

Artist Statement

I believe that living is an act of rebalancing, and I am drawn to the tension inherent in the process: the tenuous balance between natural and man-made; the progression of certainties, constructed on passing cultural interpretations; the labor for self-understanding, existing as a woman habituated to the idea that others know better; the compromise between dignity (self-respect) and humor (self-deprecation).

At the heart of my process, where all my inspiration comes from, is everyday life in an urban environment. I paint images of familiar objects and subjects which for me simultaneously trigger nostalgia and complicated feelings about reality. I like to take my subject out of context, or see it out of scale, as an exercise in questioning the value I associate with it.

I paint diminutive campers in generic settings. The subject matter is homelessness, but the paintings are small and cute, and easily consumed, like candy. I paint campers and tent cities into picturesque landscapes. It's celebrating the great outdoors, but also seeing the misplaced displaced-the people easily ignored at home. With combustion engine parts and female anatomy, I make up decorative patterns and imagined anatomical diagrams. I'm contemplating gender norms, domesticity, medicine, and the politics surrounding the female body. I paint fetuses absurdly engaging in activities meant for children. It's about legislating morality, as well as perceived danger, and what constitutes good parenting.

I want my paintings to evoke a mixture of awe and apprehension-to be wonderfully disturbing. I hope the work inspires not-so-serious conversation about human complexities and imperfections, conveys my hopefulness that beauty will emerge from broken ideologies, and my belief that brokenness is an opportunity to rebuild.

JoEllen Wang