

Denise Hughes

FINE ARTIST

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Biography

Artist Denise Hughes is exploring what it means to connect deep passions to her art making.

After earning a Bachelor's Degree in Fine Arts from East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina, Denise instantly established a career in the arts. In the beginning, Denise's art career was largely cultivated by working for a professional artist in Raleigh, North Carolina. It was here that Denise honed in on the study of mural painting and decorative arts, completing numerous residential and commercial mural painting commissions and strengthening her business skills. Over the following six years, Denise developed an aesthetic in her art that is recognizable today. Her mastery with trompe l'oeil, intuitive realism, and her use of very complex visual perspectives in painting are all signatures of the artist's style.

Shortly after this period, and now with two young children in tow, Denise set out to work as an independent artist. Although well-versed within a large variety of subject matter, it was the whimsical, child-like story she was living as a mother which most strongly inspired her subject choices. Several, large-scale public art projects in the Triangle area of North Carolina propelled Denise's career and demonstrated her skills with playful designs. Among these, murals at Wake Med Children's Hospitals feature playful, seek-and-find imagery intended to create a relaxing experience for patients, and her thematic murals for exhibition spaces throughout Marbles Kids Museum both signify an early public recognition of her work and grouped Denise among the Triangle area's most talented and versatile artists.

Today, Denise's art is driven with the purpose of expressing her inspirations, of which family is at the heart. Recently focusing on the subject of water, which she refers to as "a great equalizer" with its' tranquil, healing power, Denise is drawn to the way in which generations are united by play and activities involving water. Denise's newest works are oil paintings of floating figures submerged in water. She captures her subjects photographically, whether at home in North Carolina or traveling throughout Europe and Asia with family. The paintings illustrate the artist's ideas about water and reflections, demonstrating her mastery of the subject and the medium. Among other new works are large-scale collages, created with upcycled, single-use plastics depicting marine life as well as portraits of well-known icons, the first of which she created of Nelson Mandela which was inspired by her travel to Capetown, South Africa. These works offer Denise a way to express her concerns for the global protection and preservation of water.

Denise lives in Raleigh, North Carolina with her husband Rick and their two sons Finn and Callum, and a cat named Ruby.

Artist Statement

Among the various subjects I paint, I am most drawn to the element of water. During travel with my family to places such as Europe and Asia, I have become drawn to its' tranquil, healing energy. I notice the way that play and activities, centered around water, unite generations. This inspires me to create oil paintings of figures submerged in water. In these paintings, I explore the figures' weightlessness, buoyancy, and tranquility, capturing them mid-float while at play. In these paintings I offer engaging perspectives and up-close views, focusing on detailed reflections, ripples, and bubbles caused by the figures and their relationship with the water; both the body of water and the body of the person each affecting one another. I also create large-scale, two-dimensional works by collaging found plastics. Using upcycled, single-use plastics as my medium, I make a connection between the preservation of water which affects all living things and a statement about our global, overuse of plastics. Using subject matter such as marine life and land animals, these works are thematically connected to my desire to preserve Earth as a habitat.

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EDUCATION

East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina, Bachelor of Fine Arts, 1995.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

1997-2002 Mural artist and decorative painter, Artifacts, Raleigh, North Carolina

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2017 Victor R. Small House, solo exhibit, Sampson Arts Council, Clinton, NC

2016 University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, "Beauty Through Toxicity II," Chapel Hill, North Carolina

2015 Cameron Gallery, "Beauty Through Toxicity," Durham, North Carolina

2014 Trinity Gallery, "Ode to Kodachrome," Raleigh, North Carolina

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2015 Visual Art Exchange, "Common Goods," Raleigh, North Carolina, USA
- 2015 University Mall, "Scrapple Hill," Chapel Hill, North Carolina
- 2005 Cary Visual Arts, group show, Cary, North Carolina

COLLECTIONS

"Our World, Our Responsibility," public mural, Clinton, North Carolina, 2017

"Around the World," public mural commissioned by Lenovo, Millbrook Elementary School, Raleigh, North Carolina, 2016

"We Are Family," Joyner Elementary School, Raleigh, North Carolina, 2015

7 public mural commissions, Wake Med Hospitals and main campus, Cary, Garner, Apex, and Raleigh, North Carolina, 1999-2013

10 public mural commissions, Marbles Kids Museum, Raleigh, North Carolina, 2007-2018

"All Around Raleigh," Greystone Recreation Center, public mural commission, Raleigh, North Carolina, 2011

8 public mural commissions, Oberlin Road Pediatrics,, Raleigh, North Carolina, 2010-2014

"City Street," SAS Institute, Cary, North Carolina, 2000

"Rooftops," Municipal Building, Rocky Mt., North Carolina, 2001

"Seal," Seal Sitters, Seattle, Washington, 2015

“Country Gate,” First Citizens Bank, Emporia, Virginia, 2014

“Thatched,” First Citizens Bank, South Hill, Virginia, 2014

Live painting event, Band Together, Walnut Creek Amphitheater, Raleigh, North Carolina, 2014

“Skiffs,” First Citizens Bank, Drakes Branch, Virginia, 2013

“Gate,” First Citizens Bank, Enka, North Carolina, 2013

“Calistoga,” First Citizens Bank, Chatham, Virginia, 2013

“And All Was Good,” Anija School, Dominican Republic, volunteer service project, 2013

Live painting event, Band Together, Red Hat Amphitheater, Raleigh, North Carolina, 2015- 2018

PUBLICATIONS

Walter Magazine, 2018, cover

“Artist Spotlight,” Walter Magazine, 2014

Wake Med Foundation Magazine, 2002, cover

NC Design Magazine, 2001, cover

AWARDS

Art Award. 2nd Place. Scrapple Hill Exhibition. University Mall, 2015

Award of Distinction in Painting. East Carolina University, 1995