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questions. Plus we'd love to know how you might want to use Toska!

Topic: Materials

Looking around the studio I could see ripped paper in many places and rolls upon rolls of decorative paper. Kate informs me...

Kate - It's all wallpaper. Most of it is either vintage or out of stock. I buy it on Ebay mostly or at estate sales. You'd be surprised but there are actually wall paper dealers.

Phil - And you called it Toile?

Kate - Yeah, Toile (Pronounced Twal) started as 18th century French fabric, and then they made wallpaper from the designs. Some of this is hand printed from huge wooden blocks. It's really cool stuff.



Topic: Balance

Kate - I have a gallery that just offered me a show in march. They also got into Art Miami in December and are coming today to choose between two pieces. I kind of have two bodies of work: the anatomy work which tends to be a little bit more critical and I also do a lot of birds and some other things that sell better. But the gallery just wants anatomy for the show.

Phil - That's an interesting challenge. Two different buying audiences. The people at an art fair and people at a gallery.

Kate - Yeah, I do art fairs locally, and people like the birds and butterflies and crabs. But if I bring my skulls, people are like "oh no no no", they don't want it, but galleries are like "we don't want the birds and butterflies but we do want the skulls".

Phil - How do you like that? How do you manage that?

Kate - I actually like it because I find these pieces [anatomy] have more social commentary to them. But then I'll find an old etching of a really cool persian bird and want to make it. And I find that making the fun things, like the birds, helps me make the more serious stuff.



Topic: Developing Style

Phil - How did your style develop?

Kate - Okay, so a while back I was an abstract painter. But when I started teaching I needed to teach my students drawing skills. So I taught myself so I could teach them. This forced me to be a better drawer.

Then at the same time I switched from oil painting to acrylic because I moved my studio space from (the building) out back to here in the basement and I didn't want to bring turpentine in here. Then with acrylic I realized I can put textures, I can put things in my paintings without them deteriorating.

Eventually, I was at a teacher swap for Baltimore country and somebody brought a bunch of old wallpaper rolls. I initially took it for school - for a collage - and then just ended up playing around with it and it went from there.

Phil - How do you pick your imagery?

Kate - I really research - I either get excited about the paper I find, or I get excited about an image and go looking for a paper to make it.

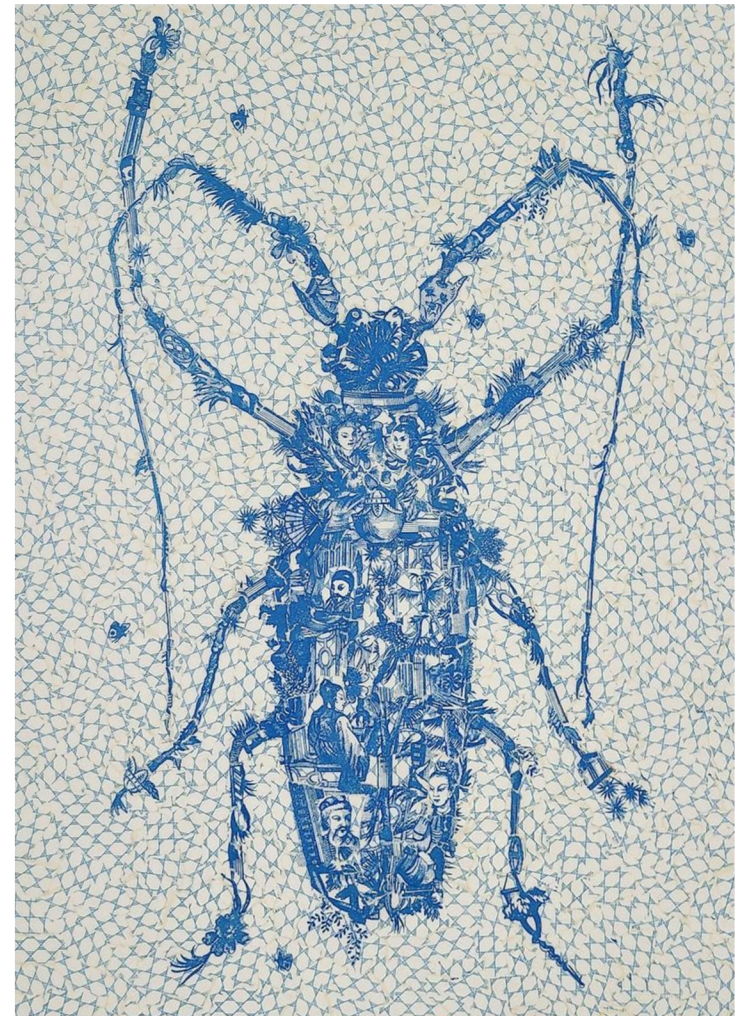
Phil - So you went from abstract painting in oils to using acrylic and putting things in the paint and then to what you're doing now. Was there a moment what you knew "I'm just not going to put paint on it anymore"?

