



THE DUALITY OF GROWTH

THE DUALITY OF GROWTH

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ABSTRACT

I create large figurative oil paintings that revolve around the concept of growth. Growth is a beautiful experience but can also bring about overwhelming uncomfortable feelings. I am interested in capturing this duality and exploring how these internal emotions affect how we interact with our external environments. I want to bring into question, “What exists in reality and what exists in our subconscious?” I aim to blur that line and combine multiple realities in a single canvas. Working as a florist has informed how I create compositions and inspired my use of natural and botanical elements combined with the human figure. All my paintings derive from an intuitive place and take the form of a visual subconscious diary for my life. I consider my subconscious like an uncontrollable living liquid, leaking out little bits of visual information when I least expect it. I chase these intuitive images as they propel my strong compulsion to create. With reflection I come to understand what they mean to me, often realizing the paintings serve as a mirror to my inner self and how I engage with the outer world. Seeing these indirect self-portraits forces me to become more self-aware, and I experience true growth. I feed these emotions directly back into my practice.

DEDICATION

I dedicate the last two years of intense work and discovery to my family, especially my supportive parents. Without their continuous love and support none of this would be possible.

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THE DUALITY OF GROWTH

DESCRIPTION

My paintings revolve around the phenomenon of growth. Because they are intuitive, they take the form of a visual subconscious diary for my life. I have always felt as if I am in a constant state of growth and very much drawn to nature. These interests became an obsession after working as a florist for the past five years. As a result, natural and botanical elements have crept into my work, seamlessly combined with the human figure. Personal growth is a beautiful experience, but it can also bring about a whirlwind of uncomfortable emotions. I capture the duality of growth through plants and the human form to explore how these beautiful and uncomfortable feelings can infringe on our perception of external environments. I want to question, “What exists in reality and what exists in our subconscious?” I aim to blur that line and combine multiple realities onto a single canvas.

Over time, more ideas and subjects related to growth appear in my paintings, such as *Begonia Maculata* (Figure 1). A female figure sits in the foreground with large leaves replacing her head. She is in a dimly lit room filled with surreal elements



Figure 1. Jacquelin Nagel, *Begonia Maculata (In Progress)* 2023, Oil on Polyester, 48x72in.

representing growth and decay. Another figure's arm reaches into the scene, as if offering her a colored flower. When I am in a depressive state, I find the strength within to search for my own joy. I am both the figure and the arm. Growth requires personal effort, so I strive to create my own beauty in what sometimes feels like a mundane and bleak environment. I want to portray this idea through my color palette in this painting. The entire painting feels grey and muddy in juxtaposition to the saturated red of the roses, fallen rose petals, and red underside of the maculata leaves that carry the viewer's eye through the composition. This trail of red mimics the idea of a silver lining that must be searched for when life becomes dark. A cross and rosary are hidden along this trail, symbolizing the source of my personal light in darkness. These muddy and saturated colors also mirror the floral world, and hint at the notion that from mud comes vibrant growth.

Experiencing growth too quickly can lead to feelings of disassociation—the feeling of being so tangled up in internal thoughts and anxieties it can be hard to connect with the external world. It becomes difficult to decipher what makes up reality and what is in our brain. One's headspace can begin to overtake one's real space. In *Begonia Maculata*, I combine the reality of my bedroom at my parents' home with surreal elements from my subconscious to create the disorienting feeling of merged realities. Although a head is missing from the figure, I wanted to include a bust above it to represent my feelings of disorientation and disassociation more directly. I included a begonia maculata plant on the shelves to add to the confusion of the space by differentiating the scale of the same object. Playing with scale allows the viewer to experience the disorienting headspace I paint about. Hands reaching out of shelves and drawers continue to create discomfort and push the space

into the surreal. I want to juxtapose a living space that is so comfortable to me with the uncomfortable headspace I sometimes experience.

The art historical idea of vanitas has also naturally appeared in my work as I have reflected on the transience of life. As I learn to come to terms with our mortality, including symbolism in my paintings that invites meditation on the brevity of life has been therapeutic. Objects such as dying flowers, rotting fruits, or dead bugs demonstrate the passing of time and emphasize the idea that life is ephemeral, and we must cherish these fleeting moments of beauty.

Although my work comes from an intuitive and internal place, external influences have continued to affect how I create. Working for the established botanical artist WIFE NYC has continued to open new ways of thinking about plants and merging my floral and fine art backgrounds, which was the



Figure 2. Jacquelin Nagel, *Subconscious Exploration #1*, 2023, Oil on Polyester, 39x39in.

driving force behind my *Subconscious Exploration* series. (Figures 2 and 3). These paintings were also greatly inspired by the artist Sean Norvet. I want these explorations to appear as if they are bubbling up from my subconscious in a surreal way. I instinctually take natural elements and parts of figures out of their everyday settings and rearrange them in unique

ways to bring a new appreciation to the forms, approaching the composition in the same way I would a floral arrangement.

The addition of eyeballs has become common in many of my current paintings like *Begonia Maculata*. When I was younger, I drew eyeballs repetitively. This helped me to teach myself how to draw realistically, but I believe I was picking up on the powerful emotive quality of eyes from a very young age. A single eye can express a range of emotions, often helping to set the strange and emotional mood of my paintings. When separated from a face, an eye simultaneously feels weird yet beautiful, encompassing the duality I aim for. They have evolved into an important symbol for me to further explore and understand. Beyond *Begonia Maculata*, their resurgence has appeared in my *Subconscious Explorations* and my *Freefall* paintings.



Figure 3. Jacquelin Nagel, *Subconscious Exploration #3*, 2022, Oil on Canvas, 12in.

As I continue to dive into themes of growth, I want to explore the impact of art history on my work. Caravaggio has been a big influence, and his *Bacchus* painting directly inspired my *Bacchus* painting (Figure 4).

