brutjournal

✻ *Founder & Editor: Edward M. Gómez* ✻

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OCTOBER 2023

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Detail of a painting by Elisabeth Condon

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"WHAT'S ON MY MIND," PART TWO

AMONG ANOTHER GROUP OF ARTISTS AND THINKERS, THOUGHTS ABOUT THE FATE OF THE EARTH, THE VALUE OF HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS, AND THE MEANING TO THEM OF CREATING AND CARING FOR THEIR ART

Here's a second batch of "On my mind" comments and observations from a variety of creative sources.

FRANCES SMOKOWSKI

The artist Frances Smokowski (Instagram: @ francessmokowski) lives and works in the Hudson Valley. Recently, she has begun showing her work at Cavin-Morris Gallery in New York. While much of her art includes figurative imagery, she has also produced a body of work featuring abstract compositions dominated by rhythmic, biomorphic forms. She writes:

"Longevity and mortality have been on my mind for a while, [which has prompted me to] shift the focus in my studio from making new work to protecting existing pieces with framing I do myself. I've a backlog of stunningly fragile works, an unknown corporeal expiration date, and no offspring. Last year, at 60, I was embraced by a gallery that presents my work beautifully, making it available to those who will preserve it. Protecting it for the future, and preparing for letting go, I'm redefining 'presentation' by working with both matting and salvaged frames for a supremely gratifying, signature completion."

Works from the artist Cathy Ward's "Rite of Passage" series are now available as special premiums with an Option 3 subscription. Click on "**SUBSCRIBE**" in the main menu, above, for details.

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Examples of Frances Smokowski's abstract, biomorphic compositions in the frames she has been producing for the purposes of displaying and preserving them. Photo courtesy of the artist

MOLLY McINTYRE

The New York-based artist Molly McIntyre makes clever images that are characterized by a strong, decisive line and a simple, black-and-white palette. Her work is currently on view at WHAM! (Woodside Heights Art Museum), a new, community-oriented venue in the Woodside neighborhood of the borough of Queens. Housed in an old, brick building, the small museum was founded by Harley Spiller (see part one of "On My Mind") and his wife, Micki Watanabe Spiller. McIntyre says" (McIntyre's Instagram account: @brooklyn_rabbit)

Works by the artist Molly McIntyre, now on view in the windows of WHAM! (Woodside Heights Art Museum), a new, community-oriented cultural venue in the New York City borough of Queens

"Reddit recently suggested a post from 'r/ratemyface' by a girl (23F) who wrote, 'Be honest. I really have no idea if I'm cute/pretty, ugly, average?' This made me despair but — I get it. We want to know: What do people see when they see me? We want to be told: I see you. You are in one piece. You are lovable. I'm shocked by how beautiful people are when you look at them long enough. We're the stars of the movie and we're also the filmmakers. Witnessing each other. Witnessing each other witnessing each other. Mutual gratitude."

Donna Sharrett, "Tailored Herbaria: Pocantico River Watershed (2023 #1)," 2023, made with donated clothing, textiles, notions and guitar-string ball-ends, and thread, 9 x 12 inches (22.86 x 30.48 centimeters). Photo courtesy of the artist

DONNA SHARRETT

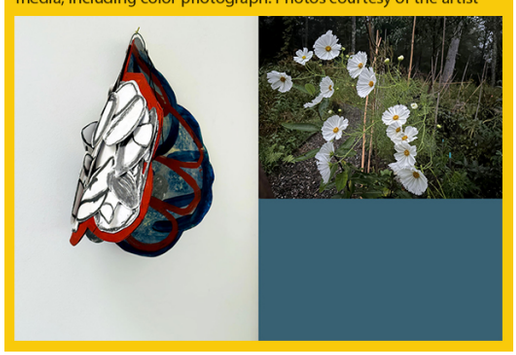
The artist Donna Sharrett (Instagram: @TKTTK) lives and works in Ossining, New York, a small town on the east bank of the Hudson River, about 30 miles (48 kilometers) north of New York City. Her mixed-media artworks, which feature sewing and the use of fabric, celebrate the expressive power of fine craftsmanship and the visible touch of the artist's hand.

Sharrett's most recent creations are a group of fabric- and embroidery-based works she calls her "Tailored Herbaria" series. These pieces emerged out of her interest in plants, the land, and nature in general; her work as a garden and landscape designer; and the whirl of thoughts and emotions she experienced during the long pandemic, with its many periods of isolation. Sharrett, who was profiled in **brutjournal**'s May-June 2023 issue, notes that this concern is on her mind:

Donna Sharrett, "Tailored Herbaria: Pocantico River Watershed (2023 #5)," 2023, made with donated clothing, textiles, notions and guitar-string ball-ends, and thread, 9 x 12 inches (22.86 x 30.48 centimeters). Photo courtesy of the artist

"The ecosystems that support us need *our* support. Pause in silence among the trees and plants that are native to the places in which they grow. Allow your eyes and ears to adjust. Notice the flower flies, bees, moths, butterflies, and all the living beings. Learn to identify them. Do all you can to save them. Plant for the native wild beings or support the parks and conserved places that can. Do this as if future generations of all living beings, including humans, depend on such action. They will and they do."

