

CATCH &
RELEASE POETRY-
ART &
REFLECTION
JOURNAL

Anita Bushara

Catch & Release

Journal

A memoir in creative expression

Art-Poetry-Reflection

Art and verse are not luxuries in difficult times; they are lifelines—mapping emotion, anchoring meaning, and stitching together the frayed edges of experience.”

ASB

State of Mind

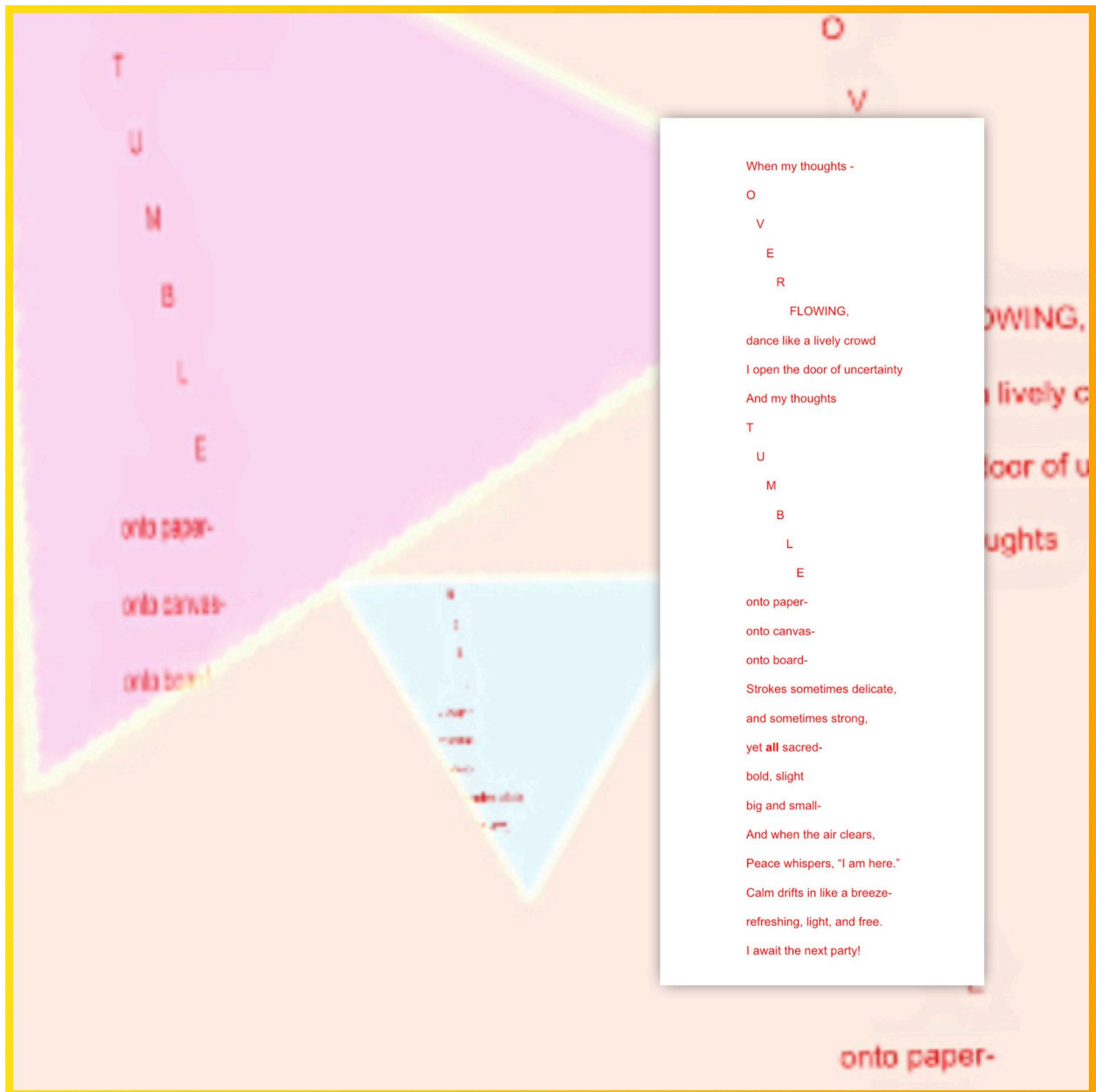
During the height of lockdown and COVID restrictions, I was driven by the grace of the universe, the power of God, and perhaps the desire within me, to align and activate pent up energy in an exercise of creative expression. My expression came through a medium in which I could use my hands- something I have always liked to do. However, I had not painted before. With only a handful of art supplies at my disposal (I had little more than a craft box filled with remnants from my teaching days, but it was enough to begin).

