

Blooming



This series of artwork is based off of experiences, thoughts and changes that have happened in my life over the past year. Despite the darkness I feel, I know I am beautiful inside and out. I know many people must feel this way. I also know that the thoughts, feelings and experiences I have gone through in the past couple years are not unique to me. I wanted to make this series relatable to others, so I have chosen subject matter that is more universal and yet very personal. Also, I have not painted my face anywhere in this series. I have replaced my head with a rose. I chose the rose because it is beautiful. I am beautiful. We all are beautiful, and we all deserve to feel this on the inside and out.

I believe there is beauty in everything, including tragedy. I don't like to paint scary imagery, I'd rather look deeper to see the beauty in any dark situation and give a voice to that.



Not all is Rose Colored, 30 x 40 in. oil on canvas, 2020

Over the past few years, the stress in my life has manifested into something I never expected. In 2018, six months before I turned 40, I noticed a marked decline in my overall health and wellbeing. I was told I was okay several times by my doctor. He ran tests on me on several occasions. Up until January 2020, I truly believed all the pain and exhaustion I was experiencing over the past two and a half years was simply because I was getting older. In January 2019, after leaving my professional accounting career, I lost my health insurance. It is then that I began a self-healing process trying to repair the damage caused by my career in accounting. I started feeling better for a while and then relapsed. Stress had come back into my life, and by the Fall of 2019, I was practically bedridden. After getting insurance again in January 2020, I was able to go back to a doctor after not seeing one for a year. The sad part is, I did not go because of the extreme exhaustion or pain. I accepted the chronic pain and fatigue as a regular part of aging. This time, the reason I went to the doctor was because I was having extreme nausea. There began the long process of all kinds of tests. I made a few changes to my diet and got on medication. I felt numb, but it helped. I started to get back to the gym, then COVID hit.

In February 2020, I was diagnosed with Fibromyalgia. It's an incurable disorder. On an almost daily basis, it causes me not only physical pain but chronic fatigue as well. Both can be debilitating. Finally, I knew that I was

not crazy for physically feeling like a 75 year old man inside. One evening as I sat back trying to make sense of all this, the feeling gratitude surfaced from within and I found myself thinking, "I'm so grateful for having great skin and a head full of thick dark hair at my age. I'm not perfect but I'm in ok shape." I realized how crazy this was. For if I appeared on the outside the way I felt on the inside, I'd look like an old decrepit man. It was these feelings I wanted to capture, so I decided to paint about it and use my body in this series.

I have never painted my body before, and it was in this moment I decided to do so. I knew it was going to be all down hill from here. I decided I wanted to present raw and honest beauty while I am still somewhat young and beautiful. I can feel my health and youth slipping away, and the need to record it had become important to me.

'Not all is Rose Colored' is a painting about my diagnosis with Fibromyalgia and how I feel on the inside. Despite the fact I'm 42, attractive and appear completely healthy, I live with a disorder that is deceptive. What I feel on the inside is the complete opposite of what I see reflected to me in the mirror.

In this painting, just as I see myself in reality, I have presented the viewer with a beautiful, colorful painting with a dark story behind it. In this painting, the viewer is presented with a body resting comfortably on a beautiful sofa in a beautiful room. "The Character" is relaxing in a rose colored world. However, the character's head is slightly angled down. In this painting I give little clue that something is wrong, other than in the title and the detail of the rose/head pointing slightly downward. In my real life, I give little clue that something is wrong. Based on appearance alone and without me saying differently, no one could ever imagine how rough things have really been for me.

I am sure I'm not alone in being diagnosed with life changing disorder/disease. I'm not alone in feeling my youth slip away. I hope this resonates with all lucky enough who have reached an age where health problems begin to appear.



Plenitud, 30 x 40 in. oil on canvas, 2020

In this painting, I am sitting on the floor of my bedroom at my mom's ranch in Zacatecas, Mexico. I painted this because, for me, being in this ranch is a state of mind and a state of being. I have visited this ranch countless times throughout my life. It is like stepping back in time and getting back to true basics. Despite how little is there, I am filled with and surrounded by love and natural beauty when I'm there. I have all that I need, and I am truly content when I'm in Plenitud. The name of this ranch is Plenitud, which means the same thing in English "plenitude". I enjoy the feeling of plenitude that I have there. It is a feeling I have never achieved living in the United States. Here, I am constantly running a never-ending rat race. The quiet simplicity of life, and the sense that time passes slowly there, makes this place special because it is peaceful. It truly is a place where I can disconnect. Being trapped in Houston has been difficult. Due to Fibromyalgia, loud noises like sirens, planes, motorcycles and construction can cause me physical pain. I just don't hear a siren, I feel it coursing through every nerve in my body and it hurts. I am so sensitive to sound that sometimes I can see sounds. When this happens, it is usually unexpected and causes me to have panic attacks. I believe peace and plenitude are things we all could use more of in our lives.



