

## *An Interview with Artist Kim Lee*



Dear Kim Lee,

It is my honor to interview you! Thank you for agreeing to take the time to share a bit of your experiences with us. The following questions are for you, though you do not have to answer all of them. I am hopeful that you will choose about seven questions to respond to. You can of course answer more! It's up to you. Thank you so much for your thoughts! I can't wait to read your responses.

Devon

**1.) Henri Matisse once said, "Creativity takes courage." In what way does this quote speak to the challenges of being an artist, or leading a creative life?**

*"Creativity takes courage." Like all creative ventures, people who choose this path in life open themselves up to quite a lot of criticism and judgment. Not to mention unemployment! Whether we are writing poetry, painting a scene, or film-making, there will always be naysayers who believe you are wasting your time and those who don't "get it." Artists are people and their skin is no thicker than anyone else, we just have to learn to take it and be brave. Bearing your soul with the possibility of it being rejected can be scary.*

**2.) How does the joy & freedom of childhood resurface in your art?**

*As a young artist, I realized early on that I drew better than most people my age so I had to learn to do everything "right." I argued with my friend Lynn about what color a doggie should be. I was creating a brown coat with shades of orange and yellow in it to add texture; hers was purple. Did you ever hear of the Blue Dog? George Rodrigue became famous with his series of blue dog paintings. I should have listened to Lynn.*

**3.) You hold a BA in Art from St. Thomas Aquinas College. During your career as a student of Art, did you ever receive wisdom or advice that challenged or changed you?**

*One word: Juxtaposition. Along with the ability to provide meaningful critique of others work while providing encouragement, a quality that comes in handy in other areas of life as well.*

**4.) From your perspective, what is the role of the Artist in society?**

*Today it seems like most artists are expected to create for entertainment and design purposes. To provide beauty and inspiration in our chaotic world is a good thing. But there is still an important place for artists to create works that shock people into action or dialogue and open their eyes to abuses or issues that need addressing. Picasso's Guernica is a famous example. Also, art as therapy is an important tool in healing.*

**5.) The Fine Arts program at Geneseo has recently been cut. Even still, we are finding ways to keep creative energy alive on campus. Do you have any suggestions?**

*I think you guys are on the right track. Expand your horizons by reaching out to the art community here in the Finger Lakes. There is so much going on. Making connections with artists and art programs and galleries in the region can provide a great learning and living environment to supplement life at Geneseo.*

**6.) What artist or work of Art do you most identify with?**

*This is tough! Berthe Morisot and Mary Cassatt were the pioneering women of the art world at a time when women did not get the recognition they should or respect they deserved (not much has changed). The Impressionists as a whole were viewed with open hostility initially and today are considered the harbingers of modern art and forever changed how we view and create art; hence Matisse's quote above).*

**7.) Have you ever experienced an artistic slump? If so, how do you cope with this inspirational block?**

*What day is it? There hasn't been a year that I haven't had a slump. Most of the time, it just takes doing something else and getting away from the problem piece. Sleeping on it helps a lot. Reading about art, taking a workshop or visiting a gallery is very stimulating. Hanging out and painting with friends can really stir the creative juices and provide encouragement that can urge you toward your next great work.*

**8.) What advice do you have for students who don't believe they have any artistic talent?**

*Don't listen to your inner demons... I know, easier said than done! Look online. Everyone puts everything out there today. Start small with a medium or subject that speaks to you, do what you love. If you like poetry, write. If you like to paint, paint. If you love to bake, bake. Paint a still life of your baked creations before you eat them (just don't let them go stale!) Read, take a workshop, go to Youtube for "how to" videos, have fun. Don't worry about making mistakes... that is how you learn! One thing you need to know: school does not end with graduation; your life lessons are just beginning. With any luck you will NEVER stop learning. I am a much better artist now than when I graduated. Remember, "Creativity takes courage"!*

- 9.) It is sometimes assumed that a certain level of melancholy is required to produce “great” art. For example, great Artists like Rothko and Van Gogh had to battle their share of inner-demons. What role does sadness play in the creation of Art? Is strife often a catalyst for artistic endeavors?

*There have been many times that grief has spurred me to paint. I still have projects on the burner inspired by images of my father and me (he passed away a year ago this month). Art can be therapeutic and help the creator move through the grieving process and come out the other side. [With] that being said, there can be too much of a good thing. Rothko had fame, and he may have been better off without it. Van Gogh never had fame at all... quite the opposite! Yet, today he is considered [one of] the best painter[s] in history. Its pursuit partially led both of them to the same end. Pollock was an alcoholic, and Basquiat, a drug addict. Many artists are trying to self-medicate their way out of depression. I wonder if some nurse their turmoil instead of quell it in fear of their creativity diminishing. You need to find a safe balance and recognize when you need help.*

- 10.) We are really grateful to have you as a Nassau Arts Fellow! What do you see blossoming out of this fledging relationship?

*I am looking forward to seeing your creative ideas and works and sharing local experiences in the arts through your eyes! Happy Creating!*