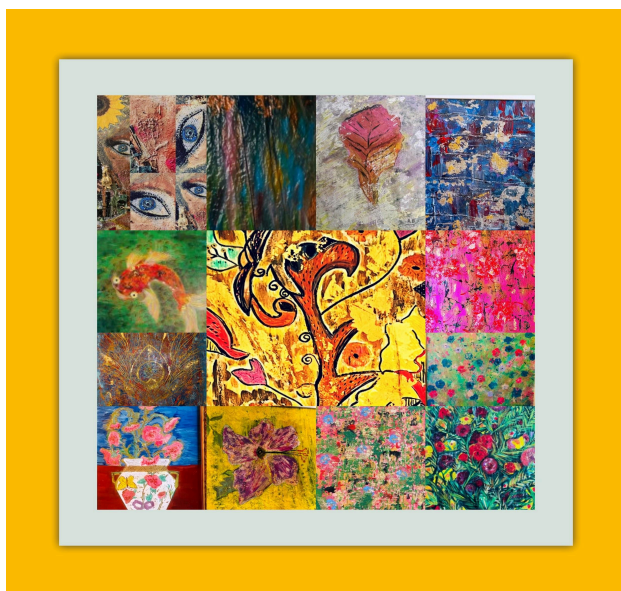
Each painting session was unplanned- a spontaneous outpouring that could come morning or night. Every piece started with a pressing need to purge what had been building inside me. I carved out a small space in my home where I could retreat and work uninterrupted, from start to finish. In many ways it felt exhilarating to cloister myself and purge.

There was a palpable sense of relief, when each piece was finished. There was a softening, as if the emotion I'd been wrestling with had found its place on the canvas. To this day, I remain profoundly grateful for that release. And this exercise is not about the paintings, it's all about creating or engaging in a mindful state where you are able to connect with your innermost self. The paintings came first, and the poetry and reflections came later - post pandemic, A time when I felt that I could breathe in hopefulness more.

Now, the pandemic has receded, and life has resumed its familiar rhythm. Without the oppressive weight of uncertainty, I find new ways to catch and release. I swim in the ocean almost daily. I enjoy iPhone photography. I am discovering the beauty of my island home and its treasures. I lose myself in books, savoring beautifully crafted passages of my favorite authors, sometimes reading the same exquisitely crafted metaphors over and over again! I cherish each moment, embracing the beauty of vulnerability, and most of all, I greet the world with newly opened eyes.







A Language of Color

This journal brings together thirteen distinct works, each with its own emotional frequency and visual rhythm. (Each individual piece can be viewed on <https://asb.artcall.org>.)

From abstraction to figuration, from vivid florals to expressive gestures, the pieces in my Catch and Release gallery are rooted in contrast but also connection.

Through a kaleidoscope of emotion that I felt at different times, I explored the dialogue between chaos and clarity, softness and strength, memory and imagination.

Each piece offers a singular perspective, yet together each piece reflects the layered nature of my experience, which only reflects a shared human experience. Anyone can relate to joy, sadness, memories, surprise, and discovery!

This journal has been a celebration of emotional resonance. Learning how to respond to “catch and release” has been one of the highlights of my art/poetry/reflection journaling experience. I have learned that disparate elements, when brought into an intentional relationship, can illuminate unexpected beauty and shared truths. I’m sure that I will revisit this time and time again, and new truths will be revealed. I will endeavor to find new ways of expression- be it through poetry, art, reflection....



Introduction

This Catch & Release painting and poetry journal /memoir was born from the stillness of the Covid-19 pandemic.

This “Catch & Release” collection pairs visual art with poetry, and creative reflection. I also invite anyone looking through it to engage- through a ‘reader prompt.’ with the hope that others can practice examining their own expression.

