



Theresa MacNaughton: An Artist Interview



Theresa MacNaughton resides in Wethersfield, Connecticut with her husband and two rescue dogs. She has been creating art since she was a young child, when she would spend hours drawing imaginary characters with a ballpoint pen in lined notebooks. She studied art throughout high school and into college, receiving a bachelor's degree in fine arts and journalism from Southern Connecticut State University in New Haven, Connecticut. After dabbling in recreational painting for many years, Theresa opened Whimsy & Enchantment Art on Etsy, where she currently sells original art, as well as prints, note cards, journals, and other functional items featuring reproductions of her work. Collectors are drawn to her introspective and whimsical portraits of women, beautiful woodland creatures, and majestic birds of prey.

What type of work do you create? What materials do you use?

I specialize in mixed media art - combining paint, colored pencils, watercolor crayons, collage elements, antique book pages, inspirational quotes and poetry into one-of-a-kind pieces inspired by nature, magic, everyday whimsy, and deep reflection of the soul.



When and how did you begin making art?

I have always loved art and have been drawing for as long as I can remember. I was enrolled in art enrichment classes in grade school and had fun exhibiting all types of creations in art shows at my school. This love for art following me into high school and beyond.

How did you find your unique style?

After a period where I had stopped making art, I discovered the work of mixed media artist Suzi Blu online. Suzi's work was unlike any I had ever seen. I was fascinated by her work, mostly portraiture that was both whimsical and realistic, and began taking her classes to learn how to incorporate all these unexpected elements into composed paintings. From there, the online art community began to boom, and I networked and took classes from other well-known contemporary artists in the mixed media field.

Much of your work is female figures: are these people you know or imaginary people? Or facets of yourself?

They are all figments of my imagination. I like to explore the many facets of the soul, emotions, and mythology in my paintings. They come alive organically for me on the canvas. Sometimes, even I'm surprised with the results. Any facet of myself is purely coincidental. For animals and birds, I will use a source photo to capture their true essence.

Can you tell us about your creation process?

I create the backgrounds of my paintings first. Oftentimes, I will infuse the piece with affirmations before laying down any paint. I'll create depth and texture with collage papers, book pages, crayon marks and other tools, which I then cover with paint. I'll then distress it, allowing some of the background poke through. At that time, I will begin to create the imagery onto the page – a goddess, a bird, an owl – whatever speaks to me at the time. I'll finish the piece with paint splatters, doodles, embellishments, and an inspirational quote that speaks to the theme of the painting I'm working on.

Which artists do you appreciate and admire?

I've always loved Pierre-Auguste Renoir. I was a big fan of impressionist art in my teen years. I also like Arthur Rackham, John Anster Fitzgerald, Margaret Keane, Sulamith Wülfing, Edward Gorey, and Tasha Tudor.



Question 6: What do you hope for viewers to experience in looking at your work?

I want them to experience joy, reflection, peace, and playfulness. Mostly, I want them to feel the heart that I've put into every piece.

Sarah Moon is an Artist-In-Residence (Theater discipline) at EC-CHAP; Director of the Dye & Bleach House Community Gallery; and Assistant Professor of Humanities at Massachusetts Maritime Academy. Sarah can be reached at: communitygallery@ec-chap.org.