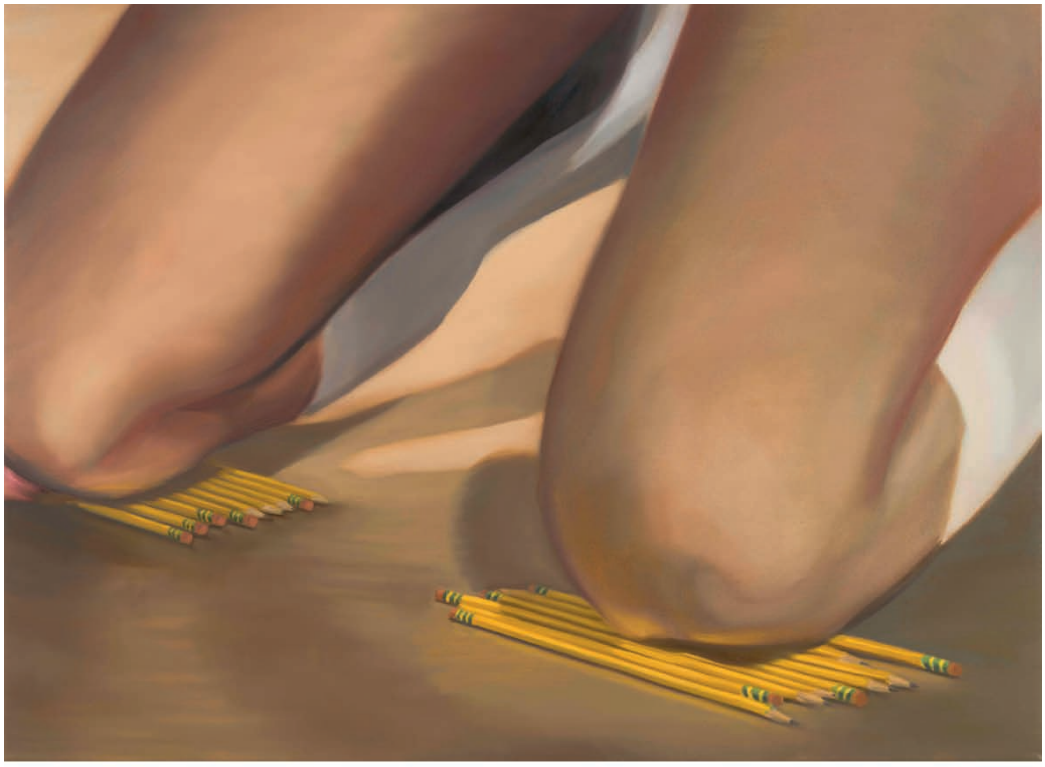
Shannon Cartier Lucy,
Press

AnOther

Shannon Cartier Lucy's Uncanny Portraits of Domestic Life

Art & Photography / Feature



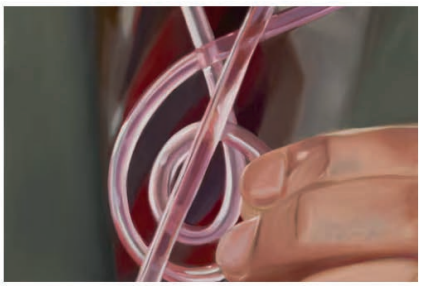
Shannon Cartier Lucy, Pencils, 2025
Courtesy the artist and Soft Opening, London. Photography by John Schweikert

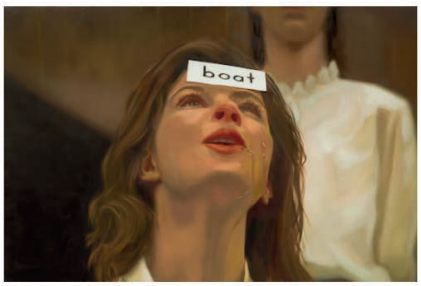
"I'm drawn to the depth and strangeness of things," says artist and psychotherapist Shannon Cartier Lucy as she opens a new show in London

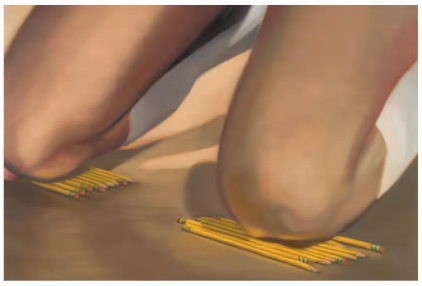
AnOther, 2025

Shannon Cartier Lucy paints alluring and unnerving images. Her scenes are often tightly cropped, focusing on semi-obscured slices of activity around which viewers might fill in the gaps. For her new show, **Woman With a Juice Box** at Soft Opening in east London, the US artist is exploring uncanny domestic moments. In one work, a child's pink bendy straw gleams in the foreground, clutched by the close-up fingers of a suited man who fades into the background. In another, a pair of bare legs in white socks kneel painfully on two neat rows of yellow pencils.

"I'm drawn to the depth and strangeness of things," says Lucy, when we speak ahead of the show's opening. "I want something that feels slightly uncomfortable. I can tell when I'm looking at a piece of art if the artist was able to let go enough for something strange to come through." While she does not overly psychoanalyse her images and works intuitively when composing her unusual scenes, she is a trained psychotherapist. This rich understanding of the unconscious mind imbues her work with a surreal edge.







Gallery / 10 Images

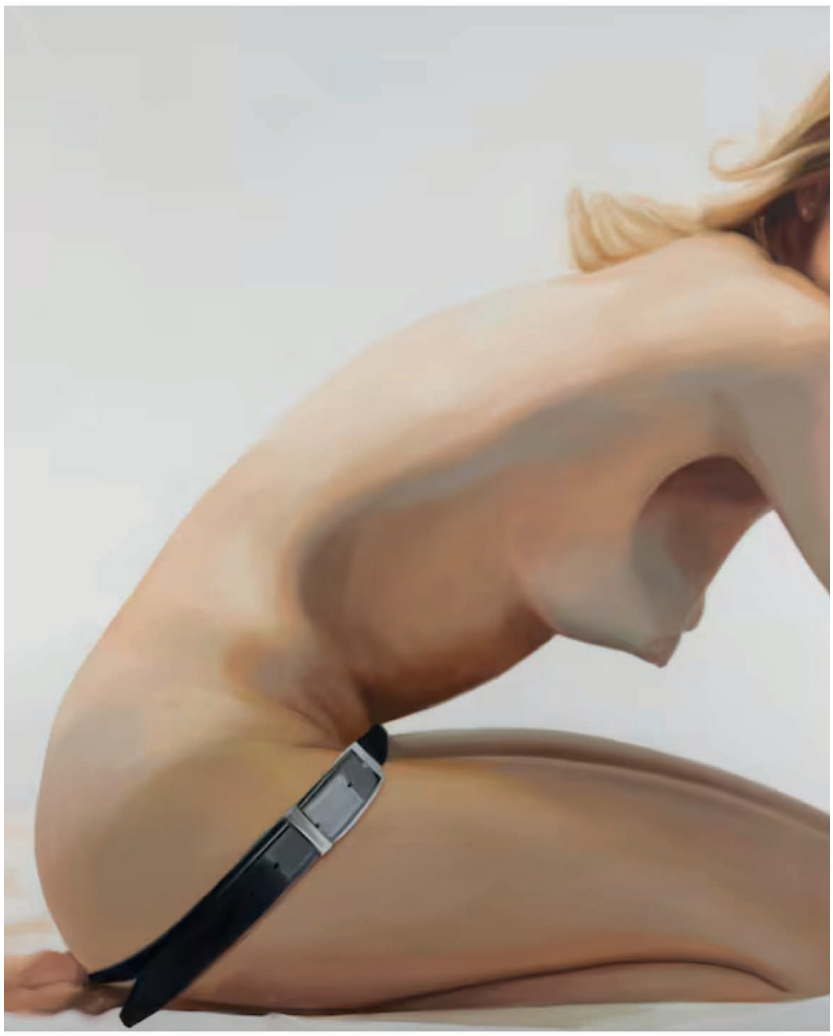
Lucy rarely paints recognisable people. When faces do appear in the work, they are partly covered. "I want to stay away from the viewer's relationship to the person and keep it about the experience and iconography of the image," she says. Another piece in the show features a woman clutching a juicebox, her face enveloped by a sheer grey veil and woven hat. "I tried to envision this middle-aged woman walking down the street where you might do a double-take and have all these questions about what is going on." She enjoys bringing together recognisable, everyday objects with such moments of oddness. "A friend's child said something which I love, 'I know it, but I don't know it.' I like it when you feel you know what you're looking at, but then it doesn't make sense."

Many of Lucy's images have a photographic quality – cropped as a quick snapshot might be rather than a formally composed setup – and she is also inspired by cinema. She looks a lot at cinematic stills and recognises that her favourite movies shape some of her ideas. "I am a cinephile. I've been obsessed with films since high school, much more than fine art," she tells me. "I work viscerally, and I think film has just seeped in. It's how I see things; it is my visual language."

Shannon Cartier Lucy, Untitled (boat), 2025
Courtesy the artist and Soft Opening, London. Photography by John Schweikert

She is particularly compelled by the films of Robert Bresson and Michael Haneke. In the latter's movies Funny Games (2007) and The White Ribbon (2009), there is a potent combination of psychological horror and aesthetic refinement that resonates through Lucy's work. "There is such a deep spiritual and psychological connection to the viewer. The films themselves are beautiful but also really dark," she says. The softness and beauty of her paintings similarly allow her to delve into uncomfortable power dynamics without becoming too repellent. "If I'm looking at an image, it will turn me off if it's overtly rude or horrific," she considers. "Why would I want to create that relationship with the viewer? My mother is a fan even of my weird, edgy works, and I love that. I'm not going to repel for the sake of rebellion."

Numerous quotidian objects recur through her work, taking on various roles. In the exhibition, yellow pencils are shown as a painful, punishing item, but she has also utilised them in works that suggest disobedience. A new painting showing at Art Basel in Miami next month features multiple pencils stabbed violently into a table full of brioche and cheese, disrupting the typical calm of the still life format.



Shannon Cartier Lucy, Woman In Black Belt, 2024
Courtesy the artist and Soft Opening, London

Many of Lucy's paintings contain objects and aesthetics that have been highly feminised or connected with innocence, from the bendy pink straw to white socks and satin ribbons. The imagined purity of these items heightens the unsettling nature of the work, though she stays in a place of uncertain discomfort rather than explicit kinkiness. "I'm not into kinkiness," she says. "There is a lot of other art with this kind of symbolism, but I don't mean for it to overtly communicate that. I use it more as a symbol of emotional or spiritual submission … You've been invited into this soft, colourful world. You can't quite put your finger on it, but you find something uncomfortable. That's a painting I want to make."

Domestic space is an ongoing theme for Lucy. Her career took off at the start of the pandemic, as the feeling of home changed and its at times constricting nature took hold. She notes that the collective consciousness seemed to bubble over with a feeling she has had for a long time. "I felt a sense of disenchantment my whole life; what are we doing playing this charade of control as a society? When you see it crumble, everyone freaks out so much." Her work does not comment on specific global events, but she does tap into a very current feeling that things are on the brink of collapse. "I'm trying to submit to this uncomfortable truth that encompasses the beautiful, the ugly, the violent."

Woman With a Juice Box by Shannon Cartier Lucy is on show at Soft Opening in London until 10 January 2026.

Emergent, 2023

SHANNON CARTIER LUCY, THE SELF-AWARE PAINTER

An intimate coversation with Lorraine de Thibault

Words By: Lorraine de Thibault

I am convinced that there is no accident in encounters as there is no accident in writing. As long as you don't write, as long as you don't overcome laziness, it's because the need is not strong enough yet, not suffocating enough, it's because the subject hasn't been fully encountered yet.

When I discovered Shannon's work, it was obvious: I had an urgent need to know who was behind these enigmatic paintings, between surrealism, idealism and disillusionment.

Our first contact was through the telephone, in order to arrange our Zoom meeting, both victims of the distance that separated us, she in Nashville, I in Mexico City. That first conversation lasted 40 minutes, during which it seemed to me that I was calling a long lost friend that always had been cooler than me. A kind of complicity, of gentleness, was established between us, two women without faces for each other. Only the voice guided us towards trust and understanding.

The appointment was thus made, two months later, by interposed screens, imposed by this modernity that only works half-heartedly: why didn't it simply tackle the question of teleportation?

Shannon Cartier Lucy in her Nashville Studio, 2022

Emergent, 2023

On Monday 30th of May, our conversation opened with news of each other, with confessions about love, long-distance love and the beauty of longing for the other: the beauty of staring for hours into the void not knowing what you have been thinking, yet knowing that those thoughts have been inspired by your heart and your far away love.

I had read interviews with Shannon before. Very frank, no sugar-coating, she notably talks about her breakdown which was a lifesaver and necessary for her.

In the introduction, I talked about the moment of encounter with one's subject. I'm going through a phase in my life where I'm finally worried about myself because I've hit a breakdown. A few days ago, I even thought I was experiencing it. Funny reflex, I thought: now I have to write about Shannon. My text was almost ready, ready to read, ready to eat, but it was written by reason, by head and under the yoke of the deadline. It was therefore to be discarded.

Let's start again: Shannon leaves for New York at 17, after being encouraged by the artist Lisa Yuskavage for her artistic talent, almost in spite of herself. She devours the Big Apple, full of ambitions and with her share of traumas she has taken with her.

She starts art projects, full of willpower and dreams, becomes by necessity the nanny for a famous artist / gallerist couple in New York and sees the life she would like to touch without really getting there. Then, to remind her of her dances and her dreams, drugs and her lost paradises intruded. Her career didn't take off, she found herself in a kind of fishbowl where, in addition to the pressure to create to sell, there was the added pressure of having a baby for a woman who was entering her thirties. One day, it became too much. By the time Shannon was sober, she couldn't take it anymore, her marriage was falling apart, she decided to leave New York.

"I don't think I had anything in the beginning. I had a couple of art shows, and I felt like there was a promising outlook if I just stayed on the path. Maybe just like anyone would, you know, grow in the art world. But because of the drug addiction, because of emotional sort of instability that comes with like maybe trauma or whatever that led to my drug addiction, I was defeated. And it wasn't just by New York, it was by unresolved emotional issues and childhood issues. And whatever it is right, that I just sort of pushed down until it all needed to explode. Whatever that defeat was, it wasn't that New York defeated me necessarily. I was a lot softer human compared to people with plans to find success. It was never my outlook on anything. In terms of life, mine was just sort of like, how do I feel in each situation, what feels real and authentic and what feels phony. Anytime something felt « phony »: it was not for me. I was not cut out for this yucky, gross phony world. That was continually my experience. Then the breakdown happened - thank God. »

So she leaves for Los Angeles, a new city, a new Shannon. Everything is ready: the workshop, the acquaintances there, a supposed mental space - and yet. Shannon can't do it, she just cries.

Sex after death, oil on canvas, 2019

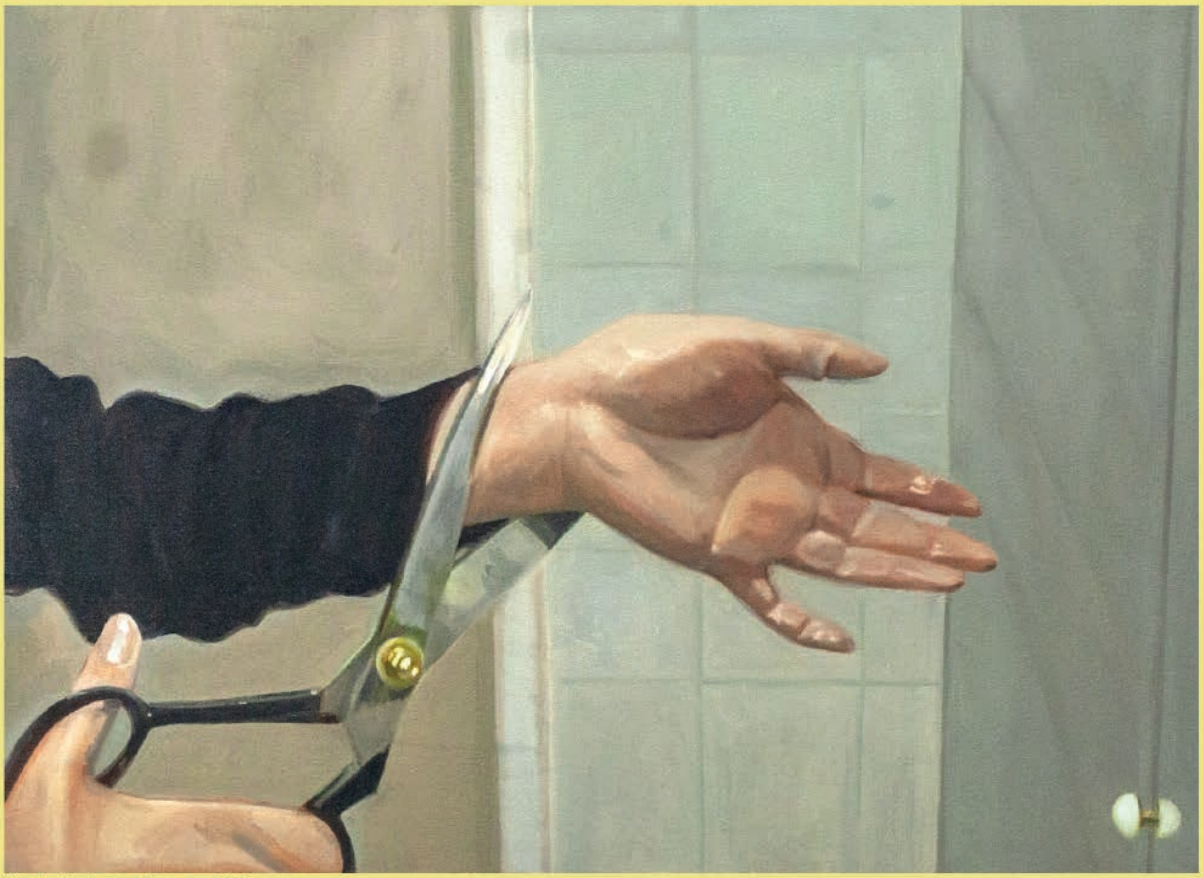
This episode is fascinating for me. It's interesting how you always try to place a breakdown in a specific space-time, like a second when everything has tumbled down, changed its face, reversed the direction of the earth. If that were the case, recovering from it should be instantaneous too. Falling down, all at once, and getting up again with a snap of the fingers. Everything is an instant. Maybe so, but everything is preparing for that moment, like a wall bending from the last drop too many.

