

**Inside the Artist -
Torrey Carroll Smith
August 2014**



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

I did art as a young person but was told it was not practical and so I buried it for a while. As my kids aged, I had the chance to think about who I was going to be. As I got more breathing room, I wanted to see if I still liked art. I started taking classes and made more time in life to be brave and do more art. Nine months ago I rented studio space on Main Street in downtown Waterbury. It was a very public declaration that was both scary and exciting.

I started "Tilt and Whirl" as part of that same journey. I knew Kelley Taft and was amazed at the project she was working on with her daughter at the Waterbury Farmer's Market and what she learned from it. Our own kids talked about wanting to be part of something like that. We found a way to pair our art and food related ideas into a summer booth at the market. It was a way to test what worked, both for my own art and for my kids to make crafts and learn the basics of a simple business model.

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

Acrylic paint. Also known as the "Mom Medium". I had three babies and needed a medium that had little or no toxins. Acrylic paint is solid, with big color, and quick to dry. It allowed me to carry my art room to room (especially important when my kids were little). A canvas bag and portable easel was my studio back then.

I love the feeling of pushing the paint around canvas. At first I used heavy body acrylics but I eventually moved more toward fluid acrylics. It just feels good.

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

When I go to a museum or a gallery and a piece grabs me, makes me want to come back and see more of it... I guess that's what I am hoping to accomplish in my painting. So often it may even be a rather mundane image, but the artist is able to capture something elegant. Or, just the opposite: there might be something surprisingly universal in what seemed like a very personal or particular moment the artist recorded.

It helps that my husband Ben and I are each taking the same journey, although his medium is writing. We can talk about the doubts and successes. We are not competitors so we can have empathy for each other and it helps to know that he is trying something crazy too.

It's been transformative to have various discussions with people over art. Those conversations and connections help me to see my experience in theirs, which is both comforting and inspiring, motivating and energizing. I went to Sarah-Lee Terrat's studio to visit and she was so gracious and generous and encouraging. I've seen lots of generosity in our community of creatives/ artists and it feels open and honest to have conversations with them.



What blogs or books are you reading or would recommend?

"*Art and Fear – Observations on the Perils (and Rewards) of Art Making*", written by David Bayles and Ted Orland (a couple of artists/art professors sharing observations on their own careers and with students). Seeing that many of my artistic worries and insecurities are actually quite universal has the funny effect of

both shrinking my fears and bolstering my courage to join the ranks of others who persevered before me.

"*The Creative Habit – Learn it and Use It for Life*", written by Twyla Tharp. Recommended by a local artist, this book was truly enjoyable.

"*War of Art*", written by Steven Pressfield. Also recommended to me by a local artist, the ideas were good and validated what I was going through; how to play the head game and not defeat myself.

"*Ten Poems to Change Your Life*" written by Roger Housden, this is the midlife crisis book that led me to read "*Art and Fear*". Part of a series; each poem and essay offered a reminder of the deep satisfaction we get from listening to our own dreams.

A recent novel I enjoyed is "*Telling the Bees*" written by Peggy Hesketh. It's a great reminder that if we share our love and interests with others, we can often find meaningful connection.

