

NIKI MCQUEEN

VISUAL ARTIST



BIOGRAPHY, TECHNIQUE, PORTFOLIO HIGHLIGHTS

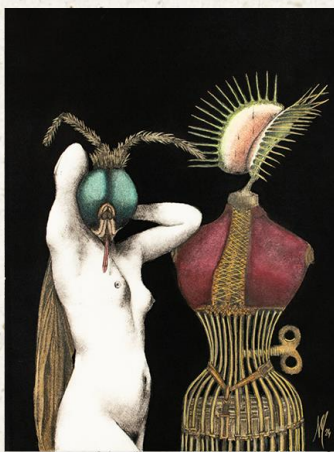
"My artworks are manifestations of an urgent, unquenchable need for the expression of years of unspoken truths, unthought thoughts, unfelt feelings, unfulfilled longings, losses, triumphs, lessons and personal evolution."

Niki McQueen



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BIOGRAPHY



BACKGROUND

Niki McQueen is a visual artist from Cape Town, known for her surreal and symbolic narrative work, with a background in communications and graphic design. Despite her profound passion for art, circumstances prevented her from pursuing formal art studies after school, and she went on to obtain an MSc in Marine Biology, a field that has significantly influenced her artistic vision and the aesthetic of her work.

As the Covid-19 pandemic swept the globe, Niki harnessed her creative resilience and pioneered and developed a unique technique over several years, which she uses to create richly-coloured, finely detailed, surreal, and otherworldly artworks. In a marriage of traditional and contemporary practices, her process begins with the creation of digital composites and collages, using fragments of hand-drawn and public domain images, meticulously combined, hand-printed, then hand-drawn onto heavy archival papers. Each piece undergoes a painstaking 10 – 12-step process involving washing, painting, colouring, and finishing with various materials, resulting in striking and intricate artworks.

MOTIVATION

Niki's work is at times deeply personal, driven by her late-diagnosed autism, the profound impacts of Long Covid and PTSD which led to her disability from long-term employment. She has since dedicated herself entirely to her art. Captivated with the extraordinary, she draws inspiration from literature, Jungian theory, vintage medical, biological, and scientific illustrations, museum and library collections, vintage printers, etchers and engravers, and classical surrealism—a central theme in her high school art studies.

Her work explores powerful and emotive personal symbolism and worlds of magical realism, probing the truths that lie on the edges of reason and the familiarity of everyday existence, with imagery that includes and alludes to anatomy, biology, psychology, archetypal interplay, mythology, innocence, joy, eroticism, decay, rebirth: being human. Each work tells a story, be it personal or symbolic, inviting viewers to explore meaning in their own interpretations.

PORTFOLIOS

Niki's extensive body of work, comprising over 600 pieces, is divided into two main portfolios. The first, [Niki McQueen Art](#), includes surreal and symbolic Fine Art artworks which stem from her process of focusing and reflecting on psychological and emotional disturbances or realisations. While some of these works begin with a deliberate theme, topic or purpose, some emerge and develop subconsciously and may take days, weeks or months to create, understand, and contextualise.

Her second more whimsical portfolio, [Life Beyond Reason](#), features light and playful works that often depict children and animals or whimsical, dreamlike scenes, speaking to flashes of a somewhat surreal childhood characterised by an unquenchable curiosity, and spent often in the realms of imagination and make-believe. Through connecting with facets of the playful child inside, she seeks to express innocence and wonder and bring joy to viewers.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Niki sold her first artwork within a month of going public in 2020 and began exhibiting and signed with a gallery six months later. In under four years, she has sold over 220 artworks to local and international collectors. She was a top 40 finalist in the Vuleka Art Competition in 2021 and 2022, a top 100 finalist in the Sasol New Signatures Art Competition in 2021 and won the Africa Regional Award in the international Copic Awards in 2021. In 2023, she represented South Africa at the *Art Connects Women* Exhibit in Dubai. She published her first book of art and poetry in 2022 and has had her work included in several international publications, including an upcoming feature in [Suboart Magazine](#) (September 2024).

Since 2022, Niki has had an ongoing collaboration with cult-celebrated US punk cabaret duo, [The Dresden Dolls](#), which started when she created a collection of artworks for their 2023 and 2024 tours. She also collaborates with lead singer, bestselling author, human rights activist and TED speaker [Amanda Palmer](#), and has worked with [Nathan Monk](#), bestselling author and noted human rights activist. In 2024, Niki joined the South African print collective, [The Printing Girls](#) and her work is available for sale directly and in several notable South African galleries. Her [Artist CV](#) is available on her website.

