

# UO BLOG

UO Studio Visits: Mattea Perrotta

Young LA painter Mattea Perrotta is at the top of our lists of artists to watch right now: join us on a trip to her studio, for a study in palette, abstract shape, and form.

Photos by Kate Parfet



Can you share a bit about yourself + your upbringing?

I was born in Venice Beach to an Italian body builder father and Portuguese mother. I have two sisters, one older and one younger. My upbringing seemed normal at the time, but looking back it was rather unconventional. My parents aren't artists per say, but they encouraged us to pursue anything we wanted as long as we had passion in the process. Venice is a strange place to raise three young girls, but I wouldn't trade it for anything; it's a melting pot, a magnet for the bizarre, or once was at least. Living there made me curious about the world and I really value that.

Most of my childhood was spent in the sun or playing on the beach with my family. I grew up swimming, so most of my time was split between being underwater and drawing. Both were two very introspective things that I loved to do more than anything. There's a delicacy to swimming, the way one moves through the water, similarly to the way you move the paintbrush with your hand...you have to create a rhythm and flow. Nothing brings me greater joy than being by the sea. It humbles you in a different way than the arts.

What has been your trajectory into painting: how did you get started, how has your work evolved, and how you describe the work you are drawn to creating?

I was always drawing a child. I was a shy girl with a big imagination. Art was a great outlet and perfect excuse to avoid social situations (it still is to this day actually...) I went to art school at 17 and studied art practice at UC Berkeley. The program isn't as technique based as most art schools, rather more conceptual, and I had a lot of freedom in the studio to experiment with new mediums. Oddly enough, portraiture became my niche. I loved

Oddly enough, portraiture became my niche. I loved my five-hour figure drawing class, which is kind of where my love for abstraction began. Rather than drawing the whole body, I would focus on something less noticeable and draw it largely on my newsprint. Then, I'd apply the vulnerability from the model into the way my hand moved the stick of charcoal on my paper. It was messy and dark, but I found that to be the beauty of it. Until a few years ago I kept painting portraits, trying to capture the vulnerable moments we sometimes see when interacting with others. Slowly I began to abstract those faces and figures into more simplified forms...and now here I am.

What ideas, color combinations, or art concepts have been inspiring you recently?

I began reading the fundamentals of Bauhaus, which has been really interesting and inspiring the way I view my work.

What ideas, colors, or art ideas always interest you? Can you share an example of how this has manifested in your work?

Josef Albers' *Interaction of Color* has been a big inspiration to the context of my work. I grew up watching old spaghetti westerns with my father and I've been revisiting those films: the colors are amazing, with lots of variations of blue hues and nudes.

I recently moved back to East LA and began documenting the architecture of the old Los Angeles buildings and houses. Gregory Ain was an architect in Los Angeles during the 60's and designed some really neat modern homes — there are a few blocks of his houses on Beethoven Ave in Venice. I actually went to elementary school across the street from them and remember wanting to live in one as a kid. I loved the simplicity of his designs. It looks too simple, like a child could design it, but there is a matureness and sophistication of the design. Anything simple interests me, simplicity is inevitably the foundation of all my work.

Describe a typical day in the life for you.

Everyday is different. Lately I've been waking up fairly early and going to the gas station for coffee. I really enjoy weak, watered-down black coffee. Then, I drive up to the Silverlake Hills. I've been going on morning walks near the Reservoir looking at the houses. There's something really unique about the architecture of those homes and the diversity of the designs spread out along one block...I've been awkwardly photographing them on my iPhone and archiving them for inspiration. I love the simplicity of the lines and muted tones. After that, I usually head to the studio while my mind is still inspired. I balance my day with paintings and my freelance work: I enjoy working on several projects at once because it keeps my brain fresh with new creative ideas and they always feed into one another somehow. In the evenings I go back home to make some dinner, most of the time it's an egg with some sweet potatoes, then take a bath and watch *Seinfeld* or an old movie until I fall asleep. I'm really into evening cozy time at home.

How do you get in the working/creative zone?

I like to sketch before I begin painting to wake up my brain. I always have some kind of background noise going, whether it's a record or a podcast. My mind is definitely more creatively active at night, unfortunately when the light is poorest, but I love getting lost in my work in the evenings. Lately I've been trying to experiment with working times, so I'm consciously trying to be in the studio during the day and save my evenings for moments in my kitchen nook. Today I listened to Les Baxter in the studio.

What's a personal mantra or favorite quotation?

Be kind and have a flexible relationship with life.

Who are some of your favorite artists? Is there anyone newly on your radar we should know about?

Forever Agnes Martin. Lygia Clark and Retrados Pentads. I'd definitely check out Robbie Simon, Danny Fox, and Ariana Papademetropoulos' show "Wonderland Avenue" at MAMA Gallery. It's sensational.

What are 5 other things you've been interested in lately?

Isabella Rossellini

bronze

Bauhaus

eggs

billards

What's next for you?

I'll have some work in New York in May with MAMA Gallery. After that I have plans to travel to Cuba...really excited about that.