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BIOGRAPHY

Ketra Oberlander



Ketra Oberlander founded Art of Possibility Studios (www.AOPStudios.com) as the only art publishing and licensing brand exclusively representing physically disabled artists in a for-profit model. Oberlander locates and develops art and artists who seek to share their work and experiences with others to uplift, encourage and inspire, while also earning an income. She also negotiates licensing agreements with socially conscious, cause-oriented manufacturers seeking to feature Art of Possibility Studios' beautiful imagery on their products.

Oberlander, herself, is a blind artist whose award-winning paintings are also represented by, and were the impetus for, the agency. After a successful career as a writer and editor that drew her to creative opportunities in the San Francisco Bay Area, Ketra left publishing around the turn of the millennium when her vision started to fail and employment prospects concurrently diminished.

Severe myopia, a lack of color and depth perception, and cone dystrophy conspired to rob her of her sight in her late thirties. By her fortieth birthday Ketra was blind. With some vision that, as she describes, is "like staring at the sun with shortening smeared on your glasses," and a keen interest in visual perception - and misperception - Ketra decided to find a means to visually express the experience of her lost sight.

At 40 she picked up a paint brush for the first time and, despite her blindness, has become a true visionary. Through her natural born gift for painting, she explores beauty and creation through her bold floral portraits, close views, color washes and cubistic interpretations of space. Since "going pro" in 2005, Oberlander has received numerous awards and widespread recognition for her work, which, among other notable honors, has twice been shown in the prestigious MH de Young Museum in San Francisco and has graced two homes for ABC-TV's "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition."



However, being an artist and running an art business are two entirely different things. Although her work met with great success, her professional opportunities were limited by mobility challenges. Oberlander faced a constant stream of obstacles in the logistics of getting her original artwork in front of patrons at exhibitions and other common marketing venues. She had a problem and needed a solution...and so her quest began.



Oberlander's research revealed that licensed artists largely worked from their studios, which solved her logistics problem. She also learned that there were no for-profit art resources exclusively focused on the disabled. These bits of key learning inspired a larger business vision, whereby she would represent herself and other physically handicapped, though entirely talented and motivated, artists with the same challenges. Oberlander sought council from the best in the licensing business, who encouraged her to start her own agency. And so she did.

Since launching Art of Possibility Studios in January of 2008, Oberlander has brought four other disabled artists into the fold. In July of 2008 she met with a prospective licensee at its corporate offices; in August she cut her first deal; in January of 2009 rolled out her first licensed product line. All four artists whose work is part of the line received an income check – a pinnacle moment officiating that Oberlander's dream had become a reality.

Now overseeing the ground-breaking agency Art of Possibility Studios, Oberlander hopes consumers of her licensed products will not only appreciate their beauty at face value, but also take a moment to realize the magnitude of the purchase – direct support, liberation and empowerment of a physically disabled artist no longer dependent on charity and disability benefits, or oppressed by logistical limitations, in their quest for self-sufficiency.

Oberlander often humbly asserts “I am not a noble person. I am a problem solver,” continuing with this: “I solve a financial and confidence problem for my artists. I solve a problem for manufacturers, desperate for beautiful and differentiated surface design and market positioning. I solve a problem for retailers, who won't need to discount the products. I solve a problem for consumers, who want to adorn their lives – and the lives of others - with meaningful goods that truly help create a better world.”

A problem solver indeed.

Oberlander hails from Peoria, IL, USA and now resides in Santa Clara, California with her husband, Simeon. She studied English literature at the University of Missouri-Columbia and Lansdowne College, London, England.

Exhibitions

- MH de Young Museum (San Francisco, CA)
- Kennedy Center sponsored "Visions from the Heart"
- City Lights gallery (Bridgeport, CT)
- "Art Ability," (Malvern, PA)

Awards

- 2008 Artist of the Year, Santa Clara Art Association General Category
 - First Place, Santa Clara Art Association March 2008, General Category for "Galactic Chancellor." (peer)
 - First Place, Santa Clara Art Association February 2008, General Category for "Cinema Carpet." (peer)
 - Second Place, General Category January 2008, Santa Clara Art Association monthly member show
 - Award of Excellence, "Visions from the Heart" (national juried) 2007, for "State (Flower) of Grace."
 - Second Place, Santa Clara Art Association October 2007, General Category for "Azul Alla Prima." (peer)
 - Second Place, Santa Clara Art Association June 2007, General Category for "Drips." (peer)
 - "Visions from the Heart" promotional art. 2007
 - Third Place, "We're All Artists" exhibition, The Art Center, Butler, PA 2007 for "Summer Fading." (national juried)
 - "We're All Artists" promotion/catalog cover art. 2007.
 - Second Place, Santa Clara Art Association October 2006, General Category for "My Future Thighs." (peer)
 - First Place, Santa Clara Art Association September 2006, General Category for "State (Flower) of Grace." (peer)
 - Second Place, Santa Clara Art Association February 2006, General Category for "Reclining Nude." (peer)
 - "The Oberlander Room," Momento Pharmaceutical, Cambridge, MA
 - Honorable Mention, 32nd Annual Santa Clara Art Association show, oils/acrylics category for "Let Freedom Ring." (peer)
 - Honorable Mention, 32nd Annual Santa Clara Art Association show, oils/acrylics category for "Break Time." (juried)
 - Second Place, Santa Clara Art Association June 2005, General Category for "Peace." (peer)
 - Second Place, Santa Clara Art Association April 2005, General Category for "Dance! Dance!" (peer)
 - Finalist, Alliance of Visual Artists (AVA) Annual competition, for "Spring Day, Sunday" and "Welcome Home."
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