



# JANE GENNARO

## VISUAL ARTIST | WRITER | PERFORMER

Interview | Photographs by Harryet Candee and Courtesy of the Artist

*"Making art is how I question the meaning of life daily in various disciplines. It's an ongoing inquiry into death and renewal, what can be preserved through an act of the imagination. It's how I process and explore my concerns and curiosity about nature, human nature, politics, culture, and the objectification of women's bodies."* —Jane Gennaro

**Harryet Candee:** Your creative voice was extraordinary at a very young age. You saw odd things, and your curiosity led you on a search to explore. Now you have created artwork that is a result of all that, tell us, what in particular launched your fascination with nature and religion?

**Jane Gennaro:** As little kids, we're closer to the ground. You lie on your stomach with your nose in the grass; pick up a stone *with stripes* or a rock that looks like it's made out of diamonds! See a pink worm squiggling out of that deep, rich black earth, dare to touch it, and —Surprise! It curls up on itself!

Just the rhythm of rain on the roof makes you want to run outside and breathe in the fresh smell as soon as it stops. We'd count dead worms dried out on the sidewalk like fried spaghetti. One time, kicking puddles (while trying to avoid splashing my clothes), I got to this really big puddle with the sky in it! Right at my feet! So I jumped in at

just the right place: a powder blue patch with white cottony clouds, but instead of being able to fly through the sky, my shoes hit the cement, and my pants got splattered in mud streaks! Nevertheless, art persists to show us a way in.

Mom was big on "Go out and play!" I thought I was the first person in the world to discover "Teeny green roses!" Mom told me we were just sedum". My mother was a savvy gardener. She made *us* pick the Japanese Beetles off her rose bushes and drop them into jars of gasoline. *But wait. What about "Thou Shalt Not Kill"?*

One day, a baby Blue Jay falls out of the nest in the trumpet vine. It's in my hands like a prayer; running into the kitchen. "Mom, look! It's alive!" She finds me a shirt box, and I line it with a paper towel like when I change the parakeet cage. Only this is a more tidy hospital room. I know I can nurse the baby Blue Jay to health and teach it to fly. But there will come a day when the baby Blue Jay shall fly away because it's wild. Nevertheless,

it will come back and visit me.

I put a lid of water and a bug beside the baby Blue Jay in the shirt box in case it gets hungry at night. Next day, I wake up at dawn, fly downstairs like Christmas morning, and look in on my patient. Then I turn on my heels, go back upstairs, pull the covers over my head, and go back to sleep so I can wake up *again*, go back downstairs, and look in the box. Only this time, the baby Blue Jay won't be dead.

The resurrection narrative got drummed in early. It bothered me animals couldn't go to heaven because they weren't human and didn't have souls. You had to be a baptized Catholic to get in, and even that was no guarantee. It wasn't fair! How could God leave out birds, cats, and dogs? Goats and sheep! That little lamb draped around the neck of the shepherd boy in the manger under the lights of our Christmas tree? The porcelain oxen and donkey!

*Joseph and Mary Get Dressed* resurrects a tiny



salamander. I like the Egyptian vibe of the piece. Talk about exotic afterlife beliefs! But why do we have to believe there's something more, Harryet? *Why this relentless quest for immortality?* Stephen Cave calls this seeking—this will to immortality, "the foundation of human achievement, the well-spring of religion, the muse of philosophy, the architect of our cities, and the impulse behind the arts."

**When we met, I mentioned to you that I have been exploring abandoned houses as a hobby. Your collage series, *Kinderdraussen*, reminds me of the things I found during my explorations. Amidst the cobwebs, broken glass and furniture, old magazines and books, plates, and toy parts, I found remnants of a person's life. The musty air of those old, worn-down homes was filled with the voices of the past. I'm curious to know what inspired the name *Kinderdraussen* and what this series means to you personally.**

JG: I'd love to explore among the cobwebs with you, Harryet! The remnants of a person's life fascinate me as well. I made up the word *Kinderdraussen*. It means "children outside". After my



Left: Jane at play Photograph: Harryet Candee

Middle: Studio paraphernalia Photograph: Harryet Candee

Right: *Joseph and Mary Get Dressed*, Eisenhower-era handkerchief and coloring book illustrations, salamander, wasp nest, goose egg shell, various species of bird feathers, beak, skeleton, cicadas, seashells, vintage lace, chipmunk tail, cheesecloth, paints, on canvas in Lucite box 20 x 20 x 5 in. Photograph: Sam Freed

mother-in-law died, Stephen excavated a champagne colored quilted satin box from her bureau drawer. It contained a collection of handkerchiefs, some from the 1950s, and 60s.

