

URBAN ARTIST®

YOGA FOR THE MIND

OCTOBER 2026 • ISSUE 12

THOMAS W. SCHALLER:

The Deeper We Look

FAITH RAINVILLE:

All Views Are Subject
to Change

GLORIA CASSIDY:

Piecing It Together



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Cover

“Past, Present, Future”

Mixed Media Collage

by **Gloria Cassidy**

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EDITOR'S LETTER



The Art of Becoming

There is a moment when we begin. But beginning and becoming are not the same thing.

Beginnings are easier to recognize. Something changes, we make a choice, or life makes one for us, and suddenly we find ourselves moving in a different direction.

But becoming seems to happen more slowly, as we begin to trust what may have been there all along.

This issue of Urban Artist Magazine grew from my curiosity about that process. What makes someone finally claim the word artist? What allows another to continue reaching after decades of accomplishment? What do we build from the fragments of our lives, and how much of who we become was quietly taking shape before we recognized it?

The artists in this issue arrived at those questions from very different places.

Thomas W. Schaller reminds us that becoming does not end with mastery. There is always more to see, more to question, and more to learn. His work asks us to look closely—not only at the world before us, but at what we bring to the act of seeing.

Faith Rainville's story made me think about permission: the moment we stop waiting for someone else to tell us who we are. Her collages reclaim fragments that once belonged to another story and give them new meaning. Perhaps we do that with ourselves, too.

Gloria Cassidy brings us quite literally to the fragments—pieces gathered, rearranged, and transformed into something that could not have existed quite the same way before.

Maybe that is what becoming asks of us.

Not to erase what came before or necessarily reinvent ourselves, but to recognize what is worth carrying forward, what we are ready to leave behind, and what has been waiting all along for us to notice it.

We are always beginning.

And, if we're lucky, we are always becoming.

Kathy Gonzales
Publisher & Editor
Urban Artist Magazine

*Left: Obsession, watercolor on paper
30 × 22 inches — Thomas Schaller*

What Was There All Along

What is it that actually prompts the becoming?

There are moments in life that seem to spark creativity. A divorce or death can quiet someone enough to pause and look inward, searching for ways to express the pain and hurt, trying to make sense of it all.

Which makes me think about creativity itself.

We often think of creativity as a talent, a fun pursuit, perhaps something reserved for a chosen few. Yet for some, it seems to come alive during the very moments in life that can be introspective, painful, exciting—and even magical.

Sometimes it arrives quietly—with curiosity, an impulse, the discovery of a material that somehow feels familiar in our hands.

Sometimes it arrives with force: loss, rejection, anger, love, necessity, or the realization that the life we have been living no longer quite fits.

Something awakens.

But what?

Is creativity learned, or is it inherent? Is it confidence that finally brings to light something that was always within us? Does it happen when we stop listening to the negative voices and decide it's time to let the magic fly?

The forces that shape an artist are not always the ones we would choose. Encouragement can give us confidence, but rejection can give us resolve. Success can open a door, while failure can force

us through another. Doubt can silence us—or compel us to find something more truthful to say.

Maybe it's these moments in our lives that spark the becoming. And perhaps becoming asks us to leave something behind: expectations, definitions of success, the need for permission, or even an earlier version of ourselves.

That's what interests me.

Not simply how someone becomes an artist, but what prompts the becoming.

What was the spark?

What gave them courage?

What nearly stopped them?

What did they have to overcome, relinquish, discover—or finally believe about themselves?
And after years, even decades, of creating, are any of us ever finished becoming?

In this issue of *Urban Artist Magazine*, we explore those questions through three artists at different places in their creative lives. Their materials, experiences, and paths are their own, but beneath them is something universal: the quiet—and sometimes not-so-quiet—transformation that happens when we continue to make, question, risk, fail, trust, and begin again.

But there is another question I can't quite let go of.

Is creativity something we possess from the beginning, waiting for the right moment to emerge? Is it something we learn? Something we cultivate? Or is there something more mysterious at work—something we don't quite have language for?

Perhaps creativity is learned. Perhaps it is inherited. Perhaps circumstance calls it forward. Perhaps there is something else at work entirely.

I don't know.

But I keep coming back to Glinda.

What if we've always had the power?



Emerald City, collage by Faith Rainville



Photograph by Katherine Gonzales

STAY
CURIOUS

Stay Creative



Thomas W. Schaller

The Deeper We Look

On seeing, curiosity, and the constant process of becoming.

Left: *Kyoto Nocturne*, watercolor on paper, 30 x 22 inches



Thomas W. Schaller

by Kathy Gonzales

Thomas W. Schaller's paintings carry a sense of reverence—not necessarily religious, but a respect for the world he observes and for what humans have imagined and built within it. His paintings seem to ask us to notice what we might otherwise miss.

His buildings have strength.
His skies have drama.
His light has movement.
But the paintings themselves still feel quiet.

Kyoto Nocturne holds a wonderful tension. The red against the aqua, blue, and violet doesn't whisper visually—it's a striking color relationship. A solitary figure appears to move through the scene, a light illuminating his path. Another form near the house suggests someone else may be there. Nothing overtly happens, yet the painting feels charged, as though something has happened or is about to.

Art will never speak to two people in quite the same way. Perhaps that's part of the conversation. The artist asks us to look but doesn't necessarily tell us what to see. We bring something of ourselves to that exchange, leaving room for thoughts and feelings the artist may never have anticipated.

In Schaller's work Plato's Cave, there is a silent mystery that keeps me looking.

“We may all look at the same thing, but we will all see it somewhat differently.”

A figure sits absorbed at a desk while towers of books rise nearby. Beyond him, the New York skyline. A little dog is there too, almost hidden beneath the desk. Why is he barely visible? Why do Schaller's figures sometimes seem so small against the worlds surrounding them?

The longer I looked, the more I wondered whether the mystery lay in the painting or in what I was bringing to it.

I had to ask myself: What does it really mean to see?

A language exists between artist and viewer, almost a game of give-and-take. The artist gives us what he saw, thought, or imagined, but somewhere between the painting and the person standing before it, the story changes. We are left to write the ending and walk away with something of our own.

Looking at his paintings left me wanting to understand not simply how Schaller paints, but how he sees.

Biography:

Thomas W. Schaller is a multi-award-winning artist and the recipient of the Arthur Ross Award in Fine Art from the Institute of Classical Architecture and Art

Thomas W. Schaller
AWS, NWS-MA, TWSA
NWWS, CWA-MA
SDWS-MA, IMWA, CAC
SCNY, ASAL, AAPL

“Making art was not just a hobby,
but a way of being.”

— Thomas W. Schaller



Plato's Cave, watercolor on paper, 30 × 22 inches

Accepted into the National Watercolor Society's 106th Open Exhibition

Was there a moment when making art became more than something you did—when you understood it was something you needed to pursue?

Schaller: *“I can't say that it was a precise moment, but gradually, ever since childhood, it became more and more clear that making art was something that was not just a hobby, but a way of being. Making art was the only way for me to make sense of the world around me, to control my emotions, and express myself in a way that mere words could not. As I reached adulthood, artwork emerged as the only logical way that I could imagine trying to make a living or to spend my time.”*

You've written about the importance of honesty in one's work. How much of being an artist is learning the craft, and how much is learning to trust yourself enough to allow what you genuinely feel into the work?

