

# **Birds of Mars Digest**

## **Number Nine**

**December 2021**



**The 8 by 10 Series [33-40]**

**Conversations about music with...**  
**Daniel Winger**  
**Kat Alexander**

**Photo Essay: Local Artist Destroys Paintings**

## **Introduction**

It's already January 22, 2022 and I haven't finished putting together this year-end issue of the *Birds of Mars Digest*. I haven't been doing much writing lately.

In December I had a \$20 art sale. A lot of my friends and people I hadn't met previously (some I still haven't met) got some paintings. That was good. Then I took a break and started some more paintings in January. That is going well. More on that in future issues.

This issue contains images of and comments on paintings from the "8 by 10 Series" that were made in December 2021. Fortunately I wrote most of those comments and organized this file back in December. I'm just going to go through this once and fill in comments as needed. I really want to get this out there today.

There are also two 'interviews' with musicians. One with Kat Alexander from the band Lunar Carnival, and the second is with hand-percussionist and recording engineer Daniel Wininger.

Also included is a photo-essay of some of the paintings which I destroyed as part of my artistic process. I wrote the comments about that shortly after. I haven't though about it much since then. Mostly I want to get this published today.

Chris Gentes  
Northampton, Massachusetts

## **The 8 by 10 Series [33—40]**

All paintings are acrylic on stretched canvas except as otherwise notated in the main text. Size is either 8x10” or 10x8” depending on whether the painting is in vertical or horizontal orientation.

*In Progress—a collaboration with Sam Gas Can*

33 Fitz & Owl

*Completed*

34 Provisions

35 Guitar

36 Color Study

37 Trees

38 New Osaka

39 Color Study 2

40 Color Study 3

For images and comments of the previous paintings in this series see the following:

*Digest Number Seven: Paintings 01-24*

*Digest Number Eight: Paintings 19, 25-32*

## The 8 by 10 Series [33—40] Comments by Chris Gentes

**33 Fitz & Owl** (not shown) is still in-progress ; a collaboration with Sam Gas Can, the third painting we've worked on together within the "8 by 10 series."

The following is an excerpt from *The Birds of Mars Digest Number Three* (November—December 2020):

*"While I was out walking around taking night photos I took a few shots of the back of **133 Provisions**. I liked how they had designed it with the bottles in the window, and the name on the wall was lit by the lights and had dark shadows around the letters. It seemed like it would make an interesting painting."*

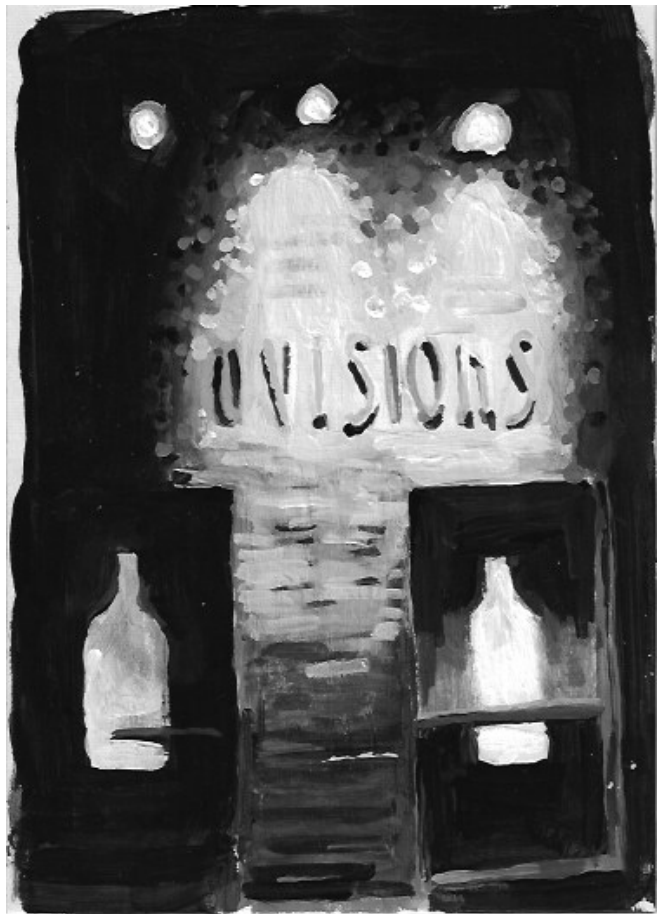
So about a year ago I had made this small (7x5") study on archival card of Provisions. And at the time I was...

*"...watching documentaries about the Impressionist painters. I am always amazed at how incredible their paintings are. I was inspired to try a little bit of free brushwork in this one where the light blends into the shadows."*

And after completing this one I realized that ...

*"...this would make a nice larger size painting."*

So that is the originations of the next painting in the 8 by 10 series. A year earlier I had made a small 'study' of a scene I had encountered one night while roaming around taking photos for paintings.



133 Provisions (2020). 7x5". Acrylic on archival card.

I could write about writing about this now, since this too is part of the documentation process. I could write about how an artist, as demonstrated here, sometimes make a work of art which will inform other works of art. And that is what I will continue to do as this story unfolds. I randomly found a book called “Writing About Art.” That is what I am doing.

As mentioned, the painting **34 Provisions** is not the first time I’ve made an artwork of this popular wine, beer and food store. I had started this painting on the 17th, but got hung up on finishing the three previous paintings, so it is not until just now, the evening of the 23rd that I have just now finished 30 Faces, 31 Van Gogh Church, and 32 Harold’s Garage. So that leaves me some freedom to work on this Provisions painting. I don’t know how it will end up being, but I really like that little painting from 2020. I might try to do one just like that. It kind of looks like how this painting I’ve started already looks.

What happened was I painted a horizontal version of this. It just didn’t look right. Then upon looking at the little painting from 2020 I decided that I would start over and use that composition. I kept it minimal. Here it is.

This painting seemed to take forever. There was always something that didn’t look right. Eventually I just buckled down and it worked out. Sometimes I can’t see it anymore so I have to set it aside for a few days or longer. Then when I look at it I can see it better. I can see what needs to be done and I might not mind having to do that.



34 Provisions. 10x8". Acrylic on canvas. Private Collection

It was time to decide on a new painting **35 Guitar** when sometime around the 19th of November everything kind of fell into place. I had finally figured out the logistics behind making the paintings. Not 'how' to make them (that is an endless ongoing process), but the schedule of making them. An organized schedule. So today, on the 20th I am anticipating putting this schedule into place. Starting on Monday. I have the whole week's schedule worked out through to next weekend.

