

Animal portraits pop with color, personality

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Artist Alina Bachmann recalls her mother's worry when she was 3 years old and describing in vivid detail all the colors she was seeing in a dark room. For Bachmann, the world has always appeared in a multitude of shades. A trip to the eye doctor concluded that nothing was amiss, yet this visual superpower ensured her trajectory as an artist.

In fact, Bachmann rarely uses pure white or black in her paintings. Instead, she uses the full range of her paint palette to find varying hues in a black piece of fabric or a white wall. Her love for Vincent Van Gogh's dimensions of color and

brushstrokes influence these stylistic choices.

"I play off certain qualities of impressionism and push the limitations of colors," says Bachmann. "I always push the boundaries. Recently I painted a gray tabby cat and was finding yellows and oranges in his coat that someone else might not recognize."

Bachmann's animal portraits will be shown as a part of this year's Creative Tallahassee, an exhibition coordinated by COCA for the City of Tallahassee's Art in Public Places Program. Attendees to the opening reception on April 25 will encounter her scarlet ibises and wreathed hornbills in startling pinks, greens, blues and reds.



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ALINA BACHMANN

These plein air paintings were created on site at Zoo Atlanta, one of Bachmann's favorite artist retreats. After graduating with her BFA in studio art from the College of New Rochelle, Bachmann worked as a graphic designer for the Bronx Zoo. Her office was nestled behind the birds of prey exhibit, and on her lunch break she'd go to "Madagascar" to watch the lemurs in their habitat.

"I've painted people and self portraits but I always turn back to animals," says Bachmann. "My two passions as a child

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If you go

What: Creative Tallahassee 2019

When: Opening Reception 6-7:30 p.m., April 25, gallery on display 8 a.m.-5 p.m., Monday-Friday through June 3.

Where: City Hall Gallery, 300 South Adams St.

Cost: Free

Contact: For more information, call 850-224-2500 or visit coca.tallahasseearts.org/art-in-public-places/city-hall-gallery.

Portraits

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were animals and art. Because I chose not to work with them as a scientist, it makes me feel connected to them through paint.”

During creative dry spells, Bachmann often turns back to nature. Whether it's flipping on a wildlife documentary or taking a walk outside, she nurtures her connection with the animal kingdom. Her home studio is similarly wild. Bachmann refers to her workspace as “the reptile room.”

Living amongst her art supplies are pet panther chameleon Spiro and giant day gecko, Goddesszilla. However, many of her paintings are completed on site where she can be present with live animals.

“Animals are constantly moving,” says Bachmann. “So I'll take a pose they might have been in a few hours ago and merge it with what they're in now.”

Bachmann is a graphic designer by trade, though she says her heart and soul is fulfilled when she paints. The two worlds collide when she sets out to sketch new ideas. Rather than scribbling them out by hand in a notebook, Bachmann will map out her ideas on a computer before planning it out on canvas. This process allows her to make infinite edits and rid herself of any uncertainty she feels about the compositional elements.

However, Bachmann isn't rigid with her final vision. She will allow for her natural impulses to come out in the moment as she's dipping her brush into acrylics or watercolor paints. This is especially evident in her “imagined” backgrounds that serve as the backdrop for her feathered and furry subjects.

“The backgrounds are trying to get me back to a place where I was as a child,” says Bachmann. “I want them to come from more of my soul than what is in my surroundings. It's like a sixth dimension.”

Bachmann is proud of the work she's been able to accomplish as a designer and animal lover in Tallahassee. She has been redesigning the Tallahassee Museum's information plaques for the past couple years, and enjoys visiting the animals at the museum.

She's looking forward to seeing how her birds hang with the other art in Creative Tallahassee. To her, both paintings deal with love. The hornbills are entwined together while the ibises admire their surrounding flowers. Whether she's painting animals in their habitats or pets in a home environment, she feels an emotional output from each species.

“Hornbills are monogamous,” notes Bachmann. “Many bird species are. Essentially, I'm using an animal to capture the essence of what I would do with human subjects.”

Bachmann paints quickly, often completing work in a day and painting with simple tools like school grade watercolor sets. She says she prefers the faster pace so that she is not caught up in refining or endless editing. It also lends itself to her plein air work, where she finds the most rewarding moments as passersby, children especially, watch her paint.

“The look on children's faces when they watch you create something is just this mesmerizing magic quality,” says Bachmann. “When they see the materials, they connect with it. That's what drives me to do it, to inspire the next generation of artists.”

Amanda Sieradzki is the feature writer for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area's umbrella agency for arts and culture (www.tallahasseearts.org).



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