“Learning one's craft is, of course, essential. But it is also important to remember that skills and technique are simply tools - the necessary components of self-expression. Your ideas and your unique creative point of view are what matter most. They are the destination, while techniques are simply parts of the path to help you get there.”

Architecture asks us to solve problems, while watercolor often asks us to surrender to uncertainty. How have those two disciplines shaped not only your work but the person you've become?

Schaller: *“Any creative endeavor can be seen as a type of problem-solving. And in fact, design itself is a type of problem-solving—choosing what to include, what to leave out. Designing a successful building is*

often an issue of trying to solve some very real-world problems of site, materials, space, budget, social, public, private, and environmental concerns. Designing a painting is another sort of problem solving. But instead of working with components of concrete, glass, and steel for example, we are working with more personally expressive elements such as memory, dreams, and pure invention.”

“The constant attempt to improve is what inspires me every day.”

There is often tremendous energy in becoming good at something. The harder question may be what happens once you've become very good at it. What keeps you curious enough to begin another painting?

Schaller: *“Issues of “perfection” or “ideal beauty” have compelled artists throughout the years. But we all understand that these are impossible goals. Still, the more our skills improve, the better we become at authentic and honest expression, the higher and farther we try to reach. The constant attempt to improve is what inspires me every day to go to my easel and try to be a better artist than I was yesterday.”*

After conversations with many artists, and through my own experience, I've come to think of success as something deeply individual. Sometimes success is simply setting up a place to paint, picking up the brush, and beginning. Saying you're going to make something and following through. It can happen at any age, at any stage. Perhaps success isn't arriving at all, but continuing to reach.



Doors
watercolor on paper
22 × 15 inches



City of Light
watercolor on paper
30 × 22 inches

After so many years of looking closely at light, space, and atmosphere, are you still surprised by what you see? What can stop you in your tracks today?

Schaller: *“What a great question. And yes. I am constantly amazed by what I notice in the world around me. We can walk by the same thing day after day and still be shocked by some play of light, some collision of shapes, some unexpected trick of color that we never saw before. I write a great deal about the difference between “looking” and “seeing.” We may all look at the same thing, but we will all see it somewhat differently. And this is true in our own lives as well. As Heraclitus said, ‘A man can never step in the same river twice, because it is not the same river, and he is not the same man.’ Change is the exciting constant.”*

No two people will see the same thing in the same way. But I wonder if even our own seeing changes from day to day. Can our inner emotions set their own palette?

At this stage in your career, what does failure look like to you? Has your relationship with it changed?

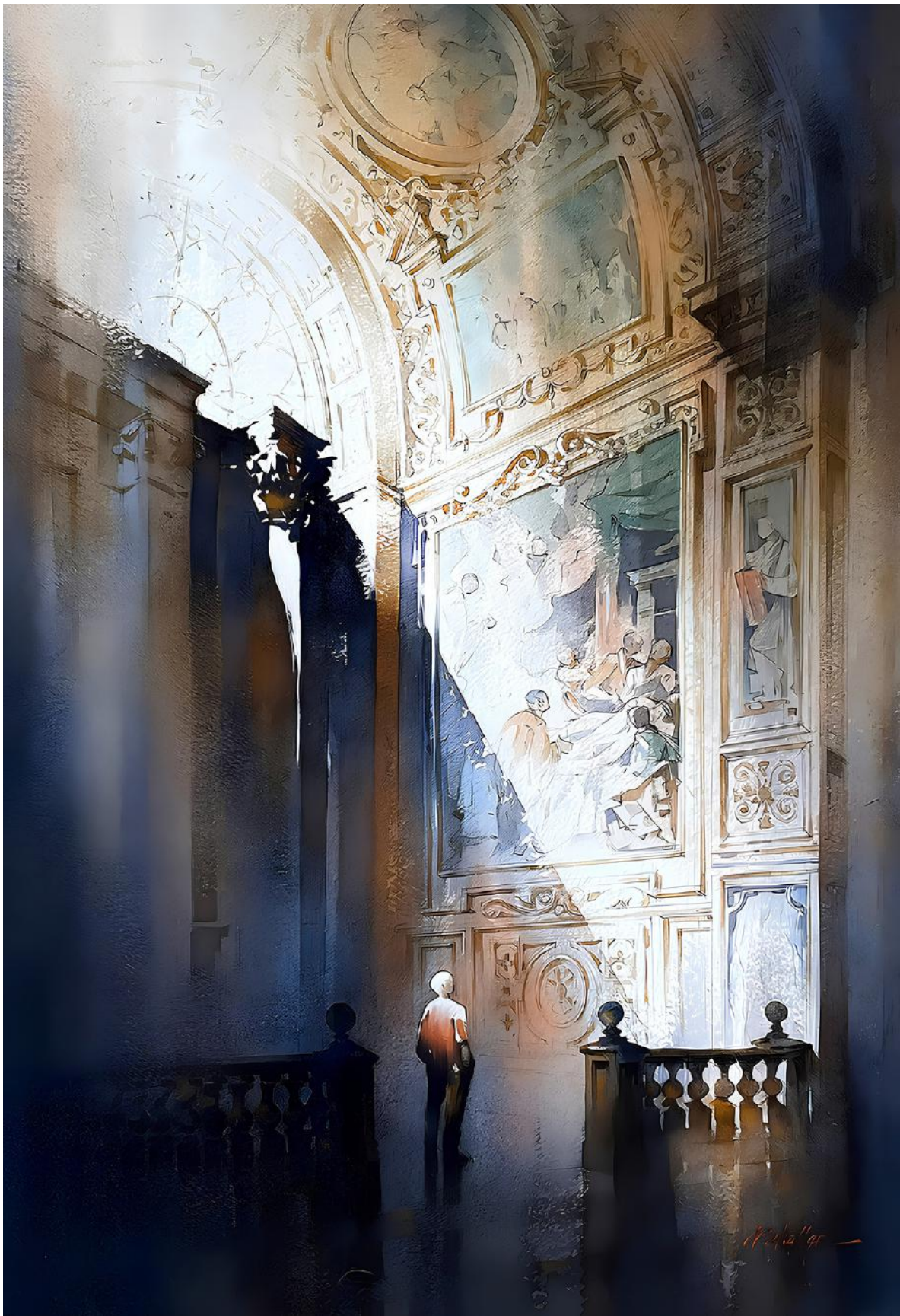
Schaller: *“Failure.” This is such a loaded word. And yes, my definition of it has changed a great deal over the years. As we set out, we cannot help but compare ourselves to others. We wish we had their success or their notoriety. We wish we could paint like they do. But in time, we learn that not only will we never paint like they do, we no longer wish to. We understand that they will never paint like us. And to improve as a painter—or anything else—we can do so only when we compete with ourselves. So at this point, I am only disappointed when I feel I have fallen short of my own internal goals of authenticity or clarity of expression. What is it I need to work on to better and more effectively express my own creative ideas? There is always so much more to learn.”*

Anyone who follows you knows Otis occupies a special place in your life. Animals seem to have none of our preoccupation with accomplishment or what comes next—they inhabit the moment they're in. Has sharing your life with Otis taught you anything about being present—or about yourself?