This is based on a photo I took one afternoon in Birdhouse Music. The sun was streaming in through the big south windows. I seem to recall that those windows were blocked off and covered back when it was a photo shop. So I took advantage of that light and snapped a few photos.

There were some strange shadows on the bridge which I initially thought were little cuts in the wood. I could see how the strings went over the plastic thing, which I later found out is called the saddle. But it also looked like little grooves and maybe the string were going into those grooves as well. It turns out that those were all shadows. There was a hand guard there that I painted out because it didn't make sense zoomed in this close. It looked like the hole in the body of the guitar. But that ruined the composition so I put it back in. Anyway, once I figured all of that out I was ready to start zeroing in on this painting. I also had a deeper understanding of the actual colors at my disposal. I learned this while painting the color studies.





35 Guitar. 10x8". Acrylic on canvas. Private Collection.

This is a color study of some of the paints I am using. For now I'm using a set of about 60 different colors of paints. On **36 Color Study** I use 24 of these unique colors. The ring around the center is how the pigments look out of the tube unmixed. Going clockwise starting with the very bright Neon Orange at the bottom left they are: Portrait Pink, Light Pink, Old Gold, Unbleached Titanium, Parchment, Yellow Ochre, Naples Yellow, Deep Yellow, Brilliant Yellow, Lemon Yellow, Neon Yellow, Silver, Gray, Yellow Ochre Deep, Bronze, Raw Umber, Burnt Umber, Brilliant Red, Vermillion, Copper, Burnt Sienna, Red Ochre and Orange and then Neon Orange again. These are all of the paints with the exception of white, black, blue, green, purple and the rest of the reds. These are the yellows, oranges, reds, tans, browns and grays.

The purpose of this study was to create a color wheel which I could reference when looking for a specific shade, tint or color. I know that if I mix a color paint with white, that it will lighten in value and lose some of its chroma (intensity of color). What I wanted to see was how each pigment looked as it approached the limit of white. What I discovered is that there are instances where different pigments looked similar as they became lighter. This can be seen closest to the center of the painting.

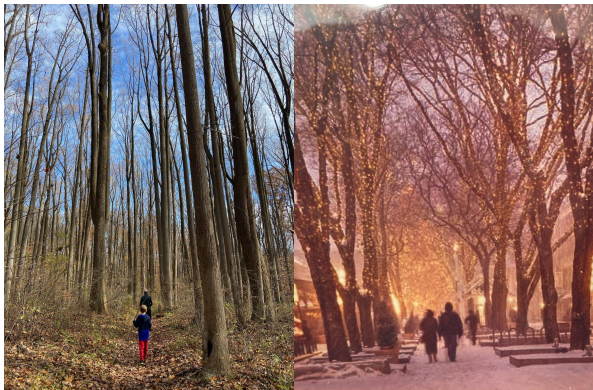
The outer edge of the painting is where I glazed over the original pigment with black paint, and just inside that—the inner edge of the black rectangle is where I mixed each pigment with various amounts of black.



36 Color Study 1. 10x8". Acrylic on canvas. Private Collection

**37 Trees** is a painting idea from a friend. I really approached this painting very slowly. One of those minimalist compositions. I tried to make each brushstroke important. I made some studies. Eventually I painted a very minimal underpainting of the trees. I slowly added the rest of the scenery, mostly based on adding to what was there on the canvas. Responding to what was there, and adding brushstrokes of paint based on what was in the picture.

This is a study, but it is also a completed painting. I say it is a study because at some point I would like to make some new versions—maybe add some people walking through the woods. Or a winter scene. The main focus of this one was to think about trees and how to paint them in this particular situation. There were a lot of synchronicities with this painting—one is shown below.



Photo—Idea for a painting. Greeting Card—Discovered same day.



37 Trees. 10x8". Acrylic on canvas. Private Collection.

**38 New Osaka** is another look at this popular Northampton restaurant. I wanted to explore this subject some more, but from a different angle—a new composition. This view is based on a photo a friend sent me. It includes the interesting looking windows of the building Osaka is part of. It reminds me of an old time New England looking Edward Hooper type building. I wanted to include that in the first painting of Osaka, but it didn't work out.

I spent a lot of time on the study of this one. I reduced everything to an essential. I omitted a lot of things, and of those things I decided to keep I arranged deliberately to make a better composition. A lot of it I made up. Like the umbrellas. I wanted to make it festive. Those are actually bubble tents in reality. The thing I like about this painting is that it also shows the corner where I will sometime play my sax. That tree is actually on the corner, not on the other side of the street. And the rainbow crosswalk is actually two rainbows, one on each side of the street. I made it one rainbow so it could be seen better. That is the first time I've included Northampton's rainbow crosswalk in any of my art.

I'm looking at this now a month after having painted it and I kind of like this painting more than I did right after I finished it. There are a lot of things to look at. It is a good blueprint for future versions. A lot of the sections of this painting don't make sense to me, but it doesn't seem to matter. It is different styles in different parts. There are a lot of fields of color. The most detail is found

on the windows of the large building. The windows of Osaka also have a lot of detailed brushstrokes, but they don't lean as much toward realism like the windows above.

I included the sign for the steak house—reduced to its essential symbols and form. Coincidentally I then saw that symbol all over the place—not of that sign, but similar design, but for other things.



38 New Osaka. 8x10". Acrylic on canvas. Private Collection

For **39 Color Study 2** I used 36 Color Study 1 (twenty-four pigments) as a model. [See *Birds of Mars Digest Number Eight*] Here I used just eighteen pigments.

I decided not to use Light Pink because it looked identical to Portrait Pink. I also didn't use Burnt Sienna since it resembles Red Ochre. I also decided to not use any gray, black or white paint other than my usual black and white. The shiny paints are out also. The silver paint is shiny, and when the light gets caught in a reflection it is brighter than the white paint. That is another thing that must be taken into account. If the paint is caked up it can sometimes reflect light as well. That can be used deliberately in a painting to add light via a real reflection.

This is in part a study of how mixing pure individual pigments with white or black changes the value of the original pigment. I am focusing on the paints which I've discovered reduce to either gray, yellow, tan, orange, brown or red before they become white. Before becoming overwhelmed by white.

24 paints. For this one I am using just 18. Once I had roughed in all the paint and made the lightening and darkening I started outlining the different slices of color. Then I added outlines in various shades of gray. At first I thought it looked bad, but there I noticed how in dim light it looked really weird. Something about the combinations of shapes and contrasts. When it was at that point I added circles and that helped me understand how the design could be improved. So I went about doing that, while also working on 42 Color Study 3 since it's the same paints.





