

## VANESSA MCKERNAN

Toronto, ON

### BIOGRAPHY

B. 1981. Vanessa McKernan is a visual artist living and working in Toronto, Canada. She works on canvas, wood, mylar and paper with both oil and water-based materials. Vanessa studied Painting and Drawing at Concordia University and completed her honours BFA in 2006. In 2020 she was awarded the prestigious Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation Grant for emerging artists.

### ARTIST STATEMENT – Revelation in the Garden

The works in Revelation in the Garden ask existential questions about life, death, love, relationship and the human psyche. The garden acts as a mythical setting for the figures who move through experiences of suffering, re-birth, revelation, and transformation.

These painting are the result of an intuitive conversation with color, line, and form. In the process of making them I felt I was chasing compositions that were both spiritual and elusive. Even now, though complete, they continue to hold a sense of mystery.

### ARTIST STATEMENT

As an artist, painting is the way I process my experience of the world and what I intuit and imagine are the experiences of the greater human collective. Pulling from contemporary culture, personal anecdotes, and dreams, my work is primarily concerned with the complexity and fragility of “relationship”. Using a narrative structure, I work with the figure to tell the story of our interactions with each other, with ourselves and with nature. Though drawing and painting from visual observation is the foundation of my practice, I am also interested in conveying through paint the things I observe on an emotional and sometimes even unconscious level.

We inhabit the world in our bodies but are so much more complex than just our physical selves. When I work with the human form, I am really taking in to account all aspect of the self and often layering an emotional or spiritual “body” on top of, or next to a physical one. The environment I

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am working in or the world I am painting references the interiors and landscapes of my reality but also mixes with the interiors and landscapes of my imagination. This is where I feel free to play with color, pattern and line. I want the viewer to recognize what they see but then I want to take them a step beyond recognition, to a place that is more about feeling.

What I paint is deeply connected to my process in the studio. There too I am trying to marry the formal elements of making figurative painting, with intuition. This means starting with a theme, a framework that provides structure, a place to start from and a place to return to if I get lost. Within that framework, I sit down each day to engage in dialogue with my materials, being open to who and what shows up. This I believe gives space for the life of the painting itself and its ability to reveal something to me that is greater than or bigger than my own intentions for it. I see this process as the height of creative expression.

Materially, though much of my finished work is oil on canvas, panel and mylar, in my studio in the process of creating a work, I move back and forth between working in oils and working on paper with charcoal, conte, ink and watercolour.

## CV

### EDUCATION

- 2021** Turps Painting School, CC Mentorship Program, London, UK
- 2006** BFA (Honours), Studio Art major, Concordia University, Montreal, QC

### SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2023** *Revelation in the Garden*, Wall Space Gallery, Ottawa, ON
- 2022** *night on the lake*, Jones Gallery, Saint John, NB
- 2021** *River Variations*, co-solo with Julie Gladstone, Wall Space Gallery, Ottawa, ON
- 2020** *Gathering*, Artist in Residence show, Heliconian Club, Toronto, ON
- 2016** *Between Land and Water*, Solo exhibition and fundraiser for SKETCH, Toronto, ON
- 2014** *Piano Children*, Ben Navee Gallery, Toronto, ON
- 2009** *El Interior*, Galeria Nacional, San Jose, Costa Rica

### GROUP EXHIBITIONS + ART FAIRS

- 2023** *The Artist Project*, Toronto, ON
- 2022** *New Perspectives*, Wall Space Gallery, Ottawa, ON

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- 2021** *The Quick Brown Fox Jumps Over the Lazy Dog*, Turps Mentorship Program Virtual Exhibition
- 2020** *Rites*, Jones Gallery, Saint John, NB
- 2020** *Gathering*, Wall Space Gallery, Ottawa, ON
- 2019** *Body of Work*, Wall Space Gallery, Ottawa, ON
- 2019** *Cabbagetown Arts & Crafts Festival*, Toronto, ON
- 2019** *The Great Big Wall of Smalls*, Wall Space Gallery, Ottawa, ON
- 2019** *The Artist Project*, Toronto, ON
- 2018** *X: Ten Year Anniversary*. Wall Space Gallery, Ottawa, ON
- 2018** *Wondrous Ways*, Arta Gallery, Toronto, ON
- 2018** *The Artist Project*, Toronto, ON
- 2017** *Day Trip*. Gallery 555, Toronto, ON
- 2017** *Layers; Women Artists of Our City*. Partial Gallery Pop-Up, Toronto, ON
- 2016** *Toronto Outdoor Art Exhibition*. Toronto, ON
- 2015** *Fragments*. Earls Court Gallery, Hamilton, ON
- 2015** *The Artist Project*. Toronto, ON
- 2015** *Bean Art Exhibition*. MakeWorks Studio, Toronto, ON
- 2014** *Open Studio*. Gutterbird Studios, Toronto, ON
- 2013** *Salon Show*. Project Gallery, Toronto, ON
- 2010** *Under the Table*, Dahlhouse Productions Pop-Up, Los Angeles, CA
- 2007** *Annual Juried Drawing Exhibition*. John B. Arid Gallery, Toronto, ON
- 2006** *Off Subject*. Nota Bene Gallery, Montreal, QC

#### AWARDS + GRANTS

- 2020** The Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation Grant, Montreal, QC
- 2019** Richard Silver Award, Cabbagetown Arts & Crafts Festival, Toronto, ON
- 2015** TYPE Competition, 3rd Place Winner, The Artist Project, Toronto, ON
- 2006** Cecile Butler John J.A. Murphy Scholarship for Drawing, Concordia University, Montreal, QC

#### RESIDENCIES

- 2019-2020** Heliconian Club Artist in Residence, Toronto, ON
- 2009** Julia and David White Artist Colony, Artist in Residence, Ciudad Colon, Costa Rica
- 2008** Julia and David White Artist Colony, Artist in Residence, Ciudad Colon, Costa Rica

#### PRESS

- 2021** ShoutOut LA Interview, Meet Vanessa McKernan: Painter
- 2019** Luxe Magazine, *Ethereal Figures Filled with Movement and Whimsy Draw You Into the Canvas*, Sherry Smither
- 2014** Descant Magazine, *The Dead, the Devine and the In-Between*, Issue 163; The Brink and the Break
- 2013** Iskuhi Avagyan, *Taking the Leap; An interview with Vanessa McKernan*, [www.nowwhatpodcast.com](http://www.nowwhatpodcast.com)
- 2013** Leander Kalil, *On the Artist Vanessa McKernan*

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**2009**

Al MacLeod, *Painting a Mi'kmaq Legend*, Guardian Newspaper, Charlottetown P.E.I. (September 8, 2009)

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