ARTIST STATEMENT

The themes and symbolism in my artwork are diverse and speak to a life lived hard. They touch on the challenges of being an atypical person in a neurotypical world, to the horrors human beings are capable of, to burning loves that are ashes now, to a complex relationship with constructs like the patriarchy and organized religions, to deep rage about economic, cultural and gender injustices. They also speak to dream and wish-fulfilment and the imagination of a permanently-puzzled child. From sublime joy, to severe trauma, the tapestry of my life is woven inexorably into my art where words have failed me, insistent it be given space, demanding it be seen and felt.

From the earliest time, my artistic inspiration and the resulting endeavors have always been infused by a yearning for the edge-places: the realms beyond reason and familiarity. I seek to examine emotional reactions, ingrained beliefs, thoughts, and societal norms and further my knowing of myself and others, through the lens of my personal paradigm. I seek to explore and understand the misunderstood places in myself and others, as well as our connection to, and the language of, the psyche.

My work often speaks to my profound fascination with the human experience, which I have come to understand is a powerful need driven by an atypical existence, that permeates every facet of my life. With deep appreciation for elements of Jungian theory, I both deliberately and subconsciously strive to express personal and archetypal narratives and perspectives, using surreal compositions which embody a spectrum of experience and being, including grief, joy, whimsy, humour, sorrow, curiosity, longing, regret and many others I have no names for.

Jarring or unsettling juxtapositions and impossible encounters appear commonly in my artworks, always pushing the boundaries of my understanding and ability. The significance of my work, often created in a hyperfocused, trancelike state, is sometimes glaring, and sometimes only becomes apparent after deep reflection. I strive for authenticity, trying to never contrive meaning or force interpretation on viewers. These pieces often provoke unbidden triggers in myself and others and connecting with my audience and peers through this channel, has been invaluable.

My artistic journey is a crucial pursuit of the truths I seek in myself, and a desire to provoke examination, and bring meaning and joy to others.

NIKI MCQUEEN, 2024

PORTFOLIOS

NIKI MCQUEEN ART

FINE ART, SURREAL AND SYMBOLIC WORKS

<https://nikimcqueen.com/portfolio/niki-mcqueen-art/>



LIFE BEYOND REASON ART

LIGHTHEARTED, WHIMSICAL AND FAIRYTALE WORKS

<https://nikimcqueen.com/portfolio/life-beyond-reason-art/>



TECHNIQUE

"The techniques I use and processes I follow in creating my artwork are, as far as I know, relatively unique. I developed them myself over several years through a process of experimentation and modification of traditional artmaking techniques."

MY PROCESS:

1. I start my process by creating a digital composite consisting of up to 50 different images and image fragments drawn from public domain collections and my own hand-drawn work.
2. Once I am satisfied with the digital layout of the picture, I hand-print the composition onto Fabriano Artistico 300gsm or 640gsm Hot Pressed archival paper. I laser-print components of the composition, transposed so that they will be the right way around on the paper, and then carefully place them onto the paper using a light box. I transfer them using solvents and I layer some darker areas several times over.
3. I then use the solvents and laser toner to paint and even out the composition. This forms the underprint which I work with,
4. Using the underprint, I hand-draw the entire picture using fine-liners, technical pens and art pens, adding depth, detail and balancing elements of the drawing to perfect the composition.
5. For works with black backgrounds, I next apply masking medium over the drawn and printed areas I want to preserve.
6. I then create the background of the picture, using watercolour and ink washes (for pictures with lighter backgrounds) or a matt black charcoal formulation (for images with black or dark backgrounds). These are applied with a variety of brushes and tools.
7. I then remove the masking medium (if used) and touch up the pictures and add finer details where needed.
8. This is followed by adding colour to the pictures using inks, watercolour pencils, alcohol markers, metallic powders and a variety of other mixed media.
9. I then UV-seal the artwork, using a universal fixative and sealant.
10. Next, I add any metallic leaf if the work involved has leafing detail and I finish by varnishing this leafing.
11. I then sign, number and photograph the picture.
12. I finish by adding a final layer of protection using Schminke matt spray varnish, which lightly coats and preserves the artwork.

