

A Personal Response

In October 2021, I had the privilege of interviewing April Marten. She agreed to come on the All About Art Podcast to speak about her practice. Little did I know that, although I was already a believer in the power of art and how it can touch lives, her practice would touch mine so strongly.

April and I spoke extensively about not only her practice, but how themes of gender, the church, trauma, rituals, intergenerational connections, and more, all tie into her work. She stated, “The work is not just for me”, referring to how others have responded to what she creates and how the work is for the viewer as much as it is for her. The way in which April spoke about her practice had indeed done what she believed throughout my conversation with her, allowing me to open up about my experiences as well as be incredibly receptive to hers.

We spoke in depth about her series *Frances Wasn't a Saint*. The enchantment Frances holds, as Marten's grandmother and one of her main subjects, comes from her positioning as a role model. Not only is this powerful from the perspective of April herself, exploring the intergenerational connections and relationships in her family, but also from the perspective of womanhood, encompassing love, support, introspection, self-awareness, and confidence. In a ‘candy-coated aesthetic covering deep existential concern’ (quoting Marten from her All About Art episode), the performances relate to objects through acts that reference rituals while using deeply personal insights and inspiration from meditation and dreams, including those of her grandmother.

In using her practice as a catalyst with which she can work through her past, Marten has come to feel that art can be sacred in some ways. I experienced a strong connection to her when discussing her early life, facing complex situations at a young age and then entering somewhat of a ‘fight mode’ after experiencing trauma, something I greatly related to. As we both became teary speaking about the impact art has, and in which ways it is sacred to us, I realized just how deep her practice can reach, within both herself as well as within others.

Art saved Marten's life, as she candidly expressed to me, however despite her artistic spirit exuding a power I've rarely experienced even through art, she states on the podcast that she struggles with self-doubt. As a result of the aforementioned ‘fight mode’, she was always striving to do more, to take action. There is so much more I could say on Marten's practice and how it has stayed with me since I first spoke to her in 2021, however I will leave it with this for now: her current exhibition *Function of [an] Imaginary*, her entire body of work, and what she took from her formal education in art, shows what came of Marten learning to trust in her practice and the path she was on. Through her patience and

dedication to articulate her vision with her work, she has been able to impact everyone who engages with her practice in such a deeply personal way, including me.

Alexandra Steinacker

All About Art Podcast

Curator, Art Historian