

#artinthetimeofcorona

interview with Lisa McShane



This is one in a series of interviews with our customers to see how they are adapting to the COVID-19 world.

Lisa McShane lives in Bow, Washington. She has been a customer since 2013.

She says, "I paint landscapes to capture light and to convey a powerful record of the world I see.

These lands are at my core. In northwest Washington I capture the crystal clear light, early dawn, cold northern lakes, fog and long, dark shadows of winter. In eastern Washington I convey the stark beauty of this exposed, eroded land using a saturated, luminous light so that I can chase and give form to my memories."

This is her **#artinthetimeofcorona** story.



lisamcshane.com

How was Bow, Washington affected by the COVID-19 virus? How have you been affected personally?

I'm in Washington State, my county has had a high rate of infection, and our Stay Home/Stay Safe order was announced mid-March. One of the super spreader events was here in Skagit County and took place just three days after my art show opened

on March 7th. We dodged a bullet.

The gallery closed ten days after my solo show opened and my paintings are still hanging there. I had another solo show scheduled for June which was cancelled, and the Seattle Art Fair is cancelled. The cancellations are painful, but I am focused on my drawings right now and planning out a larger project for next year.

I am fortunate, I don't know anyone who has died. But my children live in Germany and Chicago and I don't know when I'll see them next. We live near the Canadian border and every time I see the sign saying "the US/Canadian border is closed to nonessential travel" – it really hits me that I cannot see the people I love.

Do you have a daily routine that keeps you grounded these days?

I've been drawing, a lot. When I'm stressed I draw and by early April the work was starting to pile up. So I started sending drawings off as gifts to the world: art collectors, friends, family, people I wanted to thank for their leadership or kindness, people who needed to be cheered up, friends of friends, strangers who asked. I sent out 16 drawings on April 8th and then kept going. You can see some of this on my Instagram feed, [@lmcshaneart](#). I sent out Pandemic Drawing #161 today.

I mail a small drawing, a poem, and a personal note. A few weeks ago I ran out of drawing paper and a nearby printmaker resupplied me with gorgeous imperfect papers and cut ends. Sending these packets off allows me to focus deeply on others, on what I believe they'd like, what poem and stamp reminds me of them, and it takes me outside of myself. The responses I get from people – whether on social media or letters back in the mail – have been delightful. Governor and Trudi Inslee were in the first wave of drawings I sent off and he sent back

a 3-page letter with drawings of a walk they took around the capitol! That cheered me up.

The first thing I do every day is draw; I play records and I draw. The packets go into the mailbox, and then I settle in to work. I don't know when I'll stop this project, it feels so right for this moment.

Are you reading, cooking, streaming, or doing any activity that is helping you cope?

We have 15 acres of forest on an island off the coast of Washington and I've been running on forest trails and sometimes to the beach. These are the beaches you can see in many of my paintings. I've also spent time listening to books while pulling invasive ivy out of our forest. These two things help keep me healthy, sane, and grounded.

With museums and galleries closed are you seeing a shift to the internet for viewing/selling art? How is this affecting you?

I had a trip planned to in early April to visit my daughter in Chicago and with that cancelled, we went online together and did virtual visits of the Hermitage, the Getty, the Kunsthistorisches Museum. I was in Washington, she was in Illinois so we dressed up, opened identical bottles of Washington wine and discussed paintings. It was kind of wonderful.

The gallery that represents me, [Smith and Vallee](#) in Edison, Washington, has a robust online ordering system and I think they are seeing some sales. People are also finding their way to the gallery to purchase in person. Since starting my Pandemic Drawing Project three of the people who received a drawing bought a painting in the gallery.

Do you see any positive changes for artists in a post pandemic world?

Yes, so many.

We aren't going back to the pre-pandemic world and I believe people are understanding the value of art in our lives. I was reading the New York Times on Sunday and noticed ads for expensive handbags and wondered, in what universe does this matter anymore? Consumption suddenly feels dated and the things that matter are having people to love, good food, a forest trail to walk in, poetry, music, and art. I'm planning to buy a painting at an upcoming art exhibit and I feel certain I'm not the only one who wants more art. Everyone who needs a better Zoom background should buy art!