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by chaw on August 15, 2023

This month we are featuring Camille Kouyoumdjian for the Capitol Hill Art League's Mind of the Artist series. Read her story and check out her artwork below.

You can view more of Camille's artwork here:

[HTTPS://www.ckouyoumdjian.com](https://www.ckouyoumdjian.com)

Embracing Nature's Canvas: My Journey from International Development to Environmental Art

Life's journey often takes unexpected turns, leading us to discover hidden passions and untapped potential. In my case, my path from working as a policy work in international development to becoming a Master Gardener and Beekeeper eventually led to my true passion: artwork. It all began with my love for the outdoors and a deep connection to nature. Exploring diverse cultures and ecosystems eventually blossomed into a career in creative activism.



The Calm Beyond

From an early age, I found solace and wonder in the great outdoors. Exploring the Blue Ridge and Shenandoah brought tranquility to my harried, urban life. This connection to the natural world was an essential part of my identity and played a significant role in shaping my values and beliefs.

When my daughter was born, life presented me with an opportunity to see the world with new eyes, and explore more fulfilling pursuits than what I was experiencing in my largely desk-job world. I embarked on a journey to become a master gardener and beekeeper, delving into the art and science of nurturing sustainable ecosystems.



Whispered Dream

As I immersed myself in these very hands-on endeavors, I began to understand the intricate web of interdependence that sustains our planet. Witnessing the delicate balance between ecosystems and the importance of conserving natural resources awakened a sense of responsibility within me. I felt compelled to capture the beauty of this interdependence in a meaningful and expressive way. I took lots of photos, but found my photography didn't capture the essence of what I was trying to convey.

In the off-season, I explored museums and art venues, becoming more and more drawn to a wide range of artistic styles and expressions. This exposure deepened my understanding of the potential of art to convey emotions and concepts beyond words.



Wild Blue Yonder

Six years ago, I took a leap of faith and enrolled in an art class at the Lorton Workhouse Art Center. Little did I know that this decision would be a turning point in my life. From the very first brushstroke, I felt liberated. Painting allowed me to explore my responses to nature's wonders in ways that realism couldn't capture. I read about the "9th Street Women," and finally understood how art can respond to, reflect and even define an era. However, I knew that I was not a purely abstract artist, and that I wanted to convey environmental sustainability in a way that others could relate to.

Summer's Gaze

My spare time became dedicated to translating and interpreting nature on canvas, using hand-painted paper collage, mixed media, and acrylic. With each layer, I sought to depict the delicate balance between living organisms, the harmonious flow of energy, and the cyclical patterns of life. Art quickly became my primary endeavor. My final renditions are a fusion of realism and intuition, a reflection of the emotional impact that nature has not only on me, but on all humanity.

Summer Nights

Through my art, I aim to share our profound connection with nature and hope to inspire others to appreciate the beauty and significance of preserving our environment.

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