

BRIDGETTE MAYER GALLERY
BOLD
JOURNEY

Meet Holly Wong

July 16, 2024



Alright – so today we’ve got the honor of introducing you to Holly Wong. We think you’ll enjoy our conversation, we’ve shared it below.

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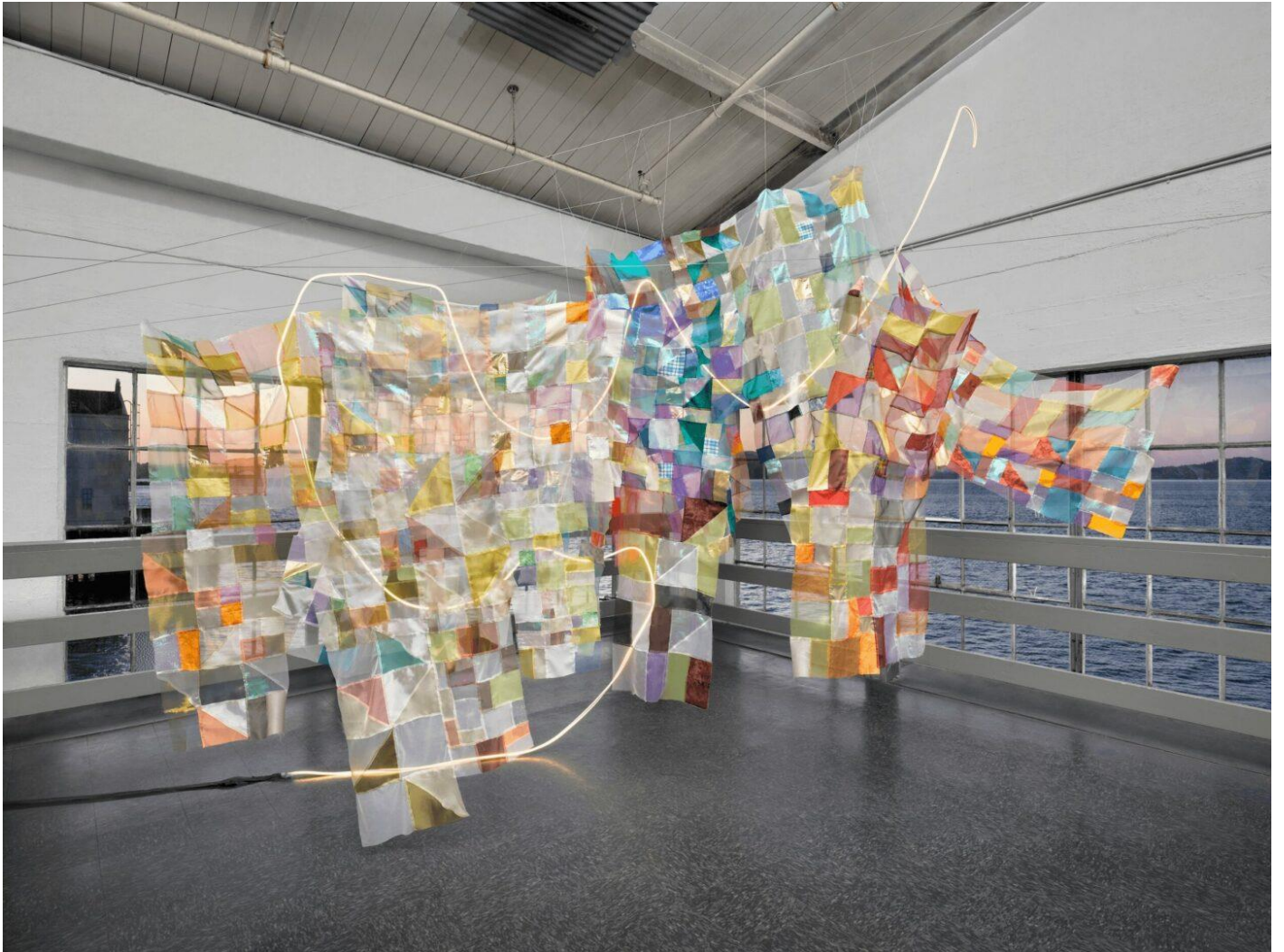
Alright, so we're so thrilled to have Holly with us today – welcome and maybe we can jump right into it with a question about one of your qualities that we most admire. How did you develop your work ethic? Where do you think you get it from?

Like many artists, I have spent much of my career balancing the responsibilities of a full time day job with a studio practice and family life. I was able to do this through a combination of very hard work and sheer endurance. Much of this ability to just keep going came from growing up one of four children to a single Mom. My mother supported all of us doing secretarial work and I watched her every day get up and go to work, regardless of how tired she was. As a young adult, I started my career in a medical emergency room doing shift scheduling and observed that residents and medical students worked at all hours of the day or night. I saw that as a model for how I could get up at 2am before my day job and get my studio work done every day. I was determined that I would carve out my artistic practice regardless of what happened in my life. As the years went on, my practice grew along with my self confidence. But it started with a commitment to my work regardless of my circumstances.



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Great, so let's take a few minutes and cover your story. What should folks know about you and what you do?