My contemporary version of Bacchus explores how someone's headspace may infringe upon one's real space. Surreal elements like checkered or balancing fruit let the viewer know that this space is not real. The line where reality starts and ends is hard to see. Caravaggio's dramatic chiaroscuro has also had a lasting impact on me. As a result, I am constantly drawn to darker backgrounds and often use them to dramatically light my figures, especially in my *Freefall* painting (Figure 5).



Figure 4. Jacquelin Nagel, *Bacchus*, 2023, Oil on canvas, 30x40in.

When I think about my life, it can be difficult and overwhelming to understand the lack of control I have over what happens, fueling inner anxieties. I have been working hard to accept that life is just one giant freefall, and I am finding immense personal growth in that



Figure 5. Jacquelin Nagel, *Freefall*, 2023, Oil on Polyester, 48x84in.

acceptance. I hope to capture this emotional journey in my painting *Freefall*. Two dramatically lit falling figures are intertwined with bare limbs and flourishing plant life. My floral background and love for *ikebana*, the Japanese art of floral arranging, played an influential role in my compositional choices and the emphasis I place on the negative space surrounding the figures. I approached the composition in a similar way to my *Subconscious Exploration* paintings, making sure each element has the space to be appreciated in its own beauty, yet still creating a cohesive and attractive gestural form. A dark background adds to the drama of the

expressive forms. The swirling brushstrokes help to convey the chaotic internal mindset I experience. Impasto brushstrokes filled with energy and movement and fluid abstract forms sit next to my heavily rendered figures, bringing out the beauty of both types of mark making and further representing the idea of “chaos vs control.” The multiplicity and separation of limbs are meant to show the discomfort of growth and echo feelings and themes of disassociation. The reaching hands mimic plant life as they stretch towards the light. Like me, they seek out light in the darkness. There is no clear line between where reality ends and the subconscious world begins. Vanitas is symbolized through fallen dying rose petals

trickling down the painting and wilting leaves. Sharp rose thorns layered over the soft human form adds to the sensation of pain that I experience with growth. This painting feels like a genuine amalgamation of my subconscious, who I am as an artist, and what I have learned the past two years. It visually embodies my current state in life: my awareness of a constant flux of growth and decay, my efforts to understand my place in this overwhelming world and the limited time we have here, all while striving to find my grounding, so that I can blossom into the best version of myself.

My work derives from a vulnerable place and has become an extension of myself. As I've completed this series, I've come to think about my subconscious as an uncontrollable living liquid, leaking out little bits of visual information when I least expect it. I chase these intuitive images as they spiral into a compulsion to create. Although the work is extremely personal, I leave enough room for viewers to connect with the paintings through their own experiences and emotions. Painting life size helps me to further blur the line between the real and the surreal. When looking at the paintings, the viewer can see the life size figures and imagine themselves in the surreal environments, as if they can walk directly into the world of the painting.

RESEARCH

When thinking about my work in a broader sense, I can make connections, personal self-discoveries, and gain insight into how and why I create. I borrow from other artists in the fine art and floral worlds and let my personal experiences inform the rest. This combination of my backgrounds feels genuine to who I am and inspires me creatively.



Figure 6. Jacquelin Nagel, Floral Arrangement, 2021.

Working as a florist has opened my eyes to all kinds of floral styles and ways of thinking about composition and sculptural form. *Ikebana*, the art of Japanese floral arranging, has had a profound impact on how I view all visual stimuli. These arrangements are often centered around the idea of living in harmony with nature, which I personally hold as a high value. In *ikebana*, “emphasis is placed on accentuating the lines and individual shapes of each flower, leaf, and branch” (Kopytin 35), which can be seen in my rendition of an *ikebana* arrangement in Figure 6.

The surrounding negative space becomes just as important as the physical elements themselves “creating rhythm and flow, engaging the viewer with the composition” (Kopytin 35). Less gradually becomes more. This aspect of *ikebana* is something I have brought into my artwork. In traditionalist views, black backgrounds are regarded as an incorrect way to fill a space in a painting, however, I use them often. A black background not only creates high contrast but also draws viewers’ attention to the individual botanical forms, their shapes, and the negative space around them. I always make sure the forms have room to breathe and can be appreciated for their own beauty. My use of color is directly pulled from unique natural botanical forms and is also emphasized in contrast to the black backgrounds.



Figure 7. WIFE NYC, Untitled, www.wifency.com

Having the opportunity to work for artist Sophie Parker, aka WIFE NYC, has continued to challenge my creative ideas about art and natural elements. Since the first time I came across WIFE’s work I was blown away. I had never seen fine art and florals combined so seamlessly in a way that got every gear in my brain turning. WIFE NYC looks at the botanical world as a sculptural medium and “challenges classical notions of floral arranging by reimagining traditional forms and offering new modes of thinking about what is natural” (Parker). She has opened doors for me to find new ways to combine and compose the two art forms—florals and fine art—that I have fallen in love with. You can see her influence and the influence of *ikebana* in my work, especially in my *Freefall* reference sketch (Figure 8). I approach the composition in a sculptural way, creating bold shapes and movement with the



Figure 8. Jacquelin Nagel, *Freefall Reference Sketch*, 2022, Digital Drawing, 4x7in.

forms. Her work inspired me to play with the human body as just another floral element, taking the form out of its usual expected environment and playing with it in a new way, while keeping my message of uncomfortable growth in the forefront of my mind.

The Baroque art movement and Caravaggio specifically have greatly influenced my work. His use of dark backgrounds and dramatic lighting have stuck with me for many years, and it was only a matter of time before his influence appeared more strongly in my

paintings. My black backgrounds have developed over time from his influence and use of

chiaroscuro. Baroque artists specifically pushed the idea of chiaroscuro, focusing on shadows and a single light source to achieve realistic depth and tone (Taggart). Caravaggio would often black out large portions of the background and brightly illuminate the foreground subjects (Taggart). This idea of chiaroscuro can be seen in my *Freefall* painting (Figure 5), which utilizes a single light source, strongly lit foreground figures, and black portions of the background. This technique creates intense contrast, guiding the viewers eye to the strongly lit areas helping me to control the focal point of the composition. Chiaroscuro also helps me to set the dramatic and existential mood of my painting.