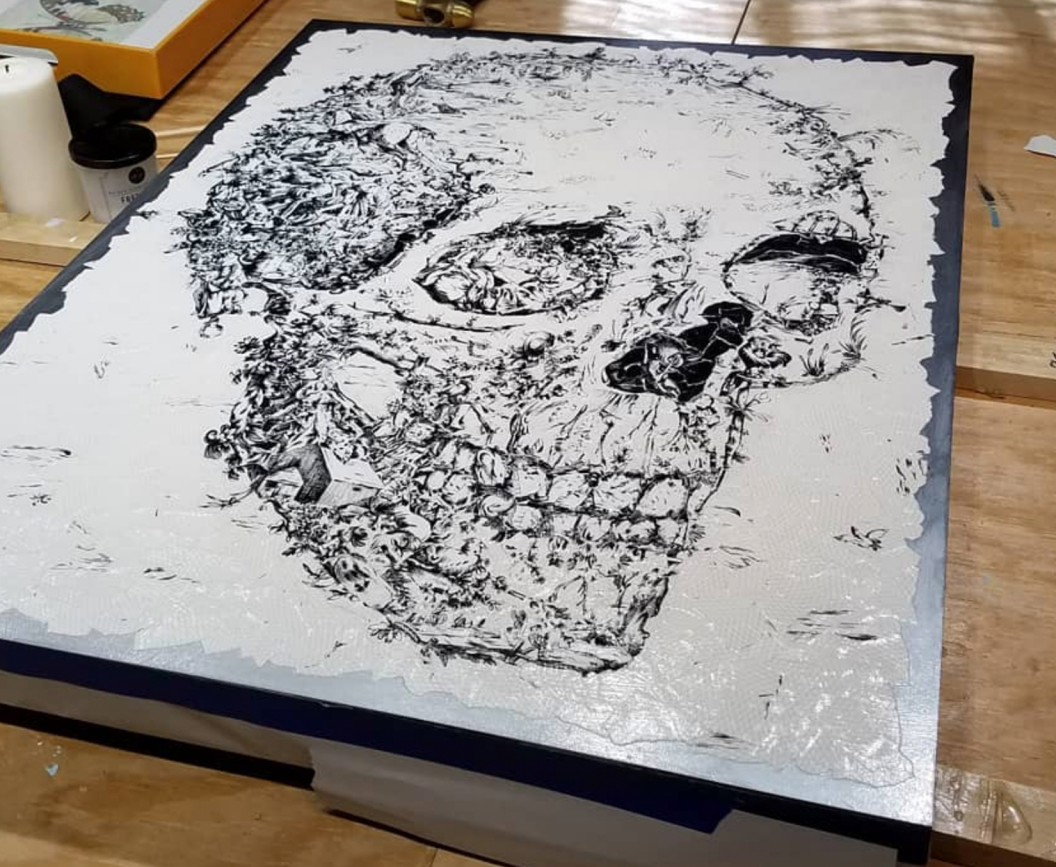
Kate - Do you know who Rex Ray was? He was a San Francisco collage artist that just passed away - he did posters and he was really dynamic. He would paint patterns and then cut them up. I thought well, I could do that, but as I started working, I decided I wanted to limit myself to wallpaper. And if I can't find exactly the brown I want, then I can use two different color papers together to make it look that way. It was my own self limitations.

