

ISSUE 2
SPRING 2021

ETCH

A MAGAZINE FOR CREATIVES



THE ART OF CHANGE

ABOUT OUR COVER

PHOTOGRAPH BY PETER GREEN:

"A bonded pair of urban Red-tailed Hawks constructed a nest on a fire escape on the back of the Veterans Memorial Auditorium in Providence. For the full photo series of the nesting season, including adorable chicks, please see: tinyurl.com/urbanhawknest." - Peter Green

Read more by Green on page 31, and find his Ohanga Story at www.ohanga.com/our-creatives.

The Ohanga Editorial team selected Green's photograph because we couldn't help but notice the similarity between birds' seasonal behaviors and humanity's endeavor to break free of the pandemic. With the distribution of vaccines, we hope to return to the way things were—to "normality"—similar to how, without fail, birds return in the spring. But just like there is no guarantee that a bird's nest will still be there upon its homecoming, we too might have to return to a new and changed normal.

THE EDITORIAL TEAM



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A LOVE LETTER FROM THE EDITORIAL TEAM

TO OUR FELLOW CREATIVES

Dear Readers,

In the Fall of 2020, our team started working on the first ever edition of Etch, a Magazine for Creatives. We weren't exactly sure what Etch would become, but we were all motivated by a simple conviction: that Ohanga, whose mission is to amplify the voices of local artists, artisans, and makers, needed a publication to collect and organize all the creative energy we were, and still are, delivering into the universe.

Thus Etch was born: a Magazine for Creatives, for those seeking depth and breadth to their personal and intellectual curiosities.

Months into the reality of COVID-19, the editorial team strategized through online video calls, three different time zones, and a feverish hope that all of this—this stagnant chaos, this cemented distance—would soon change. We baptized the first edition "Art at a Distance" so that Etch Winter 2020 might be a mirror to our universal feelings of isolation and fear, but also a window into the magnificent achievements we have conquered despite the leagues of space (both metaphorical and physical) between us.

As one of the few certainties of life, it is only appropriate that Etch Spring 2021, which is published a quarter into the new year, during the second phase of COVID-19 vaccinations, on a new wave of hopeful gazes towards the future, be called "The Art of Change."

This magazine itself has changed since last season, as has Ohanga. Just as Etch has broadened its subject matter and pool of contributing writers, the Ohanga team is proud to have spearheaded and achieved new initiatives, projects, and services to continue supporting our expanding community of creatives and customers.

As for the world, of course, this year we expect exceptional changes in the form of a restoration of normality. But change doesn't indicate direction; it denotes movement. In Etch: The Art of Change we explore and accompany this movement in various fields and through different perspectives. You can look forward to more features of creative individuals who have had to overcome significant change even before COVID; history, including how humanity's understanding of beauty has changed with styles of portraiture; immigration, and how people's displacement have been depicted in various forms of art; society, specifically in the way that a museum has played a role in presenting truth; nature, highlighting an urban bird photographer's experience in Providence, RI; original poetry; and even social media, and how a popular platform has played an important role in two young artists' successes.

We hope that Etch will inspire you to begin or continue pursuing your own creative change.

Sincerely,

The Etch Editorial Team

“All Immigrants are Artists”

How Movement is Art Verbatim

BY ISABELLA KEHL

Patrician Engel's "It's Not Love, It's Just Paris," is a novel that follows the story of a young woman named Lita caught between her home in America and potential future in Paris. In this story, Lita describes a conversation between her Columbian-immigrant father and herself about her future. When expressing her desire to pursue a creative career, her father notes that there is no need, as she is already "an artist by blood." He expands upon this: "All immigrants are artists because they create a life, a future, from nothing but a dream. The immigrant's life is art in its purest form."

Understanding immigration, migration, and movement in this context allows us to truly understand the depth of immigrant artists. Simply in the movement from one place to another, one language to another, one culture to another, a migrant is an artist. Undergoing the transformation from one place to another and the ability to build from this struggle is art in itself. Edwidge Danticat offers her insight on the struggle of movement and literature.



Edwidge Danticat speaking at the "National Book Series Presents" event in Washington D.C.



The Brooklyn Bridge—scenes of Danticat's life after moving from Port-au-Prince.

Edwidge Danticat

Edwidge Danticat was born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti during the reign of the oppressive dictator François Duvalier. Under his regime, Haiti suffered not only from devastating poverty, but state-sanctioned violence. Political dissidents and those suspected of such crimes without evidence were often imprisoned or killed publically—a message to those who challenged Duvalier's authority. In 1973, Danticat was left to the care of her aunt and uncle while her parents fled to the United States. At the age of 11, she reunited with her parents in Brooklyn, New York. Constantly feeling out of place between Haiti and America, Danticat turned to stories for support. Writing from early childhood, she turned her refuge into a career.

In several of her works, Danticat explores the depth of immigration, refugees, and assimilation into American society. Feelings of isolation, loneliness, and fear are often present throughout her stories. In her short story collection, "Krick? Krak!" Danticat details narratives from several generations of Haitian women, from the Haitian Revolution, to the despotic rule under Duvalier, to the modern immigrant neighborhoods in New York. Each of her characters present unique struggles of coping with violence, fear of death, and the uncertainty of escape.

After uncovering and exploring the lives and difficulties of multiple generations of Haitian women, Danticat leaves her audience with a final message in her epilogue



Downtown Port-au-Prince, Haiti, 1969.*

"Women Like Us" by bringing the audience into her personal struggle with her mother over being an author. While telling her mother her goals, her mother shakes her head in disappointment and warns her, "In our world, if you write, you are a politician, and we know what happens to politicians." Yet Danticat, understanding the danger of being an author, accepts and chooses this life. Stories always comforted her during the uncertainty of survival in Haiti and the feeling of isolation in America. Perhaps writing is dangerous; yet it is in this danger that her art is born. All immigrant authors who experience these feelings of loneliness, isolation, and danger are tied and bound by this common thread. Simply in its existence is the immigrant life art.

Jhumpa Lahiri

While Danticat explores physical movement and migration as a catalyst for her writing, Jhumpa Lahiri explores the movement of language and its effect on her art and identity. Jhumpa Lahiri was born in London in 1967 and migrated to Kingston, Rhode Island, when she was a toddler. As a child of West Bengali immigrants, Lahiri notes that she always felt estranged from multiple cultures. Her "mother tongue" Bengali was foreign to her, and English only reminded her of her estrangement from

both cultures. In her short essay, "Teach Yourself Italian" Lahiri details her journey of learning a new language, completely separate from her self and history.

Lahiri remembers the brief stilted conversations she had in Italian and the many blunders she made along the way. Despite years of studying, she still felt disconnected from the language. Years after superficial practice, Lahiri decided to move to Rome to become fully immersed in



Kingston Railroad Station, Rhode Island.



A Street in Rome, Italy, where Lahiri moved in adulthood.*

the language. Six months before leaving, she completely stopped reading in English. She wrote, "I consider it my official renunciation." Her time in Rome was difficult, full of half conversations and frustrated tears. Yet while in Rome, she began to write a journal in Italian. Even though stilted and full of errors, Lahiri realized that her Italian voice was "the most genuine, most vulnerable part of [her]." As she continued in her language journey, Lahiri grew more confident in herself and in her love for Italian.

Italian offered refuge to Lahiri in a way that English and Bengali never could. Bengali only reminded her of how foreign her parents' past life was to her. English was a representation of her feelings of alienation not only from others, but from her own identity. Italian, which she

Judith Ortiz Cofer

Similar to Lahiri, Judith Ortiz Cofer explores the constant inner struggle of never feeling completely welcome or home in two different places and cultures. Cofer was born in Hormigueros, Puerto Rico to a home-bodied mother and a father serving in the United States Navy. She spent her early childhood travelling back and forth between Paterson, New Jersey and Homigueros until she moved to Georgia when she was fourteen years old. The constant travel back and forth between these two places greatly influenced her work, as she constantly felt out of place in each area.

In her poem, "El Olvido," Cofer describes her conflict between her childhood in Puerto Rico and her future in Georgia. While she has familiarized herself with America, she knows that she is not "fully American." Yet as she embraces her new life, she constantly feels guilt and longing for her past memories of Puerto Rico. "El olvido"—"to forget" is dangerous. Where one comes from, the memories of your past, the safety of your home, is a sense of comfort. To forget is to spurn. In her new home, Cofer is not living; she is surviving. Despite the constant conflict and tension between her past in Puerto Rico and her future in Georgia, Confer reconciles this with an understanding that she will not forget. She will not fall victim to spurning her home. By writing about her struggles with isolation and acceptance into American society, Cofer is honoring her past. Thus, by detailing the split between these two different worlds, Cofer recognizes and admires both. Because of this

pursued of her own volition, offered a new perspective on herself as a writer. In learning Italian, she was no longer bound by the expectations of assimilation and the pressure to feel drawn to West Bengal. In Italian, she was her true self. Now, Lahiri only writes in Italian. While seemingly unusual, Lahiri's willing transformation from one language to another offers a unique perspective on the power of language and movement. Her language migration was a grueling process filled with small victories and frustration, but resulted in something beautiful—acceptance of herself. This realization and acceptance is her art. Italian reconciled her constant internal struggle between two places where she felt like a stranger.



struggle between conflicting sides of herself, Cofer is able to fully express herself and thrive.

Migration, immigration, and movement are constant, especially in a globalized society. What does this mean for the art world? Movement, while often difficult and painful, is a process that leads to growth and perspective. Movement not only exposes us to new perspectives, but also allows us to more deeply understand ourselves. Perhaps Danticat would not have explored her love of writing had she not immigrated from Haiti so young. Maybe Lahiri would never feel authentic in her language had she not taken the leap to learn Italian. Perhaps Cofer could not have honored her home without struggling with a split identity. These physical movements are painful, yet they preceded a transformation of a sort. Thus, in this transformation, movement itself is art. As the world continues to change and people adapt to the current landscape, they are creating anew: a new life, new dreams, a new future. Thus, all who move are artists.



