

BRIDGETTE MAYER GALLERY

HYPERALLERGIC

A View From the Easel During Times of Quarantine

This week, artists reflect on quarantining from their studios in Nova Scotia, Philadelphia, Au Train, Atlantic Highlands, and Sonoma.



Elisa Wouk Almino May 1, 2020

This is the 158th installment of a series in which artists send in a photo and a description of their workspace. In light of COVID-19, we've asked participants to reflect on how the pandemic has changed their studio space and/or if they are focusing on particular projects while quarantining. Want to take part? Submit your studio — just [check out the submission guidelines](#).

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Shirray Langley, Nova Scotia, Canada



My bedroom is my studio. My work during isolation has been focused on painting the figure. Without the availability of a live model I have been drawing from poses on the internet. I then take these gestural drawings and develop them into large scale paintings, using the walls as a support. Another change in my work has been to use acrylic paints as opposed to oil sticks that have a stronger odor.

This period of isolation has resulted in more experimentation and freedom in my work, despite the limited workspace. As artists we have learned to adjust to different work environments. When the weather improves, I will move to the garage where I will do encaustic painting.

Nova Scotia has experienced a devastating period with the COVID-19 virus and a mass shooting. My work has sustained me during this difficult time.

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Arden Bendler Browning, Philadelphia, PA



In addition to being a working artist, I am a long-time homeschooling mother of three. My husband and I built our home directly across the street from our long-time studios. Before the lockdown, my studio time occurred when my children were occupied for long stretches — at day programs or with a babysitter. I was making very large paintings with Flashe and acrylic spray paint, and developing walkable Virtual Reality paintings. Now, without childcare help, I have brought most of my supplies home. I now work during Minecraft time, at night, weekends, and when my youngest wants to paint alongside me. During our first days at home, I rearranged our craft room to become a joint studio for me and workspace for all of my kids. When the weather is nice, I take everything outside onto our patio and work out there. We set up the VR equipment in our bedroom. Prior to the pandemic, my process relied upon travel for much of my source material. Now, I am clicking along Google maps

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street views (from our cancelled trips) and painting from my many snapshots taken during our very brief, socially distant outings into bits of urban nature.

Manda Gorsegner, Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey



The virus has shifted the relationship I have with my studio. For the last six years, I've struggled carving out studio time at home with an infant, several jobs in the arts, a mortgage, and living paycheck-to-paycheck. I work hard to be a professional female arts administrator, a working artist, environmental activist, supportive wife to another artist, and a kick-ass mom. With financial hardships, busy careers, and a wee one, my studio practice suffers, with little more than 15-minute intervals or a random hour in the studio to sit and ponder a painting in progress. COVID-19 has forced me to carve out space in my studio for a laptop, earbuds, and copious notes and lists. The forced intervention has created a new relationship between my work and my *work*. The air is infused with poppy and linseed oils, and my palettes, encaustics, and brushes are a constant friend in my periphery. When my neck strains from the DIY oak plank on sawhorses, I grab a brush and make headway on my paintings and handmade pollution paper pours. I honestly haven't been in the studio this much in years. It's refreshing and thought-provoking, during these solemn and deadly times.

Linda King Ferguson, Au Train, Michigan

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I live on Michigan's Lake Superior shore, an isolated place to begin with, but over time without outings and travel, it's as confining as anywhere else. Yet without distractions and commitments, I now have more time to spend on Instagram and listening to Podcasts. I'm finding these are expanding my sense of connection to the greater art world of other makers, both current and historical. More time looking and listening makes me feel less alone.

My studio is in the basement of my home. I'm lucky to have windows and full glass French doors letting in the natural light during the day and a truncated view of the woodlands beyond. Sometimes I have wild turkey visitors peering in

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the doors who are wonderful comedians. When they begin pecking at their reflections thinking they're other turkeys, then I shoo them away.

Being a basement room, the ceiling in my studio is low, but I have enough room for a number of tables. The table surfaces are where I sketch, design, and paint. During this time I'm creating a family of works to keep me company, I think of my abstractions as social bodies.

Julia Westerbeke, Sonoma, California



I spend my days almost exclusively with my three-year-old son, walking trails on the family property in Sonoma. I have been furloughed from my job, and my husband is a journalist, so he's busier than

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ever. My son Beckett is a sweet and energetic boy with special needs, and I've found he's much happier and more centered when we're exploring outdoors. We watch the same poppies everyday, noticing how they gradually push off their little caps and burst into blooms. He's learned the difference between honey and bumble bees, and to stay away from poison oak and stinging nettle. Time has slowed and changed its shape for us. Minutiae of the fields and nearby creek are magnified. I don't want to romanticize it too much, I'm exhausted almost all the time, and Beckett is struggling with separation anxiety from his preschool friends and teachers which means random tears and tantrums. But there's definitely something very cool shifting in our relationship, and it's affecting my work. I've been collecting inspiration on our walks and pinning it to the studio wall. We still do a nap time every afternoon, which means I can squeeze in exactly two hours of studio time everyday from 1 to 3pm, which is my lifeline. It's amazing how productive you can be when you have no choice. Even now I'm writing this against the clock, 15 minutes before I'm back in the world of Beckett. There's never enough time. But there's also a wealth of ideas, new directions to take, and new trails to amble.

https://hyperallergic.com/560189/a-view-from-the-easel-during-times-of-quarantine-5/?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=D050420&utm_content=D050420+CID_cdfda3e086d619aeeb271cd36f4a37de&utm_source=HyperallergicNewsletter&utm_term=A%252520View%252520From%252520the%252520Easel%252520During%252520Times%252520of%252520Quarantine