39 Color Study 2. 10x8". Acrylic on Canvas. Collection of the Artist.

**40 Color Study 3** is a continuation of the previous two color studies. The flower design was painted one night in grayscale. I was thinking of the other studies, but wanted to have more of a design associated with this one. So I worked out the form and built out the petals based on the size of any particular area. I was thinking of how the color would move towards white toward the center, like in the other studies. Here I used sixteen pigments, two less than the previous color study.

I have areas where I glazed over grays and areas where I painted glazes over areas. That is the secret to a lot of this. Paint something. Glaze over it. Paint over that. Glaze over that. Depending on how you did that, effects begin to happen. The answers are all right there, but sometimes it is difficult to actually put them to use. There is a lot of discord within the brain when previous assumptions are destroyed.

Anyway, this painting was completed in December and then I took a break from painting, and had my \$20 art sale which kept me busy.

Now it is January and I have continued with some new paintings in the 8 by 10 series. I've finished three, and have two near completion. These are in a similar style to some of the previous paintings in this series.

The ones after these five, of which I've started two, will be compositionally different than the previous ones. This will be shown in future issues of the *Birds of Mars Digest* as these works are created.



40 Color Study 3. 10x8". Acrylic on Canvas. Private Collection.

## **Drawings [211–219]**

December 1—31, 2021

211 All 8 by 10s

212 Weekly Sheet I.

213 Weekly Sheet J.

214 Weekly Sheet K.

215 Weekly Sheet L.

216 Weekly Sheet M.

217 Study: Old Firehouse & Mural

218 Study: Woodstar & Mural

219 Kent Hewith—Diminished Scale Notes

This is a list of the drawing sheets from December. I include this information within these digests mainly for documentation purposes. It is archival and informational.

What are these “drawings”? Each is on a regular 8.5x11 inch sheet of ‘copy paper’. Regular paper. I date and number each sheet. There is no set rule about what they are. It is just done this way for archival reasons. To keep it organized.

What happens is that I will get an idea for something and I might like to write it out on a sheet of paper. I used to use sketchbooks or notebooks or random scraps of paper. But things can get buried and lost in sketchbooks. And there is no way to easily find anything. So a few years ago I got the idea of the letter-size paper and writing the dates. I keep these sheets in simple folders, mostly by month. In 2021 I made 210 of them. In the fall they were mostly studies for paintings in the “8 by 10 Series.” In December (the ones listed above) I started the month making weekly sheets for documenting my painting activities. But as December progressed I stopped making a lot of new studies and I stopped making new paintings. So there wasn’t much done in December regarding the drawing sheets.

## Conversations About Music

|                       |    |
|-----------------------|----|
| Introduction .....    | 1  |
| Daniel Wininger ..... | 2  |
| Kat Alexander.....    | 13 |



Photo by Zim Sands

## Introduction

Sometimes it takes a long time to develop a creative process. There are starts and stops. I suppose it is not unlike being a scientist. There is an idea (a hypothesis) and then there is the doing (the experiment). These two interviews were conducting by phone, and I wrote notes during the conversations. While they capture most of the gist of those conversations, they also fail to capture a lot of the nuances.

See *Birds of Mars Digest Number Eight* (November 2021) for a short essay on my rationalization of conducting these interviews in this manner (the hypothesis).

As a result of the results of the results I've altered my approach to conducting future interviews. What I am planning on now, are thirty minute interviews by phone which I will record and then subsequently transcribe. It won't be too difficult to transcribe thirty minutes. Also it seems as if thirty minutes is a good length of time for an interview. These previous ones went on for hours.

Anyway, that is how this section is evolving. I'll probably call future ones "Thirty Minutes With..." or "Thirty Minutes About...[subject]...with...[interviewee]". It should be easier to conduct future interviews using this format. But I still like how these interviews came out.

—Chris Gentes. Northampton, Mass.

# Daniel Winger

December 7, 2021

1- Daniel Winger

2- Chris Gentes

\*\*\*Much of this interview is paraphrased from notes taken during the interview, and as a result a lot of the nuance of the conversation has been lost.\*\*\*

2- So I know that you lead a drum circle.

1- I have facilitated a drum circle. I hesitate to use the word lead. I would say I support a drum circle. Setting up chairs and providing instruments and welcoming people in to musically meld. Mingle.

2- I've joined the circle a few times and really enjoyed the freedom involved with it. How much of what is played is planned ahead of time?

1- Nothing is pre-known. I'm learning as I go. I come into it with a very blank slate of a mind when I start the drum circles. I recognize that everyone has a potentially equal role to play, so I try not to direct anything. It's all about the people involved and what they have to bring. It is a very free form and experimental thing that I started to do on a whim. I'm learning as I go. The purpose is to have fun and see what happens. It isn't an artistic project. It is more of a music facilitation project. Music happens, but that isn't the primary goal. The goal is to facilitate. It's equal parts social and musical.

2- How long have you done that?

1- I started in the middle of the summer 2020.

2- Do you participate in other drum circles?

1- Every once in a while I'm in upstate New York near Woodstock where they have a weekly Sunday drum circle, led by this guy named Kevin Johnson. He's also known as Timekeeper. He makes drums and facilitates drum circles—they can be huge when the weather is nice. Fifty or sixty people. I go to those sometimes. It is equal parts a social and musical experience.

2- Do you drive out to them specifically?

1- I usually am in an area somewhere for the weekend and happen to be driving by and I find a drum circle and will stick around. His are more organized and structured. He's been doing them for what seems like decades. He has a following and a regular schedule and raises money for charitable organizations. He makes announcements and gets everyone on the same page. He is more of a leader than what I do.

1- Hand percussion is my main instrument. The West African hand drum. Djembe. I would say that I heard someone once say that percussion isn't an instrument it is a verb. I identify more with that than saying I play any particular instruments. I'm a hand percussionist. I hit things with my hands that make cool sounds. A lot of those things happen to be hand drums. I also play the Doumbek. It is a Middle Eastern and North African drum that is smaller than a djembe and is goblet shaped. People traditionally play that more using their fingers. Also their hands too. I don't play these drums very traditionally. I sort of have developed my own style.

2- What do you mean traditionally?

1- Types of beats, but also how you hit the drum. How the hand falls on the drum and how you hold it too.

2- That has to do with sound and also types of rhythms?

1- Yeah.