K I N G S H U K

B O S E

My name is Kingshuk Bose, and I am a photographer.

I became involved with this form of art due to a fascination with the camera and a curiosity to discover what I could do with the device. Growing up in India, I saw many of my relatives take pictures of our family members and friends. However, I always knew there was so much more to photography.

When I came to the United States as a graduate student in March 1989, my first major purchase was a Minolta SLR that cost me \$350. Back then, photography was a somewhat difficult proposition. As a student, I did not have enough time to dedicate to art, and I lacked the money and resources that could have helped me realize my ambitions. Besides, my photography did not yield immediate results—to see the images, I needed to buy films and develop them.

This has now changed. Digital photography has enabled millions of people to do something that, up to thirty years ago, was limited to just a few professionals. Beyond the technical aspects, the advent of the digital world has incredibly democratized photography, making it cheaper and ever-increasing in technical quality. The creation of cell phone cameras has accelerated and consolidated this revolution.

I always had a camera, but I used it primarily as a social tool. In the beginning, my photographic efforts were mainly restricted to shooting in the "auto" mode of the camera and taking a few pictures on weekends—mostly of people and social events and, less frequently, the places I visited. When I look back at some of the compositions from those days, I realize that I was not doing much other than pointing and shooting. A lot of my photographs look pretty awful, and I wish I could go

back in time and re-do them.

I am motivated by a desire to enjoy the wonders of the physical world around me and present them to an audience who either was not present when I witnessed a certain wonder, or perhaps did not perceive it the way I did, even if I was present. Composing a picture helps me enjoy the wonder myself as it happens, as well as store it for myself and others to enjoy in the future. A moment can be captured for eternity.

I like to think that my art communicates the message that there is a wonderful world out there, while simultaneously encouraging my audience to take the time to enjoy it. If you do not have the time or the means to do so yourself, or even if you do, consider looking at the work of so many talented artists, including photographers, who make an effort to bring this wonder to you through their own creations. I am inspired by the mesmerizing beauty of everything—tiny and big—in the world around me. Such beauty provides me with opportunities to pause and indulge in the proverbial act of "smelling the roses." It can be cathartic to take a few moments from the busy day and enjoy a beautiful sunset before returning to the rhythm of a daily routine.

Through my photography, I hope to record a few snapshots of time and space in the life I live for the future generations of my immediate family. I hope to leave them with a sense of the world where their family-tree started in this country of immigrants. If it brings some semblance of joy and happiness to others, that is an added bonus!

Take the time to soak in all that Mother Nature has to offer—in person or through photographs!

Kingshuk Bose



"Composing a picture helps me enjoy the wonder myself as it happens, as well as store it for myself and others to enjoy in the future. A moment can be captured for eternity"

- *Kingshuk*



"Blues & Bees"
Kingshuk Bose
Available on the Ohanga Market.

SOLID AT YOUR FEET

BY ROBYN BOURGOIN

I AM THE ROCKS AT YOUR FEET,
I NEVER CHANGE, WON'T EVER CHANGE.
YOU ARE THE WATER,
A NEVER ENDING,
EBB AND FLOW OF ENERGY,
YOU LET THE HEART DECIDE,
WHEN YOU MAY BE THE SMALLEST OF STREAMS, A RAGING RIVER, OR THE
DEEPEST OCEAN TIDE.
AND YET AS WE MEET,
I, THE ROCKS AT YOUR FEET
AND YOUR WATERS FLOW,
OUR WORLDS COLLIDE,
AND NO MATTER HOW STRONG, HOW WEAK, HOWEVER CHANGED
YOUR WATER MAY BE,
I AM STILL HERE,
SOLID AT YOUR FEET.
THE TURBULENCE CARVING THROUGH ME,
WEARING AWAY A PATH TO NOWHERE.
THOUGH THERE ARE DAYS YOUR WATERS RUN DRY,
I WILL REMAIN.
I AM THE ROCKS AT YOUR FEET,
I WILL NEVER CHANGE, WON'T EVER CHANGE.

ALSO PUBLISHED IN BOURGOIN'S FORTHCOMING POETRY COLLECTION,
"THE EDGE OF EVERYTHING."

What Came First: **The Portrait or the Person?**

BY TATUM SAMSON

Read more of Tatum Samson's writing at
www.tatumsamson.com



Hans Holbein painted the "Anne of Cleves" portrait in 1539 for King Henry VIII. The piece is now located at the Louvre in Paris.*

Like the riddle of the chicken and the egg, it is impossible not to wonder whether portraiture or beauty standards came to fruition first. While it is a widespread idea that art reflects life, there are moments of reversal, in which the means of recording the self's essence affect the actual self. The divide between media and self-merit runs precariously thin, begging the question: do portraits capture the truthful beauty of their subjects, or do they influence the definition of beauty, both within art and within the general canvas of life? Furthermore, how does portraiture interact with, reflect, and impact changing beauty standards?

Long before photography, cell phones, and television existed, the catapulting moments of time could only be preserved in memory or memorial. The faintest hint of a smile, the mischievous twinkle of an eye, and the subtle movement of breath become immortalized in the stroke of a paintbrush. So, it is no surprise that humans sought self-preservation through art, hoping to hold onto the living through portraiture. The art form can be traced

back to around 100 CE ancient Egypt, where mummy portraits were painted and used to cover the faces of the deceased.

Portraits displayed not only the faces of their subjects, but also the positions of their subjects in relation to the surrounding political and cultural climates. The power of portraiture cannot be diminished to canvases. Rather, these paintings served as means with which to share or alter the appearances of powerful figures, and even to signify the worth of the women included in the depictions. Women's outer beauty was often believed to match their inner worth; thereby, women displayed as fitting society's physical standards in portraits were thought to be virtuous. As Dr. Patrizia di Bello writes in her review of Ashgate Aldershot's book, "History's Beauties: Women and the National Gallery, 1856-1900," "Women could be at once elevated to the status of celebrated individuals, and 'put in their place' by being represented as exemplary; fulfilling roles consistent with dominant modes of nineteenth-century femininity."

The importance of portraiture in female representation and political power can be proven in two specific cases, with painters Jan van Eyck and Hans Holbein. Jan van Eyck of mid-1400s Netherlands visited Lisbon in order to paint portraits of suitress Princess Isabella of Portugal for Philip the Good of Burgundy. In a similar manner, Hans Holbein of the 1500s Tudor era was commissioned by King Henry VIII to paint Anne of Cleves when the King was choosing a new wife. It was rumored that Holbein painted Anne of Cleves to appear more conventionally pretty than she was, which supports the idea of portraiture, beauty standards, and politics closely intermingling.

Simultaneously, the concept of Holbein holding political power and influencing history through his depiction of Anne of Cleves—which he may have crafted untruthfully in an effort to reflect English beauty standards and influence Henry VIII's decision—cannot be ignored.

English women in the Tudor era were expected to have light hair, red lips and cheeks, and pale skin; these standards were based on the appearance of Elizabeth I, whose portraits could be seen in great halls. Thereby, both Elizabeth I's actual appearance and the recording and sharing of her likeness led to the development and spread of culturally-specific beauty standards. Women took great lengths to achieve these standards, as they were bled and used ceruse—a makeup containing lead that sometimes resulted in poisoning and death—to gain a pale pallor. If women reached the pre-set ideals, they could gain political power in the form of marriage.



The original "Portrait of Isabella of Portugal," painted by Jan van Eyck, has gone missing. This copy was created by an unknown artist at an unknown time.



An unknown artist painted the "Armada Portrait of Elizabeth I" in 1588. The painting depicted is the Queen's House Version and is now part of the collection of London's Royal Museums Greenwich organization.



Painted between 1636 and 1638 by Peter Paul Rubens, this portrait is titled "Helena Fourment in a Fur Robe." At the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, Austria.*



John Singer Sargent painted the "Lady Agnew of Lochnaw" portrait in 1892. The painting depicts Gertrude Agnew and is now located in Edinburgh's Scottish National Gallery.*

Moving forward in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to the late 1500s and early- to mid-1600s, beauty standards evolved in accordance with, and as depicted in, Peter Paul Rubens' specific style of painting and portraiture. Rubens' works featured curvy women with rounded features, such as double chins and ample cheeks, and ultimately created a new style of beauty termed "rubesque." Clearly, the manner in which Rubens portrayed women affected the actual beauty standards of the day. The subjects of his paintings had large thighs and breasts, pale skin, blushing cheeks, and curvy figures. In accordance with this shift to an hourglass-shaped, voluptuous ideal, corsets gained immense popularity amongst women. The contraptions pushed up the breasts while emphasizing the hips' curves; corset shapes and styles changed with the age's ideals. Simultaneously, women continued to alter their appearances using questionable remedies, which included dung and goat hair. As Sharom Romm of

The Washington Post writes, "If an improved complexion didn't result after applying these remedies, women would hide their faces behind masks of black velvet or silk stiffened with leather."

In the Victorian era, the standards drastically changed once more. No longer were vivacious women the most beautiful; instead, weak and even ill women became the ideal. Tuberculosis coincided with beauty standards, which included nearly see-through skin and thin bodies. In order to achieve such expectations, women went so far as to eat arsenic to remove acne. Corsets continued to play an important role, as they were often laced so tightly that women could not breathe normally. Portraits of the time highlighted skeletal and fragile appearances, which emphasized the cultural ideas surrounding female need for male guidance and protection. They often featured sitting women, contributing to the image of fragility and weakness.

