniable that debates supported by valuable arguments, rather than personal preferences, are useful to reinforce some points of view about the approach of my work.

One line of thinking that can be countered in my body of work is the relevance of realism, which was a movement that some consider to have ended one hundred and fifty years ago. By all means, it does not necessarily mean that there is something wrong with expressing memories by *realism*. As a matter of fact, this incoherent argument can be refuted by making an analogy comparing the realism art movement with classical music. Realism as an historic art movement is considered to have ended in the 1880s when other art styles surpassed it, but the fact is that it has never really gone away. Similarly, classical music started in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Like realism, it was surpassed by other music styles. It does not mean that today there is no place nor meaning to develop both realism and classical music.

The use of nostalgia does not necessarily represent a mistake in the approach to my thesis work. Still, nostalgia can be considered harmful when someone is locked in the past, avoiding living the present. However, using nostalgia to go deeper into research about experiences can help to understand feelings and emotions even better. Everything I create in my life is based on my previous experiences, including paintings. While there may be an element of nostalgia in my

work, I am not living in the past. Rather, I am reviewing the events of the past through the lens of wisdom and maturity.

Questioning a body of work is valid when it is followed by rational arguments. It becomes useless when the debate is based on personal preferences of whether or not to use principles of composition like, for example, the golden ratio. Furthermore, using the deconstructive approach to disagree with a process of building paintings without presenting and sustaining any line of thinking does not make it effective. In other words, deconstructing or tearing an idea apart by itself will never be more effective than to construct an idea sustained by rational principals and a solid line of thinking, especially when the deconstructive approaches do not present any guidance. Metaphorically comparing, it is easier to demolish a house rather than to build a new one from the ground up. Moreover, concepts such as Gestalt, Semiotics, and Golden Ratio are based on research related to how we humans, understand, analyze, interpret, and synthesize the visual organization of images. When the approach of the body of work is based on *realism*, the concepts related to how to build images such as balance, clarity, and visual harmony become necessary in the process of composition. All these concepts are based on the principles of perceptual psychology of form, and they are identifiable in many master paintings.

In conclusion, I am a representative painter who experiences life through feelings, and this influences the way I approach my creative process. My thesis work has my childhood memories as a subject, and since I have been living abroad for five years, painting my early memories is a way to be linked to my roots. My childhood memories are comprised of images of plants, trees, flowers, small animals, and the presence of my mother. Even though my paintings intrinsically carry the theme of imagination, my pragmatic side determines my creative process, which follows a sequence based on the fundamentals of painting: composition, color harmony,

color palette, and brush application. I am more of a realistic painter than an imaginative artist, but I am fundamentally a representational painter who expresses emotions through realistic images. Abstract painters like Paul Klee and Jackson Pollock have been influencing my artwork not only through their visual approach, but also the intention behind of some of their images, which match with the approach in some of my paintings. In my opinion, using realism is the best approach to describe figures and my childhood environment, and it is also the most appropriate way to express the loneliness and love represented by my mother's figure and my compositions of plants.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Among a dozen chickens living in the backyard of my mother's house, Inacio was my favorite. One day, I got that little yellow chick in my hands and, making the same movement of a baseball pitcher, I threw Inacio against the wall from just a few steps away. In my child's innocent way of thinking, I was teaching him how to fly. However, Inacio hit the wall and dropped ninety degrees straight to the ground. No movements. No sign of life. *Did I kill him? Oh, my God, what did I do?* Silence in the backyard. Once I realized he was dead, my body started showing me that something tragic had just happened. My hands began sweating. My legs started shaking, and my heart started beating faster. Body language is the sincerest way of communicating emotions because it reveals what is hidden deep in the subconscious. Indeed, the manifestations in my body at that moment were the best signal that, while unintentional, I had done something incredibly wrong. Immediately after I realized that I had killed Ignacio, I began to feel terrified, scared, and guilty. First, our body shows our emotions without any label and then our brain starts classifying and labeling our feelings. Emotions come before feelings, and

this situation illustrates that emotions are deeper than feelings. Emotions are remarkable and unforgettable in our memories.