2- Are there certain rhythms you can only play by hitting the drum a certain way?



1- Probably not. It is as nuanced as you would expect. Traditions are not necessarily because people have been enforcing rules how to do certain things. I think they are traditions mainly because that is how people have been doing them. Not everyone wants to come up with their own ideas. It is easier just to follow.

2- When did you realize you were a hand percussionist?

1- I remember when I was ten years old my mom asked me what kind of music lessons did I want to get. She's a musician so she wanted me to at least try to be a musician—if I had it in me. I got to choose what kind of instrument I wanted to play. I guess I chose percussion. My parents told me I was already drumming on tables and desks. When I was ten I took hand drum lessons from a guy from West Africa. I ended up liking it a lot. I ended up seeing that I could be very good at it.

1- My family on my mother's side has always been interested in African music. My grandma would play for my mom, when she was little, records of blues singers. My mom loved African-American music and eventually was working for Afropop, so that love for African music was present already. My grandma ran into someone in Brooklyn selling clothes on the street, New York City a couple decades ago, maybe still, there were a lot of street markets. This guy was from West Africa made and sold and taught drums. When he opened his drum shop, my mom sent me over to his place. I wasn't the only one my age taking lessons. Most lessons were one on one. Maybe two or three in the class. So African music. Africa is where music comes from originally.

2- What was he showing you?

1- I couldn't answer that without a drum in front of me. But techniques of how to hit the drum, rhythms you could play and how to practice.

2- Were you performing then?

1- Oh no.

2- When did you “get it”?

1- You never get it.

2- Yes, true. When did you know that you never get it?

1- When did I realize that I was a drummer? I guess it was six months or a year into my lessons. I don't know how significant this is, but around that time I decided to drum for an hour straight. I sat in front of the clock for an hour when I was ten or eleven and got myself into a trance state. There was also a point where my drum teacher said to my parents in front of me that I would be better than him when I got older. I was taken aback. This guy is a master. But the words stuck with me and encouraged me for sure.

2- So it was a given?

1- Saying that it was a given feels like it was my destiny to be a drummer, but I feel less that it is my destiny and more that it is my choice. Definitely a joyous choice.

2- Where did it go next?

1- One of my favorite toys was a tape recorder, so when I had friends over we would play with the tape recorder and record stuff. Pretend we were on the radio or play songs. We would imitate what we heard on the radio or people on tv. I would have my drum and my friends would make their own music. Rap or play the keyboard or something like that. We were just playing around.

2- Do you still have the cassettes?

1- I have one of them. We made a bunch. Some of them are lost forever. We would record over ourselves. We would record over what we had done when we couldn't find another blank tape to record on. I have about ninety minutes of silly material from that age.

1- I also expressed interest in playing piano. When I was sixteen I begged my parents for a piano. They made a deal with me. If I got one I would have to take the lessons. I had a very good teacher. Someone whose fortes are jazz and baroque music. So I got a taste of both. I got into piano and was in the percussion section in the middle high school band. Doing both at the same time. The band was fun. The percussion section of the band is sort of like where all the slackers go. I was in good company. It was little rowdy, but an adventure. That went through high school.

1- I moved away from New York City when I was 13 so I stopped taking the lessons. I had taken them for one and a half years, and the teacher said that he had taught me everything he knew. So I've barely taken any drum lessons since then. I went to a Latin percussion after-school program in high school for a year after that. I was basically teaching myself after those initial lessons.

2- After high school?

1- I went to college. I decided to major in music and minor in environmental studies. I got sick with arthritis so I decided to just focus on music. My first semester in college I got severe joint inflammation in my large joints. We thought it was lyme disease for a year. It is a medical mystery. That slowed me down, my progress. It is still with me. I have to do things every day to keep it at bay.

2- Was piano the main thing in college?

1- I branched out. The thing I spent the most time on academically was recording. We had a nice recording studio. I took five or six classes just based in the recording studio, doing audio projects. I was playing with the idea of being an engineer. All the way up until a year ago I was recording pretty constantly. Mostly others. Mostly other people's songs. Mostly I record folk

musicians in my studio. Musicians who wanted to put out cds. I called it Swing Set Studio for a while. I tried calling my recording studio “the womb”, which a couple people liked, but I didn’t stay with that name either.

2- Were you performing in college?

1- Yeah, I played piano a couple times and tried starting a drum circle a couple times. I was kind of in a few bands. The first thing that happened was I met a guitarist whom I still work with today. We clicked well together musically. We didn’t perform, but we played our music and recorded a little bit. He transferred and went on his own path. As I was starting to take recording classes I met a musician who became my girlfriend. We performed as a duo. Mostly a recording duo and recorded a lot and performed a few times. So a couple acoustic duos with me on percussion. We didn’t play out very much. With my girlfriend it was folk or alternative. The stuff with the guitarist was more American Primitivism. Leo Kottke. It’s basically instrumental music on a guitar which is usually open tuned. And it can be quite detailed music. Sometimes improvisatory.

2- What types of chord forms? What drove the improvisations?

1- Not much room for chord progressions. More textural, rhythmic and harmonic. It is hard to describe. They say talking about music is like dancing about architecture. One of the reasons I like it so much is because I can’t pigeonhole it into a genre. It doesn’t sound like anything I’ve heard before. We have fun trying to come up with names for the genre that we’re in. We end up making up some funny terms. Like Acoustic Funk. Math Folk.

2- Do you still have the recordings from college?

1- Yeah, most of them.

2- What format?

1- It was a digital studio. Wav files and like that.

2- After college what happened?

1- I travelled for little bit, but I ended up in western mass, and set up a little recording studio in my apartment. My friend with the guitar was in the area so we've been playing together on and off since then. A friend from summer camp thought I would like the area and invited me here to stay with his friends. I ended up liking the people and the area and ended up moving here. I had first visited here in 2009, but I didn't move here until 2014. I would go to open mics to perform there. When I first visited here I met another musician that I am still working with today. A bassist named Luke Averill. In 2009 we were playing on the street for money in Northampton. He still does that a little bit. I haven't busked in two or three years.

2- How much money can you make busking in Northampton.

1- Hundreds of thousands of dollars. Every time money was my main goal I would not have a good time busking, and not make a lot of money. But when I would do it because I felt like playing music for people and making their day, then I would have a good time and make money.

2- People enjoyed it?

1- Yeah.

2- Did you meet any cool people?