It was also during this era that the camera was invented. George Kodak created the Kodak #1 in 1888, and with the advent of a new form of imaging—that eventually led to television and social media—came a fresh method with which to relay ever-changing ideas surrounding beauty and femininity. One such marker of the media's impact can be found in its portrayal of Marilyn Monroe as the ideal woman. The major presence of Monroe in the media through various photographic portraits and movies made the pin-up body type the most stylish. The look included an hourglass figure, curly hair, and pink cheeks. "Playboy Magazine" came into being in 1953 and popularized the collecting of pin-up covers while simultaneously utilizing female bodies in art as a marketing method. Like the sitting women in Victorian era portraits, the "Playboy Magazine" covers of the fifties were at least partially designed to please and appease men. However, the art form also symbolized a jump in female freedom, as women living in and celebrating their bodies caused less shock.

Nowadays, it is easier to create and share portraits than ever before. With a simple second on a cell phone's

camera app and a few clicks, selfies can be posted to Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat. The filters provided on these apps—modes of art in and of themselves that create large eyes and lips along with perfect skin—transcend the online and move into the physical. Magazines and television shows, FaceTune and VSCO filters, all impact the standards set. According to the National Eating Disorders Association, 69% of American elementary-age girls in 2010 stated that magazine images affected their ideas surrounding "the ideal body shape," while 47% revealed that the magazine images "ma[de] them want to lose weight." Just as women in the seventeenth century wore corsets to shape their bodies, people nowadays can alter their appearances not only with editing apps, but also through often dangerous means.

Beauty standards, of course, have continued to change by the year and decade. Yet, no matter the method of portraiture—painted, sculpted, or photographed—it cannot be argued that the curating and sharing of images plays as large a role in manufacturing physical ideals as the subjects of the images do themselves.



Credited to Teichnor Bros. of Boston, this photographic portrait originated as an unmailed postcard taken before 1978. Before becoming a movie star, Monroe was a model and was featured in calendars.

"Aphrodite - Goddess of Love"
Anchored Soul
Available on the Ohanga Market.



My name is Karen Giarrusso, and I am a mixed media artist and mosaicist.

My passion for art was inspired by my mom. I grew up in Kentucky with my father, a national park ranger, and my mother, an amazing homemaker. My mother was a talented artist and my first teacher. She taught me how to quilt, sew, embroider, cross stitch, make my own clothing, and even cane chairs! With our backyard filled with hues of green, bright flowers, and a variety of birds, my creative spirit emerged.

In the third grade, I started selling my own little crafts at the local art store. I sold potholders and placemats for no more than 50 cents. I remember it being such an amazing experience, the first time I sold my own creation. At that point, art was just something I loved to do—it was my fun time.

In 1979, I went to college at the University of Kentucky, studying primarily accounting. Despite enjoying a few art classes, I did not pursue any art career during my time at university. When I graduated, I became an accountant, but it quickly became clear that I needed art back in my life.

Once I realized that accounting could not fulfill my creative needs, I pivoted to become a buyer for department stores. I started mixing colors, patterns, and textures for my job, and I found that this itched the scratch. Being a buyer was special to me, as I could finally pursue creativity within my career. I ended up specializing in costume jewelry, as I was captivated and inspired by the vivid colors. I didn't know it yet, but my time as a jewelry specialist greatly influenced the type of art I create now. Costume jewelry led to another important aspect of my life: my husband. We bonded over a mutual love and appreciation for beads, color, and art.



**KAREN
GIARRUSSO**

"I hope my art goes forward in time"

- Karen



**"Mosaic Passion Mirror"
Karen Giarrusso**

When my mother passed away, I decided to pursue art seriously. She had always been my biggest supporter, my first teacher, the first person to cultivate my artistic vision. She gave me vision. Through her passing, I picked up my artwork again to clear my head—which needed a lot of clearing. When I finally picked up my materials again, I did it in her honor. It was a way for me to connect with her and, in a sense, pursue the artistic vision she had taught me from such a young age.

The greatest influence on my artistic journey was my trip to Italy in 2001. I visited Rome, where I was completely captivated by the art and mosaics that covered the ancient walls and basilicas. Then, I visited Pompeii and I just knew—this was what I wanted to do with my life. I have been studying mosaic art ever since. In 2009, I went back for a two week mosaic class in Ravenna, Italy. Despite being such a quaint and sleepy town, Ravenna is the biggest mosaic capital in the world! Walking through the streets, I was constantly surrounded by ancient art and reminded of its timeless beauty. I even held a piece of art in my hand that was 2,000 years old! During this time, I studied under a master named Lucia, who

taught me the ancient process of creating mosaics and art restoration. I left Italy confident that I was going to fulfill my passion.

When I came home from Italy, I continued to learn as much as I could. Every summer local mosaicists visited Falmouth, Massachusetts and I would take their classes. I noticed that the more I learned, the more my style evolved. Art is always a process of evolution. While my early art was boxy and detailed, my new work was more confident—it flowed and flowered. As my confidence evolved, so did my style.

Art is my quiet time—my peace. It relaxes me. My favorite part of creating is starting with nothing and finding the piece I long to create along the way. I love seeing the progression of hundreds of loose beads turning into a finished product. Color, however, is where I find my greatest clarity. I enjoy taking soft colors and popping them with a bright metallic texture, or even mixing hot and cool tones together. Such stark contrast and juxtaposition is just fascinating to me. I love creating the unexpected and pushing the boundaries in art.

Since my daughter matured, I have had more free time to explore my style. I filled my walls with art—it was time for me to start building a business. Working with interior designers, I have created backsplashes, large mirrors, furniture, and other home accessories. I hand cut the glass pieces and jewels myself, while also finding the best color combinations and textures to apply. Yet, I have found that I prefer creating something uniquely my own. I am not bound by any type of constraint: I can mix my textures and color palette with complete freedom. In my art, I throw together my “peacock colors” and metallics—my pieces are full of greens, purples, teals, blues, and shiny colors. I can experiment with textures, using beads, rhinestones, stained glass, tiles, and jewelry. The creative process can seem messy to others, but I am truly in my element. I sit in my studio with sunlight cascading through the window—hundred of beads on the bed—and create away.

No matter the difficulties that arise from representing yourself, I am always motivated by the warm energy that I put into my work. I want my pieces to truly find purpose in the homes that they rest in. I aim for my work to be the warm center of homes that make one stop, smile, and think, “I’m really glad I bought this.” Just like creating art is my happiness, I wish my pieces to bestow the same amount of warmth and joy in their new home. I have made several pieces for my daughter, and I hope that she keeps them and shows her children to pass on my legacy. I hope that my art goes forward in time. I want my creations to be just like the timeless piece of mosaic that I held in Italy that survived 2,000 years of history—ancient, beautiful, and inspiring.

Create with passion,
Karen Giarrusso



"Memory Pearls"
Karen Giarrusso

What Makes it Modern?

(1860s - 1970s) BY ERICA MACRI

After the Industrial Revolution spurred change in the world, artists were freed to work with their own subjective experiences as inspiration. Sometimes re-imagining work from prior decades, sometimes rejecting it completely, forward-thinking artists often left their mark on modern art when they redefined their own styles.

Claude Monet (1840-1926)

Claude Monet's famous blurry style was actually the byproduct of cataracts, which started to cause his vision problems around 1912. Because of the cataracts, colors lost intensity; he meticulously labeled tubes of paint to compensate for this. Originally opposed to surgery, he said, "I prefer to make the most of my poor sight, and even give up painting if necessary, but at least be able to see a little of these things that I love." The cataracts altered his ability to imitate changes in lighting and shadows, and his later paintings have an energetic style that lead some to consider Monet the father of modern art.



"The Rose Walk, Giverny" (1920-1922).
Photo: Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris.



"Japanese Footbridge" (1899).
Photo: National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

Pablo Ruiz Picasso (1881-1973)

Perhaps the artist most well-known for changing styles, Pablo Ruiz Picasso is remembered for an almost extreme drive to redefine. On his art style shift, he said, "The world today doesn't make sense, so why should I paint pictures that do?" When World War I broke out, French and British publications denounced cubist art as a product of Germany, calling Picasso's career into question. He shifted back and forth between styles for a time, but in his later years, he increasingly favored rudimentary articulation and positioning.



"The Old Blind Guitarist" (1903).
Photo: The Art Institute of Chicago.

"Femme Assise" (Sitzende Frau) (1909).
Photo: Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin.



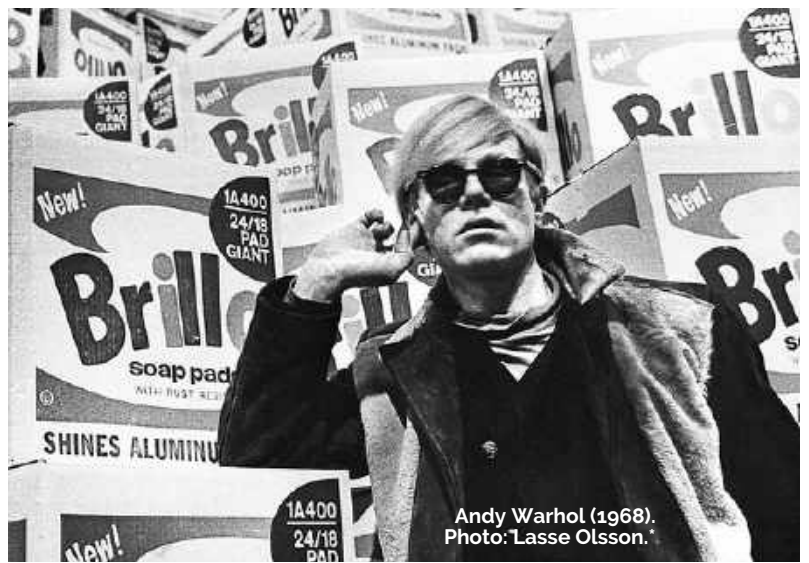
"Nous Autres Musiciens" (Three Musicians) (1921).
Photo: Philadelphia Museum of Art.



Jackson Pollock's Floor, used as Pollock's primary painting surface from 1946 until his death in 1956. Photo: Rhododendrites.

