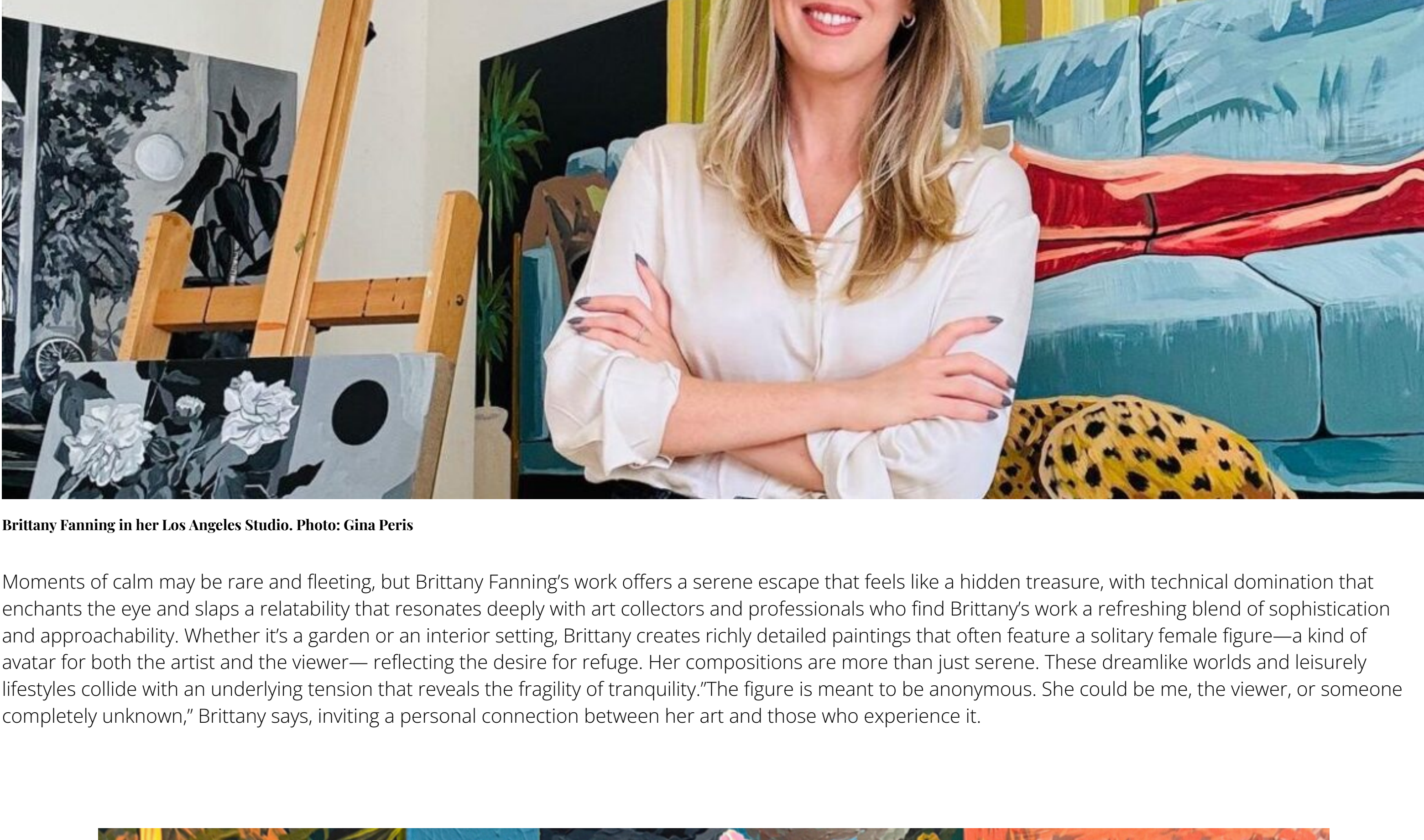


Brittany Fanning Harmony in Enchanted Spaces

Donnalynn Patakos

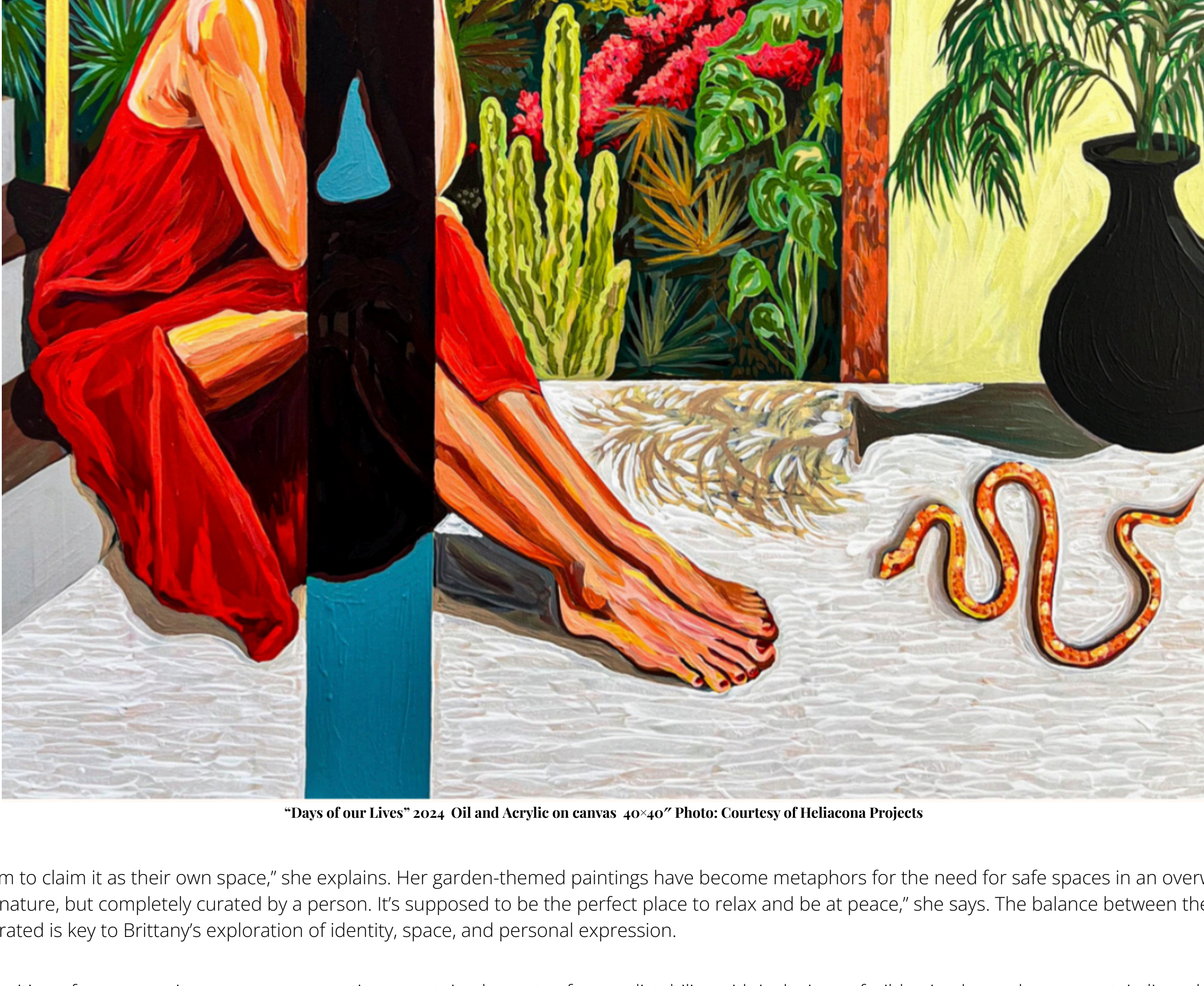
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Brittany Fanning in her Los Angeles Studio. Photo: Gina Peris

Moments of calm may be rare and fleeting, but Brittany Fanning's work offers a serene escape that feels like a hidden treasure, with technical domination that enchants the eye and slaps a relatability that resonates deeply with art collectors and professionals who find Brittany's work a refreshing blend of sophistication and approachability. Whether it's a garden or an interior setting, Brittany creates richly detailed paintings that often feature a solitary female figure—a kind of avatar for both the artist and the viewer—reflecting the desire for refuge. Her compositions are more than just serene. These dreamlike worlds and leisurely lifestyles collide with an underlying tension that reveals the fragility of tranquility. The figure is meant to be anonymous. She could be me, the viewer, or someone completely unknown," Brittany says, inviting a personal connection between her art and those who experience it.



"Days of our Lives" 2024 Oil and Acrylic on canvas 40" x 40" Photo: Courtesy of Heliconia Projects

"I want them to claim it as their own space," she explains. Her garden-themed paintings have become metaphors for the need for safe spaces in an overwhelming world. "It's nature, but completely curated by a person. It's supposed to be the perfect place to relax and be at peace," she says. The balance between the natural and the curated is key to Brittany's exploration of identity, space, and personal expression.