After recognizing Caravaggio's impact on me, it only felt natural to try and create my own contemporary version of one of his paintings. The mysteriousness of his *Bacchus* figure (Figure 9) piqued my interest while the fruit and plant life begged me to create my own (Figure 10).



Figure 9. Caravaggio, *Bacchus*, 1598, oil on canvas, 95x85cm, Uffizi Museum, www.uffizi.it/en/artworks/caravaggio-bacchus



Figure 10. Jacquelin Nagel, *Bacchus*, 2023, oil on canvas, 30x40in.

Although the overall composition remains the same, I made it my own by adding more floral and botanical elements to help push the idea of internal uncomfortable growth infringing on our external environment. Caravaggio's Bacchus invites the viewer in for a drink, while my Bacchus seems tense to demonstrate the uncomfortable emotions I want to express. Working as a florist surrounds me with the natural elements I love, giving my palette plenty of inspiration. I saturate the colors of natural elements to emphasize their beauty and give viewers an insight into how I view and appreciate the vegetal forms. I used the leaves from Caravaggio's version as direct reference for the leaves in my own, creating a stronger visual connection between the two paintings. The process of this painting has been rewarding and feels as if I am infusing the work that has molded me with my own interests. I am growing as an artist while I do it.

The Baroque art movement has continued to affect my work in relation to vanitas, a popular theme in the Dutch art genre of still-life painting. Vanitas still-life paintings gained popularity in Holland in the 1600s. Through specific symbolism, these types of paintings encourage contemplation on the brevity of life, man's fragility, and the vanity of worldly things (Sonnema 3). These ideas feel genuine to me as I am constantly in awe of how fast life is moving. Specific objects carry unique symbolism within the realm of vanitas helping me to convey my message. This effect is most easily exemplified in my *Begonia Maculata* painting (Figure 11). A vase of dying red roses pops out of the shelving in the upper right-hand corner to emphasize the idea that this life is ephemeral. The falling petals help to indicate the roses are reaching the end of their life. A pocket watch resides on the floor in the shadows, reminding the viewer that time is running out. Balancing moldy fruits rest upon each other as they start to rot, representing the passing of time. In Dutch tradition, these objects fall under

the vanitas category of death and transience (Sonnema 4). I decided to include books and a sculptural bust on the shelves to represent the arts and sciences and earthly existence as the



Figure 11. Jacquelin Nagel, *Begonia Maculata (In Progress)*, 2023, Oil on Polyester, 48x72in

Dutch artists did (Sonnema 4).

They represented resurrection and the afterlife with ears of corn, trumpets, and literary references.

However, I decided to represent this idea through a small gold cross peaking from behind the vase of roses and a rosary

hanging from a drawer knob to represent my faith as a Catholic.

Likewise, in *Subconscious Exploration #1*, I decided to place dead insects in the foreground of the painting, peeking out of floral and figurative elements to remind the audience that this life comes to an end so we must cherish

these fleeting moments of beauty. The same sentiment is evoked by the dead insects in the foreground of my *Bacchus* painting. I enjoy the notion that an image or symbol can serve as a path to contemplation and plan to continue to incorporate vanitas into my future work.

My color palette in *Begonia Maculata* differs greatly from my other paintings. Instead of my usual saturated palette I have decided to create a dim and dull world in contrast to the bright red roses, rose petals, and red underside of the maculata leaves. This look was greatly inspired by artist duo Telmo Miel's painting *Along for the Ride* (Figure 12). I decided to use this color palette to convey the idea that light must be searched for when life becomes dark. With light, dark times can lead to growth.



Figure 12. Telmo Miel, *Along for the Ride*, 2020, Oil on Linen, 100x40cm. www.telmomiel.com/indoor/

Although I pull heavily from my art historical knowledge, I am constantly going to art openings in Los Angeles and finding new contemporary artists whose work I enjoy. I first saw Sean Norvet's work in person at Richard Heller Gallery for his solo show *Motion Pictures* in Spring 2022. He describes his paintings as “sometimes explosive and sometimes still, and often mashes up elegant photo-realism with two dimensional cartoon buffoonery” (Norvet). This can be seen in his painting *Loud as a Whisper* (Figure 13). Although I personally don't utilize cartoons in my own work, I was blown away by his effortless combination of multiple realities on a single canvas space. In the gallery, his work looked like an elegant subconscious explosion, holding a sense of movement and stillness simultaneously—something I strive to achieve in my own work. His paintings directly



Figure 13. Sean Norvet, *Loud as a Whisper*, 2021, Oil on panel, 30x24in.
www.seannorvet.com



Figure 14. Jacquelin Nagel, *Subconscious Exploration #1*, 2023, Oil on Polyester, 39x39in.

inspired my *Subconscious Exploration Series* (See Figure 14) and the formation of my *Freefall* painting. His work continues to change the way I think about utilizing my subconscious in relation to my paintings.

The more I paint, the more I can understand the impact of my artistic influences on my work. I am enjoying recognizing the importance of each inspiration and discovering new ones. As I continue to dive into my studio practice, different challenges arise keeping me on my toes. Each challenge requires a different mode of attacking the canvas. I enjoy fine tuning my process which is in turn helping me to gain speed, allowing me to better keep up with the pace of my ideas.