Jackson Pollock (1912-1956)

Jackson Pollock's signature chaotic style reflected his belief that "today painters do not have to go to a subject matter outside of themselves. Most modern painters work from a different source. They work from within." Pollock changed his style in 1951, when he started incorporating abstract figurations in mainly black, earning these bleak paintings the name of "black pourings." None of these pieces sold when he exhibited them. Later, he sold one at half price to his friend.



Andy Warhol (1968). Photo: Lasse Olsson.

Andy Warhol (1928-1987)

In his lifetime, Andy Warhol elevated his own persona to the level of a popular icon. On his style he said, "How can you say one style is better than another? You ought to be able to be an Abstract Expressionist next week, or a Pop artist, or a realist, without feeling you've given up something." In 1965 he "retired" for a time to concentrate on his experimental films. Lasting five hours and 20 minutes, one film, "Sleep," consists of looped footage of John Giorno (Warhol's lover at the time) sleeping, leaving the audience acutely aware of the viewing experience.

Frida Kahlo (1907-1954)

Frida Kahlo was introduced to painting through self-portraits, and she later gained a cult following through her collection of self-portraits. At the age of 18 she was injured in a bus accident. As she grappled with physical limitations, Kahlo incorporated adjustable easels into her practice and experimented with Mexican folklore to convey her experience with traumatic injuries. Frida Kahlo rejected the surrealist label given to her, saying, "I never painted dreams. I painted my own reality."



Frida Kahlo, seated next to an agave plant (1937). Photo: Released by Library of Congress.



Lauren Weintraub, songwriter and singer of "She's Mine."

TIKTOK ARTISTS

BY FRANCESCA GIANGIULIO

When asked to define "art," your mind might immediately go to colorful acrylic paints delicately dancing across a canvas to form picturesque landscapes and elegant portraits. However, defining "art" is not that simple, especially since the field is constantly evolving as new artists, or "creatives," as we like to call them, continue to think of new ways to spread their creativity.

This instability and non-stop increase of product and participants in art may seem like a good thing—more and more people want to use their imaginations to create—but more often than not, this uncertainty and new levels of competition pose a challenge to artists who don't already have an established name in the art world.

One of the most common stories we hear from our Creatives at Ohanga is how they almost gave up or chose a different career path out of fear of not being able to "make it" in an oversaturated market.

This past year—without opportunities to work in collaborative studios or showcase new work—has produced additional challenges to artists, especially those who are still working on getting their name out to the general public. However, the year has also highlighted many resilient and innovative young creatives who were able to use the power of social media and internet trends to jumpstart their businesses and create—in some cases, worldwide—followings that otherwise would have been unimaginable to them.



Kate Marr, owner and creative behind Awear Apparel.

The social media giant TikTok has only been active in the United States since August 2018, nevertheless, this video-sharing app has skyrocketed in popularity with over 130 million users in the United States alone, over 2.3 billion worldwide. TikTok was by far the most downloaded app of 2020 and is exceedingly popular among the young people in America with almost 70 percent of US teens engaging on the platform monthly.

TikTok thrives on its fast-paced "For You Page," which uses an algorithm to curate videos for each user based on individual likes and interests. This method has helped small businesses, especially young artists, gain exposure to a whole new audience. The app has proven to be an extremely successful method for publicizing their work, growing their businesses, and creating a nation-wide following that they may not have found otherwise.

This is what happened to Lauren Weintraub, 22, whose TikTok featuring her original song "She's Mine" got over 100,000 views in just two hours. Her original video currently has over 1.7 million views, and the studio single, which she released a week after she posted the video, has over 2 million streams across all listening platforms.

"Everyone in their career, when they're starting out, has a moment that really helps you build your following. For me, this is the first one, and I never thought it would be TikTok," says Weintraub.

Weintraub graduated high school in 2017 and attended Belmont University for two years before being offered a publishing deal by then Sony/ATV Music Publishing president Troy Tomlinson.

"[Troy] was like 'Lauren, if you got offered a spot in the NFL would you just stay in school and not be in the NFL?' so I made the bold decision to leave school, but I never really looked back and it seems to be working."

Weintraub, who is a triplet with two brothers, says her mom used to put all three of them in the same activities like soccer and baseball because it was easy.

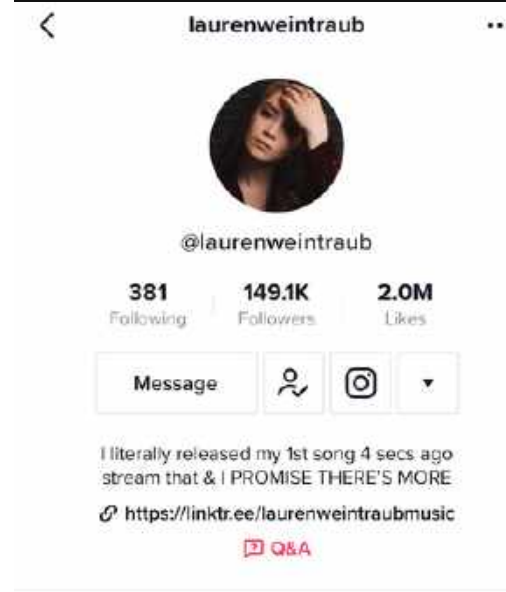
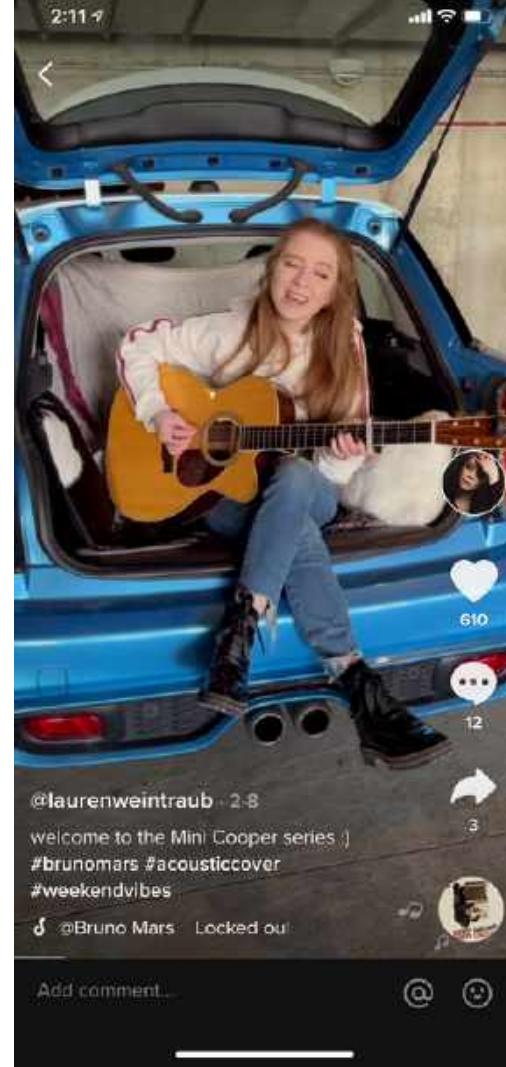
"I had no hand-eye coordination and no interest whatsoever," says Weintraub, "I was in the outfield doing cartwheels, so my mom decided I should try something else and that led me to singing and theater."

Weintraub spent much of her pre-teen years heavily invested in the theater world, frequently traveling between Boston and New York doing auditions for Broadway and off-Broadway productions and now-popular TV shows like *Stranger Things*.

"When I got to high school, I realized that I wanted to start telling my own story rather than somebody else's," says Weintraub, "so I wrote my first song my freshman year and when I finished it I just knew that was what I had to do for the rest of my life."

In high school, Weintraub would perform on the streets outside of Faneuil Hall in Boston. She says that the comments from people who would stop to listen, the "tiny angels," telling her how she "made their day" reassured her that she had to pursue music.

Weintraub grew up listening to popular artists like Ed Sheeran and John Mayer, but when she started song-writing she fell in love with the "storytellers" of country music like Marren Morris and





Chris Stapleton. "I love the sound of a hit, like Zara Larson and Dua Lipa, but I want to bring it into country music and always tell a story," says Weintraub, "A truthful story is my goal, so the sound of [pop] but with the narrative of country music."

Weintraub "succumbed to the pressure" and made her TikTok account in July where she would occasionally post covers, but she never wanted to be considered a "TikToker."

"I was anti-TikTok. I didn't want to just be stuck on [the app]," says Weintraub, "but then you think about someone like Shawn Mendes whose career started on Vine. It's just proving to me that TikTok is the most powerful thing out there right now for somebody like me."

Despite her initial reservations, the popularity and exposure Weintraub has gained from the app has shown her how effective the app can be for young artists like herself.

"It's just insane how your videos can get millions of views," says Weintraub, "Even on YouTube that doesn't really happen anymore, so it's cool that there's this new platform to help people like me find my people."

The best part about TikTok for Weintraub is being able to connect with others who have had similar life experiences, especially in

a time when it's difficult to go out and connect with people in person.

"The people I'm finding on TikTok are just happening across me. They're not asking for it, they're just swiping on their for-you-page, so for me, I'm now thinking about what can I do as an artist to make people want to look at my content every day, instead of just happening upon it," says Weintraub.

She says that the for-you-page—a continuous stream of videos individually curated for each user based on their preferences as decided by the app's algorithm—and the way it allows users to connect with people in a way that seems almost like fate is "massively powerful." Weintraub says the thousands of comments she receives from users telling her how they found her song and how much it means to them has changed the way she approaches song-writing.

"It puts me in other people's shoes and makes me understand that it's okay to write about the truthful, real stuff of what's going on in my life because that's what people relate to," says Weintraub.

Weintraub credits her success on TikTok and as an artist to the self-assurance she's been able to maintain through the difficult times of the COVID-19 pandemic and the sense of gratitude she has developed for the little things.



The Patchwork Sweatshirt from Marr's original viral video.



A product created by Awear Apparel

"As an artist, it's easy to act out of fear and think you can't do something, but the second you start getting confident and really specific about what you want to achieve, it can happen, so I'm just trying to remember to be grateful and live in the moment."