More than a gallery/journal/memoir, this is my journey of process, presence, and personal release. I began with nothing—no tools, no training—just a need to listen to the world around me and respond.

Each painting was created in a single day. Each piece is born from deeply felt emotions during a time of global uncertainty.

In retrospect, through painting and poetry I accessed creative tools that permitted me through an existential grace to purge, to heal and feel joy simultaneously, through expression . You might ask- ‘What did I need healing from?’ I remember one instance- needing to purge from disappointment . I remember missing my son’s 18th birthday. Missing that milestone was a catalyst for “Weeping Spring.” My son was away at school and we were supposed to visit him. The world shut down and we couldn’t travel. I was pulled into a place where I was challenged in thought, drowning in uncertainty, but with a wave of grace I decided to swim in expression. I maintained this attitude of flow for nearly 4 years. At the end- which is where I am now, I marvel at what that time taught me through creative channels.

This journal represents my marathon, my reflection, and ultimately, a joyful release.



THE POETRY & THE ART

Title: Weeping Spring



*With nothing but grass in hand,
you answered the silence.
Spring wept
so you gave it color,
And layered it in grief
and grace.
This was not just paint,
but a moment breaking open.
The earth, tender with sorrow,
the beginning of your voice.
Here, pink is pain,
but also permission to begin again.*



Description: Created using only beach grass during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Weeping Spring is a raw, intuitive work that marked the start of my painting journey. The textured pinks and layered strokes are meant to evoke vulnerability and vitality, to reflect the emotional turbulence of spring 2020. As a symbol of resilience and strength I've placed the Japanese character for strength in this piece 100 times. It looks like this :

力

Weeping Spring sets the tone for the entire Catch & Release collection: making art from what's available, and letting expression triumph over uncertainty.

Painting: Weeping Spring Date: March 2020 Medium: Reeds and acrylic on canvas Dimensions: 36x84 Collection: Catch & Release



Title: Happiness-Hope-Freedom-Rejuvenation



*A burst of belief on a Monday in August
a palette of prayers: hope in yellow, freedom in blue, happiness in red, and rejuvenation in gold.
A feather blooms at the center
part flame, part amulet,
its quiet eye watching over, its hidden symbols pulsing with care.
This is a canvas of rising
a reminder that victory may be delayed,
but never denied.
It is comfort, not loud, but luminous.
It is the anthem of a restart.*

Description: This painting began as a colorplay exercise aimed at expressing the emotional tones of hope, happiness, freedom, and rejuvenation. Painted in the wake of global challenges like the pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement, the piece evolved to carry both personal and collective resonance. The world was crying out for justice, peace and reconciliation. This piece is layered with texture, vibrant pigment, and symbolic 'amulet eyes' are hidden throughout, hoping to channel protective energy and emotional renewal.

After one of my countryman (Olympic triathlete -Flora Duffy) had a gold medal Olympic victory in July 2021, I added dot accents to express the exclamation of triumph. This artwork stands as a visual mantra—offering strength, healing, and a powerful reminder that joy and resilience are always within reach.

Painting: Happiness-Hope-Freedom-Rejuvenation Date: August 2020 – Completed July 2021 Medium: Acrylic and gold leaf on textured canvas Dimensions: 27x33 Collection: Catch & Release



Title: Calm in Chaos



*It came like weather
a warning whispered in the wind,
the kind that makes you paint with urgency
Each stroke, a pulse.
Each color, a contradiction
loud, unruly, and beautiful.
And yet, beneath it all,
something still blooms:
soft blue flowers, peeking from riotous color,
the eye's quiet anchors.
Peace is not always the absence of noise
sometimes it's the choice to see beauty within it.*

Description: Calm in Chaos is an acrylic painting created under the looming tension of a storm warning- a hurricane. The brushwork is intentionally bold. I was hoping to capture emotional and environmental turbulence, while also offering moments of unexpected serenity. Subtle flower forms and bright tones emerge from the canvas surface charged with movement, asking the viewer to locate beauty in the midst of uncertainty. More than an aesthetic composition, this piece is a visual metaphor: a wish for grounding and peace even when life becomes unpredictable.