I consider myself a rationally emotive artist. My identity as an imaginative person is a consequence of my creative process. The emotion intrigues me and increases rational analysis, which consequently conjures mental scenes that represent the feelings evoked from that initial agitation. To begin my creative process, I identify an emotion I am feeling but do not have the words to explain, and then I start attempting to represent that emotion in a composition. As I paint, I make decisions in terms of value, color, and composition that help me rationally understand and relate to the depth of that emotional response. Finally, I spend time observing the final product to validate the degree to which it accurately and realistically represents the emotion. My character as an artist has been evolving through the outcome of my paintings. Each painting is a visual expression of my emotional moments. The profound presence and impact of emotions in my life when I paint and observe other artists' work was the reason I became a fine artist.

Through my paintings, I represent what my visual perception and aesthetic sense consider delightfully real enough to touch other soul. Therefore, I paint to entice the perception of beauty in the viewer. By emphasizing empathy with the viewer, my paintings represent dynamic moments of emotions, ushering the observers into a world of sensations to reinforce the importance of their existence as humans. I believe art is a bridge between souls and I utilize classic oil painting methods to stimulate different ways in which people recognize themselves through their feelings. By questioning the consciousness of emotions and awareness, I am developing a context for what is profound while avoiding shallow representations.

While there are many approaches to producing fine art, I follow a logical sequence in my rationally emotive creative process. It is essential for me to have order in my life and my art; hence I naturally follow a linear way where I begin from identifying the emotion, then follow a step by step sequence surrounded by information related to the topic chosen. My starting point in the creative process can be either a simple word related to a feeling or a philosophical concept described in a paragraph I read from an article or a book. Either way, the initial idea for a painting is triggered deep within my intuition, and the first action of my ideation process involves decoding the meaning of that trigger and deciphering a representation of it that I can make with paint. Before picking up the brushes or even preparing the canvas, every new project requires research. The research involves the improvement of the repertoire of information related to what I want to express through my paintings.

It is possible to identify the expression of both feelings of love and loneliness in only one painting as well. Specifically, my painting, *Folhas*, is an oil painting that represents love by not only the refined painted leaves, but also loneliness metaphorically (Figure 12). *Folhas* is nothing more than a fraction of the wall, which is covered by a plant called Hera. Based on the golden ratio principle and its application, two large leaves are working as the focal point on the left high quarter of the painting. On the opposite side of these two large leaves, on the bottom right corner, there is a yellow caterpillar creating balance in the composition and working as a surprising element. The painting represents a physical division that served as a protective barrier between



Figure 12: Emerson L. Ferrandini, *Folhas*, Detail, 2018, 22 in. x 22 in., Oil on canvas, Collection of the artist.

the outside world and my childhood environment. *Folhas* is also a representation of the separation between the way I perceive external events and the way I process my perceptions internally. I usually go very deep in my analysis of the events that I consider important in my life, such as my relationships, my career, and my well-being. The process of the profound analysis of my emotions, going deep into my feelings, and bringing clarity to my perception, unfolds in much the same way as the layers of the painting are built up. Furthermore, *Folhas* shows mystery and depth as well as refined details inspired by the feelings of love and loneliness. For me, realism is the best way to represent feelings, and *Folhas* is connected essentially by the expression of the feelings of love and loneliness, as well as by the environment of the piece of land on which I grew up. Looking back in time, my childhood was filled with love, loneliness, and imaginary adventures.

Every time that I start studying aspects involving the composition of the image, I begin by establishing parameters using principals of Gestalt, Semiotics, and sometimes applying the Golden Ratio principle. The reason for it is mainly because I consider the visual structure one of the most challenging parts of my creative process. Therefore, I prefer to spend as much time as necessary on it. The painting, *Folhas*, is an example of this. I also believe that concepts such as Gestalt and Semiotics is one of the reasons why some paintings were considered masterpieces, so I try to apply these concepts in the process of designing my paintings as often as possible. Moreover, using different visual concepts not only contributes to the foundation of my artwork but also increases the chances of making a more elaborate painting, and consequently, in my opinion, a better one.

Since I am an artist who approaches art in a more representative than imaginative way, it makes more sense for me to approach my paintings realistically. Even though realism can be

considered a mere mirror image of visual reality, Realism as an approach consists of the representation of objects that are visible and tangible for the artist. Based on that, I believe that these leaves on the wall are the best representation of one of my childhood moments of emotion. Most of the time, to consider a painting finished is nothing more than a decision, one I made by emphasizing some highlights and making small adjustments in detail. Therefore, I decide a painting is finished when my visual perception, as well as my sense of aesthetics, does not identify any part of the image that does not look real. With that in mind, I considered the painting *Folhas* done, and six months after that, I varnished it.