Weintraub embodies "the art of change" by showing us how "art" really has no boundaries. In the same way that a painting can tell a story about a person and the world around them, Weintraub wants her music to tell the narrative of humanity and the human experience that we "don't talk about enough." Weintraub is an example of how the unprecedented popularity of TikTok nationwide has helped expedite young artists to levels of exposure that were previously unimaginable. TikTok has given these young artists new confidence in their abilities and has added to their spark and passion for creating.

Weintraub says this "TikTok-effect" has as much to do with the motivations of the artists as the design and for-you-page style of the app itself.

"When you put your mind to something and you leave it up to the universe and you manifest and you think about everything you want, I guess it truly can happen."

But TikTok is not only helping singer-songwriters like Weintraub; it has also quickly become the best platform to be discovered as traditional and functional artists. Teenagers and young adults on the app, who often post short tutorials of their creative processes or show off their completed pieces, can get millions of views over night, fast-tracking them to exposure to new customers and supporters internationally.

Katelynn Marr, 23, is an upcycle fashion designer from Franklin, MA who has used her TikTok popularity to pursue her dream and expand her small business, Awear Apparel (www.awearapparel.co).

Marr, who normally posts videos of her design process, "blew-up" this past December thanks to a video of her making an upcycled color-block sweatshirt that now has almost 200,000 views.

Marr told Etch that almost overnight, her follower count skyrocketed and her DMs (direct messages) on the app were filled with users asking about availability, pricing, and what other products she makes.

"I had no intention of it going viral or getting traction at all. I just wanted people to be able to share what I was doing behind the scenes so that people could see the amount of thought and effort that went into a lot of the pieces," says Marr.

Marr worked with traditional art styles throughout high school and college, but she found that upcycling and fashion design were a better method for spreading her message of sustainability.

"[With] painting and pen and ink, once you made it and put all the hours into it, no one really saw it unless you were walking around with a canvas and telling people to look at it," says Marr, "I was trying to find a better way to get exposure for the things I was creating and spending all this time and ideas on."

While attending Merrimack University, Marr started painting quotes and images on old pairs of jeans that she thrifted or that were given to her by friends.

"I liked the idea of art you could wear. . . instead of throwing them away, I liked that it gave them a second life," says Marr.

This notion inspired the concept for her brand Awear Apparel, which she says is a play on "art-wear" and also being "aware" of what you're wearing.

"I want to say that I'm aware of what I'm using, what I'm putting on my body, and what I'm recycling with. And then art-wear is what the end result would be," says Marr.

The products Marr sells on Awear Apparel give customers access to one-of-a-kind pieces that don't leave an environmental footprint.

"It's a form of art in itself to find those components, and work them together to make a complete piece that you can not only wear but also fits the human form in a way that makes people want to wear it," says Marr.

Marr, who has met artists from California to Ireland through TikTok, says that the exposure from the app gave her a much bigger platform to share what she was doing and spread her message of sustainable, wearable art.

She also says that TikTok provides young artists around the world with new opportunities to display their talent,

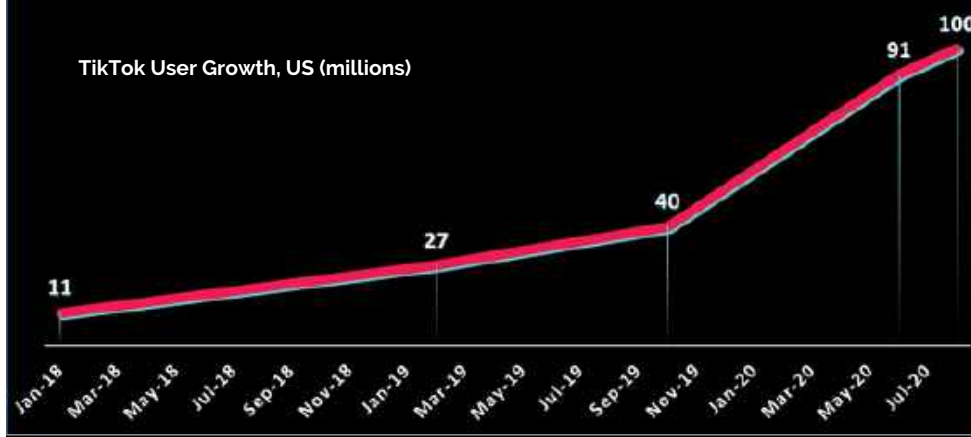


A product created by Awear Apparel

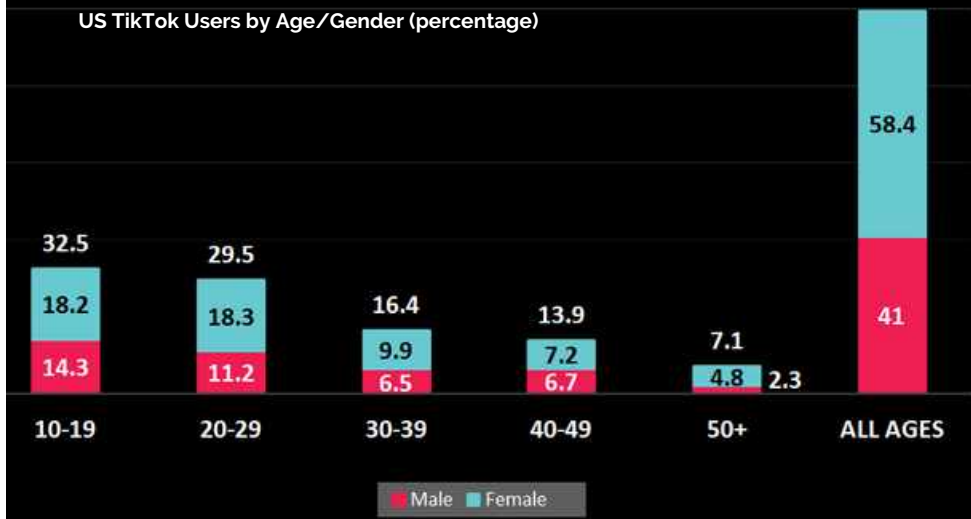


A product created by Awear Apparel

TikTok User Growth, US (millions)



US TikTok Users by Age/Gender (percentage)



Marr Modeling one of her products.

and it creates a community for young people to encourage and support each other as they pursue creative careers.

"We wouldn't have been able to meet or communicate if it wasn't for this platform, and the more it's grown, the more people that have the same ideas or similar interests have been able to reach out, which is really neat."

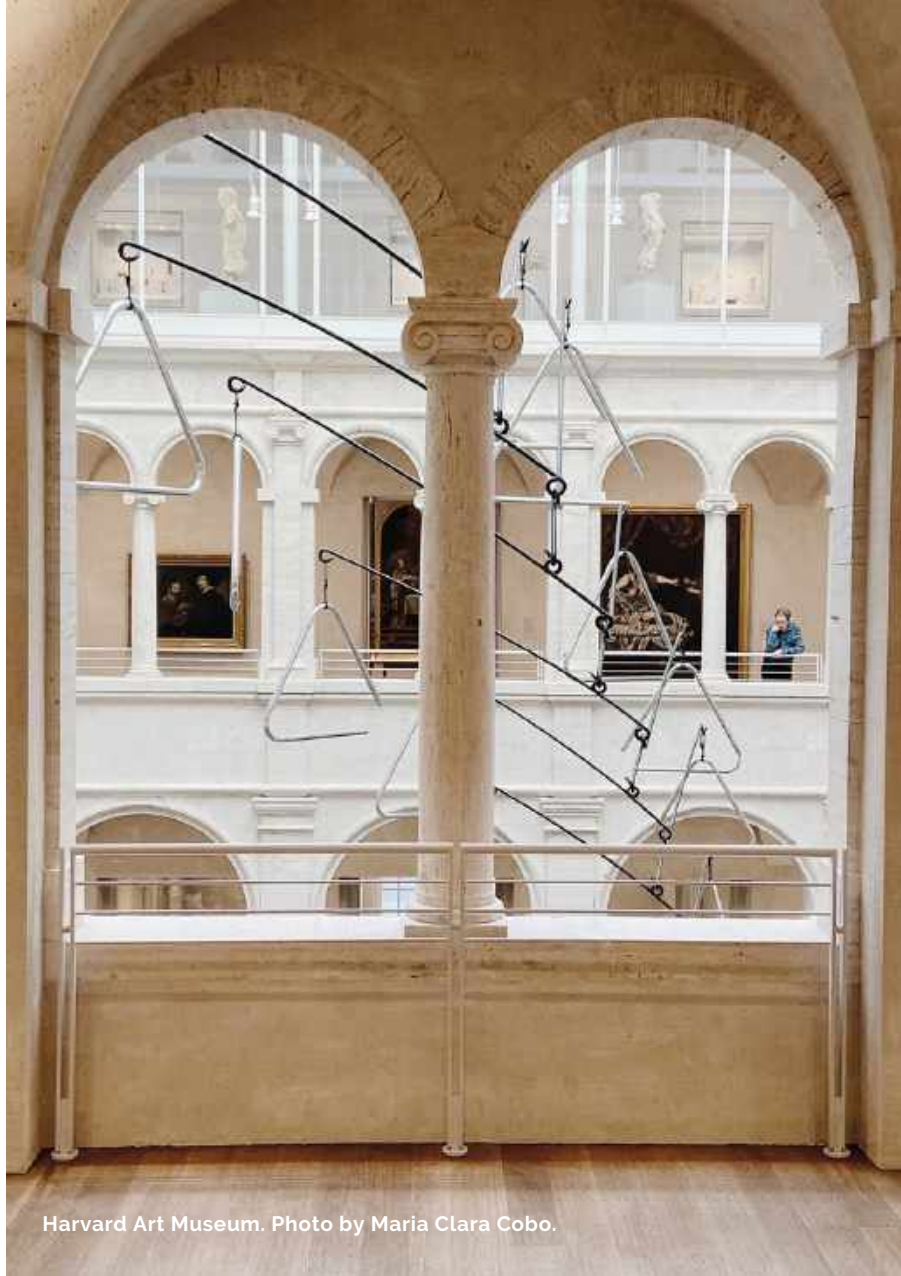
Marr has always felt confident in her ability to succeed with her art. She says that her father is her biggest supporter and that it was his continual encouragement and reassurance through her many "art phases" growing up that led her to dedicate her time to pursue a career in fashion. Marr's father is actually the person who taught her how to sew and gave her the skills she needed to create Awear Apparel.

