

Gina Louthian-Stanley

JANUARY 2023 FEATURED ARTIST



Gina Louthian-Stanley is the quintessential example of someone who has devoted her life to art. Her earliest memories are of drawing and painting, so it felt like a natural progression to formally study art at college. Years later, while working in another field entirely, her artistic aspirations drew her back to school to pursue a master's degree and embark on a career as an educator.

Left: "River Over Rock, 12 x 9, Rock, encaustic, PearlX pigment, Shellac burn.

Her primary job has been teaching at a nearby high school but Gina has also established herself as an exhibiting artist and instructor at select art centers and galleries in Virginia, North Carolina and Tennessee. Gina's teaching repertoire includes methods in encaustic sculptural techniques, monoprinting, cold wax and oil painting, mixed media collage, wabi-sabi bookmaking and more.

Connections are important to Gina who has developed relationships with both staff and students where she works as well as online. "Most artists experience a lot of alone-time, so it's important to find your tribe, and build a network of people who share your passion. This is how we, as artists, can receive creative feedback, share ideas, plus raise our profile within the arts community."

Gina makes an effort to reach out to other artists she meets at the galleries where she teaches or shows her work. Her in-person and virtual tribe also include some of the artists-members of International Encaustic Artists and the Encaustic Art Institute in Santa Fe. Gina is avid about posting regularly on Instagram and Facebook.

As a member of IEA and similar groups, Gina seeks out opportunities to enter shows that are away from her usual stomping grounds. One of her pieces ("*River Over Rock*" - shown above) was juried in to the 2022 IEA Convergence Retreat in Morro Bay, CA. Recognition of Gina's accomplishments in art have been ongoing, with multiple honors, awards and publications touting her ability to visually capture the natural world in a variety of mediums, especially encaustic and cold wax. Aside from having many individual clients, Gina's art pieces have been added to several gallery and corporate permanent collections around the world.

Like many artists, Gina can sometimes feel overwhelmed or experience self-doubt but decades of teaching art has honed her ability to inspire and motivate those in her care, as well as herself. "Keep on going, follow your heart and don't get discouraged," she counsels. "I still feel I have a lot to learn, even though I've been working with wax since 2006. But that's the beauty of this medium, isn't it? There are so many methods and processes to try. Once I retire, I hope to have the time to

create complete bodies of work in specific encaustic techniques. "My perfectionist nature can cause me to become very invested in one piece. But thankfully, I have a pragmatic side and if the piece refuses to come together, I'll just torch it" she laughs." (Welcome to the club, Gina!)



*Left: "Moon & Clouds", encaustic, 4" x 4" / Center: "Earth", encaustic, 10" diameter
Right: "Rising Fog", image transfer, pencil & pigments on birch substrate, 6" x 6"*

At the present time, Gina likes to wake early to create something small each morning to kick start her day. She favors practicing contour drawing in her sketchbook or creating tiny (2x3) gouache paintings on Kozo paper, often preparing a visual haiku, which she calls a "morning gift" to post on her social media sites.

Inspired by nature, Gina looks forward to her route to work, which wends its way past a river that is sometimes layered in blankets of fog, offering images just begging to be photographed. Gina often captures these dreamy scenes for reference and then translates them into highly textural paintings. "When I create in my studio, I prefer working on MDF or cradled panels which are ideal surfaces for larger wax pieces. I love the whole process; choosing the palette, infusing multiple layers of wax with various pigments and oil sticks, scraping and scratching back. My result, when the process works, is tremendously satisfying. I love creating art that reflects the unique aesthetic of this part of the world."

In 2011, after taking care of her ailing mom, Gina felt a void that needed to be filled. She decided to give herself some breathing space and signed up for a cold wax class with Cindy Walton at the 310 Art Gallery in Asheville, NC. Little did she know that it would help to reignite her imagination and enthusiasm for her art practice. Since then, cold wax and oil are a part of her teaching curriculum at her studio and at the gallery.

In 2020, the pandemic presented challenges and opportunities for everyone, including Gina. On the upside, the school where she works proved to be sensitive to the needs of its teachers, as well as its students, and made many accommodations to keep everyone safe. During that time, Gina also agreed to become president of the Market Gallery in Roanoke, VA, which turned out to be a stimulating experience for her. "I've learned a lot," she states. "Joining the gallery's board provided a new perspective on the business of showing and selling art," she says.



Left: "Totems" - mixed media: encaustic, monotype papers, rusted metals, wire, nails and various mark making tools, on a plaster and foam substrate. Left: 11" x 4" x 2" Right: 11.5" x 3" x 2"

Right: "Still Standing", encaustic, 6" x 8"

And now that her June retirement is becoming more of a reality, Gina is contemplating what comes next. Aside from traveling, deepening her personal practice and taking on the teaching gig at 310 Art Gallery, Gina has proposed researching the possibilities of establishing a new chapter of IEA. If it sounds feasible, she'll join forces with another encaustic artist to make it happen. Not surprisingly, it would be another excellent way to build her tribe.



Gina lives in Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains and teaches individuals and groups at various area art centers, in her home studio, and online. For more information, you can visit her website: www.ginalouthian-stanley.com