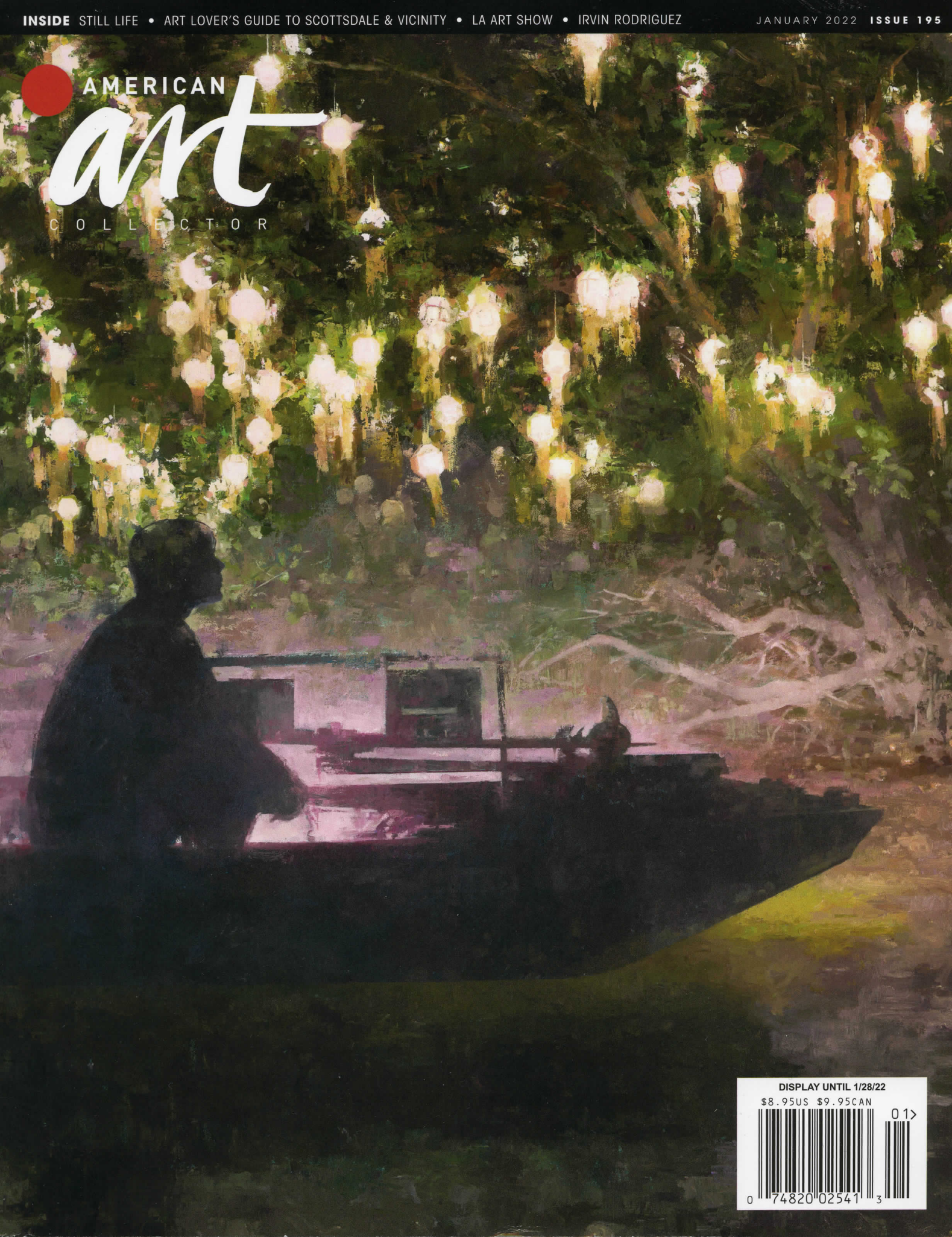


AMERICAN
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ALYSSA MONKS

Behind Glass


 Scan for
VIDEO


1

Figurative and portrait painter Alyssa Monks had been working on her earth and nature series for the past five years, but when the pandemic hit, she felt that it “didn’t seem to ring true anymore.” Like many others, she was isolated, without nature, and frankly, “‘nature’ felt a little unsafe for awhile,” she says. Adding to this were personal heartaches, a growing political divide and a social justice revolution. Monks felt the need to reimagine her subject matter, themes and even her process.

In her solo show *It’s All Under Control*, now on view at Forum Gallery in New York City—also the artist’s home—Monks revisits an older series involving water, steam and glass. “My experience was a lot like being trapped behind glass looking out at the world that was focused intently on tiny threatening water droplets potentially containing virus,” Monks says. In addition, Monks received news that her brother and best friend

was diagnosed with brain cancer.

With the all the chaos of the current social and political atmosphere, she felt she “needed to observe the psychology of what all this does to a mind,” she says. “So I used my own mind as the subject and did a lot of observing with as much objectivity as I could. I read up on Jung and other texts I pored over in college, reawakening the ideas of persona, shadow self, integration, as well as Buddhist traditions of acceptance, benign detachment and dissolving the ego. The act of painting each mental state was both honoring and making space for my own personal struggle, as well as a reflection of what I was witnessing going on around me.”

Monks approached the collection in a new, open-ended and intuitive way, blending elements of abstraction and realism, and she worked without a plan, as she often did in the past. She revisited older shower and water references and was more drawn to

1
This Is Not What You Wanted, oil on linen,
62 x 90"

2
Dissociated, oil on linen,
30 x 30"

3
Watch The Only Way Out Disappear, oil on linen,
54 x 54"

4
I Accept, oil on linen,
30 x 30"

Images © Alyssa Monks.
Courtesy Forum Gallery,
New York, NY.



2



3



4

the abstracted views where it was difficult to see the figure, as seen in *Disassociated*. The figure is created in Monks' likeness and is hidden behind steamy droplets of water on glass.

"You get the feeling there is a figure there, but in what state or position isn't clear," Monks explains. "I was excited by the color and the strangeness, the newness, the unexpectedness of what reality actually is, as opposed to what we expect to see. As I painted, I followed these curiosities. What emerged was an expression of what had occurred, the psychological state of dissociation: a break in how your mind handles information."

What followed was a short film that Monks created of herself behind the glass with steam and water droplets "just to see what that would do visually," she says. "It turned out to become the source material for four of the paintings in the show, *This Is Not What You Wanted*, *It's All Under Control*, *Watch the Only Way Out*, *Disappear* and *No Going Back*. *This Is Not What You Wanted* was inspired by the song *Bad Kingdom* featured in the short film *Jesse Brass and I made that goes with this body of work*."

Monks adds, "I feel this body of work may be my most personal and sincere work yet...Although I've used my likeness and my own mind as subjects, I would hope that viewers can see themselves and their own minds in these paintings, and that the paintings create a space to contemplate the viewer's own relationship to coping and struggling with difficult circumstances." ●

Forum Gallery

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