Even with the familial support, Marr says that the reassurance she gets from strangers on TikTok who "don't have any bias" is extremely motivating for her to continue improving her business. She says that online encouragement has helped her to think outside of the

box and try new things with her designs, "because there is someone out there who thinks it's cool and it's not just going to sit in your studio, someone's going to wear it in the world."

Marr thinks that shooting an arrow with a bow is a perfect metaphor for running a small business: "You pull an arrow back before it goes forward. In the beginning, it felt like I just kept going backward, but if you stay focused on your small business and what you want to do, then it'll click, the arrow will go forward, and all your hard work will pay off."

Marr embodies the art of change both in the mission of her business and how she came to find this increased success. Through her sustainable designs, Marr shows us how fashion is not a fixed form, and just because something is created one way does not mean it can't take on a new life later. By using TikTok to promote her work and her business, Marr is showing us how a new generation of young artists and creators are blazing into the art world, ready to take the stage and make a name for themselves.



Harvard Art Museum. Photo by Maria Clara Cobo.

Winslow Homer:

A Testament to the Changing Role of Artists in Representing the Truth

BY MARIA CLARA COBO

Artists are storytellers. They have something to say. People often think of artists as illustrators of stories or ideas, and many of them are. But because artists are observers, they are interpreters, their artworks are not literal tellings of those stories.

Artists might explore an ancient myth, the experience of a kiss, the disasters of war, or the effects of a pandemic—but no matter what their subjects, they are all offering audiences a lens through which to understand the world through their own eyes. No matter how much the language of art evolves, how much art changes with time, it always comes to us through the voices of different artists. Art is a language not just of interpretation and subjectivity, however, but of evolution and change. A painting or sculpture, or a performance or collage, tells the story not only of its subject, but of the artist and her era, contributing to the larger story and language of art.

Many people might be surprised to learn that Winslow Homer, a Boston-born artist known for his work in oil and watercolor, started his career in a newsroom making illustrations about the Civil War for newspapers and magazines. But they might be even more surprised if they learned that, long before claims of fake news and manipulated images saturated our screens, artists like Homer navigated a media landscape in which truth was hard to tell from deceit.

Through a collection of illustrations, oil paintings, watercolors, and photographs, Homer's work over the course of his life traces how his responsibility as an observer who documented the American Civil War, molded his career as an artist. His artistic legacy also questions the objectivity of images as representations of reality and emphasizes that the role of the observer in framing a specific event cannot be overlooked.

Homer served as a correspondent for Harper's Weekly during the Civil War. His illustrations



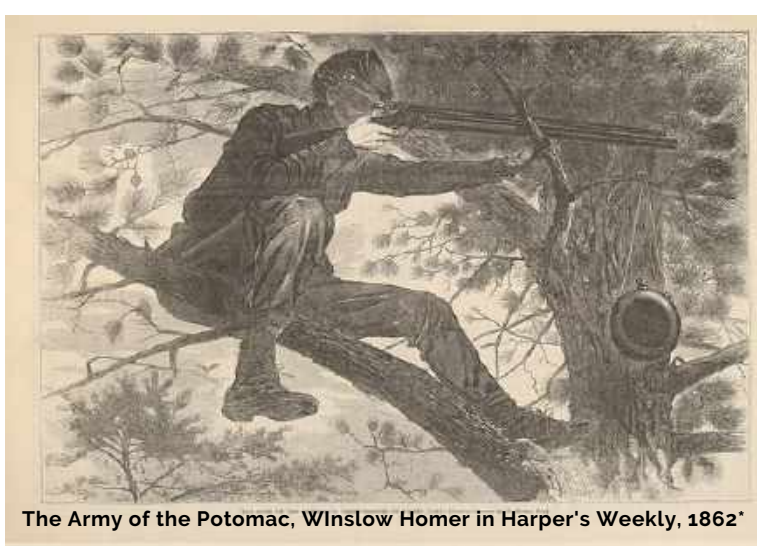
A Bivouac Fire on the Potomac. Winslow Homer in Harper's Weekly, 1861'

of soldiers on the frontlines and back at camp accompanied the journal's written accounts of the conflict. Although photography played an important role in documenting the war, it was still a time-consuming and burdensome process. Instead, publishers relied on artists such as Homer to report on the conflict not only with words but with vivid illustrations.

Homer's black and white sketches published in Harper's Weekly highlight Homer's range of techniques and details used to convince the readers that his drawings were grounded on facts. For example, "The Army of the Potomac—A Sharp-Shooter on Picket Duty,"—regarded as one of Homer's most iconic war illustrations—captures the terror of the rifle, which fired faster, farther, and more accurately than earlier guns. The drawing shows a soldier on the top of a tree pointing his rifle toward an unseen target.

According to the wall text that accompanied the image in a recent exhibit at the Harvard Art Museum, "In an effort to persuade Harper's readers that he had witnessed that scene, Homer incorporated specific details such as the soldier's untied shoelace and his regimental cap into a closely cropped composition." In this way, the image succeeds in transmitting the brutality that came with new, technologically advanced weapons in war.

The current media war over the concept of truth in news is not a new one. Publications were already emphasizing the accuracy of their illustrations while questioning the reliability of other publications in the days of the Civil War. For example, Harper's editors boasted of "pictures quivering with life created by the correspondents with their pencils in the field, upon their knees in the dusk



The Army of the Potomac, Winslow Homer in Harper's Weekly, 1862'

twilight with freezing and fevered fingers." But the truth is that artists were required to maintain a safe distance from the frontlines and from the enemy. Therefore, it is unlikely that Homer witnessed the violence of war. In fact, most of his illustrations for Harper's Weekly cover the stillness of camp life, dashing uniforms, and, rarely, the action of battle.

Something striking about the meaning Homer's art has acquired in the present, is that it renders him a witness and a servant of the truth, when he never actually depicted emancipation, the root of the conflict in the American Civil War. "Homer's efforts to present himself as a truthful witness sometimes involved distorting reality to fit the biases of his audience," read a wall text next to the golden-framed image at the Harvard Museum of Art. "Nowhere was this tendency clearer than in the portrayal of men and women of African descent." The only painting in the exhibit where Homer depicts black subjects in war shows a freed slave with top-knotted hair dancing around a fireplace for the amusement of Union soldiers. The racism in Homer's images of the Civil War was sometimes obvious, as was much of the accompanying coverage in Harper's Weekly. This specific bias in the work of a war correspondent in the nineteenth century shows that the internal demands of media organizations have always controlled the content that they produce and publish, just as they do in the present day.

By showing his work and his artistic decisions—about what to show and what to hide, whose truth to represent and whose to dismiss—the legacy of Winslow Homer challenges the commonly-held belief that images act as a mirror of reality and raises questions about the role and the responsibility of journalists in representing the truth.

LAURIE CHARPENTIER

My name is Laurie Charpentier, and I am a full-time mixed-media artist.

For my whole life, I have referred to myself as many things: Master Gardener, Horticultural Therapist, Human Resources Director, and more. However, until recently, I never had the courage to refer to myself as an artist.

All deeply-rooted beliefs grow from a seed, and the seed that grew into my lack of self-confidence was sown at a young age. In fourth grade, my class was assigned the creation of a big art mural. Everyone felt excited at the prospect of contributing to something so important, including myself. The teacher let one of my classmates take control of the project. This classmate began painting long green blades of grass, and I immediately jumped in, wanting to take part in the fun. Yet, my teacher intercepted my paintbrush and told me: "You're not good enough. Let's let her do that part." That moment was the dark seed that fueled my inability to recognize myself as an artist.

Fortunately, I maintained a nagging sense that I should not give up my love for art so easily. In high school, I found friends amidst creative individuals and took art classes and electives. My freshman year art teacher helped me fall in love with the creative process almost more than the finished art products themselves. I loved the challenges art presented and the way it stimulated my imagination.



"I'm not trying to become famous. I'm enjoying the ride and hoping to positively impact as many people as I can"

- Laurie



Laurie Charpentier's Studio

Since those early high school classes, I have dabbled in all sorts of art—everything from drawing and painting to ceramics and pastels. I discovered what I liked and disliked, what I was good at and what I was not. Still, in the back of my mind, there was always the belief that I was not good enough or as qualified as the professional artists with framed fine art degrees from prestigious art schools. As if these fears were not bad enough, several people in my adult life tried to convince me that being an artist was a waste of time. Their pressure had a profoundly negative impact on my willingness to indulge my creative side, and it kept me away from creating art for several years. In fact, I deviated from my original plan to attend art school after graduating high school and instead married and had children.

Thankfully, gardening—my other passion—remained a constant in my adult life, even when I was not creating art. It was my grandfather who inspired my love for the earth and its bounty. I went back to school later on to

pursue a degree in psychology, and that is when I finally started to take art electives again. After graduating, I entered the corporate world, where I found I could apply a surprising amount of creativity to my job as a human resources director. While one side of my brain was stimulated at work, I continued to garden and make art for my own enjoyment. But when the company I worked for changed ownership, I felt less empowered to be creative in my position. So, in 2007 I left the corporate world to study life coaching, and opened my own practice. After all this time, I was still convinced that art could not be a valid career for me.