Siblings, 30x40 in. oil on canvas, 2020

In this painting I am seated on the floor holding a donkey mask with a donkey seated on both sides of me. The donkeys represent my two brothers. I don't have the best relationship with my brothers. I believe they are true jackasses in their own special ways. My relationship with both of them is strained, and not for any particular reason. I am very different from them. In the past, I have painted myself as a donkey plenty of times because I identify with the donkey. The background is grey because this color represents my feelings about my brothers. The character is looking at the donkey to his left because that is his younger brother, the one he loves. The yellow donkey mask is a Mexican wooden mask, and I use it here to symbolize my propensity to be a jackass.

I imagine many others have strained relationships with siblings too. This is not an exclusive situation to me.



The Odyssey, 30 x 40 in. oil on canvas, 2020

In January 2019, I left my career as an accountant behind. Although I have no regrets, there are things I have had to get used to. When I was an accountant, I was financially stable and enjoyed all the privileges that come with financial stability. On the outside it would have appeared that I was doing great. On the inside, I was falling apart and free falling straight into hell. I was truly miserable. I was in mental pain and living a lie on a daily basis. I was doing what was so against my nature. I am now a fulltime artist and I am no longer financially stable. I have humbled myself tremendously. I am hardly surviving, yet I find more happiness in this state of existence than when I was an accountant. The transition from accountant to working artist has been difficult, chaotic, tumultuous and scary. It has also been marked by a lot of personal growth and passion. I chose red as the backdrop to represent how my life has been turned upside down and inside out. I was rich and miserable. Now I am poor and finding happiness. My goal is to complete this transition and be financially stable, happy, and creating art. In this painting, the characters are holding hands. They represent my past and present. I believe that the greatest thing about money/financial stability is the freedom it can afford. Doing what I love as an artist will only get me so far in the journey towards happiness. I need a sense of stability and security, and that is why in this painting I am holding hands with my past. I miss financial stability.



Lament, 30 x 40 in. oil on canvas, 2020

This painting is about my breakup with my boyfriend of 3 years. The character in a chair pushed into a corner looking down. He is confused and sad. In relationships, many of us have pet names for our significant others. In my relationship, he was Little Bear and I was Piglet. I miss him and us terribly, and at times I'm not sure it was the best decision to end it. I know a relationship is not where I need to be at this moment in my life. I am going through so much change. I don't have it within me to be in a relationship. With Fibromyalgia, I don't have the mental energy for a relationship. It is difficult enough trying to take care of myself. I need to work on myself mentally and physically and learn how better to live with fibromyalgia before I can give the type of attention that any good relationship deserves. The mustard tones of this room are Little Bear's favorite color. In this painting I'm surrounded by his memory.



The Green Hour, 30 x 40 in. oil on canvas, 2020

The green hour is what I like to call that special time of day when I eat an edible or smoke weed. When I get high, things seem okay. I even become more positive in mood. I am constantly in physical pain and I am always tired. When I am high, I leave pain behind. When I am high, I leave the negative mood behind. I am able to relax and escape my body and mind long enough to think and enjoy existing. Some days, when I have a fibromyalgia flare up, I get high, this pulls me out of bed and takes me to a physical and mental place where I can sit at my easel for hours. It is a crutch that keeps me functional. Without it, I would be in bed in pain most days. Because of the type of disorder that it is, there are no medications for the chronic pain and there are no medications for the chronic fatigue. Smoking weed wakes me up and pulls me out of darkness. It dulls the pain and makes mental room for me to feel passion and function. It does more for me than any pill has ever done.



XLII, 30 x 40 in. oil on canvas, 2020

I'm not alone in wanting to hold on to my youth. I've come to realize, I only have so much time left before my age starts to show. I have, with full intention, tried to make many of the paintings in this series subtly erotic. Throughout this series, I'm celebrating looking good for 42 years old. Staying in shape has become increasingly difficult due to fibromyalgia. It is tough and painful staying in shape, but not staying in shape is even more painful. As I follow the natural progression of life, I've realized my slow decline has begun. I can't stop time, but I can capture my youth on canvas. I'm terrified of getting older. In this painting, as I have done in most of the paintings in this series, I have captured my youth and used my body to tell a story.

