



With Love,

Texas



Introduction

'With Love, Texas' is a collaborative series of 36 paintings that explores the duality of Texas by examining and presenting Texas's most difficult and controversial modern day issues from a factual and historical perspective. The goals of this body of work are to bring awareness and education to very real and serious issues affecting all Texans today while simultaneously providing historical and educational information about Texas. This series seeks to spark conversations that lead to positive change. The playful and bold nature of these paintings is memorable and approachable, two qualities this series seeks to impart on the difficult and complex topics presented in this series.

This politically charged body of work treats every topic with respect and dignity. Every painting is visually non-offensive, educational and factual. Most importantly, every plant, animal and detail in each painting is 100% native to Texas, happened in Texas or so closely linked to Texas that the relationship is undeniable. RobinWood Art Studio would like the public to experience this factual and educational portrait of Texas in gallery settings within educational institutions across the state of Texas and beyond.



Robin Baker

Wood Fancher Anthony

RobinWood Art Studio Biography

Artists Robin Baker and Wood Fancher Anthony, collaboratively known as RobinWood Art Studio are lifelong Houstonians. Robin Baker, a product of the Baby Boomer Generation has vision issues that cause him to see mostly shadows and light, resulting in high contrast black and white work. Wood Fancher Anthony, from Generation X is deeply inspired by the artistic richness of his mother's homeland in Zacatecas, Mexico. Much of his work is filled with brilliant color and energy. Despite, growing up in two different generations in Houston, TX both artists grew up surrounded by the diverse culture of the region. Since 2015 both artists have increasingly collaborated and evolved into a truly unique artistic duo. Their personal artistic styles, stories and connections to Texas and Mexico have enabled them to explore and appreciate a multitude of themes and topics as a collaborative team inspired by their unique points of view, solid connections to the past and experiences as artists in the fastest changing time in human history.



Texas is not a Theocracy, 2023, 24 x 30 in (61 x 77 cm) acrylic and oil on canvas

Elements in this painting provide an opportunity to further explore and learn more about Texas' iconic state capitol, native fish and plant species. More importantly this painting provides a chance to take an in-depth look at the concept of separation of church and state and its importance to the stability of a democracy.

The Texas Capitol in Austin, Texas is widely recognized as one of the nation's most distinguished state capitols. It is the largest state capitol building and is taller than the National Capitol building in Washington D.C.¹ This historic building is the seat of Texas' government and symbol of democracy.

For millennia fish have been symbolic of Christ, Christianity and Christians. In the early days of Christianity, the fish symbol was used amongst Christians to identify each other.²

Today we normally see the Ichthys or fish symbol displayed on the backs of cars among other places. We chose to use blue catfish as an Ichthys in this painting for two reasons. First, because no specific species of fish has ever been mentioned to be representative or has ownership of this powerful Christian symbol, we were free to use any fish native to Texas. Second, because catfish has skin instead of scales it has been biblically deemed unclean.³ We reimagined a Christian symbol in a biblically unclean way as symbolism for impure and toxic Christianity.

Fanatical Evangelical White Christian Nationalism is infiltrating all levels of government in Texas.^{4, 5} From local governments and independent school districts to state level government, the lines between separation of church and state have been blurred. Bluebonnets are the official Texas state flower and are toxic to humans.⁶ We have included bluebonnets in this painting to represent poison. By painting the catfish (Ichthys) carrying bluebonnets in their mouths we are declaring that poison and toxic Christianity are being brought into our democracy under the disguise of familiarity, in this case Christianity.

White Evangelical Christian Nationalism's fanatical views and determination to control the private lives of citizens at every level of government is on par with the ideologies of ISIS, Al-Qa'ida and the Taliban.^{7, 8} All of us need to be reminded that Texas is not a theocracy.



Birth of Ignorance, 2023, 48 x 36 in (122 x 92 cm) acrylic and oil on canvas

Elements in this painting provide a chance to further explore and learn more about Texas' native plants, marine wildlife, gulf shore, Black History, Mexican American History, historical Texas currency and how cotton made Texas a global economic powerhouse all while respectfully addressing an array of serious social issues involving the suppression of knowledge in Texas.

From local to state level government, knowledge in Texas is under attack.^{9, 10, 11} The common octopus is an incredibly stealthy and cunning creature with many overreaching arms.¹² Due to these characteristics we have painted the common octopus choking owls as symbolism for the control Texas government and politicians' excerpt on knowledge. Owls have been symbolic of wisdom and knowledge for millennia.¹³ We have painted native owl species as golden statues because knowledge is valuable.