In the same way that revisiting my past can reinforce some of my memories and emotions, defining rationally that a painting is finished does not necessarily mean that the process of expressing a feeling has ended as well. During one of my midterm meetings with my adviser, Serena Potter, and my mentor, Cynthia Sitton, we agreed that the painting should reinforce the subject matter by the size of the canvas. Having the wall symbolizing a strong moment of emotion in my memory, the main reason to make the painting larger than just 24x24 in is to represent that moment even more dramatically.

Undoubtedly, painting a wall closer to its actual size is a more accurate way to express the environment in which I grew up. In the book *Realism*, the writer

James Malpas describes the importance

of Realism in painting as “*The need for realism, in both life and art, maybe the result of a sense*



Figure 13: Emerson L. Ferrandini, *Inacio*, 2020, Oil on canvas, 4 ft. x 6 ft., Collection of the artist.

*that fantasy, imagination, speculation have all run away with human attention and that things, as they are, have been shunted into the area labeled, ordinary everyday uninteresting” (7). In my childhood, fantasy was present every single day when I was playing by myself in the backyard of my mother’s house. However, what made me feel emotional was a simple, real, everyday event. My emotion was real, and representing that scenario realistically is the best way to express my memories. Consequently, I started working on one more painting with the same subject, but this time measuring 4 x 6 feet called Inacio (2020) (Figure 13).*

Rationally analyzing how to make a bolder painting in terms of the emotion, I want to express drove me to insert personal objects into the composition of the painting *Inacio*. Based on my previous experience making the first painting *Folhas*, I decided to make some changes not only in the process of painting but also in its composition. To design a painting even more closely connected to my early days, two personal objects related to my past were inserted in the composition: a bird’s nest, making an association with the event involving *Inacio*, and my first-grade booklet, making a reference to my early school years. The most significant change related to the process of painting was to start from a black background. Both personal objects and the black background were the difference in the process of making the painting *Inacio* and *Folhas*.

The emotive side of my creative process is not linear, but rather spatial. With my thesis body of work, painting my childhood memories was a way to connect not only with my soul presently but also with the person I was in the past as well as some people who surrounded me. Furthermore, going back to my early memories, the feeling of being alone is one of the most present in my mind. Notably, there are many ways to represent loneliness. Basically, in my case, the act of being physically alone as well as the lack of deep connections in some of my relationships with a few relatives, represent loneliness. Specifically, in the painting *Complicity*

(2020), having something between the main character and the viewer is representing the relationships without a true connection, and this was my starting point for this project (Figure 14).

The rational part of my design process uses metaphors to express how the feeling of loneliness can appear in some relationships: in my experience, by the lack of complicity. Once I had decided on the motive of the painting as well as my model set up, I took about one hundred pictures of my mother in the backyard environment in her house. After many shots, one, in particular, showed what I was precisely looking for in terms of both composition and light. Based on the previous experience involving painting the wall actual size, I approached the painting *Complicity* in the same way, and my first inclination was to provide a sufficiently large canvas. Having that set, I started preparing the canvas. Every time I start any painting, my first action is always to seal the canvas by applying a PVA glue diluted with thirty to forty percent water. Once the glue has dried, I paint a very thin layer using raw umber oil paint diluted with a solvent. The next step is to design the grid as well as the main parts of the composition using graphite, usually an HB pencil. Most of the first layers of my paintings are made with a monochromatic approach. That is the moment when I check all the values related to the image. Usually, this is the step that I invest more time building the image. I mainly focus on adjusting the values and composition. Only after everything is in place and I feel comfortable with all the



Figure 14: Emerson L. Ferrandini, 2020, *Complicity*, 60 in. x 80 in., Oil on canvas, Collection of the artist.

aspects involving the image, I start adding color. In fact, I approach coloring in two ways: by glazing, which is a thin transparent layer of oil paint, and by traditionally painting by layers.

For instance, in the painting *Complicity*, I started glazing after the underpainting, but I could not apply a thin layer of oil paint to the entire image. In some areas, it was necessary to apply a layer of oil paint covering all the underpainting. Even though most of the adjustments involving composition and shapes were made during the grisaille step, it was not yet complete, finishing painting is a decision, and this is the hardest step for me. Once I decide that the image is done, I wait for six months to varnish the painting.

