

rated

ART

Winter 2025

A McQueen Agency Publication

Holiday
Spirits Worthy
of Cheers!

Get to Know
Villager
Puzzles

10 Things
We're Looking
Forward to
This Winter

Artist-Designed
Holiday Cards

MCQUEENAGENCY.com

Meet
**Antonio
Garullo**
AN ARTIST Q&A

AGENCY DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Beginning Again

People love a story about overcoming adversity. An athlete out of retirement for one last competition, or an artist who has struggled and finally gets their break. The broken become whole again. It's satisfying and narratively clean—a fall, a reckoning, a redemption. But I wonder if we've gotten the story wrong. Maybe it's the framework itself that's the problem.

The comeback narrative suggests a binary where you're down, then you're up. You failed, then you succeeded. But that's not how life actually works, especially not the life of an artist. Life, as you all know, is much messier and ongoing—a constant renegotiation with yourself, your creative process, and your desires.

Consider Antonio Garullo, our cover artist, for whom inspiration often comes by chance, leading him by the hand, knowing where it wants him to go. That journey of unexpected directions has taught Garulla not only to live with uncertainty, but to welcome it as a gift. The point is the process. He is not in pursuit of some moment of success. He's, instead, living within an ongoing journey.

So maybe we need to stop waiting for redemption in the face of adversity and start recognizing that growth doesn't follow



Jared Tabler. Photo by Ryan Parker.

a predetermined arc. Perhaps the artist isn't returning to her old life; she is building a new one. Maybe that emerging artist isn't failing to achieve; he's succeeding at something entirely different than what the narrative demands.

In that spirit, our Winter issue not only celebrates the holidays but also looks ahead to the new year. With resolutions and goal-setting top of mind, we encourage you to reject the comeback framework altogether and, instead, reclaim what has always been yours. Look ahead to what is possible. You aren't coming back from anything—you're simply beginning again. And as Henry Ford said, "...perhaps more intelligently."

We all love a good redemption story, and that's okay. It's convenient to frame chapters of time in that way. Just remember that it's really about the courage to keep going when the structure of the narrative demands finality. The best stories, after all, aren't ones with tidy endings; they're the ones with endings that keep evolving. Because that's the real invitation: not to come back, but to show up. Again and again.

– Jared

ARTIST Q&A

Meet Antonio Garullo

For Antonio Garullo, inspiration often comes by chance, leading him by the hand, knowing where it wants him to go. That journey of unexpected directions has taught Garullo not only to live with uncertainty, but to welcome it as a gift. A mirror that helps him recognize what is essential, both in work and life.



Antonio in his studio. Photo by Marcello Scopelliti.

As a figurative painter, Garullo is interested in exploring how people maintain their psychological equilibrium within the daily struggles of existence. A constant oscillation between presence and absence, and a longing for a connection between himself and the world. Meet [Antonio Garullo](#).

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I've learned that a painting finds its truth only if I allow it to reveal itself slowly.

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As an artist, what themes or inspiration do you find yourself returning to?

I often return to themes related to human fragility and the precarious balance between presence and dissolution. I'm fascinated by that point where the figure seems about to give way, bending under the weight of time or existence. Perhaps because, in that limit, I recognize something profoundly true.

My main sources of inspiration are the past and nature. I live in a place (between Rome and Naples) that's incredibly rich in artistic and historical traces of ancient civilizations, yet also surrounded by nature and the sea.

But inspiration often comes by chance—from colour itself, which takes over and leads my hand in unexpected directions. It's as if the painting knows where it wants to go before I do. I return to these themes because I find within them my own search for meaning: to understand myself in order to understand the world.

Throughout your career, in what ways have you grown as an artist? And what's something that's stayed the same?

I think I've grown above all in my ability to listen to my work—to let it speak before I intervene with reason. In the beginning, I tried to control the process, to build the work around a precise idea (I'm thinking of conceptual pieces like *Il sogno degli italiani*, a sculpture-installation in which every detail was studied and rationalized). Today, however, I rely much more on gesture, chance, and the dialogue between matter and thought.



Equilibrium 3, oil, pencil, clay, and tar on canvas, 185 x 130 cm, by Antonio Garullo, 2021.

In the past, I was more influenced by current reality and looked for immediate answers to problems. Over time, I've learned that a painting finds its truth only if I allow it to reveal itself slowly—even if that means contradicting my expectations.