Painting: Calm in Chaos Date: October 2020 Medium: Acrylic on canvas Dimensions: 22x30 Collection: Catch & Release



Title: Last Night I Dreamt About Flowers



*The dream spoke in petals.
You woke with its color still blooming behind your eyes,
and gave it form.
There is no fence in this field
just bright blossoms tumbling forward,
as if the night was still whispering its story.
Not a memory, but a feeling
soft and vintage,
like a letter folded in the heart*

Description: Inspired by a vivid dream, this piece contrasts with the earlier pieces in my Catch & Release journal due to its palette which is more vibrant and has a dreamlike tone. Fields of abstract flowers bloom across the canvas in vintage hues, trying to capture the feeling of inspiration -caught between sleep and wakefulness. This piece represents growth and optimism—drawing a line of continuity from my earlier piece Weeping Spring. Things are now blooming with clarity and color.

*Painting: Last Night I Dreamt About Flowers Date: July 2021 Medium: Acrylic on canvas Dimensions: 20x24
Collection: Catch & Release*

Title: Yomma's Toub





Born from a drop-cloth, not a plan
 a painting that found you before you sought it.
 Strokes accidental, then divine
 like the way memories slip in through color.
 The pleated texture
 like fabric moving in a breeze,
 carries the jewel tones of history,
 copper's warmth,
 and the shimmer of remembrance.
 Two pieces, one origin
 bound by intuition,
 named by love,
 framed by heritage.

Description: Originally formed by chance on a drop-cloth palette, Yomma's Toub evolved from an unintended work into a deeply personal composition. The end product reminded me of my mother-in-laws toub. The pleated brown paper absorbed layers of bold, flowing paint—creating a vibrant effect akin to woven fabric. Later separated into two panels, the pair remain visually and emotionally linked by their palette and origin. The name, meaning 'Mother's Dress' in Sudanese Arabic, was inspired by the resemblance to the colorful toub worn by women in Northeast Africa. This artwork stands as a tribute to cultural memory, transformation, and the beauty found in accidents.

Painting: Yomma's Toub Date: April 2021 Medium: Acrylic and copper accents on pleated paper Dimensions: 24x33 Collection: Catch & Release

Title: Koi Energy





*Beneath the green hush of the pond,
a single koi turns
eyes wide with wonder.
surrounded by
gold like light,
fins flick stories into silence.
It swims not away,
but into, the strength of the current,
with the weight of hope.
In this fish, there is a lesson: that joy can shine, even in murky water.
To paint this was to feel motion become meaning.
To know that even the quietest strokes can carry us upstream.*

Description: A crimson and orange koi fish, textured with metallic hints and wide, expressive eyes, swims through a richly layered emerald-green pond. The fish's curious gaze and elegant motion evoke a sense of quiet strength and grace. This piece explores the symbolism of koi as icons of perseverance, luck, and resilience—qualities deeply tied to the artist's exploration of emotional strength during uncertain times. Koi Energy is a celebration of the power of symbolism and the quiet courage it inspires. This painting hangs in my son's room above his bed. I hope that it inspires him!

Painting: Koi Energy Date: June 2021 Medium: Acrylic on canvas Dimensions: 20x20 Collection: Catch & Release



Title: Love Actually



*This is how love feels to me today-spoken in blooms.
Some flowers burst into view; others linger quietly beneath the leaves.
Love can be like that-brilliant, bold, hidden, or hesitant.
Its moods shift like petals in the wind: tender, wild, uncertain, soft.*

Description: This painting, Love Actually, is an exploration of emotional complexity through florals. Bright flowers emerge from thick greenery-some fully visible, others obscured-mirroring the way love presents itself in both clarity and confusion. The work reflects the layered nature of love: vibrant and joyful, but also at times elusive or mysterious. It speaks to love's shifting moods and the way it can both uplift and challenge us. I also created a black-and-white rendering of the piece that augments the emotional tone. Both pieces remind us that: Love is good. Love is patient. Love is kind.

