

DEBBIE T. DAVIES

ARTIST BIO

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I am a New York based multi-media visual artist. My work has been shown in London, Berlin, Frankfurt, Tokyo, Kyoto, Barcelona, and New York. My current goal is participating in global collaborative projects and curating; with a focus on interactive social art. I am a painter, photographer, and videographer. I also create sculptural art from recycled materials.

My educational and employment background is unorthodox for someone who is an artist. As a teen I attended pre-med classes in New York as part of a special program for honors students. I also worked summers at a research lab. At the same time I was studying Civil Technology at Brooklyn Tech High School. I attended only one year of university before accepting a position as a Civil Technologist redesigning roads and highways in New York.

I left both science and engineering behind, and instead tried on other careers working in a photo studio, an ad agency, a marketing firm, and as a commercial print producer. I owned a gallery in Brooklyn Heights and started an agency represented photographers and illustrators for commercial assignments, and produced photo shoots for print campaigns. I moved on to established Focus + Finance, a firm that provides financial services to creative clientele. It has grown into a successful business that helps other artists and people who work with artists grow their careers and manage their finances.

I am a member of the Brooklyn Working Artist Coalition. My paintings have received awards and honors from the Brooklyn Museum of Art and Barrett Art Center. I have participated in the Tribeca Open Artist Studio Tours for several years when I maintained a studio there. I recently founded an artist collective, HyperOptik Creative, with the intention of collaborating with other artists through interactive experimental media and socio-political subject matter.

I was born in Trinidad. My family came to Brooklyn when I was four, and I have lived in New York City since then. I come from a very colorful background, both ethnically and culturally. Trinidad is known for its splendid Carnival, exotic foods, and diversity. I'd like to think what is in my blood is represented in the type of art I create.

My painting style is definitively abstract expressionist. The artworks possess a tactile quality luring viewers to touch the rough surfaces. The materials I use - mostly acrylic paint combined with coarse materials like pumice, garnet, and mica painted on wood - are a firm attachment to nature. During the act of painting, I allow the painting to independently evolve rather than believe I am the one in complete control. The result is free and colorful. I am influenced by Anselm Kiefer, Jackson Pollock, Jean Du Buffet, and Terry Winters. The spirals channel the art of ancient cultures. My educational background in both medicine and engineering has informed my art; the organic fluid quality of the spirals and the structured linear quality of the mosaics.

The work I create using recycled – or upcycled – materials evolved from workshops I've conducted with children; particularly in low income neighborhoods where art supplies are a luxury. The current project involves collecting and re-purposing receipts from an entire year of my life, to create an installation of paper sculptures. It is a testament to consumerism and the easy disposability of our purchases; also our forgetfulness as many of the items purchased are no longer owned by me – discarded within a year.

The most important part of my work right now is The I Love You Project. It is a global interactive social art project which I have so far conducted in Spain and Germany. This is a collaborative effort incorporating original music composition and video editing by other artists. I use a digital microscope camera – a child's toy – to record video of participants saying "I Love You". I also shoot still portraits. The experience itself of videotaping people is part of the project. Subjects have their own experience saying these three words to a stranger, many times in the presence of other people. Neighbors who never met come in as strangers and depart as friends. Our social circle expands. Further, I feel that peace and love between people of diverse backgrounds cannot be achieved unless we start a one on one relationship with strangers. The final result of the project is an exhibition where photos are displayed and the edited video with the soundtrack of the participants' voices is screened. During the opening receptions participants meet other participants and it's a festive and poignant event. This project is a traveling exhibit and the intention is to reproduce it in every country.