

Loyola University New Orleans
Digital Humanities Studio

The Louisiana Art Project

Interview with Sophia Germer

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Interviewer: Tristin Gaspard

Abstract:

Sophia Germer shares her passion for photojournalism and painting, highlighting how these two art forms intersect in her work. She discusses her experiences as a photojournalist in New Orleans, emphasizing the power of photojournalism to change lives and opinions. Germer also talks about her love for painting, particularly the way it allows her to introduce color and blend different mediums. She expresses her desire to use her art to tell stories and capture the essence of the Louisiana coast and its people.

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Sophia Germer (0:0): Hi, I'm Sophia Germer. I'm a photojournalist and painter, and I live in New Orleans. Yeah, I started drawing when I was a child. And just it, I was an only child. So I spent a lot of time drawing when I was bored. And painting, I only started maybe six or seven years ago, maybe. Um, so my drawings were all in black and white. And I wanted to introduce color, black and white pencil pen, I love to pen. I just, I think pens are just so universal and so cheap, so accessible to everyone. And I really admire that about pen. But then I wanted to introduce color. And so I got into markers. And then from markers, I wanted to kind of learn how to layer color, and mix color. And I love mixing colors. So I usually just start with white, blue, yellow, and red. And just mix my colors from there. And it's just so satisfying when you get the color you're looking for. I've used oils before, I just I guess I'm just so used to acrylic. But I so I had a teacher in college at the San Francisco Art Institute. And she really pushed me she made me cry a lot. But she also brought me up. And she showed me the power of photojournalism and how it can change lives and opinions. And I was fascinated by that. And so after I graduated, I moved back to New Orleans to use the new skills here and see what kind of stories I could tell in New Orleans. I wanted to live in San Francisco. Yeah, after I graduated, I actually couldn't see myself being able to live happily and afford San Francisco work as a photo journalist. And so I moved to New Orleans trying to figure out what was my next step. And so while I was trying to figure that out, I applied for an internship at the Times Picayune and they never responded. So The Advocate gave me an opportunity. It's interesting, because it's starting to become where a lot of my interests overlap with what the newspaper sends me out on. And they have been sending me out in environments that inspire my paintings and like the coast like the coast. Yeah, yeah. The thing is about my photography is it's more about people. And I really, really love the people of Louisiana, and especially along our coast, because it is kind of it is a blend sometimes, but when it's like okay, I have an assignment or like, if I like for things like hunting, I don't always feel comfortable sending it to the paper, like blood and stuff like that. Like there was one time I photographed an alligators had getting sawn off. And I was like, This is so cool. So I kept that yeah, that's not gonna make the paper so yeah, I put that off to the side but yeah, as far as like environmental work I feel like my personal work and and my Yeah, like work work is really is blending in that way. I guess it really depends on what. I'm starting to

find that even my painting is starting to blend in a little bit. I hate to go back to what you're saying. But like when putting photos aside, I just remembered. I do put photos aside of swamp scenes for to help you. Yeah, as as reference photos, I'm fascinated by the Louisiana coast and our wetlands, and thinking about climate change and subsidence and movement of people. And so I decided that what if, what if the buildings could move? What if they could relocate themselves? And so I put some shrimp boots on them, which is such a symbol of the coast and let them have personality. So it's kind of like a playful way of seeing climate change. I would call it I've I would say it's swamp surrealism. Well, I have, I realized that a lot of my paintings are about the people riding on the backs of animals. And I'm not sure why yet, but I learned that opossums who do they carry their young on their backs, but the I heard that there's some native groups in Mexico that believe that opossums are a sign of fertility. And I heard this, I couldn't find any more information about it, so I can't confirm it. But there was, there's this group that would cut the tails off of the opossum and drink the blood to induce the pregnancy. Maybe I'll do something with the St. Louis Cathedral and put it on the back of an animal. I don't know. I like it when things are not set up, because you're seeing it more for what it is rather than, Oh, I'm gonna put some lights here and stand this way and turn your head that way. I think I think portraiture is collaborative. But I like it when the challenge of being able to allow people to do what they want. And in their natural habitat, I guess you could say or not not gonna say that. It's interesting also, because this drives me nuts. When you're taking a picture of someone and they freeze in that position. It's like no, the camera will do that for you like you don't have to freeze so much talent in New Orleans or Louisiana. Yes, I am. Very, very happy here and I probably won't leave.