

# URBIN AESTHETIC

By Michael Heslink



In the last few years Kelly Seeber has decided to go public with her painting, something she always believed would be a solitary venture. “I never really thought I would,” she remarks, “I thought it would just be my own private endeavor.”

Kelly considers painting to be a necessary part of her life that is playful and therapeutic and began sharing out of a desire to connect with the community. Her work has a strong “urban aesthetic” that comes from her up-

bringing in the San Francisco Bay area and her travels around the world. “The urban influence is embedded in me and affects my aesthetic overall: in art, design, clothing and architecture. I tend to love a clean, contemporary look and I create art with these spaces

in mind.”

One of five siblings, Kelly grew up in the city, where her father, a former marine, worked at the shipyard. Her mother was a homemaker and very involved in the church, where Kelly and her siblings attended Sunday school and participated in arts and crafts. Growing up, she was always involved in creative projects from needlepoint and quilting to woodworking and stained glass. Despite this heavy creative influence, she received her Master’s of Science

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Degree at Old Dominion University and continues to work as a dental hygienist. Over the last several years, however, she has felt like her creative side has been missing and has chosen to focus more on improving that. She now feels fortunate that she is able to do both.

Kelly did not begin painting until after she was married. "My husband and I had an apartment, and I wanted to put some art on the walls." From there her passion took off. "Once I picked up painting I just fell in love with it and never put it back down."

Her art has a strong urban influence from San Francisco and the

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~Kelly Seeber

many cities across the world she has travelled to. These environments are embedded in her and she describes her paintings as having an urban aesthetic, something she deems more contemporary and "definitely not traditional." Kelly loves urban art and has been largely influenced by abstract artists, such as Beatriz Milhazes. "When I saw her work I just fell in love."

Kelly usually begins a painting with a certain concept in mind or idea she wishes to communicate. "For some reason I have something in my head and I want to get it on to canvas." From there she thinks in terms of layers, such as how many the piece will have and background to foreground elements. Her painting methods depend on the overall look she wishes to achieve, but they are usually very bold and colorful. When she first began painting, her husband told her "Go bigger. Always go bigger," and she continues to employ this idea in her pieces. She uses a variety of tools from brushes, paper towels, and spatulas to pouring and sanding to achieve her effect. She considers herself to be a self-taught artist and loves studying art books and looking at works of art. In particular, she pays close attention to details and techniques to try to figure out "how they got those marks on the canvas." The biggest part of learning for her is experimenting and she has attempted a range of styles throughout the years. She loves experimenting with art techniques and believes she is "creating differently every day."

Painting is definitely a mode of communication for Kelly, and she frequently includes hidden text or symbols in her pieces that have meaning to her at the time. These are usually recurring images, such as the letter "B" which is an important letter to her and stands for be

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yourself and find strength in that. She also includes question marks to illustrate the idea of continuing to question your surroundings and learning and uses footsteps as a symbol for moving forward. While she does not consider herself inspirational, she likes to put out a positive message and says, “If people were inspired, I would be ecstatic.”

Although Williamsburg is a more traditional city, Kelly does not believe it’s difficult to find inspiration locally and considers herself fortunate to live here. “It’s quieter. It’s a little bit simpler and I definitely appreciate that as I get older. It’s such a beautiful city.” She left California to follow some family members that were moving to Texas, where she met her husband, a contract engineer. After that, she lived in a few places before settling down in Williamsburg. She believes the city has a lot of opportunities for the arts, but believes there is room for expansion.

“I think that there is a lot of traditional art here. I definitely appreciate that, but I think that there’s also room for more growth on the contemporary side as well so I’m excited for that,” she says. She has started to connect more with local artists and feels that the art community is very supportive. “It’s been great. People have been really awesome and I’m just having fun.”

Aside from painting, Kelly has also been doing photography for eight years, but has recently taken it to the next level. She loves portraits and began when a friend and makeup artist asked her to take some portraits, and she fell in love. “We just had so much fun and I was hooked.” Portraits are her favorite type of photography, and she considers them an extension of art for her. While painting is more solitary, Kelly loves photography because it is more social and like a team effort with her, the client, and makeup artist/stylist all working together. “It’s a different kind of creating, but I love it!” Kelly is very interested in the artistic side of photography. She particularly likes digital photography because of the artistic opportunities it offers. “I love that I can filter a photo three different ways and get three different looks.”

Kelly enjoys that she has begun to share and people are acknowledging her hard work. She finds the public aspects challenging, because she is generally a private person and very reserved, but pushes herself to be more outgoing. She believes you need the support of the people around you to be successful and is appreciative of the support of her husband, friends and family.

Kelly also has a passion for home design and green building. She would love to design and build an eco-efficient home one-day that includes a downstairs creative space with an art and photography studio and engineering space for her husband that could be rented out for other services, such as to yoga instructors or used as an art gallery.

She generally considers herself a very independent person and serious by nature. “I’m just built that way so I definitely appreciate those around me, especially my husband, who can bring out the silly in me,” Kelly Seeber remarks. She has travelled to cities and countries across the world such as Vancouver, Singapore, Costa Rica, and the Caribbean and has retained an urban influence from these environments and her hometown of San Francisco.

“My influence always has some roots in where I come from.” **NDN**

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