The background image of the bare breasted Roman goddess Venus sensually rising out of the sea with her son Cupid by her side was taken from a vignette on an 1840s Republic of Texas 50 dollar bill.¹⁴ (Appendix A) Venus is the goddess of love, sex, and fertility.¹⁵ We included Venus in this painting as symbolism for knowledge regarding sexuality, sex and sexual reproduction. Across Texas, knowledge regarding sexuality and gender identity is being banned.^{16, 17} Oysters have been symbolic of fertility for millennia.¹⁸ We included Gulf oysters in this painting to draw attention to the fact that sex education in Texas has been severely limited.¹⁹ Despite having one of the highest teen pregnancy rates in the United States, sex education if offered in a Texas school, is not required to be medically accurate.^{20, 21}

Cotton blossoms bloom for a single day. Towards the end of the day, cotton blossoms turn pink as they close and die.²² Cotton is profoundly tied to Texas and Black history.²³ We have included cotton blossoms in this painting as symbolism for the Black experience. Knowledge regarding and teaching Black history is under attack in Texas.²⁴ Lawmakers in Texas have passed legislation that restricts the discussion of racism and the contributions of marginalized communities in schools. These efforts are part of a broader conservative backlash against critical race theory, a framework that examines how racism is embedded in institutions and systems.^{25, 26}

Prickly pear blossoms bloom on prickly pear or nopal cactus.²⁷ In addition to being the official state of Texas plant, prickly pear cactus is featured in the center of the Mexican flag, making them an important symbol for Mexican and Mexican American identity not only in Mexico but across Texas as well.^{28, 29} We included them in this painting as symbols of the Mexican American civil rights movement and experience. Overall, the historical

treatment of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in Texas has been marked by discrimination, mistreatment, marginalization, and a struggle for equal rights and recognition.^{30, 31} The lack of comprehensive education on these topics perpetuates a narrow understanding of Texas history, American history and fails to recognize the contributions and struggles of Mexican Americans. Whitewashing history and limiting students' exposure to diverse perspectives perpetuates ignorance, racial disparities, racial tension and violence.³²



As Texan as a Three-Dollar Bill, 2023, 36 x 48 in (92 x 122 cm) acrylic and oil on canvas

Elements in this painting provide an opportunity to further explore and learn more about Texas' native birds and historical currency. More importantly, this painting allows for an opportunity to take a more in-depth look at gay rights movement in Texas all while respectfully addressing an array of serious social issues regarding LGBTQIA+ community.

According to the Human Rights Campaign, at least 525 anti LGBTQ+ bills have been introduced in state legislatures across the United States in 2023 alone.³³ With over 100 bills that would harm the LGBTQ+ community, Texas is leading the nation in anti LGBTQ+ legislation. Of the more than 100 anti LGBTQ+ bills introduced in Texas' 2023 legislative session, at least eight bills seek to ban the acknowledgment of the existence of LGBTQ+ people.³⁴

We used a vignette featuring the Roman goddess Ceres from the 1840s Republic of Texas \$3 bill as the stage for this painting.³⁵ (Appendix B) We used this vignette specifically because of the infamous expression associated with \$3 bills. The expression, as “queer as a three dollar-bill” originally meant counterfeit, fake, inauthentic and strange. This is because the United States never circulated a \$3 bill, however Texas most certainly did. Over time, this expression became a derogatory way to describe obvious gay men.³⁶ Ceres was the Roman goddess of nature, earth and motherly love. Ceres was an important deity and had her own cult and festivals dedicated to her worship especially amongst the lower classes.³⁷ In this regard, Ceres is an appropriate goddess to use in this painting as LGBTQ+ people have historically been treated as less than second class citizens in the United States.³⁸

Because of their ability to fly, some birds can be symbolic of freedom.^{39, 40} In this painting we have used painted buntings to symbolize freedom and represent the LGBTQ+ community. Painted buntings are songbirds as colorful as rainbows and are considered by many the most beautiful birds native to Texas.⁴¹ By titling this piece ‘As Texan as a Three-Dollar Bill’ we are asserting that the LGBTQ+ community exists, is real, is Texan and a part of the Texas community.



Obscured Truths and Consequences, 2023, 40 x 30 in (102 x 77 cm) acrylic and oil on canvas

Elements in this painting provide a chance to further explore and learn more about Texas' Guadalupe Mountains, West Texas wildlife, astronomy and astronomy related tourism, Mexican American culture and animals brought by Spanish conquistadors all while respectfully addressing an array of serious social issues regarding teen pregnancy.

Texas has one of the highest teen pregnancy rates in the United States and leads the nation in teens giving birth multiple times.⁴²

Teen pregnancy affects Latino communities more than any other community in Texas.⁴³ Due to this we have chosen to include The Virgin of Guadalupe in this painting as symbolism for motherhood. The Virgin of Guadalupe is the Catholic patron saint and protector of the unborn and is highly venerated in Mexican and Mexican American communities throughout Texas. Not only is the Virgin of Guadalupe a part of today's Texas culture, but she is also deeply rooted in the fabric of Texas' history.^{44, 45} The Virgin of Guadalupe is the only Marian apparition portrayed as an expectant mother (her pregnancy is indicated by the high-waisted black sash).^{46, 47}

For a painting about Texas' out of control teen pregnancy crisis, a night sky seemed a fitting backdrop. West Texas has the darkest skies in the continental United States.⁴⁸ A West Texas night sky needs a West Texas landscape. The Guadalupe mountains are in West Texas in the Guadalupe Mountains National Park. Guadalupe Peak at 8,751 feet is the highest point in Texas.^{49, 50} Here we have placed the Virgin of Guadalupe among the stars towering above her namesake mountains.

