DESIGN

Camilla Engstrom Reimagines Nature with Feminine Paintings

Camilla Engstrom is a self-taught painter who strives to bring healing colors to her work. Photo by Raymond Molinar

BY SOPHIA CONFORTI APRIL 22, 2021

Born in Örebro, Sweden, Camilla Engstrom never thought she'd be a painter. "I was introduced to drawing and watercolors by my grandfather when I was a kid. He was super encouraging and told me I would one day become an artist," she says. "I thought he was wrong, as I wanted to become a fashion designer."

As she got older, Camilla kept drawing in her free time, but it wasn't until her early twenties after what she calls a "failed career in fashion" that she decided to dive deeper into painting.

A self-taught artist, Camilla says constant practice and experimentation has brought her art where it is today. "It took me about five years of constant painting to develop a style that feels like me," she says. "Switching from acrylic to oil really helped, though I didn't like painting with oil in the beginning, as I thought it was too intimidating."

"Soft Portal" represents a colorful hibernation scene, referencing Camilla Engstrom's Swedish upbringing and the need to be in a soft, cozy place during winter. Photo courtesy of Over the Influence

Playing with color has also been key to her vibrant nature scenes and cheeky images of the female form. "Colors are everything," she says. "They're healing to me. I don't know exactly what each color represents, but I like green and yellow a lot right now, and before it was a lot of red and pinks. I always have new favorite colors I like to use."

In paintings like "Soft Portal" Camilla uses color to bring together both nature and the feminine. "I painted it in the beginning of winter, right when I was about to start my hibernation period. I guess it's like a portal or birth canal but reversed, like I was climbing back into the 'womb,'" Camilla says.

"It sounds weird perhaps, but that's what I felt. I'm from Sweden, and we hibernate in the winter because the dark and cold is unbearable; we would rather stay cozy indoors. Personally it's a time for me to write and think and drink a lot of tea."

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