

Art A View from the Easel

A View From the Easel

This week, artist studios in Montana, New York, Virginia, and Pennsylvania.



Lakshmi Rivera Amin November 12, 2023

Welcome to the 217th installment of A View From the Easel, **a series** in which artists reflect on their workspace. This week, artists find comfort in their backyard, work in a studio for the first time, reflect on food and heritage, and find new uses for old materials.

Want to take part? Check out our **submission guidelines** and share a bit about your studio with us! All mediums and workspaces are welcome, including your home studio.

Julia Justo, Manhattan, New York



During COVID lockdown, my income as a teaching artist went significantly down and as a result, I lost my artist studio in 2020. At the time I decided to use my building's backyard as a working space, which was free and safe.

As an artist, I make textile-based installations of immigrant workers such as street vendors and domestic workers.

The gray and neutral background of my backyard inspired me to create a neutral (black) background in my artwork, which gives maximum visibility to my colorful subjects, paying homage to my Latin American heritage. This combination of neutral and vibrant colors showcases immigrant workers in a way viewers may find striking yet familiar.

After lockdown, I decided to keep using my backyard, which I still do. I feel that being outside in this green space inspires my creativity and gives me a sense of well-being in my body and mind.

Tulu Bayar, Lewisburg, Pennsylvania



Nestled within the picturesque rural expanse of Pennsylvania, my studio occupies the hallowed grounds of a once-vibrant dairy barn. A mere 10-minute stroll from my residence transports me to my studio, bridging the divide between my urban origins and my current rural abode.

On this corner of the studio, citra transfer prints on handmade paper and a collection of drinking vessels on trays are scattered flat across the wall. In the foreground, protruding giant scrolls sleep on a bench that I found in a wastebin. Both ends of the scrolls are rolled up, referencing the hidden past and future, waiting for an unfold.

My creative process starts with assembling disparate elements, ranging from salvaged images, my own photographic archives, photographic films, old drawings, and maps to repurposed textiles and cultural belongings, and ends with imbuing them with new life. This process of amalgamation serves as a metaphor for the mosaic of human existence — fragments coming together to form a coherent whole.

In the spirit of Italo Calvino’s “continuous cities,” my studio itself serves as a microcosmic metropolis, where materials gain human-like attributes. In my studio, the essence of the past, present, and future meld, echoing the complex mosaic of human existence.

Victoria Ann Jensen, Norfolk, Virginia



My current art practice consists of using food and the narratives shared at the kitchen table to make sense of my hyphenated experience as a woman of Dominican and European heritage.

I use a variety of mediums to create my art, ranging from Adobe Photoshop to tablecloths, markers, acrylic paint, and assorted paper collage. My stylistic approach is a combination of realism and stylistic mark-making. I use

graphic linework to emphasize certain elements or emotions in my figures and food, such as the wrinkles in a grieving grandmother's face or the thick swirling broth of sancocho.

In the MFA program, I work closely with my professors on multiple projects both in the studio and out in the community. The knowledge that I have acquired has inspired me to further explore the material culture of my work. Currently, I am creating handmade paint from food ingredients that I will then use to paint a specific dish. In another series, I am creating my own paper from recycled materials and dying with artificial food dyes.

Each piece I create, from large-scale murals in the NEON district to more intimate paintings on tablecloths, uses food to explore relationships, celebrate tradition and culture in the hopes of connecting to the viewer and prompt reflection on their own lives. Food helps us digest our narrative inheritance and develop our identity, and every aspect of each painting is my exploration of the hyphenated experience.

Jeff Corwin, Cardwell, Montana



Given my past as a commercial photographer who always shot on location, being in a studio is intimidating. Especially that first day when I walked into a newly leased studio in Seattle. I was kind of panicky. I spent 40 years problem-solving on location for clients, so the switch was jarring. “What the heck am I supposed to do in this empty room?” But gradually, as I began to build the assemblages for my “Guns in America” work, I felt more at ease with my ability to create in a void. Location and studio work both have their issues to “problem-solve.” And that is how

I've always defined all of my work.

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