Painting: Love Actually Date: May 2022 Medium: Acrylic on Canvas Dimensions: 16x18 Collection: Catch & Release

Title: Hopeful Lament





*A cry and a candle
 This canvas holds both
 the sorrow of a fractured world,
 and the flicker of belief that it can be mended.
 No country's flag, but every country's ache.
 No border, but all belonging.
 It is the smallest painting
 but its wish is vast:
 that wounds can close,
 that justice can rise,
 that we can begin again, together.
 It is a quiet prayer,
 painted in color and conscience.*

Description: Hopeful Lament is another expressionist piece sadly inspired by a tragic act of violence that filled the news during the summer of 2022. It is small in scale, it carries a profound message—a global prayer for healing, justice, and reconciliation. Its abstract palette allows for universal interpretation, transcending national colors and speaking to a shared human yearning for peace. As the most intimate work in my Catch & Release gallery-journal, it stands as a testament to art's role in acknowledging pain and imagining possibility.

Painting : Hopeful Lament Date: July 2022 Medium: Acrylic on canvas Dimensions: 9x12 (smallest piece in the collection) Collection: Catch & Release

Title: In Memory of a Leaf





*A leaf, fallen
not forgotten.*

Its colors still shout: magenta, bronze, and dusk, echoing one last season of light.

*It rested on silver asphalt,
like it belonged there weathered but not unwanted,
fragile but not lost.*

Beauty doesn't ask for permission.

*It simply arrives
even at your feet,
even near goodbye.*

Description: Painted in response to a leaf spotted in Bermuda's Botanical Gardens, this piece reflects on beauty found in decay. The leaf's vibrant magenta upper half contrasts with the bronze-toned base, resting gently on a silvery, textured background. The image captures a fleeting moment of wonder and reminds me of nature's grace and the sacredness in everyday encounters. It is a visual prayer—an ode to impermanence and gratitude.

Painting: In Memory of a Leaf Date: June 2023 Medium: Mixed media on paper Dimensions: 11x14 Collection: Catch & Release



Title: Bouquet in a Vase – Withering but Beautiful



*A bouquet no longer upright,
but still ablaze with yesterday's joy.
The flowers lean- softened by time,
yet their color clings to memory,
defying decline.
They whisper,
beauty doesn't always bloom;
sometimes, it lingers in the withering
in the echo of presence,
in the lines of aging petals.
Even the vase,
vintage and ornate,
cradles the weight of what remains:
a reminder that aging things are still beautiful things.*

Description: This painting was inspired by a reflective moment with a fading bouquet that had once brought me immense joy. Though withered, the flowers retained a quiet dignity . I used bright colors to recall their vibrant past, while the textured strokes and drooping forms show their graceful decline.

The blue background shifts between cobalt and cerulean, enhancing the contrast with the art deco vintage vase- a thrift store find! Together, they celebrate the beauty in age, memory, and the art of truly seeing.

Painting: Bouquet in a Vase – Withering but Beautiful Date: July 2023 Medium: Acrylic on canvas Dimensions: 11x14 Collection: Catch

Title: Belief





*It began as a doodle
 a wandering line on a quiet afternoon,
 unaware that it was becoming something sacred.
 A hornbill rises from bark and bronze,
 part bird, part myth,
 part memory of a place you may never have seen but somehow always knew.
 There is strength in the grain,
 joy in the fabric,
 fidelity in the feathered curves.
 And though it rests in stillness,
 this piece speaks of flight
 not the kind with wings,
 but the kind with purpose.*

Description: Belief is a symbolic mixed media piece that began as a spontaneous doodle and evolved into an art panel. At its core is a stylized hornbill bird—referencing a revered symbol in Asian culture, often associated with strength, fidelity, and enduring love. I've used bronze leaf, beading, and traditional batik fabric to create depth and movement. The surface mimics wood and the natural accentuates the earthiness of the piece. The vertical composition is double-matted and recessed under glass in a heavy bronze frame which elevates the piece both literally and symbolically.

Overall, it is a visual meditation on growth, strength, and the quiet power of artistic evolution.

