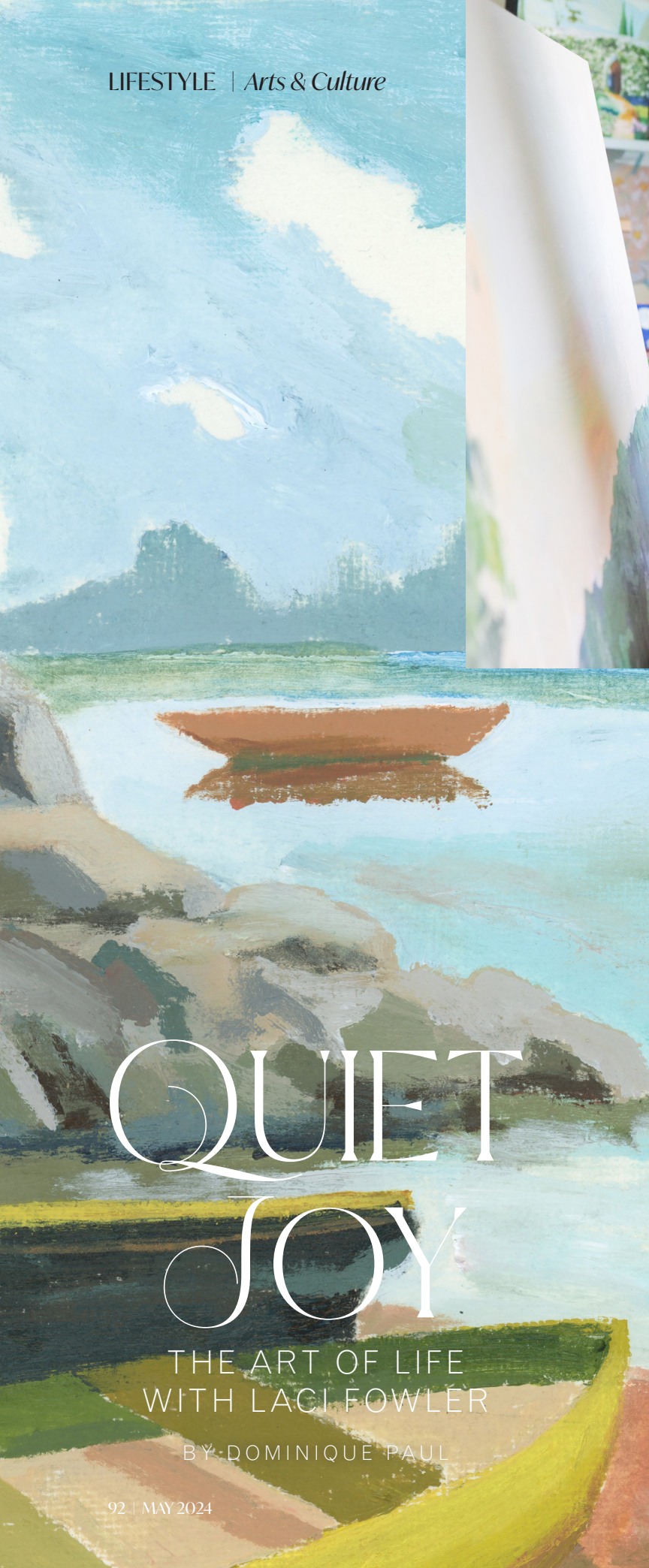




QUIET JOY

THE ART OF LIFE
WITH LACI FOWLER

BY DOMINIQUE PAUL

David Mamet famously said, “Art is an expression of joy and awe.” The first time I saw a painting by local artist Laci Fowler, that’s exactly what I felt. It was a colorful, abstract floral that seemed to be bursting off the canvas, unable to contain its joy.

It was impossible not to feel happy when looking at it. You may recognize Laci’s work, as she has recently brought her trademark style to collaborations with Anthropologie, Harper Collins, She Reads Truth and more. Originally from Mississippi, Laci and her husband, songwriter-producer Bryan Fowler, have lived in Franklin for ten years. “I love where we live,” Laci told us. “I love being part of the art scene and seeing it bloom and grow.”

We caught up with Laci to learn more about her approach to art and life. What transpired was an inspiring and thought-provoking conversation too long for our pages. Please see Laci’s full interview at yourwilliamson.com.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT LIVING IN WILLIAMSON COUNTY?

LF: I love the mixture of big and small. There is a charm to this area, an appreciation for that charm, and attempt to preserve it, which I appreciate. I like that creatives of all kinds can thrive here.

GROWING UP, WHAT (OR WHO) INFLUENCED YOUR DESIRE AND MOTIVATION TO CREATE?

LF: The first person to inspire was my Aunt. I was probably 4 or 5. She made these big straw hats for my cousin’s birthday party. Every



Opposite Left: *Boats*
by the Rock

Left: *Spot at Sunset*

Above right: *Wild West*

Below right: *Mother*

little girl got a hat. Even at that young age I remember thinking: “she *made* those. That’s cool! I want to make hats too!” Other people include my first art teacher at age 9, Vicky Land. I grew up in a small town in MS. Very few people stood out as artsy or creative. Like most small towns, sports ruled. Vicky always wore a light, airy scarf and had fun glasses and a lovely posture. She was like a sunflower in a sea of daisies. I always felt a bit different growing up as the one who liked art and music and writing. She made me feel like that was ok.

