

Britt Michaelian



It seemed evident to her family and many of us now that Britt Michaelian was born to be an artist. For her, however, coming to this realization was a longer process.

Michaelian's mother was an interior designer. Her father marketed major hospitality corporations and her years as an infant and toddler were spent moving with the family from Florida to Chicago to Southern California as her father advanced his career. The family settled in San Francisco when Britt was 5 years old and remained in the Bay area until her Junior year in high school when they returned to Southern California. It was there that Britt's career in art started to take form.

Chosen to be an assistant by her high school art teacher, during her junior year, Michaelian became immersed in the world of art, design, composition and color. Her teacher inspired her to view the world in a new way, guiding her through the technical and practical aspects of art. For the first time she began to think of herself as an artist. During this time of awakening, Michaelian focused her energy on the performing arts, believing acting to be her calling. She pursued theatre at the University of S. California from 1991 through 1993.

A restlessness, however, lead her to a reappraisal. She took a semester off to discover her true passion and, during this time, she realized her happiest moments were spent drawing and painting—surrounded by color and immersed in creating. It was this epiphany that motivated the young Michaelian to immediately transfer to the Otis Parsons accelerated program.

After completing her foundation year at Otis, Michaelian was invited to attend a wedding in Chicago. While preparing for the trip, her father suggested that she take her portfolio and contact the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. This simple suggestion would set the course for her future career in art.

Michaelian secured a portfolio review, was accepted on the spot and registered for classes that same afternoon. Within two weeks she moved to Chicago. "It was rather prophetic," she states, "as my mother always told me from the time I was young that I would attend school there."

While at the Art Institute she delved into areas previously unexplored, honing her illustration and fashion design skills. That summer, she returned to California and joined her newfound skills with her love of theatre, designing costumes for films. She thought this move would bring her closer to where she was meant to be but, again, disquiet came over her.

Returning to school, Michaelian persisted with her studies, still unclear as to where she was headed. Her first exhibit at the BFA show at the Art Institute was a considerable success and she persisted in her studies to receive her BFA in the fall of 1996.

Upon graduating, Michaelian returned to Los Angeles to pursue acting one last time. After six months of auditions and a few small parts, she decided to return to the Bay Area. Working as an office manager, bank receptionist and design assistant, Michaelian's practical capabilities enabled her to make a living, all the while creating in every spare moment.

Still actively seeking her niche, Michaelian happened upon an artist who worked as an art therapist. Intrigued by the profession, she investigated the educational requirements and submitted her application to Notre Dame de Namur College. While working on her Masters there, she met and married her husband. Together they now have two daughters.

Working as an art therapist proved to be both life- and art-altering for Michaelian. She found herself both enriched and challenged by the patients and their experiences as they grappled to express the emotions that accompany illness, loss, mortality as well as triumph.



“When I worked as an intern, I used to paint with a fury from the people and situations that I encountered,” Michaelian recalls. “This was when my art took an abstract form. It was the only means available to me to express the unconscious feelings inside. There I was, a young woman, placed next to someone facing some of the most difficult situations a human being can be asked to endure, and my only means of expressing it, at its most basic and human level, was through my art.”

“Now, because of those encounters, I can explain my art. The color and layers became a metaphor for the experiences and emotions that encompassed and saturated my life.

“My art is about pure expression of emotion. It is the process of applying paint to canvas and not wanting to control the drips or washes but, instead, moving through them and with them. In that moment, I am the painting. It is a dance of meditation that I cannot live without.

“Through the process of using color and applying paint to a canvas, I find release and healing. Image and texture are a means to express the beauty, wonder and pain that are innate to all humanity. I seek to provide a place for the viewer to find appreciation for the process of creation, not just in art but in life. It is my hope that the viewer experiences my world of painting where there are no rules...where nothing is wrong or bad. It just is.

Exhibitions and Public Collections

Stricoff Fine Art, New York, NY	2004
La Fond Gallery, Pittsburgh, PA	2004
Limn Gallery, San Francisco, CA	2003, 2004
Chicago Cultural Center, Chicago, IL	2003, 2004
NCADA, San Francisco, CA	2003
Bay Shore Film Studios, San Francisco, CA	2003
Children’s Health Council, Featured Artist, Palo Alto, CA	2002
SOMArts Gallery, San Francisco, CA	2002
NTV Newfoundland Super Station, St. Johns, Newfoundland	

Education

University of Southern California, Theatre	1991 - 1993
Otis Parsons, Ls Angeles, CA Accelerated Program for Art	1994
The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL BFA	1996
Notre Dame de Namur University, Belmont, CA MA	2002

Born Chicago, IL

November 2, 1973