

**What did you want to be when you were a child.** I lived many years on a farm in Bogota, Colombia where I grew-up. I learned to milk cows, ride horses, explore nature and all its wonders and really fell in love with that world so I thought I would end-up being a veterinarian or going into animal husbandry.

Having said that, paralleling those experiences, I also was deeply inspired by the bright colors and shapes found in my surrounding nature. My mom is an artist and I vividly remember as a child how she would set-up her easel and paint plein air.

I was so amazed about how she actually captured nature on her canvas that she introduced me to my first oil painting lessons.

I really wanted to learn how to paint what I saw and that too, became something I wanted to be, an artist.

**Early influences** I see the world in all shades of color, thanks to the opportunities to travel and a multicultural, bilingual upbringing, rich in traditions and challenges from third world countries.

From the age of 4, which is when my family and I moved abroad, I vividly remember feeling extremes of joy and tragedy, beauty and ugliness, happiness and sadness, color and grey, rich and poor, sick and healthy, clean and dirty, easy and difficult, scarce and abundant, etc.

These were constant parallels to reality, day in and day out, that in a way, often required me to respond on a deep, visceral level to deal with. It was the only way I knew how to take in and truly try to understand the world, who I was, what I was "made of" and where I belonged...sink or swim, right?

I am very happy to have had the opportunity to grow up in South America. I cannot imagine life with only one language, one set of traditions and one lens to look at life.

Having said that, I have to say that I can't fully identify with any culture, which sometimes gets in the way of defining any place I truly belong. An interesting position but not always easy.

**Emotions of adulthood** In my adulthood, much of my life has been shaped by telltale symptoms of a genetic condition I was born with called Marfans.

It is a condition that seriously affects the eyes, all the connective tissue and all the arteries of the body. Aneurysms, anywhere, anytime, are one of your favorite manifestations... I've had my share of scary moments!

My approach to life as an adult has been quite influenced by the crudest of survival instincts, and my response to almost anything remains at a very visceral level because of that, often juggling multiple realities in order to move forward.

I only share this, because this is a gift from which all my art comes. I don't know if I would be an artist if marfans weren't part of my daily life. It pushes me far beyond the comfort zone of my limits, allowing me to find a way to transcend physical realities and transmute my journey into the best journey I can take for as long as I can...never a dull moment!

**How I got involved with the arts** After being an expat for many years, I returned to the United States somewhat reluctantly but with no other choice.

Starting over in a foreign place where everything is completely different is quite a challenge. It took me several years to understand new ways of thinking, communicating, speaking, oh my god, even dressing! I didn't realize I wanted to get seriously involved in the arts until I got this cool job a few years after I moved to Miami.

It was a job that connected me to the creative world of video, art, pop music and glamour. I worked with some pretty fun Latin stars of the time, and in addition to having a lot of fun,

I realized that I needed to dedicate my life to creativity in some way and declared my career path to become an art student though not sure exactly where that would lead, but I definitely committed to the program. I ended up getting my degree in art education with a concentration in printmaking.

**Careers** I started out teaching in Dade County inner city schools and eventually ended up in one of the best private schools in South Florida. I loved teaching children and sharing my gift and passion for the arts with them.

To this day, I am thrilled to say that I keep in touch with several who went to art school and are now successful professional artists and creatives. Those results made all the incredible sacrifices and hard work worth it.

After many years of teaching, I got hooked on technology and decided to immerse myself in a new career in graphic arts. At some point, I opened my own graphic arts business and had a fabulous experience working with some multinationals. I took care of all their branding and marketing needs and really learned all there was to trade nationally and internationally.

I share this because my work, to this day, combines highly graphic elements that interact with loose, expressive marks that help create and release visual tension.

After living in Miami for over 20 years, "life" was ready to try something different and less stressful, so my husband and I decided to move to Charlotte, an up-and-coming city with plenty of opportunity for both of us.

We were looking for a new start and in many ways we played it all, but today we can say that we played very well! Upon arrival, my first priority was to connect with the art scene and get an art studio.

I feel very blessed to have met wonderful people along the way and very grateful for all the "doors" that have opened for me, which have surely contributed to my development as a person and as a full-time artist.

In 2011 I had the opportunity to open a gallery with some business partners. It was an amazing opportunity to learn the art business on a grand scale and make amazing connections. The gallery closed its doors in 2017 due to the urban expansion that was taking place in the area.

**What artistic opportunities have been highlights in your career?** Over the years, I have had to fill many roles because of the many opportunities that have come my way.

Many experiences stand out. I guess, in a way, every opportunity is a step higher in my career, so I value every one of them.

Being invited to exhibit in Bogotá, Colombia was exciting and full of adventure! We were invited 2 artists and the exhibition was a success!

Having my pieces accepted into exhibitions in Spain and New York was exciting!

I must say that the highlight of my life as an artist was the 15 years that I taught art to middle and high school students. I gave them 150% because I understood that I was another positive step in the development of their lives. Everything I taught them brought them closer to discovering who they were shaping up to be. On the other hand, I learned every day from my students. I cannot express in words the amazing benefits of teaching and what I was taught.

Teaching made me a stronger artist on so many levels!

Owning my own graphic arts and marketing business for several years was also a highlight. It gave me the opportunity to connect my art with the graphic, printing and marketing world. I learned everything there was to learn about designing, printing, working with clients and figuring out complex problems on stringent schedules. It was very challenging and met my right and left brain needs quite well!

Another great opportunity was being a gallery owner for more than 5 years in the city of Charlotte. It was a time of real learning about the art business and all its facets.