It is interesting to see that a new start in one's initial idea is sometimes not enough - as if the change is not radical enough to be reborn. You really have to give up everything, make everything die, to really claim a second birth.

And where better to be born again than in the town where your life started?

Shannon returned to Nashville, the city of her childhood, of her recovered traumas and of her mother's house, where she decided to start over.

Emergent, 2023



If my hands offends, oil on canvas, 2019

Embracing your second choice and the first one takes you back

Back at home, Shannon decided to study psychology, fast-tracked, which she had often thought about. She was 39 years old at the time.

These studies of psychology, in particular, blossomed in Shannon's mind because she had been raised by a schizophrenic father. This particularity, a childhood in which everything took on a different meaning with overwhelming logic, is as if she had adopted it in two ways: in her new studies and in her later work, in which a form of surreal normality can be distinguished.

So the studies pass by, like a caravan. One day, an emotional shock, a reconciliation with the past, makes Shannon start to paint:

"So making that first painting, it's like the floodgates open and I was sort of reconciling with my ex and it was a lot of emotions. I made like a painting a week for the next six months. They just flowed out of me. And all of a sudden, after realizing that I learned how to paint back then in college, I had ONE painting class, I thought: Why don't I just start painting? It's not like as an experienced painter, I just had learned enough to where now I can start exploring. I'm still not a great painter, honestly, like, I mess up all the time. »

Do we have to turn our backs on our destiny in order for it to come back on its own?

This painting, a fish in a bowl on a stove, seems to be an allegory of an inner drama. Of the woman, trapped in her macho role and obliged mother, of the artist who sees the life she would have liked to lead flash in front of her.

"And I was like, alright, I guess this is my new thing, a bit like a science experiment, you have to have the constants in order to have the variants. Painting is going to be the constant now and I'm just going to every idea that swimming through my head. I'm just going to fit it into painting and we'll see what happens. And I didn't think far ahead, I was just making art and be okay with myself not to be in the art world. I was okay with not being in New York. Now, the only thing that is important is to make good art, to exist in the world and to have integrity. (...) »

Emergent, 2023

Our new home, oil on canvas, 2017

Thus the paintings are followed by the questions of others and the statements of oneself:

« I had no idea what to do with my paintings. But Instagram exists and I received validation. It is a totally different experience than when I lived in New York, we didn't have Instagram, we didn't have this sort of instant way of sharing with that many people. That gave me sort of this kind of fuel: people are responding, I'm going to keep painting. It wasn't just for me, we want other people to see things. And then my identity was starting to come back. I had to tell myself, versus the psychologist role that I might be playing, that art could also be a service, a very important service if I'm authentic and if it's coming from a place of sincerity. (...) I used to be very shy but now, I am very confident about my paintings. The way I see things has changed tremendously. »

Indeed, from her experience, from almost a certain detachment from the art market, Shannon has adopted a very confident attitude towards herself and her work, which is undoubtedly the result of accepting herself and her sorrow. She then shared with me what I would like to call "the girl on the train anecdote".

"I was on the train in New York City, and I was reading a book by Pema Chau, « When things fall apart ». As I was reading the book, a woman started a conversation with me. I don't remember the full conversation but this part, I will never forget. She said "self awareness kills art and creativity". It is like she had stabbed me in the gut by telling me something like that, because I was already convinced that art was not coming for me, that my life was over. She was saying that you were supposed to be a tortured soul to commit brilliant shit. And years later, for this type of work to come out, I always thought of that random, strange woman on the train saying that to me and thinking how wrong she was. I do believe you don't have to be deep in some sorrow to make a painting about sorrow. These things can overlap and coexist. (...)

I think the fear always exists and it's always going to exist, grief exists, and will always exist. But we have the ability to also exist within a separate space in which you can see it happening. So the only difference is the maturity or the self-awareness that enables you to watch these things as they're happening. So automatically, that gives this kernel of fear, this kernel of sorrow or longing, the deep longing within us, regardless of it being a person, identity. We are all left with a deep spiritual hole. You get to see it while it's happening. So automatically, it doesn't have that grip on you, it doesn't mean it's ever gonna go away. So that's the difference. And I think that's what that woman could not have told me because obviously, she didn't experience that very thing. »

The acceptance of your pain, your sorrow deep inside can then be the key to art, thus creating two spaces: the one where you keep, where you cradle your deep feelings and the one where you express yourself, sometimes drawing from the former, in full awareness.

Emergent, 2023

Intruders, oil on canvas, 2019

Shannon, in this new and accepted consciousness, thus received recognition through Instagram and as happiness (liberation?) never comes alone, her work was noticed and she presented her first exhibition at the Lubov Gallery in 2019.

I wondered then if it was a revenge, a war won against New York, a big city that has always scared me: too big, too money-oriented, too much iron, too much glass, too many smiles whose sincerity one doubts.

It's exciting how quickly you get an idea of what someone's attitude is, or at least should be. Disappointed by New York? Ego wins out, right? You want to crush the city like you felt crushed. That is not Shannon.

"Maybe on some level, it is revenge but it is proving not so much to other people -because that's sort of an anonymous other is not anyone specific, it's maybe proving to my old self that struggled for so long. Also, I might just be like that I enjoy challenge anyway, otherwise, I wouldn't paint; because painting is so fucking hard.(...) And concerning New York and my shows there, it is certainly where I put the most redemptive sort of energy into my work. New York is my home, I lived there since I was 17. I lived there for 17 years. That place shaped me. And I feel like the energy is what kind of work I am presenting, not so much to anyone in particular - even though there's probably a few of those with whom I want to be like: "Look at me, I've made it back ». It's not revenge though. It's redemptive. It's resurgence. »

The resurgence, the new birth, that which has been waiting for its moment to arrive and which is undoubtedly accompanied by a form of calming maturity and a more detached vision of the world.

Emergent, 2023

Girls with swans, oil on canvas, 2017

« I know feel solid type of ground, which means anything around me that may or may not seem ridiculous or funny doesn't affect me anymore. I can create my own destiny. Regardless of anyone else's way of seeing, especially as we are in a capitalist, disgusting, capitalist world, I can choose how I'm going to engage with that, whether or not I'm going to engage with it. In other words, I just finally had a solid ground. And maybe that's just maturity. I mean, I'm in my mid 40s now. So maybe, it's not just the defeat and just the overcoming of all that, but it's also kind of growing up, having fear kind of shading »

In May, Shannon presented an exhibition at the Massimo de Carlo Gallery in Milan entitled "The secret ingredient is death" in homage to the mortuary elegance of Italy and her past experience, consciously apprehended, as the well of her inspiration.

Her upcoming show "Rubedo" opens in February 2023 at Night Gallery, Los Angeles.

Shannon Cartier Lucy, *Dinnertime (Self-Portrait)*, 2018, oil on canvas, 20 × 31".

Shannon Cartier Lucy

LUBOV

A pet Dalmatian cut open on a dissection table, six blackberries strung together with a needle and thread, four pairs of large white panties neatly aligned on an Anatolian rug: The paintings of Shannon Cartier Lucy present a magic realism of precise displacements, suffused with soft kink and macabre sentimentality. The exhibition here, "The Loo Table," was a follow-up to her 2020 breakthrough debut at Lubov. It was titled after a type of eighteenth-century card table with a foldable top, but the press release encouraged a slippery associative logic: "Loo is the loser, the runaway, a lullaby." It is also, to state the obvious, a toilet, the word homophonous with the first syllable of the artist's last name (and the gallery's, for that matter), insinuating, to the prurient mind at least, something scato-biographical gathering at the edges of her tidy, feminine-coded interiors and anxious delicate still lifes.

In the late '90s, Cartier Lucy studied under Lisa Yuskavage at New York University but soon set aside figurative painting to make text-based works, installations, and fabricated objects. She returned to the genre years later after divorcing, getting sober, and exiting the professional art world to become a psychotherapist in her hometown of Nashville. The artist's personal life has loomed large in much of the recent writing on her work, and she herself has openly acknowledged her childhood with a schizophrenic father as an inspiration for her surrealistic household tableaux ("It was customary in my home to find a toaster in the freezer or the Holy Bible in the dishwasher") and has spoken of the healing role painting played in her adult experiences of trauma, recovery, and self-actualization. In anchoring these images in the artist's psyche, however, we needn't foreclose other riffs and resonances. One detects echoes of Balthus, Edward Hopper, or Norman Rockwell (by way of Lana Del Rey's profane tmesis) in her scenes of torqued domesticity. But the artist's more immediate influences are cinematic: Robert Bresson, Jean-Luc Godard, and Michael Haneke.

A still Cartier Lucy found on the internet from Carlos Saura's 1975 film *Cría cuervos* (Breeding Ravens) inspired the overall composition for her *Girl at the Loo Table*, 2021. The humongous fork and knife, which the painting's young protagonist attentively manipulates to eat her supper (an unappetizing brown bolus of unidentified starches and meats) are the painter's invention. She makes quick work of the scalloped white china, the light refracting through the glassware, and the cumulus-like dinner roll on the stiff white tablecloth. Crisp and epigrammatic, the painting feels like a distillation of the turbid melodrama unfolding in

Artforum, 2022

Dinnertime (Self-Portrait), 2018. Here, the artist's juvenile likeness braces herself with one elbow on a red Persian carpet. She's fallen next to a skirted table and is being pinned down by a procrustean wooden chair that has, for reasons unexplained, tipped forward. An acephalous, buttoned-up female torso and the cuff of a beige gentleman's sport coat indicate the aloof presence of mother and father, formally seated around a glinting silver teapot.

In an effort to "generalize" her emotional and psychological themes, Cartier Lucy deliberately excludes period-specific details from her work. And yet, despite the tradition-bound naturalism of her chosen painterly idiom, one feels that her paintings couldn't have been made at any time but the present. These are genre pictures for an age of prestige TV and creeping proletarianization, of self-care and social breakdown. None of these concerns surface in any identifiable way in the content of her art, but we look at its controlled chaos and instinctually recognize it as our own, just as the titular figure of *Woman in Reflecting Light*, 2021, stares down at a table awash in sunlight, mesmerized by her distorted shadow.

— *Chloe Wyma*

BOMB, 2021

The Brooklyn Rail, 2021

Shannon Cartier Lucy: *The Loo Table*

By Jason Rosenfeld

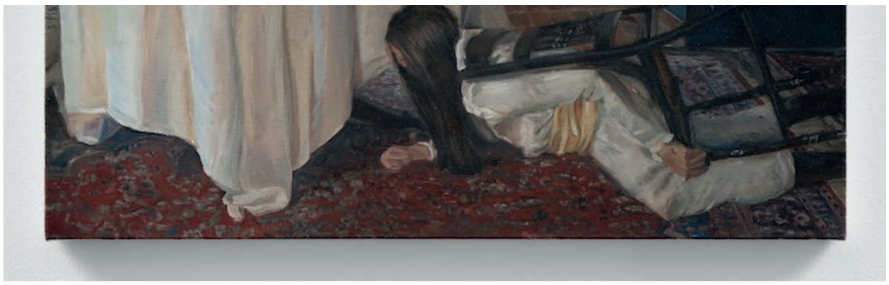
Shannon Cartier Lucy, *The Autopsy*, 2021. Oil on canvas, 34 x 44 inches. Courtesy Lubov Gallery.

ON VIEW
Lubov Gallery
September 18 – November 14, 2021
New York

Shannon Cartier Lucy's nine oils occupy two rooms in Lubov's fourth floor space, in its airy perch above Chinatown's Kimlau Arch. The streetwise cacophony here gives way to domestic intimacy, of a quietly compelling kind. Born in Nashville, Tennessee, Lucy has only returned to artmaking over the past few years after multiple different lives—as an undergrad at NYU who pursued an art career in the city before moving back to Nashville to kick a drug habit, giving up art, and earning a Master's in Psychotherapy from the University of Tennessee. She claims to be still learning how to paint, after training in other media and that long layoff from artmaking. Writers and the artist herself often cite growing up with a schizophrenic father when discussing her work's predilection for unexpected juxtaposition. That is evident, to a degree, but the recent pictures present less pat stories and oppositions, and strong connections to 19th-century European art.

The Brooklyn Rail, 2021

There are two works from 2018 and the rest are from this year. *A New Pack* (2018) is an overhead view of four pairs of white panties lined up on a worn wool rug, like arrows with the tapering crotches pointing right. The delicate details of the carpet weave are finely worked and equivalized to the canvas's own fabric. The fringe of the rug comes close to the lower edge of the canvas but does not quite touch, locating our vision in space, making us feel as if we can almost see our toes poking into the scene as we admire the new pack in formation. Across the room is *Dinnertime (Self-Portrait)* (2018), and now it is the artist on a similarly decorative rug. She sprawls on the right, on her stomach, an overturned black wooden chair framing her buttocks, as if its front legs gave way and pitched her forward. She wears a white jumpsuit with a yellow sash at the waist. Her hair occludes her face. In the upper-left section are fragmentary, headless views of her startlingly nonchalant parents. The father is in profile but represented only by a section of his right arm from brown-sleeved elbow to hand, the top of his left hand, and a bit of his right leg. The mother sits primly and facing out at the far side of the table with her hands clasped, in a gray robe and a white blouse. The tabletop is set with a silver tea service, a small white flower in a squat vase, salt and pepper shakers. Bright light from casement windows behind the couple brings the table's still life elements to glittering life. The creamy treatment of the off-white tablecloth and glowing tone recall naturalist art of the late 19th-century, interiors by Nordic artists through Munch or British painters of the Newlyn School. The psychological impact of the flailing girl, struggling to hold herself up like the old woman in Andrew Wyeth's *Christina's World* (1948), is more contemporary in its thrust. Yet the picture seems to lie in the realm of the British "Problem Picture" made famous by artists like John Collier and William Quiller Orchardson, who offered narratival pictures without literary referents to an avid Victorian/Edwardian art public who delighted in trying to tease out a story from the scenes. But those tales tended towards distressed lovers or issues of class and gender rather than emotional and physical torture. Lucy treads in more malevolent realms of the female experience.



Shannon Cartier Lucy, *Dinnertime (Self-Portrait)*, 2018. Oil on canvas, 21 x 30 inches. Courtesy Lubov Gallery.

Near the windows is *The Autopsy* (2021), a startlingly direct view of a Dalmatian on a cockeyed mortuary slab, bloodlessly peeled open to reveal its organs. But for the exposed viscera, the dog could easily seem asleep. The most sanguine element of this inertly horrific image is the dog's thick red collar. In the more recent work, Lucy is less concerned with textures and materiality—the brushwork is thin and only generally descriptive, giving the subjects more agency.

Across from this stilled doggy life is a still life titled *Threading Blackberries* (2021), featuring a red table with a crisp white cloth bisecting it from front to back. There is a small plate of peanuts at center right, perilously positioned on the front edge, six blackberries threaded with a needle and a spool of thread, a tray of green tomatoes, a bunch of grapes, and a highly reflective red Asian vase with a menacing golden dragon motif. The background is black, as in Zurbarán or Cotán, but Manet is the leading light here.