The 2008 economic crash followed a year later, and my husband and I lost everything. In a way, it was a blessing. Forced to start from scratch, we reevaluated our lives and what we really considered the definition of success to be. After a lot of soul searching, we decided that we wanted one thing above the material possessions and fancy titles: freedom.

So, we pivoted one-hundred-eighty degrees, bought a modest home on five acres of property, and started growing herbs and lavender to make soaps, herbal teas, eye masks, and heating pads. We called the business Max's Farm—named after our Dachshund, Max—and opened a shop to sell our products. While I waited for customers to arrive, I began playing around with the pebbles, shells, and bits of nature that I always collected when I went to the beach—which, besides the garden, has always been the most restorative space I know. That was the beginning of my signature art form: small, simple, nature-made scenes accompanied by a meaningful phrase. I began creating these works as small gifts with no intention of selling them, but then one day, a customer entered the shop and saw the current piece I was working on. She was instantly enamored and asked to buy it.

The validation I felt from the love of a customer that day sparked something in me. After that piece sold, I made another, and another, and soon they were selling faster than I could make them, slowly chipping away at my

chronic lack of self-confidence. In 2018, I was diagnosed with Crohn's disease, which pushed me to meditate even further on what I wanted from life. I made the decision, then, to close the shop and work from home. My husband is a woodworker, so we built him a workshop on our property to use as his workspace, which allowed me to use the basement as my studio. My daughter, Amanda—who inherited my love for nature and gardening—started helping me operate Max's Farm, which allowed me to pursue my art full-time.

While I am still enamored with the creative process, what I have really come to love is seeing people's reactions to my work—seeing them connect. My goal is not to become famous. I am just enjoying the ride and hoping to positively impact as many people as I can. To finally accept myself as an artist and realize that this is my life's purpose is a joy that I hope everyone experiences.

Thanks for sharing in my journey!
Laurie Charpentier



"Pets Leave Pawprints," available for sale on the Ohanga Market.



BY ERICA MACRI, ASSISTANT EDITOR

There's life stirring in my gutters.
There's life, ephemeral as all things feathery,
nudging at the seasons while their mother comes
and goes. She does not delay takeoff to share reasons.
Opposite the glass, there's always some thought settling.
But chicks will find it tiresome
to resist soaring—
and when they wriggle, like the worms they take
throat to throat, you see that one day they'll lift
like a prayer; that, like us,
they insist on trying their own fragility.

SEE MORE FROM ERICA AT
ERICAMACRI.COM



EMPTY NEST SYNDROME:

Waiting for Kestrels

By Peter Green, Urban Wildlife Photographer

Have you noticed the egg in the center of the Ohanga logo? In fact, Ohanga means "nest" in Māori, the Eastern Polynesian language spoken by the indigenous population of New Zealand who inspired the company's original mission to support artists. The vibrant colors surrounding the egg are woven together like a bird nest: a very clever design.

Birds are also very clever, especially in their unique nesting adaptations. While all birds lay eggs, not all use the typical round twig structures that most people associate with nests. Woodpeckers use their powerful beaks to drill a cavity in a tree trunk into which the female lays her eggs; Baltimore Orioles weave sturdy sacks that dangle from a secure attachment to a branch above; on an open cliff face, Peregrine Falcons scrape a shallow depression in the dirt to hold their eggs; Great Horned Owls often commandeer nests from other unlucky birds after construction is complete. In

downtown Providence, Rhode Island, some of my favorite birds to watch are American Kestrels, which are cavity dwellers: they don't construct twig nests, but rather lay eggs in holes of decaying trees. In the urban environment, dead trees are hard to find, so the pint-sized falcons cleverly make use of empty spaces in buildings.

At only 8 to 12 inches long, kestrels are the smallest falcons in North America. Sadly, their numbers are in sharp decline nationally (88% decline in New England since 1966) which is why it is critical to monitor and support their populations. The decline is likely due to habitat loss, competition from other species, pesticide use, and more.

When spring returns in Providence, so do the kestrels, and there are a few nests that I document each year. For their own protection, I do not publicly share the exact

locations. Due to their individually unique urban environments, keeping an eye on them without drawing attention presents particular challenges; as an urban wildlife photographer, I try to keep a low profile.

On Federal Hill, there is a kestrel nest that is accessed from a roof opening on the back of an apartment building. One of the residents invited me to come photograph the colorful falcons that she had spotted. It's a great excuse to jump on my bicycle, get some exercise, and check on the kestrels' progress across town. At that location, I get the best view by watching the nest cavity from a private parking lot, waiting for the birds to emerge. I always wear a hat and t-shirt from the American Kestrel Partnership because the last thing I want to do is alarm the neighbors or look like a creepy stalker with a long zoom lens. If anyone approaches to ask what I'm doing, I introduce myself and simply point at my shirt with the illustration of kestrels, and they quickly understand I'm just looking at birds. If they're interested, I can talk their ears off about these amazing little predators.

After the nestlings fledge in July, they leave the area to find their own territories, and the parents do not use the nest as a home during the non-breeding seasons. Nests are only used for laying eggs and raising hatchlings, then abandoned when the birds migrate for the winter. If I'm lucky, the adults will return to the same cavity next spring.

In West End, a pair of kestrels nested in the back of a house that I located while riding my bike around the area. Since I was not invited there by the homeowners, I had to respect their privacy. I considered approaching them with information about their avian tenants, but I feared the kestrels may be seen as pests and promptly evicted.

Often perched on a tall antenna, the kestrels had an unhindered view of various bird feeders in the neighborhood, and those songbird feeders quickly turned into kestrel feeders. The doting parents were great hunters and brought home a variety of prey species: sparrows, mice, dragonflies, garter snakes, and more. These feisty little falcons are also very protective—chasing away much larger Red-tailed Hawks that happen to fly too close.

The following year this pair of kestrels returned to the same house, but they nested in a cavity on the front side of the building. The best view I could find was on the street, so in order to remain incognito, I had to visit this location in my car. I'd pull up and quietly sit there waiting for kestrels. If someone passed by I'd hide my camera, not wanting to look suspicious. Like a "blind" used by photographers in the woods to camouflage themselves, my car acted like an "urban blind," hiding me from both the kestrels and humans.

I thought I was doing a good job of concealing myself, until one day when a man approached my car window and asked if I lived on the street. He wanted to know why I had been parking there for hours on so many days, just sitting in my car. He became agitated and nervous.

"Are you a cop? FBI? Why are you watching my neighbors? Are you watching me?"

Luckily I had my kestrel shirt and hat on, and I pointed at both and said, "I'm really sorry. . . I'm just. . . watching birds." I showed him my latest photos on my camera's LCD screen.

"Birds?! What?!" he exclaimed. I apologized again and told him that I wouldn't return if it made him uncomfortable. He smiled, said it was no problem, and chuckled as he walked away. Laughing to himself, he shook his head with relief, and repeated, "Birds?!"

After a long isolating year of Covid restrictions and a cold icy winter, I'm anxiously awaiting the return of spring and kestrels. If you're also experiencing cabin fever, consider birding as a post-Covid change of pace. Join a virtual or in-person birding class hosted by the Audubon Society of RI, then take what you've learned outside and discover the amazing species in our state. You can also invite wild birds to visit your property by hanging a nest box that can aid their population growth. The size of the box and hole will determine which species finds it suitable. Purchase a pre-made box or construct one following specific instructions readily available online. If you're lucky, American Kestrels may move in and start a family.

WENDY RODGER

My name is Wendy Rodger and I am a functional artist.

I haven't always considered myself an artist, however. I've only recently started using the label "functional artist," because it feels most right. I was always a creative person—even as a child—but I couldn't draw, which is the skill I thought qualified an artist. Looking back now with the understanding that art is so much more than drawing, I recognize that I was in fact firmly rooted in the arts. I was a ballet dancer from the age of three to fifteen, and participated in children's theater. My neighborhood friends and I would put on shows, and charge our parents to come and watch the performance. I probably got the instinct from my mother, who also should have considered herself an artist. She wove grapevine wreaths and made folk art out of wooden cut-outs, one of which even made it into the Countryliving Magazine.

Over the course of my childhood, my father's job as a civil engineer moved my family seventeen times. We ultimately ended up in Massachusetts, where my sister and I attended universities in Boston, and my parents bought an old historic home in Medway. The property came with a barn, which my mother transformed into an antique store called Backyard Vines and Antiques. The shop did really well because she had a good eye for staging, curating, and collecting. One of the many things I took from her, I believe, is just that: the creative eye.

In college I pursued an English major because I liked creative writing, and I also took photography classes. I loved taking pictures of nature and the city, but also of passersby; immortalizing moments and expressions, each with its own story to tell.

I knew what I wanted to do with my life, but something kept holding me back. I was told I was too distracted, too unfocused, too social, all things that were preventing me from being successful. My self-esteem suffered greatly, and it was only later in life that I was diagnosed with ADHD.

After graduating, I found a job as an administrative assistant at a marketing company where I worked for five years. It wasn't exactly the dream journalism job I had imagined for myself, but it still had creative outlets that kept me happy. It was during that time period that I met my future husband. After he finished graduate school, we got married and moved to Rhode Island.