To reinforce the fact that Texas is experiencing rampant teen pregnancy, we included black-tailed jackrabbits in this painting as symbols of fertility. They reach sexual maturity at seven months and can produce up to four litters a year with up to eight rabbits per litter.⁵¹

Donkeys have historically been linked to ignorance. We included a donkey in this painting to symbolize the ignorance Texas teens have regarding sex education. Lack of comprehensive sex education is one of the largest contributing factors to teen pregnancy.⁵² In Texas, schools that teach sex education must emphasize abstinence, those that do teach sex education are not required to be medically accurate.⁵³

We included a Texas cave scorpion in this painting as symbolism for officials from school districts up to state level legislators actively engaged in limiting knowledge regarding sex

education. In Texas, sex education is under attack by The Texas Republican Party.⁵⁴ Just as scorpion venom is toxic to humans.⁵⁵ The many lifelong consequences of teen pregnancy can have toxic effects on the health and quality of life of young mothers and children born to young mothers.⁵⁶



Divine Divide, 2023, 40 x 60 in (102 x 153 cm) acrylic and oil on canvas

Elements in this painting provide an opportunity to further explore the rich history behind Texas' famous cowboy and rodeo culture, Mexican culture and its ties to Texas, Texas' medicinal plants, ancient Roman religion and mythology and how it relates to Texas' history. More importantly this painting provides a chance to address and study a variety of current issues regarding women's health, civil, human and reproductive rights.

Reproductive and women's rights are under assault in Texas by the Republican Party.⁵⁷ In addition to having the most restrictive abortion ban in the nation, Texas has the lowest percentage of mothers receiving early prenatal care.^{58, 59} If Texas were a country, it would have the highest maternal mortality rate in the developed world.⁶⁰

We placed the Virgin of Guadalupe at center of this painting because her image is associated with everything from motherhood to feminism and social justice; themes central to this painting.⁶¹ Rugged cowboys, symbolic of white masculinity are deeply rooted in Texas history.^{62, 63} In this painting we have painted cowboys engaging in a tug-of-war with the Virgin of Guadalupe at the center of the struggle as symbolism of the

misogynistic male dominated Texas Republican Party and its incessant fight to dominate women's bodies, health and civil rights.^{64, 65}

Located at the bottom of this painting are the statues of Texas' Goddess Liberty and Lady Justice (left to right). The Texas statue of Goddess Liberty sits atop the Texas state capitol building in Austin, Texas.⁶⁶ The Statue of Lady Justice sits atop the Bee County Texas Courthouse in Beeville, Texas.⁶⁷ We included these statues in this painting to symbolize liberty and justice and have placed them at the feet of the struggling cowboys to symbolize that in Texas, liberty and justice are being trampled on by the Republican Party. In this painting, purslane blossoms have been disrupted are being kicked up from the ground as a result of the Republican lead fight to control women's reproductive health. Purslane is an emmenagogue, meaning it can cause uterine contractions and has been used to cause miscarriage.⁶⁸ Due to this, we painted purslane blossoms to symbolize abortion.



The Long Journey, 2023, 18 x 24 in (46 x 61 cm) acrylic and oil on canvas

Elements in this painting provide a chance to further explore and learn more about Texas culture, monarch butterflies and their migration patterns, the powerful cattle industry, Texas BBQ, Spanish conquistadors, immigrant contributions, steam powered trains and how they shaped Texas. More importantly this painting provides a chance to take an in-depth look at the immigration crisis at the U.S. – Mexican border.

All animals in this painting are not only Texas icons, but also migrated here. Texas as we know it would not exist if it was not for migrants.

The Texas State Railroad's 1917 steam powered No. 30 Locomotive is the backdrop for this painting. Because trains have a long history related to travel, we used a train as symbolism of long journeys.

Longhorns were brought to Texas by Spanish explorers in the 16th century and later became a symbol of the cowboy culture and the Wild West.^{69, 70} Longhorn cattle drives were a major part of the Texas cattle industry in the 19th century, helping to shape the state's identity and economy.⁷¹ Longhorn cattle are considered a heritage breed and are part of Texas' cultural legacy.⁷² The Texas Longhorn is the official State of Texas large mammal.²⁸

Every spring, Monarch butterflies migrate to Texas from Mexico. Their arrival coincides with the blossoming of spring flowers. It is in Texas where monarchs that have been hibernating all winter in Mexico lay eggs that become the first United States born generation that will continue the migration northward.⁷³ Monarch butterflies are the official State of Texas insect.²⁸

Texas' beloved little tank, the armadillo is not native to Texas. The armadillo migrated to Texas from Mexico in the 1850s. They have thrived here and have now migrated far north beyond Texas.⁷⁴ The armadillo is so culturally significant to Texas that is it the official State of Texas small mammal.²⁸