What hasn't changed is my need for truth in painting: that inner tension that drives me to seek, through the figure or its absence, a possible meaning within the world's uncertainty. It's a search that changes form, but never urgency.



Tre età, oil on canvas, 170 x 130 cm, by Antonio Garullo, 2024.

“

Recognizing in other artists that same tension—that need to confront the inexpressible through colour, gesture, or form—gave me a deep sense of belonging.

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Did you always want to be an artist, or was it a detour on another path?

I don't think I ever decided to become an artist—it just happened naturally, almost without me realizing it. Since I was a boy, drawing and colour were my way of understanding the world and bringing order to emotions.

I still keep my early pencil drawings, made while studying the great masters of the past—especially Caravaggio. It wasn't a linear journey because I've always felt that painting, that artistic expression, wasn't a choice but a necessity.

Over time, I've understood that painting means staying in touch with a deeper part of myself—the part that observes, absorbs, and gives visual form to what words can't express. In this sense, art wasn't a detour; it was my natural direction, even before I was aware of it. Like a child who's given a bit of clay and instinctively creates beautiful shapes.

When you were first starting out, what was it about the arts community that made you feel like you belonged there?

At the beginning, what made me feel part of the art community wasn't so much galleries or exhibitions, but rather the encounter with people who shared the same urgency to express something genuine.

Recognizing in other artists that same tension—that need to confront the inexpressible through colour, gesture, or form—gave me a deep sense of belonging. Even simple exchanges of ideas, and the chance to talk about the creative process without filters, made me realize my place was there, among those trying to see the world through art.

Exhibitions then became the confirmation of that belonging—and in this sense, taking part in the Venice Biennale was an especially emotional moment.

What is the creative process like for you? Where do you usually begin, and how do you develop an idea?

My creative process in painting always begins with an intuition—a colour, a shape, or even an impression that seems to appear from nowhere, from something I can't yet see or understand.

I let gesture guide me, allowing the painting to take form through a dialogue between hand and surface. I often start with light marks, pencil or colour, without knowing where

they'll lead, observing how the material reacts and how forms start to emerge in space.

As the work evolves, it develops its own inner logic: I add layers, adjust proportions, bring together tones and materials, always keeping a tension between control and chance.

It's a process that requires patience and listening, but it allows me to enter an almost trance-like state, where the work grows on its own—and I become just a witness and co-creator of what appears.



1963, oil on canvas, 170 x 130 cm, by Antonio Garullo, 2024.



What has your work taught you about yourself?

My work has taught me to recognize and face my own fragility, tensions, and inner contradictions. Painting has become a way to look at what often remains hidden, to give form to emotions and thoughts I couldn't express otherwise.

Through thin figures, curved lines, and suspended spaces, I've learned to live with uncertainty—with the constant need for balance and the oscillation between presence and absence. In that sense, art is a real mirror: it shows me who I am in depth and helps me recognize what is essential, both in my work and in my life. And above all, it has taught me to return to the essential whenever I lose myself in the chaos of living.

What do you do to stay creatively sharp?

To stay creative, I try to keep a constant connection with the world around me, without judging or filtering it too much. Revisiting old drawings or paintings also helps—returning to a past work often opens new possibilities and stimulates imagination.

I also cultivate curiosity for other art forms—reading, music, cinema, and especially theatre. Everything becomes nourishment for creativity. But I always need moments in nature, where human silence allows the absolute voice of nature to emerge.



Equilibrium 1, mixed-media on canvas, 170 x 130 cm, by Antonio Garullo

What's one piece of advice that you lean on when days are tough?

On difficult days, when inspiration seems to have vanished, I remind myself that the creative process has its own rhythm and pauses—not everything must happen immediately, and not everything must be perfect. Art has taught me that silence, waiting, and mistakes are part of the journey.

In life, I often take inspiration from the Latin motto "*Sic transit gloria mundi*"—everything is relative, everything passes. It helps me face difficulties with a bit of detachment, without being overwhelmed. But you know, emotions in an artist are amplified, and it's important to let them surface. They'll end up on the canvas anyway.

“

***Art has taught me
that silence, waiting,
and mistakes are
part of the journey.***

”

Tell us about the first piece of art you ever bought. And tell us about the last piece you bought.