My mother had mailed a large envelope of coloring books with stereotyped depictions of cherubic children doing things. I fused handkerchief ground and coloring book figures on canvas and painted in keeping with the color palette of the hankies. I started adding organic elements to the lovely designs of those unsung illustrators whose craftsmanship celebrates fauna and flora. I like watching people being attracted to the innocent storybook quality of the *Kinderdraussen* come closer and go, "Wait a minute! Is that a claw? A real bee? What a tiny skull! Wow, a deer rib! I see a wasp nest!"

**Not only were you interested in visual arts, but also in being seen and heard through stage performances and writing. Did your interests overlap and how did you balance them?**

JG: They overlap and converse—like siblings who get along. They've gone hand in hand since I moved into the city at twenty. My idea was to become a famous actress and use my art to "fall

back" on. Fortunately, I got a receptionist job at Famous Music, a record company whose clients included Melanie and Billy Joel. You stepped off the elevator onto the twenty-third floor of The Gulf & Western Building at Columbus Circle to be greeted by a jukebox and me behind the front desk in a floppy hat and mini skirt. I answered phones, disconnected dozens of people daily, and drew line drawings of connected people in a large blank book lest people miss the next Picasso in their midst.

Mr. Tibor, aka "The Candy Man," a little old Hungarian, would get off the elevator and limp toward the front desk, towing a shopping bag on wheels, selling delectable homemade chocolates. Legendary in offices around the city, when I told Mr. Tibor I was an actor and an artist, he connected me to a Broadway producer who chased me around his desk and an art director at Chappell Music Publishing who hired me to illustrate several children's music books. At the same time, an A&R guy who liked my voice let me do my first voiceover for, I forget what—maybe an in-house promo recorded in a closet-sized studio across the hall. A Want Ad in the *NY Times* led to full-time

*Continued on next page...*  
THE ARTFUL MIND DECEMBER 2023 • 17





Left: Jane holding up and hiding behind *Flag*. Snapping turtle eggs, garters, cotton, cheesecloth, gesso on wood frame. Photograph: Harryet Candee  
Right: *School*, 9 x 12 in., Hen eggs, cotton mattress cover, gesso on cork board. Photograph: Jane Gennaro

illustration work with the cartoonist, graphic novelist, comic book creator, and writer Barbara-Jo Slate, who was then creating *Ms. Liz*, a line of feminist greeting cards "for the woman who speaks her mind." We became fast friends. Barbie introduced me to my husband, Stephen, but before that, she fixed me up on a date with this guy, Jack, who took me to The Comic Strip.

The 80s were a golden age of stand-up in New York City comedy clubs. Regulars included Jimmy Brogan, Paul Reiser, Gilbert Gottfried, Jerry Seinfeld, Larry Miller, and Larry David. Seeing Carol Leifer's act and Nancy Parker's impressions made me think, "I can do that!" I passed my audition on open mike night and played the comedy clubs for seven years. Eventually, I worked with the band at Catch A Rising Star, doing singing impressions of MTV's hottest rock stars.

Before that, my sisters Ellen, Mary Jo, and I had had a cabaret act, "Those Gennaro Sisters." Our little sister, Martha, was our manager. Andy Warhol came to see us at one of our first gigs at The Horn of Plenty! I drew our flyers until my brother Mark (a fine painter and, at the time, an art director) took over.

I've illustrated promotional materials for my performances, demo tapes, etc., throughout my career. It was a fun way to catch the eye of casting

directors and agents. When The American Place Theatre produced my first solo play, *The Boob Story*, my cartoon of the boobs, Chuck and Lefty was on the cover. With *Reality Ranch*, the Artistic Director, Wynn Handman, invited me to exhibit my "notes"—large pastels on newsprint in the lobby of The First Floor Theatre. On opening night of my recent exhibit, *Storytales*, at the Claverack Free Library, I performed selections from my new solo play, *Coloring In Circles*.

