**Karen Lloyd Artist Talk Transcript**

**Katie:** Here we go. Alright, so welcome everyone. I'm Katie Miller. I'm the executive director for Inclusive Arts Vermont. Today, I'm joined by artist Karen Lloyd. I'm so happy to be in conversation with you today, Karen. We're going to start off by just doing short verbal descriptions of ourselves and our surroundings as an access feature. So- I'm a very pale skinned woman in her mid 30s. I have brown, and silver, and blonde hair- there's lots of colors happening here. It’s down and it goes a little bit past my shoulders. I have a like a plum purple dress on, and I'm seated in my bedroom which has gray blue walls and big white doors and a white dresser behind me and I'm wearing clear framed glasses. Karen, do you want to introduce yourself?

**Karen:** Hi, I'm Karen and I'm also a very pale skinned woman. I have very long strawberry blonde hair and green eyes and today I'm wearing a headband and leaf earrings that are probably gonna get covered by my hair. I wear glasses, and behind me is actually a really special painting. It's not one of mine, but it was inherited when my grandmother passed away. My um, it was in my Babki’s home. Uhm, as long as I ever knew her, because she was gifted it along with her husband. Uhm, many many years ago and. Uhm, so through my whole childhood it was like something that I was inspired by that I would look at and just like I want to do that someday and autumn is my favorite season so it's quite a special piece to me. So that's what's in my room behind me. I'm actually sitting on my couch in my living room, in Winooski

**Katie:** Nice, it's- that painting is beautiful with the river in the middle and the bold autumn colors. It's really, it's really beautiful. Yeah, so uhm Karen. You have a piece in MASKED, the latest Inclusive Arts exhibition and I'm wondering if you could tell us, just start by telling us a little bit about you. You said you live in Winooski, but you know, what types of art do you make, and I don't know, what should we know about Karen Lloyd?

**Karen:** So I'm actually not a native Vermonter. I was born in Ohio, but I grew up in Connecticut and I came to Vermont because of UVM, and I've lived in Winooski since 2006. Uhm, I think everyone has to; if they know me, they have to know I'm a bunny mom. So, I have two bunnies, River and Journey, who are like the loves of my life. They just, they inspire art and they just, they make every day better and…It's a bunny home.

**Katie:** Your bunnies are sort of free range in the House too, right? Is that correct?

**Karen:** They are. They're just like how other people have cats. So they're loose all the time, they’re litter box trained, and so they're totally part of our family.

**Katie:** That's so awesome.

**Karen:** So yeah, they were kind of. I felt like they were giving me the pep talk even this morning. You know, when I was getting ready. Uhm, just being cute, and sweet so.

**Katie:** Like you can do it, mom, you can do it!

**Karen:** Yeah! I uhm. As an artist, I've, I've always sort of uhm. You know, liked animals, so, like bunnies have always been a huge part of the subject matter of my art. But uhm. As far as like mediums, I feel like I have such a wide variety like end up doing photography and painting and drawing and model horses and. And so it really really varies, so I feel like you know, my identity as an artist, you know it's not just one label really, and so often I'll just call myself artist because I, I don't think of myself as like just a painter or just a photographer. Even though I might wear that more than the others at different times of my life. Uhm, and I feel like the other huge part of you know, my life at this point has been as, which is really why I'm here, you know, as an artist, Inclusive Arts, MASKED exhibit you know having, I have chronic health condition now for so many years and having dealt with Lyme disease and fibromyalgia, it's really impacted every day of my life. Since I was 19 and I'll actually be turning 40 later this year, which feels like a huge milestone. And um, you know, so it really is you know, half my life and it feels like 2 chapters now. There was when I was healthy and uhm, the second half of my life when I haven't had that the same way and uhm, you know all the challenges that come with that, but then also the lessons that have come from that.

**Katie:** How um, does that, how do your life experiences, whether you know it's the things you were just talking about or other things? How does that weave into your process at all? Does your, do your life experiences inspire your artwork or inform it in any way?

**Karen:** Yeah, definitely. I think, um in two major ways. I think sometimes um, my art. I want it to be inspiring for myself. You know, almost like It's there almost in some ways like they're they're little bits of inspiration towards me, even though they're by me but I also want them to be that for everyone else, and that's always my biggest hope actually, is to sort of pour my heart into no matter whether it is the photograph or a painting, and to impact someone else positively who's maybe having you know, a really hard day or going through a you know a tough time period in their life and you know. So whether it's even to like the bunnies, you know, I I do a calendar every year with them, and so whether it's you know those sweet cute fuzzy bunny pictures that could maybe make someone smile, or maybe it's a landscape photo that just feels really empowering uhm, you know could just give someone hope through a hard time uhm, 'cause I feel like it's done that for me, and so I feel like that would be the greatest thing as an artist- If I could give that same sort of emotional experience for someone else to some degree, even though of course, anyone who Is a viewer of art everyone has their own interpretation based on their own life experiences and everything but uhm, that's probably what means the most to me is having that impact and you know, as an artist I think. You know my health, really although it can inspire or want me to inspire others uhm, it also can be very limiting and I think that's one reason why I've turned more to photography because I'm finding painting can be really hard on my body. It's just physically like I end up like I think you know, partly this past weekend, you know I was working on a painting project and just, you know, ended up with a really intense migraine and my body, like physically like just a lot of muscle pain you know, so I think It does unfortunately have some effects in that way too of just me having to even understand myself better OK, like, how can I- maybe it's just working an hour at a time or two hours at a time then waiting till the next day and so we having that patience in some ways it has forced me to take a step back at times and have more patience with myself. You know, I think naturally, I'm very type A and I was very much like go go go person when I was young and would just pack everything in, and it has taught me that sometimes I can't, you know, just do that, you know that it's important to listen to my body.

