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Bibby

An Interview with Mixed Media Artist Bibby Gignilliat

Interview by Alice Leiden, Maisy Tommei, Benjamin Waldman, Anu Pastor and Manu Pastor 4th, 5th and 6th Grade

What inspired you to be an artist?

A: I loved painting as a little girl. It brought me a lot of joy. I did all sorts of other things—I ran a company—but inside I always knew I wanted to get back to the joy of being an artist. Now I teach art classes in my studio one Saturday a month. A lot of parents take the class with their kids.

When did you start working as an artist?

A: I started doing art five years ago. I took a class in this building and I was the worst one in the class, but I loved it. I knew it was in me. I kept practicing and finding the right

teachers. I gave myself a master's in art by finding teachers I liked instead of going to art school.

"If you really want to know what to do in life, you look at what you loved as a child."

— Bibby Gignilliat

What's the most fun thing about being an artist?

A: For me, it's the community in this building. Every time I get stuck, I'll go talk to oth-

er artists in the building. It's a great creative community.

What is fun about doing mixed media?

A: I like doing mixed media because it's very free and it's hard to make a mistake and I don't want to feel like I have to be perfect or anything.

What's the most challenging part of being an artist?

A: The most challenging part is trying to make a living as an artist. The income is inconsistent. Some months I'll sell a lot of paintings and some months I sell hardly any. In order to have more even income, I teach classes.

What inspires your art?

A: All sorts of things. Sometimes it's color and sometimes it's about things I find on

the street. In the painting over there, do you see the red patch? That was a billboard sign I found on the ground in San Francisco. The sign was for an insurance company and I saw it falling off the wall. I ran over when no one was looking and took it down. So, I get inspired by scraps. I'll find something cool at a store and I'll come up with a whole painting, so in each painting, the inspiration is different.

Did you always have this style or did you have another style when you first started?

A: I really was the worst one in my first painting class. Then I found a teacher who was a collage teacher. I realized I need to paint with paper, because I didn't feel I was good at drawing. I didn't want my drawing to limit me, so I started painting with paper. Sometimes I'll even paint the paper, cut it into shapes, then glue it on like collage.

What was the longest time it took to do a painting and do you ever get stuck on a painting?

A: The longest was a couple months. I didn't work on it every day. Sometimes you get stuck and you don't know what to do, so you put the painting away for a few months. They say if you're stuck you should turn it around so you can't see it and come back later.

Do you do any other kinds of art?

A: I recently started doing these wall sculptures of road signs. I painted the stop sign in, but these all are road signs I assembled together. There are three separate pieces. Some of them are cut up, and some of them I had cut up.

How did it feel when you had to sell something you really loved?

A: I don't get too attached. I tell my students to practice nonattachment. I'm thrilled it sold. There's a little moment of sadness when I'm delivering it and I have to say goodbye. But I'm thrilled knowing it's out there.



On Creating:

I collect stuff a lot of people would think is junk. I find things on the street, and put it all in my paintings. I like a lot of texture. Recently, I had to go to the hospital. So I'm putting my hospital tag in one. Here is a parking ticket. This is a bingo card. This is some kind of standardized test. I went to Morocco and this is a newspaper from Morocco. I'm constantly looking for things I can put in my paintings. I'll go to a restaurant and I'll find a menu and I'll take it home. You can find things everywhere. These are my grandmother's sociology notes from the 1930s, so I'll decide I've got to get those in my painting. But it's almost all going to get covered up. When I paint over it most of it goes away and you see these little windows of stuff coming through. I paint using a trowel—a mason tool for spreading cement—instead of a paintbrush. I make fun windows, so the collage shows through. If I want my grandmother's sociology notes to show, I can make that happen. In a lot of these paintings I put maybe four or five layers down of collage. My mantra is to not think too much when I do art. I operate from my intuition.

Left to right: Benjamin Waldman, Manu Pastor, Alice Leiden, Artist Bibby Gignilliat, Maisy Tommei and Manu Pastor.