**Your first employment in the art world was after high school when artwork was submitted to *Mad* magazine, and your cartoons made it in. Thanks to your rapidograph pen, this was the beginning of a perfect start. What was it about that pen that unleashed your artistic abilities?**

JG: Bill Dehn, my high school art teacher, introduced me to the Rapidograph, a steel nibbed technical pen used by draughtsmen to make lines of constant width. I used it to illustrate a series of two-page spreads in our yearbook, *The Colonnade*. The ink flowed into organisms populated by the student body, faculty, and custodial staff. Mr. Dehn encouraged me to continue in this style.

**When did you move to using color in your art?**

JG: I've always colored. The miracle of red, blue,

and yellow combining in myriad ways to create a gazillion colors blows my mind. But some work wants something else. I try to respect that.

**During your mid-career in art in 2002, you transitioned to three-dimensional work after a confrontation with a pair of wild geese on the peninsular of a pond upstate New York. Can you tell me more about what took place during that confrontation?**

JG: Stephen and I love the city, but noise makes me crazy, so buying our house in the country had much to do with this idea of tranquility in nature. On our first spring weekend, we wake up to cacophony. I mean loud honking! We throw off the covers, run outside, and behold! A couple of geese flying overhead come swooshing down to land splash! in the middle of our pond. This is how we imagined country life. It's very picturesque. And they stay. They build a nest, which is so perfectly like a storybook. And we're the "Gentle Folk in the Cottage".

Then, on Passover, Stephen's Uncle Dan makes it sound more like an Alfred Hitchcock movie. "Geese multiply like Catholics. Those birds will ruin your property." Apparently, Geese took over his golf course. So I call the EPA, and the guy on the phone confirms our property sounds like the kind of environment Geese appreciate. "Oh no!"

I probably sounded like I was about to cry, so he said, "Listen. Off the record. If you break their eggs, they'll lay more, but if you shake their eggs, they'll go away. We need to be prepared to move really fast the second we see them away from the nest. Sure enough, one Sunday morning, they're not around!—probably off having Sunday brunch on somebody else's pond with other geese couples.

Suddenly, Stephen's standing before me wearing the camouflage pants he wore in Vietnam. Holding a ridiculously huge Black Umbrella "To use as a shield," he tells me and hands me the kitchen broom, which I'm supposed to use to "run interference." "What the f---?" — "Janie, nothing's gonna happen. It is just a precaution." Fine. So we set out on our mission. We sneak around the peninsula to the nest. A goose nest is basically a depression in the ground lined with feathers, leaves, and down like a comforter. Stephen stands over the nest. Opens out his big black umbrella and holds it over his head against this postcard-blue sky. He kneels down on one knee. Carefully picks up the first egg and holds it to his ear. It's like we're in a surrealist painting. All that's missing is a melting clock and his bowler hat.

Goose eggs are big. Really big. Three times the size of a chicken egg. And there's five of them. So he holds the first one to his ear and listens before he shakes it. I'm getting a rapid heartbeat. What if

goslings still hatch, and they're deformed? Flapping webbed feet where the tail belongs? Beaks for wings! "Maybe we should shake them twice," I say when suddenly the geese shoot out from around the reeds like enraged deities!

Geese are big birds. I never realized just how big, until they were about to kill me! These giant pterodactyls honing into peck out my eyeballs like Suzanne Pleshette in "The Birds." So I raise my broom and start swinging it around my head in circles—while jogging around Stephen—Who keeps shaking the eggs! The gander whacks into his umbrella! Breaks a spoke! The goose attacks my broom, and I drop it. "Stop! I surrender! Don't eat me!" She flicks out her lizard tongue. Hissing. Like Satan in my face. *Hiss! Hiss! Hissssss!* I scream "Stephen, run!", but he keeps shaking the eggs! Forget "running interference" I run for my life! You know how when you're running so fast, your heart's in your throat, your legs are burning, your eyebrows melting, but you keep going? A blood-pumping ocean pounding your eardrums! We return to the house on the brink of collapse, dare to look behind us, and see—the goose settled back on her nest. Like nothing happened. The gander swimming back and forth in front of her like a sentinel, guarding their would-be, rather never-will-be-thanks-to-us goslings, now nothing but egg drop soup. This incubation ritual goes on for weeks. Day after day.