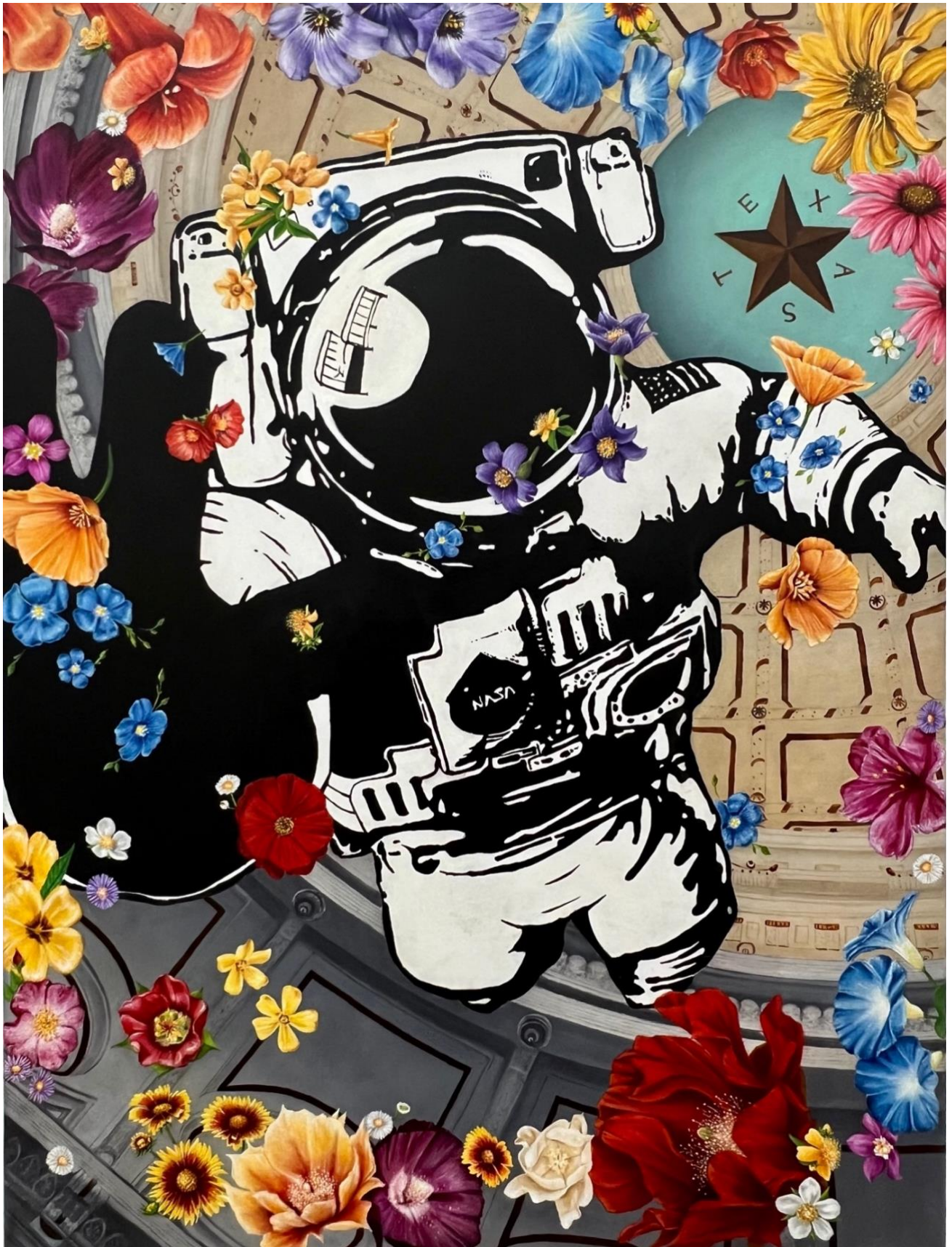
Abject Poverty, 2023, 18 x 24 in (46 x 61 cm) acrylic and oil on canvas

Elements in this painting provide an opportunity to learn more about Texas' citrus farming industry, South Texas' economy and Texas' historical currency. More importantly, this painting provides a chance to take an in-depth look at extreme poverty and its effects on Hispanic and other minority communities across Texas.

The Rio Grande Valley located in South Texas is not only the poorest region in Texas but also the poorest region in the United States.⁷⁵ Many residents in this region live in communities known as Colonias. According to the Texas Office of Attorney General, "Colonias are substandard housing developments, often found along the Texas-Mexico border, where residents live in squalid conditions lacking basic services such as drinking water, sewage treatment, and paved roads."⁷⁶ Hispanics make up most of the population in South Texas and are over-represented in Texas' poverty population.^{77, 78}

We used a vignette featuring the Roman goddess Ceres from the 1840s Republic of Texas \$1 bank note as symbolism for poverty and the poverty stricken people of the South Texas region.⁷⁹ (Appendix C) We did this for three reasons. First, the \$1 Republic of Texas bank note was the lowest denomination of currency circulated in the Republic of Texas.⁸⁰ By using imagery from the lowest denomination we are reinforcing the theme of poverty. Second, in Roman mythology, Ceres was an important deity, worshipped especially amongst the poor and lower classes.³⁷ Finally, as the goddess of agriculture, grain crops and fertility we can tie her image to the citrus fruit in this painting.

According to the Texas Department of Agriculture, “Texas is the third largest citrus-producing state in the United States”.⁸¹ Texas’ citrus industry is almost completely located in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Grapefruit accounts for 67% of citrus production in South Texas.⁸² The grapefruit was brought to South Texas by Spanish missionaries in the late 1800s with the first grapefruit grove being planted in 1893.⁸³ Decades later, a single mutation on a tree became the famed Texas Ruby Red grapefruit, which was the first-ever grapefruit to receive a patent.⁸⁴ Painting citrus fruit as a background in this painting allows us to bring attention to a historically and culturally significant sector of the economy in the poorest region of Texas and the United States.