Painting: Belief Date: June 2023

Medium: Mixed media on wood with bronze leaf, beading, and batik fabric Dimensions: 12x40 Collection: Catch & Release

Title: Layla





*She watches with knowing eyes
 blue as memory, sharp as inheritance.
 Each fragment of her face tells a tale not yet written
 a prayer bead,
 a sunflower
 a leopard's grace,
 a burst of gold at her brow.
 This is Layla
 not just one portrait,
 but many pieces of a becoming.
 Her story is layered, living, growing.
 And in her gaze,
 we see both past and future
 a woman still unfolding.*

Description: Layla is a narrative-driven mixed media collage representing a fictional Nubian woman of strength, faith, and resilience. Composed of layered media elements. Layla also represents a written narrative in progress- I may finish it one day. The current triptych of 'papers' that I used feature a blend of acrylic, oil pastel, ink, gemstones, and metallic embellishments - all which symbolize the complexity and richness of Layla's life. Each panel and iteration adds to her mythos, forming a portrait of cultural identity and enduring power that will continue to shift as her story unfolds.

Painting & Digital collage: Layla – A Cultural Study of a Nubian Woman Date: July 2024 Medium: Mixed media collage (acrylic, oil pastel, pen, paper, metal, gemstones) Dimensions: 9x12 original, Collection: Catch & Release



Title: Purple Hibiscus



*A flower full of fiction and fragrance
rooted in story,
unfolding in paint.*

*Its petals wear history:
freedom, fragility, and faith
pressed between pages and carried onto canvas.
Yellow surrounds it like sunlight- bold, warm, and unapologetic,
as if to say,
joy too is revolutionary.
Wabi-sabi in spirit,
it does not strive to be perfect
only honest, fragrant, and full.*

Description: Inspired by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel 'Purple Hibiscus', this painting reflects on themes of freedom, identity, and beauty emerging through tension. The textured purple bloom rises against a vibrant yellow backdrop, symbolizing enlightenment and resilience.

The book was filled with lots of vivid imagery of this special flower: Here are a few references. "rare and fragrant with the undertones of freedom."

"The purple hibiscus serves as a reminder of joys that should be given space to grow."

Rendered in a wabi-sabi aesthetic, the piece honors imperfection, and the richness of emotional and cultural layers.

This piece merges storytelling with symbolism, celebrating the ways we bloom through complexity.

Painting: Purple Hibiscus Date: May 2024 Medium: Acrylic on canvas Dimensions: 21x22 Collection: Catch & Release



Journaling was the culmination of my storytelling; it connected the visual with words, bringing to light what was on my mind at the time of global upheaval . I share my experience through:

- *The day I painted this...*
 - *Snapshots in time*
 - *Small gratitudes, and*
 - *Creative Interludes*





Weeping Spring

The Day I Painted This

It was April 2020. The world had closed in. There were no art supplies in the house, only the wind outside and a walk I almost didn't take. I picked up a few reeds from the beach trail and brought them home-not thinking I'd paint with them, just needing to hold something. I found a large panel of wood in my yard leftover from some home maintenance. .

This piece began with silence. Then came the pink, and the breaking open. I didn't know then, but this was the beginning of everything.

Reader Prompt

Write about a moment when stillness gave way to movement. What did it lead to?

Snapshot in Time

Everyone was baking bread. Masks were just becoming normal. The air felt heavier, not just because of the virus, but because of uncertainty. I remember the birds being louder than usual. And I remember thinking: 'I need to make something.'

Small Gratitude:

Thank you, pink. Thank you, grief. Thank you, grass.

Creative Interlude

("On Starting")

*Starting is never glamorous. It rarely looks like a studio or a vision board. Sometimes it looks like you, holding a broken brush. Or no brush at all. Sometimes it's a question-What now?*What matters is that you answer with movement. The painting doesn't have to be good. But it does have to be yours.*





Happiness-Hope-Freedom-Rejuvenation

The Day I Painted This

It began during a summer of collective reckoning-when the world was full of protest and reflection. I remember adding gold leaf carefully, almost prayerfully, feeling the power in reclaiming joy. This piece carries energy-soft but strong. The kind you gather over time when you refuse to give up.

Reader Prompt

What colors represent hope, freedom, or rejuvenation to you? Create a palette of them.

Snapshot in Time

August 2020. I had just seen news clips of worldwide marches. The Olympic Games were delayed. And still-flowers grew. Paint dried. Joy found its way in through small cracks.

Small Gratitude

Thank you, gold. Thank you, ancestors. Thank you, courage.

Creative Interlude

("On Joy as Protest")

Joy doesn't mean forgetting. It means refusing to be erased. It is strength in bloom, laughter in tension, a sunrise that shows up despite everything.





