

Featured Artist Ashley Cassens

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Painter Ashley Cassens paints intimate portraits of loved ones, as a means of allowing people to connect through her art. See more of her fascinating portfolio by visiting her website.

I want to encourage touch and connection in a digital world.



"Low Sleep (Us)" Oil on Canvas, 24" x 36"



"Arteries (Anxiety Feet)" Oil on Canvas, 48" x 30"

Remember what it was like to sit down with intention and write a letter? As a child growing up in Daytona Beach, Florida, I penned letters to many pen pals. It was my dream to own a paper store because the act of writing felt so luxurious.



Exhibition featuring artist Ashley Cassens' paintings.

In my own studio practice I need to make paintings that *feel* like writing a letter. As a millennial that is constantly connected, I long for spaces where I can disconnect and have a sensory experience.



Artist Ashley Cassens in her studio

This space is my studio. I turn off my phone and for hours upon hours I lose myself in canvas, medium, brushes and oil paint. Painting, in particular oil painting, is my own way of making visceral physical connections in a largely digitized world.



"Rhinoplasty" Oil on Wood Panel, 22" x 16"

I began thinking about these concepts in relation to my practice as a figurative painter while earning my Masters of Fine Arts Degree at Florida Atlantic University in 2014. Prior to this, I earned my Bachelor of Fine Arts from Florida Southern College in 2006, focusing on representational work using traditional methods of oil painting as taught by the masters.



"The Earring" Oil on Wood Panel, 36" x 36"

I created several series of works that addressed these concepts, the first of which is the "Projection Series." Seeking to bridge my experiences as they were viewed through a screen (my phone, my computer, my endless Netflix streaming) I began painting vibrantly charged portraits using myself and my husband.



"Skinny Lumens" Oil on Canvas, 24" x 8"

I lusciously layered highly chromatic oil paint on top of painted flesh and lingered in ephemeral imagery.



"The Bedazzled One" Oil on Wood Panel, 24" x 30"

I wanted an opportunity to disconnect and have a physical experience using paint to linger in a moment that would have previously been instantly consumable.



"Armhook" Oil on Canvas, 57" x 34"

The body of work that culminated as my thesis exhibition was punctuated by the absence of my partner. While earning my three year MFA degree, we got married and due to my husband's job, we were forced to live apart for three years. His absence was extremely difficult.

I processed this loss by painting the parts of my husband that I longed to touch—his brow, his freckled shoulder and the crook of his arm. By sensually applying layers of oil paint, I recreated the essence of my husband.

Much like the ease and flow of a conversation with an old friend, I find the construction of each painting to be the accumulation of meditative moments in which time and space lose context and I am connected to the body I love.



"Arm Crook" (Detail) Oil on Canvas



"Freckle Constellation" Oil on Canvas, 32" x 48"



"Enfold" Oil on Canvas, 16" x 12"

Today, I am finally reunited with my husband in Tampa, Florida with our dog Lucius Fox. I want to encourage the kind of deep connection that I receive from painting my loved ones on to others. I work full time as a portrait artist using paint as a conduit for touch in other people's lives.

Artist Ashley Cassens invites you to follow her on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).

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