**Katie:** I was just thinking about what you were saying about the emotional connection to art and how um the process of you know- What I got out of it and what resonated with me and I'm sure, resonates with so many creative people is that first process, the act of making, like that's that's the part for you and then when you put it out in the world, it's you know what do other people get from it and it's almost like a two step process and it's almost like every piece of art created is both for the artist and for other people. Uhm, and it's I don't know that that relationship between the artist and the people receiving the work is like such a beautiful thing, especially when you think about the emotional connection of it for sure.

**Karen:** Yeah, I actually got to have something like that. I feel like recently I um, you know it. It unfortunately comes from a great loss. I had my father in law passed away at the end of January so very recently and that's been a lot to process and you know, going back to when I had lost my Babki, so my grandmother, who had inherited the painting from, you know she passed away several years ago and cardinals had shown up when she had passed away and I'd always wanted to capture an amazing cardinal photo so all these years, you know, it's been since 2014. And you know my father in law passed away just a few days later, there was this gorgeous male cardinal that showed up. I was actually playing my singing bowls and I looked up and it was the first time I was playing this one bowl that I had played when he was in the hospital actually. So one of the last times with him. And I was finally playing it again and I looked up and This male cardinal was right like in the center of my view If I you know, going down my hallway and looking through the glass doors and It was just a moment and normally the Cardinals look like they sort of flip away pretty quickly and it stayed and I was able to grab a camera and I kept thinking like there's no way I'll have time to get from my living room over into the kitchen. And like he won't fly away, but he stayed and that became my photograph “Special Visitor”. And I made cards of it, and uh, because it just felt like this was something that I just felt like there was some magic to it and wanted to share that with other people and so I made some cards of it and was bringing it to Guys Farm and Yard in Williston, and I had just barely put it the card rack and this woman comes over and we ended up having this amazing conversation she had just had a cardinal visitor herself really recently, and so we shared this moment and she ended up purchasing my cardinal card and so you know, having that. Uhm, you know because sometimes it's artists you know. We don't always get to see or hear the stories of the receiver. And for me that was so special because I had my emotional connection to that piece. And then to have this woman, and it turns out she was actually buying it for her inlaws.

**Katie:** Oh my gosh!

**Karen:** So yeah, it was just like, ‘Oh my goodness’. Like, how does that even happen and the fact that it was such a small moment. You know I was only in there for maybe an hour and I just barely put it on the rack and it so it was quite an honor, you know, as an artist, we don't always hear or see the reactions and so that meant a lot.

**Katie:** That's, wow. What a beautiful story. I kept thinking like oh it's full circle now, but then it would do another loop and It's almost like instead of a circle, I'm making like mental images, you can tell I'm such a visual person, but it's like continual loops and it's the thread just keeps looping around and around and around. What a beautiful story. Would you like me to bring up that photograph and share it?

**Karen:** Sure, that would be great.

**Katie:** OK. There we go. So this is Karen’s photograph “Special Visitor,” and I'm going to do a short verbal description if that's OK with you, Karen.

**Karen:** Yes, that would be wonderful, yeah.

**Katie:** OK, great, so this is a horizontal color photograph and it is of a male cardinal which are the red ones, sitting on a branch that sort of cuts horizontally in an ever so slight bend across the center of the image and and he's surrounded by different branches of an evergreen tree and sort of the really beautiful, vivid green color of those, the. needles.

**Karen:** I think it's a cedar, but I'm not totally sure.

**Katie:** Oh, a cedar! There we go. My father is a woodworker and he would be ashamed right now that I don't know what kind of tree that is but and anyway, along the top of the branch that the Cardinal sitting on, there's just this layer of snow like it must have just snowed or was currently snowing and there's a few snowflakes. Sort of jutting by in front of his body and I think one of my favorite parts of this photograph- this isn't part of the verbal description, but just looking at it, my favorite part is the just the roundness of this cardinal, he looks so like plump and cozy in the center of this image. It's beautiful.