I create fiber and drawing-based installations and collaged paintings that explore healing and resilience. I was educated at the San Francisco Art Institute where I graduated with a Master of Fine Arts in New Genres. I have participated in over 100 exhibitions including group shows at the de Young Museum, the Marin Museum of Contemporary Art, and the Contemporary Jewish Museum. Some of my awards include being named a Presidential Scholar in the Arts, and I have received grants from the California Arts Council (Established Artist category), the Puffin Foundation, the George Sugarman Foundation, and the Barbara Deming Memorial Fund. I have gallery representation with SLATE Contemporary Gallery in Oakland, CA, Bridgette Mayer Gallery, Philadelphia, PA, ELLIO Fine Art in Houston, TX, and am a member of A.I.R. Gallery in Brooklyn, NY. I live and work in San Francisco.

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There is so much advice out there about all the different skills and qualities folks need to develop in order to succeed in today's highly competitive environment and often it can feel overwhelming. So, if we had to break it down to just the three that matter most, which three skills or qualities would you focus on?

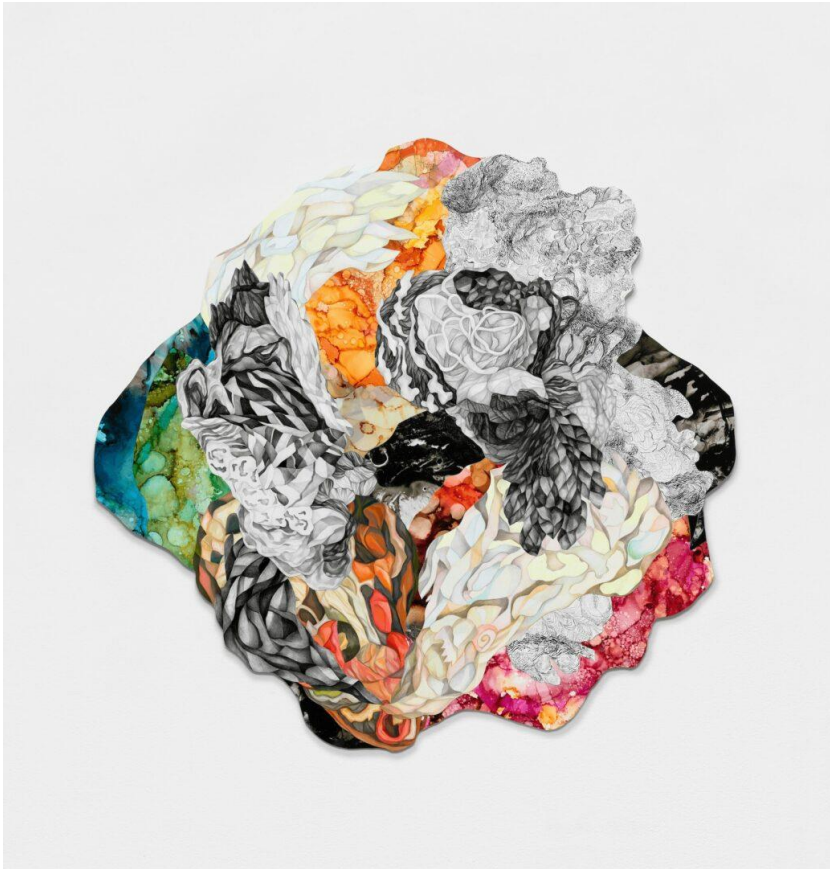
I think the first quality is the ability to be resilient and to understand that both your studio practice and your career have ups and downs. Sometimes, one's work doesn't go well, a show goes poorly or you don't make any sales. And that is all part of it. The ability to access what went wrong and to seek feedback for improvement without defensiveness is really key. No matter where we are in our careers, we all can improve and so in that sense, we are all in the same boat.

A second quality is building community with other artists, knowledge sharing and not making comparisons/being competitive. There are so many lost opportunities when people compare, feel bad about themselves and then isolate from others. Open yourself up to the learning and expansiveness of looking at others' journeys. If someone is thriving, feel happy for them and see if there are tips or things you can learn. Being open to the learning is key.

Finally, take good care of your body and mind. This can be counter to the notion of having work ethic, pushing outside your comfort zones, etc. But it can be as simple as avoiding fast food and excessive sugar intake. Making sure to have some kind of exercise or walking at least 20 minutes a day, and seeking mental health support if you need it. Being careful about not exposing yourself to negative people or negative social media. It all adds up. You have to remember that you must take care of yourself because being an artist is about the long game.



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What is the number one obstacle or challenge you are currently facing and what are you doing to try to resolve or overcome this challenge?

My largest obstacle now, as well as in the past, has been to regret my choices. Because I grew up extremely poor without health insurance, I focused on making a living for much of youth. Though I earned my MFA when I was 23, I also earned an MBA in Finance when I was 39. There have always been two pulling directions in my life which have been my desire for stability and my desire to make my artwork. By the time I was in my mid 40's, I realized that art making was my only way to self realization and wholeness. At the age of 53, I am retiring from my office work and will be a full time artist. I can either move forward with joy and energy or I can regret that I didn't do this sooner. Regret saps creative energy and weighs you down. Honoring your choices can fill you with energy and lightness which is what I need to be ambitious and energetic in the studio.

Contact Info:

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- **Linkedin:** Holly Wong
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