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19 Artist Spotlight Series: Josette Urso

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I am excited to introduce you to my latest [Artist Spotlight Series](#) feature.

This New York talent has mesmerized me with her vibrant works.

Enjoy getting to know

Josette Urso

New York, NY



What is your training?

When I was a child, one of my teachers suggested that because of my interest in art as well as science, I might like to study medical illustration. I started college taking both science and art classes but soon realized that I was most interested in fine arts. I finished my undergraduate studies with a BFA degree in drawing. I took a year off backpacking in Europe and South America and decided that I was really most interested in studying painting. So I went to graduate school, where I earned an MFA in Painting from the [University of South Florida](https://www.usf.edu/), in Tampa.



What inspires you and your designs?

I am always most influenced by the things going on in my immediate surroundings — especially those things that are easily within arms length and seemingly commonplace, but that reveal surprises that I could never predict until directing my focus to them.



What is your favorite piece?

My favorite painting is generally one that I have recently finished. Probably because I am most interested in what I don't yet fully understand and a new painting always feels fresh and always suggests the next possibilities and points to the future.



How has your area influenced your work?

My studio has large windows and a wide-open city view. When I first moved into the space in Brooklyn, I immediately started making larger paintings, and my work also became influenced by weather, particularly at its most extreme. Recently, the spaces in my paintings are beginning to include inside/outside and near/far. Currently, I am experimenting with manipulating the view by hanging small constructions on either side of the glass windows and exploring the "space-in-between".

Whenever I travel, I like to paint outdoors.

In the autumn of 2016, I painted in Ruhpolding, Germany.



Last summer in 2017, I painted in Cadaques, Spain



and this summer in 2018, I painted in Ballycastle, Ireland.



What is your favorite restaurant in New York?

I always enjoy [Le Zie](#) on Seventh Avenue in Chelsea. I almost always order the Salt Baked Branzino served with Escarole and Olive Oil Braised Potatoes but they also serve delicious pasta dishes.



What is your favorite cocktail?

I enjoy something festive with fruit, preferably frozen and upbeat...maybe with a splash of rum and some pineapple. But, what I most enjoy are tea drinks...like [Taiwanese Bubble Teas](#) – which I discovered while on a 2005 painting residency at Stock20 in Taichung, Taiwan (where coincidentally the Bubble Tea originated). I also love simple, unsweetened, southern iced tea with lemon.



How do you balance personal life and work?

For me there is no separation between my work and my life — which is a good thing because painting is demanding and requires nearly every waking amount of time and energy. Luckily my husband is also a painter, so he understands what it takes to sustain a life in art.

Dream trip?

[Japan](#)



Dream commission?

My dream commission is to make a tile mosaic in a swimming pool or in a fountain.

Your favorite host / hostess gift to give?

I love giving plants that require little or no maintenance, like amaryllis bulbs that you can literally watch grow on a daily basis or quirky little succulents or cacti. Or bringing a batch of homemade gluten free cupcakes. In fact, giving gifts is sort of a pastime of mine and I always enjoy wrapping packages in unexpected and offbeat ways. I cherish a memory of wrapping gifts with my young nephew and seeing his delight when I suggested we wrap a predictably shaped item for his parents in a cereal box. I occasionally wonder though if the wrapping is sometimes more exciting than what is inside.



Who is your style icon?

It is impossible to select a single style icon but I have always been drawn to upbeat and playful styles from the 60's – as seen in the wonderful [Meglio Stasera clip](#) (from the 1963 Pink Panther film) by Fran Jeffries – as well as 50's modern or midcentury design.

I recently enjoyed the [Dries Van Noten documentary *Dries*](#) (2017) and have always been inspired by what he does as well as the work of [Isaac Mizrahi](#), who had a wonderful recent 2015 exhibition at the Jewish Museum in NYC: [An Unruly History](#). [Emilio Pucci](#) is another designer whom I have always admired.



Your favorite up and coming artist?

One day last summer, while walking to the grocery store in Cadaques, Spain, I was literally stopped in my tracks by some amazing paintings that I saw drying on the sidewalk outside what I discovered to be a classroom space used by the **Escuela de Pintura**. I couldn't resist wandering inside where I found a group of dedicated 4 to 10 year old children busy at work on their paintings. This summer, some of the classes were held in a new space and you can see some images of the children's art on Instagram at [escueladepinturacadaques](https://www.instagram.com/escueladepinturacadaques).