Shannon Cartier Lucy, *Wasps and Bramble*, 2021. Oil on canvas, 22 x 32. Courtesy Lubov Gallery.

In the rear room is a portrait format work titled *Artist with Huckleberries* (2021), where she poses behind a round table strewn

with the red fruit and channels the pose of Virginie Gautreau in Sargent's *Madame X* (1883–84) at the Met. In *Girl at the Loo Table* (2021), a juvenile version of Lucy cuts some unidentified plated food with a cartoonishly overlarge knife and fork, like a shrunken Alice in Wonderland. She is flanked by two glass vessels holding water that are marked by lovely geometric abstract reflections, as against the straightforwardness of the girl's depiction. Loo tables were 18th-century versions of round-topped card tables that could fold up for storage. The table surface when folded upright could also serve as another painted element in the room. The duality of purpose—a gaming venue and template for visualized fantasies—parallels Lucy's pictorial and thematic strategies.

Nature comes into play in *Loblolly Pine* (2021), a closeup of a pinecone floating in a glass of water with a flattened and benedictive hand hovering above the lip, and *Wasps and Bramble* (2021), also blown up, wherein one of the buzzing insects has alighted on the left side of a bethorned branch and another, at the right, is caught in midair, seen impossibly clearly while in flight, above a vessel filled with liquid whose edges glisten from light from an unseen source. This is the strangest work in the show. Its pleasure lies in the gentle blend of hues, the consistent overall tone, the air of non-surrealist inexplicability. This is consistent in these mundane tableaux, in Lucy's flitting from genre to genre in the same musical key. She has asserted that "painting for me is a repetitive, meditative practice that helps keep the crazies away."[1] The practice is repeated, the results blur into an overall sameness, but the quizzical subjects intrigue, strengthened by their lack of easy comprehension. Lucy's worlds are not particularly enterable, nor alluring, but they linger, even after one re-engages with the teeming city below.

1. Interview with Taylor Dafoe, Artnet News, August 27, 2020.

Contributor

Jason Rosenfeld

Jason Rosenfeld Ph.D., is Distinguished Chair and Professor of Art History at Marymount Manhattan College. He was co-curator of the exhibitions *John Everett Millais* (Tate Britain, Van Gogh Museum), *Pre-Raphaelites: Victorian Avant-Garde* (Tate Britain and the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.), and *River Crossings* (Olana and Cedar Grove, Hudson and Catskill, New York). He is a Senior Writer and Editor-at-Large for the *Brooklyn Rail.*

ARTS

In New Paintings, Shannon Cartier Lucy Blows The Lid Off Reality

Brienne Walsh Contributor

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Sep 17, 2021, 12:19pm EDT

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Shannon Cartier Lucy, "The Autopsy," 2021, Oil on canvas, 35 x 44 inches IMAGE COURTESY THE ARTIST AND LUBOV.

A few weeks ago, my 5-year-old daughter called my husband into the living room. She wanted to show him a cool television show she was watching. She pressed play on her iPad, and the screen was filled with the scene of a man doing an autopsy on a wild animal. She was watching PBS's "Inside Nature's Giants," and even as my husband flinched away from the gore, she was fascinated.

I won't say my daughter isn't like anyone else, but she certainly isn't like everyone else. She often points to her limbs and tells me that she is made up of animal parts. She isn't scared of ghosts or monsters. Her favorite color is red. In her

early years, she was often kept away at night by “the invisible girl” who sat at the end of her bed. In my family, there is a long history of mental illness. I worry, sometimes, that my daughter’s fascination with the uncanny and the gory might link her to this dark legacy. I’m also proud of her because I don’t have to try hard to raise someone who knows who she is. My daughter knows who she is already.

"Loblolly Pine," 2021, Oil on canvas, 25 x 36 inches IMAGE COURTESY THE ARTIST AND LUBOV.

I see my daughter in the paintings of Shannon Cartier Lucy, which will be on view at “The Loo Table,” an exhibition at Lubov gallery in New York from September 18 through November 7, 2021. Consisting of nine paintings, seven of which were made in the past year, the exhibition uses the aesthetic language of master painters of light and shadow such as Vilhelm Hammershøi and Johannes Vermeer to create landscapes that lift the veil off what we have been conditioned to see — and expose so much of what we do consider to be real as artificial. At the risk of sounding like a complete dolt, they allow the viewer to see the world with fresh eyes, like a child does.

Often, over the past year, like so many other people, I have

felt the effects of intense screen burnout, which has led to depression and exhaustion. For the first time in twenty years, to recover from it, I stopped trying to cram my time with "productive" or money-making activities, and instead, did nothing. I lay in bed and watched the different shades of leaves on the two magnolia trees outside of my window. I sat in a chair in the shade, and watched a hummingbird visit the purple flowers of a bush that flourished in the humid Southern environment where I live.

"Wasps and Bramble," 2021, Oil on canvas, 22 x 32 inches IMAGE COURTESY THE ARTIST AND LUBOV.

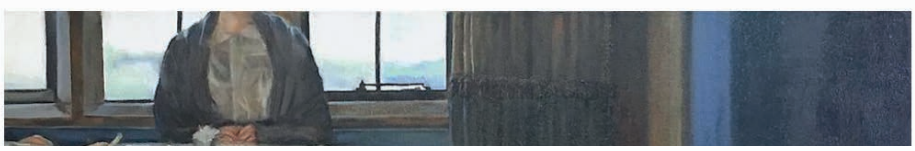
Lucy captured not exactly what I saw, but instead, what it felt like to look at the world again after so much time away from it. *Wasps and Bramble* (2021) depicts a thorny stem, hovering over a clear liquid, visited by two finely rendered wasps. *Loblolly Pine* (2021), which depicts a pine cone in a half-filled glass of clear liquid, covered by a hand, looks like an experiment my daughter would do when I told her she wasn't allowed to use her iPad. *A New Pack* (2018) shows an exquisitely rendered carpet covered with four pairs of clean white underwear — a "pattern," as my daughter proudly announces when she notices the repetition of certain elements in our ordinary days.

Forbes, 2021

"A New Pack," 2018, Oil on canvas, 20 x 24 inches IMAGE COURTESY THE ARTIST AND LUBOV.

Lucy studied painting at New York University, and then gave it up after losing herself to the hard-partying, cut-throat ways of the art world in the early 2000s. “I’m sort of just a soft human, and it was too much,” she says. “It didn’t feel real.” She eventually moved to Nashville, where she grew up. “It felt like giving up,” she says. “There was no art scene, and no cultural energy.” Her father, who is schizophrenic, and was homeless for a time, moved into the home she shares with her partner. “He’s a guy who wears two pairs of pants, and smears his television with peanut butter,” she says. Rather than being horrified by his behavior, she finds it fascinating. “That off quality, that uncanny quality [in my painting], I’m attracted to that because of my father,” she says.

In 2017, Cartier was a week away from graduating with a master’s degree in science from the University of Tennessee when a painting “came out of me,” she says. The first painting was followed by thirty others. She was scared to identify as a painter again after giving up the medium. “I related [painting] to failure, to not getting what I wanted,” she says.



Forbes, 2021

"Chair Self-Portrait," 2018, Oil on canvas, 20 x 31 inches IMAGE COURTESY THE ARTIST AND LUBOV.

But the paintings she made in the past three years are virtuosic, expertly balancing on the edge between beauty and grotesqueness, violence and serenity with flat, assured brushstrokes. Often, they are very funny. *Chair Self-Portrait* (2018) depicts the artist, her long straight black hair covering her face, pinned on her belly by a dining room chair while two other people sit patiently at a perfectly set table. *Girl at the Loo Table* (2021) depicts a young, pretty girl sitting at a similar table, eating a meal with comically large utensils — perhaps the way that Lucy feels as an adult trying to behave. *Woman in Reflecting Light* (2021) shows a beautiful woman dressed like Princess Leia, completely enraptured by her shadow on a table. I look at the painting, and I see my daughter at 25, whiling away an afternoon.

Often, Lucy's paintings hint at sexual deviance, or self-harm. *Better Call it Grace*, a monograph of Lucy's work published by Hassla Books concurrently with the exhibition, is full of reproductions of paintings of women bent over tables, wrapped in plastic or holding sharp scissors against their wrists as if they are going to cut off their own hands. But the paintings in "The Loo Table" — the exhibition takes its name from a 17th century card game played on a round folding table — are devoid of such innuendo. They embody the viewpoint of a girl whose mind has yet to be muddied by sexual awakening. What does a dog look like when you cut him open? What happens when you put an acorn in water? What does a

Trebuchet, 2021

Shannon Cartier Lucy: Sensual Imagery

Nashville-based artist Shannon Cartier Lucy *speaks to Millie Walton about her solo show at Soft Opening in London and how the physicality of painting elevates the image*

For her first solo exhibition in London, Shannon Cartier Lucy presents a new series of seductive and unsettling paintings of women set amidst the domesticity, chaos and excess of a party.

Here, the artist discusses her inspirations, disrupting the expectations of the gaze and why she likes the feeling of uncertainty.

Your work feels very narrative-driven. Do you see yourself as a story-teller?

Rather than point to a story, I want to invoke a feeling because feelings inform thoughts which inform feelings and so on, which creates an experience. An abstract painting, because it isn't pointing necessarily to figures and objects which are recognisable, isn't really expected to have a narrative. I think with figurative painting, there's an expectation for familiar figures and objects to make sense and be cohesive. And with surrealism or fantasy painting, we can still logically point to that and say, "That's fantasy, it's not realistic." I guess my paintings live somewhere in between. We can look at them and say, "I see an image rendered realistically, but I don't really know what's going on here." The image is intriguing and sexy and scary or odd, depending on who is seeing it. Painting somehow elevates the image, whatever it is, because the craft and its physicality can stop you, draw you in and convince you of its presence.

Tell us about *Cake on the Floor*. What interests you in the dramas and settings of a "party"?

Trebuchet, 2021

Actually, it was after making a few paintings that I thought, "How do all of these relate to each other?" One of those paintings was a piece of cake on the floor, so I liked the idea of simply using *Cake on the Floor* as the show title. It's interesting and fun to find that a title can automatically guide our minds in a direction, a way of seeing the rest of the paintings. I always get nervous when it's time to title a show because I am so afraid of limiting it somehow. I felt like this title made the most sense because it didn't make much sense, but it could also mysteriously tie the rest of the paintings together.

A Soft Rein (2021), Shannon Cartier Lucy. Courtesy the artist and Soft Opening, London. Photography Theo Christelis

What symbolism does the ribbon hold for you in these works?

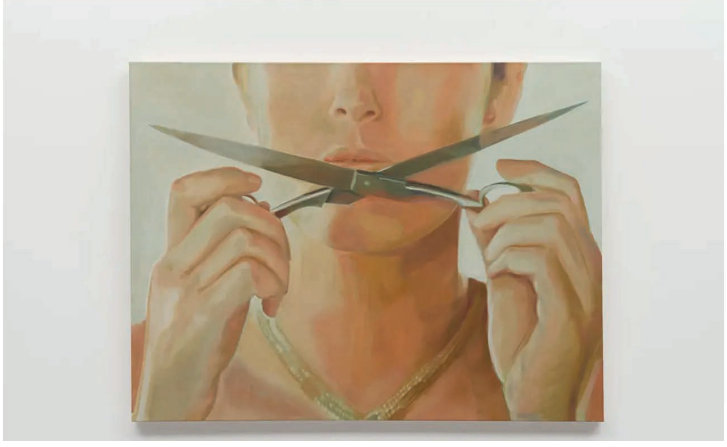
From a very young age, I would watch my mum take scissors and curl the ribbon into those tight springy curls, so that particular image carries a lot of nostalgia for me, it's comforting and familiar.

What generally inspires your compositions? Do you work with models or source imagery?

I use both images and models, depending on the scenario. For this show, I had a model wear a child's multi-coloured raincoat that I had bought on Etsy. I also made my boyfriend begrudgingly pose for me with ribbon on his face and hanging from our light fixture. I source imagery from lots of different places.

The clothing, interiors and colour palette often seems to suggest a time period that's neither contemporary nor nostalgic – it feels almost like you're creating a kind of dream space.

That is interesting. I guess it is my dream space because it's what I am conjuring up. I think there is a very classic style element to the interiors and clothing in my paintings that's timeless in a way.



Trebuchet, 2021

Woman with Scissors (2021), Shannon Cartier Lucy. Courtesy the artist and Soft Opening, London. Photography Theo Christelis

Your protagonists are generally captured at awkward angles, bending over or their backs turned, and we rarely see their faces. Is your intention to place the viewer in the position of a voyeur, and if so what do you find interesting about that kind of perspective?

Faces tell so much that they can be distracting. Sometimes, it's a figure in a space that I am pointing to and not the way the figure feels in that scenario. We, as viewers, get to feel something. I have painted faces, though, and usually it's because I want that face, that expression, to be at the centre of what the painting is about.

I wouldn't necessarily consider myself a voyeur and I'm not sure that I have the intention of placing the viewer in that role, although that is not really up to me. I simply want to create pictures that make sense to me in a very visceral way and I want other people to see what I think is beautiful. Very awkward, dark or even painful experiences are quite poignant and have been a huge part of my life, and I assume I am not alone in this.

Many of these latest paintings depict food and/or the act of consuming – half-eaten pieces of cake, thick icing and greasy lips. How does the idea of excess fit into the wider themes that you're exploring in these works?

I am usually attracted to images with a sensual quality to them. I think food in my painting is generally used as a prop to create a mood, a scene that is relatable, that we can recognise. We all relate a piece of cake to a particular feeling. It references something specific. For me, it's a reward of some sort. So, why is it on the floor? I just thought that's a funny and interesting scenario that could have so much meaning.

Cake on the Floor (2021), Shannon Cartier Lucy. Courtesy the artist and Soft Opening, London. Photography Theo Christelis

Despite the domesticity or everydayness of the scenes you paint, there's often an underlying strangeness that can feel uncomfortable or even threatening. How does this relate to your thinking around femininity and womanhood?

I can't necessarily speak for anyone else's experience of womanhood, but from my own point of view, I just happen to be a woman and I guess I could say I embrace my femininity. The figures in my paintings are closest to what I know best, so I generally paint female figures. When I am coming up with an image to paint, I also want to experience seeing the image as somewhat strange and not really know what's going on because I find that intriguing. I don't, as the creator,

have the secret backstory. I like the feeling of mystery, of not knowing, of subtlety because, to me, that is truth, but I think it may make a lot of people feel uncomfortable. People like knowing what everything is and where everything is supposed to be, and how figures on a canvas are supposed to be arranged, but to me, that's delusional and boring.

What are you working on currently?

I am working on my next show which will be in New York City in the fall. Each painting involves a table, that is all I can say. The show will coincide with the release of my first book of all of my paintings to date with Hassla Books. I just hope it all comes together. I am so excited!

"Shannon Cartier Lucy: Cake on the Floor" runs until 31 July 2021 at Soft Opening, 6 Minerva Street, London

Featured Image: *The Celebration* (2021), Shannon Cartier Lucy. Courtesy the artist and Soft Opening, London. Photography Theo Christelis

W Magazine, 2021

STUDIO VISIT *09.09.21*

Meet Shannon Cartier Lucy, the Artist Whose Paintings You Can't Stop Staring At

by **Steph Eckardt**

Shannon Cartier Lucy photographed in her studio by Cedrick Jones for W Magazine.

In Shannon Cartier Lucy's darkly beguiling paintings, something usually feels a little off—like "bad-dream" scenes, as the *New Yorker* put it in a 2020 writeup of Lucy's solo exhibition at Lubov gallery in New York. It's a unique quality that's recognizable at just a glance. "There's a narrative in her work that has no resolution—it's like having an itch you can't scratch," says Lubov's founder, Francisco Correa Cordero, pointing to scenes like three goldfish swimming in a bowl atop a lit stove burner. "People automatically try to decipher what's going on in the image. You can't stop looking."

Cordero got in touch with Lucy in 2019, after seeing her work on social media, and the 43-year-old artist seized her chance: She loaded up a rented van with all the paintings she'd made over the past two years and drove 14 hours from her home in Nashville to the gallery, in Manhattan's Chinatown. Cordero tried to manage her expectations, but he needn't have: Lucy's show at Lubov in January of 2020 sold out on opening day. It's fair to say interest in her next solo exhibition, which opens September 18, is already sky-high; one out-of-town collector has made it a point to attend every Lubov opening to doggedly inquire about the availability of her work.

