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ARTIST STATEMENT

A museum owner recently asked me, “What is your highest achievement in art?” My answer was immediate: Elbows.

Standing anonymously at the back of gallery shows, I’ve had the privilege to watch people interact with my artwork. They walk slowly, never suspecting benign objects like acrylic paint, canvas and whimsical design to become a soft catalyst for emotionally healing conversation.

My artwork studies human emotions tucked neatly into unsuspecting images with the intent of sparking conversations that lead to growth. It offers the viewer a gentle way to approach and converse with their trusted community about hard-to-define emotions or difficult moments. The goal is not to shock the viewer and make them feel these deep emotions while they examine the art, but rather, to use art to encourage viewers to find words to talk safely with their loved ones about how they feel.

One thing I’ve learned about capturing emotions in a format that promotes conversation is that visual variety is fundamental to success. Every viewer resonates with a different type of design, and successful interpretation of emotion cannot be captured with one style or format, or it risks losing the intended audience. Avoiding a niched style with intention and focused effort, I often complete a series of work on the same emotional topic so that each piece displays a unique visual style, united by a common thread of my choosing.

Uniting my body of work are grayscale elements, transfer of newspaper text as both texture and relevant meaning impact, layerist or crowdsourced journaling that becomes hidden text or images, solid backgrounds, and a focal image protagonist (animal, object, or human). A continuously recurring sub-study in my work centers on the exact moment when one emotion shifts to become another emotion, particularly grief to hope.

The ultimate success of my artwork is to design and execute an image that compels a viewer to stop, contemplate, and then nudge their partner with an elbow. A fundamental need for every human is to have another in close community to bear witness to the monuments of their life, and these are often marked by deep and difficult-to-define emotions. My goal is to be a trusted visual vehicle that never forces these conversations, but quietly works to develop personal and community growth.

The deepest conversations all start with a safe space and a nudge: The elbows. The whispers. The tears or the laughter. And ultimately, the artwork reaches its highest achievement when a needed conversation is unleashed.