

Daisy Patton

We interviewed Daisy in her studio at Eastside International where she enjoyed a studio residency over the summer of 2016 in Los Angeles away from her home base in Denver, Colorado.

COAGULA ART JOURNAL: When did you first become interested in found photos?

DAISY PATTON: 2014, actually. So I had my family photographs and I had been doing a different painting series where I was basically replicating my family photos and inserting a father's presence into them. I didn't know who my father was, I still don't know who he is, it was sort of a way of thinking of alternate time lines and fake realities where he would have been present and what that presence would have looked like. But I also had my (maternal) grandmother's photographs, and they're gorgeous, they're beautiful, but there's something about them that was particularly haunting and really interesting and of course thinking of Roland Barthes, and him talking about his mother's photographs and what they sort of represent. So I tried painting them, but in a more painterly way, the way that I was more accustomed to painting, you know, photo realism is great and all, but it's very restrictive and you know exactly what it's supposed to look like and what it's supposed to be, there's no room for anything else...

CJ: No discovery?

DP: Right. Different painters have different things that they enjoy doing and for me that's something that's very restrictive. I was really focused on painting when I was younger, then sort of hit a block and stopped painting for a while and then delved into photo and photo theory and then left with sound, in grad school. In any case, I had these photographs, and I tried just painterly representing them, without painting on a photograph, and they just weren't translating, they weren't working. So then I started getting interested in other people's family photographs and the meaning behind them, for them to be abandoned and what that represents. So usually I've been concept driven first before I start a particular project, I work on many things at once, that's actually the most effective way for me to work. If something gets really frustrating I can bounce to something else. Some things require collaboration which obviously is a far more drawn out process than if you're painting, because you can just rely on yourself. So I collected these initial images, (looks at one), and I of course had background in printing, so I was able to get some prints and mounted it to panel after doing some research of some of the best practices of how to do so, and knew I wanted to enlarge it to be life size again, so I was kind of reckoning with the figure and then started painting on it. It was a very subconscious thing initially, then understanding what the project was about and what I was doing was sort of following it afterwards. It was a huge high of being able to paint these and suddenly it felt like I really hit on something. So I was really focused specifically on portraits at first, thinking about the history of portraiture, specifically related to painting and photography. I like to call painting and photography "dysfunctional siblings" because they're always telling each other that they're not important or they're dead in some way, but they're really co-dependent and sort of intertwined with each other. And that's the starting point for the series...

CJ: So you couldn't do your painting without photography, and it would be just photography if it wasn't for the painting, so in your practice, you are merging them...

DP: Right, exactly. With the previous painting series, which was strictly painting, it was thinking about what painting and photo each represent, photo representing "death," "death of a moment," thinking specifically Barthes, and then painting is sort of an elongation of time, it's more dynamic, it allows for many different things, so merging them together again made a lot of sense, but also specifically with this series being able to actually paint over the photograph. Now obviously it's a copy of a photograph because I have the originals still put away safely.

CJ: And they're not anybody you know?

DP: No one I know at all. So all of the paintings are considered "untitled" in the series but if there's anything written on the front or the back of the image, then that's included in a bracketed title, otherwise I just come up

continued on page 21



DAISY PATTON, continued from page 12

continued on page 24

DAISY PATTON, *continued from page 21*
with something, (points to one) that's "crease with purple" because that seemed like a very straightforward way of describing it.

CJ: Nobody who is in these photos of have confronted you have they?

DP: No, that's actually one of the most popular questions I get... I haven't had that problem just yet (*laughs*)... it's interesting because I know where a lot of these photos come from, because I'm the one who sources them, so some of them have gotten at flea markets and I can probably guess that this person's storage unit got seized, some have been from Ebay, just a lot of random images. They've obviously been separated or passed down from various places. Sometimes I'll get a lot on Ebay where it's basically the whole family. I have one particular photo set, where they were labeled, and then whoever this person was who owned it, I'm pretty sure it was a woman, sat and wrote her relationship to each person, so "Papa," the

So I was really focused specifically on portraits at first, thinking about the history of portraiture, specifically related to painting and photography.

back says "Papa Edwin Hill," that sort of thing... some people are dead, and some people could be very much alive. So far I haven't... they really just needed to be divorced from their original owner...