The juxtaposition of serene environments can sometimes contain elements of unpredictability, with inclusions of wild animals—wolves, mountain lions, bears, and lizards creating nuanced hints of ever-present lurking dangers that exist outside and sometimes inside these cushy pockets of peace.

"Even in spaces of solitude, there's always that feeling the outside world is waiting to encroach," Brittany reflects. This balance between calm and unease, coupled with her attention to detail, allows her to create intricate narratives. Brittany jokes about her meticulous process: "I'll sometimes spend hours perfecting a single leaf, making sure it has 40 different shades of color," describing the textured worlds she creates with near-hypnotic precision.

"I love architecture in Los Angeles, and on the weekends, my husband and I go to (extravagant) open houses and judge them. I take many photos of the landscaping and architectural elements that I find interesting and try to put that in my work in my way. I'm the landscaper and the architect. This is new for me and something I'm developing. If you look at my work from this year, you'll notice I had a moment with the "arch." It's in almost all of my paintings," she explains, highlighting where she draws her inspiration.

Brittany's passion for art began taking shape while attending college in Georgia. She initially had no intention of studying art. However, a chance enrollment in a drawing class sparked a new passion that would ultimately change the course of her life. Brittany's time there also enriched her love for country living. She says that she felt like she was part of a culture for the first time in her life during her time there. The rugged beauty of the mountains created an atmosphere of creativity and introspection that influenced her work.

Devils Food Cake 2024 30" x 60" Photo: Courtesy of Heliconia Projects

"There's something raw and real about country music that resonates with me," Brittany reflects. This love for music, authenticity and the region's spirit continues to be reflected in her paintings, where the intersection of rural lifestyle and personal reflection plays a significant role.

Artists like Art Rosenbaum, whom her professor studied under, also left a lasting impact. "Art Rosenbaum is one of my favorite artists. He's an insider-outsider artist, and I like to think there's a painterly lineage between his work and mine," she shares, honoring the strong effect her environment and mentors have had on her artistic evolution.

Her photography teacher, Paul Dunlap, played a role in encouraging her artistic pursuits. He appreciated her snarky but honest critique of other students. His mentorship helped her realize the potential of her creative voice, pushing her to explore new forms of expression.

Rainy Season Afternoon 2023 Photo: Courtesy Heliconia Projects

Her Move to South Korea

"So, my cat died, and I wanted to leave the country," Brittany recalls with a mix of sadness and humor. "I was thinking about Japan, but ultimately chose South Korea because my sister and her husband were there, and I loved it."

When she first arrived, she taught ESL for almost three years. The pandemic impacted her artistic growth, as she began painting cityscapes during the eerily quiet lockdowns. The streets were empty, and it was easy to go out and paint buildings and architecture.

Brittany's work is also infused with wry humor, much of which stems from her love of listening to comedy podcasts while she paints. "Life is full of contradictions, and so is my art," she notes. Whether it's the uncertainty between solitude and danger or the unexpected twists in her compositions, humor plays a critical role in softening the heavier themes. This approach allows her to engage with life's beauty and absurdity, offering moments of levity amid her work's more serious, emotional undertones.

A moment in South Korea that profoundly impacted her artistic vision or practice was Brittany's more intriguing and playful series, *Getting Away With Murder*, imagined initially as a dramatic exploration of potential violence and murder-themed series set in her garden, took an unexpected turn into a light-hearted look at indulgence and culinary delights. It became all about food. "I get an idea, and it turns into something else entirely," she laughs, reflecting on the evolution of the series. This shift exemplifies Brittany's playful approach to art, where her initial ideas often morph into surprising new directions, blending her humor and creativity in unexpected ways.

"Dinner with a Comedian" Photo courtesy of: The Artist

The first painting she made was called "Dinner With the Comedian." It featured Doug Stanhope in one of his signature plaid suit jackets, the hawk Mordecai from The Royal Tenenbaums, John Wayne Gacy's Last Meal, and (the back of) myself largely in the foreground, admiring it all. I was so excited about this painting, and I think that's when I realized how making art should feel. "I consumed so much media during the pandemic; it became a large part of my life. It didn't make sense that it wasn't showing up in my art," she says.

The best outcome of all from her time in Korea was meeting her husband, Paul. They were married on Halloween 2020 in South Korea.