Phil - When you found this style, did you realize pretty quickly that this was it?

Kate - Yeah, I felt like everything gelled together. One of the first things I made was an anatomical heart and posted it on facebook. A friend of a friend said, "I love it. Can you make me a bigger one?". I said sure, and it just snowballed from there. I started going to art fairs, then go into shows from because of the fairs and now I'm onto galleries.

I've only been doing this work for four years, so it's fairly new in that respect, in terms of how long I've been making things.





Topic: Putting in the time

Phil - One of the questions I always think of, with anybody who creates is, where does that persistence, that push come from?

Kate - Yea, well I've always had it. I'm was a competitive swimmer when I was younger so I've always done laps. I think part of the monotony of doing laps helps. If I'm doing a big piece and I'm crunched for time between teaching or life or whatever, I'll come home and be like "okay, I don't want to think about what I'm doing so I'll spend an hour just working on the background". So I come down and work for an hour and I don't think about it, so it just kind of gets done that way.

Phil - So you do think sports help?

Kate - Yeah, I think it did help. Just knowing creating art is a skill and it takes time.

When I'm teaching and a kid says "I can't do that", and I'm like "Well you can learn to do it right? I can teach you the skills to help you to get there." And if they're like "well it doesn't look perfect," I'm like, "it's not supposed to be perfect". It's just hard for some kids when one of their peers is really talented. It makes them think "I can't do that".

Phil - yeah, it's almost like in art, people believe too strongly that you either have it or you don't. But that's not right, it's the amount of work you put in that matters the most