ORIGINAL VARIANTS

As hand-printing is a foundation step in my creative methodology, a very limited series of original variants of each artwork is made available. I typically make between 1 and 10 limited edition original variants of each work, the exceptions being commissioned works and extra-large (22 x 30") works, wherein only one iteration is produced. The variants are curated with meticulous care, and while no two are exactly alike, with nuanced distinctions setting them apart, the intrinsic spirit of the original creation is carefully preserved in subsequent iterations.



Example: Variants 1 and 2 of 5, of Perfect Ruin, 2022

PORTFOLIO 1: NIKI MCQUEEN ART

These are selected artworks from various themes and collections in my [fine art portfolio](#), which includes commissioned work, surreal and symbolic work, and whimsical work



THE DARK MUSE COLLECTION



UNFORGIVEN



ICARUS IN GOLD

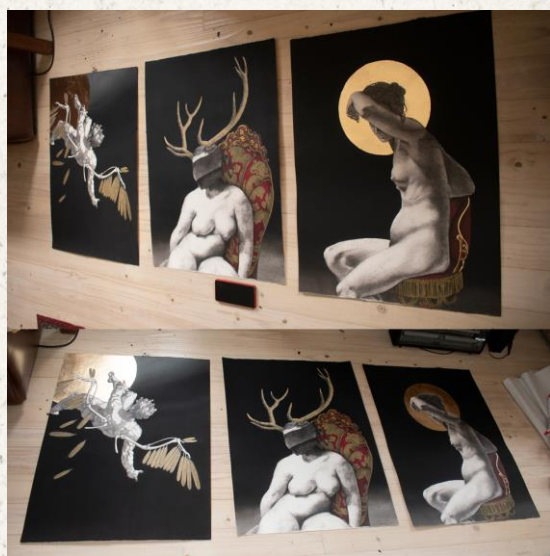


UNSUNG:
SELF PORTRAIT 2022



YEARNING

These are the first four extra-large format works I made, all 56 x 76 cm, on Fabriano Artistico 640gsm HP paper, currently on show at Fine Art Africa in Hout Bay



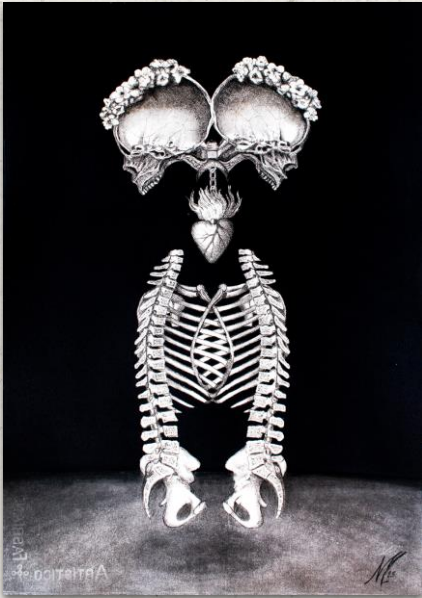
CURRENT PROJECT

ARCHETAPESTRY

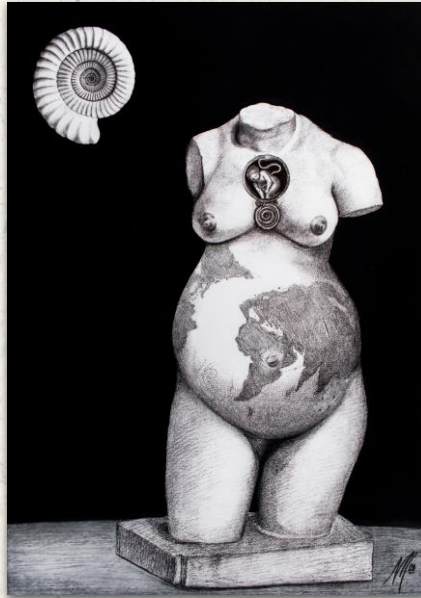
These are a collection of my personal reflections of Jung's Archetypes.

This series of 10, of which 8 are complete, is a work in progress which I aim to finish by mid 2024. They are all 38 x 54cm, created on Fabriano Artistico 640gsm HP paper, UV-sealed and matt-varnished.