I'm not really a collector in the traditional sense, but there have always been works or objects that struck me deeply, that I felt close to. The first "piece" I could mention is a very old book of poems, by Eugenio Montale, that I found at a street market—I keep it like a relic.

Then there are some design pieces, like Le Corbusier's chaise longue or the Arco lamp. But above all, I love the pieces of driftwood I collect on the beach—their shapes and textures are incredible.

Tell us a little about what you're currently working on or hoping to explore next.

Right now, I'm reflecting on the next step in my research and how to expand the themes already present in my painting. I'd like to explore the animal world and its relationship with the human—observing the analogies, tensions, and correspondences between the two. I'm interested in how animal forms, gestures, and movements can dialogue with the human figure, creating new balances and visual narratives.

This new phase will be an opportunity to explore matter, colour, and gesture in different ways, deepening that tension between control and spontaneity that has always guided my work.

Where's your favourite place to work or get inspired?

The place where I feel most at ease creating is, of course, my studio—because there I can isolate myself from time and the world, getting into deep contact with my work. Every surface, every colour, and every mark is part of an ongoing dialogue between what I feel and what appears on the canvas.

At the same time, the natural places I love—the Circeo, the sea, the beach—always play a key role. Observing the light, the shape of the headland, and the movement of the water gives me a sense of balance and suspension that reflects in my work. They're spaces that allow me to find my inner rhythm.

You know, where I live, even in December you can walk barefoot on the beach, breathing in rhythm with the waves. Of course, it doesn't have the energy of a big city, with its rich cultural pulse—but for that, Rome or Naples are close enough. I need a slower, suspended rhythm.

Describe your perfect day. Where do you go, and what do you do?

I think the perfect day is one where you can balance everyday routine with the discovery of something new and exciting—even just seeing a newly opened flower.

I like to start early, with the morning light entering the studio—it's the moment when everything still feels possible, when the colour and the canvas seem to be waiting. Then, if I can, I take a walk along the beach, preferably with Oliver, my Jack Russell! Later comes a bit of training, and in the evening, good wine and good food—but vegan, of course.

In the end, a perfect day is one in which I feel a genuine connection between myself, matter, and the world—when everything seems to breathe in the same rhythm.

Discover more of Antonio's work [here](#), and give him a follow on [Instagram](#)!



Antonio in the studio with his dog, Oliver. Photo by Marcello Scopelliti.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Get to Know Villager Puzzles



Kelly Striemer, founder of Villager Puzzles.

As prepared as Striemer was to found Villager Puzzles, she says she always knew that having a great business plan would only get her so far. What she'd need as much, or possibly more, was an amazing community. And that's exactly what she's built with the help of Canadian women artists.

"I have a background in marketing," says Striemer, "so I'd been wanting to start a business for a while but was never able to come up with quite the right idea. I was clear on the business



Northern Cabin puzzle. Artwork by Diana Pinnell.

Kelly Striemer doesn't know who needs to hear this, but not everything you do in a day needs to be productive. Sometimes you just need to put the phone down and put a puzzle piece in. You should probably take her word for it, too. As the founder of Villager Puzzles, Striemer not only understands the power of self-care, she understands the power of building a successful business—and supporting other women in the process.

criteria—the product would need to be easy to ship and not have a specific shelf life, etc., but I also had personal criteria. The biggest of which was creating a business that would support other people. Something I could build community around."

So when Striemer came up with the idea for a puzzle company, she started looking for partners to work with, and that's where the idea of collaborating with Canadian women artists came from. Not only would the artwork for her puzzles



Fireside Christmas puzzle. Artwork by Jess Capeling.

“*When the idea for Villager finally struck, everything fell into place, and now this is what I get to do with my time as a business owner—something that brings people joy. I mean, how lucky am I?*”

be original and exactly to her taste, she'd also be able to shine a spotlight on each artist and provide them a revenue stream that supports their businesses.

The key to that financial support? Royalties. As Striemer explains, “licensing can work in a number of different ways. Sometimes it's a one-time up-front fee, other times there's a sliding scale that attaches to it based on the number of units. But my thought was fairly simple: I think success should be shared, so I provide a royalty on every puzzle that's sold, and it's uncapped. So if their art is extremely popular, they will earn a royalty for as long as that puzzle continues selling.”

