

IN THE MAKE

Studio visits with West Coast artists (<http://inthemake.com>)



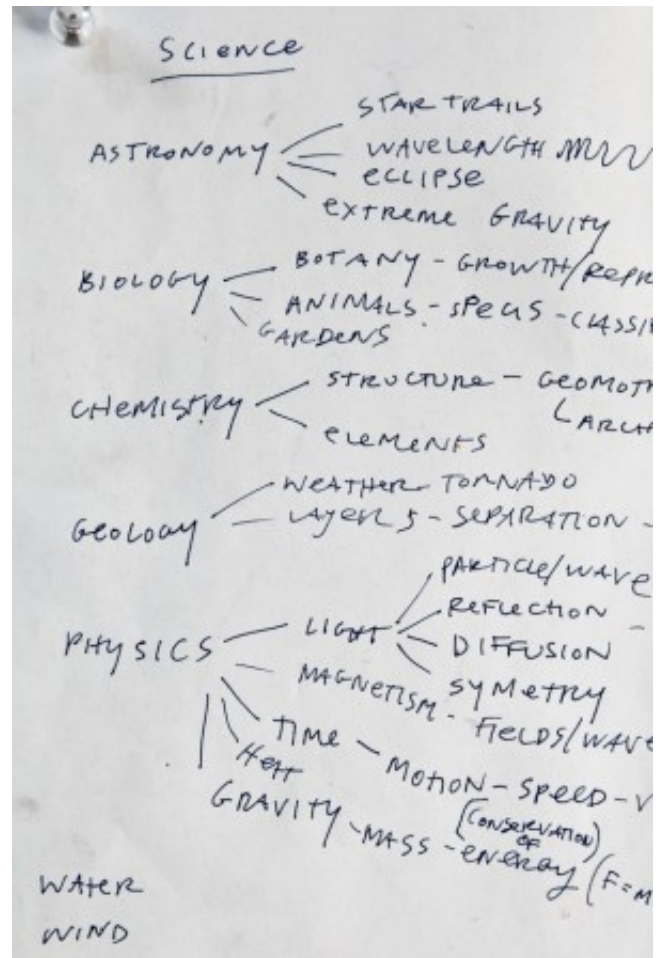
Lia Halloran

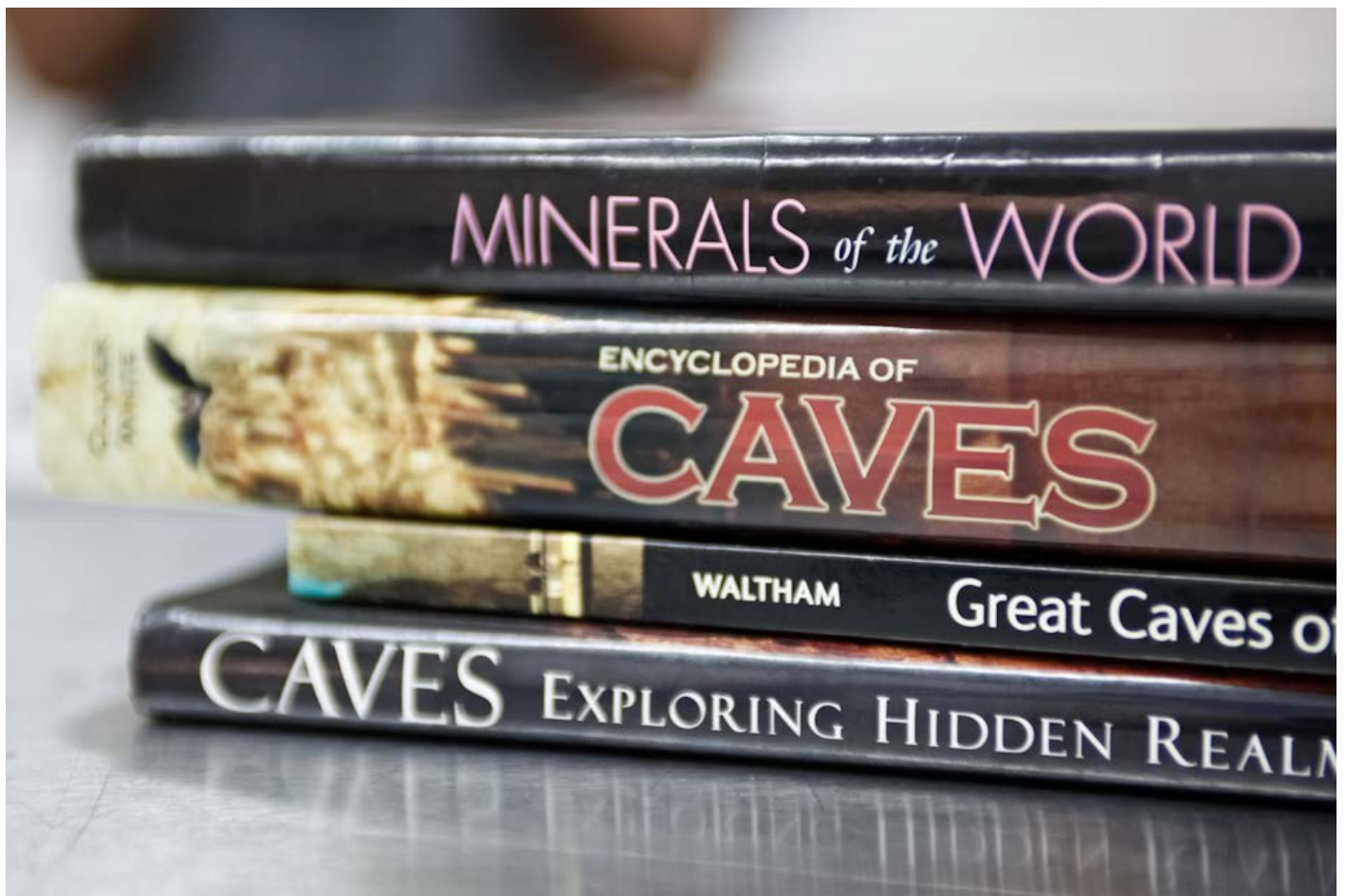
GLASSELL PARK/LA (/TAG/GLASSELL-PARKLA), PAINTER (/TAG/PAINTER) // APRIL 2012

“It’s important my studio is a place that I enjoy being in whether I am working on a painting or not, so I have lots of books, things to look at, a comfy place to sit and read, and I try to be in there as much as possible.”



Lia lives in the Glassell Park neighborhood of Los Angeles in an adorable house that she's spent the last few years fixing up. Behind the house is an awesome patio, fully equipped with a fire pit for both cool winter evenings and summertime BBQs, and then beyond the patio is Lia's studio. I gotta say, her set-up is ideal; there's a natural flow between the indoor/outdoor spaces and being able to work in a studio that's just a few steps away from home, but that's still a completely separate space, is a true luxury— especially in LA, because driving anywhere seems to take forever! Lia is a real dynamo, full of fast-talking fervor and exuberant curiosity. When it comes to her work, she's also obsessive and incredibly methodical; she's very much process-orientated and invests a great deal of time experimenting with her materials, observing how things play out, and then cataloguing her findings. She has elaborate charts that detail the various hues for the paints and inks she uses, and she's acutely aware of the ways in which weather conditions affect their fluidity and how quickly or not they will dry. Lia spent a good portion of our conversation discussing the characteristics of the blue ink she's using in her current work—the subtleties of its nature and the tricks she's learned in order to bring about results she's after. I was struck by Lia's ever-evolving understanding of her materials and her preoccupation with even the most nuanced of possibilities, and the extreme delicacy with which she approaches every gesture. Lia's work is driven by her multifaceted curiosities and the aim, through trial and error, to gain a sense of fluency, intimacy and grace with her materials.





When people ask you what you “do”, how do you answer?
I’m an artist and I teach art.

