

## Silver Linings Q & A



### **How do you choose an object Katy?**

*"I'm looking for a new texture, something that might seem off-limits to paint because it's such a big nothing. The decision happens seconds before I start painting. I like objects that we can all relate to. Through this art process we get to know them better. It's like falling in love, late in life, with someone you knew in second grade. Various items instantly bring to mind my mother. There was always a used tea bag on the counter waiting for a second dip (which never came) It's a nice way to commune with her."*

### **How does your relationship to the object change after you've painted it?**

*"I find new love for it after I paint it. I'm curious about people and believe everyone has something interesting to offer. I ask a lot of questions. Doing these paintings feels similar. Through this visual inquiry, trying to understand it's particular-ness, I find an object's unique beauty. I love to reincarnate and repurpose. Painting something headed towards the trash makes me feel less wasteful. I've extended it's life. There's something beautiful about honoring everything and everyone. In many ways these are memorial paintings."*

### **Your garage has become a tiled room. Had you planned to do so many (800) and to display them this way?**

*No, this evolved organically. I knew I'd need a routine once we were in lockdown. I started painting one a day, in an effort to cheer myself up. And, practically speaking, if doomsday was close, I didn't want to start something I couldn't finish. Once I had painted a few hundred, I started taping them to the wall. They started communicating with one another. Stories began to emerge. This was a brand new way of composing a painting: duos, quartets, grids of nines. I see them as visual poems. The group together is one large "lockdown landscape." I see it as my largest painting to date- a pandemic panorama.*

### **You are painting on vintage aluminum Katy. How and Why?**

*"Smith College's art history department went digital and was giving away drawers filled with aluminum rectangles. The drawers used to hold glass lantern slides. The aluminum functioned to separate the slides. We were separated during lockdown, when I began painting on them. I liked the idea that I was "filling in" or creating in the space that used to divide. The aluminum is so smooth that I have been able to achieve levels of detail not possible before. I leave areas exposed. It's reflective, so it essentially has a space in it already which sets off the close object. Having hundreds of them freed me to experiment. They didn't seem precious, so I could let go, play. Letting go seems to be the way to make things happen in the studio.*

**Can you describe the difference between a successful day painting one of these textures compared to a failed attempt?**

*“The painting challenge involved a mysterious form of persuasion: It is not enough for someone to simply recognize an object. What matters is that they have an emotional response to the painting. I want them to feel that they **love** that object. I didn’t leave the chair until there was a transformation in the way the painting affected me. I’m also after a sensual experience; I want the reaction to be visceral. Its fun to look at texture after texture on the wall and believe you can touch with your eyes, smell, hear, or even taste just by looking.*”

**You’ve mentioned that most of your work harkens back to your upbringing. Can you describe the ways it relates to the world at large and to your family of origin more specifically?**

*“When I look at the collection on the wall, I see an idealized version of the world: a beautiful and diverse place where everyone (or every thing) is treated equally and plays an important role. I shuffled these paintings around until each found a location/ a juxtaposition which brought out the best in it. It’s very democratic- each object has literally been placed in the spot light. All are the same size, and received the same level of detail and attention. It is a community that is isolated yet together sharing an experience.*”

*This level of activity and complexity is so reminiscent of my childhood apartment. My father had collections, multiples. He loved antiques; pewter, clocks, horsehair settees, oriental rugs, cylinder stoves. A pump organ blocked the natural light coming in from a big window in the living room. Vintage standing lamps created the light. My mother tried to organize the stuff the best she could but she had her own collecting going on, with a waste not want not attitude: plastic deli containers, fabric scraps, leftovers. The collection has unconsciously become an homage to both my parents and a return to the crowded home I shared with six siblings, a dog and many objects.”*

**You’ve described these as still lives. You’ve described them as landscape. You’ve described them as having “roles” as a member of their community of 800. Are they portraits too?**

*“Yes I do see them that way. I’ve always made portraits. Lately, however, faces seem a bit superficial as a way to conjure a person. I am very interested in creating a new kind of portrait; one that is based on items that capture the moments spent with that person or their passions. Objects and their textures are like portals. They can take you back in time connecting you to a memory.*”

*The whole room feels like a self portrait too. In so many ways it is a deeper look at who I am and how I approach life. It is perhaps a reaction to the current selfie culture. Is a face really the best way to tell people who we are?”*

**What are your hopes for the project?**

*“I want to share this project with as many people as possible. I’d love for the installation to travel to various museums and spaces large enough to accommodate its length. In particular I hope to engage children with it. Had I seen a show like this growing up, I might have felt that the idea of becoming an artist was more of a possibility. These objects are all around. It might inspire kids to approach anything and everything as subject matter. I envision skill building games: ie there are seven socks hidden here. Can you find them all? Or: find all the ingredients and tools needed to cook a grilled cheese sandwich. I see the show inviting conversation about the beauty of diversity and connection. The images have been used as writing prompts in junior high English classes, and in adult writing workshops. I love the idea of people bringing their stories to these images.”*

## **Why is this project called “Silver Lining?”**

*“Fear is a motivator. If I hadn’t been so afraid of getting COVID related anxiety, I wouldn’t have put these parameters in place. They kept me focused, peaceful, and energized. Many days I felt euphoric having accomplished my task. Discovering how to summon euphoria seems like a silver lining to a pandemic. The silver lining also refers to maybe putting a positive spin on the irritants left around the house. As I mentioned, painting something blah or mundane and then finding what quality made it compelling I’ve pulled out the beauty within. The silver lining of leaving shoes in the middle of the living room is that I suddenly notice a gesture to their position or get inspired by the way the light hits them. Whenever my husband or dog or I am a slob, I often say “Eureka!” I am grateful for that mess or that unwashed dish. I found a muse.”*