What could be seen as overnight success has in fact been a long, circuitous journey. The 2020 show marked Lucy's comeback after a long absence from the art world; it was her first exhibition in New York in a decade. Born in Nashville, Lucy moved to the

East Coast in 1995 to study art at New York University. She graduated in 2000, and showed at the influential, now-defunct Team Gallery alongside Genesis P-Orridge and Banks Violette that same year. But by 2011, when she left the city, Lucy's personal life was in shambles—so much so that she nearly gave up on art altogether. She went back home to Nashville to kick a heroin addiction, then moved to Los Angeles to start over in the aftermath of a "horrible" breakup. "'Sweetie, this isn't just your divorce,'" Lucy tells me over Zoom, recalling a reality check from a friend who had a long history with psychotherapy. "'This is *everything* in your past, rising up to the surface.'"

Shannon Cartier Lucy, *Our New Home*, 2017.

It took a few years, but that revelation ended up reviving Lucy's practice—and transforming it. "Lots of things had to change, and the universe had to change me," Lucy says. "I was just holding on, gripping. Thank god I fell apart."

For a while, she simply stared blankly at the walls of her studio, incapable of and unwilling to force herself to make work. Eventually, in 2015, she moved back to Nashville and enrolled in the University of Tennessee to get a masters in psychotherapy. She had obtained her license to practice when art unexpectedly reentered the picture, prompted by a brief encounter with her ex. Lucy couldn't get the thought of a goldfish bowl atop a lit burner of the stove they used to share out of her head. The image was puzzling, but reminiscent of actual vignettes she often encountered in her childhood, growing up with a schizophrenic father. "It was

customary in my home to find a toaster in the freezer or The Holy Bible in the dishwasher," she says in her online artist's statement. The goldfish bowl was so lodged in Lucy's mind that for the first time in years, she had the impulse to make art.

Having last worked in multimedia, Lucy first attempted to execute the image via sculpture. Unsatisfied with her efforts, she returned to painting—though not in the conceptual style she'd favored in the past. Painting realistically, she discovered, made the images she had in her head legible to everyone. "Painting has that kind of magic ability to bring people into your story, to get to a place where they can trust you and respect your craft," she says. "You bring an image out of nothing, and that takes a lot of grueling, attentive work."

Lucy's partner once described her as a "populist painter"—"it's like you're painting for your mom and her friends, and then your really edgy Norwegian black metal friends, all in the same work," he said. Lucy was thrilled with the description. She started intentionally removing defining details in her work, "neutralizing" anything that could hint at a specific time period or circumstance. "What's left is the psychological or emotional connection," she says. "You're like, *Oh, it's a girl with a knife and a fork*. We can all relate."

It's never quite that simple, though. Those utensils she mentions are strangely oversized for the child holding them, and we'll never know why. Another work soon on view at Lubov features a Dalmatian mid-autopsy. When she shows it to me over Zoom, I point out that the animal is the same size as her dogs, Shine and Tyranny, whom I can see in the background. "Those are my models!," she enthuses. *The Autopsy* isn't about shock value—something Lucy says she tries to avoid at all costs—but a challenge to herself to portray death in a way that's personal without being grotesque. To her, the Dalmatian's collar is a key detail: She wanted it to be clear that the dog was a pet. "I think it's such a sweet sentiment to love your dog so much you get it an autopsy," she says.

W Magazine, 2021

The Autopsy photographed in Shannon Cartier Lucy's studio in Nashville, Tennessee by Cedrick Jones for W magazine.

Lucy's disquieting scenes had led me to expect the opposite of the bubbly personality I discover when she has me laughing throughout our two-hour conversation—particularly when we discuss the works I had considered among her darkest. Take a 2019 painting of a pair of scissors held up to a wrist, titled *If My Hand Offends*: "I thought a biblical quote could elevate it a little more than, you know, the emo girl." Or another of two men in ski masks looming over a semi-nude, bound woman: "I thought if I called it *Intruders*, clearly, I'm like, these are bad guys," she says. "Imagine I had called it, like, *Night With the Boys*."

Her upcoming Lubov exhibition features nine paintings loosely centered around an 18th-century piece of furniture called a loo table. It's the first show since she's returned to painting that isn't, as one would say in Instagram parlance, a "photo dump"; rather than a purge of works that have piled up over the past few years, it's somewhat organized by theme. She anticipates the same to be true of the three focused shows she has confirmed into the fall of 2022—two with Massimo De Carlo, in Hong Kong and Milan, followed by a solo outing at Night Gallery in Los Angeles.

Shannon Cartier Lucy photographed in her studio in Nashville, Tennessee by Cedrick Jones for *W* magazine.

When I ask what themes she's thinking will emerge from this new stage in her career, Lucy turns to the titles of the folders on her computer desktop. She always works from an image, often a collage of JPGs haphazardly thrown together on Photoshop; current categories include "'popcorn," "funeral," "crutches etc.," "awkward legs," and "breeding goose." One in particular—"oven, washing machine"—makes her laugh. "You know what that is?," she says. "A man putting a woman inside the oven or washing machine

W Magazine, 2021

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For all her seeming lightheartedness, though, it's clear that Lucy is utterly serious about her work. "Whenever I give myself a hard time, I have to remind myself that no one has seen what I originally set out to do but me," she says, then pauses. "I'm getting to a place of, I think, maturity. Isn't maturity all about learning to let go, no matter what?"

Evening Standard, 2021

London Gallery Weekend - highlights from the celebration of the city's galleries

How have we never had one of these before?

Shannon Cartier Lucy: Cake on the Floor at Soft Opening

Woman tangled with curly ribbon / Shannon Cartier Lucy

"Like Norman Rockwell meets David Lynch" is how the American artist's work has been described, and if that doesn't make you want to see it I don't know what will. This is the painter's first solo exhibition in the UK, and her weird figurative scenes have a whiff of the surreal about them (perhaps not surprising since she has a masters in psychotherapy). Fascinating and fun.

softopening.london

artnet, 2021

From Julie Curtiss at White Cube to a Birthday Party Gone Wrong, Here Are 10 Shows to See During London's First-Ever Gallery Weekend

We selected a few key shows to catch on each night of the event.

Artnet News, June 2, 2021

Shannon Cartier Lucy, *The Celebration* (2021). Courtesy the artist and Soft Opening, London. Photo by Theo Christelis.

Hoping to signal culture's emergence from lockdown and inject sales momentum as we head into the usually sleepy summer season, London is premiering its first ever gallery weekend this week, aiming to offer a comprehensive overview of the scene across the capital.

To tackle London's vast geography, the weekend has been split into three broad areas. A glut of more than 100 central London galleries will take center stage on Friday, and gallery devotees will be spoiled for choice—a well-planned itinerary might include a pitstop to the street outside Pace Gallery to catch a capsule performance from Jean Dubuffet's *Coucou Bazaar*. Saturday is South London's time to shine, with some 20 galleries taking part over a more spread out area so visitors are advised to plan their map accordingly, and nearly 30 galleries in edgy East London will be the focus on Sunday.

Here are our picks of what to see on each of the days.

artnet, 2021

“Shannon Cartier Lucy: Cake on the Floor”
Soft Opening
Through July 31

Shannon Cartier Lucy, *A Soft Rein* (2021). Courtesy the artist and Soft Opening, London. Photo by Theo Christelis.

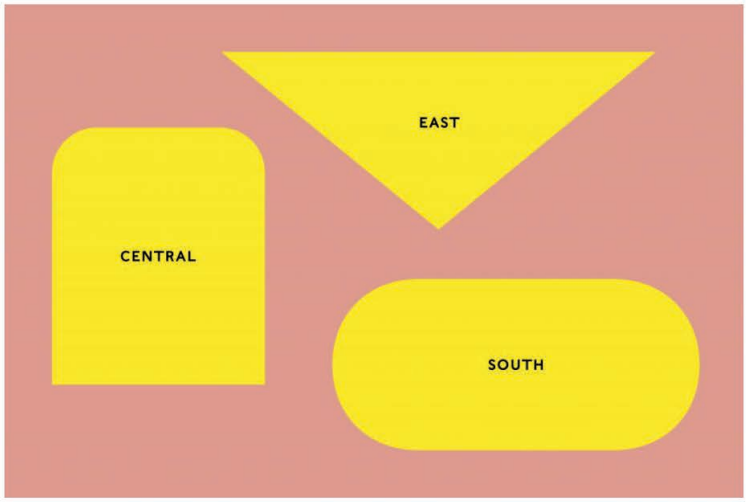
The Nashville-based artist Shannon Cartier Lucy presents 11 new paintings in the first London solo presentation of her work. Lucy’s disturbing paintings of women among the trappings of a party carry violent undertones, and add an uncomfortable dimension of objectification to her chosen medium of traditional figurative oil painting.

“Cake on the Floor,” Soft Opening, 6 Minerva Street, London

Art & Object, 2021

PRESS RELEASE | MAY 28, 2021

Inaugural London Gallery Weekend Features 137 Galleries



COURTESY OF LONDON GALLERY WEEKEND. DESIGN BY ATELIER DYAKOVA.

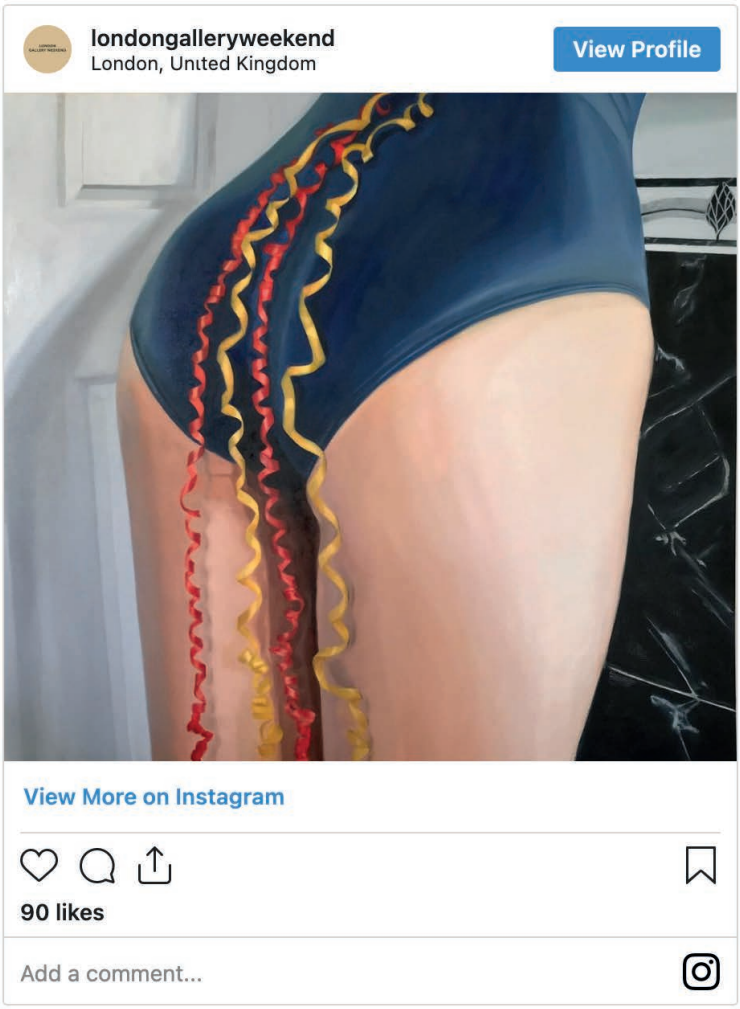
London Gallery Weekend will bring together 137 galleries from June 4 to 6, 2021.

London Gallery Weekend, a new initiative celebrating art galleries in the UK capital, has announced details of the 137 leading contemporary art galleries taking part in the inaugural edition, from June 4-6, 2021.

The event unites galleries from across the city, with participants zoned into three areas. London Gallery Weekend will promote a daily focus on a geographical area, starting with central London on Friday, followed by south London on Saturday, and culminating on Sunday with galleries in the East End. All participating galleries will be open across the three days, and until 8 pm on their respective focus days.

London Gallery Weekend brings together a rich program of exhibitions by leading contemporary artists, featuring both established names and emerging talents, alongside a public program of discussions, studio visits, children's events, late openings, and performances across the city produced by participating galleries.

Art & Object, 2021



In East London, visitors will be able to view Rana Begum's first exhibition with Kate MacGarry; American painter Shannon Cartier Lucy's first solo exhibition in the UK at Soft Opening; an exhibition of Peter Hujar at Maureen Paley, focused on a series of his photographs capturing performers backstage in New York theatres and nightclubs during the 1970s and early 1980s; The house of the spider, an exhibition of new paintings by Sanya Kantarovsky at Modern Art; a major presentation of new works by Yayoi Kusama, featuring a dynamic installation of paintings, bronze pumpkins and painted soft sculptures at Victoria Miro Gallery; a site-specific installation by Japanese artist Soshiro Matsubara at Union Pacific, featuring sculptures, ceramics and paintings; new works by Hana Miletic from her ongoing Materials series at the approach; a solo exhibition of historic works by Mary Webb at Hales, featuring paintings made by the artist between 1969 and the mid-1970s; and Joseph Yaeger's first solo exhibition at Project Native Informant, which sees the artist present a new body of paintings.

The Art Newspaper, 2021

Our critics' choice of London Gallery Weekend: East

Much like the area itself, the galleries of east London are presenting an eclectic mix of exhibitions, so our critics have joined forces and picked some of their favourites

Shannon Cartier Lucy, Woman Bending with Curly Ribbon (2021)
Courtesy the artist and Soft Opening, London

Shannon Cartier Lucy

2 June–31 July, Soft Opening, 6 Minerva Street, E2 9EH

The first UK solo show of Nashville based painter Shannon Cartier whose muted atmospheric works merge the mundane with the seriously strange. Cartier Lucy gave up making art for several years and trained as a psychotherapist, a discipline reflected in her drab domestic scenarios shot with a deadpan sense of dread and disquiet. Past subjects include a goldfish bowl placed on a lighted gas hob, a woman taking a nap beneath a transparent plastic sheet and a girl toting a carrier bag full of swans. Uncanny is an overused term, but it is fully applicable here. Soft Opening also has a West End outpost in a glazed-in kiosk in Piccadilly Circus tube station which for London Gallery Weekend is occupied by the fantastical glazed ceramic sculptures of the Japanese-Nigerian artist Narumi Nekpenekpen, the first leg of a three-part show curated by Kate Wong. **L.B.**

Artforum, 2020

CRITICS' PICKS

Shannon Cartier Lucy, *Sex After Death*, 2019, oil on canvas, 29 x 42".

NEW YORK

Shannon Cartier Lucy

LUBOV
5 East Broadway #402
January 18–March 8, 2020

In "Home is a crossword puzzle I can't solve," Shannon Cartier Lucy's first New York solo show in roughly ten years, the artist offers up several oil-on-canvas tableaux in which reality feels porous and unburdened by logic. The work, sharp and subtly verist, is suffused with warm, muted tones; the space Lucy creates is one of deep loneliness—but one that is expansive enough to let us all in.

During her hiatus from exhibiting, Lucy became a licensed psychoanalyst, which may explain the well-wrought sense of unease the artist brings to her troubled human subjects and their uncanny settings. In *Naptime*, 2018, a woman lies beneath a translucent plastic dustcover on a bed. Other objects in the room are swaddled by the material, including a floor fan and a nightstand. Clothes in an open closet, perhaps fresh from the dry cleaner, are also shrouded by the stuff: The whole world of the painting is a sanitary spectacle tainted by something sinister. In another macabre image, *Our New Home*, 2017, three goldfish swim in a bowl sitting atop a stove's lit burner—a scene of quiet tragedy likely caused by domestic delirium. In a beige-drowned canvas from 2019, a woman sits on a couch reading a book called *Sex After Death*—which also serves as the title of the

Artforum, 2020

painting. This work, in all its gloomy quietude, feels somehow hopeful—as if a gentler tomorrow might be possible after all.

All the ingredients that make up Lucy's exhibition—love, longing, endless confusion—are familiar. As the show's title suggests, the answers are there, but just out of reach. Living, alas, is not for the faint of heart.

— *Wallace Ludel*

The New Yorker, 2020

ART

Shannon Cartier Lucy

Through March 8.

Lubov
5 E. Broadway
Downtown

347-496-5833

Website

Ten years ago, this painter left New York and moved back to her native Nashville. Her first show since then features six bad-dream scenes, rendered with melancholic delicacy in a faded Kodachrome palette. The gallery's close quarters heighten the air of claustrophobia in such works as "Naptime," in which the contents of a bedroom—including a woman asleep on a bed—are seen wrapped in plastic, and "My Signature Act," which captures the tension of a parlor trick (in which two hands play the piano while balancing a mug and a pencil), with the gloomy gravitas of a Rembrandt. The highlight of Lucy's comeback is the creamily painted, crystalline image of goldfish whose bowl rests, alarmingly, on the lavender flame of a gas stove.