<https://nikimcqueen.com/portfolio/archetapestry/>



THE LOVER



THE MOTHER



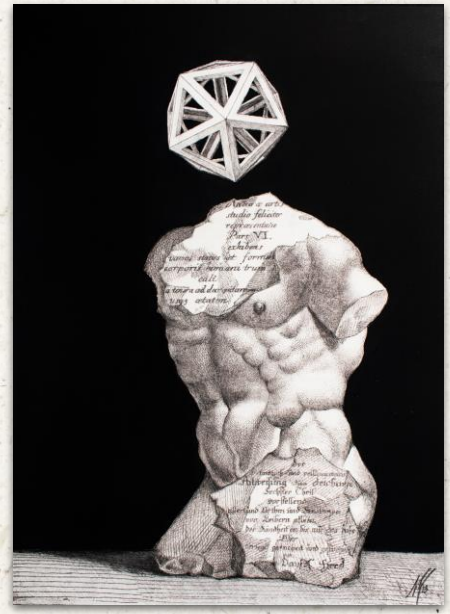
THE VICTIM



THE ANIMA



THE CREATOR



THE SAGE

THE MASKS WE WEAR

These three works are available for show.

Created on 640gsm Fabriano Artistico, and float-framed in Kiaat, each measuring 680mm x 780mm.



DEER ME
SELF PORTRAIT CIRCA 2021



F-STOP:
REPURPOSING THE GAZE

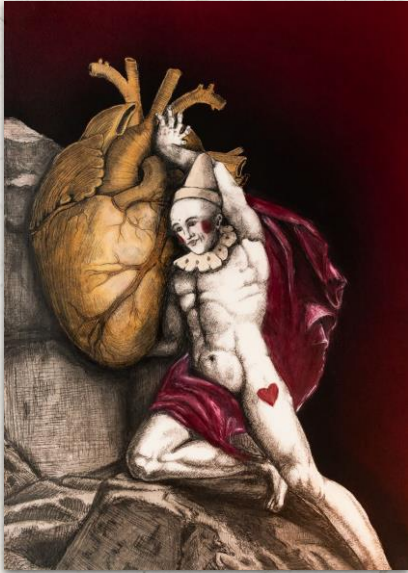


CABIN FEVER
SELF PORTRAIT CIRCA 2022

THE DARK CIRCUS

Smoke and mirrors, Perriot's paradise. Here lies face the surreal comichorror of everyday existence, gnarled and brittle, blighted and beautiful.

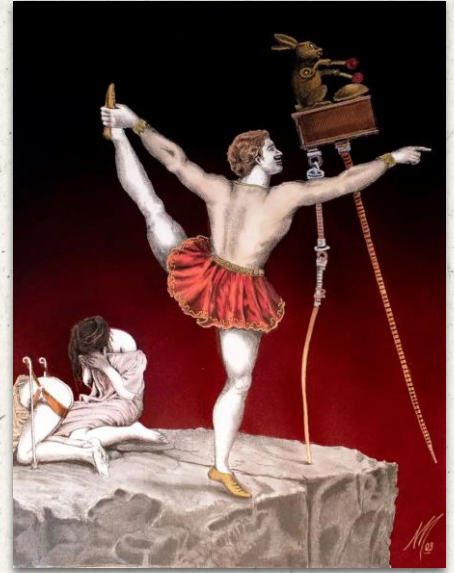
<https://nikimcqueen.com/portfolio/dark-circus>



FOOL FOR LOVE



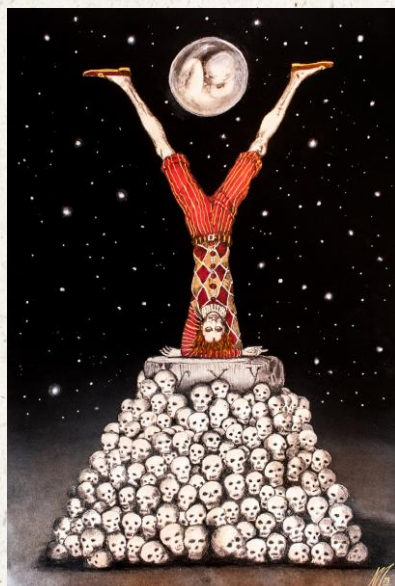
THE TOLL



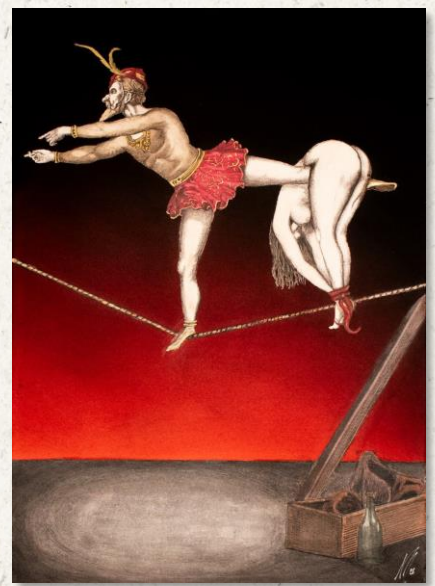
THE MOURNING AFTER



SACRAMENTALITY



MAGICIAN INVERTED:
THE LAST LAUGH



THE PERILOUS POSE OF
THE PATRIARCH

TALES BY GASLIGHT

A survivor's journey collection, created for victims and survivors of domestic abuse.