1- Yeah definitely. My last experience was joining in with another drummer on the street. Congas in front of Thornes. And this person was awesome so I joined her on the shaker and cowbell and supported her act. I let her keep all the money. She might have thrown me a couple bucks. But yeah, we played together many times since then. She writes poetry and recites poetry. So that is one person I stayed in touch with in the busking world. One time I was performing with someone else

and a woman came up and listened the whole time and I'm still in touch with her now—casual friends. It's a good way to meet people.

2- Did you meet any famous people when busking?

1- I met Johann Sebastian Bach coming out of Haymarket with a croissant, which I thought was weird because he's German. I said, "Wait, I thought you were dead," and he said "Yeah, I'm bach from the dead."

2- Are you playing in any bands now?

1- Nothing performing out. Just playing with friends mainly now. Nothing that has a name.

2- Why not?

1- If things were starting to roll absolutely I would be totally involved. I think it is mainly a matter of logistics right now. I still play once in a while with my guitarist friend and Luke the bassist, and one time all of us together.

2- In an ideal situation what kind of band would you have?

1- That's an interesting question. It has multiple answers because the musical journey is something that has a lot of stops and I don't know if there is one end goal I want to reach. I want to explore the four piece set up of a band—a rock and roll set up. I also want to explore the more orchestral thing and bluegrass instrumentation with mandolin and banjo and fiddle. Anything and everything in between. Sigur Ros is a band from Iceland and they're a four piece rock instrumentation, but they don't play rock and roll. They often collaborate with other musicians, usually orchestral stuff. Violins, cellos, choirs—up to a whole fifty person set up. That is kind of what I would like to be. A thing that can be anything. From me and my guitarist friend to fifty people. We would be flexible to the needs of the audience or

the venue. I was going to give you the short answer. What ever Pearl Jam was doing in the 90s. But that is not exactly true.

2- Do you sing?

1- A little bit.

2- Composing?

1- Yes.

2- Still playing piano?

1- Yes.

2- Do you put out any of your own music?

1- Very informal compilations on cds that I would give to friends. I have a bandcamp site with a lot of my music on it. [danielwininger.bandcamp.com](http://danielwininger.bandcamp.com)

2- Tell us a little bit about about finding sounds.

1- Just as I started college I bought a field recorder and I have had that since then—at least the model—a Zoom H2, a digital stereo recorder. I've carried one around with me almost wherever I go since 2008. I have thousands of field recordings. I just record everything that sounds cool or weird or interesting. Some of those are me walking down the street. Some ambient. Sometimes I'll find something that sounds cool to hit on the street or somewhere and record that. Mostly it is something I hear and then want to get that.

2- Do have a method of indexing?

1- By date, and I try to be as descriptive with the name of the file as possible.

2- Why do you do that?

1- It's fun. It almost feels like I'm a scientist who is discovering new things to share with the world. It feels like a good fun thing to do.

2- How aware are you when you hear something new.

1- It is hard to measure my own awareness, but I guess it is something I have experience with. Everyone has experience

hearing stuff, but I've just focused on that for a long time so I guess my nervous system is specialized in the audio department.

2- Is hearing something new enjoyable?

1- Yes, but not just because it is new. I've heard new stuff that sounds pretty awful. It has to be a combination of new and pleasurable and interesting.

2- What have you done with these recordings?

1- A couple of years ago a roommate of mine took interest in my field recordings and commissioned me to come out with two albums. One was nature field recordings and the other was more human—manmade environments that I would record. In a city or people's voices. Those two are on bandcamp. But that is a lot of sitting around and looking at a computer screen which isn't fun for me.

2- Any vinyl?

1- No vinyl.

2- Have you ever made a new composition and pull old stuff off of the field recordings?

1- I've used them in other people's songs that I've recorded, but not for my own songs. Sometimes I'll suggest it and sometimes they will ask.

2- How do you fit in with Noise? The genre of Noise?

1- Noise. The very word noise can describe anything. So the genre of noise leaves it open to any soundscape, but the noise acts that I've seen generally tend to be loud, electronic, overwhelming, and generally mostly incomprehensible to me. It isn't something I usually enjoy, but one in a while there is something enjoyable. Mostly I've shied away from those performances. I don't play synths.

2- Do other performers use your recordings in live performances.



1- Ostensibly yes. I haven't heard the final outcomes yet. A couple of times people have used my recordings for their own performances.

1- One thing about the field recordings—most people like to take photographs for memories, but I like to make recordings instead. I remember things by audio more than visually. I have some favorite ones that I'll listen to them.

2- How many other field recordists do you know?

1- My guitarist friend likes to make recordings too. He has the same field recorder. He does the same thing. Probably not as much as I do. I have a friend in Japan who I met in college who likes working with field recordings too. A smattering of people. My mom likes to make recordings of the local wildlife. There is a site called freesound.net which is a database of sounds that people can upload and people can use for free. I'm not sure I want to do that. It may be that my recordings hold more artistic value than I can see right now, so I want to keep them more private.

# **Kat Alexander**

December 7, 2021

1- Kat Alexander

2- Chris Gentes

\*\*\*Much of this interview is paraphrased from notes taken during the interview, and as a result a lot of the nuance of the conversation has been lost.\*\*\*

2- Hi Kat. I'm going to start by reading your bio, which I have here.

*“Katerina Korolov was born into a family of wise and eccentric Russian Immigrants, Katerina, known by some as Katfish (due to her liquidious voice and deep-diving nature), first began her musical career at the young age of 14, reading sheet music and singing Baroque and Medieval music with a polyphonic early music group, called Schola Cantorum, out of Syracuse, New York. Katerina had been naturally inspired by the Lute music that her father had performed, internationally, during her childhood. Katerina studied Early Music at Indiana University and Jazz Vocal Performance in New York City, before completely taking a left turn to study and work in the Environmental Sciences and, in 2011, started an on-going original musical group called Lunar Carnival. Uniting with musical companions is a dream come true for Kat, who is a sucker for Jazzy Music and Good Vibes.”*

2- What has Lunar Carnival been up to?

1-Hi Chris, thanks for asking! We've been adding new material and have some shows coming up. It's been a lot of fun. Making arrangements of combinations of new old music and

new new music. By that I mean that we love to toss in those old jazz standards, those swing tunes, those old time folk songs with that mountain fiddle sound. I create a lot of music so we throw those songs that I write into the mix. We have a lot of fun. It's a nice mixture of material. I really like co-creating with members of the band. It's great because even though I lead the band and write a lot of the material. I've always been more of a wingman—a vice president. I've never felt the need to be front and center. It isn't as much about the performance, as creating a song, writing a song, hearing it, and then getting a group of musicians together and weaving it into being. So I've been enjoying that lately. For me, as a musician, when I'm in the musical spirit, I find that these songs are in my body and in my head all day long. I hear this music constantly. Not just in my head like an echo chamber; I can hear it in my body, and the music wants to keep playing. That's what it's been like for me lately. So, I've been having a great time getting the band together. It helps me transmute that energy over time.