In this painting, the character is getting ready to go the gym. I hate going to the gym, but if I don't stay active, I end up bedridden with pain due to the Fibromyalgia. Due to COVID, I was unable to go to the gym. This took an enormous toll on me. Physically, mentally and emotionally, I went through a lot. It was not until July 2020 that I was able to go to a gym. Finally I was able to manage fibromyalgia, not only with medication and diet, but also working out in ways that did not further damage my body. Within days I began to feel better.



Wearisome Bath, 30 x 40 in. oil on canvas, 2020

2020 has been difficult. I feel anxious, worried, desperate, angry, sad, broken, repulsed and disgusted, not only with myself, but also with everything going on in the world and how people are reacting to things. I have to cut out as much negativity as possible in order to try and function like a normal human. Stress can cause my fibromyalgia to flare up, leaving me bedridden with pain. Because of this, it's very important for me to cut out as much stress as possible. In these times it's hard keeping stress at bay. I feel as if an evil sprit has cloaked my mind and my life. Negativity from the outside has seeped in and has poisoned me.

In the *Wearisome Bath*, the character is in a tub washing away negativity. He is fighting hard to maintain his senses in a crazy world. He is washing away the darkness that has taken over so much. This painting is about my daily struggle to be the best I can be and be as positive as can be despite how difficult it is. Negativity creates stress. Stress is registered by my body as physical pain. I painted the tiles on the bathroom wall Haint Blue - a color said to ward off evil spirits. This painting is about recovery. The character is washing away his daily demons in this bath. In reality, I have been working out, eating right, cutting out as much stress as possible. I am reflecting on things and spending more time being grateful for what I do have. It can be a wearisome task keeping stress out, working on my art and taking care of myself. There are days when I don't have it in me to function.



Unspeakable, 30 x 40 in. oil on canvas, 2020

The past couple of years have been difficult, and 2020 has been beyond words. Fibromyalgia, isolation, chronic pain, chronic fatigue, catching COVID, a break up, global pandemic, racism, riots, violence, overwhelming stress, financial instability, a political shit show, a society festering with fools. It's incredible and unimaginable how much has taken place. In *Unspeakable*, the character is grounded in an expanse of darkness with his personal hell there to torment him. There are no words to describe how I feel about 2020. I almost left this painting "Untitled" because there simply are not any words that I can use to accurately describe how I feel. The devil is modeled after a Mexican wooden devil mask. He represents all the negativity I have felt this year. He represents the poison I have let grow within me. He represents the horror that 2020 is. He is the evil that surrounds me and lives in me. I wear a brave face as I don't ever talk about my problems, or put them out there publicly. I never show how I feel. This series is forcing me to talk about things I usually never discuss. I have been hurting, and I hope the viewer can feel the pain in this painting.

I hope this painting can resonate with the viewer as we have all been affected by what appears to be the worst year in recent global history.



Domus, 30 x 40 in. oil on canvas, 2020

Domus means Family/House/Household in Latin. In *Domus*, I have painted my family portrait. I am half Anglo American and half Mexican. With the exception of my dad, I have always known my white side was on the trashy side. The past few years, and especially the past few months, have shown me the full extent of how trashy my white side can be. My father was a redneck from East Texas. Despite this, he was evolved. He married a Mexican and embraced every aspect of her. In return he was completely embraced by her family. I think a lot about how Mexicans were treated and viewed in Texas back in the 60's and 70's. It would have taken a special kind man who grew up in East Texas to marry a Mexican. I am the result of his open mind. In *Domus*, I have painted a white trash bag to represent my white family. My Mexican side is all about love, happiness, hard work and ethics. This is why I have chosen an angel represents them. The angel is modeled after a wooden Mexican wall sculpture. I have turned my body towards the angel and have given my back to the white side of my family. I have united us all by using red in each of the main figures in this painting. Many of us have family we don't care for. Many of us have family we will love for eternity. I have both.



I've Had Too Much to Drink, 30 x 40 in. oil on canvas, 2020

In this painting the character is sprawled out on the floor in a sad, desperate position reeling from a hangover.

I have slowed down on my drinking significantly. It has become increasingly hard to handle. My fibromyalgia has made it difficult for my body to tolerate alcohol.