Two works by Mimi Young: above, "A Stick + Stone," 2023, mixed media on paper; below: "AfterThoughts 01 Flora," 2023, mixed media, including color photograph. Photos courtesy of the artist



MIMI YOUNG

Based in upstate New York, the artist Mimi Young (Instagram: @mimi_young) makes paintings and mixed-media assemblage objects. She has also worked directly on and in the land. (See our article about one of Young's land-based projects in **brutjournal**'s September 2022 issue.)

About what's currently on her mind, she writes:

"I've recently been reflecting on and examining some very simple ideas that are relevant to all things. I began by observing the forest in front of me and saw how relationships developed through layering. I was excited by what I couldn't see, by what was hidden. I realize that it's easy to forget the steps that have been taken to get to the present moment. There are many layers, visual layers, historical layers, emotional layers that contribute to perception."

"I've also been obsessed with the idea of cause and effect. It's hard not to think about it as the world around us is changing so radically and quickly, and seemingly as a result of our human actions. Every thing, every decision, every gesture, every mark or idea spawns something new and helps creates a new reality."

Lon Levin, "White Hot Coral," 2023, oil on canvas, 33 x 50 inches (83.82 x 127 centimeters). About this painting, Levin notes, "I created it be feeding sketches into an AI program, then digitally editing and painting that material." Photo courtesy of the artist

LON LEVIN

Lon Levin (Instagram: @lon_levin_art) is an American painter who has been living in San Miguel de Allende, a city in the state of Guanajuato, north of Mexico City, that boasts a large community of expatriates, including many artists. His work is colorful and, increasingly, experimental, as he explains in his "On my mind" remarks.

Levin says: "My current preoccupation? Artificial intelligence. A year ago, I ventured into the world of AI, discovering tools like Videoleap, Midjourney, and ChatGPT. These AI tools integrated seamlessly into my daily routine of creating traditional art, enabling me to craft art that resonates with my vision. They facilitate the creation of cohesive exhibitions paired with compelling artist statements. I firmly believe in the positive impact of AI when it's thoughtfully harnessed. It's a conviction that occupies my mind, emphasizing the potential for AI to enrich the realm of art."

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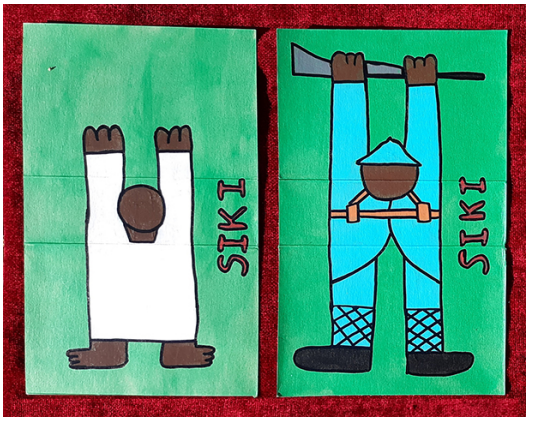


Cour d'Blax-Neeck, first two panels from "The Saga of Battling Siki," 2019, acrylic and oil pen on paperboard boxes, each piece 12 x 7.5 inches (30.48 x 19.05 centimeters). Photo courtesy of the artist

COUR D'BLAX-NEECK

The self-taught artist Cour d'Blax-Neeck (Instagram: @courdblaxneeck), who is based in Fontana, California, makes abstract or randomly patterned paintings and drawings that often include representations of the letter H as a graphic element or that feature H-shaped compositions.

Cour d'Blax-Neeck, whose work was featured in **brutjournal**'s September 2023 issue, is affected by Tourette Syndrome (TS), a condition of the nervous system that causes people to display visible "tics" — sudden twitches, movements, or sounds that occur repeatedly and involuntarily. He often employs an inkblot technique to create his art. In his "On my mind" comment, he writes:

Cour d'Blax-Neeck, second two panels from "The Saga of Battling Siki," 2019, acrylic and oil pen on paperboard boxes, each piece 12 x 7.5 inches (30.48 x 19.05 centimeters). Photo courtesy of the artist

"The pugilist Battling Siki is on my mind. He was a Senegalese boy who sailed to France, boxed professionally at the age of 15, fought in World War I, earned the Croix de Guerre and the Médaille Militaire, returned to boxing, won the light heavyweight title, became the first African World Champion, walked his pet lion down the Champs-Élysées, moved to America, spiraled out of control, and died in New York City in a Hell's Kitchen gutter with two bullets in his back at the age of 28. His story is reminiscent of Tupac Shakur's, only 70 years earlier, which intrigues me and repeatedly shows up in my work."