**Karen:** Thank you. Yeah, he was sort of fluffed up because it was actually snowing when I took that. So yeah it was during like, a little snowstorm and I loved sort of how it, it seemed like he was nice and sort of cozy.

**Katie:** I have quite the fondness for Cardinals myself. My mom Cardinals always make me think of my mom - So this photograph automatically makes me think of her.

**Karen:** Oh, it was amazing 'cause I, you know I I I will share this because I, you know, hope it will even help someone else who, you know, goes through this. You know, I- I have anxiety disorder from years ago and so, sometimes you know things like this as much as I want to do them and I’m excited to do them, I get really nervous. And this morning I heard a cardinal out my back door again and I looked out and there was this beautiful female cardinal and it was kind of the same sort of experience where just a very unusual amount of time and could see that she was watching me and like turning her head looking at me and I just thought OK like 'cause that time I was in the kitchen, so to leave the kitchen, go to the living room, grab my camera, come back, and not startle her- I thought there's no way. But, she stayed and I don't know that this was going to be an image that will end up on a card, but it meant so much to me because I thought that it was my Babki who was saying like “hey, like you know I'm here for you today during your talk” and It just and like you know, knowing that I was already planning to share my other cardinal picture, it was just amazing- you know the timing.

**Katie:** It's another loop. So you know you were talking about Karen, how you're a photographer, and a painter, and an artist in general. How long have you been creating or making artwork?

**Karen:** It's really as long as I can remember which is the wild thing. I can't recall a time in my life where I didn't identify as an artist. And I even had this distinct memory of being in 3rd grade and one of our school things. You know, there was a day where you're supposed to, sort of, you know, dress or, you know what we're going to be when you grow up. What do you want to be when you grow up? And so you know, people might say like a police officer or a doctor, teacher, whatnot, and I said artist. And you know, that's not probably the most common answer for, you know, career choice, especially so young. But it was something that I had felt really my whole life and probably just felt even like I didn't want to even do like a coloring book. I wanted to create my own drawings and I would make these little books, and so I would like literally like write a little story and illustrate them. And so, there were Bunny books and there were dinosaur books, um and horses were another really um, it was going way back- horses were one of my main subjects which has stayed with me obviously. Yeah, honestly it's funny because I can't remember not drawing. And obviously when I was a baby I wouldn't have been but you know, at my earliest memories.

 **Katie:** Might’ve been!

**Karen:** Right just born with like yeah. And then, you know, going to to college, though I wasn't an art major, which might be surprising because you think, OK, this person wants To be an artist. But ah, I went originally for animal science and then switched to an English degree with an animal science minor and my art professor tried to convince me actually to switch to be an art degree, but uhm, it didn't happen at the time, and uh, you know it's, it's weird because sometimes you know the way the the universe works or whatever um, you know some of the very things that can be so devastating, like having a chronic health condition and having to give up my full time job, and you know, impacting my life in many ways that haven't been easy and yeah, at the same time, it really has allowed me to embrace my art and really take on that identity as an artist more fully than I maybe would have if I was working a more traditional job full time.

**Katie:** So when you talk about all these different mediums you you work in- either mediums specifically or themes. Is there anything that you're feeling really drawn to right now?

**Karen:** Yeah, you know, I'm not sure exactly the “why”. You know, I've internally asked myself, you know, why photography through the pandemic? But through the pandemic I felt like photography is what I'm most drawn to right now. Uhm, you know, I haven't done any canvas paintings recently, trying to think- um this this past Christmas actually didn't even paint any Christmas ornaments, which was sort of unusual for me. Usually I would do you know these custom ones with, you know, pretty elaborate you know, almost like a miniature painting, really um and yeah, for whatever reason I feel like photography is just where I am right now and I wish I had a better answer of why.

**Katie:** That's great, I think maybe I don't think you need a reason why if it, if you're drawn to it, you're drawn to it. You know, usually the answers to those sorts of the why comes out later If you look back after a while.

**Karen:** Yeah, and maybe it'll be something that will take a few years for me to really look back on in hindsight but being in the midst of it, it's hard for me to really know why, but it's definitely where my heart is right now has been photography, and I think more than ever really exploring that dichotomy of light and dark. Really, I feel like my photography has grown in some ways in the past couple of years just in understanding the importance and the power of light in an image and how it can take a picture from being kind of you know, it could be even a good picture or an OK picture, but where what the lighting is in that moment can really change the whole mood and the atmosphere of an image. And I really have loved having those images where they may be even unexpected so uhm, like one of them was last year in October; we were driving through like Vergennes and all of a sudden, this scene opened up with Camel's Hump and it was the golden hour, and so, like this is light.