2- What were your musical beginnings?

1- I started singing when I was 14 with an Early Music ensemble. Baroque and Medieval music. Polyphonic, five part harmony vocal music, the kind you hear at churches. That is known as Early Music. I started by diving right in and sight reading with these singers at a church; a professional singing group from an early start. My father is a string instrumentalist. So music is in my blood. That's how it began with me: old world music was at the root of it. A combination of both sacred and nonreligious—secular. A combination of the two. I sang at a church as a soloist for many years, and occasionally still do as one avenue of music.

1- Lunar Carnival started in 2011. Five people now.

2- Who's in the band?

1- I'm playing guitar and voice, Dan Grip on bass, Chris Trevethan playing drums, Steve Yarbrow on clarinet and sax, and Brie Green on fiddle, she is also part of the Green Sisters. Dan was one of the founding members as well. We sing a lot of beautiful harmonies together. That is part of the essence of the group. We have a gypsy-esque swing band. At any given show we may have a variation of players. It allows for freedom and different sounds. We decided early on that we wanted to have universality with our music. We want to reach anyone—any age or background. We like to be able to play at a bar or a family wedding and reach people beyond the social limitations. Which is nice. How that might be revealed is in appealing to families. We hope that our music adds to people's lives.

1- I finally ordered and even today received recording gear to wrap up a bunch of recordings that are in the wings. The sound files were just sitting there collecting dust, so I'm going to put some elbow grease into getting all those songs finished up and out. It's a lot of previous partially recorded material. I have to add some parts to them and I'm going to get those finished. So I got some gear I can set it up and then have people show up and make it happen. Basically I noticed that if I can make a job as easy as possible for folks, it helps with the creative process.

1- We put a cd out a few years ago [*Once Upon A River*—available at [www.lunarcarnival.com](http://www.lunarcarnival.com)] and I feel it is time to put out a new cd. We play a lot of live shows. I learned early on in the business of being a band, at least for me since I also have a day job, in order to sustain the band that it is more important to keep going and keep showing up, rather than trying to burn out and overdo it. We've kept playing shows. Four to six a month before covid. We have played a few here and there during the past year. We have a few shows coming up in 2022 in January and February. We just keep the music going. I want to capture

more of that on digital and share it in a way that is accessible to more folks.

2- What is it the song writing process for you?

1- I'm trying to visualize that. I'll throw this in. A curve ball as a side note. Which is that basically human's are amazing. We have so much potential energy and capacity for all sorts of things. One thing we take for granted is the fact that we can just create music and art and poetry (you name it), whatever the expression is, out of thin air—out of nowhere. If you think about it, it is miraculous. Because we do this every day and it is how it's been, sometimes it is easy to forget how amazing that is.

1- It feels a bit miraculous to write a song. It feels like I hear a line [Kat sings a melody] and I hear some words and put them on the line [singing with a few words]. Once I have a line I sing more words, I keep adding music on top of the first line. I start creating it and I keep weaving it out of itself. It's not always instant, but usually I get a seed—an inspiration. I'll take a moment to at least record what I hear. Then I'll sit down with my guitar and write out the chords and write out a basic framework and lyrics. A lot of times that is the best way; when I'm feeling it, to allow it to be written. But that being said, I've actually got quite a few songs that are snippets of songs, they come in this fashion. Maybe a couple of verses—partially written and recorded songs. Every once in a while I'll return to one of those snippets and add a B part. Sometimes, many years after I'll finish a song. There is no exact formula. But like most anything in life, finding that fuel to be inspired comes down to finding that place in yourself and dusting it off. Everyone has it. A beautiful magical fountain that we can tap into. We can pull beautiful music out of the traumas and conditioning that can add layers of dust and cloudiness to that. I think for me part of

that miraculous ability to create is very much attained through a lot of effort to keep myself in a healthy state of mind.

2- What song that you've written do you love and why?

1- The one I'm working on at the time or the most recent. Those songs I adore the most. The ones I'm working on now. Looking back the ones that have stood the test of time I think *Eagle Valley*, which is on the website, is a good one. There are a few reasons I like it. It's got the basic elements I like to implement in our music which are: beautiful instrumentation, vocal harmonies, interesting rhythms and some really pretty arrangements. So I just love it. A lot of the songs I create have intricate arrangements; specific musical lines that just add so much, like a character. If you think of a song like a person, I like a song because it isn't a man in a dull gray suit. You admire the man because he has a funny hat and a long red robe with funny shoes. You enjoy it and enjoy playing it. It makes you feel good. Music is an expression of energy. Flow of energy. That is another reason I like to create music—the positive and universal. That is what I want to create: positiveness and universality. It feels good to sing about it.

2- Does that tie back to the Early Music?

1- Well, there is something in common between the two. I choose to experience music as an intermediary. I feel like I'm tapping into that beautiful divine source energy. The person I happen to be is the channel for the expression of that divine source. So when I'm singing sacred music in church, it is obvious that that is going on. It doesn't need to stop outside the church. The way I perform music in general is that I am a vehicle of the expression of energy, so in that way both styles of music are similar.

1- People ask me how I overcame stage fright, or they say they couldn't be a performer because of stage fright. I expressed

to them that there were two things that helped me work through that. One of them was to connect to the concept of being more of a middle-man, because that allowed me to stop giving my personal energy to the crowd, I would get tired. Once I tapped into the universal music energy it was easier to share that. I tap into a bigger energy source. When I first started gigging with this band, I hadn't done tours on a regular basis. But we jumped in and just kept playing every day, and I got more comfortable; just jumping in. Feeling it out over time, I was able to see how I was feeling and how to handle it.

2- Where did the name Lunar Carnival come from?