CJ: So if they're coming from flea markets; there's some chance there was some big break that their family photos ended up in a flea market, instead of staying at home? Obviously it would still be in someone's home if there was stability over the generations...

DP: Right. Initially my collection process was the heyday of the family photograph as an object, from about the 1930s until about 1990. But I've been recently going a little further back, and of course photos mimicked painting in their early history. That was really what they were trying to do... so I think that's kind of interesting of trying to turn them into painting again, because I do consider all these as paintings first and foremost. As far as the people are

concerned, some of these come from all over the world, that one's from Poland, from Bulgaria, several are American...

CJ: You are based in Denver? Are you native to Colorado?

DP: No, I'm actually native to LA... I left when I was nine and I moved to Oklahoma, then I moved to Bakersfield for the first two years of high school, then moved back to Oklahoma, where I did my undergrad at OU, then I did a year abroad in England, then I took a few years in between undergrad and grad school, and went to the museum school in Boston, and that's where the most recent place I was...

CJ: So, why Denver?

DP: My husband got into a Ph.D in science education in Boulder (*laughs*), but it was actually the best thing that could have happened. While I was in grad school I was diagnosed with MS (Multiple Sclerosis), and this was before the ACA (Affordable Care Act) so I had to have insurance, so that meant after I graduated I couldn't do a teaching fellowship while everybody I knew was trying to cobble together a living, I had to have insurance... so I went back to doing university administration, which was something I was doing before. I didn't make any work, and I think some of that had to do with decompressing from grad school itself, my practice really changed while I was in grad school, so it went from this sort of voyeuristic, predatory practice to something that was based in the more personal or autobiographical, more compassionate as well. That sort of shift and pivot was something I was still trying to figure out what that meant exactly. So when I moved down to Colorado I dived into my practice full time, which was really exciting, and started painting again. Which deep down inside, I think of myself as a painter. I am multidisciplinary, I do different media, but painting feels like something that is just very inherent. In terms of different approaches for the different media, I see it in color and texture and surface, that sort of thing...

CJ: So with the ACA though, you can do whatever you want right?

DP: I can get insurance (*laughs*)... so that makes things a whole lot easier.

CJ: So tell me about Denver?

DP: Denver is a really interesting scene, so I am incredibly fortunate, I got into a residency at Red Line Contemporary Art Center (Denver)... it's a 2-year residency, you get studio space for free, but also you get studio visits, and its an open studio policy... so that means anybody who comes to visit, when people are visiting, our doors are open... so I have a sixth sense when people are watching me while I'm painting (*laughs*), it's an interesting process... I'm very much a proponent of community engagement in arts and literacy, I'm thinking about how arts education are getting cut in schools... because art is a language, it's a different way of communicating and a lot of people don't have access to that...

so it's been great to try and figure out how to try and talk about my work, to a range of audiences, and that's helped me to hone what I'm doing. As far as the Denver scene, it's not restrictive to one style, people are very open, very friendly, and very excited in their work, so that's been really fantastic, a lot of opportunities for artists too... I think a lot of people don't like to show their process, but for me I'm really comfortable with that and I'm also comfortable with failure, so, if a painting is not gonna work, I'm not gonna overwork it, I'm just gonna throw it away and move on to the next one...

CJ: Turning a page in the family photo album so to speak...

DP: Kind of yeah (*laughs*)... but I appreciate the painters who like to keep working on the same thing but for me I'm a very

I like to call painting and photography "dysfunctional siblings" because they're always telling each other that they're not important or they're dead in some way, but they're really co-dependent and sort of intertwined with each other. And that's the starting point for the series...

decisive, focused kind of painter, I'm gonna do what I'm gonna do, if it doesn't work, oh well... with these there's sort of a falling in love process with each photograph and how to sustain that love as you work on it. With the big ones they take a really long time to do, the one I just finished with the intricate pattern, the blue one down here, took 2 weeks all by itself. And I have this hung pretty low, so I was on the ground laying down flat trying to paint it... so sustaining love for the work is a challenge (*laughs*). ■