

ELIZABETH DARROW

STUDIO VIEWS

Studio Views began in May of 2020

We got a rare view of the artist at work in their studio and gained insight to their unique creative processes during Covid-19. In May of 2021, we asked them to check back in.



MAY 2020

When the news of the corona virus hit, I started watching TV news for the first time. I was mesmerized. Then I joined Facebook. Facebook, that I had always eschewed, suddenly presented itself as a good idea: a way to stay in touch with friends and family now that everything was altered. So between the vortex of TV News (several stations, and several narratives) and the rabbit hole of Facebook (endlessly addictive), I lost my motivation to go out to the studio and face my inability to focus on painting.

But one project did call to me...just a bit...an idea that has popped into and out of my head a few times over the years: I have accumulated so many used paint brushes – hundreds and hundreds of them. . They're no good for painting anymore, but I've never thrown them out, even when I stopped using them. I've often thought they could be used someday, in some way, artistically, sculpturally, and so, this project began when I realized this was a different time now. Sort of an interlude where we were all assessing things...What's what? Where is this going? What's to come?

In my kitchen cabinet I have a large container of wheat flour that I never use. I Googled "wheat paste". I learned what to do. Rip up some newspapers. Mix up the flour and water on the stove.

"I can give this brush a face", I thought...so I began paper-macheing faces on my old paint brushes. Personifying them. One at a time...making new friends, out of old friends, during the time of quarantine.

I'm waiting for the pegboard to arrive, so I can affix them to their place. "Thank You For Your Service" will be the title.

This project has loosened me up to get back to painting.... to turn off The News...to experiment again with paint on canvas...to play in present time....to see what unfolds, day after day.



MAY 2021

My work is in such a different place, as is my head, from a year ago!

When the Covid lockdown began I was glued to the NEWS and feeling disoriented by all of that input. At first I occupied myself by making paper mache bottle-heads, whimsical things that didn't require too much depth of concentration. Then I moved on to abstract oils and played with them for most of 2020.

Things changed dramatically for me in February of 2021. I was feeling increasingly disengaged from the abstract work and decided to return to the figurative work I had abandoned a couple of years ago. By this time I had the good sense to turn off all the NEWS OF THE WORLD--radio, TV, newspapers, as well as most contact with friends, and just delved deeply into my own quiet place. Gradually, at first, and then with a building momentum, new images appeared almost magically and I experienced the most profound creative outpouring of my entire career.

In these new pieces, I started with a darkly nuanced canvas, peering into it in search of a sign to get me started. I found two eyes, that gave birth to a face, that grew a body, that filled the canvas or invited other forms to exist together harmoniously. For three months now I have been entrenched in the studio, working 8 to 12 hours a day, and making paintings that feel present and meaningful to me. Perhaps it's not quite accurate to call them paintings, since most of the work is done with oil pastels on top of the background of dark paint. So in a way, these are colorings. I began by painting out lots of older work, but eventually I moved on to new canvases, which is where I am now. Working against a black background is akin to searching the unconscious, and images keep presenting themselves if I am present and attentive. They all feel like my friends now. I look deeply into them, and they're looking right back at me. They have something to tell me. This has been a very productive, fertile time.

And now the world is opening up again.
I feel it happening, ready or not.