Houston, We Have a Problem, 2023, 40 x 30 in (102 x 77 cm) acrylic and oil on canvas

Every element in this painting is a chance to take an in-depth look and learn more about Texas' medicinal native plants, capitol building, medical center, NASA and its many medical breakthroughs, while also addressing a grave issue affecting millions of Texans.

Despite having the largest and one of the most advanced medical centers in the world, "Texas has both the highest number and the highest percentage of uninsured residents in the nation".^{85, 86} The Texas Medical Center is located 3 miles south of downtown Houston, Texas.⁸⁵ To symbolize the Texas Medical Center, we painted a wide variety of native and medicinal Texas wildflowers across the canvas.

NASA's Johnson Space Center is located about 25 miles southeast of downtown Houston, Texas.⁸⁷ The proximity of NASA and the Texas Medical Center have to each other, both being in Houston, Texas has resulted in a unique and spectacular synergy. The astronaut in this painting is symbolic of superior medical science and all medical breakthroughs made by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). NASA collaborates with and applies its medical research to healthcare in Houston's Texas Medical Center.⁸⁸ By using the astronaut in this painting we can include imagery that is highly associated with both NASA and Houston, TX.

To represent the uninsured, we painted an empty hospital bed that can be seen in the reflection on the astronaut's helmet. We painted the hospital bed as an almost negligible detail because from personal experience as artists without health insurance, neglected and invisible is how we feel. We painted the astronaut and medicinal wildflowers floating around aimlessly within the Texas capitol rotunda to symbolize how chaotic and highly political access to healthcare in Texas is.⁸⁹ The astronaut's outreached hand is symbolic of how despite having the best medical science in Texas, it can't reach many of us.



Oasis of Love, 2023, 44 x 55 in (112 x 140 cm) acrylic and oil on canvas

Elements in this painting provide an opportunity to examine the extraordinary cultural diversity of the Houston region, native plant and animal species, non-native animal species and their significant economic and cultural impact while bringing attention to a negative side effect of wealth and diversity.

Several key factors have made the Houston, Texas region the most diverse region in the nation. The combination of immigration, economic opportunities, educational institutions, geographic location, and a culture of acceptance have made Houston, Texas an incredibly diverse and multicultural city.^{90, 91}

Houston, TX has more mega churches than any other city in the United States.⁹² Mega churches thrive in regions that offer high population, economic prosperity, cultural and

religious diversity, suitable facilities and a favorable social and political climate. These factors provide a larger potential membership base, financial resources and a conducive environment for their operations.⁹³

In addition to playing host to more mega churches than any other city in the United States, Houston is home to Lakewood Church, the largest mega church in the nation. Lakewood church teaches prosperity gospel which is a belief system that emphasizes material wealth and financial success as signs of God's favor.⁹⁴ Prosperity gospel teaches followers that God wants them to be wealthy and that poverty or financial struggles are a result of lack of faith or sin. Followers are encouraged to give generously to their church or religious leaders, with the expectation of receiving financial blessings in return.⁹⁵ Prosperity gospel promotes materialistic and self-centered approach to spirituality, focusing more on personal gain rather than spiritual growth or service to others.

Lakewood Church has capitalized on the diversity of the Houston region.⁹⁶ We titled this painting, "Oasis of Love" for two reasons. Just like a real oasis we painted an oasis that has attracted a diverse population of animals. In this painting the variety of native and non-native animals presented symbolize the cultural diversity of the Houston, Texas region and Lakewood Church's diverse congregation. In addition to being native or strongly tied to Texas, every animal in this painting is also mentioned in the Bible. By painting all these biblical animals as golden statues we are reminding the viewer of the biblical story regarding idol worship. As a reference to the biblical serpent in the garden of Eden, we used a native Texas western diamondback rattlesnake to represent both Lakewood church and its pastor. Finally, we titled this painting 'Oasis of Love' because "Oasis of Love" was once Lakewood Church's slogan.⁹⁷ Flax and purslane, both native to Texas, are also biblical plants. We painted blue flax and red purslane, symbolic of luxury and vapidness, respectively to symbolize the essence of prosperity gospel.^{98, 99}

For the background, we used a vignette from an 1840s Republic of Texas \$100 bill featuring Moneta receiving coins from Roman god Mercury.¹⁰⁰ (Appendix D) Using this vignette has allowed us to use imagery associated with money worship going back to Texas's early history. Moneta was associated with the minting of coins.¹⁰¹ Over time, the name "Moneta" evolved into the modern English word "money."¹⁰² Mercury is the Roman god of commerce and trade he is associated with financial gain and prosperity. Mercury's role as a patron of thieves and tricksters suggests his involvement in deceitful and clever ways of acquiring wealth.¹⁰³



Wisdom in the Bleachers, 2023, 24 x 30 in (61 x 77 cm) acrylic and oil on canvas

Elements in this painting provide an opportunity to learn more about Texas' native birds, plants and iconic Astrodome. More importantly this painting allows for an opportunity to take a more in-depth look at the broken education system in Texas.