Schaller: *“My little dog Otis was a rescue who came into my life quite suddenly. It was never my intention that he should become such a large part of my life - personally or professionally. But he cannot bear to be left alone. So I began to travel with him to my classes and exhibitions. Over time, he has traveled much of the world. Even though I am working, he has a job to do as well. He helps put my classes at ease with his sweet, loving, and cheerful nature. He helps keep me calm as well. What you say about being present is so on point. As painters, we can become so lost in our own thoughts, anxieties, and ambitions, and little Otis truly helps me to remember to relax, have fun, and to live in the moment. In this way, and a thousand others, he has improved both my life and my paintings. And I have to wonder, who rescued who?”*



Otis



Afternoon in Rome, watercolor on paper, 30 × 22 inches

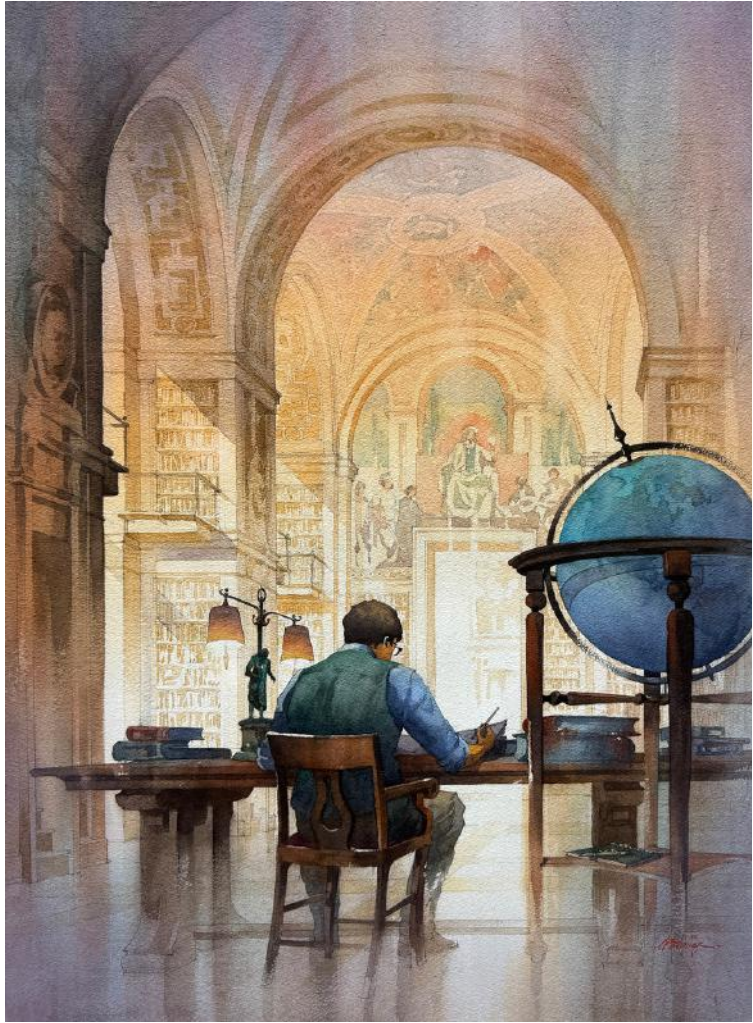
“We can do so only when we compete with ourselves.”



January – West 70th Street
watercolor on paper
30 × 22 inches

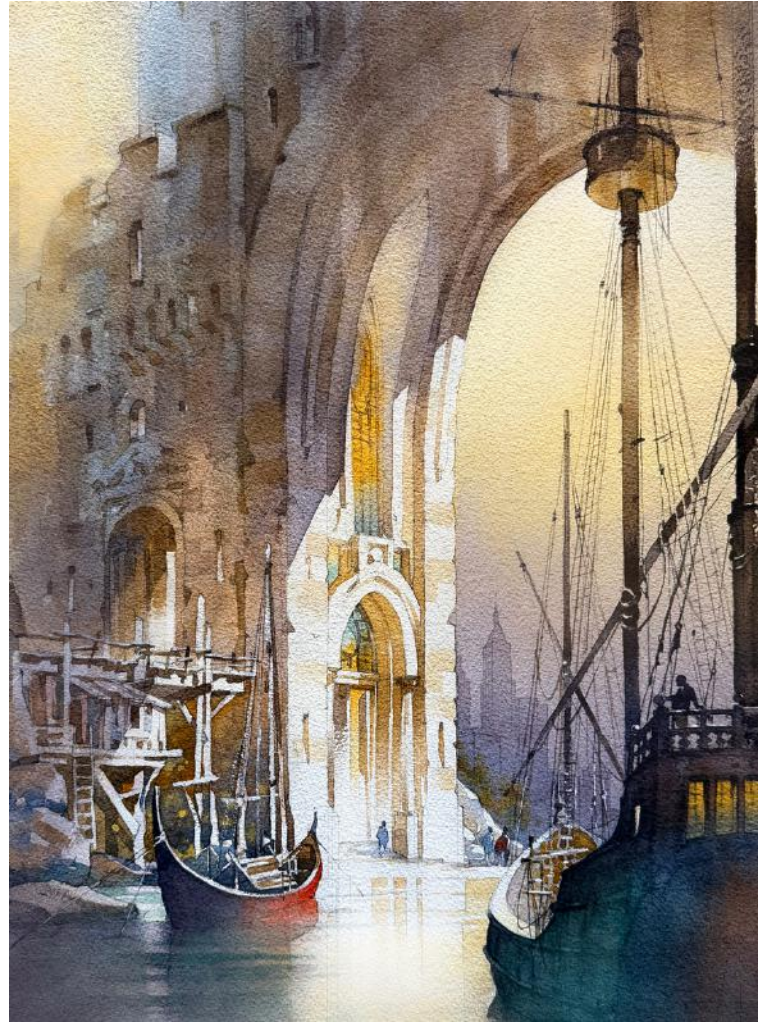


A World of Your Own
watercolor on paper
30 × 22 inches



World of Design
watercolor on paper
30 × 22 inches

Finalist, 98th Grand National Exhibition
American Artists Professional League



Safe Harbor
watercolor on paper
22 × 15 inches

Accepted into the California Watercolor Association's 57th
International Watercolor Exhibition



Belvedere, watercolor on paper, 12 × 16 inches

We often talk about "becoming an artist" as though there were a point at which we'd arrived. After a lifetime of making art, do you think an artist ever arrives—or is becoming the work itself?

Schaller: *"Because we know how much more there always is to learn, and how much room we all still have for improvement, we understand that "being an artist" is more properly defined as a constant process of "becoming." I don't find this frustrating or depressing, but exciting. It is the very best reason to get up every day and to get back to work to see what more we may be capable of expressing than we were before."*

“Being an artist is more properly defined as
a constant process of becoming.”

Still Standing-Havana
watercolor on paper
15 × 11 inches



“I am curious as to how much deeper I can look...”

Finally, what are you still curious about?

Schaller:

“For many years, I worked as an architect and then as a commercial artist. I enjoyed that work very much, but I was always aware that for the most part, I was painting the visions of someone else. As I transitioned into the world of fine art, I began to understand that I could not produce good work until I had a better handle on an understanding of my own point of view. What was it that I had to say? Was there anything at all, and would anyone care to hear? It was surprisingly difficult for me to look inward with focus and honesty to be able to begin to answer those questions. It has been only over the past few years that I feel I have begun to truly make progress in that regard. And so, I am curious as to how much deeper I can look, and therefore, how much better I may be able to connect with others because of it.”