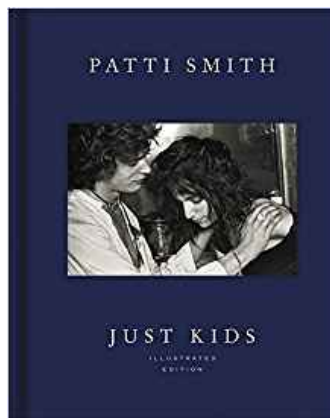
What is your most treasured possession?

My most treasured possession is not a "thing" but instead it is a "state of mind" that can only be achieved with uninterrupted studio time. It is that highly sought after place where time (as we generally perceive time) dissolves and a complete and absolute painting "flow" takes over. That place is hard won. It is the ultimate gift for every artist and I am always striving to be there.

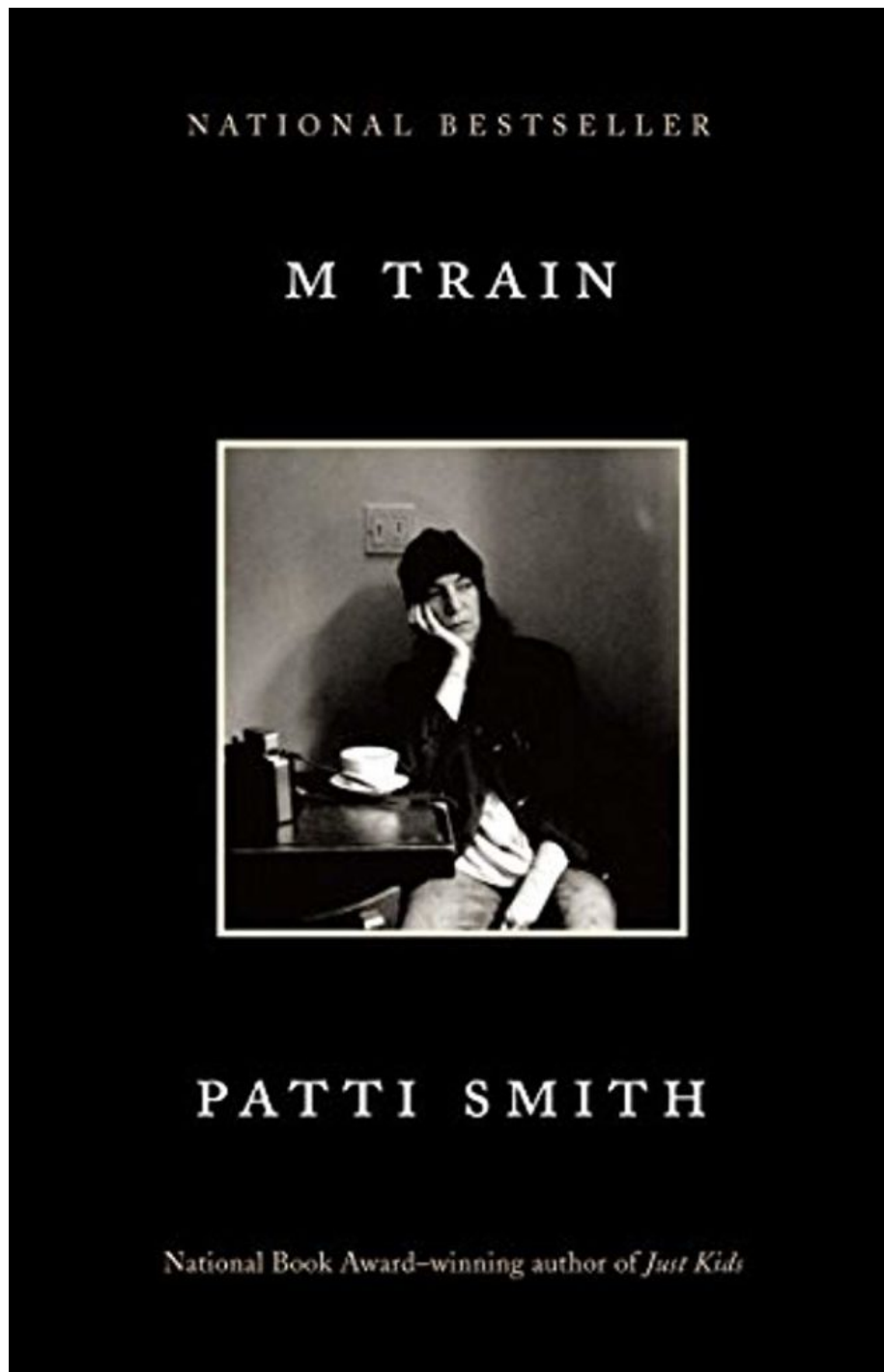
What are you reading?

