

ARTIST STATEMENT

Karen Archia

After more than 20 years of professional work where I was writing for and about other people, I felt an urgency to tell my own story via painting. My occasional approach to art-making ramped up and, at the start of this artistic journey in 2012, it did not occur to me to look outside of myself for subject matter or reference, or even to learn figurative drawing. I simply wanted to express what I felt.

As an art lover, I had always been most drawn to the abstract expressionist painters whose work spoke to me at a visceral level. I wanted to tell my story in a similar non-objective manner. I wanted to access and present what I was feeling about my life experiences in a way that was evocative and liberating, and did something different than simply re-present the physical world.

This undercurrent of sharing what is inside of me is expressed through mark-making using a variety of tools, both analogue and digital, or no tool at all. When I am art-making, I hold in mind a conversation, feeling, thought or experience and I allow it to inform my color and medium choices, animate my gestures, and/ or suggest a title for the piece before I begin it. As I work, I focus on creating relationships. I love to joyfully balance order and chaos, distill a feeling down to what I see as its essence, or offer a peek into or map of some emotional world, either my own or an imaginary one.

Much of my work is line-based, and as a result a common theme in my work is a strong, black line. Whether in Sumi ink, charcoal, pastel, acrylic ink, paint or in digital form, a strong black line is something I return to again and to center my identity in my work, and to create coherence and structure.

I also use ink work to “cry” in my pieces - tears of joy, grief, sadness or just emotional release. Often when I use ink on a surface, I tilt and bend the surface to direct the ink to create lines and shapes. Since I am using no tool to mediate the process, this changes my relationship to the medium and the surface in a way that influences my ability to control the ink and allows the ink to surprise me with its movement.

I also engage in mark-making with no completed piece in mind. This frees me to mark-make without judgement or criteria, and also allows me to deconstruct, reconstruct and reclaim pieces of what I have made into new combinations.

While my artwork has developed beyond traditional painting, my intentions remain to express my interior world in a way that feels authentic and unique, to engage viewers in a “conversation” about complex or difficult emotions, and it is one important way I seek to simply connect with people and feel seen and known.

I hope to urge viewers to see the beauty in imperfection, to see me at my most confident and alive but still grappling, or feel a sense of relief and release. The best result for me as an artist is if the viewer can see a part of themselves in my work and feel that through the specifics of my artistic voice, some part of the universal human experience has been cherished, honored and elevated.

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EXHIBITIONS

Participating Artist - We Art Greensboro (Virtual Exhibit), Center for Visual Artists, October 2020 - present

Presenter - Inhabit 2020 Virtual Conference: "Bringing Our Neighborhoods Together" - original artworks from "The Fragile Heart series" used for online Visio Divina session for conference participants. Conference hosted by The Parrish Collective, July 16-17, 2020

Participating artist - "Self Recognition through the Other" - Juried exhibition, Center for Visual Artists, Greensboro, NC, February 7 - March 28, 2020

Participating artist - "when they see Us"- Juried exhibition, Guilford College, February 3-28, 2020

Participating artist - "You A Wonder" – Center for Visual Artists, Greensboro, NC – February 1 – March 15, 2019

Co-exhibitor (with Perry Boswell) – "Soul Food" – an art exhibit and food donation project, The People's Perk, Greensboro, NC – April 14, 2018

Solo Exhibition – First Friday Downtown - University of North Carolina at Greensboro Art Truck Greensboro, NC - April 6, 2018

Co-Exhibitor - 50+ Art Show and Sale at the Center for Creative Aging - Greensboro, NC - September 14 - 16, 2018