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Interview with Mary Finlayson of Painted Mary



Carrying local and independent artists work is central to what Rare Device stands behind. We love to support and promote artists that we feel are making bold statements in the world of art. Enter Mary Finlayson, the owner and operator of **Painted Mary**. Mary is a San Francisco based artist who creates acrylic and gouache based paintings with a rich color palette. Her interest in painting interior spaces reflects the vulnerable narratives we display to the world through the choices we make in each object.



Finlayson of Painted Mary

KC: Can you tell us a little about your brand?

MF: Painted Mary is (plainly) a reflection of myself and my interests. I'm not sure it's a brand, but rather an expression of my art and experiences. My style is influenced by artists like David Hockney, Matisse, and Stuart Davis as well as the natural beauty and colors of California.



Tools of the

trade

KC: How long have you been painting and have you had any formal training?

MF: I really can't remember a time in my life when I wasn't interested in painting. I grew up in a very busy family and was the youngest of four. My mom always kept a huge drawer in the kitchen full of art supplies so after school I would entertain myself at the table drawing and painting until it was time for dinner. Later I took a lot of after-school art classes and went to a high school where I was able to choose art as a concentration. I went on to get degrees in Fine Arts, Art Education, and Art Therapy.

KC: Did you find pursuing a degree in art to be helpful in finding your own artistic voice? Would you recommend studying art in school to other aspiring artists?

MF: My formal training really gave me the discipline and respect for this craft. However, my artistic voice formed years after I graduated through experimentation and real-world experiences. For me, the formal training was very important, mostly for the fact that it challenged me hugely and helped me to understand the level of discipline it would take to pursue art professionally.



Painting in her studio

KC: Your paintings focus largely on material objects and scenes. Are these taken from real life, or are these scenes in your mind?

MF: I photograph homes and objects I visit then create flat compositions that skew and distort the compositions my paintings are based on. Usually, a lot changes between where I begin and where the painting ends up, this is most true for the color. I am more interested in capturing the feeling of a space than I am in depicting it strictly as it appears. So the spaces are partly real and partly imagined.

KC: What are you trying to communicate with your art?

MF: I am interested in the stories that interiors contain and how we use these spaces to tell stories. I like to consider rooms that feel personal - places with meaning full of important objects that create accidental compositions.

KC: Do you have a favorite thing you've created?

MF: I think my favorite painting would have to be "de Kooning with Plants." This was the first painting I made after leaving my job as an art teacher/art therapist to be a full-time artist, so its the marker of a huge change in my life and stylistically it was an important shift in my work also.



Finding the perfect color

KC: I think many artists struggle with consistently creating art that they feel is worthy of putting out into the world. Do you ever struggle with creative block or experience periods of creating things that aren't what you want them to be? How do you push past those times?

MF: Definitely, I struggle with this all the time! It's very difficult to feel inspired all the time, and the pressure to produce can cause a lot of anxiety. I think the best way to overcome a creative block is to not let it take hold of you and to just keep working even when you don't feel like it or don't have a particular idea. The notion that we need an idea before starting something creative just produces creative inertia. Inspiration rarely comes from sitting idly. Once you are playing around with the material it will usually lead you somewhere new. So my advice is to begin anywhere. It's okay if you don't know where it will end up.

KC: Is there a medium you would like to try but have not yet pursued?

MF: I'd love to learn how to weave and create textiles.



Mary's

sunny San Francisco studio

KC: Are you currently working on any pieces or have any fun projects planned for the future?

MF: For the last 6 months most of the pieces I've made have been relatively small, so right now I am working on several large canvas pieces because I miss the scale! I will be having a solo show in SF in early 2018 so am trying to get a lot of work ready for that. I recently partnered with a group of artisans to create a series of rugs and potential other textiles which will be available in the coming months.

You can find a selection of Mary's prints at both RD Divis and RD Noe Valley as well as **online**.

All photographs by **Nicola Parisi**



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