**Katie:** Do you want me to bring it up while you talk about it?

**Karen:** Sure, yeah that would be great.

**Katie:** Yeah, keep talking and I’ll bring it up

**Karen:** So the light, just it was that amazing magical hour, you know, as photographers often call it, the golden hour. Because it is. It's it's so powerful and magical and so basically you have this horizontal sunlight just illuminating the landscape and so it made camel's hump and the autumn foliage in the distance just, it was like on fire, you know it was just amazing and in the foreground it's actually you can tell that it's late afternoon, because it's getting quite dark actually, and so that was, you know, just a great example for me of you know, stumbling really on a very, very special lighting moment where it's beyond my control, even as a photographer, to some degree, it's partly being in the right place at the right time and using that. But this piece is called “Vermont's Golden Hour” and it's become actually one of my favorite pieces. It just felt like wow, when I saw it in person I actually we were in the car and I yelled at my husband to stop driving because you know, I was trying to capture it and you know we're speeding along, you know down the road and I was like ‘Oh my gosh!’ so I made him go back, you know, in reverse and so this is actually captured with the window down. I was literally still in the car.

**Katie:** From the car!

**Karen:** From the car.

**Katie:** That's amazing, so the this image, it's another horizontal color photograph, and it's a landscape and the bottom I would say third is darker. It's not quite a black silhouette, but almost there there's just hints of green, and there's a grassy, tall grassy field, line of trees, and then at the tree line- just beyond that, it's as Karen was describing, the next layer is the valley of just beautiful, bright, vibrant autumn foliage and then beyond that, there's camel's hump, just perfectly lined up in the center of these two trees. It's almost like the two trees at the opening are just creating this gateway to this view of the bright autumn foliage, and then camel's hump. Behind it, which is Deep blue and purple, and then the sky is on top of that, which is the light, uh, the typical light sky blue but the the clouds are pink and purple and blue, and the shape of the clouds is almost like an inverted, what shape am I thinking of? Trapezoid. And it's it's like the shape of the clouds mimics the shape that the bottom half, like the silhouette makes, so it's it's almost like creates a visual sort of hourglass.

 **Karen:** Thank you for describing it.

 **Katie:** Oh yeah, of course.

 **Karen:** I loved your word use of gateway because that really fits for me too The way I saw it.

**Katie:** That's the the first word I thought of I mean it, it just feels like- so the the horizontal line of trees, there's a break in the center where you can see it's almost like another world beyond that and it's it's like that, that was the only word I could think of is a gateway opening up into this landscape beyond. So it sounds like it's between you know things that force it to be this way, or just in general, your your creativity has a bit of spontaneity to it, which you, do you, would you say that that's true?

**Karen:** Yeah, I think that's something that has happened, maybe more so actually with the pandemic. And you know, even the piece “Promise of Tomorrow” that is, you know part of this exhibit and MASKED, you know that was kind of like this one- where I wasn't really planning on it and I think that's a huge difference actually between um, most of my paintings versus some of my photography where a painting tends to be very thought out and depending on the piece, might even be for several weeks where I'm sort of internally, you know doing the composition and thinking of colors and shades and different elements that I want to include. And it's funny because I actually don’t often initially sketch, I often have it in my head first, and I sort of internally think of a lot of it when doing a painting. And so with some of these photographs they are very spontaneous and it's almost like a magic gift- you know, it's like it's almost like nature being like, ‘hey, here's this a moment and you can choose to capture this forever if you'd like to’ and it in a way, it feels like an honor. You know, having like seeing these beautiful moments and you know, being able to bring them to others and share them with other people beyond myself.

**Katie:** So, I'm wondering if you were talking about it briefly, but the, your piece that is in the show it's titled “Promise of Tomorrow”, is that correct?

**Karen:** Yeah.

**Katie:** Uh-huh yes. and it's another photograph. Is it OK if I bring it up and you tell us a little bit about it?

**Karen:** Sure

**Katie:** OK We're really testing my zoom screen share, skills today- doing it though.

**Karen:** For some practice!

**Katie:** Yeah, so I'll do a quick verbal description and then you can tell us more about this piece So this is a horizontal landscape photograph and the bottom 3rd is a grassy field there's sort of the the deep green grass and then there's some taller tannish beige pieces sticking out, sort of brush, and then there's a tree line and all the leaves have fallen from the trees and above that is a very very vibrant blue sky and some clouds that are making- If you go from the top corners of the image down to the center they make this V, um, where they meet right at the center, where a trees are coming out of the center of the image from the horizon line and it sort of bursts out at the top with all of these small branches where there are no leaves on the tree. Hopefully I did it justice.