This summer, I started my two-month painting residency at the Ballinglen Arts Foundation, in Ballycastle, Ireland with the ***Mayo Anthology*** (edited by the poet **Richard Murphy**), a selection of journals, memoirs, stories, essays, poems and a play by writers who live in or came from County Mayo, Ireland). This edition was published in 1990 by the local County Mayo Arts Council and was the perfect welcome to this magical, remote location in northwestern Ireland.

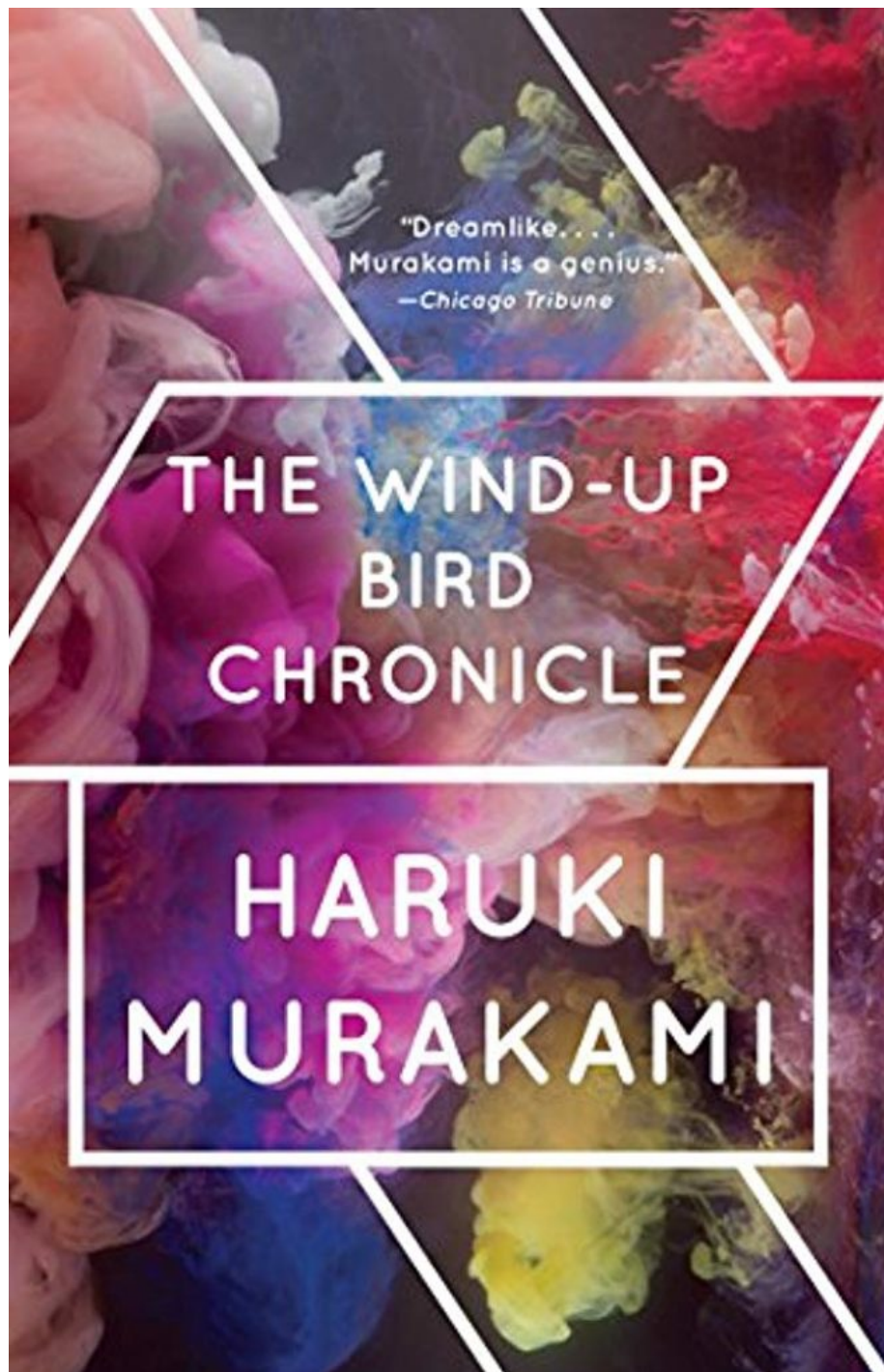
I also read ***Patti Smith's Just Kids***



and ***M Train*** and now I am on a quest to next read some of the writers she mentions.