ABOUT THOMAS W. SCHALLER

Thomas W. Schaller is an award-winning artist, architect, and author based in New York City. He is the recipient of the 2024 Arthur Ross Award in Fine Art from the Institute of Classical Architecture and Art. His honors also include the 2024 and 2025 Raphael Awards, a Graham Foundation Grant, and two Hugh Ferriss Memorial Prizes. He is the author of three books, with his fourth, *The Creative Eye*, scheduled for publication by Rockport/Quarto Press in 2027.

CONNECT WITH THOMAS W. SCHALLER

Schaller: *“Thank you so much for the fantastic questions and for the kind invitation. And thanks to all who’ve taken the time to read this interview.*

To know more about me and my work, my upcoming classes and exhibitions, see my website: **www.thomaswschaller.com**, or follow me at that name on Instagram, Facebook, Threads, Bluesky, and YouTube. I have published several books, but look for my new one, **The Creative Eye, to be released by Rockport Press in 2027**”





Obsession
watercolor on paper
30 x 22 inches



First Light
watercolor on paper
13 x 13 inches



Musical Artist

ZIMI

Singer | Songwriter | Producer

Los Angeles-based singer, songwriter, and producer ZIMI creates a dreamlike world where R&B, soul, jazz, and cinematic pop meet. At 16, she auditioned for *The Voice* and was ultimately cast, though her segment never aired. The experience pushed her to think more seriously about her identity and artistic direction. Through layered vocals, atmospheric production, and intimate storytelling, her work explores femininity, desire, vulnerability, and transformation.

Huntress begins with the pursuit—the spark and anticipation of desire. *Slow Burn* carries the story forward, following that first attraction as it deepens into longing, vulnerability, and ultimately, surrender.



Follow ZIMI:



Listen to ZIMI:



Website:

<https://linktr.ee/zimimusic>



Abracadabra, collage on paper, 8.5 × 9 inches

Faith
Rainville

All Views Are
Subject to Change

A portrait of Faith Rainville, a woman with long, vibrant pink hair and green eyes, looking directly at the camera. She is wearing a dark top. The portrait is framed by a white diamond shape on a black background.

“I think I gave myself
permission to call myself an
artist just a few years ago...
but I do feel like I’ve always been one.”

Faith Rainville

Funny how things play out: brief brushes with people you meet along the way, then one day, I don’t know...if the moonlight was right or the breeze blew in the right direction, and bam, there it is: paths cross again.

Fate would have it. And this was the path we would walk together, this moment.

This is what I thought of when I interviewed artist Faith Rainville. I have to admit I have known Faith for a bit, but only sporadically, so I really didn't get to know her until recently. There are a few years between us, but we connected on some rather interesting topics.

One of those topics just happened to be about becoming. I told her about starting Urban Artist Magazine, and she spoke about the art she was starting to do.

It felt destined to me, so I asked if I could interview her and show her art to the world because, after all, UA is about raising awareness of artists at all levels. Sometimes there are stages of confidence: we might be creating but not yet ready to claim it.

In fact, Faith said to me, "I think I gave myself permission to call myself an artist, just a few years ago, but I do feel like I've always been one."

Like others, I always saw Faith as an artist long before she did. People often assumed she was creative because of the way she presented herself—pink hair, tattoos. She made binder covers, doodles, and little collage stickers, but when people asked if she made art, she answered, "No, I can't really draw." Somewhere along the way, drawing had become synonymous with being an artist.

They say everything happens for a reason. Was this path predetermined, or was it simply there waiting for her to recognize it?

That is the art of
becoming
staring us right in the
face.

Was there a moment when you began to see yourself differently, not simply as someone who makes art, but as an artist?

Rainville: *"I think I have always been an artist, but only recently gave myself permission to call myself one. Collage is a medium that is often reduced to a "craft" or hobby. I started taking it more seriously as an art form in 2024, after traveling to the Netherlands to visit family. I met one of my cousins for the first time, and discovered that he is a graphic designer who specializes in analog collage! He showed me some of his work with brands I recognized immediately, and it truly opened my eyes to the potential of this art form. I thought to myself, That's an option? I could do this professionally! Maybe this is a talent I could pursue more."*

Was there ever a point in your life where someone else recognized you as an artist and called you that before you felt that?

Rainville: *Yes. A lot of that is probably because of how I dress, and, you know, I have pink hair and tattoos. So a lot of people assumed that I'm creative of sorts. But I've shown people just small things I've made for myself. Like I would make covers from my binder in high school and just doodles and little collage stickers. And you know, people would ask, like, 'Oh, do you do art? Do you draw? I can't really draw.' You know, it's so automatic to think, 'oh, I can't draw.' I'm an artist.' And that's like a hard thing to break through"*

I've seen your paintings. You draw; you were drawing.

Rainville: *"Yes, I'm practicing more and more, exploring different mediums. I love the soft pastel, the acrylic paint."*



I have some alcohol ink that I'm now exploring. Just love everything. Recently, I went with my mom to a paint-and-sip event at a local wine bar. I had so much fun; we had a good time, and I want to do it again."

Speaking of your mom, I always thought she was creative and allowed you the freedom to be creative and to be who you wanted to be. Has the way you see her creativity changed as you've gotten older?



Threshold of The Divine, collage on corkboard, wood frame 12 × 12 inches

Rainville: “Yes, my mom had a very different experience with creativity growing up. I think her mom made her take piano lessons, and she really resented that. I think she rebelled by doing other things. She was an elementary school principal. She just retired. But she is creative in her own way; she decorates her house for every season. I go over there and notice new little things, and there are new tchotchkes. So she’s very creative in that way. I see that now, as I’m older, and I appreciate it more.”

A piece of collage begins with fragments that already have a history. When you choose an image, a piece of paper, or an object, how much does its original history matter to you?

Rainville: “Sometimes the original history is not enchanting or honorable; in fact, it can be highly misogynistic and disempowering. I love sourcing material from Playboy magazines from the 1960s and ’70s and returning that feminine energy to its divine form.”

It made me think about the fragments of collage itself. We take something that already has a place in history, remove it from the place where someone else decided it belonged, and give it another life.

Perhaps we do that with ourselves, too.

In Faith's work, that reclamation feels particularly fitting. She is challenging an old definition of women while moving beyond assumptions about what an artist is supposed to look like. Perhaps becoming is partly that—deciding which definitions no longer belong to us.

Your imagery can feel otherworldly, intuitive, and even cosmic. Where do you think those images come from?

Rainville: “That comes from a lifetime of feeling like an outsider and surviving through acts of radical self-acceptance. I’ve learned a lot about myself through the archetypes found in astrology and tarot.”

Allowing intuition to play a role in becoming an artist—or simply becoming a more creative person—can be profound.

Inspiration can feel impulsive, as though we don't quite know where it came from.

Sometimes it can even feel divine. I've spoken with many artists now who describe an inner voice, a feeling of being guided, or an idea that arrived. Maybe part of becoming is learning to listen to that voice—and, as Faith says, getting out of our own way.

Do you ever create something that surprises you – something that seems to arrive before you completely understand what it means?

Rainville: *"I've created images that felt completely random in the moment, and later feel almost prophetic. The synchronicities feel like a little wink from the universe. Mystery is a delight, and being understood is overrated."*

And there it was again—the idea of fate, synchronicity, those little moments that make us wonder whether something is simply coincidence or whether we were meant to notice it. Maybe becoming isn't always about changing who we are. Sometimes it may simply be about becoming aware of what was there all along.