METHODOLOGY

I grow as a human and evolve as an artist just like the plants I paint. As a florist, I understand that pruning helps to create a stronger root base and encourages growth. I am actively working on artistic pruning in my practice, eliminating parts of my process that no

longer serve me and slow me down. Most importantly, I want to eradicate a mindset focused on careful rendering and perfection. I can always fall back on my attention to detail and highly resolved rendering to finish a painting, but I want to push myself outside of my comfort zone to take more risks with my subjects and my mark making. I aim to adopt a “no fear of paint” attitude and experiment with the possibilities of paint.

All my paintings need to be made. Subconscious images that inspire my paintings hit me at random and stay with me until I can bring them to life. Each painting starts from the same internal place. I often chase these images blindly, without fully understanding their message. However, every painting presents its own set of problems that require its own unique set of solutions. I rely heavily on my intuition to begin my paintings and lean on my

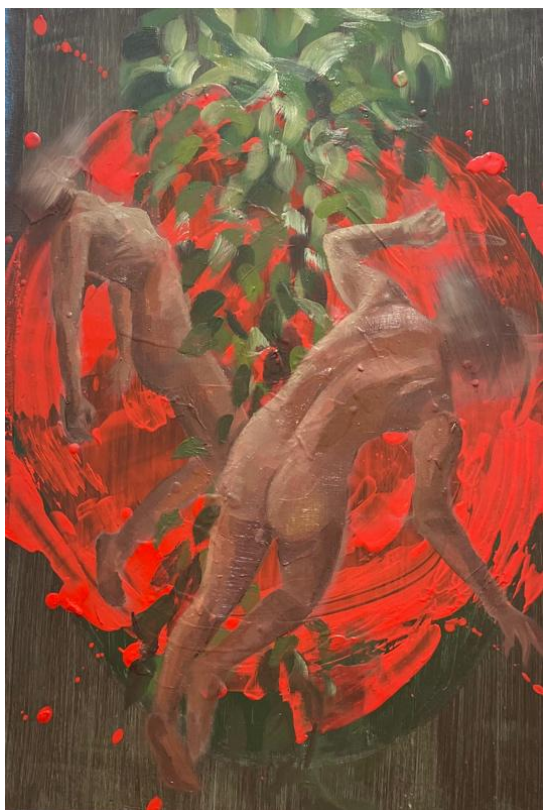


Figure 15. Jacquelin Nagel, *Freefall Study*, 2022, Oil on Polyester, 8x14in.

floral and fine art backgrounds to carry me through to the finished product. The more I paint and flesh out ideas, the more unexpected issues arise, constantly pushing my practice forward and forcing discoveries to happen in the studio.

My *Freefall* painting (Figure 5) was no exception to my intuitive process. I first received an intuitive image of two dramatically lit figures freefalling vertically with vines swirling in-between them (Figure 15). I did not know the meaning of the image for a few weeks, but after much self-reflection I could start to understand.

This intuitive image captures my struggle with the

idea of control in life. As much as we try to plan and control our lives, it is nearly impossible. Life throws the unexpected at you and can feel like one giant freefall. Letting go of the need to control everything can result in immense personal growth.

Once I understand the meaning of the initial image, I rely on my fine art training to create a complete composition. For my *Freefall* study, I kept the artist duo Telmo Miel's red and green palette in mind, which can be seen in their painting *Dreams of Regret* (Figure 16). I was interested in using a controlled complementary color palette to create contrast and an overall mood of unease. I initially planned to use a large broom to create the abstract brushstrokes with thick paint in the background to represent this idea of "lack of control." The abstract brush strokes filled with energy and movement sit next to my heavily rendered and tightly detailed figures and plant forms, bringing out the beauty of both types of mark making and representing the chaos of life and the gut desire to control it.

After sitting with my first study for a while, and after an eye-opening meeting with my mentors, I realized I had lost part of myself in this image. I went back to square one and stripped away everything except what was necessary, the intuitive image and the message it holds. I approached this fresh start with nothing in mind except who I am as an artist and what I genuinely want to create. I settled on the composition seen in Figure 17. The two free falling figures are



Figure 16. Telmo Miel, *Dreams of Regret*, 2019, Oil on Panel, 38x38cm. www.telmomiell.com/indoor/

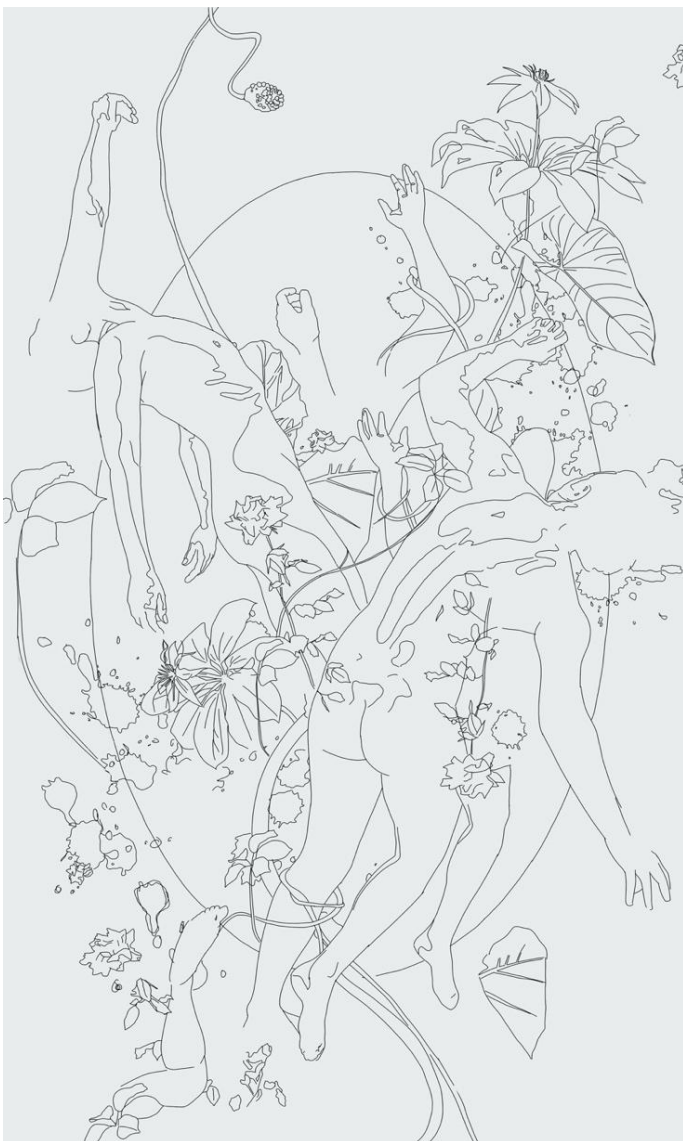


Figure 17. Jacquelin Nagel, *Freefall Reference Sketch*, 2022, Digital Drawing, 4x7in.