I have served on a few artist group boards that provided unique experiences. I learned about how nonprofits work and how the arts are interconnected.

Honestly, the list goes on of cool things I've been invited to participate in or been awarded for. I can not complain!

**What is your favorite art form?** I must say that I rarely work with just one medium. I have to experiment and learn something new with each piece of art. I am not a master of any technique, but I love painting and montage art. It will take a lifetime of continual experimentation and diligence to master any technique. I'll be happy if I master a technique but honestly it's not at the top of my list when it comes to goals. The journey of experimentation and the story that is built throughout life is higher on the list for me.

**Do you do any research to support your work?** Oh yes, a lot. I am a very curious person by nature, I investigate everything from my dreams and their meanings, to things I hear and want to know more about. Everything I experience in life fuels my art in very profound ways. I ask a lot of questions and I don't stop until I find answers.

**You work with a very bright palette! What inspires you?** I'm hispanic, what can I say! Color infuses life on all levels. The culture is full of invigorating traditions that, to me, embody all things happy... color is healing and the brighter the better! Aside from applying some symbolism to them, my bright palette represents hope. I believe my love for bright colors stems from my Hispanic heritage and upbringing where color, vibrancy and a passion for life come through because there is always hope. no matter how tough times get.

## **Can you share a bit about your creative process?**

As an artist, the ability to connect with viewers and open a space for dialogue, and self-reflection, is a privilege and a responsibility I feel deeply.

Through my work I tell a story of what I see and how I feel about it—built up in layers and rooted in hope and survival.

My initial approach to my substrate is always intuitive. I don't plan it, I actually start making marks and respond as I go. I have ideas flowing in my mind, which often come into play when they come through the marks. My art doesn't copy something that already exists, but brings out what's inside.

Before I start any piece, I often investigate my subject of interest.

My investigations answer questions and often tell me hard truths so I'm emotionally charged when I come to my first layer. Throwing paint, writing, making expressive lines, etc on this initial layer help activate each piece. Then, I start looking for my subject and composition hiding inside those marks. I then determine the palette, and work until the piece speaks to me.

Ultimately, for me it's about process, what comes out in the end is icing on the cake.

## **Which of your traits are you most proud of?**

Because I can usually see the “big Picture” of things, it helps me make purposeful decisions and give good advice.

A strong sense of empathy helps put myself in others “shoes”, helping me to gain insight into the world by seeing, feeling and appreciating from multiple perspectives.

I am proud of my resourcefulness and ability to creatively think. It has opened many doors and helped me approach the world and life from multiple angles.

Lastly, I am a libra, and those who know me, know that I have a strong sense of justice/ fairness and the ability to strike balances, often times in delicate circumstances.

In sum total though, I owe these traits to having grown-up in a different culture, fluently speaking a few languages, living abroad and traveling. These have greatly nurtured these traits.

## **What quote or saying inspires and motivates you to be yourself and do what you love?**

There are so many great quotes but one quote written by Henri Matisse, comes to mind, because it just reminds me to stay present, open and purposeful “An artist must never be a prisoner of himself, a prisoner of a style, a prisoner of a reputation or a prisoner of success, etc”

Another one by Georgia O’Keeffe “I found I could say things with color and shapes that I couldn’t say any other way - things I had no words for.

**Is there anything unique/special that you want to share with us?** Living with marfan syndrome and being a 4-time open heart surgery survivor has definitely steered my life's path in a unique way. The lenses through which I see and portray the world are intensely focused on the theme of survival, and life is experienced daily with deep gratitude and purpose.

Another thing I think is a bit unique is that I have synesthesia. In my case, I join objects such as letters, numbers, years, months and days of the week with the sensory perception color. I always see these in a particular order and direction. I see music in bars of color and see every word I hear, like an ongoing screensaver in my mind. I have had this my whole life and perceptions and associations have always been the same. My answer today would be the same answer I gave when I was 10. It wasn't until my mid career in teaching art that I realized the whole world did not perceive things like this. I think it has helped me learn and visualize things at a quicker pace and has affected how I associate with different colors. Having said that, over the years it has been important to learn to pause these things to clear my mind and be still.

### **Your style has evolved over the decades. Do you know why?**

I feel my styles have evolved as I have had to evolve with my own life. I was born with a life threatening condition but honestly not much was known about it in the 70's. I wore coke bottle glasses but really, other than that, I had a very normal childhood and did everything every other kid did,

As I got into my teens, my glasses became an issue. I became conscious that I looked different and I think I started to realize that my body was a bit different as well so it was natural for me, as I found art in my life, to express myself with organic and figurative shapes.

This style lasted for more than a decade. Then I started having some serious health issues which abruptly halted my life for a minute. The life threat became all too real and suddenly I found myself without control of my own destiny.

Marfans had revealed itself fully and my art took a sharp left and became geometric and controlled.

I took an interest in graphic arts and actually learned a whole new side career because detailed exact work suddenly really appealed to me. I could have control. This attraction for geometry and graphic arts gave me something to hang on to.

It was during this decade+ that I developed my color symbolism and literally healed from the inside out, inch by inch, color by color.

In the last five years my style has evolved again. I have become hyperaware of our planet's vulnerability to human impact.

We live in a time where humanity's impact is so profound that it has altered the course of this earth and all life on it. A planet where so much exists in chaos and perpetual conflict, filtered by technology, driven by consumption, and littered with environmental, political, economic, and socio-cultural chaos, all of our own making.

My own ailments pale in importance compared to the bigger picture of things.

My focus now, is to respond to present day imbalances between humans, nature and technology, often with the purpose of making a clarion call for change.

Ultimately, the underlying theme of all my work is hope and survival.