

Neighbor Profiles – a series of interview-based stories about members of the PPUABA
By Patti Veconi

Chrissy Angliker, Park Place resident
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A quick Google search for Chrissy Angliker will fill your screen with images of her paintings – rich, bold, mesmerizing... I'm a neighbor, not an art critic – I just know that they are arrestingly beautiful and inviting: representational enough to let me in but abstract enough to let me interpret. She has a current solo show at Massey Klein Gallery, so this month's profile is particularly timely.

Chrissy invited me to meet with her in the cozy Park Place apartment she shares with her *"brand new husband,"* Mike Hanne. It's a home she says evokes the chalets of her native Switzerland. *"Especially now in winter and after the snowstorm we just had – all the wood and the angled ceilings – and since I can't go home, it's combining all my worlds in one and it's so comforting. We just really love it."* Chrissy is new to Prospect Heights but first came to Brooklyn to study industrial design at Pratt then stayed in Clinton Hill for another decade. After recognizing that the *"safe track"* wasn't right for her – *"I tried all the avenues of creative expression through design, but it didn't touch on what I needed to*

communicate” – she made the decision to end her six-year hiatus from painting and return to it. She describes this reunion as being like the return to a relationship. *“It was scary, but I needed to check in and find out... is it still the one? Because if it was, my whole life would have to change, but also if it wasn’t then I would have resolution and peace with that decision.”*

Listening to Chrissy describe her return to painting was like being told a beautiful love story: vulnerable, intimate, self-aware and ultimately humble before her art. I’m not ashamed to say that I cried a little, appreciating how beautifully she can articulate and express that journey. Her work is about finding a balance between control and chaos. (I had read this already in her bio before we met, but was amazed at the extent to which this really is the authentic lived experience of her work.) *“It’s about me being in control but at the same time letting paint have its own expression, its own gravity, its own will... so also accepting not having control.”* This control/chaos balance is essential to her expression as an artist and what was missing for her in design. *“In design, you build things for the world... but I always felt that painting is about the world.”* Recognizing and staying fluid with how the world is constantly changing takes this important distinction further for Chrissy, and brought us to a point in our conversation about her current show and how the pandemic has informed her most recent work. *“Look where we are now... my relationship to my process has to be upped to match the new times.”* Living through the pandemic in lockdown as a New Yorker, particularly those early weeks, Chrissy realized that her family and friends in Switzerland were having a very different experience – especially because she was still in her previous industrial loft apartment in an area with no trees. *“I was starved for nature.”* Adding to the isolation was the growing sentiment that the pandemic was somehow *“a great opportunity for artists... you know, when things are crazy that’s when the artists will come and save the day.”* For Chrissy that sentiment felt like an expectation to automatically convert everyone’s shared experience into something with *“a pretty bow – to explain what it’s all about”* when in reality she was *“speechless for a long time.”* I was struck by that word – speechless – because Chrissy had also described her art as a language during our conversation, and in asking her to elaborate she doubled down on the word, explaining that *“It’s important to know when you’re speechless and not pretend you can say something... even though those are painful times, you have to wait... which is again, the loss of control.”*

In her early pandemic painting, Chrissy returned to subject matters that come and go for her, including water. With the water paintings, she found a way to be present with her feelings in spite of the speechlessness she was also experiencing. *“Also, very literally, it was painting about the blues... being in touch with the blues... trying to explore the full landscape of what being blue can mean. Those paintings were about functioning in the space [of the pandemic] when I wasn’t yet able to comment or incorporate this new reality that was still unfolding.”*

Even though she kept painting through those difficult times, it wasn't until after Chrissy and Mike moved to Park Place last spring that she began to find the new vocabulary for where her work would take her next. She is thrilled to be in a home where she can *"look out and see trees... where it's bird heaven – and the buildings you see, they're beautiful brownstones."* The immediate connection that Chrissy felt in coming to the block was largely due to how welcomed she felt as an artist. *"It can be tricky when you're an artist looking for a place to live because of the preconceived notions about responsibility and finances – but coming here and being received not only without judgment, but with excitement [she makes a winning gesture] it was incredible!"* After getting permission to have a stoop garden, Chrissy was introduced to her gardening neighbor, Den Gordon, who shared moon flowers for her to start with, *"and then nature flooded in... now I don't even have the urge to leave the city."*

Flowers became the new vocabulary that Chrissy had been waiting for during those speechless days. She had begun to anticipate that nature's expression of blooming would be her next inspiration, and through both noticing how *"flowers were manifesting everywhere around me"* and weekly trips to the farmer's market to buy fresh bouquets, *"the inspiration came and it kicked in."* She specifically works with cut flowers that are still blooming. *"Flowers are ancient – an archetype – and flower painting is forever, so working with cut flowers speaks about something that is at its height, but cut at its source...so it's a violence and a crescendo of drama – the beauty of life and death coming together – a symbol of us now. The flower is the perfect vessel for what I want to say."* Bringing her inspiration photographs into the studio, Chrissy has structure up to the moment she begins to paint, saying that she enters the work through reality, but then surrenders control so that *"the paint and I enter into a dialogue – I'm keeping it realistic in that it doesn't turn into a completely abstract painting, but I let the paint speak as it wants to and that's when I learn what it's about."* Chrissy also has a phrase from her native Swiss/German that is present when she works. The literal translation is *"say it through a flower,"* but the meaning is more nuanced and translates as *"To deliver news that is difficult through gentleness, elegance, grace and great care."*

Writing this neighbor profile on a snowy 25° day, I can think of nothing better than heading over to Massey Klein Gallery to see Chrissy Angliker's show, "Crazy Says the Daisy." It will be on view through March 5.

Massey Klein Gallery is located at 124 Forsyth St. New York, NY 10002. Hours are Thurs-Sun from 12:00-5:00. For questions about works available, please contact info@masseyklein.com or call +1.917.261.4657.

Chrissy's photograph was taken next to her impressive collection of Tschäggättä masks. These imposing masks with a mysterious history are a folk art tradition from the Lötschental Valley in her native Switzerland.

In addition to her current gallery show, Chrissy's paintings can be seen on her website at www.chrissy.ch.

If you have a PPUABA neighbor you would like to nominate for our Neighbor Profiles series, please send your suggestion to ppuaba.webmaster@gmail.com.