now intertwined with bare limbs and flourishing plant life. My floral background and love for *ikebana* played an influential role in my compositional choices and the return to my original color palette. This image feels much more in tune with my overall message of uncomfortable, yet fruitful, personal growth through acceptance of the freefall of life.

When I created this design, I knew it would force me to grow technically as an artist. I quickly realized I would have to work from the background to the foreground, quite literally building up the painting. The black backgrounds of my paintings have become a huge technical hurdle

for me, as I have always tried to create a smooth and infinite black plane without any sign of brushstrokes. Earlier in the year, I saw Dominique Fung's solo exhibition *Coastal Navigation*

at Nicodim Gallery. I was very drawn to her body of work and have only recently started to see its influence appear in my own. She also has black backgrounds in most of her paintings and fills them with large energetic brushstrokes which can be seen in her large painting *Traverse Across* (Figure 18). I really enjoyed how the rapid brushstrokes in her background are juxtaposed with her detailed rendering of the foreground elements.



Figure 18. Dominique Fung, *Traverse Across*, 2022, Oil on Canvas, 108x76in. www.nicodimgallery.com/exhibitions/dominique-fung-coastal-navigation?view=slider-tab:slideshow:slide:6

After seeing this show and letting it marinate in my mind for a couple months, I had a lightbulb moment and decided to stop fighting the brushstrokes in my backgrounds and use them to my advantage instead. Mixing diatomaceous earth into my black paint helps me to make impasto brush strokes. This allows me to create more dramatic gestures and wild movement in my backgrounds, furthering my message of chaos versus control in life as shown in Figure 19.

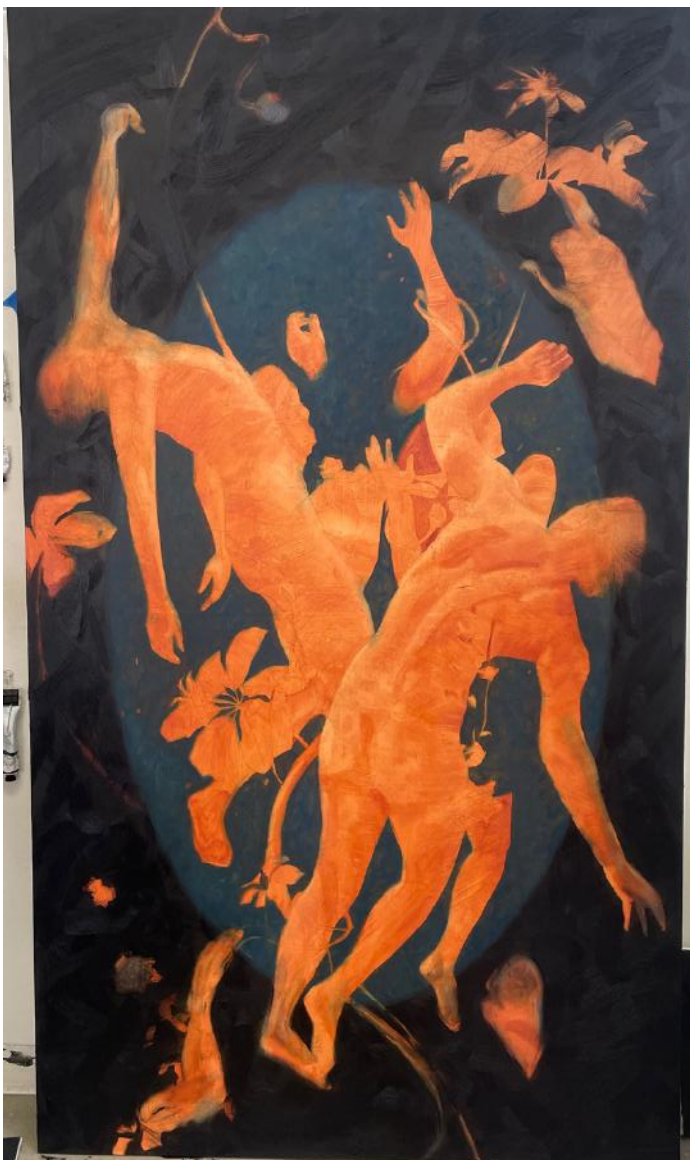


Figure 19. Jacquelin Nagel, *Freefall (Work in Progress)*, 2022, Oil on Polyester, 48x84in.

Because I am an indirect painter, I think steps ahead while I paint, setting up assets to work off in future layers. For example, starting with large flat areas of vigorous brush strokes gives me the ability to choose where I want that mark making to show through in the final painting. The same thought process applies to my transparent red earth pigment underpainting and initial mark making.