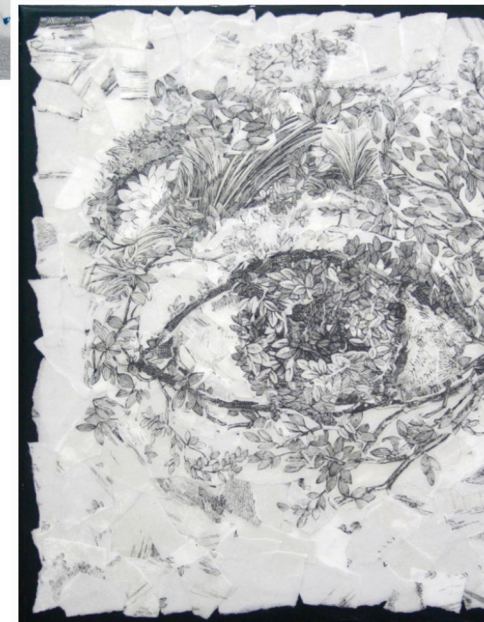
Topic: Putting yourself out there

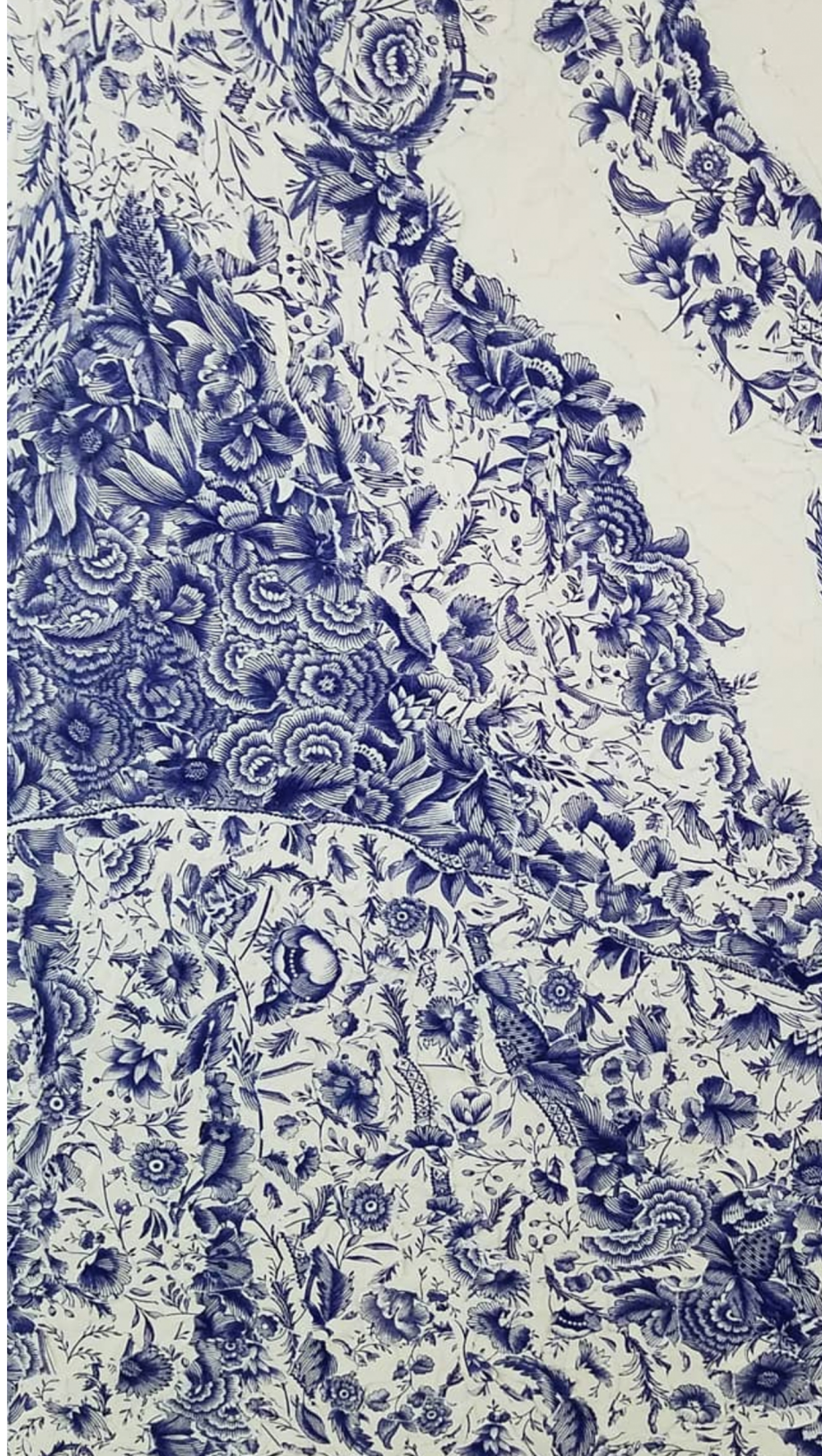
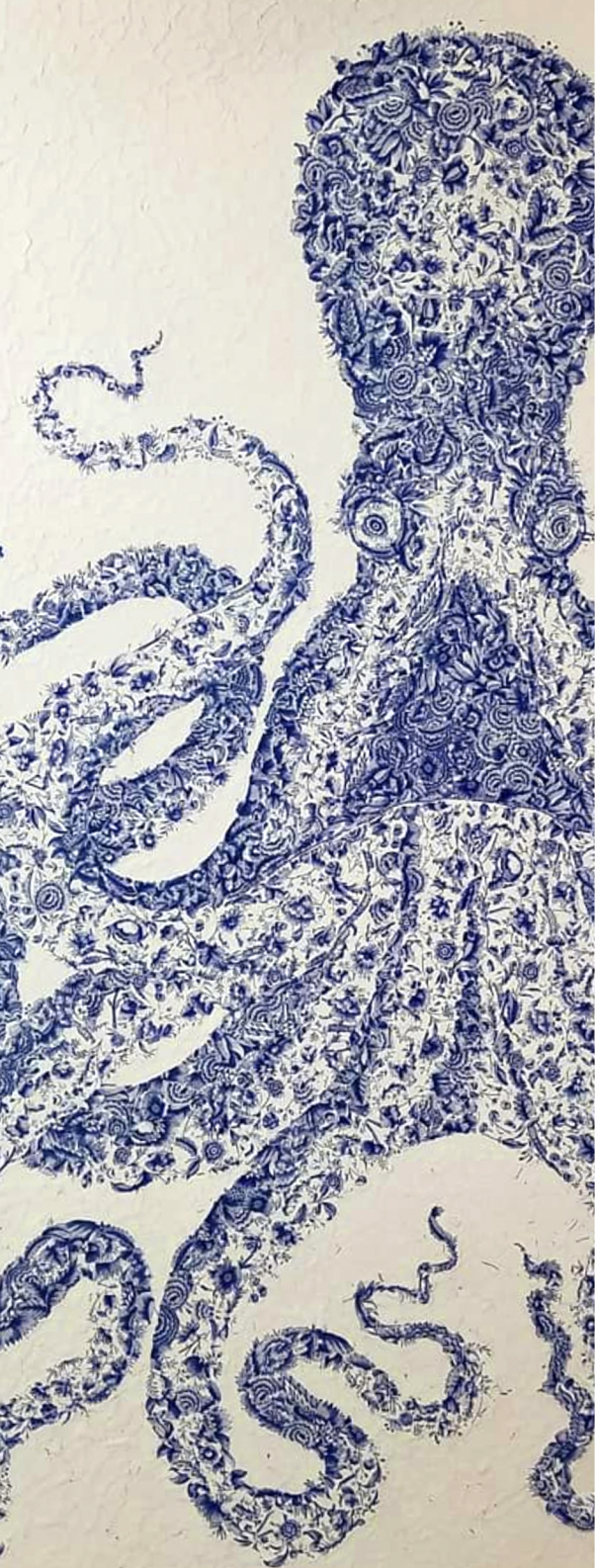
Kate - There's this thing called the Baker Artists Awards - are you familiar with it?