One morning, the gander tosses his head and honks. The goose throws her head back and honks. They spread their wings and fly up into the sky, away from the two humans who destroyed their progeny. I run to the nest. Ironically, the eggs have been broken into overnight. Cracked open and eaten by a raccoon or coyote. I gather the shells and paste them on a paint brochure under the words "Eggshell Finish." I stick on a couple of Band-Aids, draw a nun, float the works on cheesecloth, and stretch it over a wooden frame. I call it "Penance".

**In 2003, *Dove* was created as part of your *Hair* series. You used hair as a medium for linear structures, inspired by automatic drawing. Please tell us more about this.**

JG: In fifth grade, I woke up one morning and didn't want to go to school, so I lied, said I felt sick, and Mom let me stay home, but I had to stay in bed and pretend to cough, which got boring fast. I started playing with my eyelashes, actually pulling them out. Surprising little black apostrophes appeared on my fingertips, leaving a bald patch in the middle of my eyelid. Then I started pulling out the hair on my head. This is called Trichotillomania. It's a hair-pulling disorder.

One shrink suggested I save the hair and play with it instead of pulling out more. I had some blank

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Left: *Sampling, Hair*, acrylic, gesso on canvas paper. Photograph: Harryet Candee  
Right: *Dove, Hair*, gouache, on paper, 8 x 10 in. Photograph: Jane Gennaro

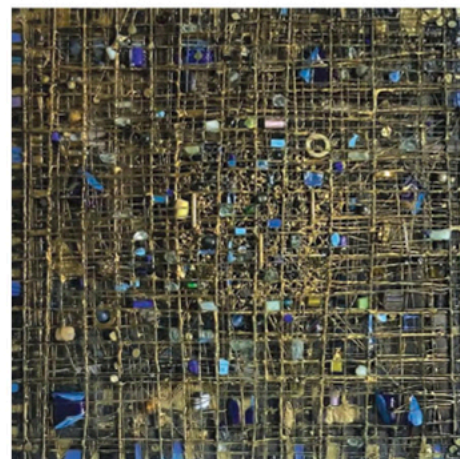




**What About Korea?** Glass, bone, metal, newspaper, cheesecloth, with gesso on canvas Photograph: Jane Gennaro



**Deadline 2**, (Work in progress) Plastic, cotton, insect wings, organza, wire, bones, on marble pedestal Photograph: Harryet Candee



**Sensus**, Infrastructure series, Glass, string, beads, acrylic, 18K gold marker, gel medium on canvas, 10 x 10 in.



**Lamb of God**, Brass crucifix, honey jars, alcohol, chipmunk, mice, vole under glass dome on wooden base. Photographs by Jane Gennaro

cards I got on sale at Kate's paper I brushed with gel medium. I started fiddling with strands of hair I kept in an envelope. Line drawings formed often suggesting animals or people I sometimes enhanced out of the abstract into a literal portrait. DOVE is one of those.

**After your experience, you started creating the Eggs and Bones series where you incorporated natural objects into your reliefs and sculptures. I would like to know which objects you used and how they helped you explore your curiosity about the delicate nature of organic life, mortality and the potential for rejuvenation.**

JG: To attentively handle an egg is to hold life's potential dear. Working with materials that contain DNA heightens the experience of making art with profound energy. Touching evidence of individual animal's lives epitomizes an exquisite balance of life and death. Attaching my clothing and bedding is an offering of comfort and protection. And cheesecloth! It's simply beautiful, endlessly musical, and surprisingly sturdy.

**During all this, what other kind of work were you doing?**

JG: Writing and drawing in my journals. Stand-up comedy. Writing and performing plays. 20 • DECEMBER 2023 THE ARTFUL MIND

Recording voiceovers. Acting in commercials (I've played a lot of perky moms in my day!)

**Infrastructure series is beautiful. What is Census, 2016, all about?**

JG: *Sensus* is composed of bits of visual information that form a pattern, like letters and words on a page. Broken glass and beads have a language all their own. Counting the population of trinkets or feathers beneath the grid is impossible.