**Karen:** You did good. Um, yeah and you know, one thing that- it's funny that I didn't even think about until last night when I was thinking about this piece again, you know, I took this in the early spring of 2020. So this was, you know, back when we really had no idea how long the pandemic was going to take or anything like that. And you know, even though I've been with this image for two years, almost. It finally struck me the significance of the tree not having leaves yet. You know, it was it was early spring and so the grass, some of the grass is green and some of it is probably from the previous season where it's, you know this golden brown and not green um, but how in some ways you know I sort of identified with that tree as someone who has you know, I've actually been struggling more recently with a new case of lyme. So on top of the old sort of chronic part pieces of lyme you know, for a few months now I've been back into Lyme treatment and in some ways I feel like I am that tree- where I'm I'm still standing. I'm still there, but you know, I don't feel like I have like vibrant health or something like that. And I think you know most people if they saw a tree without leaves, they wouldn't think of it necessarily as the ideal. But that tree, it's still standing. You know it's and it, and the light is shining on it and it just had felt like such a hopeful photo to me, you know. It felt like, and that's why the title you know, “promise of tomorrow” it felt like there was hope for the future, and so even though it wasn't what we would think of, you, know, say, like prime time of summer, where everything is the most intense green and so lush and, you know, that it was still felt like there was some optimism to it, and even though part of it was shaded and in the shadows, it felt like a very hopeful piece to me. And then the heart cloud at the very top center above the tree, you know, for me was almost again like a sign from the heavens giving this promise you know, again, of just that things would be OK.

**Katie:** Uhm, so when you you captured this photograph were you walking or like where? Where were you?

**Karen:** Yes, I was actually. Unlike the previous piece, where I was in my car. This one I was actually on foot and I didn't have a tripod or anything so it was just a matter of trying to, you know, I literally will hold my breath actually when I take photographs- it's a trick I've learned to just steady my body more. So I literally will just like not breathe for a moment- and we were walking at this park in South Hero and it was a place that we hadn't been to, except, you know, because we were trying to stay away from people, this was, you know, before we had vaccines and everything like that, we were trying to find parks that weren't very busy. And some of the parks in Burlington, or even like Winooski area, we just felt really busy because we couldn't do anything else. You know everything was, everything was closed. Pretty much, you know, it wasn't like, you know, people weren't going to the movies or going to concerts or hanging out indoors at parties so going to parks ended up being more of an activity I think than ever and so in a you know, in a way it was a real blessing because it it sort of forced us to explore places we had never been to before. And so this was a new place for us, um it was really off the beaten trail. It wasn't, you know, there's like there is typically like a little sign there, but it's not very obvious. And so it's not a place that people would really you know you're not going to have tourists from out of state going to or something like that you know was really, really just this hidden gem. And so we're walking up this hill just like with “Vermont's Golden Hour”, the previous photograph, it was that golden hour of light. And I just shot horizontally across it was just before we were going to leave for dinner and it changed this image. You know, that moment wouldn't have been the same without that lighting, and we did return to that spot other times and it never had that same or visual impact. But the way the clouds did the V, you know it felt like really this victorious V almost like a hugging of the tree and um yeah, it it was another for me a lesson of just the the power of light on an image and using that so using light and shadows.

**Katie:** Uhm, so the theme of this exhibition is “Masked” right? And I'm wondering if you can talk a little bit about this piece that you have in the show and how do you see that fitting in with the theme? Or how does it? How does the theme resonate for you as an artist?

**Karen:** Yeah, that was something I had to, you know was honestly tricky You know, compared to some of the other themes, I think that VSA and Inclusive Arts have held in the past. This one really made me have to think. You know how do I relate my art to masked and what does that mean? And I ended up coming up with that, there were several types of meanings really. You know, on the one hand, it kind of felt like covering or or hidden you know, hiding something, but that it could also mean safety and protection and sort of that duality within the word masked because you know, even as a disabled person, you know having sort of layers that we might wear a mask you know in public in a way to sort of feel like we fit in to feel sort of normal and I I mean, I, I think everyone does to some degree that we have these masks that we wear and you know, even feeling maybe like we're not fully seen and I think that's something I have struggled with sometimes is feeling that even that sort of label could you know, give certain impressions and maybe not feeling um, totally seen and then I might feel somewhat invisible at times. And um you know and then at the same point you know, especially with the pandemic, wearing a mask has perhaps saved our lives and been a form of safety and, you know, with this tree image I really saw, you know, again, with the, you know, on the one hand, one side of it you have these, you know, sort of darker clouds and the shadows of the distant trees and on the other side you have just really illuminated um, you know the the clouds are brighter, they're whiter and the tree line in the distance is also illuminated. And you know, just how um yeah, sort of just embracing that, you know the um, I think at the end, but it made me come to is just that, you know a tree embraces being a tree, a tree doesn't try to be something other than a tree, and to maybe give myself even more permission to just be fully myself.

**Katie:** That was beautiful. And it reminds me of when you were talking about the the light and the dark and you know the masks we all wear or don't wear. It's it's, I mean it all sort of fits into this duality.You were talking about earlier, of light and dark and all of that, either literally or metaphorically. So yeah, let's thank you for sharing that.

**Karen:** You’re welcome.

**Katie:** It's uh, when we created the theme, it was intentionally broad. It's a word, right? But it's a word that means so many different things people could interpret it lots of different ways and and just thank you so much for sharing because I think at surface people might be like, well, landscape photograph- tell me how that fits and it's like, well, you know it's it's there's so much more to every piece of art than than what we first see, and it's it's a beautiful photograph and then to have that layered and and nuanced meaning behind it as well, it's just beautiful, so thank you for sharing.