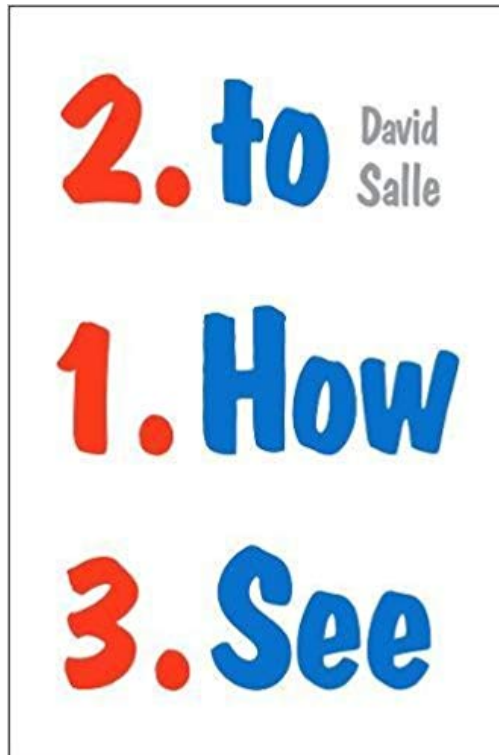


I will most likely start with [Haruki Murakami's *The Wind Up Bird Chronicle*](#)



and then something by [Ryūnosuke Akutagawa](#).

I am also reading [David Salle's How To See, 2016](#).



What are you listening to?

Jun Mikaye's:

Lillies of the Valley

Here and After

Nancy Sinatra's collaboration with Lee Hazelwood:

Summer Wine

Cat Power's:

Werewolf

Joan Baez's:

Where Have All The Flowers Gone

What are your favorite blogs / publications?

Artcritical.com

Two Coats of Paint

The New York Times

The New York Times

Please check out Josette's stunning work [on her website](#) and [Instagram](#).