Do you have a day job? What is it? What does it mean to you?
I spend as much time as possible in my studio and I’m also an Assistant Professor at Chapman University (<http://www.chapman.edu/>) where I teach painting and drawing. I enjoy sharing ideas and problem solving how to make or think about something so teaching is a good fit for me. I also appreciate having a balance between the solitude of being in the studio for long periods and then being in the classroom with many dialogues and things being made all at once.

Talking about how to make a painting or re-looking at artwork is helpful to me and is a good way to re-examine or remind myself about things I have already learned. I find it exciting to watch someone figure out an artwork or talk about what art does and can do, and offer a new way to understand seeing. The best exchange is when in turn, my students bring in things I’ve never seen or heard of. By teaching I develop a deeper understanding of readings, influential art works, and techniques that maybe I’m not currently interested in but by articulating and refining, the meaning of each changes over time.



What mediums do you work with? How would you describe your subject matter? What themes seem to occur/reoccur in your work?

I would say that primarily I paint and draw but over the past year I've made a series of photographs, some small sculptures, videos, and an installation that was a collaboration under the name 'Collider' with Sarah Strauss of Big Prototype (<http://bigprototype.com/>) (an architectural/ design firm in NY).

I'm very interested in nature and science and how we understand or are curious about the things around us. Physics has played a major role in influencing my subject matter over the past 10 years, though I'm not interested in making work that teaches something or is visually didactic. It's not so important that a viewer knows my interest or background in science, just that my enthusiasm in exploring the subject somehow gets translated.

I've been exploring performance and perception of time in architectural spaces in a series of long exposure photographs called 'Dark Skate' for several years and my last exhibition of paintings in New York were based on the discovery of the giant crystal cave in Naica, Mexico where gypsum crystals have been growing for 500,000 years. I was fascinated by how long these crystals had been growing— a scale of time that is almost beyond comprehension, and also how the scale of crystals changes our understanding of them simply because of the size they have grown to (some are 35ft long). My work essentially begins with something I'm interested in and then over time by learning about that subject I'll delve further into my study or exploration of it in whatever medium seems fittings. I usually follow the subject and try to not stay attached to any specific medium, and make things that are interesting and important to me.



What are you currently reading, listening to or looking at to fuel your work? In my studio I enjoy listening to stories so books on tape keeps me occupied for long periods, and I also load up on podcasts, specifically The Moth (<http://themoth.org/>), Radiolab (<http://www.radiolab.org/>), RISK! (<http://risk-show.com/>), and This American Life (<http://www.thisamericanlife.org/>). I've been looking at several books on rock formations, crystals, caves, elements, and actual rocks and crystals that friends have given me for the paintings I'm working on now.

I'm reading *10 Billion Days and 100 Billion Nights* by Ryu Mitsuse and since I'm currently teaching a new course called 'The Intersection of Art and Science' I have several books and articles that look at ways the two are related. Books that I'm really enjoying are: *Proust Was a Neuroscientist* by Jonah Lehrer and *Art & Physics* by Leonard Shlain, but I'm always looking for more readings on creativity and interdisciplinary thinking.

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What are your biggest challenges to creating art and how do you deal with them? How do you navigate the art world?

Time and why no one has figured out how to make more of it! I never feel like I have enough of it to spend in my studio.

As for navigation I make sure to have balance in my life with art and non-art events, and being active keeps me calm and happy; running, swimming, skateboarding. My relationship with my NY gallery DCKT Contemporary (<http://www.dcktcontemporary.com/>), who I've been working with for seven years, has been extremely helpful and supportive and they have given me great advice on numerous occasions. Having a encouraging gallery and

developing closer relationships with other artists, gallerists, collectors, students, and curators that I've met while I was in school or along the way makes it feel less like 'the art world' and more like a community.

What does having a physical space to make art in mean for your process, and how do you make your space work for you?