Texas has the second highest illiteracy rate in the nation and in the face of underperforming schools across the state, communities across Texas have and are electing to raise their taxes to build up to 90 million dollar stadiums instead of funding for other academic studies including the arts.^{104, 105, 106}

According to the Texas Cultural Trust and the Texas Commission on the Arts, "Nine out of 10 Texas parents support increased funding for the arts in their schools. 89% of Texas parents believe that art and music electives are as important as athletics."¹⁰⁷ Despite this,

Texas ranks 47th in funding for the arts in its 2023 fiscal year budget, with a per capita spending rate of just 34 cents.¹⁰⁸

Cougars, also known as Mountain Lions, are one of the most athletic species native to Texas. Cougars are known for their strength, agility and awesome ability to jump and are believed to be the fastest predator in North America.¹⁰⁹ We painted the cougar at the center of this painting as symbolism for a glorified athlete. To help with this visual we converted the iconic ceiling of the Astrodome into a halo around the cougar's head. We chose the ceiling of the Astrodome because of its cultural and historical significance. The Houston Astrodome is the historical mother of all modern stadiums and was deemed the "Eighth Wonder of the World" when it opened in 1965.¹¹⁰

Owls have been symbolic of wisdom and knowledge for millennia.¹¹¹ We included them in this painting as symbolism for education. Bluebonnets, the official flower of Texas are part of the Lupine family of flowers and are symbolic of creative imagination.^{112, 113, 114} Desert marigolds, also known as the herb of the sun are symbolic of passion and creativity.^{114, 115} By painting owls, bluebonnets and desert marigolds surrounding the cougar we are suggesting that in Texas, education and the arts often take a back seat to sports.



Don't Tread on Me, 2023, 24 x 30 in (61 x 77 cm) acrylic and oil on canvas

Elements in this painting provide a chance to learn more about Texas' wildlife and capitol building. More importantly, it allows for a chance to take in an in-depth look at Texas' government and how it operates while also addressing gerrymandering, a serious issue affecting millions of minorities across Texas.

The Republican Party has increasingly dominated Texas politics since the 1990s and it has used gerrymandering to maintain power.^{116, 117} By drawing district lines in a way that concentrates Democratic voters into a few districts, Republicans have been able to secure a majority of seats in the state legislature.

This manipulation of district boundaries has resulted in a lack of competitive elections and limited representation for minority communities. Gerrymandering dilutes the voting

power of minority groups, particularly Hispanics, who make up a significant portion of the state's population.^{118, 119, 120}

“The Texas Capitol is widely recognized as one of the nation's most distinguished state capitols. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1970 and designated a National Historic Landmark in 1986.”¹²¹ The Texas Capitol is the foundation of this painting because as the seat of Texas’ government it is a symbol of our democracy.

Blue jays are among the world's smartest birds.¹²² Blue jays have all the characteristics of master criminals. According to Budd Titlow, Vice President of the Apalachee Audubon Society, “Blue jays have all the characteristics of master criminals. They are brazen, cocky, defiant, boisterous, fearless until challenged—then cowardly when caught—intelligent, crafty, and experts at disguise. They are especially good at mimicking...”¹²³ Due to all of these specific characteristics, we painted blue jays as symbolism for Texas Republican politicians.¹²⁴ We painted them perched atop the Texas Capitol building because Republicans have maintained their control of Texas due to gerrymandering.

American Bison were included in this painting because of their group decision-making capabilities. American Bison make democratic decisions or ‘vote’ in ways that benefit the entire herd not the individual. In nature, herd survival and thus individual survival depends on this type of decision-making process.¹²⁵ In this painting, buffalo are symbolic of democracy and represent Texas residents.



Energy Capital of the World, 2023, 24 x 30 in (61 x 77 cm) acrylic and oil on canvas

Elements in this painting provide a chance to learn more about Texas' wildlife, ice houses and their cultural impact and the energy sector and its impact on Texas and the global economy. More importantly this painting provide chance to take an in-depth look at ERCOT, the Texas power grid and how decades of mismanagement has left Texas vulnerable to extreme temperatures.

Both Houston, TX and the state of Texas are frequently referred to as the energy capital of the world due to Houston being the headquarters and the intellectual capital for every segment of the global energy industry.¹²⁶ Despite this, the Texas power grid is managed by the Electric Reliability Council of Texas which is controlled by Republicans. ERCOT's purpose is to maintain the reliability of Texas' power grid. Unfortunately, ERCOT has been plagued with scandal and controversy since the 1990s. The Texas power grid failure during

the deadly and catastrophic freeze of 2021 was the culmination of decades long mismanagement by Republicans.^{127, 128, 129, 130} In this painting a busted chandelier is symbolic of all this mismanagement. Yellow roses are highly associated with and culturally important to Texas. In Texas, yellow roses are symbolic of friendship. However, they have a longer tradition of being associated with greed.¹³¹ In this painting yellow roses are symbolic of the greed that contributed the mismanagement of ERCOT.¹³²

In the 1800s, ice was shipped in from New England States to Texas where it was distributed to ice houses regionally and sold to the public for preserving food.¹³³ With the advent of electrical technology, power plants were built to power ice houses, some power plants even made their own ice. In the early days of electricity only ice houses had electricity. Eventually all power plants across Texas joined forces to create a network so they could share and sell excess electricity to the public. This is how the Texas power grid that is separate from the rest of the United States was born.^{134, 135} Ice houses are the historical foundation of the Texas power grid, which is today managed by ERCOT and in this painting, provides a setting.

