

Welcome to Arc Studios News! This newsletter features events and activities of artists, nonprofit professionals and micro business owners that are part of the creative community at Arc Studios & Gallery 1246 Folsom Street San Francisco.

## Arc Studios News July 2020

**A Conversation  
with J.L. King  
Arc Studio #101  
By Sherri Cornett**



Though the Covid-19 crisis challenged the art practices of many artists, JL King has found that painting helped her to stay productive and busy. The crisis did affect her more indirectly, as physical exhibitions were replaced by online versions. To engage virtual visitors more deeply, artists have been asked to create video tours of their work. JL, or Jen, as she is known more casually, was one of these artists. She and I talked about this process, symbolism and a new style in her work.

**Sherri Cornett:** Would you tell me about your video tour?

**JL King:** One of my pieces, Sour Grass and Fortune, was to exhibit in a group show in April called "The Unusual Child" at the Cactus Gallery in Los Angeles. With the closing of museums and galleries due to the virus, we had to do as much as we could to make the online experience as close to visiting a gallery as possible. I had never created one before, so I just used my iPhone with no editing. I'm not that savvy yet! I just had to do a few takes to get it right. I enjoyed making it and thought it was a great way to introduce a piece for a show.

**SC:** It was indeed delightful to hear you talk about your work! Where was the video shared?

**JLK:** The gallery put it on its YouTube channel and linked that to their website and social media. I shared the link on my website, for a while, and my Facebook page. I plan to do more and add them to my own YouTube channel. Next time, I will make the video shorter and use a stand instead of propping my phone on a book! I also think I will focus on something specific about the piece rather than try to cover everything and explaining symbolism, to tighten it up a bit.

**SC:** Could we look at what some of the recurring symbols in your paintings, such as the snails, candy, and insects, mean to you?

**JLK:** I think of these as "characters" in my scenes. Often, they add a certain harmony that pleases me. I love coming up with them and showing them repeatedly when a piece calls for them.

**SC:** Do you ever share your intention behind the symbols in your individual pieces? Or is the interpretation purposely left open?

**JLK:** I share bits of that in my newsletter, on my Instagram, and on my Facebook page. I may mention what sentiments the piece invokes in me or an anecdote that the piece reminds me of or the period in my life that inspired the piece. Interpretation is always open, though. Even for myself.

**SC:** On your website, you write that you replace the faces in your work with flowers, balloons, and marbles for anonymity.

**JLK:** My work is about the whole scene. I have yet to have a case where I want to commit a piece to a specific person and, if there is an individualized face, the piece becomes all about that person. I think of the beings as the "suggesters," helping to bring forth a narrative. The scenes may be bold, but the beings usually suggest a quiet, calm state.

**SC:** I read somewhere that surrealist painters tend to have rich dream lives? Is that true for you?

**JLK:** My night dreams are not that interesting! But, I often daydream while I am painting or doing something else. Thankfully, I can capture those thoughts on my phone - either through writing or a voice memo - and then get back to them later to do a quick sketch.

**SC:** When we talked in 2018, you said you loved idioms and trompe l'oeil styles of painting. I see you have a new series titled Trompe L'Esprit. Is this related to your previous work?

**JLK:** Yes, it started as a series and now is more of my style. It means trick the mind and encompasses more of what I do, the blend of surrealism and imaginative realism with trompe l'oeil techniques. I like the fantasy and curiosity that this type of imagery provokes in me.

**SC:** These newer works seem to have a bit of sadness, less levity and more of a concern for the world.

**JLK:** I don't think you are wrong. I hear many different thoughts on what my work invokes. I am not sure that there is more sadness in my work. I like to maintain a certain tone or frequency in my work that feels familiar or comfortable to me. I imagine that if it is giving off a sadder vibe, perhaps that is the emotion that feels "right" for that piece for that viewer. I appreciate the duality, or multiplicity, of ideas. They're not wrong, But, sometimes, I am surprised.

**SC:** That's a good point. Our subconscious responses to surrealism can be very individualistic. Perhaps because of my underlying anxiety with the Covid Crisis, I see your figures in postures of ennui, the drips looking like tear drops. On the other hand, I

see hope in the torn open, brighter world in the background of Where Seldom Is Heard a Discouraging Word.

**JLK:** That one was created specifically for a themed show called "Home." I think the ideas there are more obvious and intentional. Resilience, which has been part of my past works, was a biggie in this piece and . . . is needed so much in the world right now.

Website: <https://www.jlkingart.com/>

JL King Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/j.l.kingart/>

JL King Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/jlkingart/>

JL King Newsletter <https://www.jlkingart.com/sign-up>

Cactus Gallery YouTube Channel with JL King's  
video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YTp-S81ub1U>

JK King's YouTube

Channel [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1biGZNf08ylxgJRg32i\\_Fg?view\\_as=subscriberarticle](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1biGZNf08ylxgJRg32i_Fg?view_as=subscriberarticle)

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