



# INTERVIEW WITH AN ARTIST

BY EDITOR-IN-CHIEF VERONICA KING

CANVAS & FASHION ARTIST: **SUSAN FREDA**

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FOR GLAM COUTURE

Name: Susan Freda

Social media site:

[www.susanfredastudios.com](http://www.susanfredastudios.com)

GCM: You create very artistic conceptual art, Tell me about your experience with that?

SF: I find that my natural tendency is toward abstraction. Abstract space holds the most magic for me. It allows room for impressions, emotion, thought. When work is very representational it can make me feel very confined, I like to roam. It is also important for me to bring up questions in my work and to inspire thought rather than telling a story. Conceptual art is beyond the daily thought processes of quantitative reasoning, it really asks you to think and sets itself apart in this way. I feel that abstract and conceptual art are located somewhere on the edges of the art spectrum and I always gravitate toward those edges.

GCM: How did you become interested in art?

SF: I grew up painting, drawing, sculpting, making clothing for my dolls and running lots of 'experiments' in the kitchen (which I now look back on as an early form of sculpture making). This interest in making has never waned for me. I have been steadily creating something for as long as I can remember, whether it be jewelry, clothing, or sculpture. I am one of those people who needs to make things. As I grew up I began taking art classes in town and took on as many classes as I could in my high school. I painted murals for the school and generally found any art projects that I could get involved with and went for it. I have always been hungry for art.

GCM: Did you go to art school?

SF: Yes, I went to the Rhode Island School of Design and the Massachusetts College of Art and Design.

GCM: How did you begin your art career?

SF: After art school I began bartending nights and making art during the days. I did this for 5 years until I had a collection of galleries and grants to help me really launch myself.

GCM: How has your work evolved?

SF: It has come full circle. I began with jewelry and wearable art and then worked very abstractly for a long time. I made abstract glass pieces and botanical studies. Now my work is coming back around to the wearable. I've been incorporating a lot of jewelry, couture dresses, corsets, and headpieces into the collection.

GCM: What do you think separates good art from great art?

SF: When art is made from inspiration, experience, depth, and timing it is most powerful. Sometimes you get a few components but not all and it can be good art but really strong art is difficult to achieve. It requires luck and intuition as well as study and focus.

GCM: What do you think is the purpose of art?

SF: Art is so necessary for us. When we think about how we find joy in our lives, whether through music, film, fashion, or dance, it all stems from art. I think it is often overlooked but art is crucial. It is not a superficial endeavor. Without it we where would we be?

GCM: And what do you think is the purpose of an artist?

SF: I suppose to fulfill one's need to make art. To contribute to the dialogue of artists and society and to live a full life amidst it all.

GCM: What were your influences?

SF: I grew up in RI around old textile and jewelry mills. Those were dying industries when I was growing up and they were very commonplace. I really think has a lot to do with my art. Something about the overgrown, vine covered industrial mills which housed piles of lace, thread, chain, and glittering stones. It was a very romantic setting for a young artist. I love to create hybrids of nature and industry and to see how they co-exist.

GCM: Who are your favorite artists?

SF: Eva Hesse, Ann Hamilton, Andrea Zittel, Jacometti, Alexander McQueen.

GCM: Where else do you find inspiration?

SF: Much of my inspiration come from nature, botanical and marine structures mainly.

GCM: What are your favorite art books?

SF: I like picture books, books with images of nature in all forms. Stars, fungi, insects, flowers....These are usually my art studies. I read biographies often but I wouldn't say they are used for fuel in art-making the way that images are.

GCM: Tell me about your creative process.

SF: I very rarely plan out or draw what I am going to make. Things come to me in dreams. In meditation. When i'm driving. I try to catch the idea when it floats by and remember it. As soon as I can I go into the

studio and see what happens. It's really just a matter of clearing my schedule and getting myself in the studio and then letting go and playing.

GCM: What themes are you trying to pursue in your artwork?

SF: I have many running themes in my work. The natural world and the industrial world. The ephemeral and the durable. I use juxtaposition and metaphor to communicate. I work with the concept of the hybrid and cross boundary objects.

GCM: Why do you find human figures to be interesting subject matter?

SF: The human figure embodies many states for me. I use the figure to locate the viewer here on earth and in the flesh but to point to the ephemeral, the spiritual, the emotional. I hope to impart the experience of the other-worldly here in the mundane.

GCM: What constitutes a captivating pose?

SF: Posture is suggestive of emotion. What is important it choosing the emotion you are going for and finding the posture that will express that emotion the best.

GCM: Do you consider your interpretation of the female figure as being different from a male's perspective?

SF: Being female definitely gives me an edge on understand the nuances of the female body. Beyond this I don't necessarily think so. I try to be sure that I am not using sexual content as a stand in for quality of work. I want to drive a reaction from the viewer based on my ability to make amazing clothing, not because of the sexuality of the wearer.

GCM: What is your favorite media?

SF: I absolutely love wire, glass, gems and 3 dimensional art.

GCM: What is your favorite surface?

SF: Surface is texture and texture is one of my favorite things. I love smooth perfect surfaces like the surface of the lake when the wind is still but I also love the craters of a piece of coral or the interlocking lines of a root system on the surface of a concrete sidewalk.

GCM: How long does it typically take you to complete a finished work?

SF: Some pieces are quick, sketch-like drawings or jewelry pieces and only take a few hours. Others I work on for many months. Some pieces are left for years and then dug out and reworked.

GCM: How do you know when a piece is done?

SF: You have to see it. Understand when the composition is right, the color. Wait a day and come back. You have to look with fresh eyes. Sleep on it. Let your dream self decide as well.

GCM: As an artist, what are some of your greatest challenges or obstacles you face when making your art?

SF: I am a bit of a purist and I don't like to work with tools. I use very basic hand tools and much of what I make is very labor intensive. This can be difficult when I need to produce a lot of work quickly and it is also difficult to keep prices affordable when working this way.

GCM: What do you think has been your biggest achievement as an artist?

SF: I was very honored to be awarded both a Pollock/Krasner Foundation Award and a de Young Museum artist residency.

GCM: What sort of message do you wish to communicate through your art?

SF: I hope to impart hope and belief in what is not seen. To strengthen the importance of the invisible world of emotion, spirituality, and nature.

GCM: What advice would you give to an aspiring artist?

SF: It will take a lot of work and a long, long, time but if you love it you can do it. Also, you can sell your own work. You don't necessarily need a gallery to do it. You are the best promoter of your work. I'm not saying don't work with galleries but understand what you make and where to place it. It's so important.

GCM: How can one acquire your work?

SF: My gallery in Tiverton RI is the absolute best way. You can see the work in person and the newest pieces are there. Also my web site [www.susanfreda.com](http://www.susanfreda.com) for sculpture or [www.susanfredastudios.com](http://www.susanfredastudios.com) for jewelry. I have many stores and galleries, too many to list here but you can find them listed on my web sites.

Thank you for giving us some insights into your world as an artist.

Facts at a Glance

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[www.susanfredastudios.com/](http://www.susanfredastudios.com/)

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