Calm in Chaos

The Day I Painted This

This was painted when a storm was coming- a hurricane literally. The forecast had me anxious, and I remember thinking -“Paint something loud.” I didn’t plan it, I just let the colors run. It turned into something unexpectedly beautiful-chaos with blossoms, disorder with anchors. That’s how life often is.

Reader Prompt

Think of a time you were in the middle of uncertainty. What beauty managed to peek through anyway?

Snapshot in Time

There was thunder in the distance. The air was electric. Rain fell in sheets, but in my strong Bermuda home, I was safe, and happy to have a paintbrush in my hand!

Small Gratitude

Thank you, storm. Thank you, quiet blue blossoms.

Creative Interlude

(“On Channeling Emotion”)

Not all art is peaceful. Sometimes the best expression is messy, wild, unplanned. The beauty isn’t in taming it-but in letting it rise.





Last Night I Dreamt About Flowers

The Day I Painted This

I woke up with the image of wild flowers still burning behind my eyelids. That kind of dream doesn't happen often. I didn't sketch, didn't plan-I just painted it out. It was soft, vintage, and vivid. A dream held in brushstrokes.

Reader Prompt

Write or draw something you've dreamt recently. Don't analyze-just capture the feeling.

Snapshot in Time

It was spring. The windows were cracked open. And I painted while the dream was still whispering.

Small Gratitude

Thank you, dreams. Thank you, sleep. Thank you, flowers without fences.

Creative Interlude

("On Listening to Dreams")

Sometimes your unconscious knows what you need before you do. Don't dismiss your dreams-they are your spirit's early sketches.





Yomma's Toub

The Day I Painted This

This one surprised me. It started as a drop cloth. I didn't even mean to make art that day. But something in the way the paint landed on the pleated paper reminded me of a dress of my late mother-in-law. I cut the painted splattered drop cloth it in two, framed it, and named it with love.

Reader Prompt

Think of a garment or fabric that holds memory. Describe it in texture, color, scent.

Snapshot in Time

April 2021. I was cleaning up, not creating. But creation found me anyway.

Small Gratitude

Thank you, fabric. Thank you, mother-in-law for - for the sweet memory. Thank you for the unexpected.

Creative Interlude

("On Unexpected Inheritance")

Sometimes art isn't something you make on purpose. It's something that shows up through you-unbidden, but deeply known.





Koi Energy

The Day I Painted This

It was a special insulation packaging that caught my eye. The texture reminded me of fish scales. I thought— why not plant a fish- my favorite. I've always been fascinated by koi-and how they move so deliberately, yet gracefully. This one came to life quickly. I remember the eyes were what made it feel complete. There's joy in its motion. A reminder that even in murky water, we can swim toward light.

Reader Prompt

Draw or write about something in nature that reminds you to keep going.

Snapshot in Time

May 2022. The world was moving again, but not all of us had caught up. This fish helped me feel forward momentum.

Small Gratitude

Thank you, motion. Thank you, water. Thank you, resilience.

Creative Interlude

("On Flow")

When you let go of the need to control the outcome, art begins to flow-like water finding its level.





Love Actually

The Day I Painted This

This was an emotional one. I wanted to capture the spectrum of love-not just romance, but tenderness, uncertainty, and surprise. Some blooms are loud, others shy. That's how love feels to me. This is one of my most layered pieces.

Reader Prompt

Describe love as a garden. What blooms? What stays hidden?

Snapshot in Time

May 2022. I was reflecting on the ways love shows up quietly-through action, not just words.

Small Gratitude

Thank you, petals. Thank you, color. Thank you, unexpected love.

Creative Interlude

("On Love's Texture")

Love isn't always soft. Sometimes it's complex, thorned, blooming in its own unruly rhythm. Let it be what it is. Paint it anyway.





Hopeful Lament

The Day I Painted This

This was painted in the wake of loss. . I didn't want to say much. I had been watching the U.S. news and someone had caused havoc on the 4th of July. As a result, a child died. I just needed to acknowledge the ache I felt when I heard this story.

Hopeful Lament is my smallest piece, but maybe the most full.

Reader Prompt

Write a lament, but let it end with a single word of hope.

Snapshot in Time

July 2022. Headlines were heavy. The world felt tired. I needed to say something quiet but clear.