There can be pressure to make work people will understand or approve of. How much does the audience enter your mind when you're creating—and what have you had to let go of to trust your own voice?

Rainville: *"It's beautiful to create something that resonates with people, but I really don't think about the audience until I'm writing a caption on my Instagram post, about to share the work. I also enjoy making things that are just for me: spirit animal portraits for my altar, bookmarks, silly typography*

cards. I've made the mistake of sharing my work too soon, before I even know what I'm trying to say — that opens the door for all kinds of self-doubt."

We shared our thoughts on this further: the vulnerability of connecting with our inner thoughts and exposing our soul to the world, and how easily that can invite self-doubt. But once you own what you're creating, the need for approval begins to lose some of its power.

Do you think being comfortable expressing who you are gives you greater freedom in your art – to follow an idea even when other people may not immediately understand where it's taking you?

Rainville: *"Yes, that is one of the most valuable traits an artist can possess. Authenticity is the essence of free expression. It is also a form of protection to know who you are sincerely. People will judge what they don't understand, but that doesn't invalidate my expression or intention. Art is subjective; not everyone needs to "get it."*

Maybe becoming isn't about changing who we are.

Sometimes it may simply be about becoming aware of what was there all along.



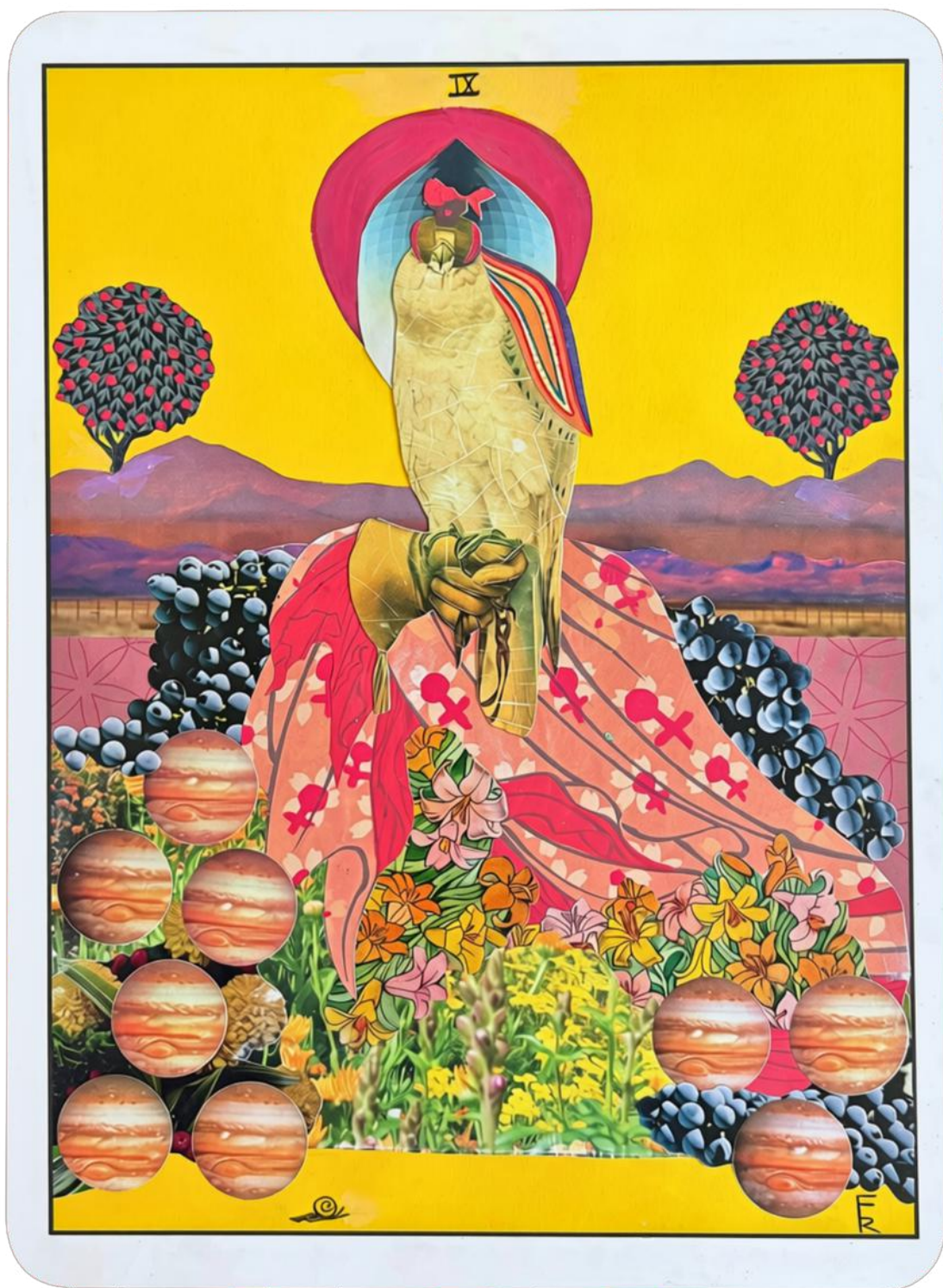
Call Your Mom, collage on paper, 12 × 12 inches



Authorized Voice, collage on paper, 12 × 12 inches



Handle With Care, collage on paper, 10 × 10 inches



9 of Pentacles, collage on cardstock, 11 × 8 inches

As you continue to evolve, what do you feel
you're becoming?

Rainville: *"I've become quite the hermit lately, but I am finally coming out of my shell to share my mystical magic."*

Is there a difference for you between expressing yourself and revealing yourself?

Rainville: *"Expression is outward, and revelation is inward. Expression without a witness is still expression, but revelation demands a recognition of soul. Revealing yourself is a lifelong process, and there will be many expressions of you along the way."*

I am a Sagittarius moon; all views are subject to change."



The High Priestess, collage on paper in tarot card frame, 4.75 × 2.75 inches



We Are Not Alone, collage on cardstock, 11 × 8 inches

CONNECT WITH FAITH RAINVILLE

Website: Faithrainville.com, launching
November 7, 2026, featuring her first collection
of 22 Major Arcana cards. Until then, follow her
on Instagram @vaith.





Photographed by Katherine Gonzales

Matisse

GAVE US PERMISSION

Matisse painted paper with gouache, cut the sheets into shapes, and arranged them into compositions that became more adventurous to him the less they resembled anything recognizable.

—*Excerpt from Jill Badonsky's Matisse's Snail*



Celebration of Life, collage on paper 16 × 28 inches

Piecing It Together

An Urban Artist Conversation with Gloria Cassidy





GLORIA CASSIDY

Time passes, and throughout our lives we pause now and then to act on our creative selves. We work, care for others, face difficult moments, and sometimes set that calling aside. Art can be a place of solace, an inner escape, a visual journal.

Creativity has a way of easing our minds, helping us feel empowered, calm, and sometimes even spiritual. It really doesn't have an age limit; young or old, we all need it—a place of self-empowerment.

Take time to dance

To draw

To paint

To sing

To write

Embrace your life and all the interruptions that come with it, using these experiences to find your flow.

Artist Gloria Cassidy did just that: She said, “I know that it took that collage and that one and that one to get to this one. It's just like those years of my life took me to get to where I have whatever it is in me now, that can come out and express the way it should. So perhaps my journey was exactly what it should have been.”