Brittany and her husband Paul in their Los Angeles Home Photo: Gina Peris

Ironically, when I asked her what made them return to the States, the answer made me laugh; perhaps (I'm a bit regretful) too hard when she began with, "Our dog died... (we both laughed together and she told me even she hadn't realized the coincidence) She was an English Bulldog and couldn't fly long distances due to their sensitive noses and breathing issues. The dog lived to the ripe age of 13 years old." So, soon after, Brittany returned to the States with her husband and their two cats (offering the potential for perhaps two more significant relocations). One of the main reasons for choosing California was that it provided the shortest flight for the animals from Korea to the US, which was ideal.

Brittany and one of her cats Photo: Gina Peris

Finding Inspiration in Art History and Personal Growth

Brittany's studio has become a space for creativity and a sanctuary filled with laughter. Her sharp sense of humor often finds its way into her work, providing a contrast to the more contemplative elements of her art. "I like to balance the heavy themes with a little bit of humor," she says, capturing her approach to art and life. Her ability to embrace contradiction—city versus countryside, beauty versus danger, or seriousness versus humor—makes her work so engaging.

How did your childhood experiences in Florida shape your artistic identity and themes in your work?

BF: I try not to pull too much inspiration from childhood. I had a good childhood, but I hated being a kid. The only symbol I still use is the alligator, and over time, I've really enjoyed working with the texture and developing my painting technique along with it. I think I will be retiring the gator from my work soon. I have an exhibition coming up in the spring with Mindy Solomon. It would be odd for me to have my first solo exhibition in Florida and not include an alligator.

Wild Daydream 2023 Photo: Courtesy Heliconia Projects

How do you reconcile your love for both urban and rural environments in your artwork?

BF: Deep down, I am more drawn to rural environments. I grew up in the country, and it naturally feels like home to me. Los Angeles is great because you get this wonderful (and sometimes terrifying) blend of the city and the country. We have our cake, and we eat it, too... even if sometimes there is blood on the sidewalk and screaming in the distance. Since I moved to LA, I paint the elements of the city I enjoy: plants, animals, architecture, and food; while also trying to retain my (dark) sense of humor and a healthy amount of cynicism.

What emotions do you hope to evoke in viewers when they engage with your garden-themed collection?

BF: I want them to claim it as their own space. That's what I do. Being back in America, I can really see the importance of having space for yourself. It's the wild Wild West out there sometimes. I think the concept of the garden is so interesting. It's nature, but completely curated by a person. It's supposed to be the perfect place to relax, recuperate, and be at peace. It's a great place to be alone.

In what ways do you think your indecisiveness between the city and the countryside affects your creative process?

BF: This is something that plagues me daily. I'm always ready to move, no matter where I am. If I'm in the city, I want to live in the mountains again. The gardens are a perfect compromise because they can be anywhere.

Black Targa 2024 Photo: Courtesy of Heliconia Projects

How do you incorporate elements of your personal experiences into the narrative of your paintings?

BF: When I began getting more personal in my art, I drew on the disasters around us. 2020 was a tense time for multiple reasons, and I chose to symbolize that by using fire and tornados. I also began my series of "nap" paintings at that time- evoking exhaustion and a yearning for peace. There will always be conflict, disease, and bad weather, so having this as any focal point in my work stopped making sense. It's time for optimism. The past year, I have been diving deep into art history and ravenously reading everything I can about artists I love and artists I know absolutely nothing about. I paint every day, but I also read and research a lot now, too. I just finished a biography on Giorgio de Chirico, and I am starting Secret Knowledge by David Hockney today. I keep a lot of art books around, and I look through one or two every day, marking the paintings I want to come back to and observe more closely- or seek out in person. I foresee an era of paintings that will be in dialogue with these historical figures and their works, and I'm very excited about that..

Brittany in her Los Angeles Studio Photo: Gina Peris

Looking Forward: A Journey of Growth and Exploration

Brittany's artistic evolution has also been supported by her ongoing collaboration with Heliconia Projects, which has been instrumental in showcasing her vision. Co-founders and directors Nicole Bainov and Elsa Maldonado have witnessed her growth firsthand and are deeply invested in her creative journey. "Since her solo exhibition with us earlier this year, we've seen Brittany's work mature in exciting ways," they note. Heliconia Projects continues to champion her voice, providing a platform that allows her to push the boundaries of her artistic practice while staying true to the authenticity that defines her work.

Brittany is fueled by her deep connection to personal experience, cultural influence, and a growing engagement with art history. She looks toward a future where her work can explore new themes and ideas while maintaining the wit, depth, and meticulous attention to detail that have become her signature. Through her art, she offers viewers a glimpse where- much like the artist, beauty, charisma, and laughter coexist in perfect harmony.

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