That integrity and belief that her success is a shared success, extends to every aspect of the business. From creating high-quality puzzle pieces that fit perfectly and have minimal glare, to using premium recycled paperboard and beautiful packaging, Striemer wanted the entire experience of sitting down with a puzzle to feel like self-care. In providing that experience, what she got in return was a “Village,” passionate about supporting art in a tangible way.

That support is, of course, shown in every purchase, but it's the community's care and engagement that Striemer says makes all the difference.

“I think one of the things that's brought me the most joy in creating the business is being able to get feedback in real time from our followers, who we call ‘Villagers.’ So when I'm sitting alone at my desk and want input on something, having a community of people so readily willing to help makes all the difference. They give me feedback on art, and artists, and on shops... and seeing how much they care has brought me so much joy.”

That joy multiplies even faster when Striemer thinks about what it's like knowing that by creating puzzles, she's become a small part of people's traditions and core memories—a comfort they've turned to during the best and worst times.

“I mean, how incredibly lucky do I feel that this is what I get to do for a living,” reflects Striemer. “You know, I spent a lot of years dreaming of having my own business, and then when the idea for Villager finally struck, everything fell into place, and now this is what I get to do with my time as a business owner—something that brings people joy. I mean, how lucky am I?”

And how fitting that it all came together, one piece at a time.

To learn more about Villager Puzzles, visit their [website](#) and be sure to give them a follow on [Instagram](#)!



Credit: @lucaslopesart

A SPARK OF INSPIRATION

Reimagining the World with Lucas Lopes

Many go fishing all their lives without knowing it's not fish they are after. Henry David Thoreau may have said it, but **Lucas Lopes'** interpretation is as enchanting as the moon rising.

A visual artist and illustrator, Lopes is known for his poetic and metaphorical work that expresses his belief that art is more than just technique—it's about emotion, narrative, and the way we experience reality. The results? Magic.

Check out the video, then be sure to give Lopes a follow on [Instagram!](#)



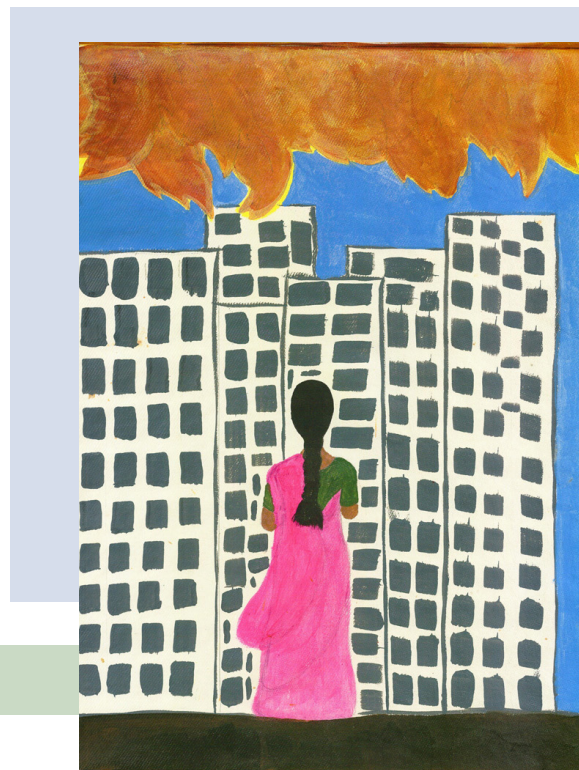
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Delivering Joy & Holiday Meals
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10 THINGS WE'RE LOOKING FORWARD TO

This Winter



1

Nutcracker Burlesque, by House of Hush Burlesque, December 18 – 20, 2025. Shimmy over to the Varscona Theatre to see some of Edmonton's best burlesque performers in this playful re-imagining of the Nutcracker. This is an 18+ show. Learn more [here](#).