1- Back in college I wrote the introduction to a song called "Lunar Carnival", just a few line introduction. I put it aside. This is back in 2006 let's say. Then years later I had met Dan here in the happy valley. We met at the Black Moon Music Lounge—for a year it was located in Belchertown. It was a great music venue. That's where I met Dan. Not long after, we decided to go hiking across New Zealand. In 2009 or 2010 we decided to go backpacking. One night we were camping out next to a big lake on a mountain, and the second part of the song came to me. We were in the wilderness. We had a backpacker guitar and a tiny ukulele. We were making music in the back woods of New Zealand. So I finished the song with the ukulele in Southern New Zealand. Later, when we were forming the band we didn't know what to call it. So we had to figure out the band name—sometimes the hardest part. We were talking about it for a few days with my old friend Maria who was in the band at the time. We were trying to figure out the name of the band. I said, listen to this song called Lunar Carnival. Everyone in the room lit up and they all said at once, "That's a great name or the band." And the rest is history!

## **Local Artist Destroys Paintings**

The following paintings found no buyers at \$20 in December of 2021, and were summarily destroyed or painted over on December 31, 2021. I am not going to title them or list them or even put the year they





were made. I do have records somewhere. I am just going to write about what I remember about destroying them. The first one was a fairly large painting and I was videotaping myself cutting it with a sharp blade, but then I was worried about accidentally cutting into the paintings that this



one was leaning up against, but that was silly, because I was going to destroy those ones as well next. Also, I was worried about getting them muddy, even though I was about to destroy those ones as well. So that was kind of a weird feeling to have. And then the video I took of destroying the first painting got lost. The app just shut down and the video was lost. That was kind of odd I thought. Then I thought that I should just destroy them and not document it. It didn't seem right to film it. So then I just had to go about the business of destroying all of the rest of the unsold paintings.

That first painting had been around since the 90s. It had already been painted over a bunch of times by the time I got around to this one in 2017. It was more of experiments with an airbrush than anything else. Same with Lizotte's. I like that painting but it is kind of bulky. This



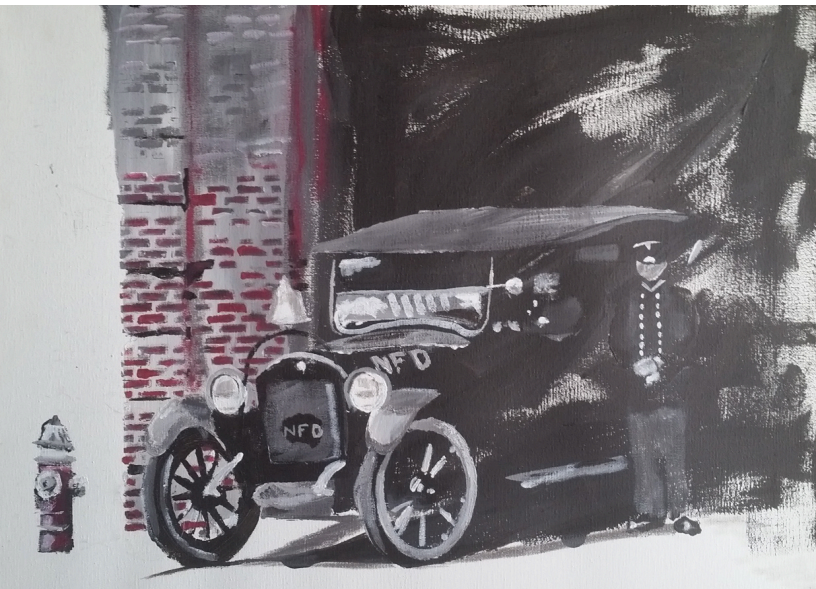
version of Harold's Garage didn't appeal to anyone, so I destroyed it. The image lingers on though. Most people just know art through seeing an image of it, not the actual artwork in person.

After those first three were out of the way I was kind of relieved. I just didn't have to think about them anymore. The main thing I am trying to do is get rid of all the old paintings that were sitting around with me having thoughts about how much money they would one day be worth and that I should keep them for when that day arrived. Well, it turns out for some of these paintings that day never arrived. The next two were part of a series of four paintings, these two being the studies, in essence, of the other two paintings. I also have drawings that I've kept.



These paintings were made in early 2019 as part of a commission for a painting by Tommy Twilite. The paintings are based on an old photo of when there was a fire station on Masonic Street. It was in the building that Woodstar is now in, and if you look carefully at the real life cafe you can see where the doors were.

2019 started off as a year in which I was making new work and then a few venues closed and the art market shifted, and I wasn't able to respond quickly enough at the time. I have it documented somewhere about what other paintings I made around this time. This would have been early 2019. The firehouse commission and a few other works in the winter. Then I seem to recall taking a long break from making any art



that year until the fall when I made the Birds of Mars paintings, which I am in negotiations regarding

I have the year written down somewhere, but not currently at hand. Perhaps 2013 was the year. I made some designs and cut stencils and then using spray paint—different colors. I would make art works on paper. Over the years most of the stencils got lost or messed up and I threw them out. I have kept a few sets of the stencils, however, and these paintings were made sometime in 2017 or 2018. I made about a half dozen on canvas and maybe some on paper. Spray paint. I also had made some in 2018 or 2019 painted by hand. Some of those got destroyed (not be me) in 2019. I really like how these paintings came out,



but they just didn't find the right person who wanted to part with \$20 for them, so I had to let them go. I've had them around for four years. If someone wanted a painting like this then I could just make them a new one. That is what it is to be an artist. You can just make a new painting any time you want to.

I like these state street fruit paintings because they show the process. The stack of color squares toward the upper mid left are the colors used and the sequence used in. I've done a lot of paintings of state street fruit but they aren't always collected for some reason. Anyway, I can just make some more similar to these since I still have the stencils. These would make cool stickers. The image is still here so it isn't really like I destroyed these paintings.











Those were the three Little Dot paintings that I had until I destroyed them. I made those in 2013 or 2014 maybe. I have it written down somewhere. There was a show on Market Street and I was asking \$200 each. They were framed. There was one couple whom seemed interested in getting one for their child's room, but the price was too much. Now seven years later these three didn't find buyers at \$20, so I see now how \$200 was too much even then. I ended up folding these in half and throwing them away. There were painted on some kind of canvas panel. It was like a reinforced cardboard and a canvas-like sheet was folded over that and glued down. Something like that. I have images somewhere of all of the paintings from this series. When I was a child whenever I went to visit my grandmother she would have Little Dot comic books, and I always associate Little Dot with happy memories of visiting my grandmother.

I am happy to know that some of the paintings of Little Dot found homes and that makes me feel good. First of all most people will never know these paintings even ever existed. And they can look at the pictures of them to see what they looked like, so it kind of didn't matter. It would have been nice if I could have sold these for thousands of dollars to a museum, but that never happened. Well, I have other paintings that a museum might want one day. I could have left these around town or given them to somebody, but at a certain point I had to let them go, and that time was earlier today, on the day that I write this.