**Karen:** Thank you, I, you know once actually thank Inclusive Arts because this exhibit honestly like having you know with the title “MASKED” and having that as something to really think about more deeply. It you know, it's not often even as an artist that I think we really spend such an extended amount of time reflecting on a piece, and it really helps me even to delve much deeper and it was you know it allowed me to really process more fully I think what emotions I felt in that moment of taking it, but just took it to another level even for myself, so I really appreciate that.

**Katie:** Well, you're welcome. So, so I have a few more questions for you um, you've touched on this a little bit, but I'd love to hear where you draw inspiration from. You know, especially I think in general, but also when you have these moments- sounds like light draws you,or is there something specific you draw inspiration from in the moment or even in a more general way?

**Karen:** And it's funny because I'm talking about light. Um, and one of you know something that I feel like is a huge inspiration for me and it does show up often in my paintings Is the moon and the stars. And um, you know I as a as a person and as an artist I end up actually being more of an evening person and so I sometimes joke that I'm you know, sort of a creature of the moon, you know, as opposed to the sun, and being so pale skinned, you know the sun isn't always my best friend.

**Katie:** I feel that.

**Karen:** Um, but the moon and the stars is definitely I mean, I can't even count how many paintings they show up in, and there's certainly several. And some, I don't know if now would be a good time to share it or not, but you know my most recent model horse piece was heavily influenced by that.

**Katie:** Yeah, I'll bring it up. It's um, I was sharing this earlier, but I have to say it again, Karen Before I pull this up. When I pulled up this image to see what you had sent me for work to share today I gasped- like it took my breath away, it is beautiful.

**Karen:** Thank you.

**Katie:** OK, so I'll do a verbal description really quick and just correct me if I get anything wrong, but this is an image- the background is sort of a galaxy. It's a dark background with a galaxy of bright blue and white and pink stars, and in the foreground is a model horse that has been painted by you, Karen right?

**Karen:** Correct, yeah, so I'm not the sculptor, but I’m the painter.

**Katie:** And the model horse, it's not just a horse, it's also a Unicorn/Pegasus, which I feel like at Inclusive Arts Vermont we're very into unicorns- if you didn't know that. And, uh, speaks to my Inclusive Arts soul.

**Karen:** Oh, awesome.

**Katie:** But so the body of this Pegasus, pegacorn? Unicorn, Pegasus? Is also painted. It's painted in this vibrant blue color with round and sparkling stars. And it has, is it a crescent moon on the

**Karen:** It does.

**Katie:** The bridge of Its nose and it has a golden horn and a dark mane and its wings are painted in white with tips of gold and that same blue star galaxy pattern and then there's a rainbow on the front section of the wing. Did I miss anything?

**Karen:** You did a really great job, yeah, and I was just going to add for people that I actually found the background image through- NASA offers images for free to the public that you can view and also download. And so this is of the constellation Monoceros, which is the Unicorn constellation, so it actually has extra meaning to it uh, which I was just thrilled because I, you know, I was trying to find an image that would be flattering to him, but then the fact that it was also the unicorn constellation, it was just extra perfect. And the crescent moon on his forehead is I actually did it as a waxing moon, so it is when the moon is growing, so it's when it's towards what will become the full moon and that was a very you know, that was a decision that I made very deliberately, because I feel like as an artist for whatever reason that I feel more creative during the full moon I feel more inspired to paint or do artistic projects when it's towards the full moon, so I gave him that sort of so it is it's becoming that more powerful moon.

**Katie:** So is this uhm this painting of the the sculpture of the horse, is this something you do regularly or is this just something you've done, like is this the first time you've done this?

**Karen:** Uh, so I started painting model horses I think it was in 2012, so about a decade now.

**Katie:** Wow!

**Karen:** Yeah, so it's kind of a another side of me as an artist and he was made primarily with Perl X which is a type of like pigment dust, if you will- it’s sort of like a powder and it's very shimmery, it has just a really amazing pearlescent to it, and so it's not flat like a typical like pastel would be cause pastels are what I would normally use on the model horse, but I wanted him to just seem magical, so there was nothing that wasn't going to be shimmery on him. He's just super shimmery. And uhm, so like his body, like when you see like the blues and stuff that's all in Pearl X and then to paint all those like really tiny tiny stars, I used golden acrylics, and their fluid acrylic line is my most favorite because it's you don't have to add water to it and it just flows really nicely, and so you keep that nice pigmentation and and then with his wings it was really a combination of the Pearl X and acrylics, so he was he took a long time it really took me the whole month. And February is actually National Model Horse painting month. And so for this event, you have those 28 days to finish painting a model horse, and you're not allowed to start ahead of time. You have to wait to paint until February 1st and then you're supposed to finish by the 28th, hopefully. And, so I was I was gonna say February 27th I was up really late, I went into the 28th. Um so, he really took the whole month for me- which is amazing considering he's so tiny. He's actually the second smallest I've ever painted, and I forgot to measure him ahead of

time, but he's a micro mini scale which is the smallest scale for model horses. So if anyone is familiar with like a Breyer Stablemate or something, the small horses that you could find in a store, he's smaller than that.

