



Anna Cipollone

// ART & DESIGN //

Anna Cipollone is a writer and editor based in Toronto. Her work has appeared in magazines like *Chatelaine*, *Canada's 100 Best*, *Festival Style*, *Yoga Journal* and *FASHION*, with topics focused on style, design, yoga, arts and culture. She splits her time between Roncesvalles and the Kawarthas.

In Conversation With Julia Hepburn

Hamilton-based artist Julia Hepburn creates fantastical dioramas—tiny sculptural scenes that are surreal, enchanting and even pleasantly eerie at times. With rich details displayed on every miniature stage, her work tackles gothic themes while reclaiming a child-like curiosity with the natural world. Here, animals are ascribed human traits as we step into a still from an otherworldly picture show. And the results are most certainly an eye-catching escape.



The One I Loved, 2016 Mixed Media Sculpture 7"x 7"x18"



Adaptation (Bread and Honey) Mixed Media Sculpture 11"x 4.75"x 11"

What made you gravitate toward sculpture, and in particular dioramas?

I've always been interested in miniatures; there's a lot of room to create essentially another world in a way that you can't really do with other mediums. It lends itself to a broader narrative, so you're seeing a vignette of something bigger. Viewers are invited to step into that space and create a story around it. I like to keep that story open so it's an interactive experience. They're meant to be these small little glimpses into a world that not a lot of people necessarily take the time to look at.

What sort of themes do you like to explore?

A lot of them have an environmental angle. It's disarming because it's almost like a doll's house, but at the same time it addresses these darker issues. It is kind of playful and silly in some ways, but it's not a threatening experience.

Where do you find inspiration?

Initially, it was very much the fairytale genre. The stories are super dark in Brothers Grimm Fairy Tales. I just adore illustrator Edward Gorey and the mood he's able to create with very little. A lot of times, I just look at my everyday interactions with nature and animals.

What is it that draws you toward fables and folklore?

It's nostalgic. These older stories were the first ones that I felt were willing to discuss death and betrayal in a way that was designed to be for children. It walks the line of communicating a moral, but it does so in a way that's extremely imaginative. And there's a lot of anthropomorphism, which I'm very much drawn to. >



A Healthy Fear of Water, 2016 Mixed Media Sculpture 3.15"x8.5"x13.35"



Even Children Get Older, 2019 Mixed Media Sculpture 33"x 6.3"x 27.5"

How do you approach your creative process?

My most recent works are reflective of how I've been feeling about our current climate crisis. I'll look to nature to inspire a way of communicating that specific feeling. The work I'm in the middle of building right now is a scene on the plains of a buffalo pushing over a telegraph pole. At the same time as a lot of colonizers were trying to wipe out the buffalo in order to deal with what they called "the Indian problem" in the States, they were trying to put up these telegraph poles to communicate across the country. They would be sabotaged by buffalo and knocked over right away. It's reflective of a historical happening but it's about animals revolting against human designs on the natural world.

How do you cope with creative blocks?

For me, it's always a walk in nature. It takes your brain to a different place. You'd be amazed at the small things that pop up when you pay close attention. Researching and learning about animals allows me to see myself on the same level as all the life around me.

Why is art important?

It gives me an opportunity to share emotions and concerns with other people. Especially with the works that are the most emotionally stirring for me, it offers a bit of a lifeline. There's obviously the aesthetics and the pleasure that comes from seeing something beautiful and how that enriches people's lives but also it's a way of sharing private thoughts and communicating on a level that you wouldn't otherwise have the opportunity to do with strangers. 📍



Julia Hepburn

Mixed Media Artist
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