—*Johanna Fateman*

Painting and the anti-Oedipal insurgency

February 24, 2020 2:26 pm

Shannon Cartier Lucy, Naptime, 2018, oil on canvas, 23 x 30 inches

Contributed by Andrew Woolbright / In 1972, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari – a French philosopher and a French psychoanalyst, respectively – published ***Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism*** and ***Schizophrenia***. It became something of an intellectual sensation. Among other things, they challenged Freud's focus on the Oedipus complex as an irrepressible source of human aggression and regimentation. Michel Foucault, another French philosopher, saw their ideas as a reaction to the scourge of fascism in the twentieth century – that is, a search for channels that diverted the human attraction to totalitarian control. Deleuze and Guattari's fascination with a nomadic, disassociated self inextricable from nature and the cosmos was, said Foucault, an introduction to a non-fascist life.

This would have been rich fodder for artists in the socio-political ferment of Europe in the 1970s, when longstanding illiberal arrangements and ideas were under attack. So it is now, as fascistic notions of social and political order resurface and percolate worldwide. Against that backdrop, the palpable shift towards interiority and reclusiveness, the auto-erotic, and insidious social architecture in the work of several Lower East Side artists reads as a nod to anti-Oedipal ego death, and a resistance to American fascism.

Two Coats of Paint, 2020

Shannon Lucy, My Signature Act, 2017, oil on canvas, 18 x 22 inches

In **Shannon Cartier Lucy**'s solo show "Home is a crossword puzzle I can't solve," at Lubov Gallery, a series of brunaille and gray-hued paintings explore small and psychically charged spaces through female bodies. They incorporate the trapped paranoia of the recluse, and seem to signal an intentional withdrawal from society while still mirroring the traumas of the exterior world within the kitchen, the living room, and the bedroom. The work imparts the self-imposed repression of desire, perhaps as an act of protest. In *My Signature Act*, for instance, hands attempt to play the piano while balancing a cup of coffee, a pencil, and a tongue depressor. Ritual self-sterilization is another Cartier Lucy motif: the uncannily deft painting *Naptime* that shows a woman sleeping under a plastic furniture cover that can also be seen on every surface around the house.

Perhaps the most charged painting of her show is *Ruffles and Bells*. Seen from behind, a girl looks out the window of a small room. She is wearing only a ruffled fabric around her waist and bells around her ankles, as if she is a domesticated pet. Her age is indecipherable, but her pigtails suggest infantilization. No violence and sexual trauma is visually indicated, but it seems to be looming, rendering the involuntary voyeurism of the viewer especially squalid. The artist may be discreetly condemning misogyny. Certainly a measure of hostility is unmistakable. Although Cartier Lucy usually stops short of explicit trauma and violence, *Our New Home* is a notable exception. It depicts a bowl of goldfish cooking on the open flame of a stove – a jarringly cruel fate for helpless fish that are normally cared for.

Two Coats of Paint, 2020

Shannon Cartier Lucy, Ruffles and Bells, 2019, oil on canvas, 34 x 22 inches

Two Coats of Paint, 2020

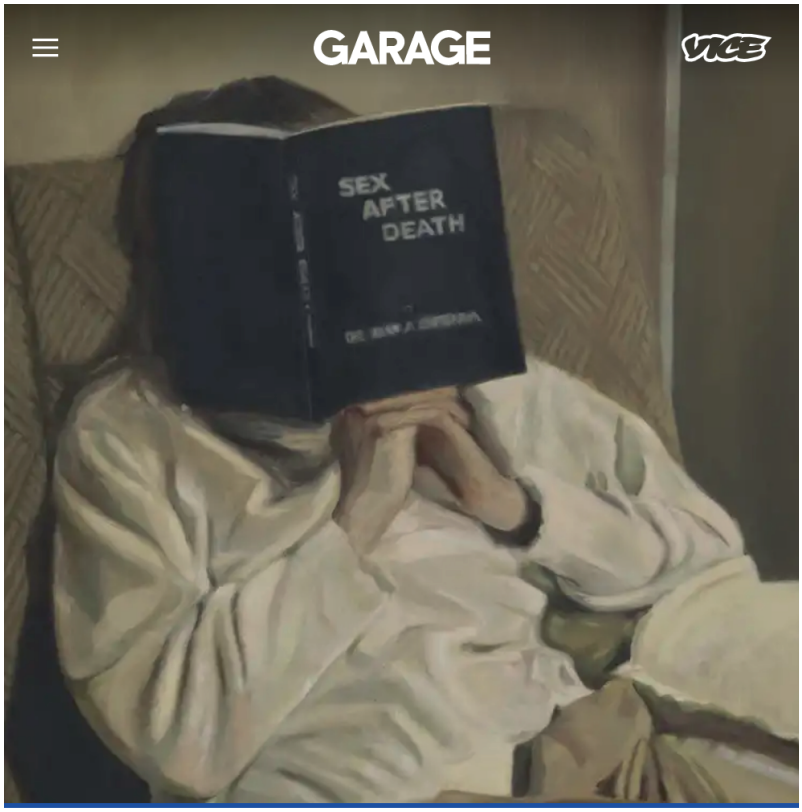
Shannon Cartier Lucy, Our New Home, 2017, oil on canvas, 28 x 22 inches

The work of all three women reflects the denial of ego and the disruption of power: Cartier Lucy's reclusive mimicry of sadism and self-regulation; Gribbon's fetishization of dominance and submission; and Brodsky's deconstruction of public/private space. Each artist willfully internalizes and dramatizes the trauma and sadism of our current politics, seeking to neutralize it by making it the stuff of controlled games and ritual. It's a start.

"**Shannon Cartier Lucy: Home is a crossword puzzle I can't solve**," Lubov Gallery, 5 East Broadway, #402, New York, NY. Through March 8, 2020.
"**Jenna Gribbon**," Howard's, Athens,, GA. Though March 7, 2020.
"**Faina Brodsky: Privately Owned Public Space,**" 17 Essex Street, New York, NY. Through March 29, 2020.

Andrew Paul Woolbright (Chicago, b. 1986) is an artist, gallerist, and writer working in Brooklyn, NY. He is an MFA graduate from the Rhode Island School of Design in Painting and has exhibited with the Ada Gallery, Nancy Margolis, and Coherent in Brussels, BE. His work has been reviewed in *Two Coats of Paint, The Boston Globe, The Chicago Reader, and The Providence Journal* and is currently in the collection of the RISD Museum. He is the founder and director of Super Dutchess Gallery located at 53 Orchard Street on the Lower East Side in New York City and currently teaches at SUNY New Paltz.

Garage, 2020



ART

Shannon Cartier Lucy Finds Her Home

After a ten year-hiatus, the painter returns with a new body of work, and solo shows in New York, Miami, and Los Angeles.

By LAIA GARCIA-FURTADO | Feb 9 2020, 11:30am

Shannon Cartier Lucy wasn't going to force it. "I know I'm an artist in terms of just how I see the world," the painter tells me huddled in a corner of the Lubov gallery in Chinatown on a particularly freezing New York day. "[But] I couldn't [make anything]. Artist block."

Cartier Lucy had enjoyed brief success in the art world in the early 2000's, showing at Team Gallery alongside Banks Violette and Hans Op De Beeck, but by 2011, spurred by drugs and a divorce, she packed up and left the city. "I was like fine, I'll get my shit together and become a psychotherapist. Get a masters. I'll go to Nashville, be around family, save on rent," she says. For the following decade, she did not paint.

Garage, 2020

"OUR NEW HOME," 2017. OIL ON CANVAS. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND LUBOV, NEW YORK

In the painting, a round fishbowl filled with water and three goldfish sits atop a gas white stove—the same one in all my rented New York apartments, maybe yours too? The stove is on, the translucent blue flame quietly raging underneath the fish. Its title, *Our New Home*.

"This is my *Mona Lisa*," she tells me she remembers thinking, not *not* joking. "I surprised myself that I could even paint like this, because I'd never even painted realistically before." Her previous work was not figurative at all, rather it concerned with words and "quirky" (her words) concept juxtapositions:; a jigsaw puzzle of all- black pieces, a small bag that would usually be filled with candy at the dollar store left empty and labeled as "nothing," a painting of the FILA logo with a flower underneath and identified as "State Flower of FILA." The works are definitely products of their time (post 9/11 New York).

Garage, 2020

“I didn’t paint, I don’t know why,” she tells me, “I think I challenged myself too much, like I tried to be punk. I’ve always tried to challenge whatever I thought was already weird, I’d be like *no, that’s too obvious, I want to play off that and then play off that even*.” Her path to art was not exactly a fluke, but it wasn't planned either. She had moved to New York from Nashville, where she grew up, to enroll at Gallatin to study “design/documentary film/I don’t know,” when she happened to sign up for a painting class with Lisa Yuskavage. Cartier Lucy had tried her hand at painting when she was in high school, “I tried it but it was really embarrassing, a shitty emotion [to have] when I was 14 years old,” she wasn’t expecting much when she signed up. “[Yuskavage] taught me how to paint. She loved painting,” she remembers, “I had another professor, Michael St. John, who is a friend of mine now, but he didn’t actually teach me how to paint. He was more into [exploring] *what are you into? How can you express yourself as an artist?*”

And so the goldfish came as a surprise, but then again not really. “I guess I had learned [how to paint] years and years ago, so I just painted this and then it's like they started pouring out of me.” After the goldfish came a painting of two female hands playing the piano, one of them precariously balancing a glass of water and a stick that have been placed upon them, in another painting a woman leans against a wall—is she waiting for someone?—holding a plastic bag full of swans, another painting is a scene in a bedroom, everything is covered in plastic: the fan, the nightstand, the young woman laying in bed, asleep.

Garage, 2020

"GIRL WITH SWANS," 2019. OIL ON CANVAS. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND LUBOV, NEW YORK

That the images are so unsettling may be because they are presented so matter-of-factly, a product perhaps of growing up with a schizophrenic father. “You would walk into his house and the mattress would never be on the ground, chairs would be upside down on top of desks, or the TV wouldn’t be facing you, but it would be on, facing another TV which had peanut butter [smeared] on the front.” She adds, “I think because I’m a child of that, I had to find peace with appreciating that versos being the controlling eldest child trying to be like *stop doing that, be normal!*”

She continues, “Total chaos is really beautiful to me, really innocent and really precious, and kind of outsiders and magical. It’s absolutely what I’m attracted to, and I think maybe it’s because I’m inherently drawn to my dad.”

Garage, 2020

After she had painted about 25 works, people started asking her if she was going to “show.” Although she eventually loaded her paintings into a rented van and drove down to New York to meet with a few galleries, she said it was the response she received after posting her work on Instagram, where I too came across her work a few months back, that gave her a bit of confidence to take the next step. “People [were] finding me, and just being so generous to share with me, *I love your paintings*. I trust every single one of these people, because there’s nothing attached to me, it is just the paintings.” Francisco Correa Cordero, who runs the Lubov gallery, came across her work after someone came up to him at an art fair in Miami and said “you should be showing work like this,” and showed him images from her Instagram. As it turns out, they were right.

“I think I found peace with making art from a place of no expectations, but I know they’re good enough,” she explains, "Plus, I'm a woman." The statement seems unfinished, but of course, it's not. Especially in this era of "rediscovering" female artists, an acceptable career arc for women is to work in anonymity all their lives, and once they reach their twilight years—if they're lucky—they become the toast of the art world. ("Good things come to those who wait!," said a recent article.)

"I had to come to terms with that [because] that's what I've been given as a possibility," she tells me. "I went through my thirties thinking *I've got to have a kid, too*, *how's this going to happen?* I can't do it all. It's a curse, in a way. I'd go *do I have to choose?* I can't be [the] supportive role, I'm just too weird. I'm the artist." She's not bitter, ("I know it sounds so brutal, it's not") and this isn't an unusual conversation (negotiation?) for women to have with themselves, especially women who are also artists.

“There’s this musical artist, Sibylle Baier, she’s from the sixties, she makes the most beautiful music," Cartier Lucy suddenly remembers. "No one knew who she was, nor did she try. So I thought if I respect her, I can have respect for myself and be here.”

Shannon Cartier Lucy's "Home Is a Crossword Puzzle I Can't Solve," is on view at Lubov in New York until March 8th. "Woman With Machete," is on view at De Boer Gallery in Los Angeles until March 21st. "The Ever-Flashing Strap" opens at Nina Johnson Gallery in Miami on April 3rd until May 2nd.

artnet, 2020

‘Along the Way, Life Took Over’: Painter Shannon Cartier Lucy on Her Wayward Path to Art-Making and Personal Redemption

The artist opens up about her complicated past, her winding career trajectory, and the strange imagery in her work.

Taylor Dafoe, August 27, 2020

Shannon Cartier Lucy. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Matt McKnight

Sometime around 2007, artist Shannon Cartier Lucy had an image stuck in her head: a goldfish in a bowl resting on a lit stove top. It was a symbol for her new domestic reality, she says. She had just gotten married and moved in with her husband in New York. They were creating a life together.

A young artist still trying to find her medium at the time, Cartier Lucy sought to have the scene fabricated, even going so far as to have a fish taxidermied for the job. But the idea never coalesced. Neither did her marriage, it turns out, and soon thereafter, everything fell apart. She got divorced. She stopped making art. She moved multiple times, finally settling back in her hometown of Nashville with the intention of becoming a psychotherapist.

Around 2015, the man who divorced her came back into her life—and so did the mental image of the goldfish. So she decided to paint it, something she hadn’t really done since her early 20s.

For the first time in almost a decade, she had made a work of art, and the floodgates opened. Since then, Cartier Lucy has been painting nonstop. Her drab tableaus merge dreamy, middle-class mundanity with matter-of-fact magical realism. It's like Normal Rockwell meets David Lynch: a girl grips a shopping bag full of swans, another naps below sheets of cellophane. A naked woman bows before a man in slacks on the beach.

Almost all of them feature a young woman whose features, while just out of focus, bear a resemblance to the artist's own. "Maybe my world, the way I see things, is just strange," Cartier Lucy tells Artnet News over video chat. She's speaking in the empty room of a house she's just purchased with her partner in Nashville, where she was born. Behind her are drop cloths and furniture covered in plastic. It's like a scene from one of her paintings.

"For me, it's familiar, it's comfortable. I'm tapping into what I think is purely me."

Shannon Cartier Lucy, *Our New Home* (2017). Courtesy of the artist and Lubov.

artnet, 2020

Let's begin by looking backward. You moved to New York in the mid-90s and had a rather auspicious entree into the art world not long after. Can you take me back to that time?

I was 17 years old when I moved to New York for NYU—wet behind the ears. At 17, what do you know about anything career-wise? I didn't have a clue about what I was going to do. All I knew is that I wanted to be in New York city. I loved Jean-Luc Godard and arty films and Tower Records and New York was just where I had to go. I didn't know I would do fine arts. I was in a multidisciplinary program at NYU, but I took an art class with Lisa Yuskavage. I had to get approval to do it, because it was a class with second year art majors. Halfway into the term, she was like, "Why are you the non-art major? I would think that you're the one who's going to be doing this in the future." She put this idea in my head that you can actually be an artist. It just had such an influence on me.

What was your work like then?

Well, I didn't have a real vision yet. I was too young to really have a vision. I was more in that phase of copying the work of other artists I liked. I painted in college, then sort of got sidetracked with fabricating things, having things made. This was like 2002 to 2005. I made this set of furniture that I still haven't done anything with. During that period, I was also doing all these weird photography sessions where I would dress as a clown—a lot of strange things. The thought of painting was just so boring to me at the time. One of the last ideas I had during this time was to fabricate a sculpture of a goldfish in a bowl on a stove. But I couldn't figure out how to make it not look so contrived. It was silly. I had a fish taxidermied, even though I didn't have a gallery or a place to show the thing. But along the way, life took over.

I ended up moving two or three times during this period. I moved to LA for a couple of years and then I went to northern Kenya for a year, living with a tribe. It was the trip that I always said I would do someday, then suddenly I was like, "There is no someday. I have to do this now." I was just kind of fearless.

Shannon Cartier Lucy, *Girl with Swans* (2019). Courtesy of the artist and Lubov.

Ironically, this is when art came storming back into your life, right?

Right. One day, my ex-husband, this person who had broken my heart, came briefly back into my world. All of a sudden that image of the goldfish on the stove came back to me too and I thought, "Just paint the image."

This was around 2016 or 2017, correct? You had been stymied creatively for years—you hadn't painted in more than a decade—and suddenly you were able to realize this image on a canvas. Other than your ex-husband coming back, what changed?

When I started just painting again I was doing it from a place of not thinking anything was going to come from it. I was back in my hometown, I had gotten a master's to become a psychotherapist. I felt relaxed. Maybe I just needed to be in that place for all this work to come.

Why paint? Why did that image, which had been in your head for all those years, manifest as a figurative painting, rather than, say, the sculpture you originally conceived?

I just wanted that image to be very clear. I wanted to express that very thing as clearly as possible. And painting for me is a repetitive, meditative practice that helps keep the crazies away. And I appreciate the craft. I appreciate what torture it is to like create a painting. I've had to Google modes of like layering and the viscosity of certain paints, which I hate. [Laughs] But I also love it. Maybe I just like putting myself through the torture of learning something that I don't know how to do. That's what keeps us alive, keeps us trying to do better and better.