**Lamb of God, 2020. You use unconventional materials, such as preserved animals, glass domes, and various bases made of stone, metal, and wood. Where do you find these creatures?**

JG: Our cat, Faccia, was an excellent hunter/collaborator. I miss her. These days I come across dead mice in the cellar and garage of the country house, but New York City is Rodent Central! I once picked a dead rat off the curb with a paper napkin and popped it in a super-size Duncan Donuts Latte Cup that was lying on the street. Ray, my super would text me "Janie, I got something for you!" A dead rat caught in the fence behind our building. I preserved it alongside the mice, voles, and chipmunks I keep in jars of alcohol which bleaches their coats. Many of these wet specimens enliven an installation called "Tom

Cruise Chooses A Wife". I've been working on for years. I'm dying to exhibit it. But where? Hm. I recently exhibited *Lee Miller's Vogue* a miniature staging with an interesting back story. In 1986, Art Spiegelman's Holocaust memoir *Maus* was published. The Jewish characters in the book are portrayed as mice. The image stayed with me. In 1995 my husband Stephen and I moved into our house in Claverack. I found a black tin box in a corner of the garage – a humane mouse trap designed for live catch and release. Sadly, it contained the remains of many mice. I cleaned and reanimated what skeletons I could, then painted them with liquid chrome. In 2015 I attended the Lee Miller exhibition at the Albertina Museum in Vienna. Formerly a fashion model and fine art photographer, Miller was the muse and unsung collaborator of Man Ray. She later became a war correspondent and photojournalist who documented the horror of the Nazi concentration camps at Buchenwald and Dachau for *Vogue* Magazine. Vintage camera lenses and a canceled postage stamp of Hitler complete the narrative, which is housed in a black wooden box on a pedestal.

In 2023, we live in a cultural climate where many books, including *Maus*, have been banned in libraries, and antisemitic incidents are on the rise

across America. I completed this work expressly for exhibit at the Claverack Free Library. I want it to travel.

**Where do you hunt for all of these parts and pieces?**

JG: I come across stuff while walking around the property, but the bulk of my collection comes from friends. Honestly, when my friends see roadkill, they think of me. Bring me specimens: Skulls, bones, snakeskins. A hoof. A dragonfly. Pods! Tiny pink crabs speckled with red freckles. A bullfrog carcass from Hawaii. The exoskeleton of a tarantula. One of my husband Stephen's clients (he's a shrink) gave Stephen to give to me. I don't want to know what they talk about. It kills me how they're wrapped: A salamander in a matchbox, a foil lasagna pan stuffed with cockroaches stuck on glue traps. One friend sent me her kid's dead pet goldfish in a baggie filled with water through the US Mail. By the time I got it, it wasn't exactly gold or even a fish, but I harvested a gill the size of a speck of angel dandruff—Sheen of Mother of Pearl!

**What do you find most popular with art collectors nowadays regarding your art?**

JG: *Reliquaries* recently exhibited at TSL sold

well. On the other end of the spectrum, a new series of colorful paper cut-outs I call scissor painting is quite popular. It's exciting having them made into prints!

**Now tell us about your present life, family, spare time activities, favorite places to travel, and most entertaining films and theatre you have seen.**

JG: It feels good to be getting older and wiser but I'm only seventy, so there's still plenty to learn. Stephen and I married in 1980. He's a great fun husband—relentlessly curious and loving. Keeps me on my toes. Also, he's a wonderful cook! My friends and family are the bomb. Loving, smart, kind, funny people committed to trying and learning new things. Several sibs are ex-pats who've moved around quite a lot. From Rome to the Sinai Peninsula to Frankfurt to London. We've visited my brother in Prague, Buenos Aires, Mexico City, Amsterdam, and Paris. We rent villas and vacation together in the States and abroad. Stephen and I recently flew across the sky over the ocean to attend our friends' wedding on Milos. Then visited Sifnos and Athens. I swam in aqua and cerulean waters for miles and miles surrounded by golden mountains. The ancient female figurines at the Museum of Cycladic Art give me hope. I'm a fan