The birdcage in the background is housing a dead chicken. This chicken has appeared in various paintings I have created over the past 20 years. This chicken represents my youth. It is in a gilded cage because I value my youth now more than I did when I had more of it. It is something that becomes less accessible with each passing day. The canary in the foreground is warning me that I need to slow my life down and take things easier, including alcohol. My body is now in control of me. I am no longer in control and when I push myself too much with anything, it usually ends with me in pain. This has been a tough road, but I'm slowly learning how to manage fibromyalgia. I am being forced to make a lot of changes that have been tremendously difficult. I still want to keep running, have fun and work as hard as I can. My mind is still young, and I'm trapped in a body that is slowing me down.



The Blue Chair, 30x40 in. oil on canvas, 2020



The Blue Chair, 5x7 in. oil on canvas, 2002

If the viewer is left feeling confused upon seeing either of these paintings, then I have done my job. I first painted The Blue Chair about 20 years ago. I originally sketched the awkward creature during marijuana and alcohol fueled night in the late 90's. Around this time, I started sleeping around and I found it fun. I realized back then how confusing sex can be emotionally. I painted The Blue Chair to represent my confusion, especially when emotions come into play. I decided to revisit the same topic in my early 40's when a lot in my life has been changing.

Although I may sound conflicted here when I say nothing has really changed except my age, but with that change, I am now aware of just how complex sex can really be. It can be used in so many good and bad ways. It can destroy and create. It can cause pain it can heal. I'm still learning. I'm still confused, and I still have fun with it when it's right.

In the Blue Chair 2020, I have placed the character sitting somewhat uncomfortably with a cocktail in his hand. The object of his confusion sprawled out on the floor, with a portrait of the Virgin of Sorrows hanging on the wall.

There have been a number of times in my life where I've had random hookups, and I'd find myself having a drink and making small talk before the action. I suppose that is what is going on in this painting. The Virgin of Sorrows hangs on the wall because this is how I am feeling, a sort of lament back to carefree, youthful days of no-strings-attached sex. I'm not lamenting having been a whore. I'm lamenting the lost youth from a sexual perspective. I lament the carefree person I once was. I now have a better understanding of sex, but I'm still confused. As I have entered my 40's, my thoughts and ideas regarding sex have evolved. I'm still figuring it all out.



Amidst, 30 x 40 in. oil on canvas, 2020



The Chicken Hawk, 6x6 in. oil on canvas 2002

I painted The Chicken Hawk about 20 years ago when I was in my early 20's. I was getting out to the bars, and everyone was older than me. I was naïve, but I was not stupid. I had all kinds of creepy encounters. I had lots of great encounters. In this painting, I represented myself as the chicken. The chicken represents my youth. The skeleton is the chicken hawk. This painting is about the darker side of going out and partying, being young, and naïve. I was fresh meat, and it seemed like everyone wanted a bite. I chose to paint myself as a dead chicken because I felt slightly jaded back then.

I decided to use The Chicken Hawk as inspiration for a new painting. 20 years later I have painted "Amidst", as a response to being in my midlife. The dead chicken still represents my youth. The skeleton represents my future. I'm 42 years old and I'm now getting to know who I really am. I'm learning a lot about myself, my confidence is growing and I'm slowly doing this all under the weight of incredible change. In this painting I am the donkey/jackass in the middle of everything, adjusting, learning and figuring how to manage.



My Underwear, 18 x 24 in. oil on canvas, 2020

My Underwear is really a self-portrait. I painted an old, worn out pair of my underwear to show how I feel on the inside. I'm torn, worn out and falling apart. When I was an accountant, I would replace things like this without thinking twice. Early in 2020, it dawned on me I had not bought any new underwear in over a year. It made me a little sad for a moment, not because of the underwear, but because it made me realize how much has slowly disappeared from my life. I thought about how much I have gone with out. There is a lot I don't do anymore, and I think that is the hardest part of all this. Not being able to do the things I love is a loss in and of itself.