Elisabeth Condon, "Burning Embers," 2023, acrylic mediums on linen, 72 x 57 inches (182.88 x 144.78 centimeters). Photo courtesy of the artist

ELISABETH CONDON

The artist Elisabeth Condon (Instagram: @elisabethcondn) divides her time between New York and Florida. Over the years, she has developed a distinctive approach to creating abstract compositions that makes use of generously poured washes of paint whose results are richly expressive and filled with visual texture. Her paintings' compositions sometimes feature what appear to be numerous, overlapping layers of color and imagery. In her "On my mind" comment, Condon observes:

Elisabeth Condon, "Daisy Face," 2023, acrylic mediums on linen, 68 x 110 inches (172.72 x 279.4 centimeters). Photo courtesy of the artist

"'*Tempus fugit*' always reads to me as 'time fugitive,' or 'time lost,' rather than as 'time flies.' I imagine time folding and unfolding like an accordion, inhaling, and exhaling each moment, perhaps uploading them to the Cloud for safekeeping and then restoring them to us through waves of insight."

"Time flows through the landscape, lodging there and shaping it. As a civilization, we don't seem to know how to absorb it. We bury it within so many options that it's hard to know what's sufficient. Painting grounds time and place in movement. I deeply appreciate the option to reformulate the landscape with paint."

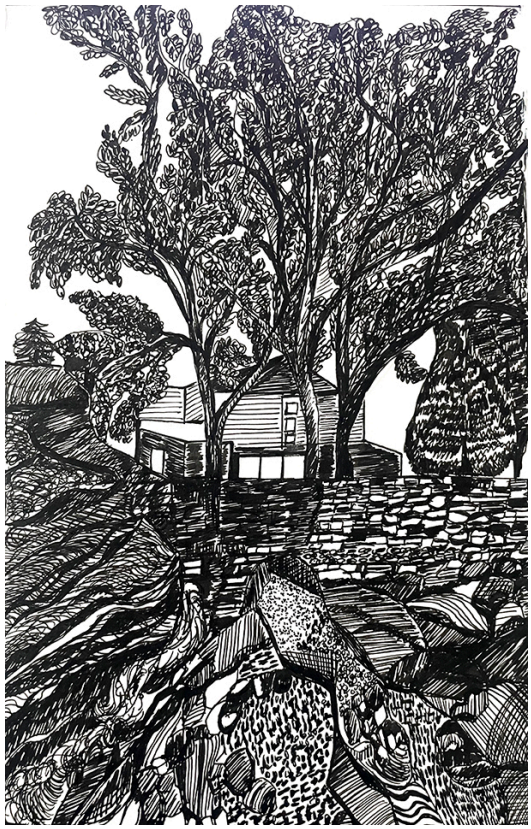
Alma Realm, "Watching Out for Me," 2021, gouache on primed paper, 18 by 24 inches (45.72 x 60.96 centimeters). Photo courtesy of the artist

ALMA REALM

From northern Minnesota, where she lives and works near a forest, with easy access to the outdoors, **brutjournal** contributing artist Alma Realm (Instagram: @almarealm) brings bold palettes and broad, decisive brushstrokes to her compositions. Normally, she makes paintings on large sheets of paper.

In her typically succinct manner, she sent us an "On my mind" dispatch referring to her painting titled "Watching Out for Me," in which she wrote:

"I have to watch out for my interests and protect my emotion. There is no one else to do this. It's nice to think of a higher power helping out."



Terressa Marie Valla, "Ideal Ecstasy," 2023, ink on Arches acid-free paper, 8 x 5 inches (20.32 x 12.7 centimeters). Valla made this drawing during her visit to the Azores. Photo courtesy of the artist

TERESSA MARIE VALLA

Terressa Marie Valla, an artist based in New York, studied at the Art Students League in Manhattan and describes herself as "self-directed" and full of curiosity about the work of other living artists. She sent us an "On my mind" note that says:

"What's *not* on my mind?"

"Recently, a freeze rested in my body for more than a few years. Fear stripped me of joy."

"Global whammies persistently slammed. News of seismic activity, hostile bloodshed, infectious microbes, and extreme/reactionary politics entered into the mix of non-stop wailing sounds whipping through the streets, stories below, outside my window, [the sounds of those who were] ambitious [about saving] lives. Then came an invitation."

"[My friend] reached out: 'We're planning a trip to an island that is part of an archipelago; it soared up in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean with volcanic hot springs, Jurassic flora, black-sand beaches, and calderas. Hillsides that sway and drop abruptly shimmer with a full spectrum of flowers and the fruits they yield."

"She said, 'I know your heart heats up with the natural world.'"

[In May 2023, Valla made a trip with her friend to São Miguel, an island in the Azores. Her reaction to what she saw there:]

"Overwhelmingly scaled trees, ferns, and volcanic rock helped thaw my icy interior. The arms of nature held me, [just as it] holds the entirety of humanity in its bosom, offering peace, renewal of the mind, wonder, beauty and nourishment. Can the global mind rest?"

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