**Katie:** My goodness.

**Karen:** Like so yeah, he's probably like about two inches.

**Katie:** So we're talking like a couple inches.

**Karen:** Yes, he's really small.

**Katie:** Oh my gosh, 'cause from the photograph it seems like it would be at least to me, like my perception, it feels like it's bigger, like I don't know not not a foot, but maybe like 6 or 8 inches like bigger, but we're talking tiny.

**Karen:** That was my goal actually. 'Cause I was so happy for you to say that because I was really hoping to pack in the detail in such a way that it would even for model horse people I wanted it to confuse people so that even if they were familiar with that particular resin, that they would be like wait a second because I didn't want him to look like ‘Oh, he's a micro mini,’ 'cause sometimes I think there can be that, you know when you get really small, that there's a loss of detail, but I wanted him to be just as detailed as if he was a bigger piece. And I felt like you know, it's funny because it's you know, it's an inanimate object. But I swear, each model horse ends up having a personality to it, you know something feel really sweet, and so and this guy just felt like he had such a strong spirit. But he was- He was big and so even though he had, you know, in literal terms, he's very tiny. He never felt small to me when I worked on him, and sometimes when I look at him after.I'm like goodness like, because it was almost as funny, disconnect like because he didn't feel, in his energy, tiny to me at all, and I you know, in a way I feel like he's been a lifeline to me because you know, this past month dealing with grief he was really the kick out of bed, you know he was a reason to push forward and you know to to use art as a way of really healing through through pain and um, and so you know it's funny because in some ways it causes physical pain you know I ended up by the end of February not feeling so great, you know, from such intense concentration and everything but I really felt like he was such a great example of art being really helpful to get through a difficult time.

**Katie:** And he, man, and you're right about the scale, he is powerful. Tiny but mighty.

**Karen:** Yeah, I I almost felt like I could write a story about him someday of being almost like like almost like it was mythological, mythological, like God of the unicorns or something like he was almost like he's almost like creating the stars or something like he was just he felt so powerful and big to me so.

**Katie:** Totally, yes.

**Karen:** So he’ll have to be a story character someday.

**Katie:** Awesome. Karen, do you have any other work you want to share? Do you want to share the last photographs that we talked about, the sunflower one? Do you want to talk about that a little bit?

**Karen:** Sure

**Katie:** Ok, If my computer will cooperate. There we go. OK, so this is a vertical color photograph of looking up so the the point of view is a little bit below uh, a really large sunflower- head of a sunflower, and so you can see the green stalk and then there's vibrant orange and yellow leaves with the sort of classic blackish brown uh center and then there's a line of smaller of I'm assuming similar size, but the line sort of trails off to the background and they appear smaller as they go into the distance- other sunflowers. And behind that there's a line of trees that's out of focus, and then the the blue sky with just a hint, the slightest hint of wispy clouds in the sky. So Karen, do you want to tell us about this piece?

**Karen:** Sure, and thank you for describing it. So this was taken in Huntington, Vermont in September of 2020. So also during this whole time period of the pandemic. And it's actually a sunflower that was grown by my mother-in-law, so it's her garden in Huntington. And uhm, this was actually a, you know, a very um 'cause sometimes with the light you know I'm working with what's there, but in this case I I sort of physically on foot, manipulated it by where I was standing so you know, I was on, you know, in in the garden and I shifted so that the main sunflower in this picture was directly in front of the sun and the sun was low in the sky at that point because of the time of day and so it made the petals if you can see, like the their backlit they're illuminated from behind and so it made them more radiant and glowing in a different way so we're so used to putting a light on an object from the front of it to light it up, but this is actually the complete opposite and so that was sort of fun to sort of Play around with that and Uhm, sort of influence it with the lighting that way and with this piece you know it was uhm it felt special to me, but it was funny because when I started sharing it with others. And of course, you know. Obviously if I'm sharing it with other people, it's probably 'cause I liked it myself, but yet I felt like the reaction by others was more than I was even expecting, and people just seemed to for whatever reason, be be really drawn to it and I had some people even say it almost felt like you know, and again almost like, think of like a character you know they felt like sort of drawn to it, almost like was a face. And now for me, you know it's you know it's always interesting how art can take on so many different forms you know over time because each viewer has their own perspectives and people can bring different things to it, to a piece. And you know, for me, my art is not typically, you know, like political in any way, you know you know sometimes there's some artists who real try to make deliberate statements on, you know world events or whatnot with their art, and I haven't 'cause that hasn't really been part of my storyline so far as an artist. But with this piece, you know in the past week I keep thinking about it because with Ukraine you know the sun flower being, you know their flower, and so in a way it has become this other layer of symbolism. And so I you know, I just think it's sort of interesting how over time, you know an art piece can sort of take on additional meanings beyond what we initially thought it would when we first, whether it is a painting or a photograph, when we first create it.