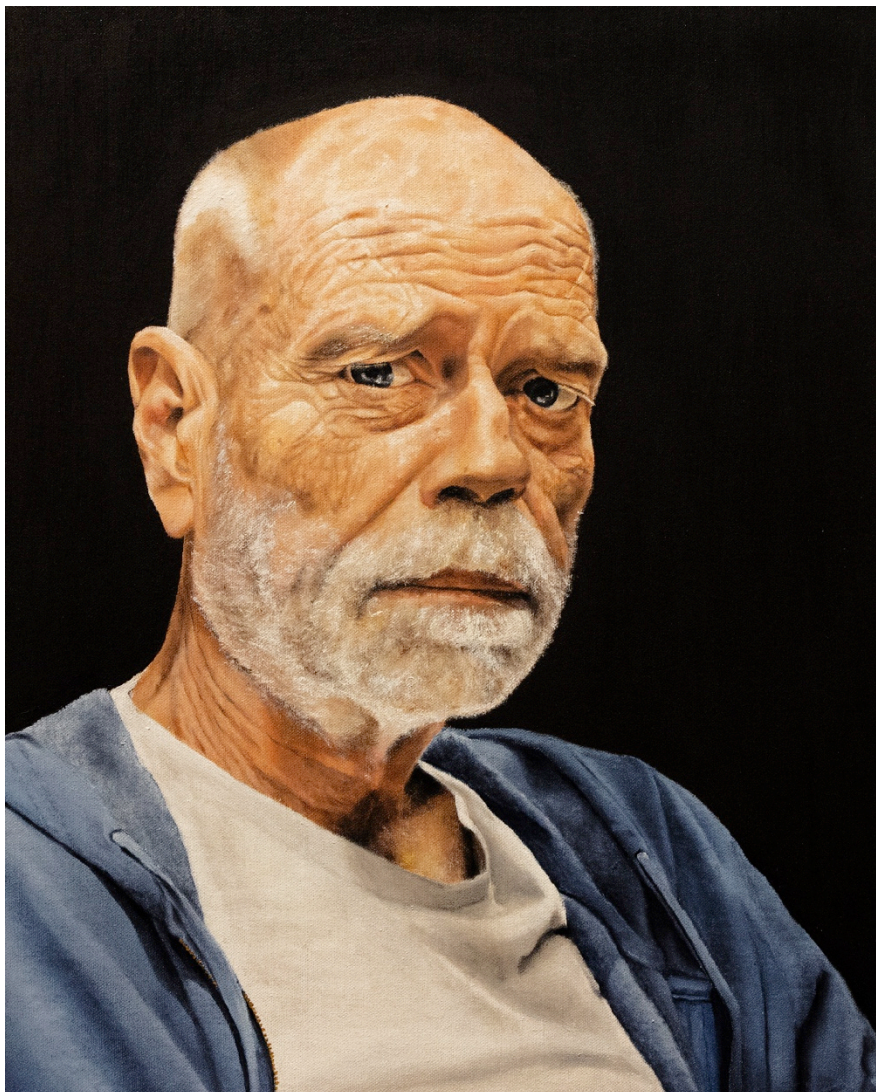
Tightrope, 40 x 30 in. oil on canvas, 2020

For quite sometime now, finding any sort of balance in my life has been tremendously difficult. Trying to balance everything, with all that I'm up against, has been difficult. I feel like one slip, and I could end up completely ruined. I don't have much left. I willingly gave up so much and life has taken even more. What little I have is necessary. I'm physically, mentally, emotionally and financially vulnerable. I titled this "Tightrope" because I have to balance quite a bit, usually with only hope. I'm wearing a pair of torn underwear because a new pair is now a luxury item for me. I was stripped and humbled by life. I made a decision to strip down and simply things even further. After that, life took even more away. In some ways, it's easier to find balance when there is less to balance. In other ways it makes it even harder to find balance when I don't have resources I need. I'm doing so much on my own, and because of this I decided to just paint my legs. It is on them that I am able to stand and keep working. They represent my daily struggle of trying to find balance in multiple aspects of my life.



There is no Paradise without Hell, 40 x 32 in. oil on canvas, 2020

I've been to hell and the only way out is to keep trying. I modeled this painting after a statue of the Virgin of Sorrows. I used a friend as a model for the face, and I used my imagination for the rest. Not visible in the photo, there are demonic faces in the background so faint many people would not realize they are there, even seeing this painting in person. The obscure faces represent my personal hell. The balloons take me back to when I was a child. My dad would buy me animal balloons. It was a time in my life when I had no problems or worries. I was carefree and happy. The balloons represent paradise; a place where I have no worries and can be happy. Just as these balloons are fragile, so is this state of being/mind for me. My path has been difficult and full of sorrow. I know things will get better; I just need to keep fighting and trying.



Portrait of my Bestie (Robin Baker) 20 x 16 in. oil on canvas, 2020

I can say that I wanted to challenge myself to paint older skin and white hair and leave it at that. The truth is, I wanted to put some of my best work into something I really care for outside of myself. Robin Baker is a close friend, my studio mate and mentor. This series would not be possible without him. Without his constant support, I would not have survived this intact in this industry.

Thank You Robin!



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