Phil - Baker? No?

Kate - It's an award here in Baltimore - it's a big fund - I think the work gets shown at the Baltimore museum of art - but it's a big local platform that's highly regarded. You have to apply to be a part of it, make a portfolio, put it online, and then they judge. I've only done it a couple of times and have never been a finalist. This year I wasn't really sure if I was going to apply but I just sucked it up and did the work. Again, not a finalist but a month later a local gallery curator reached out and said "We want to create a show with you, we're really excited about your work, we've been following you on social media." And I was like "well how did you discover me?". And she said "The Baker Artist Awards".

I felt like I was lucky, but also, I put my work out there. You have to put it out there. And that's the hard part.





Topic: Moving towards art full time

Phil - So to transition to art full time do you have a certain number of paintings you need to sell to make it happen?

Kate - Yeah, people have told me once you make half of what your current jobs income is, then you could probably transition over. And a couple of years ago I was like, I'm close, and then the pandemic hit so I was like, "I'll hang onto my job for a little longer". But I think even if I do quit I would still try to teach, either part time or pick up a gig at MICA like continuing studies or something because I find that it's nice to have conversations about art. You know, I teach in high school; some of the kids' process helps me think about how I do things. Right now I'm helping the kids pick their AP portfolios so I push them to think outside the box a little bit or to get a bigger picture or "what's your message" and then I'm like "oh, what's my message, I better go write an artist statement".

(We both laugh)



Topic: A Helpful Discount

Phil - (looking around) Basic coment but you must spend a ton of time ripping paper.

Kate - I have help! I have girlfriends who rip paper for me and my mom does it for me from California and I give them a discount.

Phil - Ohhhhh, I was gonna ask if they do it for fun? Or....

Kate - I ask them if they want to get paid and they tell me, "no, I just want to keep my discount up" and I'm like "okay!"

Phil - Oh, that is funny. How did that come about? Because I don't think it would've ever struck me.

Kate - They're good friends and a while back I had a show coming up. It was a real conflict of time and they were like "we'll help you rip" and I was like "okay, I just need the background ripped". The friend that does it the most for me told me she just does it at night while watching tv for an hour, she'll just rip paper - it's no big deal.

