

# CANVAS **REBEL**



## Meet Diana Horowitz

We were lucky to catch up with Diana Horowitz recently and have shared our conversation below.

**Hi Diana, thanks for joining us today. Have you been able to earn a full-time living from your creative work? If so, can you walk us through your journey and how you made it happen? Was it like that from day one? If not, what were some of the major steps and milestones and do you think you could have sped up the process somehow knowing what you know now?**

I would like to push back a little on the ideal of earning a full-time living on your creative work, in particular if you are a visual artist. I have been lucky enough to have had some income

from selling my paintings from my earliest days, but I believe painting is not a business venture, it's a creative endeavor. In my life I've tried not to expect my paintings to support me, I try to support my paintings. I need to hold on to the freedom to make the work that I want to make. I often did odd jobs (waitressing, selling hammocks, working in a general store, a leather store, a dry cleaner, cleaning hotel rooms, modeling for life class, substitute teaching, to



Diana Horowitz, *Calascibetta Morning*, 2023, Oil on linen-panel, 5 x 7 inches.

name a few) but the crucial thing was for painting to come first. From doing all those jobs — even the most menial — I learned important things about myself and about relating to people. I taught as an adjunct professor of painting and drawing for 23 years, but I always told my students I was a part-time teacher and a full-time painter. The most important thing for me has always been to have time to paint. Finding the right balance between making money on your work and making money doing other things is very personal choice. I didn't want to depend only on teaching for my income or only on selling paintings, so I sought an equilibrium that worked well for me.



Diana Horowitz, *Reflections*, 2022, Oil on linen, 6 x 6 inches.

**Great, appreciate you sharing that with us. Before we ask you to share more of your insights, can you take a moment to introduce yourself and how you got to where you are today to our readers.**

I was born in 1958 in New York City. My mother was a painter, so I started painting and learning about painting when I was very young. I studied art in high school, then got a BFA and went on to do graduate studies in Rome. I eventually received my MFA from Brooklyn College in 1987. Graduate school was very important to my



Diana Horowitz, *Sant'Oreste, for Morandi*, 2024, Oil on linen, 5 x 7 inches.

development, partly because in that time I met many artists who became life-long friends and worked with professors who were great supports to me over my career. I've received numerous grants and awards, including from the National Academy of Design, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, the Pollock-Krasner Foundation, and the Ingram Merrill Foundation. In 2005 I was elected a member

of the National Academy of Design in New York. I've exhibited widely in the United States and my work is included in numerous private and public collections including the Brooklyn Museum, Museum of the City of New York, New York Historical Society, Staten Island Museum, The Sheldon Swope Museum and The Mississippi Museum of Art among others. I live and work in Brooklyn, NY and I'm represented by Bookstein Projects in New York City.

**We often hear about learning lessons – but just as important is unlearning lessons. Have you ever had to unlearn a lesson?**

About ten years ago I was hoping to change galleries to find a place that better suited me. I made a list of nine galleries that seemed like reasonable choices. It was a list that was similar to what high school students create when they're applying to colleges: "reaches," "targets," and "safeties." I did my due diligence, and felt my work could reasonably fit in any of the galleries on my list. I started by going to my safeties... places I was comfortable and at ease talking to the gallery directors. My daughter said, "Mom! Are you serious?"



Diana Horowitz, *South from Uptown #1*, 2022, Oil on canvas board, 6 x 6 inches.

You need to try the place you would most like to show with, FIRST!!! “She wrote out a quote at the bottom of my list which is often attributed to Michael Jordan but was probably from Wayne Gretzky. “You miss 100% of the shots that you don’t take!” and then she said, “Mom, don’t do this for yourself! Do this for other girls and women.” I forced myself to take her advice and went and talked with my first-choice gallery dealer. My heart was pounding. But I had my first solo show there 3 months later. The gallery has changed locations and names since then, but I am still very, very happily represented by them.



Diana Horowitz, *World Trade Center Reflecting Pools and Harbor*, 2011, Oil on linen, 42 x 30 inches.

### **How about pivoting – can you share the story of a time you’ve had to pivot?**

The biggest pivot I had to make was when I was 33 and my husband and I had our daughter. I had to radically rebalance my life. Before becoming a mother, I worked nine or ten hours a day painting, six or sometimes seven days a week. I was laser focused. After my daughter was born I was terrified that everything I had worked so hard for would disappear forever. As a working artist without the financial security of a regular income I couldn’t afford a lot of childcare help. In retrospect I was too hard on myself and didn’t give myself much of a break. I never stopped working and showing, but didn’t have a lot of time or space for making paintings. And there were often frustrating school vacations, as well as the more than occasional cold or strep throat when my daughter was in daycare or elementary school. I did learn to be more

organized and to use my time more productively. I realized that I could work fewer hours and still have a satisfying painting experience, but it was a huge adjustment. The process of painting and drawing kept me sane and grounded, and I needed to do it, not just for myself, but in order to be a good mother.

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