The blue abstract marks throughout the composition of *Freefall* are included to symbolize the uncontrollable nature of life. I also wanted to include abstract marks to help force me out of my habitually tight rendering and set me up for unknown

and exciting future possibilities. After experimenting with many different media and techniques, I decided to use galkyd to help me achieve the enamel-like finish I envisioned. On top of the black surface, I lined up piles of paint of each necessary color, then squeegeed around the surface in an organic motion. Next, I tinted pools of galkyd medium and poured that mixture on top of the squeegeed paint. I mixed a lighter galkyd pool and dropped that

into the previous pools in selective areas. I repeated the last step with a darker galkyd mixture. The results can be seen wet and dry in Figures 20 and 21. What I left to dry was much different than what I came back to in the morning. I understood that this technique requires practice attempts and a deeper understanding of my mediums. After many trial paintings I have a general idea of what will happen with the abstract marks, yet no matter how many practice paintings I make, the nature of the abstract marks is largely uncontrollable, mirroring their metaphoric message. These preparatory experiments help me tremendously when it comes time to work on a seven-foot canvas.



Figure 20. Jacquelin Nagel, Galkyd Bubble Experiments (Wet), 2022, Oil on Canvas, 8x10in.

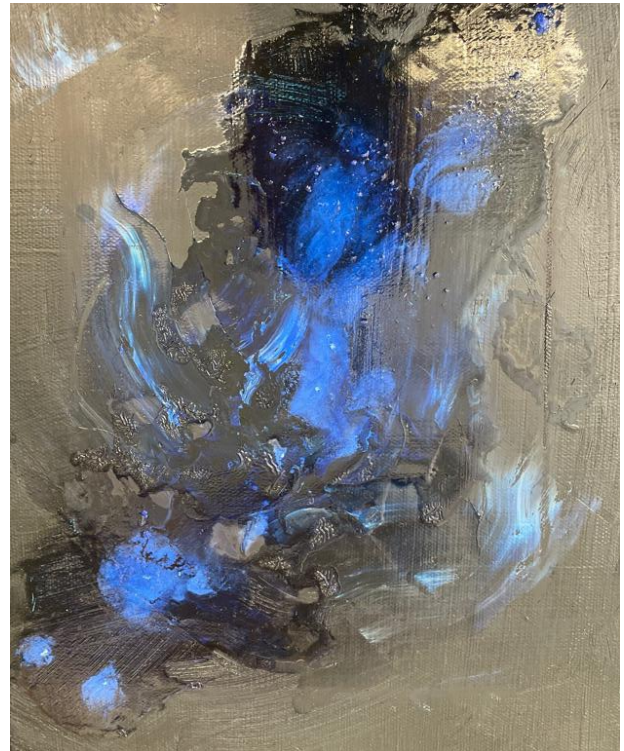


Figure 21. Jacquelin Nagel, Galkyd Bubble Experiments (Dry), 2022, Oil on Canvas, 8x10in.

As this painting came closer to a finish, it became more and more important to keep my “no fear of paint” attitude at the forefront of my mind. *Freefall* was a genuine push and pull between me and the entity it was becoming. I was constantly reacting to the image and making changes every step of the way. When the painting was about 70% finished, looking at the entire picture I still felt a sense of atmosphere needed to be pushed. I decided to add more dimension to the swirling background by creating a pathway of effortless marks. I created my own tool out of a pencil and thumbtack to make marks that were more unique than a brushstroke, but uniform enough to create a cohesive visual path for the eye. They resembled elongated dots (See Figure 22). This part of the process felt risky as I had a deadline fast approaching and

removing the dots would set me back weeks. In the end it ended up elevating my painting and pushing me to be more comfortable taking risks and running with the results. The addition of the motion blurs put me in a similar position as the dots and yielded a successful result.

My “no fear of paint” attitude has also made me more playful in the studio. I have been experimenting with incorporating different materials within my paint



Figure 22. Jacquelin Nagel, *Freefall* (Detail), 2023, Oil on Polyester, 48x84in.

like holographic paper and pressed dried flowers. I have also been using found plants as stamps by dipping them into mixed color and pressing them onto the canvas. These new additions in my studio practice can be seen in my *Cosmo* painting (Figure 23). Including plant life more directly in my work has been exciting. I'm also enjoying the additional layer of dimension and physicality the found elements give my work. It has opened so many possibilities of natural materials to explore. I want to continue to weave these materials into my paintings, especially where they can strengthen my message of growth.

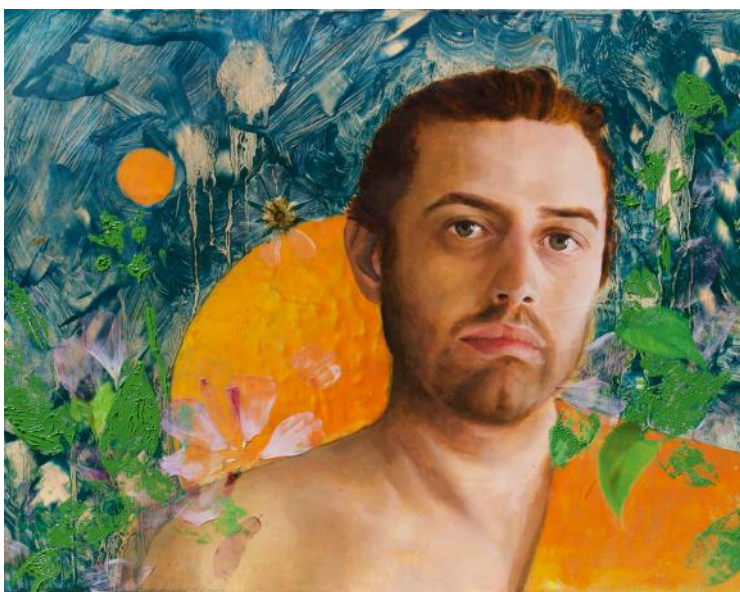


Figure 23. Jacquelin Nagel, *Cosmo*, 2023, oil on claybord, 16x12in.