Gloria has been creative from a very young age and has embraced her inner calling ever since. Now, at 71, she is owning this part of her life and making her art a priority. She is showing her work in galleries and other venues, jumping on the social media bandwagon, and letting people know who she is as an artist. But she is also turning that creative energy outward, teaching

workshops and volunteering her time to share art with participants at Agape Village in Santa Clarita. She says, “For the next ten years, I’m a real artist.”

Art gets to come first.

Everything she has lived has brought her here, motivating her to own her creative strength.

Let life take precedence—until one day, creativity does.

For Gloria, there was a time when creativity stopped being simply something she enjoyed and became something she needed. In her early 40s, as her emotional health shifted, art became a way to bring what was happening internally into the open.

“I had to create art to get through some of the stuff I was getting through. And the art wasn't always pretty, but it was very therapeutic, and it spoke to me about things that were internal, that needed to come out. You will get clues from your art, no matter where you're at or what your abilities are.

I encourage people that creativity is essential.”

Gloria Cassidy is a mixed media artist who loves the process of storytelling through her art. A native of Southern California, she grew up with opportunities and encouragement to create. From a very young age, she knew that art was her passion.

At this point in her life, Gloria isn't simply embracing art; she is embracing herself—and giving creativity the place it has been waiting for.



Details from *Idea* by Gloria Cassidy

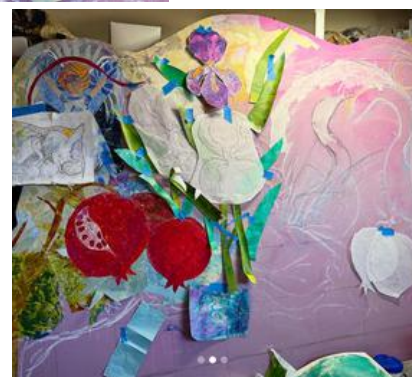
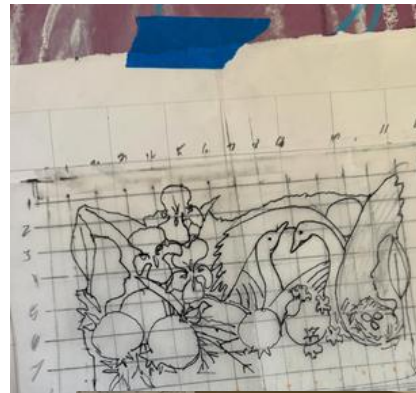
You've described your work as being created both "spontaneously and thoughtfully." Those ideas can seem almost contradictory. How do spontaneity and intention work together in your process?

Cassidy: *"It depends on the collage. Oh. Well, in this particular case, the assignment was given to me, and of course, it came out from within me too. But I had to figure out how to get it done physically."*

One of Gloria's projects was creating a headboard her husband requested. It was one of the biggest collages she had attempted.

"So I had to make patterns to put up, and I have images of all of the stages of this. They're on Instagram; I committed it like every week I would show a different stage, so you can go and look at it. And so, It's beautiful."

Oh, and also, intentionality, whatever comes in where you notice, like I take a black and white photo of everything I'm doing, I can take a photo and put it in monochromatic. And I go, oh, the hair disappeared. Or, oh, you can't even see the swan's head, because the value was wrong. So I almost always photograph what I'm doing. In fact, I have an example to show my class. This collage that I'm gonna use as a sample, photographed it. Uh-oh, where did those flowers go? The hue was too close, even though it's a different color. So I'm going to go ahead and replace that with lighter petals, because I want it to stand out. So this is why I take a photo, I go, Oh, okay. So there's spontaneity. In fact, it started as just this. And then I just started... Why not? Throwing stuff on it. And so that's kind of how that goes. Did that make enough sense?"



Gloria beginning her 78"× 48" headboard project



Abundant Praise, hand-printed paper monoprints and collage, 78 × 48 inches

How much do you trust intuition when you're working?

Cassidy: “A ton. Like, it is the most important thing. It, like, changes; the sketch is so different from the final product. For the sketch idea, I'll have sketched it out here because I'm really thinking of a pomegranate as a portal. And I questioned that on Instagram; I said, why would that come to my mind? A pomegranate as a portal. And some good friends replied, and it fit with what I was thinking: it opens into several chambers, like several portals, leading to several areas. So I feel like there's a lot for me, but this is a sketch. It won't look like this when it's done. This is— it might only be the pomegranate. Hmm. But I get sketch ideas, and then you go from there.

There are some collages I don't sketch at all. Just that one was inspired by the paper. That happens, too. I saw that paper, and I went, Oh, I'm gonna make that a tabletop. Where am I? What am I gonna use for my wallpaper? Oh, that's gonna be the wallpaper. So it went... The paper itself will speak to me.”

All the paper that you use, is it paper that you created, painted, and then cut up?

Cassidy: “I've altered all the papers I use. I only use paper that I've actually altered, or that's just white. I might use white rice paper because it turns transparent and it makes a nice effect.”

Even when we choose art as our path, sometimes the path itself changes. Like water flowing down a stream, it accommodates the new landscape. When a tremor made the precision of colored-pencil drawing increasingly frustrating, Gloria's work changed direction. What could have stopped her instead led her somewhere new.

“The development of tremors discouraged me from the type of drawing I was doing. By 2019, I stopped large-scale pencil work, knitting, and hand-sewing detailed work. I discovered gel plate printing and loved creating prints, especially botanicals. I saw some collaging of printed paper on Instagram and attempted a small collage. I fell into the mono-printing collage world!”

Gloria told me that after moving into collage, she spent two years in a Zoom critique group with her brother and other artists. Their response surprised her: they found her collages more expressive and alive.

What began as an adaptation had become an evolution.



Essence, colored pencil drawing, 13 × 13 inches



Gloria's first collage after her tremors began on a flattened cream cheese box.

Do you ever have to quiet the part of yourself that wants to control where a piece is going?

Cassidy: *"I feel like I'm this vessel. With Wings, I thought the bird was a predator. There was a woman, and I thought, that's so sad; he's going to prey upon her thoughts or her emotions. And then when I finished it, I went, That's her protector. So I stay out of my way, and then I find out what my picture's trying to be. It feels almost guided."*

One thing I began to understand is that Gloria is not only an artist but also a storyteller. She may begin with an idea or sketch, but as she works with the paper, another story can emerge. She allows the medium to lead her until the meaning becomes clearer—sometimes, she says, "almost as if it was a vision."

She says, *"I think with most creatives—and creatives can be anything—we're expressing something of the universe, and we're meant to do that. It's our calling. It touches people."*

One such connection happened unexpectedly through Past, Present, Future. Gloria had brought a print to a chiropractic appointment, and when another woman saw it, she asked what it meant. Gloria explained that the piece spoke to her about healing trauma and moving toward abundance and serenity. The woman asked Gloria to send her the image and has stayed in touch ever since. Another woman purchased the print for her son, who is recovering from PTSD.

For Gloria, experiences like these reinforce her belief that art can move beyond the artist and become something meaningful to someone else.

