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Between You and Me

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Elisabeth Joung

Artist Statement

My work focuses on that nanosecond between the known and unknown. My goal is to fix that fleeting moment onto the canvas. Then my work becomes a bridge between my mind and the world. More fully, it embodies the acceptance of a transition between those two states of awareness: the known and the unknown, the realistic and the abstract, my familiar well-structured inner world and the apparently chaotic world where we share a common perception caused by unpredictable events and randomness. Accepting this complexity is the foundation my work builds upon.

Nature is a source of inspiration. Almost always, what I paint resembles a part of a flower, a bird, or some other organic or natural element. I find gratification in knowing that viewers have to use their imaginations to determine what I have painted. I visualize a place where we could originate from, before the creation of the universe, where our state of being was filled with infinite possibilities free from limitations. It's a concept of creating from the new, from the void, from nothing at all. The process is quick, as if the paint is a natural force coming alive, growing and blooming in front of our eyes. When this happens, we get to the point where we expect the unexpected, and accepted it as something desirable.

Initially I semi-randomly pour the paint on the canvas until unexpected satisfactions settle in. To control and balance out the I Ching's embrace of chance, I also employ deliberate brushstrokes. What consumes me is my desire to impose my control over what was previously arbitrary. Countless hours I spend in the process of transforming what I considered imperfect splotches. Through many brushstrokes, I direct a poetic rhythm to reflect the essence of my experience. This is the concept that guides me in my choices; I trust my instincts to bring me visions of purity and I keep laboring until this becomes revealed on the canvas.

My palette is dominated by bright colors because I find them to be spiritually uplifting. I also use materials that might intrigue viewers: my intention is to invite people to walk around my installation and to view my work from as many angles and perspectives as possible. For that reason I usually include pieces of broken glass, broken mirror, glitter and a variety of other surprising materials, like ice cream cones. I

also blend heavy gloss medium into acrylic paint, giving greater texture to my work. This makes my surfaces appear to be wet and even creates the illusion that I have put mud onto my canvases. Viewers see that my work expands beyond the two-dimensional canvas. I simply don't accept limitation that flat painting presents: I want my work to come alive, outside of the canvas. I feel this fact only heightens a desire to enter this wonderful place.

My aspiration is to bring a sort of fresh-eyed innocence to adult reality. I believe we all have a child hiding in our consciousness. And like a child manipulating clay on the playground, I find myself absorbed by that simple process. I search for the limit between the infantile and the mature, the simple and the sophisticated. But most of all I want to raise the question: should we accept such limitations?

Context and history are relevant. We start to get an understanding of art early in life, as if it comes to a youthful mind almost by accident. My belief is that art is a foundation that gives life meaning and structure. When you're innocent, you're open to everything. I call the journey of where art takes us acceptance. My childhood does not define the core of my work, but the affect it has on my vision should be recognized only in a subtle way. Viewers who misunderstand this hidden original element will find strangeness instead. Strangeness has never been my intention. But I love and accept all reactions to my work.

Acceptance is a key to living fully in the world. What happens inside a viewer is most important to me: That is where art happens. I hope to inspire others to celebrate life and to engage in a nuanced dialogue of acceptance of life's complexity. Pain is inevitable, but suffering is a choice. The secret lies in how we react. Ultimately, I hope viewers are drawn into my work and feel suspended in a way that everything outside their experiences disappears. Complete immersion in the animated narrative and beautiful places I offer. Through narrative states of awareness, I am interested in the ambiguity or disorientation that occurs in the middle stage; when we no longer hold our preconceptions but have not yet begun the transition to a status of acceptance.