As I continue to experiment and learn, my process undergoes changes that benefit each individual painting. Glazing has always been a major part of my process. It helps me to have control over my pigments and achieve the intense color I reach for in my paintings. Glazing

traditions date back to the 12th century and were used heavily by northern renaissance masters like Jan Van Eyck. Oil paint glazes are “thin, translucent paint layers of saturated color that allow light to pass through and finally reflect back through the paint” (Bol). This reflection of light allows for the painting to illuminate itself from within, creating a luminosity. Upon entering the program, my paintings were fully glazed from start to finish. Now, as I learn to incorporate thicker paint and texture into my work, I begin my paintings with a first pass *alla prima*, or wet into wet. I then only glaze on final layers to create

subtleties, saturation, and luminosity where needed. My paintings can have anywhere from 10-30 layers in some areas depending on each painting's specific needs. The process of layering paint has become integral to my work and is necessary to achieve my desired finish.

Another technique I like to pair with glazing is the *grisaille* method. *Grisaille* is a painting technique where “an image is executed entirely in shades of gray and usually modeled to create the illusion of sculpture” (Gorlinksi). This grey-scale image serves as a base to work on top of, especially with translucent glazes. I decided to use this technique on the figures in my *Begonia Maculata* and *Bacchus* paintings. The human figures start off very cool in temperature with grey and become warmer as glazes are added (See Figures 24-25).



Figure 24. Jacquelin Nagel, *Bacchus* (In Progress), 2022, oil on canvas, 30x40in.



Figure 25. Jacquelin Nagel, *Bacchus*, 2023, oil on canvas, 30x40in.

Working this way gives me an effortless push and pull of warm and cool tones creating subtle shifts in temperature. The paint mimics the cool color under our warm translucent skin. This technique also helps me to achieve a strong lighting effect and give a three-dimensional physicality to my figures.

Upon entering my studio, I often feel overwhelmed. Every painting is seemingly screaming at me, begging me for their necessary changes. As overwhelming and daunting as it can feel, working on multiple projects simultaneously has unexpectedly become a very important part of my practice. Once I come to a place in a painting where I am unsure of the next steps, I can jump to another painting and let my brain process what the paused painting needs. This allows me to constantly have fresh eyes on my all my work, enabling me to make bolder decisions when I revisit a painting and helps me to avoid treating the work as precious.

This program is the first time I have been able to devote years of my life to my art. I have witnessed so many changes to my studio practice and don't see any end in sight. The more time I spend painting, the more changes need to be made as I discover better ways to create. I am still figuring out what works best for my process and anticipate my practice will remain in a constant state of flux as I grow as an artist.

CONCLUSION

I knew getting an MFA would be a pivotal time for me and my work, yet it somehow exceeded any preconceived notions I had. I have been resting in a place of gratitude as my time in the MFA program comes to an end. These two years have allowed me to dive deeply into my practice and propel my work forward with so many new ways to create. I can genuinely say I gave this program everything I had. I feel like I am just starting to tap my

true potential as an artist, and I am excited to see the many directions the work will go. I plan to continue to paint full time after graduation as there are so many more paintings begging to be made. I can move forward with a deeper understanding of why I create. I have a true personal compulsion to paint and a hope that other souls can connect to the work through the shared human experience. I don't know exactly what's next, but I am looking forward to the journey my work will take me on.

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APPENDIX



Plate 1. *Begonia Maculata* (WIP), 2023, Oil on Polyester, 48x72in.



Plate 2. *Subconscious Exploration #1*, 2023, Oil on Polyester, 39x39in.



Plate 3. *Subconscious Exploration #2*, 2023, Oil on Canvas, 15x30in.



Plate 4. *Subconscious Exploration #3*, 2023, Oil on Canvas, 12in.



Plate 5. *Bacchus*, 2023, Oil on Canvas, 30x40in.



Plate 6. *Freefall*, 2023, Oil on Polyester, 48x84in.