Cassidy: *"So you tell me there's not something moving around in the universe."*



Life Among the Layers, collage on paper, 14 × 11 inches



Wings, collage on paper



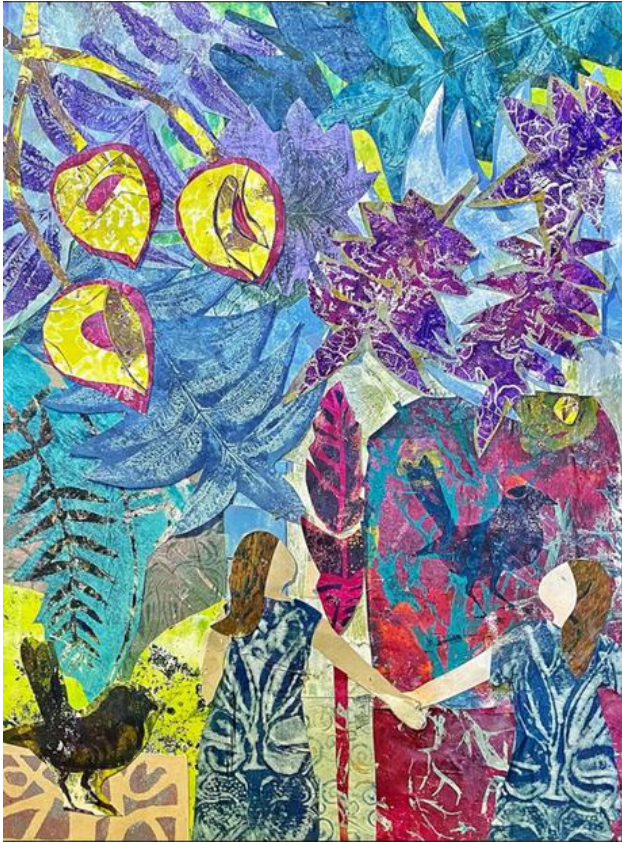
Past, Present, Future, collage on paper, 18 × 24 inches (featured on cover)

Trees root into the earth and reach up to the unending space above. Seeking serenity, an individual's profile faces the past. At the center of the piece, a healing tree supports the traumas as they are processed into abundance and peace. The long-necked birds are witnesses. They offer the suggestion of flying above the circumstances on wings of hope.

"I'm especially drawn to deciduous and fruiting trees. Observing their ability to go barren, bud new life and bring forth fruit helps me weather the seasons of my life."



Heartbeat, collage on paper, 16 × 20 inches



The Red Door, collage on paper, 24 × 17 inches



Seek Peace, collage on paper, 26 × 20 inches

“Within a shared vessel four figures gather beneath a white dove. They are each distinct yet connected in a quiet circle of hope. Together they remind us that peace is not merely the absence of conflict but the presence of compassion, understanding and a willingness to walk together. From this foundation lilies rise and bloom, symbols of renewal, purity, and beauty that emerge when hearts are rooted in unity. This garden needs intentional care. It is fed by forgiveness and the courage to seek one another despite our differences.”

“Seek Peace is an invitation to believe that, if sought after, peace can bloom, offering a promise of hope and safety.”

When you are working with layers, symbols, shapes, colors, and different materials, does the meaning of the piece usually begin with an idea, or do you sometimes discover what the work is all about only after you've made it?

Cassidy: “Several times, I discover it after I've made it, but some of my symbols have recurred since I was young—leaves, pomegranates, birds' nests, women, seeds and seed pods. I wrote a poem about seeds in fourth grade. It was about how the tears of the flower form into brown, hard little disks that fall into the ground to become... Those ideas about sowing seeds and reproducing have always been there. Mothers, mothering, even the womb have always fascinated me. And the pomegranate reminds me of the rich potential in each of us.”



Idea, collage on paper, 20 × 16 inches

Do you think there's a difference between beginning as an artist and becoming one, and what has becoming meant in your own creative life?

Cassidy: *"I think I'm continuing to be a beginner. As artists, we can always find something we wish were a little better because replicating what is spiritual into something physical is difficult. It's like how language limits us in communication; art can limit our vision."*

So I'm still beginning. But at one point, I became an artist because I accepted that I was an artist. I don't say that anymore, except for the joke I have with myself that over these ten years I'm becoming a real artist.

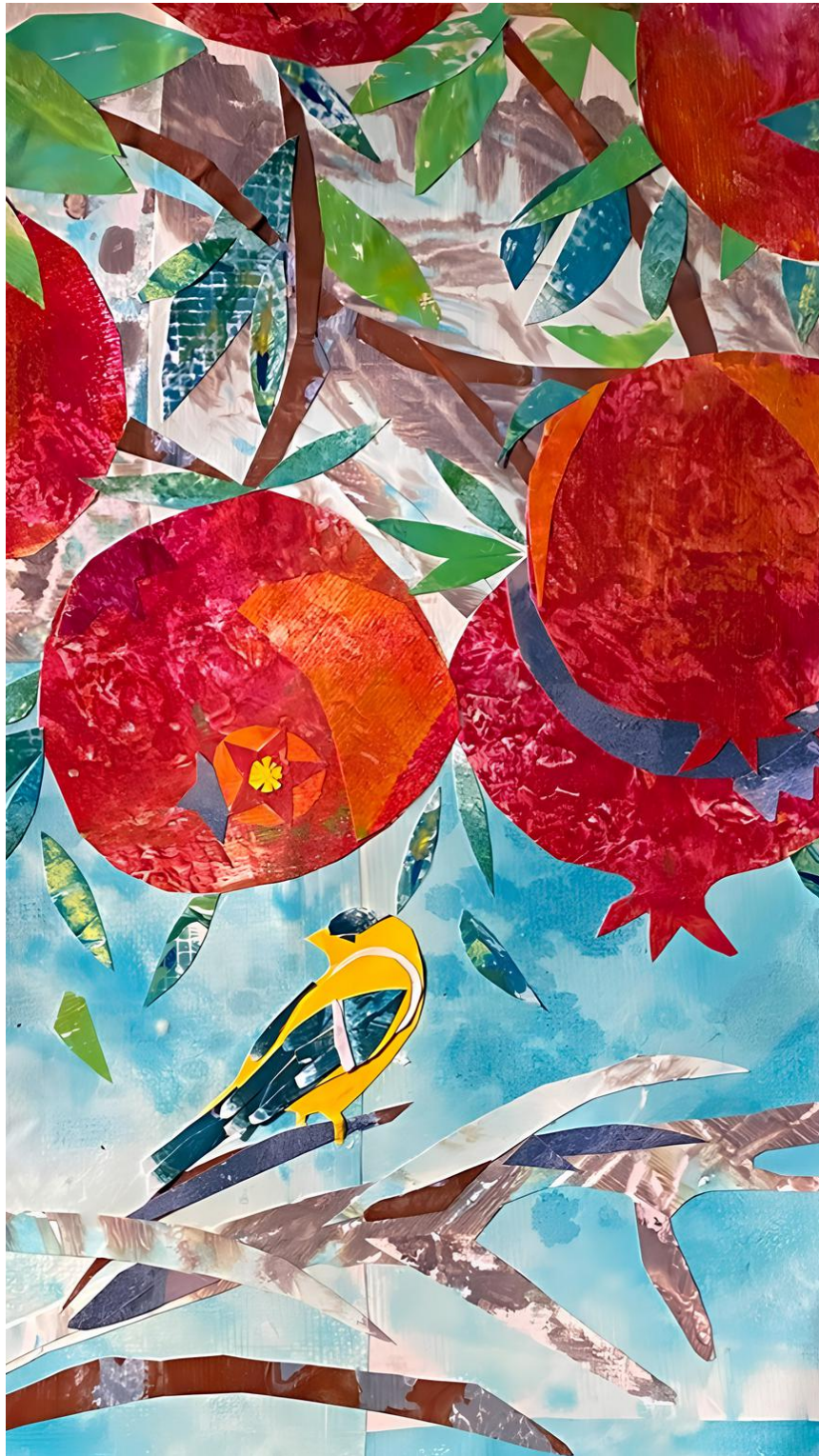
"It might be good not to say, 'Over these ten years, I'm becoming,' but just say, 'I am an artist.'"