My artistic process always follows the same sequence, even though there are emotional and rational aspects involved. The emotional part of my artistic process mixes with the way I relate to my feelings, experiencing them deeply, and never avoiding them. The method of choosing a theme based on feelings goes through identifying how emotions manifest within my personality and my history as a person. Once I decided what it should show, my rational side starts to be more and more activated. I determine aspects such as the size of the painting and the composition, followed by the preparation of the canvas, an outline of the elements of the painting, a first monochrome representation using oil paint, and after a succession of layers of paint applying the fundamentals of values and colors.

## **CONCLUSION**

On the whole, my artwork comes from my soul, because I use my emotions as a starting point to create. After recognizing the emotion, the rational analysis of what I am feeling begins, and consequently, my ideation process happens. My process of designing paintings follows a sequence of steps that my visual perception and aesthetic sense consider sublime enough to connect to other souls. These steps are ideation, composition, values, and coloring. My artistic

creation involves some percentage of unknown information, which makes the process uncertain and mysterious. Over time, I realized that having steps in a logical sequence works best for me to make the unknown known, and to make the unseen visual through the process of painting. Indeed, I am more of a representational than an imaginative painter, just as I am more of a logical than an emotive person. Despite having a predominant rational approach in my daily attitude, I have never avoided my emotions during the development process of my body of work. I believe that people who love each other must be connected and share life experiences as much as possible. Painting my mother and her environment, which is physically apart from me since she lives in another country, was my way of spending time with her— lovely alone.

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## APPENDIX



Plate 1: Emerson L. Ferrandini, *Dona Maria*, 2019, Oil on canvas, 12 in x 12 in., Collection of the artist.