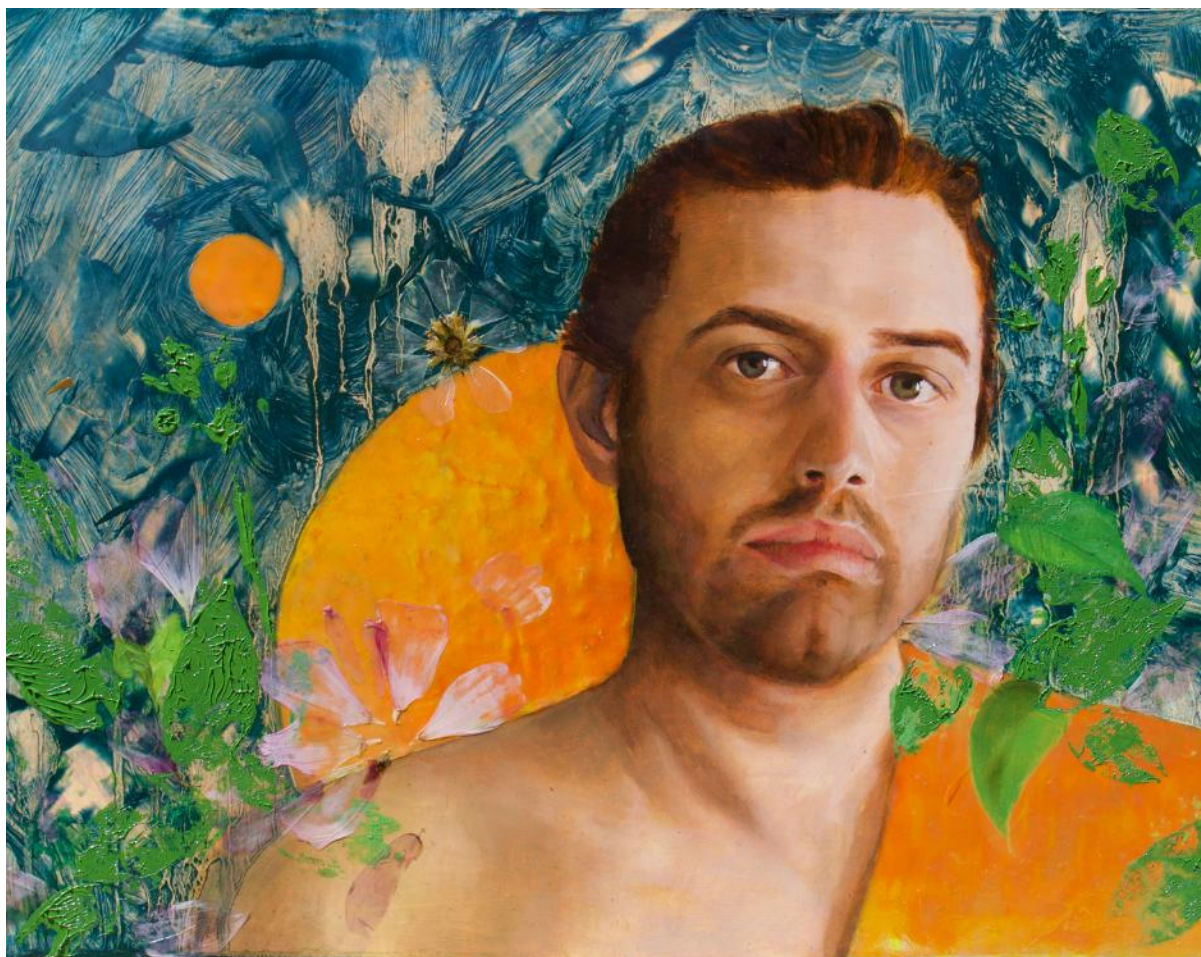


Plate 7. *Cosmo*, 2023, Oil on Claybord, 11x14in.

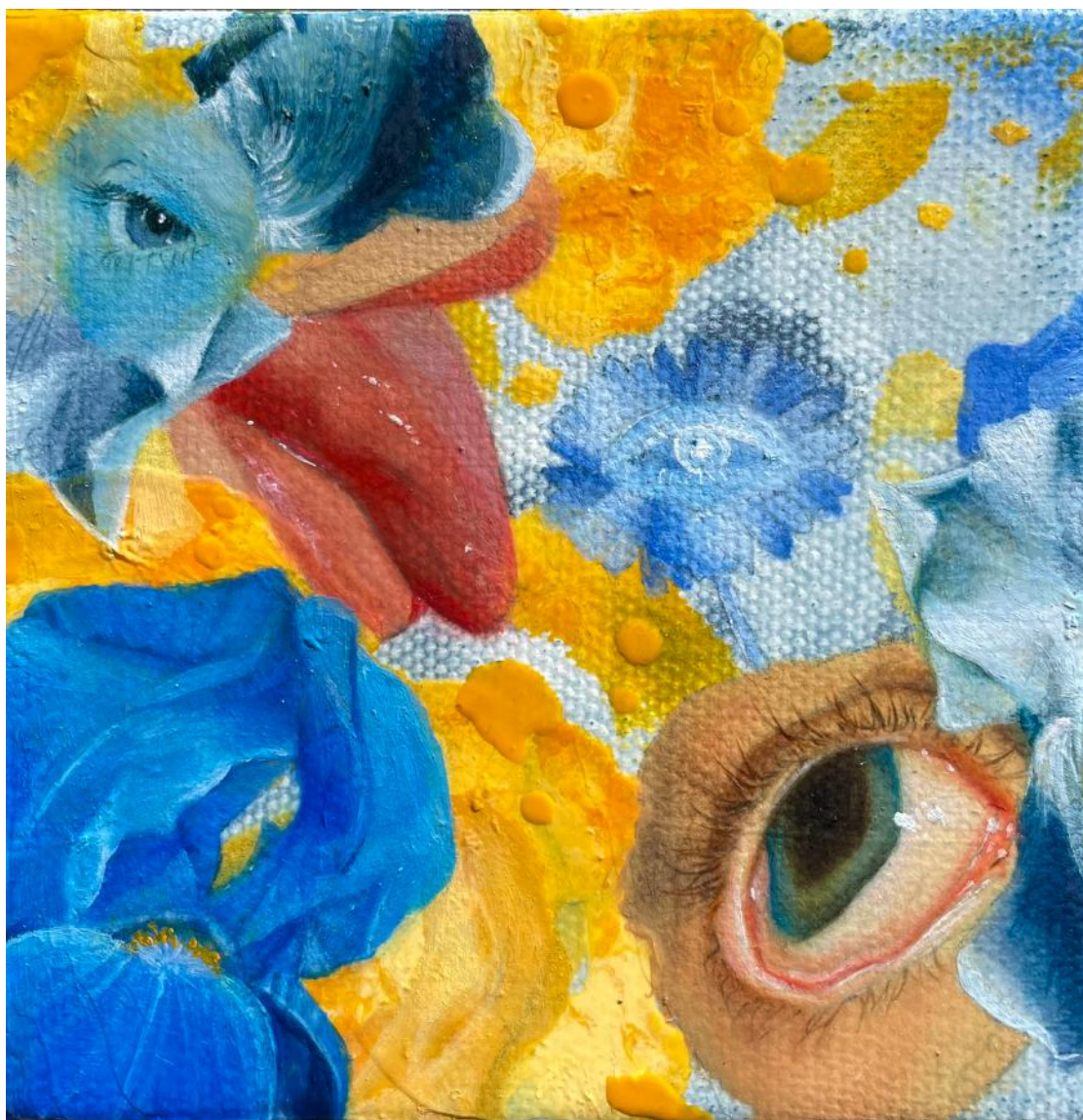


Plate 8. *Untitled*, 2023, Oil on Canvas, 4x4in.



Plate 9. *Untitled*, 2023, Oil on Canvas, 10x20in.



Plate 10. *Engulfed*, 2022, Oil on Canvas, 36x60in.

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