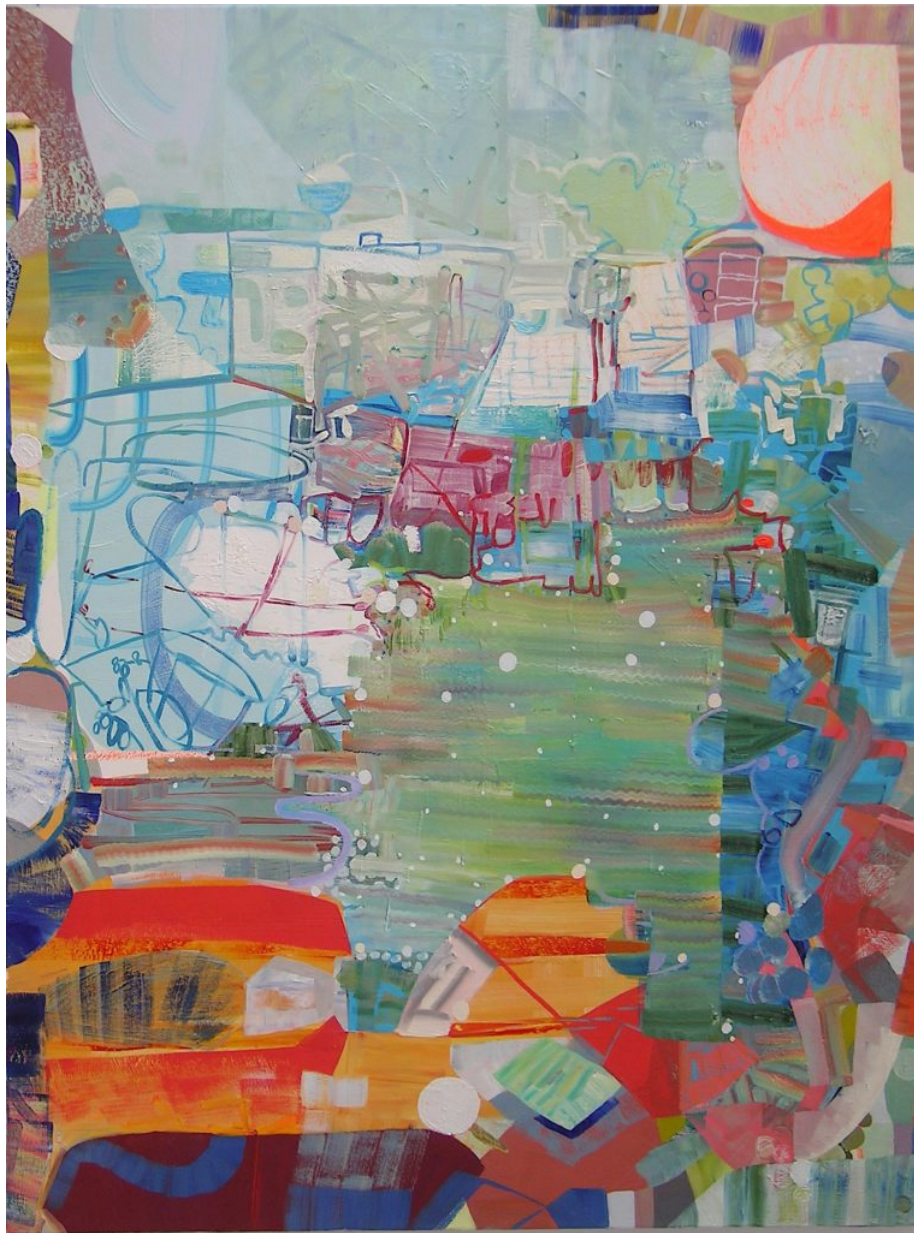














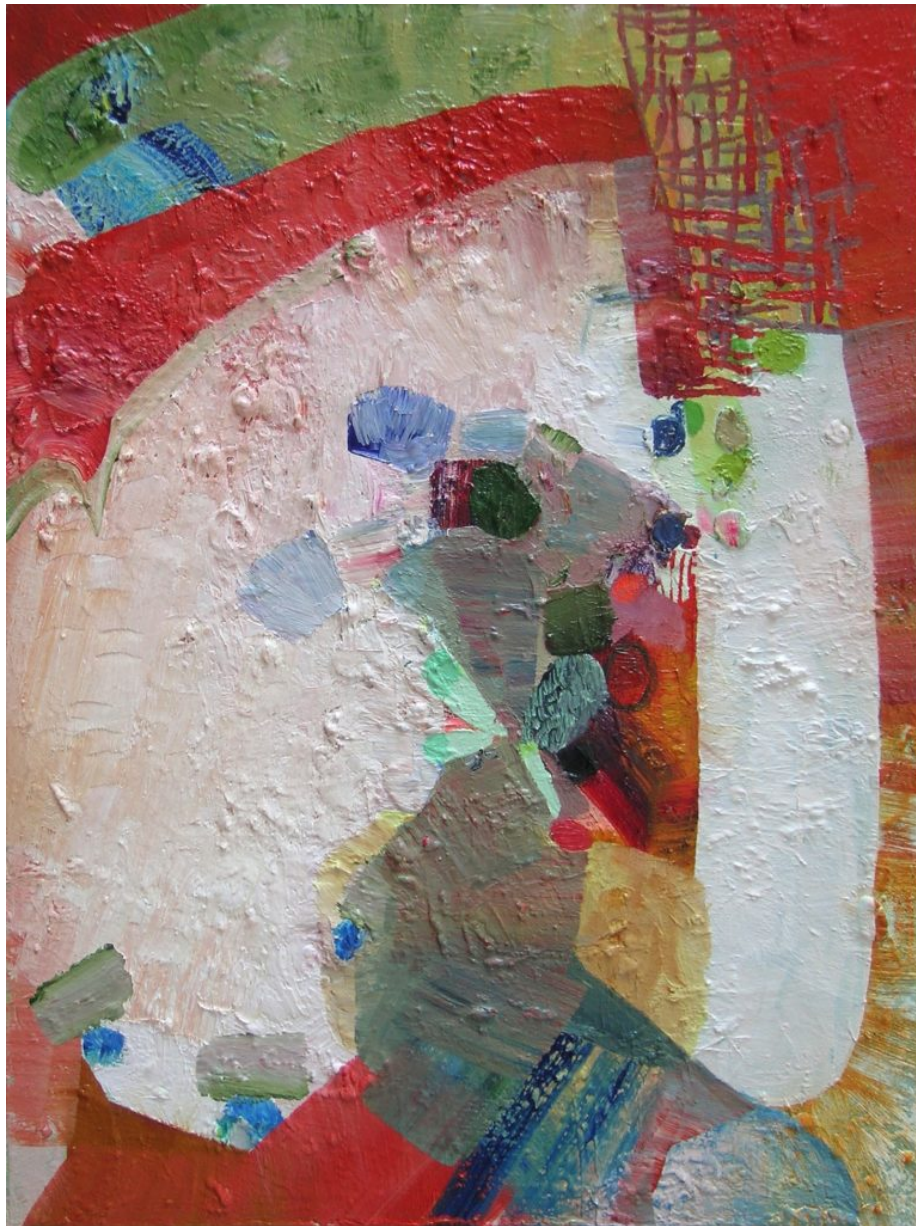