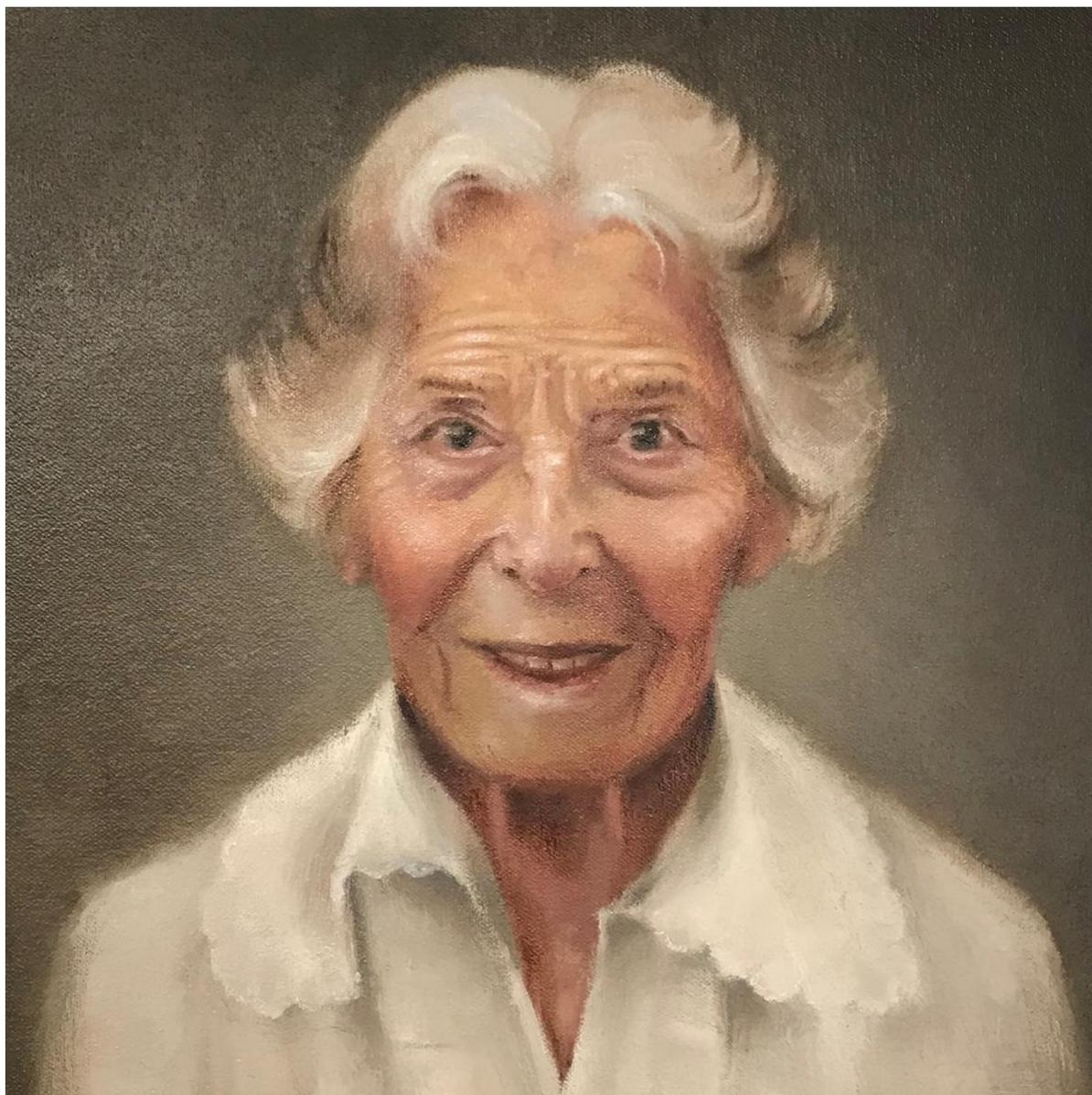


Plate 2: Emerson L. Ferrandini, *Tia Inês*, 2019, Oil on canvas, 12 in. x 12 in., Collection of the artist.



Plate 3: Emerson L. Ferrandini, *White Rose*, 2018, Oil on canvas, 10 in. x 10 in., Collection of the artist.

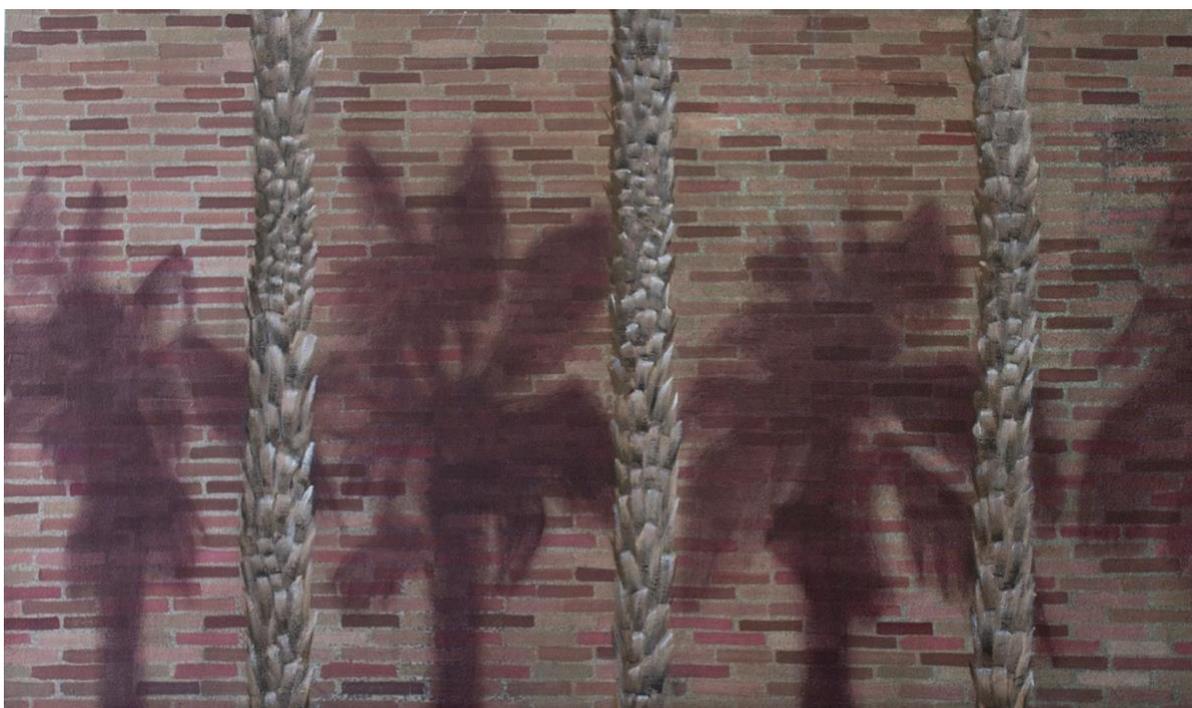


Plate 4: Emerson L. Ferrandini, *Three or Four*, 2019, Oil on panel, 18 in. x 30 in., Collection of the artist.