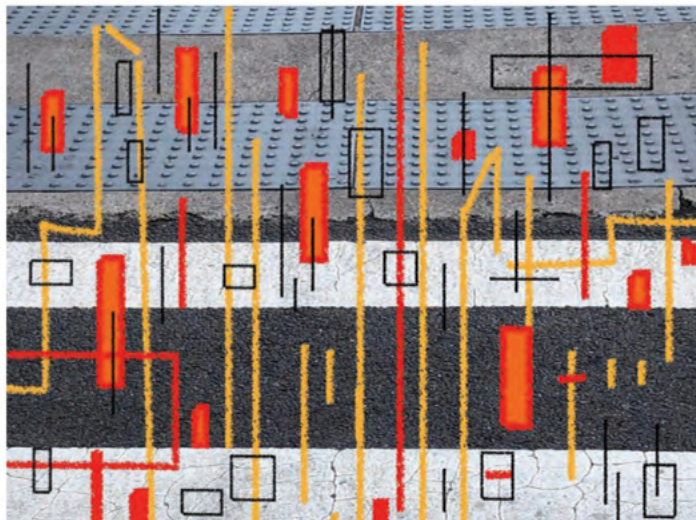
of cinema. Film Forum is a favorite haunt. Their curations span the canon offering up surprises from Elaine May and Lee Grant Festivals to their recent "50 from the 50s". It's where I first saw the most powerful anti-war movie ever—René Clément's *Forbidden Games*.

Theatre! Thank you for asking Harryet. I'll go see anything written by Beth Wohl, Lucas Hnath, Annie Baker, or Amy Herzog. Hansol Jung's *Wolf Play* had me howling at the moon. I went twice. I just bought my ticket to her new play *Merry Me* at the New York Theatre Workshop. Tonight we're off to see Aristophanes *The Frogs* with music by Stephen Sondheim at Lincoln Center. Some playwrights just never get old!

**Your performance monologue, Feed the Models, explores society's obsession with thinness and beauty standards imposed on females. Tell us about the monologue and the series of cut-outs from fashion magazine ads.**

JG: So one day I'm boppin' down the street when something changes. I suddenly feel bad about my self, but I don't know why. So I trace my steps and realize I just passed a newsstand! I've been assaulted by gaudy candy wrappers and magazine covers! Photographs of models my subconscious Continued on next page...





My City, Momento Mori series, photograph drawn over with Ipad tools



Detail of Tom Cruise Chooses A Wife installation. Snake preserved in alcohol in glass jar



Stage set in progress, coqui frogs, chrome marker Ukrainian and Russian made syringes, goose egg shell, cheesecloth, plastic cosmetic gift box, test tubes and miniature domes, plastic astronaut figures.



Jane experimenting with a snapping turtle carapace. Photographs with the exception of My City, by Harryet Candee



Startrek, 11" x 11 in., cut up magazine page on paper

VISUAL ARTIST | WRITER | PERFORMER JANE GENARO



Blush Paris Magazine by Alexander Zouari. Photograph: Ron Contarsy Full Circle, 11 x 11 in., cut up magazine page on paper

tells me I'm supposed to look like. How and why a concentration camp-like body weight got to be a standard of beauty, I don't know, Harryet. Something to do with Capitalism, ya think? All I know is distorted images of women are a tool to sell products that hook into the primal fear of not being desirable. This has nothing to do with the models themselves, who happen to be hard-working professional young women who are, on some level being dehumanized, so now I'm thinking—

*I want to love models.  
I want to feed them  
and take care of them  
and make them better  
I want to gather them up  
in all their scary gauntness  
with no cushion of protection  
and put them in a cage  
and fatten them up.  
I want to slide homemade lasagna  
with clumps of Italian sausage  
and chopped chuck through the bars  
until the models grow hips  
and thighs as plump as their lips  
until their boobs pop like made-up eyes.*

That's the opening of my poem, *Models*, which aired as a commentary on NPR's *All Things Con-*

*sidered*, retitled "Feed the Models." I wanted to know if there was a book here. I love *Henry's Walk to Paris*, illustrated by Saul Bass. So I started cutting colored paper into various body shapes, then changed direction. If this was about models, they needed to come from actual magazine pages. So, I started cutting photos of models in magazines into extremely thin lines that could pass as pen and ink drawings. I have portfolios full of them! I selected a few to blow up into large-scale prints on aluminum dibonds. This series has been exhibited at several venues, including The Fashion Institute of Technology. Ironically, a fashion photographer asked to stage and shoot real models with the art! I agreed. Once the photos were published, I cut the magazine pages of models posing with my art models into new scissor drawings which brought the process full circle in a way I had never imagined happening.

**Memento Mori.** *Pigeons of The Endicott Hotel*, 2014, and *Portfolios*, 2019, what can you tell us about these works of art?

