

Whitney Allen Johnston Bell
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Bio

Whitney Bell is a contemporary painter living in Fayetteville, Arkansas. She paints intuitively and her stimulus comes from the organic shapes found in daily life as well as a continuous pursuit to create non-objective marks when painting. Her work is characterized by patterning and contrasting layers of muted and vibrant, dark and light shapes. She combines ink, acrylic, and watercolor and thins her mediums so that they drip uncontrollably on the canvas. Whitney is interested in the process of layering materials and responding to previous layers. Though they begin spontaneously, subsequent layers feel purposeful and connected.

Whitney has exhibited her work in group and solo exhibitions, beginning while she attended the University of Arkansas as a studio art major from 2005-2009. Shortly after, she continued her education to become a certified art teacher. In 2011, Whitney began teaching art at Washington Elementary. During this time she curated childrens' art exhibitions. She was also hired as a youth art educator at Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in January of 2012. She currently serves as an art teacher at Springdale High School and continues to show her work as a Fenix artist and in other capacities locally and nationally. Whitney believes that to be a great art teacher, she must continuously evolve as an artist.

Artist Statement

The ability to dislike and later fall in love with some(thing/one) based on its layers is remarkable. I do not like my work until I have painted over it multiple times, with the underneath compositions still somewhat visible. I am interested in free form lines and their ability to create beauty through layering and repetition. Most human made designs- architectural and textile-are infallibly symmetrical. However, natural and anatomical shapes are never perfectly balanced. Humans are crooked. Flowers are uneven. I consider my paintings non-objective because most of the imagery is non-representational; however, organic forms reminiscent of the natural world do emerge. I also look for new shapes emerging as the layers begin to interact, and I outline those. Whenever sections of my painting feel disconnected, I let washes drip through wet paint, pulling pigment across my canvas to connect. I rarely wash my brushes well so that parts of a previous hue are always mixed in with the next. This helps me limit my color palette and keeps tones muted as well. I juxtapose earth tones with synthetically colorful pops of paint. However, subtlety is starting to become more valuable to me in my work. When painting, I try to dive into a subconscious state, trusting muscle memory and working as intuitively as possible. I paint many layers of intertwining patterns, creating a strata like composition. I have a need for it all to connect in some way, but not too obviously, akin to patterns in nature that we pass by every day.