



Q&A with Art Night EAST artist Megan Kimber

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The art world in Austin is about to get more colorful. To prepare for Art Night EAST, we will be featuring several artists that are on the rise in the art world. The first artists in our installment is **Megan Kimber**, whose paintings are very personal, but are shown through the eyes of someone else. Check out what she had to say about her passion for art.

Interview by Kimberley Carmona

Shuffle: When did your interest in art begin?

Megan Kimber: I can't remember when I wasn't drawing or painting. I have the craziest drawings of when I was 2 years old. Even then, the weird shapes and lines I drew had some narrative with each other – its wild.

Shuffle: When did you realize that you wanted to focus on art?

Megan: High school. I just couldn't stop drawing and it was all I had the mind space for. Then I had a lull when in the late 90's I lived in Orlando and I was in a major artist drought. Then I went back to grad school and just absolutely fell back in love with painting.



Megan Kimber said that in high school she could only focus on art and science. Photo courtesy of Megan Kimber.

Shuffle: Why is art so important to you?

Megan: I don't question it – to me it's like the lung that automatically takes in air and releases it; like the heart beating of its own accord. It just that much a part of me. With time and age, I have obviously experienced a lot of random things that run the gamut from terrible to blissful. I feel everything very intensely. Unfortunately with age I have become worse at verbal communication, but I have all of these subtle and complex images and thoughts I cannot convey other than through making images.

Shuffle: Is there someone you look up to in the art world?

Megan: Initially, Andrew Wyath (for his colors and appreciation in the meaning of everyday sights", Frida Kahlo (stubborn and spoke her mind and couldn't stop painting her minds diary over and over (thus she proved I didn't have to be normal and merely acceptable) and Ego Shiele (I will always envy his line work and negative spaces) Also photographer Sally Mann – for her moods and tones and compositions. I LOVED the subtle or blatant approach she used to document her children...her lovely, inspiring, feral children!

At the present time, there are MANY current artists who show immense dedication, skill and magic. From Andrew Hem to Korin Faight, Shawn Alexander to Scott Radke to Travis Louie...man, just too many to list. These are the people that I actually stop and my eyes lock in and travel the lines and shapes within the artist's painting. Kind of of like one would on a map – amazed at each stroke of these artists. Each line leading to that final amazing destination.

Shuffle: Where do you find inspiration?

Megan: Usually when I least expect it. When I am not looking for it. I will be in line for something and this child will be in front of me with this wild hair and gorgeous color skin and just an unusual face and I'm thinking "gaaahhhh, I would give anything to paint you!" But I take mental pictures of these interesting creatures I encounter during my days. The unexpected also happens when I'm wandering through the woods looking for animals or a stream but I wind up finding this fern that has amazing patterns on it, then I will find a tree with gorgeous flaws and discolorations and I think, wow, I can integrate that into a background of a painting, or I would integrate that into the subjects skin...etc. I'm inspired by old civil war era taintypes of women and children. They emanate a weary worldliness, a toughness that I envy, and a courage I admire. You know that there were probably some pretty intense things going on their lives, regardless of their stoic gazes for the camera. I also love and am inspired by ceremonial garments and headdresses of indigenous cultures all over the world. I love the magic ideas and feelings that exist when its time to put a costume of sorts on – there is electricity in the air – something magic and possibly minds blowing is about to occur. I love that sensation.

Shuffle: What would you like people to know about your art?

Megan: That believe it or not, I can be a happy person!!! I'm not all serious and moody all the time!

No, for real, I want them to know that the style in which I'm painting them, pen and ink nib and ink washes, is intentional. The delicate strokes and strata are a glimpse into the internal world of the person I am painting – strong creatures they are, but they all have stories and they all have their cracks and fault lines and intricacies. I want my technique of painting to reflect that. It thrills me also when people make up their own story to the painting. At my openings, I have heard people make up these amazing stories that they think the painting is about. Its so exciting, like I am being read a wonderful book! I leave my work not completely explained for two reasons: I don't want people to know how intensely personal some of these stories are and I WANT people to be able to relate to the paintings on their own terms and find their own story from it, that they love.



Kimber doesn't want people to know the personal stories behind her artwork. Instead, she wants people to come up with their own personal meanings. Image courtesy of Megan Kimber.

Shuffle: What's your favorite art piece?

Megan: Way too many to list, and they rotate about once every two months.

Shuffle: Where do you see yourself in ten years?

Megan: I honestly don't know. I don't envision things. I never had five-year plans. I live moment-to-moment and day-to-day. Sometimes I love myself for it; sometimes I think I'm an idiot for living that way. I would like to be living in the middle of nowhere in a forest, to continue stage two of my hermitage. I will bathe bones and stones and moss and the locals will think of me as "the witch."