WHEN DID YOU FIRST REALIZE THAT YOU WANTED TO BE A PAINTER?

LF: My first moment was an art class I took when I was 15. I asked my teacher if I could paint this picture of a woman I found in a magazine. She agreed. I struggled through it and she told me to turn my painting upside down to loosen up my mind. To see shapes instead of a person. It worked! When I turned the painting right side up again, there she was, this woman I had been trying to capture. That’s when I knew I wanted to take art seriously.

YOUR PAINTINGS FEEL LIKE JOY ON CANVAS. WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO PORTRAY THE NATURAL WORLD IN THIS WAY?

LF: My mom is a very joyful person. Very hospitable. A glass-half-full perspective almost always, even during very hard times. I think being around this type of personality for 36 years has found its way into my work, which I love, because it is a way to honor her. The other answer has to do with my faith. We wait with hope, full of faith that the resurrection of Jesus means that one day, death and all his friends will be no more. So I paint flowers as a symbol of remembrance. We remember these good promises and walk with gentleness and faithfulness, with joy and love and in doing so, we are a stark contrast to all the ugliness all around us, like flowers standing tall on a tattered field.

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR MOST CHALLENGING PIECE TO WORK ON AND WHY?

LF: My most challenging piece was a portrait I painted a couple years ago. It was a commissioned piece going in a new build and to be honest, our styles didn’t line up. I struggled with that. I completed the commission since I had committed but after that, I got very selective about what commissions to take. I’ve never regretted that decision. Both to finish what I started and to be selective as I went forward.

HOW DO YOU OVERCOME “PAINTER’S BLOCK” AND GET INTO THE “ZONE” TO FREELY CREATE?

LF: When I was in college, I was told by a very successful artist to not force it. If the inspiration isn’t there, don’t paint. Walk away. As I do this professionally longer, I know when to break that rule and when not to. I do think there is a way to wake that part of me back up. I’ve learned to really open my eyes and expect inspiration to come from anything, anywhere, at any time. Patterns on a dress, the colors on my son’s toy, the way the colors of food interact on a plate, my daughter’s dress and the way it happens to complement the color of my nails when I’m brushing her hair. Rocks, flowers, shells and architecture. Beauty is all around us, waiting to be beheld and cultivated and made into new pieces of art.



“ART IS MOST VALUABLE NOT WHEN OTHER PEOPLE LIKE IT BUT WHEN THE ARTIST REVERENTLY AND SKILLFULLY OFFERS IT UP TO THE MAKER OF ALL THINGS”

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES TO HAVING ANOTHER CREATIVE PERSON AS YOUR PARTNER?

LF: Ya know, they say that opposites attract, but that hasn't been my personal experience. We “get” each other in a very special way because of creativity. Because we both know the demands of the creative industry, there is so much grace. Bryan knows that if there's two ways to get home, to take the more beautiful route even if it's longer because he knows it'll fill me up. Things like that. He is one of my greatest gifts in life, truly.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO FOR FUN AND/OR RELAXATION?

LF: I walk every day because I just love being outside. Mature trees and flowers and wind and birds singing. These things relax me and rejuvenate me. I love to cook. I love a lively kitchen with music and people. I love slow mornings. I wake up pretty early before anyone is up. I read my Bible and sit in silence. Slow mornings are part of what makes me tick. I also love design, taking a forgotten space and breathing life back into it. I love a proper antique store. They affirm what I attempt to do for a living. Good art lasts.

YOU RECENTLY RE-IMAGINED THE COVERS TO SOME CLASSIC NOVELS FOR HARPER COLLINS. TELL US ABOUT THAT PROCESS.

LF: The classics for Harper Collins are a major high point in my career. I love books. I love stories and exercising my imagination. So really, these books were all fun and very little work. It felt like all the creative keepsakes I'd tucked away in my mind throughout my life were finally able to be put to good use. I opened the arsenal and applied so many ideas I had been saving for a special occasion. Color palettes and loose brushstrokes. Whimsical beach scenes and highly pigmented nightscapes. I treasure these covers.

RICK RUBIN RECENTLY SAID THAT THE CREATION OF ART IS A DEVOTIONAL ACT. DO YOU AGREE?

LF: Rick Rubin is a creative genius of sorts. There's no denying that. And in its context, I completely agree with his statement. I'm slow to fully endorse it because he and I probably have different ideas of who God is. If it were my statement, I would tweak it a bit and say this: Art is most valuable not when other people like it but when the artist reverently and skillfully offers it up to the Maker of all things, seeking first and foremost to please and praise Him by taking in his creation and responding by creating beautiful copies of all his originals.



WHAT ARE YOU CURRENTLY WORKING ON AND WHAT CAN WE LOOK FORWARD TO FROM YOU IN THE FUTURE?

LF: I am currently working on sketches. This may seem strange since I'm known for bright colors. But it is my love for bright colors and pattern mixing that led me here to sketches. Sketches are timeless. They can be layered with any color palette and pattern combination because they are neutral. I also love that they seem to capture a moment in time in a special way. There's something about the “no nonsense” of a sketch, the quiet confidence of it, that I am very drawn to.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE ASPIRING ARTISTS?

LF: If I had to sum it up in two words: stay teachable.

Above: *Daffodils*

Left: The HarperCollins “Pretty Books” classic book collection painted by Laci