

Meet Alison (Ali) Woods | Fine Artist & Accidental Curator

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We had the good fortune of connecting with Alison (Ali) Woods and we've shared our conversation below.

Hi Alison (Ali), why did you pursue a creative career?

It never occurred to me to be anything else. I was brought up in a family of professional artists going back three generations on both sides. I was surrounded by art and artists and assumed that I would also be one. When I was four years old I watched my grandmother make a large mosaic mural.

From an early age I demonstrated natural artistic ability with an innate drawing ability. Today I am far more interested in abstract and experimental work. You would think that with a whole family of artists that I would have gotten a lot of encouragement. If anything, I was discouraged from pursuing a career in art.

Can you open up a bit about your work and career? We're big fans and we'd love for our community to learn more about your work.

My most successful works have often started with a very solid plan that goes awry and requires what could best be described as a painting lobotomy midway through.



My favorite paintings are my largest ones even though they can take up to a year to complete. They create more of an immersive experience that involves one's full body. I have recently been experimenting with a series of sculptures I call the Psychostasia series which I started during a residency project on Paros Greece. The Psychostasia are the weighing of the souls.

I am proudest of my largest epic scale painting, but it was impractical and time-consuming – it took about nine months to complete! I will need to hire assistants if I make any more paintings at this scale. Curatorially, I've co-organized an exchange and residency project with fellow artist Dimitra Skandali between Los Angeles and Paros Greece as well as a collaborative project for Spring Break with two other artists Sean Noyce and Joe Davidson.

I have always created my own opportunities. In High School I made and sold macramé belts and jewelry to boutique stores. As a graphic designer I ran a successful design firm and put together creative teams to solve problems. This skill set also translated well for putting together international curatorial projects and working with fellow artists to create opportunities.

I have always been a hard worker and I try to maximize every opportunity that comes my way. I try to push my limits, take creative and professional risks, and make myself uncomfortable. Some of the politics of working with groups can be challenging for me and that skill set does not come naturally.

A challenge I have is trying to get along with everyone, and the reality is that this is just not always possible. I have found that a better strategy is to find the people you really click with and work with them.

I've learned the importance of keeping deadlines, being disciplined about working early in the process and not procrastinating. Setting goals and visualizing the best outcome. Negative thinking can become a self-fulfilling prophesy. I work best when I have others working with me. I don't do as well by myself because I am not cut out to be a loner. However, I also don't do well in situations with a lot of interpersonal politics. I like working with like-minded colleagues on an even playing field, it is stimulating. I believe bigger and more ambitious projects are made possible through collaborative efforts.

If you had a friend visiting you, what are some of the local spots you'd want to take them around to?

After I moved to Los Angeles, I started an informal artist residency called the Bridge Residency. It's by invitation only, and I have hosted a number of visiting artists from all over the world to show them the Los Angeles art scene.



From left to right: Alison's paternal grandmother Elberta Mohler Jones, painting by Alison's maternal grandmother Isabelle Schrock Barnett, and collage by Alison's mother Janet Jones

We will start by visiting the museums; The Hammer Museum, LACMA, the Broad, The California African American Museum, The Getty, MOCA, The Torrance Art Museum and MOAH.

We will then spend a day in different neighborhoods; Culver City starting with Blum & Poe, Honor Fraser, Anat Ebgi, Kopeikin Gallery, Luis De Jesus, Walter Maciel, Philip Martin Gallery, and all of the adjacent galleries on La Cienega Blvd. In Hollywood on Highland Blvd north of Melrose Avenue to Sunset Blvd Starting with Various Small Fires, Diane Rosenstein Gallery, Kohn Gallery, Regen Projects and LACE. A friend organized a number of field trips to visit Watts Tower, Mark Bradford's project space Art + Practice and to see special exhibits at CAAM. Chinatown has a bustling art scene and the Bendix Building is a fun time when all of the galleries are open on Saturday night. No visit is complete without a trip to Hauser and Wirth and Guerilla Tacos in DTLA for some of the best tacos in Southern California.

Who else deserves some credit and recognition?

Horia Boboa was one of the best instructors I ever had. Yoon Lee and Amy Ellingson from the San Francisco Art Institute gave me generous mentoring to develop the technical ability and confidence to create the work I make today. Ginger Wolfe Suarez was another significant influencer who encouraged me to relocate to Los Angeles for more opportunities.

After moving to Los Angeles, I was fortunate to connect with Kio Griffith and Max Presneill. My first curatorial project was a collaboration with Kio Griffith. Max has a contagious entrepreneurial energy which catapulted me into putting together curatorial exchanges between Europe and Los Angeles. Another person who has been an influential colleague and collaborator is Greek artist Dimitra Skandali.

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