



ARTISTS POETRY ISSUES ABOUT SUBMIT

JUNE GLASSON

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June Glasson is a landscape and portrait artist based in Laramie, Wyoming, whose works have been shown at The National Portrait Gallery in London, Nature Morte Gallery in Berlin, and various New York and stateside galleries. Her work has also appeared in New American Paintings, The Paris Review, and Guernica, as well as the film "Our Idiot Brother". She has also designed book covers for Farrar, Straus & Giroux. Most recently, she has designed a cover for Margaret the First, by Danielle Dutton, to be released by Catapult Press in March 2016.

Her landscapes often incorporate startling, bright colors - dazzling cerulean skies, popping pinks - and her portraits are similarly color-splashed in contrast to clean white backgrounds.

She works in a variety of media, including oil painting and ink-wash drawings, the latter of which highlights her technical ability. Simultaneously realistic and fantastic, her works give the viewer a sense of place, culture, and wilderness.

WYOMING ART PARTY

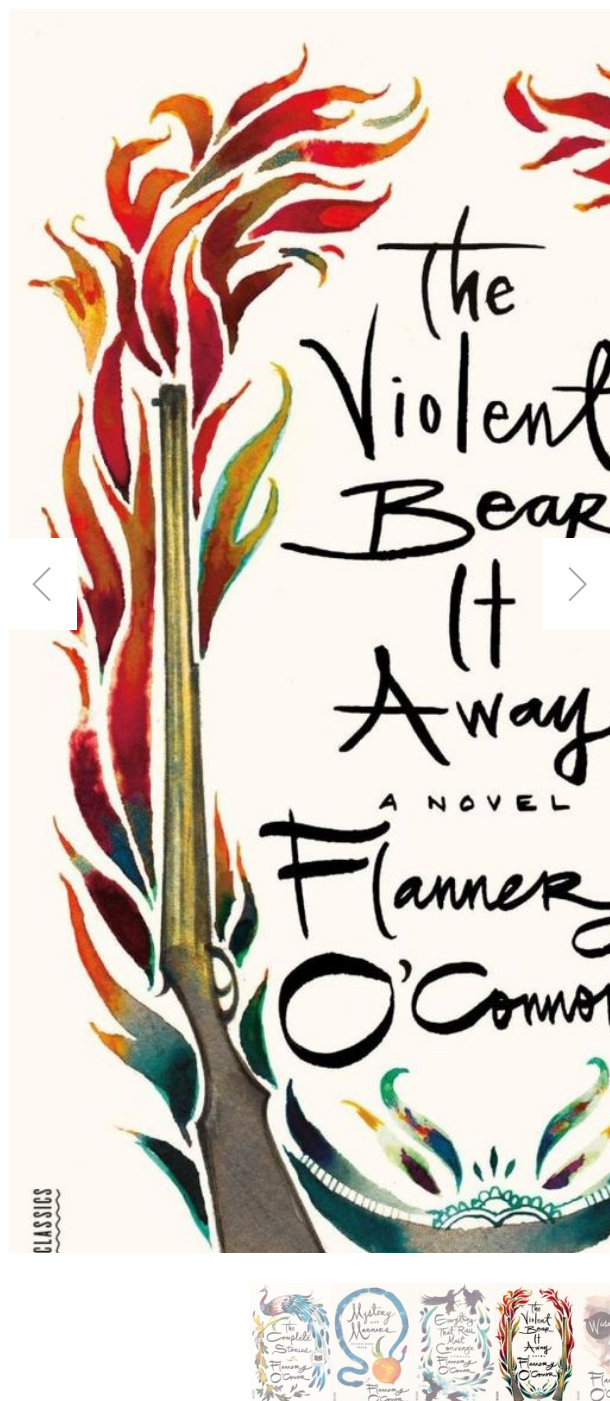
In 2014, along with fellow artist Meg Thompson, Glasson formed the Wyoming Art Party with the mission of gathering and connecting artists whose work represents the culture and landscape of Wyoming.

The Wyoming Art Party aims to "organize art projects and shows that connect individuals, scattered throughout Wyoming, who work in different regions, disciplines, and from different backgrounds, with the aim of creating work that truly represents art in Wyoming as it is, rather than as it is thought to be."



Hello, June! By chance I came across your work shortly before I ordered a copy of Flannery O'Connor's collected stories with the new cover you illustrated. I was drawn to it because it resembled the 1979 cover by Charles Skaggs, with O'Connor's iconic peacock featured prominently against a white background. Could you tell me more about how you came to design book covers for FS&G with Charlotte Strick, and your relationship to O'Connor's work?

In 2008 Charlotte came across one of my portraits in Domino Magazine and contacted me about



commissioning a portrait. A couple of years later she reached out to me about creating some illustrations for a piece in *The Paris Review*. When she started developing new covers for F.S.G., she reached out to me again about collaborating on them.

I've always loved O'Connor's short stories. So when Charlotte said she was looking for someone to create new covers for her back catalogue I was thrilled!

Before we started working on the covers I went back and re-read the work, and then Charlotte and I spent some time discussing the themes in the books and the previous covers. FSG really wanted the new covers to reference some of the previous editions, like the Charles Skagg cover and Milton Glaser's 1967 *Wise Blood*, so we drew a lot of inspiration directly from them. The new covers evolved as we worked through different mediums and designs. There was a lot of back and forth over 2 years as we perfected them. It was a very collaborative process and we both felt very proud of the results!