Shannon Cartier Lucy, *Naptime* (2018). Courtesy of the artist and Lubov.

The title of that first painting is *OUR NEW HOME*. Metaphorically speaking, there's certainly a lot to parse through there. Can you tell me what that work represents to you?

I want to allow people to think for themselves and feel what they feel when looking at my work, but for me the image of the fishbowl was about me feeling a sense of discontent within a marriage. You know, I got married, I had this beautiful home, I was doing all the right things, but I think that inherent discontent was still there.

Now, I think of it like this: if you build a home on something broken, then you can't break it. So building your home on a place that's already broken is freedom. Once something has been broken on a level of relationships falling apart or the death of a loved one, and you get beyond it, you get to a wiser, freer place. We just getting stronger and freer. That stuff can't take us down to the place it's taken us before. It's like the Japanese

technique of *kintsugi*, where they fix broken things by filling the cracks with gold. Through that process, the original thing becomes even more precious. Instead of trying to set the fishbowl up where it's supposed to be in a new home, you put it on the stove.

Shannon Cartier Lucy, *My Signature Act* (2017). Courtesy of the artist and Lubov.

We've been talking about how loaded the idea of the home is for you while you're sitting in a new house you just recently bought. How are you feeling?

It's overwhelming! I'm so excited to fix it my home, that my partner is afraid I'll never paint again. [Laughs] I think I'm like a child getting a gift I've always wanted. I just made a painting for an upcoming show in Paris with a girl shoveling. I've never shoveled in my life! I didn't even know I was going to buy a house, but recently I've been shoveling dirt every single day. Who knows, maybe I'm psychic. I have a great relationship to what's going on right now, that's all I know.

Do you think the new home experience will influence your work moving forward?

The way that I paint, I have these ideas already. I have an idea—girl in situation X, for instance. Those ideas are lined up to make enough paintings probably for the next two years. So right now I'm just getting them out.

Cultured, 2020

WELCOME HOME: MICHAEL ST. JOHN AND SHANNON CARTIER LUCY IN CONVERSATION

WITH THE OPENING OF SHANNON CARTIER LUCY'S FIRST NEW YORK SHOW IN DECADE, THE TWO ARTISTS AND FRIENDS SPEAK ABOUT PAINTING, ADDICTION AND THE IDEAS OF HOME.

On January 18th, Shannon Cartier Lucy's first New York solo show in a decade—"Home is a crossword puzzle I can't solve"—opened at Lubov gallery in Chinatown. Despite her career's upward momentum at the time, the artist fled New York a few years after 9/11, leaving behind her a nagging heroin habit among other things. With New York City out of the picture, Lucy got clean, pursued a masters degree and became a psychotherapist. The artist had grown up with a schizophrenic father, piquing her interest in psychotherapy and imparting its influence on her painting practice. "It was customary in my home to find a toaster in the freezer of The Holy Bible in the dishwasher," Lucy said in an artist statement. Her paintings reflect this quality of coolly normalized strangeness: in one of the show's paintings, a woman carries a grocery bag full of swans as if they were baguettes; in another, a glass bowl containing three swimming goldfish is placed atop a stove's heated burner.

On January 16th, painter Michael St. John opened, "Democracy Portraits," at Team Gallery on the Lower East Side. St. John's show also brims with a similarly distanced quality of unease as the artist chronicles America's ravenous appetite for violence dressed in the drag of love, and love in the drag of violence.

The two artists have been close friends since Lucy lived in New York, though they have both since settled elsewhere (Lucy resides in Nashville and St. John in Massachusetts). As of February 2020, both artists will be represented by De Boer Gallery in Los Angeles. With two coinciding solo exhibitions in adjacent Manhattan neighborhoods, the two speak here about addiction, home and painting.

Cultured, 2020

SHANNON CARTIER LUCY, "OUR NEW HOME," 2017. COURTESY THE ARTIST AND LUBOV, NEW YORK.

Michael St. John: Hi Shannon. Welcome back!

Shannon Cartier Lucy: Thank you!

MSJ : How was Peru?

SCL: Thank you, traveling was exhausting, overstimulating, but I love that I get to travel more these days.

MSJ: Do you think living in Nashville now, instead of New York City, gives you a freedom of pursuit?

SCL: For me, yes absolutely. Living outside the bustle of NYC works much better for me. I think I'm also just chilling out as I age. I feel a freedom from any pressure to measure and compare myself, like I did when I was younger and living in the city.

SCL: What about your experience leaving the city? Does living where you do now, outside of NYC, give you a sense of freedom and happiness?

MSJ: Living in Massachusetts is incredibly boring which leaves me all the time I want to think and make art. It's a luxury I couldn't have in the city. There's no compression of time, it's minute by minute and welcomed for making and what to make. Space and time are highly undervalued.

Speaking of moving, your first exhibition which, openned Saturday at Lubov gallery, is titled, "Home is a crossword puzzle I can't solve." How did you come up with this title? What meaning does this have for you?

SCL: I lifted the title from a poem by the early 20th century Russian poet Marina Tsvetaeva. The title probably does have to do with my leaving the city a few years ago, but I think it has more to do with the shifting life circumstances that caused me to leave. The idea of home seems riddled with incoherencies and paradoxes. It's a word that's associated with sanctuary and relief, a place where you feel in control and properly oriented. It's not just a place, though, but more of a person's center of gravity. Home is the connection between you and the world. It can be unnerving and tender at the same time.

SHANNON CARTIER LUCY, "GIRL WITH SWANS," 2019. COURTESY THE ARTIST AND LUBOV, NEW YORK.

MSJ: You have a very singular perspective that catches the viewer off-guard, not in a surreal way, but a psychological one.

SCL: Well, that makes sense—I paint what I know, in a very visceral way. My work is autobiographical. But I didn't paint for almost 10 years! A series of life-difficulties led me to having, I guess you could call it a nervous breakdown or an early mid-life crisis. My marriage fell apart, I got sober, left New York after 16 years and travelled the world in an *Eat, Pray, Love* kind of way.

I eventually became a psycho-therapist and then these paintings started coming out of me. I guess making the paintings allows me to psychologically recalibrate and start again. I would highly recommend nervous breakdown.

Have you ever experienced this sort of thing?

MSJ: Never had a break, but the closest thing to that for me was being a meth addict, which turned out to be very clearing. It enabled a distance for seeing, like the difference between sentiment and emotion.

SCL: For some reason, when I hear nervous breakdown, I always picture that scene from the television show *Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman*. Do you know the show?

MSJ: No.

SCL: In this one scene, Mary, a housewife played by the amazing Louise Lasser, is a guest on a TV show, and she assumes she'll be asked about her favorite household products. Instead the host asks if she is truly fulfilled in her life and she gets so flummoxed she has a minor breakdown on air. It's incredible.

I guess I'm generally drawn to women having nervous breakdowns. I love that show *Snapped* on the Oxygen channel. Sometimes, they can manifest in outwardly violent ways, but I see it more as a deep psychological process—a dissolution of self, a break from idealism, and a kind of awakening.

Your girl Joan Didion wrote about that kind of stuff, didn't she?

MSJ: Yeah.

SCL: She talked about when a person starts to become disillusioned, and starts questioning the stories they'd ever told themselves. The gift of being continually humbled is that there's not much room for arrogance that holding onto old ideas can bring. I think she talks about that in *The White Album*?

Are you showing your paintings of Joan Didion? Are you a big fan of hers?

MSJ: Yes, her painting is in the show. I'm interested specifically in her two books *The White Album* and *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*. The way she sees and reports what's in the corners and overlooked to represent the content is very meaningful to me. I feel the same way with Eggleston.

SHANNON CARTIER LUCY, "NAPTIME", 2018. COURTESY THE ARTIST AND LUBOV, NEW YORK.

SCL: To what extent would you consider your work autobiographical?

MSJ: I think of what I do as a recording of my time, the ideas of my time, the news of my time, the time I live in, for better or worse.

SCL: What role does it play when it comes to looking at and experiencing other people's art?

MSJ: Looking at other people's art I expect imagination, invention and what do they have to say.

SCL: When I look at other people's art, I really do hope to see some deep personal truth in the work, real vulnerability and also effort. I tend to be attracted to the real obsessive artist-types.

Vulture, 2020

NYC Almost Killed This Up-and-Coming Artist, But Now, at 42, She's Back

By Hilary Reid

Photo: Photograph by Matt McKnight. Courtesy Lubov; New York.

Shannon Cartier Lucy moved from Nashville to go to NYU in 1995, and had a lot of luck, early. She happened to take a class with Lisa Yuskavage — who took a liking to her. She started painting full time, became the nanny for gallerist Andrea Rosen's and painter Sean Landers's kids, and by the year 2000 was in a group show at the Team Gallery, alongside cult-y downtown figures like Genesis P-Orridge and Banks Violette. Team was followed by three solo shows in three years, at Cynthia Broan and Kathleen Cullen. It was the kind of quick ascendency most artists in their 20s hope for — and one that came with a number of personal crises. She got married, then divorced. She got deep into drugs. By 2011, she'd left New York, and returned to Tennessee to try to save herself. But she continued to paint.

Vulture, 2020

You're about to have your first solo show in New York in ten years — how are you feeling about it?
I'm excited; not so much nervous. Now that I'm 42 a lot of that fear from living in New York City and having my identity caught up in the results of things is gone now. I know it sounds all Pollyannish, but I truly do want to share my art, and I love what I do. I don't have that anticipation of, like, *Oh what does this mean? Are people going to like it?* I don't have the same attachment to the outcome.

That's a very real thing, having your identity as a young artist tied to how people receive your work. Was that something you were thinking about during your 20s in New York?
Absolutely. Once I decided I wanted to be an artist, not only was my identity attached to it, but I knew I had to make a living. I saw other people being able to do it — and who knows, maybe those people had money to begin with, but I didn't. Once I decided to be an artist, it meant, *Oh, now I need to struggle and have this be my means of survival*. I didn't like having all that stress.

You grew up in Tennessee, right?
Yes, I grew up in Nashville and beelined straight for New York City, to NYU. At first I didn't commit to being an art student. I was in a school called Gallatin, but then I chose a second- or third-year class for art students with Lisa Yuskavage. By the end of our class she said to me, *Why is it that out of all these students who are art majors, you're the only one who seems to be more inclined to paint?* She's like, *You're the best student in the class, don't tell anyone I said that.* And I was like, "Really, you can be an artist?" Lisa was like, *Well, don't come to me five years after you graduate, struggling. Don't blame me if this is what you decide to do.* But sure enough, it had a major effect on me and I was like, you know what, maybe I will.

What was Lisa like as a teacher?
She was the best teacher I've ever had. She said, paint what you see. The craft of painting has everything to do with painting what you see. Maybe this is a great metaphor: If you look at a white wall it's rarely white — it's usually shades of gray or blue or green or even red. If we're really trying to show what we're seeing, it will be green or blue or shades of gray. It was all I needed to hear.

Who were some of the other painters in that class? Were you friends with other artists whose careers were starting to take off?
Well, I'm kind of embarrassed — if you knew this guy, you'd be like, ugh. But I grew up in the same town and the same high-school friend group as Harmony Korine. I worked for his parents in a little children's shop, and was absolutely influenced by him going to NYU. There were some interesting artists in this little group of friends I had, too. Katherine Bernhardt is a painter that hung around — she had a good career when I was falling apart. [*Laughs.*] I worked for Sean Landers. But I was kind of a loner type. I wasn't in a crew, but I knew enough people that I could say, *Hi, guess what, I'm making art now.*

So what happened after NYU— did you commit fully to painting and being an artist?
I committed to the craft of painting at that moment, but ten years into it I got a little sidetracked with wanting to make installation art because that was hot at the time. What was that, like 2000? People were doing strange things in the gallery. I was comfortable making paintings, but there was this moment of identity crisis. I was at an art fair that Cynthia Broan Gallery took me to and Jerry Saltz came through and said something to Cynthia like, *Painting is dead.* Oh, poor little me! Twenty-five-year-old Shan was like *Oh, I just knew it.* Without even being conscious of it, I took that to heart and started experimenting with getting things fabricated, which on a nanny's salary was really hard to do. All of my paycheck would go to, like, building some weird table.

How was it being an artist-nanny?
It was great after just moving to New York because I got to know the neighborhoods very quickly. It was for a lot of interesting wealthy people, like in that building where John Lennon lived. Eventually I became a sort of artists' nanny — I nannied for Andrea Rosen and Sean Landers, and a bunch of artists, which was kind of frustrating.

How so?
Well, I knew I was an artist. I got to see people making a living doing what they loved to do, and saw it was possible, but honestly it was a lot of men that I was babysitting for. It wasn't a lot of women having that success. I saw women being the wives who were supporting their husbands being famous artists. I thought, *Oh this is how you have a kid — be a man.*

To go back to the work you were making at that time, what were the fabricated objects you made?
One of them was having a taxidermist create a goldfish that I could put in a goldfish bowl that I could put on a stove. No gallery was even in the future for me to even put this stuff in. What's funny though is that the first painting that came out of me after ten years was a painting of a fishbowl on a stove — that's in the show at Lubov. It took me all this time. In order to make the art, it was just about life circumstances. You know, getting a divorce, leaving New York City, getting sober, all kinds of life things that took center stage.

You mentioned getting sober — do you feel like the addiction was related to the pressures of becoming an artist at that time?
I think the addiction was just accumulated pressure of untreated childhood traumas. I know everyone throws that word around these days — but like for a lot of people, it just culminated in my early 20s with a hip scene where drugs were available, like heroin. Every artist who comes before you has some kind of drug addiction, so it's like you're following in the footsteps of your heroes, though not purposefully. I wouldn't trade it. That, and having a nervous breakdown. I'm not scared to use that phrase or brag about it anymore. I'd wish it on anybody. It gets rid of all the unnecessary fog that keeps you from just being real. I think in the art world, and any world of entertainment where there's "the star" — the "art star" in this case — there's the phony façade, and I just don't feel comfortable in that role.

Had you felt yourself coming into that role at the time?
Yeah, without knowing it. It's only in retrospect that I see that I wasn't quite fully myself, and didn't have my feet on the ground.

Vulture, 2020

One of the shows you were in around that time was at Team Gallery.
That was actually the first show, in 2000. Team was a tiny gallery, and I wasn't prepared. I think I was 20 years old, and my feet weren't planted in the ground — and I don't know whose are at age 20. Maybe people who have a really steady upbringing. I just wasn't ready, though looking back I feel like my art had similar themes as it does now.

What were those themes?
Well, I was paired with Genesis P-Orridge, who at the time was showing these latex sort of fetish sculptures. I thought that was a sort of obvious way to be edgy, to be into some sort of cult sex shit. I wanted to be more subtle. The reason Team paired us together — and looking back I totally see it — was that I had these children in my paintings, set in a scene where there were adults in the painting cut off at the top. All you could see in one painting was a little girl sort of cringing in almost a Japanese school girl-looking outfit, and you could see a red-tipped baton coming in from the corner of the painting, being held by an adult. I can see now how that, combined with this fetish art, seemed like it had some sort of sexual punishment connotation. Honestly, if anything, it was really subconscious on my side — in no way sexual, more just psychological.

A lot of the women in your paintings have obscured or undefined faces, can you tell me about that decision?
Sometimes when I'd look at other art and see people's faces depicted, I'd think, *No, I really don't want to have that photograph in my house, why would I want to look at that person all the time?* It's sort of invasive. When I started making paintings, I thought if I left that part vague it would be a little more generous to my audience, so people could step into it more easily. And a lot of these are self-portraits, like I took iPhone videos to set up scenes with myself in it to paint.

What were some of the paintings that you did that for?
For one painting, I covered myself with plastic in my bedroom, and a bunch of other stuff in plastic, and then painted that. I painted myself with a chair on my back, falling off the dining room table onto the floor, and in my bedroom doing a yoga-type pose with my leg on a table. But is it important that it's me? No. I just needed a good reference for the lighting.

Vulture, 2020

In your artist statement you write that you grew up with a parent with schizophrenia, and that "It was customary in my home to find a toaster in the freezer or the Holy Bible in the dishwasher."
That's literal.

How do you see that experience playing into your work?
It's a tough life to grow up with a parent dealing with that. I wasn't necessarily aware of how much that came through in my work until people pointed it out to me. Good friends of mine and family know where I come from, and some have seen my father's apartment and the furniture turned upside down on the bed or peanut butter on television screens. A true art installation. [*Laughs.*] In the art, there's maybe a positive thing to it, in that it's mysterious and kind of charming and catches people off guard. It's uncanny — but in my situation, it's my normal. I'm not trying to create a surreal world. I guess my world really was surreal growing up with a father like that.