I might as well mention here that I have a whole series of other Little Dot artworks also made with stencils. However the stencils for those are smaller and I hand painted them on paper. Those are really interesting paintings and I will perhaps show them one day in a future Birds of Mars Digest. These Little Dot paintings were done around the time when I was interested in documenting the street art and graffiti in Northampton. Plus the Little Dot spray-painting dots series on paper.

I have other artworks I made with stencils including some with cartoon characters making graffiti. Like Peanuts characters. I made a lot of them using Prismacolor markers. They fade if left out though. I spent a lot of money on supplies. All the expensive spray paint for the artworks I made with the spraypaint. But it is worth it. Those artworks look great. I have a few left, but most are out in the world somewhere.

The next one was also on canvas panel. It was done around the time of the Dreamscapes series back in 2012 or 2013. This painting was when I was experimenting with really simplified forms. Outlines and color interiors. A lot of the paintings that were in the Dreamscapes series were like that. This painting might have been done while that exhibition was in progress. I seem to recall that I sold some right off the walls, and then replaced them with new paintings. I had made a few other paintings of this corner, the Sweeties corner, where Main and Pleasant streets meet. Some people liked these paintings, but they aren't necessarily the kind of art you might want hanging on the wall. They have some interesting elements to them, but over all not very decorative.



This painting was on gesso board and was part of that show, the Woodstar Dreamscapes show from 2012ish. I intended to paint over this one, but the paint I had was transparent and that wouldn't work. So I just kind of etched it with the sharp blade and dirtied it with grit and mud and then tossed it. This painting always seems strange to me. It has some things that would be worth exploring again somehow.

I have a few smaller works similar to this one. They are on 5x7 inch gesso-type board. Just of the people. That is when I was experimenting with glazing many layers of acrylic. I didn't really know how it was going to turn out. I was just doing it. One of my color charts was used to demonstrate glazing explorations.



This next one was also on gesso-style board. It was tough painting over this one, but I still have the image and can look at that in the future to make new works of art. Plus I could crop this one or use parts of it for a new artwork. The thing I like about this painting is that little firebox toward the bottom right. I wonder if that is still there. There used to be, in the 90s, still a lot of these fireboxes around town. I made a painting of one of them in '97. It doesn't seem like they are still around, most probably removed at some point in the past twenty-five years. I am going to remember to pay attention and see if I can locate any.





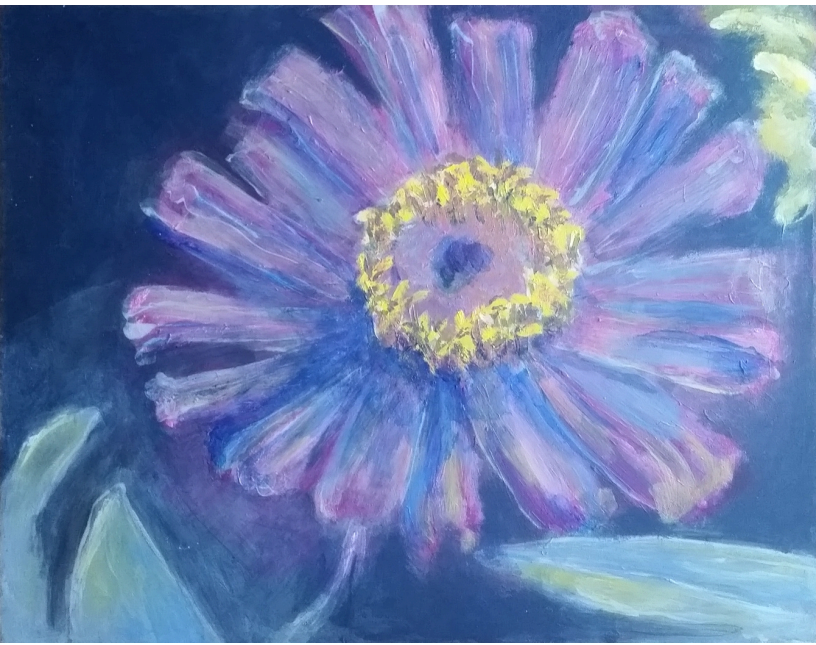
That previous painting of sweeties was the last of the dreamscape type paintings. Double-outlines and the added collage of a drawing. This was a very unusual painting, and it seems like the end of one phase of artworks. Further research would need to be done to determine if this is the actual case.

The next group of paintings were in-progress works on gessobord, with acrylic. Begun in 2014 they were intended for a show in the fall of 2014, but I was unable to get them completed in time. I had always intended to return to them at some point, but I never ended up doing that. The following four from that group have been painted over. Two paintings from this group, which were closer to completion and had a nice look to them are in a private collection of a friend of the artist.



While painting over these I at first added the white gesso as if continuing to work on them. I was adding the highlights to the flowers. It looked really dynamic. And I thought that maybe I would work on these a little bit more and make something happen with them. But then I eventually let that idea slip away because that would mean having to adapt to those paintings instead of not having to adapt to them by starting a new painting, which would be easier.

Plus I have these images. I could get one of these images printed on canvas and use that as the underpainting and then add on top of that. Like a paint-by-numbers painting. An underpainting that gives the form and some suggestions about lighting, but leaves it up to the artist to decide what to do from there. That is kind of an interesting idea that





somebody could do. I would never know about it. Someone reading this could just take one of these images and send it to their local printer and they could print it on canvas and then they would have one of my paintings on canvas. If someone did that it would probably be ok of they sent me some money if they could, but otherwise I would never know about it. And even if I did know about it there wouldn't be much I could do about it. I hope that wouldn't happen, but if it did happen there isn't much I could do about it. Send me money if you do that please.

One friend of mine, a famous artist, said he once went to Copenhagen and there was a coffee shop there that was completely decked out in all of his characters. The name was even the name of the



characters. So he had to tell them they couldn't do that. It might have looked cool, but you can't steal someone's characters like that as an identity without some form of approval. I am kind of relieved that I don't have those paintings around anymore. I still have a lot that I want to get rid of, but I promised a friend that he could look at them first, but he never showed up today. I am going to delay destroying the next batch of them until he gets a chance to see them. Now I am going to enjoy the day. Maybe get something to eat or go for a stroll.

FYI: I also destroyed one of the 12x12" paintings. #18. That was kind of accidental. It looked amazing and then I added some color glazes and that messed it up, and then I tried to fix it some more and that messed it up more so I just ended up ditching it.