JG: *Pigeons of The Endicott Hotel* Sounds like a tuxedoed steward announcing upper-crust guests at a Royal Ball! Makes me laugh. The Endicott Hotel is a former luxury hotel on Columbus Avenue diagonal from The American Museum of Natural History in New York City. Made of Roman

brick and terra cotta. Lovely. It was built in the late 1880s—New York's "Gilded Age". (as Mark Twain named it) And man, if walls could talk! Being a curious artist who explores old houses to discover remnants of lives once lived among the mothballs, you'd love the stories Harryet: A love-sick chamber maid committing suicide, a gentleman inventor's science experiment exploding, two fires; organized crime, murder! Now, it's a co-op. My friend Rob bought an apartment and started renovating it. I told him, "If you find anything in the walls, I want it." One day, he shows up at my door holding a plastic bag full of stinky pigeon remains. "Only for you, Jane." I was so excited but also grossed out. Matted feathers, dried maggot shells. PU. Nevertheless, I persisted! Dissected the skulls and bones, soaked them in water, and let them dry in the sun until it bleached them white. Meanwhile, I'd been holding onto a major thrift shop find; a mid-twentieth-century jewelry/music box with a ballerina that twirls when you wind the key. The tune is kind of eerie. Like in a horror movie with a demon ghost child lurking in the nursery. It's also pretty and calming in a weird way. So I'm organizing my studio (a never-ending process!), pop the bones into the jewelry box to get them out of the way, and bingo! It's art! Of course, I need to arrange them just so

*Continued on next page...*

THE ARTFUL MIND DECEMBER 2023 • 23





Top: *Ancestors of Calder 1*, Tree parts, bone, wire, wood stain Photograph: John Isaacs

Right top: *Members*, Tree parts, wood stain Photographs: Harryet Candee

Bottom right: *Pigeons of The Endicott Hotel*, 6 x 14 x 6 in., Mixed Media Photograph: Jane Gennaro



and rearrange them just so, and this goes on for months until a pleasing pattern emerges. Only now, the Ballerina (who, by the way, does not know she's made of plastic, like the rest of us who ingest it daily) tells me the bones must be gold, so I paint them with nail polish, and she twirls happily ever after.

The real magic comes from setting a stage that frees the imagination to create a story. A pigeon's sternum resembles a frog. Metacarpals might be magic barrettes, but for all I know or think I see, I will never know what it's like to be a pigeon, and that's humbling. Their bones fly. Bird bones are pneumatic—hollow yet full of wonder!

*Portfolios* similarly frames its world. The structure is a chrome portfolio rack. It's magnetic, which enables me to vary the arrangement of teeny bones strung on invisible thread and play with shadows. Nothing is permanent.

*Memento Mori*. When COVID started, I knew we might be leaving the city, so I started photographing the streets I'd miss walking on. I looked down and started shooting the pavement, crosswalks, and bike lanes.

24 • DECEMBER 2023 THE ARTFUL MIND

I drew over the photos with the iPad tools, mapping lines with geometric shapes, playing with color and changing the direction things were taking.

**When we met at the TSL Warehouse in Hudson, NY, in the bookstore a few months ago, we had a conversation about our shared interest in collecting shells, bones, and feathers and using them to create beautiful pieces of art, much like your hanging mobile sculptures. We find joy and reflection in displaying them in imaginative ways, whether randomly or with a plan. Can you discuss the process of selecting and physically assembling the artifacts for your mobiles, as well as what they represent?**

JG: The mobile series is called *The Ancestors of Calder*. They're composed of galvanized steel tomato cages hung with deer bones, fish bones, and tree parts—driftwood, firewood, and limbs from the forest floor. I pick up suggestive shapes that attract me and refine and or enhance their natural growth pattern by sculpting and sanding with a Dremel drill. I stain some pieces white. Balance

happens in the intermingling of organic elements. I'm a big fan of Alexander Calder, who changed the course of modern art with his three-dimensional kinetic sculptures. Marcel Duchamp named them "mobiles." Calder's colored abstract shapes are made from industrial materials hung in lyrical balance. The innate lyricism of our own skeletal structure is a balance of bones in various shapes: long and thin, squat, cubed, and flattened. Bones change in size, shape, and position throughout our lives. Mother Nature's art is forever modern.

**Can you find a few words in your journals about your life's summary, future hopes, and reflections on life and beyond?**

JG: "I am here now."



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