What has being an artist in Tennessee been like?
Honestly, there's no visible community that I'm connected with in Nashville. It's kind of my own private Idaho. There's something that works for me about being really isolated. I get to just really focus inward and generate ideas from such an untainted place. The studio rent is cheaper. Maybe also that it's my hometown, there's sort of a comfort that allows for more of a freedom of imagination or freedom of production. An ease. Is that age, too? Probably. But I think it absolutely has to do with not being in the relationship that I had with New York City.

How did you come to have the show at Lubov?
I thought, *Okay, I've made 20 paintings, and people started responding saying these are great, what are you going to do with them?* So I put some on Instagram. I don't even know who it was, but someone who follows me on Instagram and wasn't even a personal friend, an angel, showed Lubov my paintings at an art fair and then they contacted me.

Vulture, 2020

So you drove up to New York with a van full of your work …

Yeah, so I got a phone call from a gallerist saying that he was going to be in L.A. for the Frieze Art Fair, and would love to come by my studio. When I told him I don't live in L.A., he was like, Well, I've got to get down to Nashville at some point, and I thought, *When is some point?* People are so busy. I didn't care if I looked like a total desperate nerd — I texted my friends and everyone I knew asking if they had a studio in New York I could commandeer for an hour to show my paintings. And then I got the rental van. There was one day when I was seeing Emma Fernberger from Bortolomi Gallery, and I was like, *You know, it's raining and my paintings are in the back of this rental van*. And she was like, Sure, let's just get in the van and look at the work. I loved that. When I was younger, I wouldn't have thought that was acceptable. Now, I don't give a shit.

Do you see your work fitting into any larger art lineage?

I'm not a complete outsider artist, but I'm kind of naïve when it comes to who's doing what. When people have pointed out the similarities to someone like Balthus, I see it — although there's something kind of pedophiliac about him, and I don't relate to that. I'm not trying to be über feminist in any way, but I like that I'm a woman painting women. I'm influenced less by paintings and drawings, and more by Godard, or Michael Haneke, or old Robert Bresson films. There's this sort of spiritual, emotional, psychological theme to his films. They have a sort of innocence.

Sensitive Skin Magazine, 2020

Assembling the American Uncanny – Interview with Shannon Cartier Lucy

Marian St. Laurent

Marian St. Laurent and artist Shannon Cartier Lucy discuss the unexpected ecstasies of disorder

The last time Shannon Cartier Lucy and I crossed paths was in the Lower East Side of New York City over twenty years ago, when her work was focused on words and typographic riddles. When I saw her paintings earlier this year, they seemed to cut through to something about the current American *mise en scene*.

I wasn't the only one who felt their resonance. Her new work first hit the world through Instagram and then was featured in three consecutive solo shows early this year which were covered by mainstream cultural press (*New Yorker*, *Art Forum*, *Vulture*, *Vice* et al). She is now halfway through a new body of work for her upcoming show at Galerie Hussenot in Paris this November.

Naptime, Shannon Cartier Lucy, 2018, 23 x 30 inches

We spoke about how she negotiates symbols in her paintings to capture an experience of disorder, where the mind can no longer do its job of making sense of things.

Sensitive Skin Magazine, 2020

Marian St. Laurent

So when I saw your work it hit a deep personal chord as well as a universal one. Although some of the details differ, we share the experience of being parented by someone with schizophrenia and the radical shift of perspective on reality this brings with it. On the one hand my mother has been a huge teacher and opened up a way of seeing which makes me so good at what I do, but it's created a lot of torture as well. Can you talk a bit about your growing up in this unique way?

Shannon Cartier Lucy

Just situating yourself in the world on a deep level that you take for granted when you're younger, you see more clearly when you're older. I'm lucky that channeling it into art has given me some kind of gratitude for it. I don't think I could possibly see the world this way without this influence. But it absolutely is torture.

MSTL

There's this altered reality you grow up in. You don't really get that your reality is so altered until much later. It is like coming out of something gradually.

SCL

It's ingrained in you – it's your normal, right?

MSTL

I saw your new paintings and thought, *"Whoa she's so on fire!"* and then it turns out the world thinks so too — I'm really happy for you!

SCL

Last summer I was in my first group show just about a year ago exactly – and that's when I got the attention of a gallerist in NY who has Lubov Gallery. Francisco, who owns that gallery, offered me a show for January and that was my first solo show – in this little East Broadway Gallery. Out of that came a lot of press which was really welcome, surprising, and amazing!

Consecutively, within three months, I had two other shows which is kind of unheard of in the art world. Because I had been doing this work for over two years and kind of stockpiling it, I had enough work to sort of go "Bam. Bam. Bam." I think that's why you saw so much press because the shows were so close together.

After the NY show, there was LA and then within a week of LA there was a Miami opening. So three solo shows in a row is a lot. And since then, I have had a couple of pieces in group shows; one in Karma Gallery in NY and at Soft Opening in London. These are both people I am going to work with in the future – with shows set up for next year. My upcoming solo show will be at Galerie Hussenot in Paris this November and will be my first European show.

MSTL

It looks like most of your work is sold. Does that mean that the private collectors loan it so it can be seen?

SCL

Some do. Right now the gallery in Paris for instance, is trying to get a collector to make that sort of deal. And I'm just learning about how this works. There's one collector through the Karma group show who has agreed to donate it to a museum if he can get another painting from me. At this point, I'm not so picky about who owns it. Of course I would like a museum to see it because how else can people see the paintings?

They're still translatable though through print, luckily. There is nothing like a painting, yes, but I think they print well, so you can still sort of see what's going on in a book form when a book gets made. So I have faith that they're not going to disappear if someone can't get to an art show.

MSTL

Can you say anything about the body of work you'll be showing in November or are you too deep in it?

SCL

Like we were just talking about, when you're in the experience of having a schizophrenic parent you don't see it clearly because you're inside of it. This is the first time I'm getting such objective response, and I'm able to get mirrored by other people's perspective just reading press and having people say there's something violent within my paintings – *and* soft, – *and* funny. When I heard "violence" specifically, I kind of thought *"Oh!"* – I personally don't see the violence or constraint like someone else would see – that was something that was clearly just a visceral channeling.

I'm bringing that up because in the show coming up in Paris, I would say there's overt reference to violence. So I can actually say there's a woman covered in blood. I got inspired by the film *Immoral Tales* by Walerian Borowczyk – a film about a queen centuries ago, who bathed in the blood of virgin children.

But it's overt right? When you see blood, it's overt. Whereas in the other paintings, there was no blood. This one has more tools of violence but I would say it's still subtle in that there isn't reference to horror film or the ways we typically see violence. It's not overly politicized – it's still very emotionally based or psychological – and I'm aware of it in this coming show.

There's always some kind of conflict and tension between elements. With this overt violence I also have baskets of flowers. Maybe subconsciously and consciously, I like to counter those things so that there is sort of a revolution happening – so that there's a whole picture and not just sort of a trope. So that they're not "goth" paintings. With the dark there is something soft and feminine, and violent. I like to assemble factors that sort of create that tension that is familiar and not familiar at the same time.

MSTL

I think that's the reason why it feels like a reflection of the current cultural environment. It feels 'on time,' so to speak.

SCL

I think what I saw underneath the surface that has always been there is being revealed right now because everything is uncertain. Such is life, right? We all have these ways of trying to have things so secure and set – the home life, the family life, the job. Everything turned upside down has made people sort of groundless.

It's always been groundless. You and I know this from addiction, or seeking a spiritual path in life right? – but a lot of people have not. I think just that right there – that having the "rug pulled out from under us" feeling. Which I guess I'm lucky for having already experienced in life a few times. I think normal people who haven't are getting to feel that and are really sort of unsettled right now. And maybe the feeling of "unsettled" in the work, taps into this you know?

MSTL

Uncanny is a word that covers it. It's unsettled – but then at the same time it's like everything is kind of in place.

SCL

It has to be if I'm painting. A painting is an organization of sorts. So just to put it in a picture means I'm confidently presenting it. So there's something to that. We're used to having paintings having a design. When you design chaos, it automatically makes you feel like its planned or together. There's a dichotomy being composed but not composed the way we're used to. It's a funny thing.

MSTL

I guess it makes sense that your work is deeply personal and that through that, you're tapping into the collective experience of uncertainty and disorder. Something in your art brings people together.

SCL

I love that – god I love that.

You know why? I don't exclude. Because you see figures – if I dress them in a certain way…I always use goth as an example I don't know why – if I dress all my figures in goth clothing, I'd be excluding every single person that does not relate to the gothic style. Similarly, if I dress everyone in rapper wear, you all of a sudden position yourself for or against rapper wear. I try to pare down everything to such a simple visual and symbolic vocabulary. Yes, there are women. That's because its personal.

MSTL

You were also talking about breakdown and uncertainty – the idea that in a way, losing your dreams is a doorway into something else. I wanted to ask you to talk about what your hiatus / breakdown / hibernation meant.

SCL

It tore down the things that kept me stuck within the framework of what it is to be an artist, or what it is to be female or what it is to have a career. All those human constructs and things we get caught up in. Like identity – *How do I fit in? Am I being accepted? Is this cool?*

I think when you're dealing with base emotional pain, the breakdown is of all of those ways of getting caught up – to where I feel more organic now. I'm not forcing myself to continue to be a creative person.

I found an art practice again from a place of psychological necessity. There wasn't this pressure to make a living. I left New York City, so that rat race was gone. My relationship to making art became – 'natural' is a terrible word – because what is natural? – it was just more…how do you even say that? I had grown up – so the pressures of the outside world weren't a factor anymore.

I think pressures of the world create fear. Being broken down emotionally so much, I just became fearless at some point. I have lot less fear of life. When you feel so much pain, you're not afraid of feeling more. When you lose so much, you're not afraid of losing any more. So I think fear of failure is out the door. And without the fear of failure, it gave me so much freedom to just do exactly what's coming from here [my heart] – without that over thinker or the questioner in me. And there must be something to that because it really is communicative when I hit that place.

Sensitive Skin Magazine, 2020

I think there's something to not painting for so long. As you know, I did that text based stuff and all of sudden I'm doing figurative work. Honestly I couldn't tell you how that shifted. I just decided I had learned how to paint realistically at some point and there was a certain image I wanted done and so I just decided to try painting it. I could paint – I just didn't know I could paint like that until I did it. Now I'm using that breakthrough with figurative painting like a scientist uses a constant when they carry out experiments.

MSTL

One of the things that gets mentioned but not expanded upon in press is the work you were doing as a psychotherapist. Did you bring any of this to your painting when you returned to it at the other end of this period?

SCL

It's not the psychotherapeutic practice itself. I just chose that as a second choice because I just had so much angst and anxiety regarding the art part that when I went, "Ok I'm putting that on the back burner and here I am." That magical thing unfolded.

MSTL

We have discussed what a challenge and how gradual it is to recognize the impact of being parented by someone with schizophrenia. What was the set up? Were you raised by your dad? How did the family unit deal with it?

SCL

I was raised with my mom and dad up to about age 8 until my father exhibited symptoms of mental illness. I witnessed a lot of insanity. There were a lot of mental institutions involved, police – you know, all that kind of chaos as a child. And then, when they were separated, there was this dynamic with my mom being the caregiver on the one hand, and my dad being this sort of lovely, spiritual, untethered figure in my life. So I did get this unconditional support and love from the sweetheart that is my dad, that is completely bonkers.

Before I moved to NY I saw him constantly. And now that I'm back in Nashville, he may live with me within a couple of weeks. We will see what happens.

MSTL

That you would extend yourself to provide a space for him to live seems to be a sign of coming full circle.

SCL

And I'm still scared. There's going to be a trial period. He's always just been in the state system or homeless. Because of selling paintings, we just bought a house and I can finally probably offer him a space. Because I just don't want to see him in those state – run homes. In this country, they're horrible.

Sensitive Skin Magazine, 2020

Our New Home, Shannon Cartier Lucy, 2017, 22 x 28 inches

MSTL

Only in recent years has there been a conversation opening up regarding neurodiversity and one of the reasons I love your work is for its celebration and investigation of disorder / disordered thinking.

On the one hand we want to project ideas about quality of life on other people. But then there's also not one way of experiencing reality. We can see that the agreed upon reality of unregulated capitalism is quite insane. How could we possibly imagine it as the measurement of normal?

SCL

Right – our morals, aren't they displaced?

There's a couple of things in there. Most people with mental illness, I have found, don't consider themselves mentally ill. There's this denial. He's one of those and he's never really wanted to be medicated. And unmedicated is where that true madness, and sort of genius or strangeness comes out. *It's unmedicated*. And during those periods which were many, many, many years of my dad's life, he for instance, would write all over the walls of his apartment.

When I would see him or be the one to call the cops and get him hospitalized it was not because of the unruly behavior itself, but about how it affected people living their normal lives around him. In a rental, he would destroy the rental property – or he would get harassed by people around him. Or he was a threat to himself because people would threaten him. Our society is really uncomfortable with people like that.

But those people used to be considered the shamans in certain cultures that respected the mystery of channeling whatever is going on. In this culture, they're weirdos, they're hobos.

The last time I saw him unmedicated, I saw him on the street and it hit me emotionally in a deep way. He looked me straight in the eye and said, "Shannon, I'm at *peace*". I knew he meant it. I mean he was manic and tapped in, but I knew he meant it and that saddened me because I believed him and I just knew, *"There's no place in the world for you. There's just no place in the world for you to be at peace the way you are right now".*

Because there is no order. We make this ridiculous order that doesn't make sense. I think on a deep level, we all know it's kind of ridiculous – the way we live our lives and the way things are set up. People that sort of don't adhere to that, relate or even feel envy for or an affinity with that freedom on some level, but judge it on another level because it's just not allowed. It's just not acceptable.

MSTL
When I read the word "hiatus" I understood it perhaps meant you had come through something profound and were fundamentally changed. As someone having been parented by someone with disordered thinking, were you afraid of losing control?

SCL
Looking back, I can say that absolutely happened and thank god it happened. But not everyone has that sort of major psychic, emotional, spiritual shift. It happened to me and I let it happen. I didn't fight it. I didn't judge it. I just felt it and had people around me sort of holding me up. I went through the motions and thank god – I mean, it changed everything.

It took a looooong time but when I reentered the world something big had happened. Those were the years when I wasn't painting – so a lot was happening. Maybe three or four people I know in my life have gone through something like this. And when I meet someone who has, I feel a special bond because I know what they're talking about. It wasn't that I had kids or I quit my job. It was a deep psychological shift.

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SCL

It's ironic that I just bought my first house a week ago. Before the break, I had a very cozy, cute home and every place before that I felt very attached and contained. Since then, never in my life until now, could I settle down. I was just floating within spaces and not grounding myself in homes, in apartments. It's interesting that right now is the first time I have done it. The flood gates have opened. I'm trying to secure myself – do my garden, do my fences.

The first show was called, "Home is a Crossword Puzzle I Can't Solve" because there's so many different layers of home. Again, that word 'spiritual' doesn't cover it, but is a kind of blanket term for finding a place that feels right, that feels comfortable, that feels connected. But I'm so visual that it's what I see in my environment. And because I'm a hermit – being a painter, I'm constantly alone – it's my environment that I'm seeing all the time. I'm not so social, I'm more social with my surroundings and I get so into the creative aspect of interiors, visual and color and design.

But the home part – it's probably what's kind of obvious maybe or not obvious – back to that stuff about childhood – my parent – and the chaos of my father's house where you walk inside and there's a mattress against the wall, tables stacked up on top of it and then a chair on top of that, writing all over the walls and the countertops and trash sculptures or some sort of jars on top of that you know? *That's my 'home' right?* That is not "normal". That to me – all the possibilities of that – is what is ingrained in my head.

MSTL

On the one hand there's surreality and disorder in the displaced objects of your paintings and then you have very traditional interior furnishings and textiles. Are they specifically referencing something real in your home?

SCL

Yes, I've painted my actual rooms. I have set myself up with my iPhone in certain positions and then just painted exactly that scene. A lot of times they're just really in my house. Unless I have to reference something better. If I don't like my actual rug, I will look up some beautiful rug and decide I'm going to paint that.

MSTL

What about the happy white wicker couch in "Woman With Machete"? Is that an actual wicker couch you're referencing?

Woman With Machete, Shannon Cartier Lucy, 2019, 48 x 48 inches

SCL

Yes, the wicker couch was referenced. The idea was very specific. I lived in Africa for a year and I remember telling a friend or my mother, "Wow I was just walking on the street by myself along a long dirt road passing a man with a machete" – and you get used to it. My fear mechanism went off the first time I saw someone walking with one. But it's just a tool – an everyday tool.

I knew that if I had something as strong a symbol as a machete – which obviously, in our culture you don't see a lot of – displaying that in our culture with something very – I don't want to say 'White' – but "white – centric" or "American" and a white girl in simple, classic wear, it's *displaced*. It doesn't automatically become violent, but it has this sort of air of power and it's…*strange*. So that's a very good example of how I reference but how I purposely displace things because that feels right to me. That feels more real. That feels more empowering. So I *am* specific.