CONNECT WITH GLORIA CASSIDY

To see more of Gloria Cassidy's work
and learn about exhibitions and
upcoming workshops, visit:

Website: glocassidy.com





Little Yellow Bird, collage on paper, 18 × 12 inches



Becoming Doesn't End

*An artist's voice
may begin in private.
Its influence
rarely ends there.*

Words and photograph
by Katherine Gonzales

What happens after an artist finds a voice? Where does that voice go once it enters the world?

Becoming isn't a destination—a moment when the artist finally arrives. It doesn't end with recognition, loss, age, or even a lifetime. It continues through the people an artist moves, the questions they leave behind, the courage they awaken in someone else.

An artist may begin with the private need to express something—to paint an image, write a sentence, create a garment, or sing what others have been afraid to say. But once that expression enters the world, it no longer belongs only to the person who created it. It can change how another person sees, speaks, or acts.

Dolly Parton's influence reaches beyond music through her generosity and commitment to literacy. Peter Max gave a generation a visual language. Bob Mackie transformed fashion and performance into spectacle and identity. Gloria Steinem used writing and activism to help change how women understood their place and power.

They don't belong to the same artistic discipline—and that is the point. Influence can begin with a painting, a dress, a song, an essay, or simply refusing to surrender your seat, as Rosa Parks did.

We imagine movements beginning with crowds, banners, and voices raised in unison. But perhaps they begin much earlier and much more quietly—with one person who sees what others have accepted and decides not to accept it. One person creates an image. Writes a sentence. Sings what others have been afraid to say. Sits where she has been told not to sit.

Becoming doesn't end with the individual. It passes from person to person.

Sometimes standing up does not look heroic at first. It looks inconvenient, unreasonable, even defiant. Near the end of Mayday, Troy "Assassin" Kelly refuses to land a plane until the Russian friend who helped him escape is granted asylum. When asked why, he answers, "Cause right now the only way to stand up for my country is to stand up to it."

**The conversation continues.
Read the complete essay on Substack**



NOTE TO SELF



Learning to Become

Words and photograph by Katherine Gonzales

*I'm the girl who never quite knew where she belonged.
Now I'm the woman who has learned to belong to herself.*

I learned that life is not always going to go
the way I thought it would.

I learned that was okay.

I learned that not everything was a disaster—
that somehow, it would all work out.

I learned that not everything needs
an ending or a beginning.
Sometimes, it simply needs to be what it is.

A flower taught me that nothing dies;
it just transforms.

I learned that I could become a strong woman
in a matter of moments
while taking care of my mother.

I learned not to listen to others
about my writing or art—
and, most of all,
I learned to listen to myself.

I learned to love myself.

I learned to love.
I learned it was okay to call myself a writer
and an artist.

Urban Artist Art about Town

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

On our radar — Fall 2026

A few places to look, linger, and stay curious.

SANTA CLARITA

SANTA CLARITA ARTS · CANYON COUNTRY COMMUNITY CENTER

Karen Nguyen — *Beyond the Horizon: An Exploration of Earth, Ocean and Space*

Through October 28, 2026

Contemporary landscape painting moves from sweeping coastlines to the cosmos, balancing realism with an intuitive sense of discovery.

SANTA CLARITA ARTS · OLD TOWN NEWHALL LIBRARY

Rose Smither — *Lookout Point, Wishes, Mute Reflections*

Through December 3, 2026

Wildlife, landscape, memory and reflection come together through expressive acrylic painting.

VENTURA

MUSEUM OF VENTURA COUNTY · VENTURA

Patriotic Threads: Textiles, Tapestries, & T-Shirts

Ongoing

Historical artifacts and contemporary works explore textiles as expressions of national identity, from celebration to critique.

SANTA BARBARA

WESTMONT RIDLEY-TREE MUSEUM OF ART · SANTA BARBARA

Haptic Knowing

September 3 – November 7, 2026

Five artists explore touch as a way of thinking and knowing, emphasizing sustained experimentation and the exchange between hand, material, and process.

WESTMONT RIDLEY-TREE MUSEUM OF ART · SANTA BARBARA

Marissa Voytenko — *As It Is in Heaven*

September 3 – December 19, 2026

An exhibition of encaustic paintings presented in the museum's downstairs gallery.

LOS ANGELES

HAMMER MUSEUM · LOS ANGELES

Huguette Caland — *A Life in a Few Lines*

September 27, 2026 – February 28, 2027

A wide-ranging retrospective of drawings, paintings, sculpture and textiles by an artist whose work explored home, aging, gender and the body.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

On our radar — Fall 2026

A few places to look, linger, and stay curious.

HAMMER MUSEUM · LOS ANGELES

Mavis Pusey — Mobile Images

October 11, 2026 – February 28, 2027

A major survey tracing five decades of geometric abstraction shaped by printmaking, fashion, and the changing urban environment.

HAMMER MUSEUM · LOS ANGELES

Five Centuries of Works on Paper: The Grunwald Center at 70, Part II

Through October 25, 2026

Prints, drawings and photographs spanning centuries reward close looking and a love of works on paper.

LACMA · LOS ANGELES

Reiko Sudō & NUNO — Textile Alchemy

September 20, 2026 – March 7, 2027

Textiles, sketches, tools, and prototypes reveal how craft, experimentation, technology, and sustainability can become one creative process.

Danse Macabre: Death in Print from Dürer to Dix

Through December 6, 2026

Printmaking meets mortality in a visual history of the danse macabre and art's long engagement with impermanence.

Pablo Picasso — Portraits in Disguise

Through December 6, 2026

A focused look at portraiture and the human figure, where likeness repeatedly gives way to invention and transformation.

MOCA GRAND AVENUE · LOS ANGELES

In These Times: Recent Acquisitions at MOCA

September 20, 2026 – January 3, 2027

A view into the museum's evolving collection and the ideas shaping contemporary art now.

GETTY CENTER · LOS ANGELES

Odilon Redon — Otherworldly Visions

Through October 18, 2026

Charcoal drawings, lithographs and pastels enter Redon's dreamlike world of nature, imagination, darkness and luminous color.

Next Issue

THE ART OF JOURNALING

January 2027



THE URBAN ARTIST CHALLENGE A Page From Your World

Miracles

Are you still out there
I believe in miracles
Here, I see the signs

Create one journal page inspired by something you noticed, remembered, questioned, or felt.

Draw, paint, collage, photograph—or write a short reflection, poem, or original haiku.

For possible inclusion in our January 2027 issue, *The Art of Journaling*, email your submission to Kathy@urbanartistdesigns.com with the subject “Urban Artist Challenge.”

Include your name, the title of your work, and your website or social-media handle.

Submit by November 15, 2026.
Original work only. No purchase necessary.

THE NEXT PAGE IS YOURS

The Art of Journaling

January 2027

urbanartistdesigns.com