

# ALYSSA MONKS

» BORN: 1977

» BASED: BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

» MEDIUM: OIL ON LINEN AND PANEL

## Intimacy and the Paintbrush

I don't really think about what kind of painter I am. What's more interesting to me are the possible paintings I could make, so I spend a lot of time thinking about that. I suppose if I have to categorize them in my mind; the paintings are somewhere between realism and abstraction. There is figure and portrait that you can recognize, but the technique and process are not so concerned with the myriad of details and accuracy that realism seems to be concerned with. My interest lately is pulling out the essence of a subject, the way it feels to be that subject or be in the presence of that subject—to evoke empathy and sympathy, rather than awe. I believe that the physicality and intimacy of the paint itself helps to convey that emotional experience, if the paint is allowed to be paint and not brushed away or smoothed out, denying its endless possible combinations of textures. So picking and choosing where the detail is left out, resolved or left unresolved is part of the process. Obliterating detail, losing the form and obfuscating the illusion are part of my process to create a deeper and, in my opinion, more empathic connection with the subject beneath the surface of descriptive details.

## More Than a Subject

I am interested in painting people who I feel a tremendous connection with. Painting them is like having a long conversation with thoughts and facial expressions instead of words. In order to do this I need to really feel them, understand them, have a tremendous amount of compassion for them and be curious to understand them more. In other words, I paint people I love.

## The Power of Film and Photography

I have looked at a lot of Nan Goldin's photography over the years and love the raw nature and honesty of her photographs. They feel real, gritty and unapologetic. You get to see underneath the glamour and perfection to the real person. I like that a lot. I also love a lot of the work of Sally Mann, the beauty and honesty in her portraits of her children. There is such empathy and honesty, it's so stirring. I also love the experimental work she was doing at the end with obliterating the images and creating really rough surfaces. I have been attracted to David Lynch's work for its mystery, color and atmosphere. There is a real love for the feeling in a moment, rather than spelling out all the details. The viewer can engage and it sends the mind spinning. Lately I've been exposed to more and more films that are making me appreciate simplicity and atmosphere in other ways. A long beautifully shot scene without a lot of fancy manipulation can really create that same empathy a painting can, more often than a photograph will. But it all depends on how it's done and what the feeling is.

















