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A Conversation with Heather Robinson

Arc Studio #202
By Sherri Cornett



Easing into the multi-leveled positivity of Heather Robinson's [website](#), I find a lightening in my soul, a happy, pleasant distraction from the larger world. One of her many creative skills is the creation of multiple, digital entry points to view the colorful beauty of her paintings. Though she claims to be initially quiet with people, she is, essentially, an exuberant optimist. And, that comes through in her work. I am also impressed to learn that her work is connected to the [Pattern and Decoration \(P & D\)](#) movement of the 70s and 80s – the art criticism of which has grown more positive in tandem with the rise of multiculturalism.

Sherri Cornett: Heather, you describe your work as being inspired by P & D, which championed the geometric and floral patterns prized in Mexican, Turkish, Japanese and other cultures, but in the US were trivialized as too feminine. There is an advocative aspect to your style. . .

Heather Robinson: Yes! When I was studying architectural design, there seemed to be a real disdain and rejection of ornament and decoration. I, though, really loved decorative work – the more over-the-top the better! – and that there is indeed a feminist aspect to it.

SC: I see references to [Mariam Schapiro's *femmage*](#) – her combination of quilting, appliqué and other handwork techniques and use of floral patterns – in your earlier paintings and, more recently, in your [Elsewhere](#) series. How did these evolve in your art making?

HR: I dropped out of architectural school, became a web designer, and eventually wanted to do creative work that was with more physical, beautiful, handmade things and with an element of humanity to it. Though I still appreciate the floral patterns of my earlier work, I had moved slightly more towards the geometric in combinations of patterns . . . until the first months of the pandemic. Many people were quarantined and I couldn't get to my studio. I didn't have a lot of room at home to paint, so, with *Elsewhere*, I turned to collage and embroidery, using supplies I had at home and loved, including my collection of weird vintage postcards.

SC: As to your art-making . . .

HR: My process has remained similar – starting with a piece of fabric, building up layers of color and medium, using stencils to create pattern and depth. A couple of years ago, I acquired a lot of Japanese fabric – with its traditional

geometric, repeating patterns. I use it as a jumping-off point to explore more uncontrolled and expressive use of paint.

SC: And, then there is all your marketing!

HR: I am certainly comfortable in the digital world. I have had a website since the early days of web design and, though the initial setup for online sales definitely takes some dedication, my learning curve was perhaps not as steep as for many. It is fairly rare that someone will just stumble onto your site and make a fine art purchase – with most of my online buyers I had previous conversations. Still, that part of the whole marketing strategy makes sense and on a site I control.

SC: Your images are on pillows, bags, postcards and scarves – another tie into domesticity and the P & D movement and a smart way to give buying options.

HR: Yes, my graphics skills come forth again. I'm comfortable setting my artwork up to print and modern print-on-demand companies make it really easy.

SC: One more marketing question. How do you manage all your socials?

HR: If I had to make individual posts to every account, I would never remember to do it regularly. Usually, I batch up a week's worth of posts, which is made tons easier by using a scheduler (I use Later). It now takes less than an hour a week – as long as I remember to take pictures of my works-in-progress!

SC: How did you creatively navigate the pandemic?

HR: Even though I'm going more places than I did in 2020 – and that is restorative! – the pandemic still causes challenges. Motivation and getting my work in front of new people can be difficult. Events haven't totally bounced back and I travel less to museums and exhibits for inspiration. There is virtual travel, such as the exhibit in Germany, in which I exhibited a couple of pieces with other social-distancing themed art from around the world.

SC: Now that you have joined Arc Studios, do you have new goals for yourself?

HR: So much fantastic art gets made at Arc! I'm happy to be working in a community of artists, especially since I am friends with several already. Josh Coffy, with whom I've collaborated on paintings, is next door and I hope to work with him again once my studio is properly set up. My old studio, which I loved and made successful for 14 years, was super small (more or less a cubicle within a gallery), so I'm excited to have room to create larger paintings! And, to produce more work period!

Heather's [website](#), [Facebook](#), [Insta](#), and [Pinterest](#).

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