"Oysters create pearls when sand or other irritants penetrate the shell, it's how they protect themselves; there is no beauty without adversity"

-Wendy

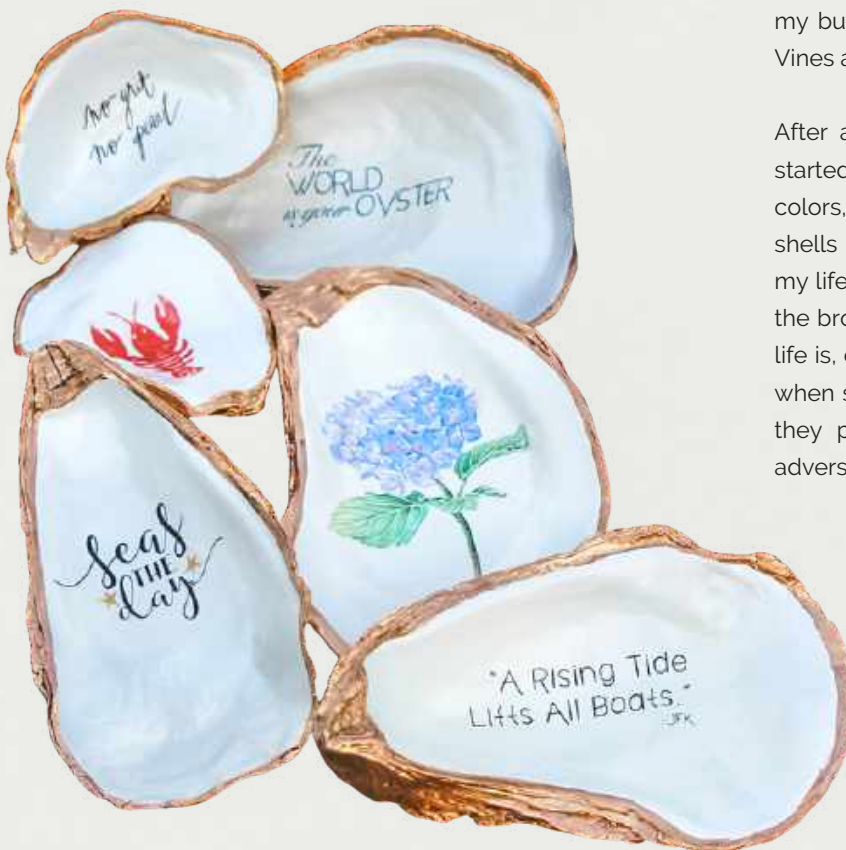


Then my sister opened a maternity store in 2002 in Wayland Square, also in Rhode Island, which I started to run since she still lived in Boston. I loved being able to use my creativity to assemble window displays, create visual merchandising, design newsletters, and organize events, but it was also difficult because I was constantly surrounded by pregnant women during a time in which my husband and my's attempts to have children were repeatedly unsuccessful.

I started a tee shirt line for adoptive parents around the same time my husband and I decided to adopt ourselves. I called it "Not Showing" and had a lot of fun making the logo and tee shirt designs. By the time we adopted our first son, Jake, some of the pregnant women I'd become friends with while working at the maternity store had given birth to their own children. A couple of years later we adopted our second son, Evan. I then discontinued the "Not Showing" tee shirt line because life with two young children was simply too busy.

It seemed like everything was finally lining up; but like I always write on the inside of my oyster shells, there's no pearl without grit.

Painted Oyster Shells by Wendy Rodger



On July 28th, 2013, while crossing an intersection near my family's Massachusetts sea cottage, I pushed Evan out of the way of an oncoming car, which hit me, instead. Evan was three years old at the time. I almost died, and that moment changed everything. I needed external fixators to hold my pelvis together for three months, and slowly started walking again when they were removed in October. Friends and family called it a miracle—which it was—but the miracle didn't help the pain, or the intense PTSD, or the real possibility of an addiction to the powerful pain medication.

That winter I started taking our dog for walks along Narragansett Beach to clear my head. At low tide, Narragansett Beach is a expanse of sand speckled with lots of flat, smooth stones. I started collecting pebbles and broken shells. A year after my accident, my mother fell gravely ill. During the following two years that I helped take care of her, I started arranging the pebbles and shells I collected into pebble art. I eventually incorporated sayings into my creations, phrases like "no grit no pearl," and "salt water cures everything." I needed these sayings more than ever—sayings that resonated with my experiences, but that I realized connected with many people around me, too.

My mother passed away in October 2016, and the following year I started to sell my artwork and named my business Backyard Beach in honor of her Backyard Vines and Antiques.

After a while, I tried to move on to different styles. I started painting the inside of oyster shells in different colors, then incorporated prints and other designs. The shells became my canvas, my storytelling. I recognized my life in the lyrics of a Rascal Flatts song: "God blessed the broken road that led me straight to you." That's how life is, even that of an oyster shell. Oysters create pearls when sand or other irritants penetrate the shell. It's how they protect themselves: there is no beauty without adversity.

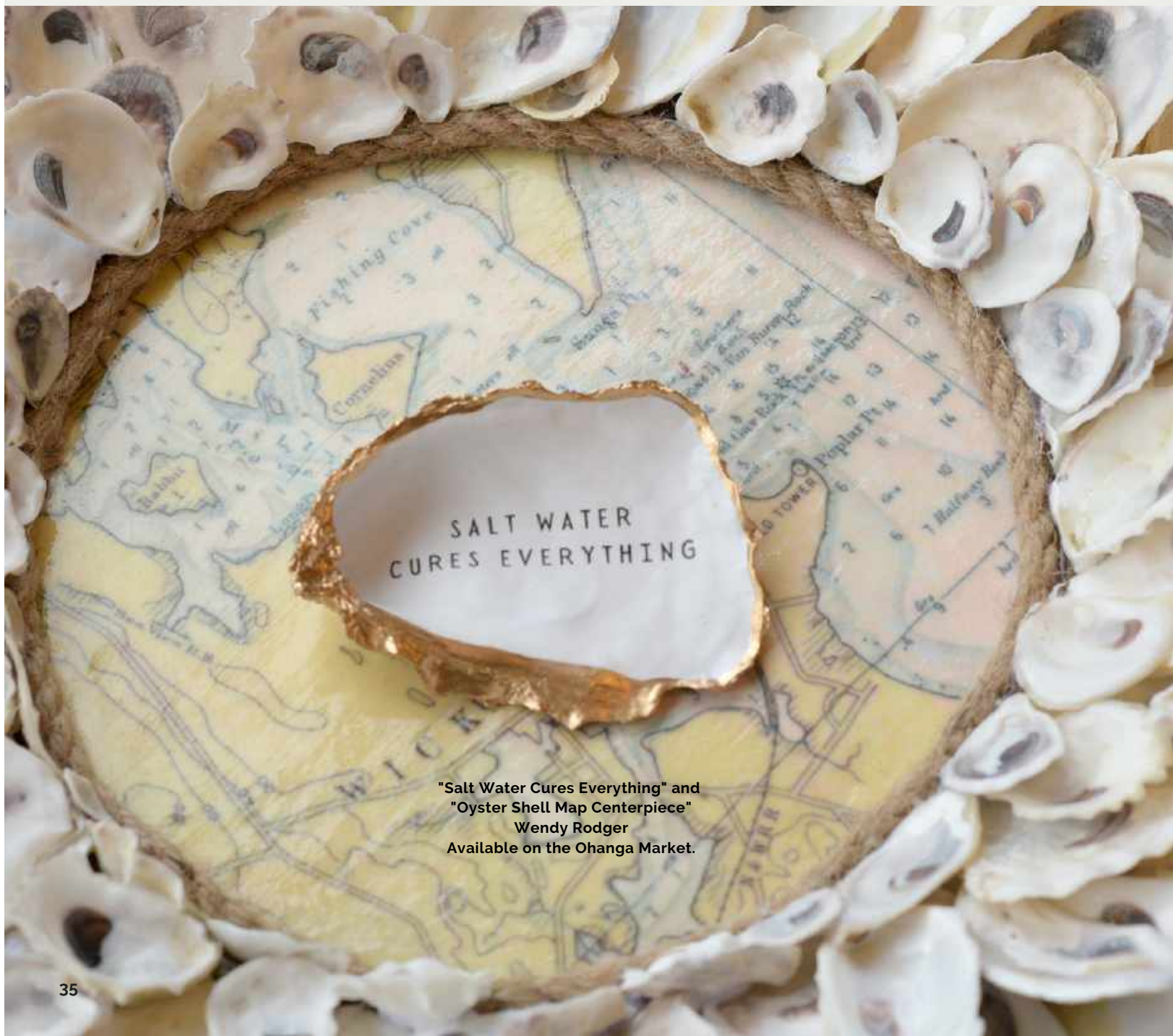
Creating my artwork was not only relaxing, but also therapeutic and healing. I did very well at the Wareham Oyster Festival, and started participating in other fairs and approaching business owners to resell my work.

I now specialize in the creation of home decor and accessories made from hand picked and locally sourced oyster shells. I find the shells myself on my beloved beaches, or receive shells from local oyster farmers. My business' responsibility and sustainability is also important to me, which is why I've recently become more involved with local non profits and the Save the

Bay initiative.

It's been three years since I started taking my art business seriously, since I've been able to call myself an artist. Ultimately, I want my creations to mean something, to be meaningful to someone, and to make space for pause and reflection, connection, feeling. Everyone is going through something—no one has it easy. But at least we can get through the grit and find the pearl together.

Keep Smiling,
Wendy Rodger



**"Salt Water Cures Everything" and
"Oyster Shell Map Centerpiece"
Wendy Rodger
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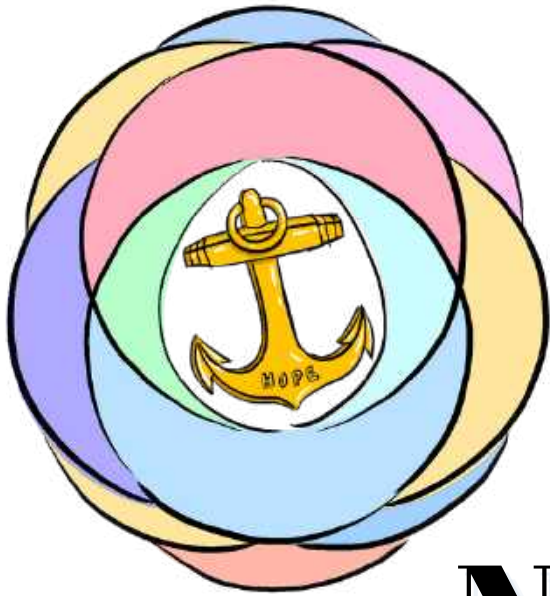
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