**Katie:** Yeah, I mean it so often takes the the time for it to just sit and be and then it's revealed to us later and and I've found oftentimes you know, with my own artwork that and I don't know if this is the case for you, but sometimes what I feel like is the meaning it it grows and it changes and it morphs over time and then it might come back to the original meaning, and then it has more than one meaning at the same time

**Karen:** So true

**Katie:** It's part of, you know, this all connects it back to what we were talking about in the beginning, where a lot of that also has to do with how other people perceive the work, so they might give me feedback and then you know some things revealed that I didn't really notice in the beginning and, yeah.

**Karen:** Yeah, yeah, it actually makes me think of like you were asking earlier; where do I draw inspiration from? And my one of my, you know, huge inspirations since 2000 has been the rock band U2 and and one thing that you know Bono has even said is that you know they are writing songs, and sometimes they're intensely personal to them when they you know when he's writing lyrics and they're crafting them. But then, once they're in a concert a couple years later and they're with these thousands of people, each of those people is bringing their own meanings and interpretations and their own personal stories. And I mean, I know I've done that myself you know, when I listen to their songs where you know it becomes it's part of my story too, and so I think that happens whether it's music or with art in a visual form that it ends up having many meanings, and so that's, you know, sort of amazing when you think about it, that it really takes on sort of this extra life after.

**Katie:** Yeah, and what a gift you know when you were talking about your conversation with the the woman about the cardinal card and like what a gift to be able to experience that- like experience other people experiencing your work, you know? That- what a beautiful thing, and a gift.

**Karen:** I think that's been some of my favorite moments actually, as an artist is those rare times. When I've had a personal connection with someone who's having an experience with one of my pieces and I think I shared that in my last um, you know my ANEW interview a couple of years ago with someone watching- they're looking at “Soul Therapy”, which is my horse piece. That was in a previous exhibit, and you know, having you know that really quite intimate moment with a complete stranger where she was crying seeing my piece like she was so touched and she's and then almost she was like confessing like, she wasn't a horse person. And yet it hit her in a way that hit to her heart and you know, my studio name is Nature Heart Studio because I feel like, I everything that I create is from my heart and so if it can touch someone else's heart. That is. That is the most. To me.

**Katie:** Karen Lloyd, you are a gem and a true just, I don't know- you're amazing.

**Karen:** Oh, thank you.

**Katie:** So Karen, if people want to learn more about you or your work, or find some of those cards you were talking about, where can they? Where would they do that? How would they do that?

**Karen:** Uh, if anyone would like to purchase greeting cards, if they’re local, um, they're at two places right now- they're at the Art Hound Gallery in Essex and also at Guys Farm and Yard in Williston, and then I do have an Etsy shop and I can provide the link to you after.

**Katie:** Yeah, well when this is up on YouTube we'll have a link in the description box and then when we're doing this live, I'm assuming right now, if this is live, the amazing Kat Redniss will put a link up on the screen somewhere, so.

**Karen:** Yeah, I was gonna say all of you are awesome, always with doing that magic, so and.

**Katie:** Kat’s our tech wizard these days.

**Karen:** Definitely. And I am on Instagram and so you can find Nature Heart Studio on there and also on Facebook, and I do have a website, so there's a few different ways if people want to stay in touch, and certainly it's social media would be the way to get sort of the latest updates of whether it is something like this you know if I am doing an artist talk or you know, if if I have a new piece that I'm releasing that would be the first way to sort of see what I'm working on is through Instagram or Facebook

**Katie:** Awesome, well Karen thank you so much for sharing yourself and your work with us today. Uh, this has just been like food for my soul, this conversation so thank you.

**Karen:** Thank you so much, Katie, I really. It's really such an honor. I uhm, just you know, having been part of, I almost feel like the Inclusive Arts family now for so many years.

**Katie:** You are!

**Karen:** You know because I go back to the “ENGAGE”

**Katie:** You are, you totally are, you’re part of the family.

**Karen:** Thank you. Yeah, you know, going back to like “ENGAGE” I have so much gratitude. Thank you, so much.

**Katie:** Uhm, well thank you. So if folks want to learn more about Karen it's Nature Heart Studio, Facebook, Instagram, website, all that good stuff- if you want to learn more about “MASKED” which is the current Inclusive Arts Vermont exhibit; that is inclusiveartsvermont.org and there's a link right there to go find out more uhm, and the show is on tour through early 2023, so there's plenty of time to go see it. Thanks so much and catch you next time.