Foxes cunning nature have earned them a place in many cultures as a symbol of intelligence and shrewdness. Foxes have long been associated with trickery and deceit.^{136, 137} In this painting, ERCOT symbolized by the sly and deceitful grey fox, carelessly looks away from the tragedy that is about to unfold upon the mice. Eastern deer mice are highly social animals and can live in groups or family units of twelve or more.¹³⁸ Due to their social nature, the deer mice in this painting represent the vulnerable Texas public and are at the mercy of the powerful and mighty rattlesnake. In this painting the Western diamondback rattle snake is symbolic of electricity. We chose to use the snake as symbolism for electricity for two reasons. First, snakes are associated with lightening by various Native American tribes including the Hopi of West Texas. Finally, just like electricity, snake venom has the power to take or give life.^{139, 140}



State of Vulnerability, 2023, 40 x 60 in (102 x 153 cm) acrylic and oil on canvas

Elements in this painting provide a chance to learn more about Texas' native plants, threatened species and diverse and delicate ecosystems. More importantly this painting provides a chance to examine the oil industry and its environmental impact on the earth, Texas and the city of Houston.

The oil and gas industry globally centered in Houston, Texas is the largest contributor to global climate change.^{141, 142, 143} Texas, is the number one producer of toxic land, air and water pollution in the United States.^{144, 145, 146} Despite this, Texas is a beautiful state with numerous diverse and fragile ecosystems. Texas plays host to deserts, mountains, grassy plains, rolling hills, swamps, forests and a very long gulf coast. Each ecosystem teeming with incredible and delicate plant and animal life makes Texas one of the most biodiverse regions of the United States.¹⁴⁷ We painted a scene from the Houston, Texas region with oil derricks visible in the distance as a setting for this painting because Houston is the global headquarters for the oil and gas industry.¹⁴¹

We included monarch butterflies in this painting because of their important ties to Texas and their relationship with the oil and gas industry. Monarch butterflies are the official state of Texas insect.²⁸ In their yearly migration from Mexico to Canada their first stop is Texas where they lay eggs that hatch and allows them to continue their migration north. Monarchs are a threatened species; their populations have dramatically declined in the past two decades due in large part to climate change.^{148, 149 150} By painting monarchs we hope to bring awareness to one of the many Texas species facing extinction due in part to climate change.



Opulent Wealth, 2023, 18 x 24 in (46 x 61 cm) acrylic and oil on canvas

This painting provides a chance to take an in-depth look at the cultural and economic impact that both the cattle and oil industry have had in North Texas and the rest of the state. This painting also provides a chance to learn more about the banking industry and the history behind how it transformed Dallas into the financial capital of the South.

Texas has the 8th largest economy in the world and Dallas, considered the Wall Street of the Southern United States, is its undisputed financial capital.^{151, 152, 153} According to the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, “Dallas’ prominence arose from its importance as a center for the oil and cotton industries and its location along numerous railroad lines. It also rapidly evolved into a center of petroleum financing; Dallas bankers were among the first in the nation to lend money to oil companies using oil reserves as collateral.”¹⁵⁴ Texas is number one in beef cattle production in the United States and the beef industry is the third largest economic generator in Texas.^{155, 156} Fort Worth, Texas became the heart of

state's ranching industry when the Texas & Pacific Railway arrived in 1876.¹⁵⁷ Including Longhorns and oil can brands with significant historical ties to Texas allows us to bring attention to a historically and culturally significant sector of the economy in the richest region of Texas.

In the 1840's, the \$500 Republic of Texas bank note was the largest currency in circulation. (Appendix E) Due to this, we used a vignette from this bank note to symbolize the immense wealth of the Dallas-Ft. Worth region. The vignette features Lady Industry and Lady Commerce – modern allegories of industry and commerce. Lady Industry holds a caduceus traditionally associated with Mercury, the ancient Roman god of wealth, commerce, finance, trickery and thievery.^{{158} {103}}



Requiem for Peace, 2023, 18 x 24 in (46 x 61 cm) acrylic and oil on canvas

This painting provides a chance to further explore and learn more about Texas' gun laws, gun culture, United States presidential history and native birds while addressing a grave issue affecting all Texans.

Despite gun culture being deeply rooted in Texas, the state once had some of the strictest gun control laws in the nation. Since the 1990s Texas Republicans have increasingly relaxed gun laws.¹⁵⁹ In past two decades alone Texas Republicans have approved more than 100 bills that loosened gun restrictions.¹⁶⁰ Today Texas has some of the most relaxed gun control laws in the nation and is experiencing an ever increasing rate of firearm-related deaths.^{161, 160}

This is a portrait of a victim and survivor of gun violence. In this painting first lady, Jackie Kennedy is happy and completely unaware of the tragedy that is about to unfold. She has

just stepped off Airforce One in Dallas, Texas and was welcomed with a bouquet of roses. The spray of red that precedes her visually foretells her immediate fate. By using an image of Jackie Kennedy, we hope to convey to the viewer that no one in Texas is safe from gun violence. Gun violence can happen to anyone and is completely unpredictable, striking when one least expects it. We included mourning doves because they are symbolic of peace and hope.¹⁶² In this painting they are symbolism for the fact that most Texans support stricter gun regulation.^{163, 164}



Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep, 2023, 30 x 40 in (77 x 102 cm) acrylic and oil on canvas

This painting provides an opportunity to learn more about Texas' many extinct species. More importantly this painting provides a chance to take an in-depth look at Texas' gun laws, gun culture and mass shootings.