MSTL

We have talked a bit about tension – and the public feedback on the theme of violence and constraint in your work. Can we talk a bit about BDSM and fetish references in your work? Where do you locate that – how is that playing in your imagination and across your images?

Sensitive Skin Magazine, 2020

SCL

Specifically in reference to BDSM, I'm not a fetish person – I know that those images of a woman in latex pants or the towel I made that says "humiliation" reference that world but I want to take away any references to the way sexual fetishists use it. It's more of a psychological relationship for me. Making 'humiliation' into a kitchen towel – that's again a displacement so that it's more that home life in general is the humiliation. The constraint of this weird human way we have of doing things is the humiliation. Having to be me within that is the humiliation.

While I get a lot of visual reference material from BDSM, I hope not to make my art "fetishy" so I purposefully make an effort to take out the obvious connection. But if people want it to be that, that's fine too.

MSTL

There's one thing about "Finish Fetish" as it relates to West Coast Pop Art and Post Pop Art that was present in your work before it took this figurative turn and now. To me it feels like an aesthetics of commerce and consumerism.

SCL

I think the baseballs on the girls back is a good example. Someone asked me if it that was a feminist statement. Well, it's more like a power thing. It's that capitalistic "the bigger man wins" / "every man for himself" shit.

Woman with Baseballs, Shannon Carter Lucy, 2019, 35 x 26 inches

SCL

Well, it's a woman on a beach, quite beautiful – I know that's a general term – with not a very specific face in this delicate, kneeling, sitting-on-her-knees stance with one figure holding her feet down and one figure stepping on her hands. If I could put into words what that feeling was, I might not have to paint it, you know?

Again, it's that idea of tension. That boundless place with the beautiful ocean and waves and these clothed – which I think is very important – figures with shoes on, stepping on her hands and feet. It's figurative for that feeling that the sky is our limit – just existence in general is our limit. It's such a deep feeling of no matter what, we're still in the constraint of this unknown – *"Why are we here? What are we doing?"*

It's not political. It's not the female vs. male world – that's a very simplified version of what is going on. It's more psychic. No matter what, we're stuck in this being-ness for now that is so strange and uncomfortable and mysterious. It's a big uncomfortable mystery. It's a fact. It doesn't mean that I always feel that way. But it's always the undercurrent of existence – of me existing. *"There's something on my foot. There's something on my hands."* We exist there and it's a matter of being comfortable with that or uncomfortable with that, right?

Day at the Beach, Shannon Cartier Lucy, 2019, 34 x 32 inches

SCL

The nudity is sexual if you want it to be. I use it when it's necessary for the symbolic language of the painting.

MSTL

When clothing is present – the clothing you paint is specific – the colors and specific elements seem to say something about performing or performance.

SCL

Yes, even if it's trying to be invisible. Even if its purposefully trying not to distract. They are still performing.

MSTL

How does Color work?

SCL

I like primary colors a lot – I think the rest is a visual puzzle in the moment within each work. It's visceral. It's just what I'm attracted to. It's that simple.

MSTL

Flowers and Keds?

SCL

I've been wearing Keds for about 25 years. That's my go-to shoe. I will order 5 pair at a time. Now that I have bought this house in the country, they are all covered in mud. Thats because I wear them all the time. That's an aspect of self-portraiture. *Paint what you know*, right?

With flowers, maybe sometimes I dare myself. If I paint floral wallpaper its because I am daring myself to paint detail. It's a craft decision. How can I dare myself to just try a little harder? I admire craft and the craft of painting and I think putting work into detail is admirable. To satisfy my own need for that even though it's torture, I admire that and I like how it looks. Floral usually does that because it's hard and it's full of detail and has unpredictable shapes.

MSTL

There are tricks and riddles or subliminal messages that seem to come across the work.

SCL

I guess riddle is a good word. It makes sense. I couldn't possibly put it in purposefully, like I'm holding the cards behind the curtain. I'm too am on the side of the audience being challenged to understand the riddle in there. Otherwise I wouldn't do it – that's my challenge.

Sensitive Skin Magazine, 2020

MSTL

How do these objects / ideas come to you? Are they in dreams or meditation?

SCL

I will have sort of inspiration highs where I will put full focus on just creating the ideas. I will have a good few days where it's more ingesting and creating the ideas. And then I will have periods where I'm just checking off the list of doing all of those in paint. Right now, I have 40 ready images that I just need to paint. I try to put together an order because they seem to be coming out thematically, naturally – sort of reflecting my life. They just come to me. I will be out in the world I will see this and want to mix it with that and it's just that sort of organic.

Like a writer, you set yourself a two-hour window and you force things to come. There is a regimen to it at times. The ideas themselves, I don't know how my brain conjures this up. But now I know that there's a formula to it. And I'm good at that formula. So like with colors – "Here's brown. How are you going to get to that brown? You add red, you add green – oh it's too light – gotta add a little yellow, add a little blue." I know how to do that with symbols to where I've got that feeling. And I can see where I've messed up. *"Oh no I need to take that emblem off her shirt and it needs to be blue".* I know how to sort of tweak that. I'm still practicing. It's editing. I'm just a visual editor.

MSTL

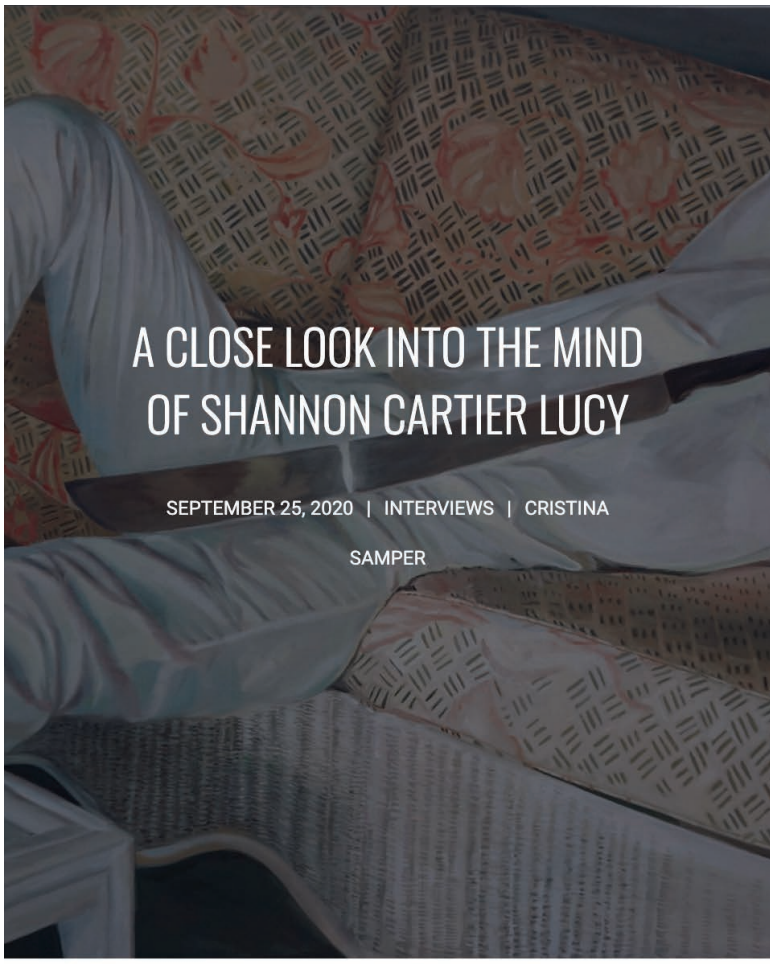
Your paintings seem to tap into the American picture right now.

SCL

Our world is kind of unraveling a little bit. And I'm like, welcome to my club. Welcome to reality. It scares a lot of people.

–Marian St. Laurent. All paintings courtesy Shannon Cartier Lucy

Art of Choice, 2020



After a 10 year-long break from producing art Shannon Cartier Lucy released a series of realistic paintings that reflect an entire new side to her artistic talent. The series titled *The Ever Flashing Strap* was exhibited in Nina Johnson Gallery, Miami April-May 2020. These intimate suburban scenes in methodical style present a dichotomy in the viewer's mind as they express a directly contradicting and anonymous scene. Pastel palettes take over scenes of every-day American household compositions, always with a blatantly absurd reality that cannot be ignored. A fishbowl sitting on a gas stove with the flames on, a ballerina stretching while a man rests his feet on her back as he reads, a woman leaning on a couch with a machete laying on her chest, a woman holding a pair of scissors to her left wrist. The viewer is presented with these paintings and suddenly time stops. The melancholy and numbness of her subjects take charge, and for that moment the viewer becomes the subject. Lucy mentioned how her thinking process, her troubled past, and her childhood release the depictions of the "familiar and the unfamiliar at the same time".

If My Hand Offends Hires, 2019, Courtesy of the artist and Nina Johnson Gallery, Miami, FL

Tell us a bit about yourself. Where are you from and how did art first come into your life?

I grew up in Nashville, Tennessee. I spent two decades in New York and Los Angeles before settling back here in Nashville.

Living Room (2019) Courtesy of the artist and Nina Johnson Gallery, Miami, FL

Has your work always taken on the style it currently embodies?

Actually, painting in this realistic painterly manner is quite new and honestly unexpected for me. I had for years been producing text paintings and painting in a whole different way. The themes, the mood, though, I'd say, are relatively the same.

Art of Choice, 2020

Our New Home (2017) Courtesy of the artist and Lubov, New York

What is the first thing you do when you start a work?

Panic, haha!

I always feel a slight nagging sense of dread. That THIS is the painting that is going to be a complete failure.

But literally, when I start a painting, I start by loosely sketching out the image in paint in monochrome only on Day one. Then,I walk away from the painting, spending the rest of the day plowing through all the self-sabotaging thoughts. Then I really start painting the next day.

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Naptime (2018) Courtesy of the artist and Lubov, New York

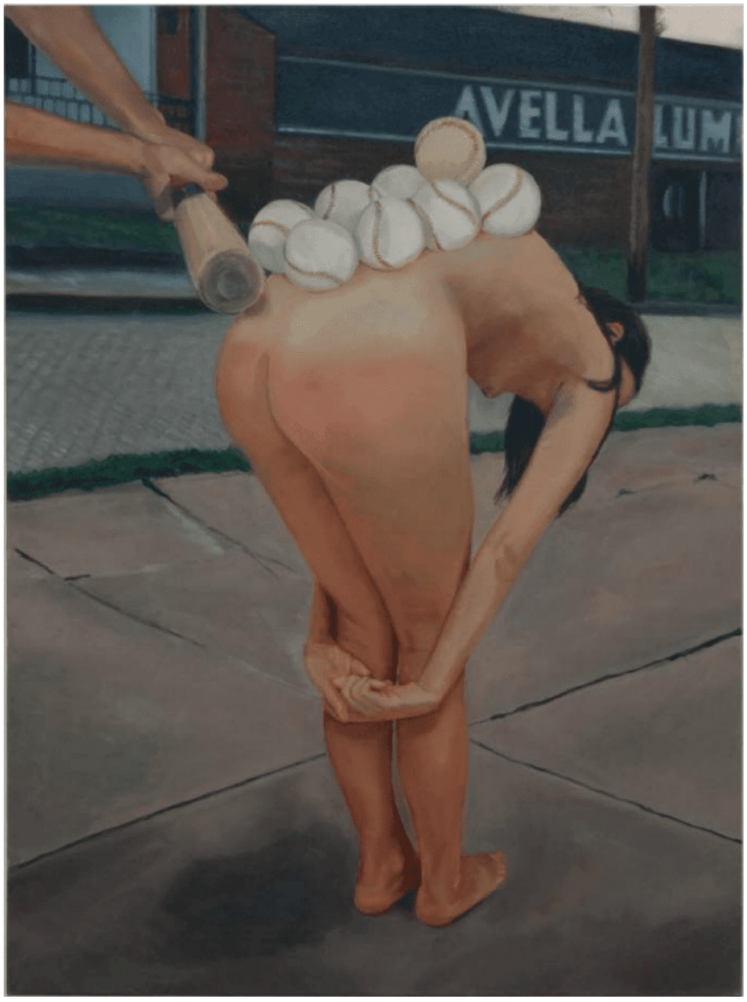
Walk us through a day in the studio

Right now, I have just moved into a new 'old' house, inside of which I am in the process of building my studio. It's a complete mess, so I have no routine yet, which makes me feel unhinged! Normally, I straighten up a bit, put on music, burn a little palo santo (because I love rituals) and start mixing my paint colors. On a good day, I'll paint 3 hours or so, take a lunch break and then return for the afternoon. I prefer working with direct sunlight, so I generally paint only in the daytime. The colors are really not the same with artificial light.

Day at the Beach (2019) Courtesy of the Artist and Nina Johnson Gallery, Miami, FL

From where do you draw your inspiration?

For the artwork I make, there is no specific place from which I draw inspiration. As I peruse the internet, something might catch my attention and I'll save an image or take a note. I have thousands of pictures in folders to draw from and assemble for a painting.



Woman With Baseballs (2019) Courtesy of the artist and Nina Johnson Gallery

Your work has a very intimate and almost surreal style. Can you tell us more about where that style originated?

This is a question I have a hard time answering. I suppose I could psychoanalyse myself and find a source for my art, but I'm not really interested in knowing why I come up with these ideas or paint the way I do. I guess my style has come naturally over the years as a result of the life I've lived and the culture I have ingested and the particular way I see the world. I paint what excites me and interests me. Other than that, its kind of a mystery.

I will say this, though- I do feel more connected to myself making art in the way I'm doing right now. Im not trying affect anything that is not me, if that makes sense. I'm being genuine and sincere. That is probably what you're finding intimate in my paintings, perhaps.

Woman with Trenchcoat (2019) Courtesy of the artist and Nina Johnson Gallery, Miami, FL

If you could share a coffee with any artist, dead or alive, who would it be and why?

Hmm, well, I could tell you an artist I admire, but as we all know, that person may not be a very interesting person to hang out with. I'd definitely pick someone really funny, because I love people that make me laugh. This is such a boring answer, but Jerry Seinfeld. I have a super crush on Seinfeld, especially after watching that show *Comedians in Cars Getting Coffee*.

Art of Choice, 2020

Morning Prayers (2018) Courtesy of the artist and Nina Johnson Gallery, Miami, FL

What source material do you base your work off of?

I paint from life, photos I take myself, found photos, screenshots, old magazines, film stills, etc.

Girl With Swans (2019) Courtesy of the artist and Lubov, New York

What's next for you?

Artwise, I have an upcoming show in late November in Paris at Galerie Hussenot, then a solo show in London with Soft Opening next spring. Also, I just bought my first house on five acres of land, so I plan to set up a nice sunny studio on the edge of my woods and grow a garden. Then I never have to leave my house and I can really start living the dream!

Family Portrait I (2019) Courtesy of the artist and Nina Johnson Gallery , Miami, FL

At the end of every interview we like to ask artists to recommend a friend whose work you love and would like us to interview next. Who would you suggest?

My friend Brad Phillips is someone whose work I loved immediately when I was introduced a few years ago. I definitely feel a kinship and think that we share a similar way of looking at things. A few years ago, we traded artwork, as so many artists do. The word painting I got from him says, “All Woman, All Cry.”

7 Standouts from NADA Miami 2019

By Lee Pivnik

DEC. 6, 2019

PHOTOGRAPH BY CASEY KELBAUGH, COURTESY NADA

NADA Miami opened Thursday and continues through the weekend, with galleries bringing an immense amount of energy and some truly remarkable works. Below are some pieces that resonated all day long.

Artspace, 2020

7 Standouts from NADA Miami 2019

By Lee Pivnik

DEC. 6, 2019

SHANNON CARTIER LUCY

Woman with Tulips, 2019

Lubov, New York, Booth 10.13

$10,500

Artspace, 2020

Slightly surreal, totally uncanny, Shannon Cartier Lucy's paintings present private scenes influenced in part by her upbringing in strange environments. Painting in a traditional, figurative style, Lucy injects intense moments of emotional resonance with the slightest compositional anomalies. From a fishbowl on a stove, to a woman laying in bed encased under a plastic furniture slipcover, moments of danger and uncertainty are constants in her work, made routine in the world she's crafting. Raised by a schizophrenic parent, Lucy states in her writing about these paintings that, "It was customary in my home to find a toaster in the freezer or The Holy Bible in the dishwasher." While many of her figures are rendered with their faces obscured, cropped, or facing away, this portrait looks towards you, and you're left deciphering if the woman is crying, as her hands graze a bouquet of pink tulips hanging upside down above her. Lucy received a BFA from NYU and is based in Nashville. Her upcoming January solo show with Lubov will mark the return of her work to New York after two decades away.

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