3

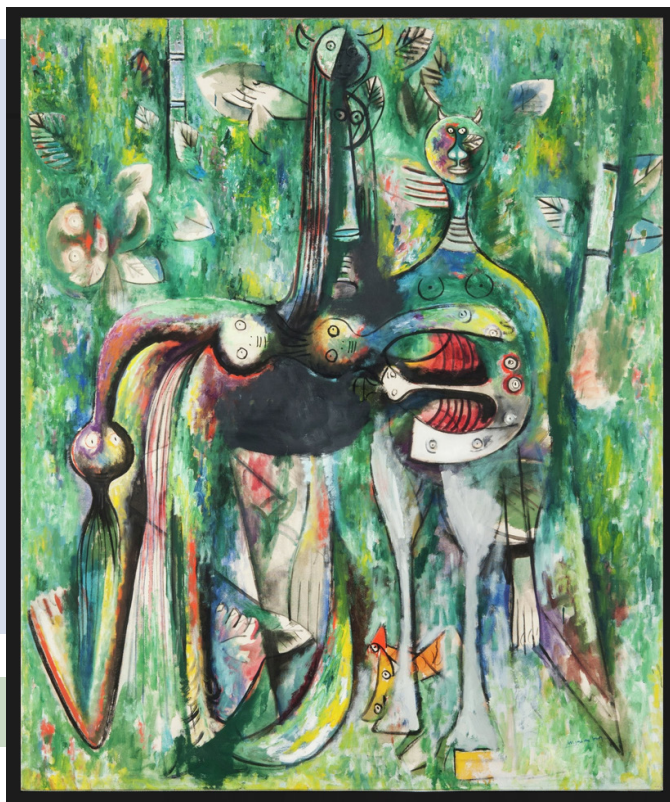
The Flying Canoë Volant, January 30 – February 31, 2026, in Edmonton's **French Quarter**. Inspired by the legend of The Flying Canoe and French Canadian, First Nations, and Métis traditions, Flying Canoë Volant is a cultural celebration designed to engage local history and everything that's great about a long winter's night. Learn more [here](#).

2

London Art Fair 2026, January 21 – 25, 2026. This year, more than 120 galleries from around the world are taking part to showcase the best of modern and contemporary art under one roof. Learn more [here](#).

4

The Mackenzie Gallery presents: *The Memory of Trees*, curated by Nicolle Nugent. Through February 22, 2026. Regina, SK. This exhibition is one of the MacKenzie Art Gallery's contributions to the *Gathering Great Plains* series of triennial programming in collaboration with Remai Modern in Saskatoon. Learn more [here](#).



Le Sombre Malembo, Dieu du carrefour
(*The Sombre Malembo, God of the Crossroads*).
Oil on canvas, 60 × 50", by Wilfredo Lam, 1943.
The Rudman Trust.

8

Miller Art Gallery presents:
Aperture, featuring the photography
of **Matthew Dairon, Kevin Hogarth,**
and **Darrin Hagen**, through March 1,
2026. Learn more [here](#).

9

MoMA presents: Wilfredo Lam:
When I Don't Sleep, I Dream,
through April 11, 2026. New York.
This exhibit is the first retrospective
in the United States to feature the
full trajectory of Lam's remarkable
vision, inviting us to see the world
anew. Learn more [here](#).

10

The New York Historical presents:
The New York Sari: A Journey
Through Tradition, Fashion, and
Identity, through April 26, 2026.
This exhibition traces how the sari
has become woven into the city's
cultural fabric, embraced by new
generations of artists, entrepreneurs,
community leaders, scientists, and
changemakers. Learn more [here](#).

5

Montreal Museum of Fine Arts presents:
Jeff Wall: Richard Avedon: Immortal.
Portraits of Aging, 1951 – 2004, February
12 – August 9, 2026. Learn more [here](#).

6

Art Gallery of Ontario presents:
Paul McCartney Photographs 1963 – 64:
Eyes of the Storm, opening February
2026. Learn more [here](#).

7

Vancouver Art Gallery presents:
That Green Ideal: Emily Carr and the
Idea of Nature, February 6 – November
8, 2026. This is the largest solo exhibition
of Carr's work at the gallery in more than
20 years. Learn more [here](#).

WHAT'S ON

McQueen Artists Take Centre Stage



All of our amazing McQueen artists are busy creating new work this winter, but one has a fabulous show we're excited to tell you about. Here's where you'll find **Johnny Taylor**.

Johnny Taylor will be taking part in the **Art Gallery of Northumberland's** 46th Juried Exhibition, in Cobourg, Ontario, through January 3, 2026. Fun fact? The gallery is in Victoria Hall, a beautiful historic building that Taylor's dad was the director of and led a restoration to preserve it in the early '70s. Learn more about the exhibit [here](#).