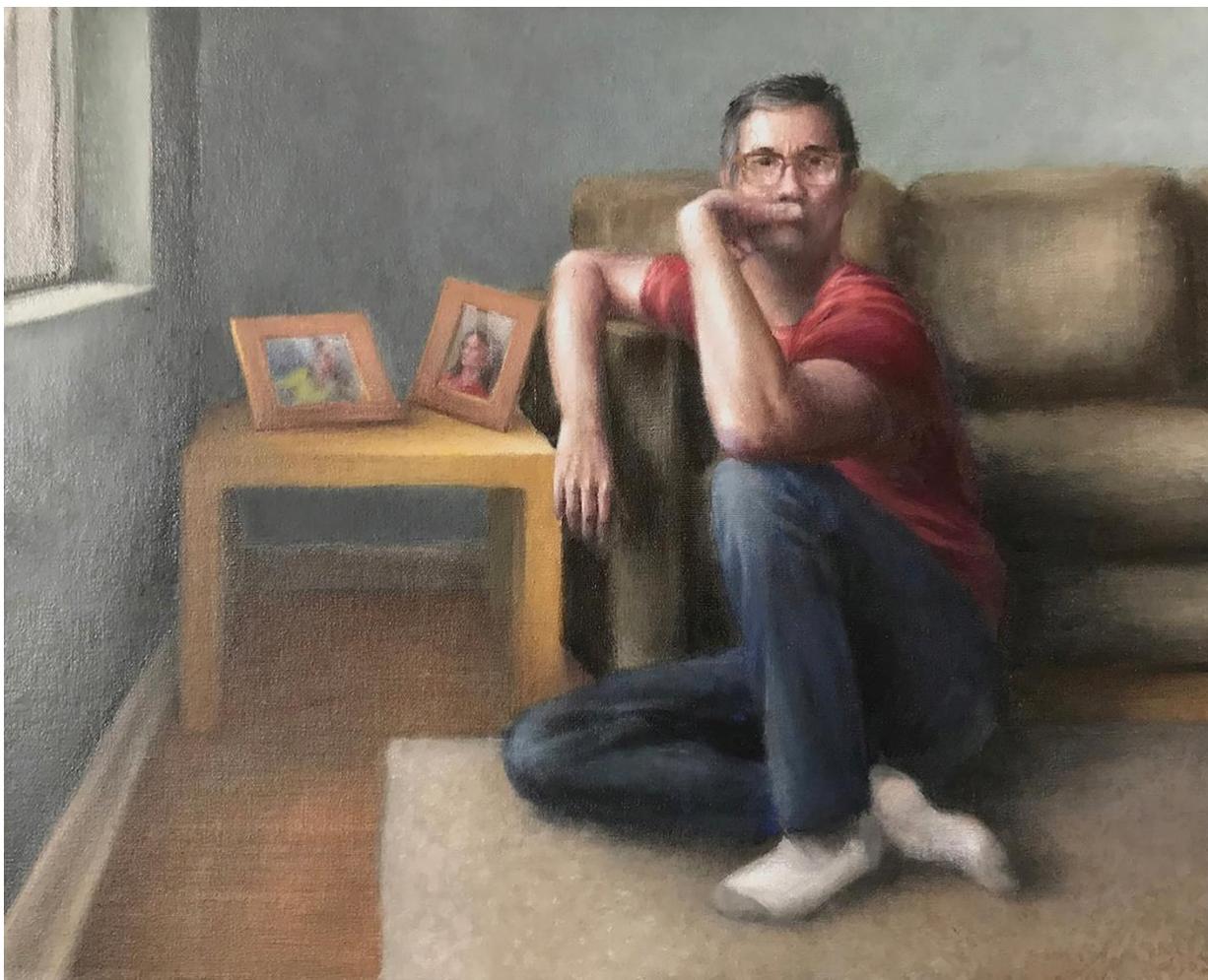


Plate 5: Emerson L. Ferrandini, *Self-Portrait*, 2019, Oil on canvas, 20 in. x 24 in., Collection of the artist.



Plate 6: Emerson L. Ferrandini, *Ego*, 2018, Oil on cardboard, 18 in. x 22 in., Collection of the artist.



Plate 7: Emerson L. Ferrandini, *Folhas*, 2018, 22 in. x 22 in., Oil on canvas, Collection of the artist.



Plate 8: Emerson L. Ferrandini, *Inacio*, 2020, Oil on canvas, 4 ft. x 6 ft., Collection of the artist.



Plate 9: Emerson L. Ferrandini, 2020, *Complicity*, 50 in. x 80 in., Oil on canvas, Collection of the artist.