Small Gratitude

Thank you, candlelight. Thank you, stillness. Thank you, ache.

Creative Interlude

("On Grief as a Color")

Grief isn't gray. It's multicolored. It glows, sometimes. And when it does, you honor it by not looking away.





In Memory of a Leaf

The Day I Painted This

I saw this spellbinding leaf lying on the silvery asphalt in the Bermuda Botanical Gardens-this single, brilliant leaf- magenta-copper-and gold,, almost glowing. I took a photo, and that photo lived in my phone for just a few hours before I painted it. It reminded me that beauty doesn't ask to be noticed. It just is, and although it was a crusty and withering leaf, it was a wonderful reminder for me of God's steadfast love. The beauty of the leaf took my breath away, and I will always remember that!

Reader Prompt

Write a eulogy for something small-a leaf, a moment, a chapter that's ended.

Snapshot in Time

June 2023. I was walking without headphones. I think that's why I saw it.

Small Gratitude

Thank you, quiet beauty. Thank you, leaf. Thank you, light on stone.

Creative Interlude

("On Seeing Clearly")

The world offers art all the time. We miss it when we rush. Try walking slowly. Try noticing.





Bouquet in a Vase - Withering but Beautiful

The Day I Painted This

These flowers were almost gone-but still bold. I remember looking at the arrangement and feeling moved by its color, even in decline. There was something honest about it. Beauty that wasn't trying anymore, just being.

Reader Prompt

Think of something or someone aging with beauty. What gives it its glow?

Snapshot in Time

July 2023. I was in a room I love. The flowers were soft around the edges. And I wasn't afraid to let them fade.

Small Gratitude

Thank you, fading color. Thank you, vintage vase. Thank you, graceful endings.

Creative Interlude

("On the Beauty of Withering")

Everything wilts eventually. Let that be its own form of wonder.





Belief

The Day I Painted This

This one started as a doodle-nothing planned. I was trying to create something to give as a wedding gift- a gift that would have meaning to the couple. I did some research and found out about the hornbill rhinoceros bird considered sacred.

This piece grew out of instinct. The frame is bronze. It has batik fabric and beadwork. It feels ancestral to me, like something whispered into form.

Reader Prompt

What do you believe in that you cannot always explain? Write about it without justification.

Snapshot in Time

June 2023. I had been looking at cultural fabric and that became one of the catalysts for this piece.

Small Gratitude

Thank you, symbols. Thank you, stillness. Thank you, belief in becoming.

Creative Interlude

("On Trusting the Line")

Sometimes symbols lead you to new discoveries . Let them lead you.





Layla

The Day I Painted This

Layla is fictional-but she feels real to me. Her gaze evolved with each layer I added. She carries story, memory, adornment. She is a mosaic of women I've known, read about, and imagined. She isn't finished-because stories like hers never are.

Reader Prompt

Draw or write a portrait of someone who shaped you, even if you've never met them.

Snapshot in Time

July 2023. I was rereading folktales and listening to Sudanese music. That spirit seeped in.

Small Gratitude

Thank you, ancestry. Thank you, gold flecks. Thank you, unspoken stories.

Creative Interlude

("On Becoming")

Identity isn't singular. It's stitched. Let your layers show.





Purple Hibiscus

The Day I Painted This

This piece is a nod to Adichie's novel, but also to the tension of beauty under pressure. The purple flower stands alone, surrounded by yellow like light. It's imperfect-and that's why I love it. It feels like resistance, but in bloom.

Reader Prompt

Describe a flower that could represent your voice. What color is it? What story does it tell?

Snapshot in Time

May 2024. I was in a state of reflection. The colors came first, and then the memory of the book.

Small Gratitude

Thank you, fiction. Thank you, petals with purpose. Thank you, purple resilience.

Creative Interlude

("On Storytelling Through Paint")

Some stories are told with words. Others bloom. Paint your story however it comes.



Closing Reflection

My wave of expression has come to end- for now. It's been edifying to experience all the joy that came from "catch and release." I'm not sure when or if I will experience this wave of expression again, but I am so grateful that I did.

Thank you for taking the time to read about my experience, and share in my expression.

May this journal inspire you in your own creative journey.

Sincerely,

Anita

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