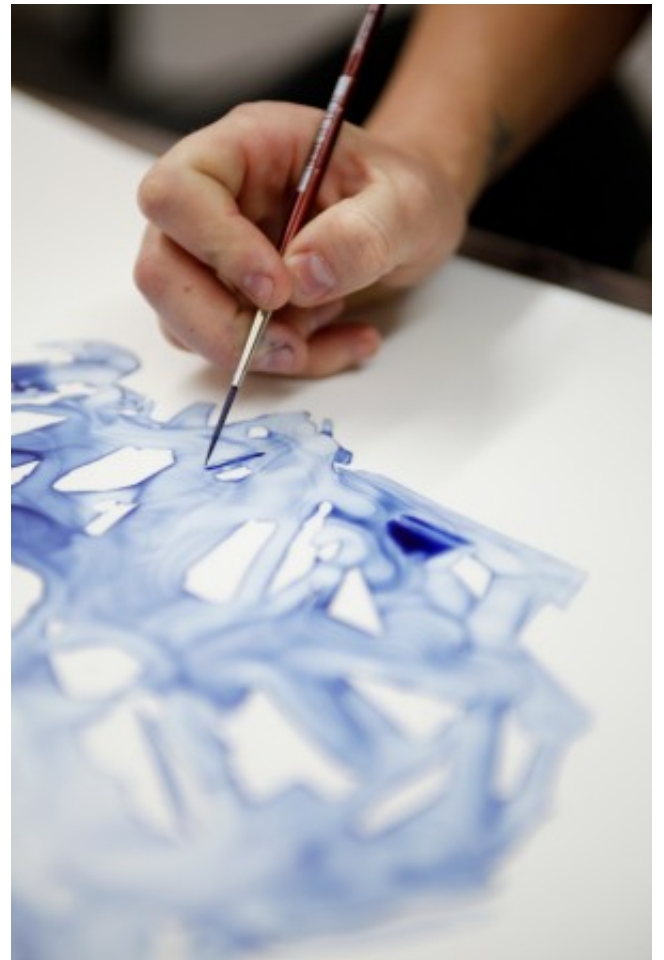
It's important my studio is a place that I enjoy being in whether I am working on a painting or not, so I have lots of books, things to look at, a comfy place to sit and read, and I try to be in there as much as possible. Because my studio is behind my house and opens to a patio I like that it's an inside/ outside space. My dogs and two desert tortoises are always wandering in and out of the studio. Right now the tortoises are in boxes hibernating until mid-April but it's pretty funny to have them roaming around while I'm painting.







Has there been a shift or change in your life or work that has led to what you're making now? Do you see your work as autobiographical at all? My new work incorporates a synthesis of figures with minerals and crystalline forms. Last year I was asked by my friend, the legendary physicist Kip Thorne to work on an article for *Playboy* with him that would describe his research and the physics of extreme gravity, black holes, wormholes and figures interacting with warped space. I started taking photographs of women in my studio for the article to make drawings from and then started thinking about the primary audience for *Playboy*, yet all the people that posed for me were lesbians or transgender because that's my group of friends. All sorts of questions about representation, posing, desire, audience, and especially classification/objectification of the body started coming up. Has *Playboy* ever had a transgender person represented in their publication? My work certainly encompasses very personal references that are significant to me, but that aren't necessarily wholly revealed.





Is there something you are currently working on, or are excited about starting that you can tell us about?

I have an exhibition opening soon with Martha Otero (<http://www.marthaotero.com/>) that will be large-scale figurative/ mineral drawings and 118 smaller works to make up the grid of the periodic table of elements. Some are imagined or interpretations of the element, or a part of it merged with a figure.

What are you most proud of?

Being a curious person and having an extraordinary group of family and friends.



What advice has influenced you?

“Never go to a second location with a hippie.” -Jack Donaghy.

Are you involved in any upcoming shows or events? Where and when?

I have a solo exhibition opening at Martha Otero (<http://www.marthaotero.com/>) in Los Angeles on May 5th, 2012.

I'm working on a project over the summer in Dusseldorf, Germany that I'm looking forward to.

To see more of Lia's work:

www.liahalloran.com (<http://www.liahalloran.com/>)

www.dcktcontemporary.com (<http://www.dcktcontemporary.com/>)

www.marthaotero.com (<http://www.marthaotero.com/>)





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(</tag/san-francisco>)