Who are your favorite writers? Is there a particular author that you would like to design a cover for?

That's tricky. I'd have to say my favorite writer of all time is my partner Rattawut Lapcharoensap. Of course I'm in love with him but I also think he's an incredible writer. I'd definitely love to create a cover for his novel, when he finishes it.

As for other authors - right now I'm reading Nam Le's *The Boat* and I've got Joy Williams's *Visiting Privilege* and an epic fantasy novel at my bed side.

When did you first know you wanted to be an artist, and what was your childhood like? You've mentioned in an [interview with The Paris Review](#) that your father was a

sculptor. Do you think that influenced you growing up?

I grew up in a very creative household. My father was a sculptor and my mother, though she would never call herself one, was an artist in her own right. I can't remember not drawing or making things with my hands. I've always been making art so it's hard for me to pin-point a moment when I figured out I wanted to "be" an artist. I think I just always considered myself one, though have only just recently begun to consider myself a semi-successful one.

In some of your works you make use of negative space, not only with your masking technique, but also in the vastness of your landscapes. Could you explain some of your reasons for highlighting empty spaces?

In art and in life, I believe the absence of something sometimes speaks louder than the thing itself. Often when I'm struggling to represent something, especially something that is loaded with meaning, I feel like using negative space works better to create a space where the viewer can bring their own interpretation or meaning.

Since moving to west, I've found my work slowly being influenced by the landscape, the history, and the culture of this place that I now call home. In a lot of my paintings I'm struggling to capture what is so remarkable about the landscape here, which is its vastness. Whenever I return to Wyoming I drive this one road that takes me through Northern Colorado into Wyoming. There is this moment when you cross the border into Wyoming and the land rises and the trees disappear and everything opens up. Laramie, where I live, sits on a wide open plain that seems empty and it's like a little model railroad city. In Wyoming, the climate and landscape is harsh and spare and beautiful and you can get on roads where it feels like you can drive forever without seeing a car or a building. All this space shifts your sense of scale; one can not help but feel removed from the rest of the world and the closeness of things in that world.

That said, all these personal feelings come up against the history of this landscape. The "American West" occupies such a specific place in our collective imaginations and there is a single dominant narrative that one encounters again and again: that of the lone cowboy, who occupies a romanticized and "empty" landscape. But we know that land is not and never was empty. There have always been people living here and behind this single story is a more complicated and violent history.

I think in a lot my work I use drawing, painting, and installation to play with iconic "western imagery" - such as buffalo, weaponry, truck nutz, etc - to investigate the dominant narrative about the region - a place that is both exotic and home to me.

Apart from cover designs, installation work and having your paintings in film, is there another area of design you'd like to explore in the future?

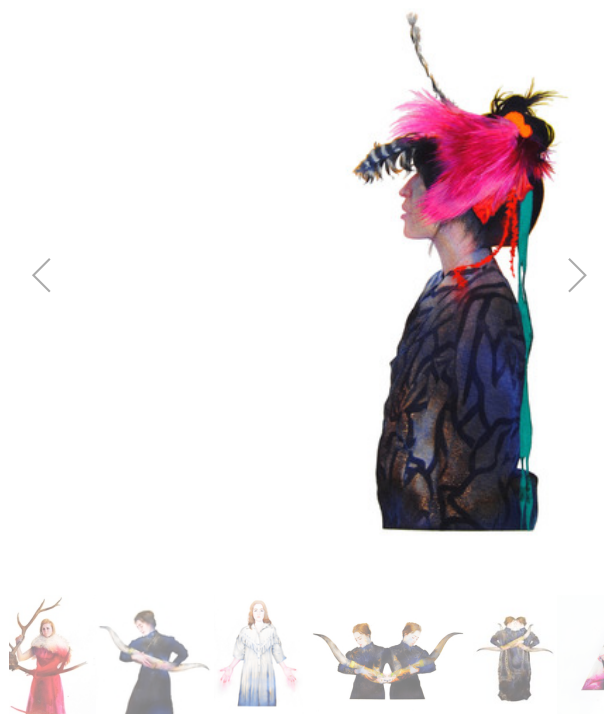
I've been playing around with some fabric designs recently and would love one day to do some album covers.

I've also been working on some designs for local murals (though so far I've only created small life-sized murals) as well as some collaborative community-based art projects with my dear friend and collaborator, Meg Thompson, through an organization we founded called the Wyoming Art Party. Some of our past projects include a travelling pan-Wyoming collaborative Art Project, Pop-up Art shows, and an annual Artwalk. For our next project we're planning on creating something for our annual "Jubilee Days" Parade.

I'd like to ask you a personal question now, if that's alright. How has being a woman affected you, in terms of your direction as an artist, or any challenges you may have faced, if any?

I feel pretty grateful for the advantages that I've been given in my life. I grew up pretty privileged but not rich, with a creatively supportive family, and a fantastic mother, who is smart and strong and independent and loved to eat and dance and who is a wonderful role model.

That said, I've also been conscious of how being a woman affects the way people see me and my work. I've also always been conscious and interested in how women have historically been represented in Art and Pop Culture. In much of my work, I strive to create realistic representation of the women in my life, representations that show both my personal



relationship to my subjects as well as my concern about the treatment of the female figure. In both my oil portraits and ink paintings I struggle to create women who play with and challenge our notions of how women should behave and be seen.

