



Melissa Stephens

Melissa Stephens knew she was destined to become an artist at a young age. She won drawing contests and was the “go to” artist for all the class projects. She majored in Art from Cornell College, in Mt. Vernon, IA, and went on to assist in printing the Winter Book at the Minnesota Center for Book Arts. After 2 ½ years of working the Percent for Art Program at the Minnesota State Arts Board, Stephens stepped down from her position to pursue her career as a full-time artist. She continued to work with galleries and other community art programs, like Springboard for the Arts, the Minneapolis Arts Commission, North East Roundtable and the St. Paul Art Crawl until moving from Minnesota to Florida, in 2005.

Stephens began her art career in drawing, and then transitioned into printmaking. After a 12-year career creating and selling monotypes and linoleum block prints, she dabbled in acrylic painting while raising two resilient boys and moving her household every 4-5 years. In 2010, she discovered the magic of encaustic painting at Northwest Encaustic in West Seattle. It quickly became her new passion.

“Encaustic” originates from the Greek word *Enkaustikos*, which means “to heat or burn in.” Heating, or fusing, the encaustic paint changes the state, color and position of the brush strokes. This process, and the gorgeous luminosity achieved with the clear encaustic medium, allows Stephens to share her ideas and perceptions in the best way possible.

The artist connects with viewers by interpreting stories and traditions. She learns from others, challenges her perceptions, and experiences new cultures in order to include the traditions and stories of others.

Stephens believes in accessibility for the arts and is an ambassador for the arts as a public speaker, encaustic painting instructor, Art in a Suitcase volunteer with the Bedford Gallery, Valley Art Gallery Board Member, Art Installation Assistant and Director of Social Media for multiple galleries in the Bay Area. She is represented by Valley Art Gallery and the San Francisco Women Artists Gallery. In 2019, her artwork was part of an internationally juried encaustic exhibit at the Ontario Community Museum of Art in Ontario, CA.

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