About Johnny Taylor

Johnny Taylor is a contemporary abstract painter based in Toronto, Ontario. Best known for paintings that merge organic elements with architectural forms, his works reflect a harmonizing of natural and constructed worlds. Taylor's art is rooted in abstraction, relying on mark-making in reaction to his surfaces that are intentionally considered as part of his compositions. Taylor paints without preliminary sketches, using a combination of oils, pigment sticks and impasto mediums, applying them with a variety of trowels, blades, and hand tools.

While his imagery occasionally draws from recognizable subjects, his practice remains firmly abstract, exploring distinct bodies of work that speak to his visual language.

Taylor's work has been featured in numerous solo and group exhibitions, including *Splash* at the Pendulum Gallery in Vancouver, *Hidden Cities* at Bermudez Projects in Los Angeles, *Trans-Arts Festival* in Tokyo, *Spaceland* at Bermudez Projects, *Kinetic Zen* at Miller Gallery in Edmonton, and *Tokyo Lights* at Bugera Matheson Gallery in Edmonton. He has also participated in *The Big Tiny Show* at District Gallery in Knoxville.



Above Left: *Spring Shadow*, oil and wax on panel, 30 x 24, by Johnny Taylor, 2025. | Above: Johnny Taylor



As the year comes to a close, we want to extend our heartfelt thanks for your trust, collaboration, and partnership. Working alongside you continues to inspire and challenge us in all the best ways. Here's to new ideas, bold goals, and everything we'll create together in 2026.

Wishing you a joyful holiday season and a bright, successful year ahead – from all of us at MCQUEEN.

Jared Carmen Amelia Ellie Joanna
Emily Cindy DJ Curtis Dawn

MCQUEEN

Carolyn working on a linocut in her Hawk & Rose studio.



SENDING GOOD CHEER

Artist-Designed Holiday Cards!

Card-senders everywhere, rejoice! 'Tis the season, and Canada Post is not on strike (or at least not yet!). For those of us who love sending holiday cards, that's all the hope we need. To celebrate and help you find the best of the best this year, we've curated a list of some of our favourites from right here in Canada. They're artists, illustrators, hand-letterers, printmakers, entrepreneurs—and all kinds of fabulous. Here's why we love them...

Carolyn Howse, founder of Hawk & Rose Press

From: Mayne Island, BC

Online: hawkandrose.ca

What: Hand-carved linocut art cards and limited-edition prints

After a career as a graphic designer, Carolyn reoriented her creative focus towards the fine art of printmaking—a centuries-old, hands-on process that felt like an antidote to the high-tech world we live in. After studying for five years at the renowned Oaxaca, Mexico printmaking studio (Taller Rufino Tamayo), Carolyn founded Hawk & Rose Press. The themes of her work express a sensitive exploration of flora and fauna, and the tactile results of her impeccable prints have a warm, vintage look that harkens back to a forgotten age.



Sustainable Printing

Hawk & Rose aims to create products with a reduced environmental impact. Printed at North America's finest and most environmentally-friendly printer, located within 70 km of the studio, their greeting cards are rated carbon-neutral and are printed on fine, uncoated paper that's Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified. Her original, limited-edition works are printed in-studio by hand.

And She Gives Back!

As a commitment to Carolyn's love of nature and wildlife, a portion of Hawk & Rose profits is donated to the **Nature Conservancy of Canada**, the country's unifying force for nature and land conservation, which has helped protect habitat for 250 species at risk.

**Gloria Ho, founder
of Gloria Ho Illustrations**

From: Edmonton, AB

Online: gloriaho.ca

What: Watercolour art cards, prints, stickers, custom portraits, and commissions

Gloria is a watercolour illustrator who paints animals, people—and animals as people! She aims to make illustrations that are joyful, inviting, and bring a smile to people's faces.

What began in 2014 as a series of whimsical bear-themed cards, grew into a signature collection of prints and animal portraiture, depicting delightfully furry fashionistas. In addition to painting, Gloria also teaches English to newcomers to Canada and says both jobs fuel her desire to make the world a more beautiful place.

