

Inside the Artist - Sarah Vogelsang-Card October 2015



Tell us about your journey in art / as an artist.

I've always known, since I was born that I was a performer and an artist. My parents exposed me to lots of art from opera and ballet to fine arts, movies and music. My first love was performing arts and I grew to have a real appreciation for the power of the arts in all forms. I have always said I wanted to be a dancer. I started ballet at age 3 and there was no deterring me. Then at age 11, I was diagnosed with Charcot-Marie Tooth disease (CMT), a degenerative neuromuscular disorder. I was told that I would not be able to dance professionally and that I would be in a wheelchair by age 20. It was a year filled with pain and disappointment. I took up the camera as a way to express myself in some way and by 14, I was taking lots of pictures. When I was 16, I entered an Alternative School program and spent my work time as an assistant photographer in New York City.

I kept up dance and was not in a wheelchair by 20. I went to photography school in NYC and kept up performing in anything with expression. I was so involved in my personal pain. I moved to Vermont at a time when I was in serious pain, and I thought I would do surgery for CMT. There was not a lot of work in Vermont as a photographer, so I stopped doing it as a job and did it as a fine art hobby. When the CMT symptoms subsided, I started a serious journey as a dancer and started performing again. It opened my world, tapped into my creativity and became a wealth of inspiration. Dance is at the root of my creativity and is my true and everlasting love (besides my husband and child!). All other forms of expression stem from that for me. Art has saved my life and dance has saved my body. It has stalled, slowed and reversed the progression of the CMT. It's hard for me to lose my skill level as the CMT progresses but dancing has kept me walking. I'm still performing now at 35. I believe that if you follow your path and journey to where you are meant to be and if you follow your passion and life line, then it will feed your body and your soul. There is a 50% chance of passing CMT onto my child, but right now he is good

and he is perfect.

One of my favorite moments was during my pregnancy. I was high risk and seeing lots of doctors who told me that the pregnancy would likely progress the CMT and they advised me to not be afraid to use a walker. At 8 ½ months pregnant I was onstage in Boston, MA doing a full African dance. It was my most empowering moment and it was like an F*% Y*% to all the doctors who told me I couldn't.



Being a puppeteer (with *Puppets in Education*) is a strain on my body. Like photography, I enjoy and immerse myself in it. To make the puppets come alive, you have to contort your body and for me it is often more brutal and strenuous than dance, making it easy for me to rip tendons and bones. (As the puppeteers of Sesame Street say, "If it doesn't hurt, you're not doing it right").

What is the medium you most like to work with/in? What draws you to this medium? What do you like about your materials?

My primary medium is dance. I studied ballet from age 3-13 and took modern, jazz, tap and West African. I'm no longer able to do the most of the movements required by these dance styles. When I took up belly dancing I found an accepting community that allows me to modify and explore, to use what I can and be as funny and witty as I want to be (as a dance member of *The Accaliae*).

The second is photography. It feels more like work since I have done it and do it for my job. I've done some great collaboration

with Beth Robinson and *Strange Dolls* and *The Art of Horror*.

The Art of Horror show is fun. I joined Beth Robinson 3 years ago and feel privileged to be part of it. It is during the month of October and the night event is about performance and dancing and food and large groups of people dressing up and enjoying the show. Last year we hung 300 pieces of art and showed 20-30 artists. My favorites are the new artists who come out of nowhere. We're always looking for a new pool of artists to draw on.

What most inspires your work - Has there been anything that has been life changing or that has influenced your practice?

My photography has been inspired by becoming a mom. With photography, I completely expose myself. In *The Art of Horror*, I explored being pregnant and grappled with losing autonomy and finding acceptance with it as parent. My photography is personal and raw.



Dance is less of this and not so dark. Dance is a great escape; it is outside my world and a place for characters, fantasy and stories.

My parents exposed me to a variety of arts and being moved by it. I was always fascinated by the dark arts. It is a great balance to stretch the darkest parts of your mind to be able to be in touch with both sides of life and to allow you to fully reach for and appreciate happiness. My fine arts and photography explore the dark; fear, anxiety, the many little deaths we have in life that we overcome to be reborn to allow change and progress.



to my eyes. I've also been listening to a segment that is all about blood (July 31, 2013) in anticipation of and to get inspired for the upcoming *The Art of Horror* show.



Kick off the Halloween season by joining Sarah at *The Art of Horror Show* opening reception at the S.P.A.C.E. Gallery October 2nd in Burlington from 5-11pm. The exhibit represents the beautiful side of decay and indulges the senses with dark imagery from Vermont artists and spirit conjuring performance art.

What blogs or books are you reading or would recommend?

Red Rising (Pierce Brown) is a new novel and it's fun. I also just found a last minute and amazing deal for a trip to the Dominican Republic. We'll be staying at a resort with my son so I've mostly been reading trip advisor to learn all about it!

I listen to lots of NPR/VPR and my favorite is *Radio Lab*. I love storytelling and I could listen to people tell their stories all day. One of my favorite episodes was of a woman in NYC who watched a couple in the apartment complex across from hers for years and she wound up falling in love with these perfect strangers (*The Living Room*, April 2015). It always brings tears