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Tracy Rocca On Her Upcoming Show, The Realities of Being A "Working Artist" and The Importance of Supporting Women In The Arts

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AMANDA CARTER GOMES • SEP 5, 2019

On most days [Tracy Rocca](#) is up before dawn (you may recognize her twin sister, Tiffany, from our [Single Women and Their Spaces home tour](#) of her home) working at her "day job", which most would consider a full-time career. Come afternoon the New Mexico painter and mother shifts gears and turns her attention to her studio, where she creates a collection of fine art pieces inspired by the emotions conjured when in nature. She spoke with our EIC, Amanda Carter Gomes, about the realities of being a "working artist," where she turns for inspiration, how to support fellow women in the arts and the necessity of her creative second career: "It's my most cherished endeavor and also the most flexible because it's personal and only impacts me."

Her [upcoming show](#) at [Winston Wachter Fine Arts](#) in Seattle opens on September 10. Read on for more insights and wisdom from this hard-working creative.

You are a painter and your focus is on the natural world—or, should we say, the feelings invoked by traveling through nature. Have you always painted? Did you go to school for art? How did you develop your creative focus?

I found myself painting in the late evenings after work, and always created a nook to double as my studio in every shared house and small studio apartment. In my twenties living in San Francisco I took night classes at the California College of Arts that focused on painting materials and process. During that time this body of work emerged as a reaction to the frenzied pace of Silicon Valley, and it became a means of slowing myself down with the intention of doing the same for the viewer.

You have focused some pieces on a place that is close to my heart, Glacier National Park. I spent a summer during college working at the park and hiking any trail I could get myself to on my days off. What about this location attracted you?

Every summer we take weeks long road trips to explore National Parks and public lands. Last year my husband and I, along with our two boys, set off from our home in New Mexico to travel up through the Rockies to Glacier National Park. I'd seen awe-inspiring photos from trips my parents and grandparents took to the park, and knew I had to see it with my own eyes. We camped our way through Rocky Mountain, Grand Tetons and Yellowstone and arrived to Glacier the day they opened Going-to-the-Sun Road for the season. We drove through the park the first day and I cried (as I always do) when I saw McDonald Creek Valley in person. This body of work seeks to represent what those moments feel like, and the restorative nature of these iconic views

Let's talk about the realities of being a "working artist". In addition to this career, you have another full-time job and are a mother of two boys. You said, "I've been pushing a boulder up a hill for 13 years since my first son was born, and I just keep inching it along!" How do these other major life commitments impact your art making process?

Currently, I'm a full-time artist, a full-time senior designer for a Silicon Valley tech company AND the mother of a 10 and 13-year-old boy. On a typical day I wake up early to do my design work, and then try to get into my studio by 1:00pm so I have the maximum hours of optimal painting light. Next, I'm off to a soccer game or tennis match or maybe getting dinner ready. I'll tie up any work loose ends after everyone is in bed.

If there are any unforeseen circumstances (as there regularly are with kids) I'll get creative to fit painting in the schedule. It's my most cherished endeavor and also the most flexible because it's personal and only impacts me. I have a family that whole-heartedly encourages my art practice, but being a mom is unpredictable so having an open mind about studio time has been important. It's an exhausting schedule, but one that's been worth it to pursue my art.

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Do you feel like there are unrealistic limits and/or expectations put on women in the arts? If so, how and what does that look like for you personally?

I've been fortunate to be represented by [Winston Wachter Fine Art](#), a women-owned gallery that has been supportive of me and my family for the past 15 years. We have a true friendship that has allowed me to do things like switch to acrylic paints when I was pregnant or take time away from the studio for family circumstances without hesitation.

I can do it all every once in a while, but I've had to accept many failures and give myself some grace.

The most unrealistic expectations are those I hold myself to. I expect that I can do it all, all the time. I expect that I can deliver a full show every year, be at every school event, get stellar annual reviews at my design job, prepare a healthy meal for my family and do it all with a smile and a pleasant demeanor. I can do it all every once in a while, but I've had to accept many failures and give myself some grace.

Why is it important for you to maintain this side of yourself?

I've never made a choice to paint or create art, it's something I've always had to do. There's something I'm trying to communicate, and I continually experiment with paint in an attempt to say it. My work is also a means of meditation and reflection that gives me fuel for every other aspect of my life. I'm definitely a better wife and mother when I'm making art.

How are you feeling about your upcoming opening and what do you want to convey most to those who attend?

I'm really looking forward to it. I love this work, and it feels so important that it be seen in person. The multiple paint layers and meditative focus can't be captured in digital images. If someone walks in, looks around at the show, and takes a deep breath, I've done my job.

What can we all do to support inclusivity for women in the arts?

Maintain friendships with other women artists, and use those friendships to lift each other up. Meet for coffee, do studio visits, recommend a friend to your gallery, create a proposal for a group show. There's room for all of us to be successful artists, and the best thing we can do is share our knowledge and create opportunities.