On August 1, 1966, at 11:48 a.m. Charles Joseph Whitman, a twenty-five-year-old University of Texas student and ex-marine, climbed to the top of the iconic University of Texas Clock Tower and went on a shooting spree.^{165, 166} The first person he shot from the observation deck was an 18-year-old woman who was eight months pregnant. Although she survived, her unborn child was fatally shot and died inside her, making the first individual Whitman shot and killed from the observation deck a fetus.¹⁶⁷ On this day Whitman shot 43 and killed 15.¹⁶⁶

The University of Texas clock tower shooting was the first modern day mass shooting in United States history.¹⁶⁸ Currently, Texas leads the nation in mass shootings.¹⁶⁹ Because of its infamous history and its association with education, the University of Texas clock tower in this painting is symbolic of all mass shootings carried out at schools across Texas and beyond.

The lamb, symbolic of purity, represents all the innocent children and vulnerable people lost to mass shootings. The lamb, also symbolic of sacrifice, represents of all the people sacrificed by Texas legislators pandering to their conservative bases.¹⁷⁰

We included passenger pigeons in this painting for several reasons. First, because they are scientifically the same as doves, passenger pigeons are also symbolic of peace.¹⁶² The last passenger pigeons in Texas were shot between 1896 and 1900 and are now extinct.¹⁷¹ Finally, passenger pigeons have red breast feathers. By using passenger pigeons in this painting, we are presenting the viewer with powerful symbolism for all the blood shed by the innocent victims of mass shootings across Texas.



Texas Tie, 2023, 24 x 18 in (61 x 46 cm) acrylic and oil on canvas

This painting provides a chance to take an in-depth look at the Texas' capital punishment history, laws and statistics. This painting also provides a chance to examine Texas history and its relationship to systemic racism within the Texas criminal justice system.

Since the Supreme Court legalized capital punishment in 1976, Texas has led the nation in executing inmates. Moreover, Harris County where Houston, Texas is located has sent more inmates to death row than any individual state in the nation except Texas itself.^{172, 173} Poppies are associated with death and eternal sleep; due to this we included them in this painting as symbols of death as a result of execution.¹⁷⁴

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice is headquartered in Huntsville, Texas.¹⁷⁵ Situated in the piney woods of East Texas, Huntsville is also where executions in Texas take place.^{176, 177} The dark reddish brown background of this painting is an abstraction meant to evoke the bark of the abundant pine trees of the Huntsville, Texas region. In doing this, we have provided a setting for this painting.

The turkey vulture is highly associated with death and in this painting is symbolic of Texas Department of Criminal Justice.¹⁷⁴ Since the Texas Department of Criminal Justice is this state agency that oversees capital punishment in Texas, we painted a noose in the vulture's beak. The noose, symbolic of the death penalty is also reference to historical capital punishment by hanging in Texas and is symbolic of historical and systemic racism across the Texas criminal justice system.^{178, 179, 180} To further emphasize systemic racism throughout the Texas criminal justice system, we used the unique statue of Lady Justice that sits atop the Bee County courthouse in Beeville, Texas.⁶⁷ The fact that this particular Lady Justice statue does not have a blindfold and is pointing her torch outward toward the viewer in an accusatory manner suggest that she is not impartial.



Lone Star Justice, 2023, 18 x 24 in (46 x 61 cm) acrylic and oil on canvas

This painting provides an opportunity to learn more about Texas' Goddess Liberty Statue, Sam Houston and Texas wildlife. More importantly, this painting provides an opportunity to take an in-depth look at the historical and significant role racism has played within all the institutions that make up the Texas' criminal justice system.

According to the Prison Policy Initiative, "Texas incarcerates a higher percentage of its people than any democratic country on earth."¹⁸¹ Texas has an extremely high prison population due to several factors, including a tough-on-crime approach, with strict sentencing laws and a focus on punishment rather than rehabilitation.^{182, 183, 184} This has led to longer sentences and a higher likelihood of incarceration for offenders.¹⁸⁵ To symbolize Texas' incarcerated population, we painted blue jays inside a prison cell. We chose to use blue jays because of their association with criminal-like behavior.¹⁸⁶ We painted the head of Texas' Goddess Liberty statue that sits atop the Texas capitol building,

inside a prison cell to remind us that laws enacted by Texas legislators have created the largest prison population in the nation.¹⁸²

According to Texas Monthly, Texas' prison system is rooted, "in the East Texas cotton fields and the convict-leasing apparatus that replaced slavery."¹⁸⁷ Systemic racism has played a large role in contributing to the high prison population in Texas.^{179, 188, 189} To symbolize systemic racism, we painted the head of Sam Houston in the prison cell. Sam Houston played an important role in the Texas Revolution, is the City of Houston's namesake, was the president of the Republic of Texas and later governor of Texas. Sam Houston settled in Huntsville, Texas where he kept slaves.^{190, 191} By painting slave owning statesman, Sam Houston's head in this prison cell, we are bringing attention to the fact that systemic racism has been a part of Texas government since its inception in addition to also providing a location for the prison cell in this painting. The Texas prison system managed by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice is headquartered in Huntsville, Texas.¹⁷⁵

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Appendix

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