

ABSTRACT LAYERING



Sooner or later our true nature gets the upper hand, and we are glad it does. For eleven years, artist Stephanie Cime worked as a lawyer before she decided to make a career out of her passion for painting. A lot of reflecting, dreaming, and eventually having the courage to jump gave her a freedom that she will never hand in again. We spoke with her about the mission that she tries to fulfil with her works, the big questions that keep her up, and the creative urge that defines her life.

Her expressions hypnotise, her style lingers. Stephanie Cime makes paintings that you can recognise immediately as one from her hand. With her eyes on the permanently unfinished state of the world and ourselves, she is creating more than ever today. Those who enter her world arrive at abstract paintings that came about layer after layer. Imperfect, texture driven, and immersive shapes define each canvas. Calm and uproar reside simultaneously in every brushstroke, and

the results speak volumes. Each time, a new work is born that does not only reaffirm the appeal of imperfections but also testifies to her philosophy. The latter constantly returns to the transience that dominates our existence in several aspects. Asymmetry and impermanence are lovingly honoured on a playing field where there is room for the smallest nuances. Life is complex and full of challenges, but with her paintings this artist tries to understand important issues better. At the same time, everything happens from an inherent ease, a second nature from which she is constantly further developing her path.

ALWAYS "ARITST"

More and more eyes are finding the way to Cime's art, and a road of possibilities stretches beckoning before her. However, things were different once. Even though she has always had the heart of an artist, for years she draped a cloak of shame over it. The reason for this is that, for a long time, her life held no special place for art. According to the painter herself, her youth was characterised by a lack of space for her authentic self, because it was believed that art was a second rank career. 'I have always had an artist in me, but I kept her on the background for a long time. I grew up as the child of two doctors in a time where parents still decided the future of their children. All of this with the best intentions, no offence. But there was little room to discover who we were or what we wanted,' she explains. Already as a kid she was captivated by creating. Painting, drawing, and crafting were all a fixed part of her occupations, and she was only three when she declared on video what was bound to happen someday: 'I am going to be an aritst when I grow up. I could not pronounce the word "artist" yet,' she laughs. As a young adult she could not wait to go to art school, but unfortunately studying at university received more parental praise. 'As much as I longed for an art education and even though there have been many discussions at home, I still had to conform in the end.'





IN THE DEEP

After embracing her passion again and finishing paintings at a high speed, the moment came when she reluctantly showed her work to a few people. Loving reactions followed, as well as the question whether her canvases were up for sale. The train was leaving and if Cime wanted to jump on, it was now or never. So it happened. She found the perfect studio close to her home and made the switch to making art fulltime. Word of mouth did its thing and the interest in her work was growing fast. Nevertheless, things were not always easy; the road was long and the path not free of irregularities. Still, the artist immediately felt that it was the right choice because your happiness never lies. 'Back then I could spend hours in the cold and keep on painting with little light and still feel intensely happy,' she says. She has not looked back since, because each day is a new confirmation of the passion that she feels for her job and the mission that she wants to fulfil with her work. Cime's art is of the kind that you cannot bring into words. She aims to tell something in an abstract language that is universally comprehensible. Even though it is difficult to choose a favourite phase out of the entire process, she feels the most satisfaction when she touches people emotionally. Next to this, she truly enjoys the preparation, such as looking for the right colours. Of course the making of the work itself is the most addictive part, considering that it is here that the process develops an almost meditative character. When she is painting, the world surrounding her disappears.

From then on, painting was shrouded in an atmosphere of shame and taboo, and it seemed an unmovable truth that chasing your true dream was unfortunately not the right path. Instead of following her calling and with the insistence of her parents, Cime started a university degree. What came after was a period in which she did not ask herself serious questions about the lack of true happiness in her job. However, a tremendous and impactful moment of reflection happened in 2018, when her younger brother died unexpectedly and her life tilted. Her fresh grief made her think deeply about life and what she wanted to get out of it. Our time on earth is limited, so doing what you truly love is one of the few things that really matter. Suddenly it was crystal clear that she needed to go in a different direction, but this was anything but easy. 'I was still afraid of choosing the unsure career of an artist. I would just continue painting in my attic room. My self-imposed embarrassment went that deep. My love for aesthetics and real estate brought me to the most logical creative, but still "acceptable" and "proper" choice, namely interior.' Coordinating and executing a few interior projects already gave her more satisfaction, although the real creative action was not happening yet. The last push that she needed, came out of an unexpected corner. It was during the Covid crisis that she finally allowed herself to surrender completely to the storm within and she started painting frantically. 'I could not hold it any longer. The urge to create was too persistent, and so the works became bigger and bigger. There was no stopping it. The fence was down. Pandora's box was open ...'



‘I have always had an artist in me, but I kept her on the background for a long time’

You only need to see two works of the painter to have a clear view of her style. However, the common thread goes further than what you see at first glance. It is about the philosophy behind it. ‘I want to celebrate the elusive beauty of transience and imperfection. Making peace with our impermanent and unfinished nature,’ according to the artist herself. By giving attention to the imperfect and the temporary, she enters a special dimension full of nuances. She also works from the intention to not strive for an ideal. Small imperfections remind her incessantly that beauty is truly everywhere. ‘Life is fragile and transitory, yet so beautiful at the same time. Everything is temporary, nothing is forever. In the first place we as humans,’ she explains. Concerning materials, she tries to continue her respect for nature. Sand, stones, organic cotton, and linen are only a few of the elements that



she likes to work with. Lately, she has been keeping her colours mainly neutral, although in the past she was not afraid of using bold shades. Nevertheless, recently her love for minimalism has been showing more strongly in her palette, and we are a fan of that. You can clearly see this tendency in her current exposition ROOTS, which can be viewed online. With this selection of works, she reflects on themes such as identity and origin.

The story of Stephanie Cime has only just begun. Her spacious canvases speak to our inherent fascination for the abstract. Layer after layer, she lets the work come to her, while she feels the enjoyment and love for her craft run through her veins. We are confident that there will be many continuations to what she has already realised with her works and think the same thing as any other looking at her paintings: she was always an artist. 🌿

(Text: Cara Jacobs)

Images courtesy of Stephanie Cime



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