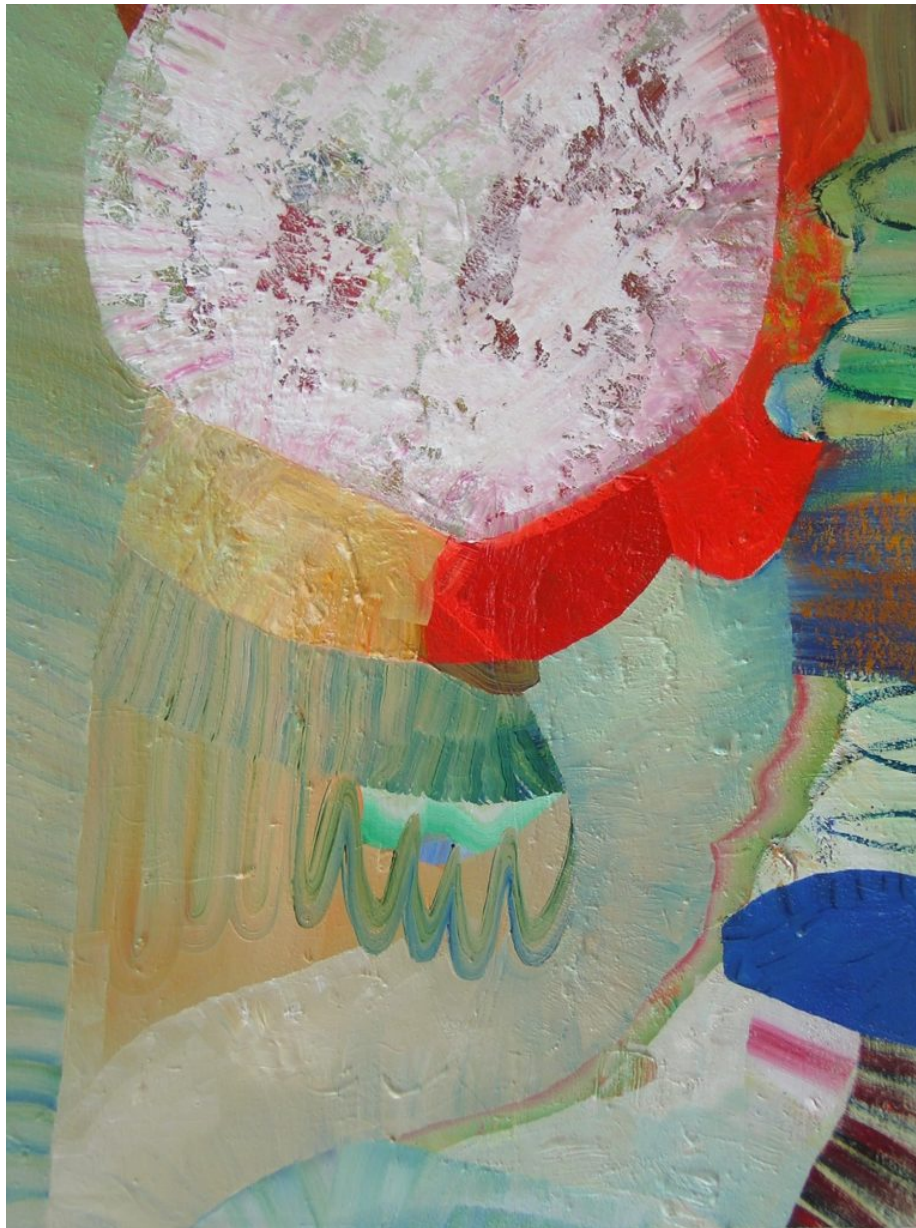


















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