Compassion for All

For more than a decade, Gloria has collaborated with the Alberta SPCA, creating posters for their "Every Living Thing" initiative—a **humane education program** for teachers who aim to inspire compassion for animals, people, and the environment. The idea that encouraging kindness to animals will result in more kindness to people has been the underlying philosophy of the humane education movement for over 150 years. With Gloria's help, thousands of posters depicting that lesson have made their way into classrooms all across Alberta.

**Natasia Martin, founder
of Natasia Makes**

From: Edmonton, AB

Online: natasiamakes.com

What: Greeting cards, art prints, and stickers

Natasia is a lettering artist, illustrator, and designer who creates bold and playful artwork inspired by nature, outdoor adventures, and navigating whatever life throws at us. Her vibrant, one-of-a-kind designs are perfect for lovers of bold hand-lettering, modern illustration, and playful contrasts. She pairs abstract elements with representational ones, clean geometry with spontaneous textures, and vibrant rich colours with ones that are muted and natural.

When Natasia's not creating or packing products in the studio, she's an instructor at MacEwan University teaching



the next generation of designers. She's also one of the founders of the Edmonton chapter of Ladies, Wine & Design, a monthly conversation series for women, non-binary, and underrepresented individuals within the creative industry.

A Believer in Positivity

Joy and positivity are the forefront of all Natasia's creations. But not because life's always that way. When Natasia picks up a new skill or learns to navigate something life has thrown at her, she uses her artwork to share her personal stories in the hope that it will empower others to see the positives in their situations and feel a little less alone.

**Malika Pannek, founder
of The Paperhood**

From: Toronto, ON

Studio showroom:

1 Wiltshire Ave, Unit 217

Online: thepaperhood.com

What: Greeting cards, original artwork, art prints, calendars, puzzles, gift tags, and postcards

Malika has always had a soft spot for all things paper. Though she grew up in Germany where she worked as a graphic designer in the corporate world, she always longed for a more creative way to bring her illustrations to life. Lucky for us, that dream came true in 2012 when she founded The Paperhood, in Toronto, and now designs and hand-paints all the illustrations that appear on their products.



If you're already a fan, you know that Malika loves painting city scenes. But it's not only the architecture and sense of place she captures. She playfully imbues every design with the energy of the people and communities that bring those neighbourhoods to life.

Proudly Sustainable

Behind all the beautiful offerings is The Paperhood's ongoing effort to make their products as sustainable as possible. Their eco-commitment includes using premium 100% recycled paper for 90% of their products, envelopes made of 100% recycled paper, and papers that are FSC certified. Their printing is powered by renewable energy in a waterless printing process that uses VOC-free inks. And at the beginning of 2020, they stopped packaging all online orders in plant-plastic and regular plastic sleeves, instead opting for paper sleeves and tissue paper. They even use recyclable tape for packaging and offer sleeve-free alternatives to their wholesalers.



MCQUEEN SIPS

Cheers to Holiday Spirits!



It's that time of year. Projects are coming to an end, successes have been celebrated, misses have been learned from, and we're facing the coming year full of gratitude for each other and you. To celebrate and say thanks, we thought we'd raise a glass and share some of our favourite holiday sips to kick off the season. Like us, some of them are bold, others are classics, and all are better with friends. So cheers to you! And please remember to enjoy responsibly.

Lisa Graziotto

Scotch on the Rocks

When I was a little girl, my family would have an open house on Christmas Eve. Friends would pile into the house, the fireplace active, food, laughter, warmth, love, and the inevitable card game. I would sneak down the hall to watch the adults do what adults do, hoping to get caught so I could sit on my grandfather's knee for a while until sleep took hold of me. The drink of choice for my grandfather was always scotch on the rocks. He would play cards, sip his drink, and patiently hold me. That drink, those memories, all bring back the best memories of Christmas for me.

Carmen Hrynychuk (Editor, *ratedART*)

There are two drinks that come to mind when I think about the holidays. And they're the epitome of my "high-low" sensibilities. The first, is a very elegant French 75. And the second is a homemade Baileys with enough cream and pecan whisky to jingle the bells off a snowman.

French 75

- 1 1/2 oz cognac (or gin)
- 3/4 oz freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 2 dashes of simple syrup (to taste)
- 2 oz champagne or prosecco

Combine the cognac, lemon juice, and syrup in a cocktail shaker filled with ice. Shake and strain into a chilled champagne glass, then top with bubbly, stir gently, and garnish with a twist of lemon zest.

Homemade Baileys

- 1 2/3 cups Revel Stoke Roasted Pecan Whisky
- 1 cup whipping cream
- 300 mL can sweetened condensed milk
- 2 tsp. instant coffee
- 4 tbsp. chocolate sundae syrup
- 2 tsp. vanilla extract

In a measuring bowl with a spout, combine all the ingredients until smooth. Pour into a bottle with a cork or cap, and refrigerate. Shake before adding to coffee—or better yet—to a scoop of vanilla ice cream, topped with chocolate syrup and a sprinkling of salty Spanish peanuts.

Charlene Johnson

Baileys & Coffee

Every year on Christmas Day, I attempt to make my whole family a traditional Jamaican breakfast dish. Since Jamaicans don't go by a written recipe, every year I botch the dish. I'm always amazed at how catastrophically I mess it up.

Now this could be because I forget the proper ingredients or, more accurately, because I'm sipping on my favourite Christmas drink (Baileys and coffee) while I cook. I'll get it right one year. I'm not sure why my family still believes in my ability though.

Pat Marino

Wine Pairings

We're a big wine house, especially for the holidays. Seven Fish on Christmas Eve requires bright acidity, so I like a dry Riesling from Mosel or the Finger Lakes.

Jean Foillard Morgan Côte du Py is a Christmas dinner staple. Elegant, silky, soulful, and rich, it's perfect for a classic Christmas roast, which in my house is beef and lamb.

Jared Tabler

"Bathtub Gin"

A tradition that started last year in our house is that my fiancé makes gin. It is really an infusion of all sorts of botanicals and things into an over-proofed vodka, but we affectionately call it "bathtub gin." Gin and tonic is always our go-to cocktail, and it's even better made with Fever-Tree tonic and a couple ounces of bathtub gin.

**No bathtubs were actually used in the making of the gin!*

Rapid Fire

WITH JOSIE MICHAUD

Another *ratedART*, another Rapid Fire session—this time with the oh-so talented **Josie Michaud**. Here's what she had to say...



Josie Michaud. Photo by Adrienna Elcome Photography.

First job?

Custodian

Last thing you watched on TV?

White Lotus, season 3.

The thing you impulse buy most at a store?

Hats or shoes.

Breakfast or dinner?

Dinner, always.

Now or later?

Now

The person you talk to when you need a good listener?

My bestie, Kelly Rose.

The first person you tell when you get good news?

My fiancé.

Sweet or savory?

Savory

Last thing you Googled?

Couches and carpets.

Favourite movie?

The Kings of Summer

3 things that are always in your fridge?

Sriracha, pickles, and mayo.

Digital or analogue?

Analogue

Favourite person to spoil?

Iain

Favourite way to relax?

By a body of water.

What's your drive-thru order?

Cheeseburger, fries, and a coke.

Dream vacation?

Japan ski trip, or anything warm with an ocean and good food!

What's something we'll find in the pocket of your car door?

Peppermint oil.

Blue or black ink?

Black

Morning person or night owl?

Neither

A talent/virtue you admire but don't have?

Patience

If you had to be a Disney character, which would you be?

Lord Farquaad (DreamWorks Animation)

What subject would you be okay NEVER learning about again?

Math

A song that makes you cry?

"Bless the telephone," by Labi Siffre

Something you're a beginner at?

Kendama

Something you're an expert at?

Talking

Title of future memoir?

Out and About

3 favourite tiny joys?

The sun, flowers, and good cheese.

Want to learn more about Josie? Check out her *ratedART* cover story [here!](#)

About Josie Michaud

Growing up in a small rural town in northern Alberta, Josie Michaud was inspired by the mountains and a love of all things vintage. Her passion for art was ignited early by the discovery of pop art, collage, vibrant colours, and vintage magazines, the latter of which she uses to evoke feelings of past times and the outdoor/ski lifestyle. Also unique to Josie's signature style is her use of pressed flowers, which add texture, depth, and a dreaminess that she hopes will ignite a sense of adventure in those who view her work and explore their own journey within the pieces she creates.

Today, Josie's work continues to evolve, incorporating mixed media, landscape collage, retro graphics, as well as painting and sketching—all of which are inspired by the mountain vistas that surround her.



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