<https://nikimcqueen.com/portfolio/tales-by-gaslight>



PERFECT RUIN



THE REFUGE OF CONSTRAINT



LOVE ME TENDER



ALL THAT REMAINS



DOMESTIC BLISS

HEDONOPHOBIA

Dystopian worlds and fever dreams. A place for uncomfortable and discordant feelings, dark humour and fragile things.

<https://nikimcqueen.com/portfolio-category/hedonophobia/>



EQUUS



SIN-THESIS



THE SIN EATER



MATER VULNUS
(THE MOTHER WOUND)



THE ORACLE

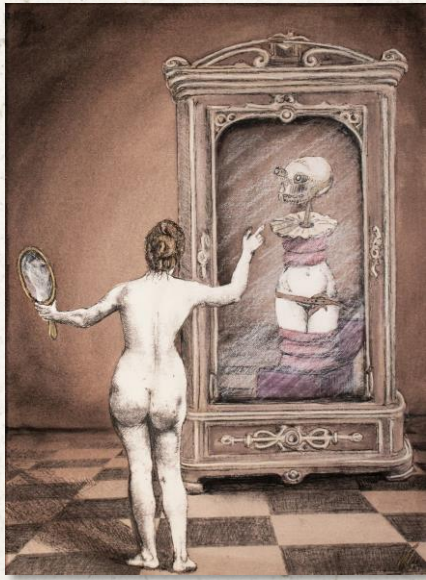


LIFE OUTSIDE TIME

THE PSYCHE

Discordant feelings and fragile awakenings. Love and loss. Lost and becoming.

<https://nikimcqueen.com/portfolio/the-psyche/>



PERCEPTUAL FRAGILITY



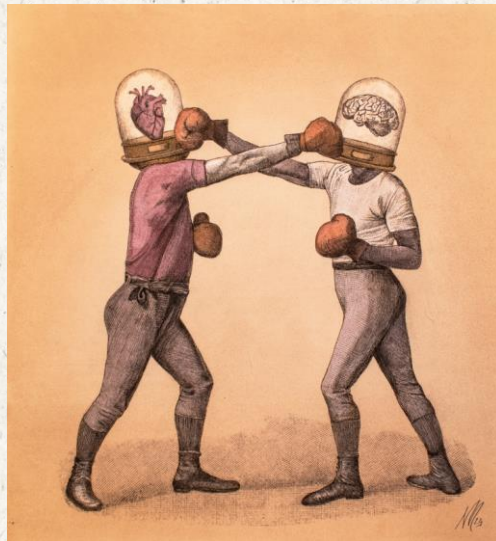
SCARRED



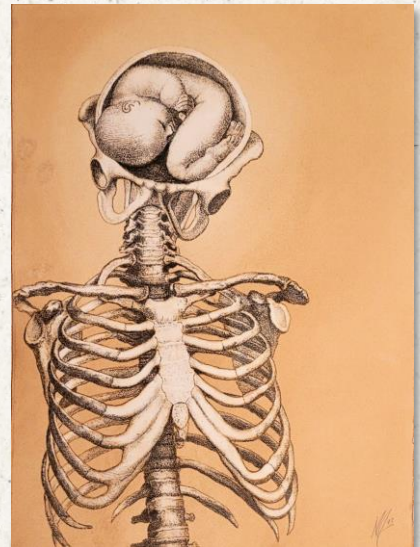
NARCISSA: THE VOID WITHIN



MOTHER'S LITTLE HELPER
SELF PORTRAIT NOV 2021



INFIGHTING



IMAGO II: THE PERSISTENCE
OF MEMORY

ELYSIAN DREAMS

The very first stories I remember were tales from Greek myths and legends, Goddesses, gods, nymphs, titans and a cast of characters and archetypes that still hold me spellbound. These are they, reimagined, repurposed, revived.

<https://nikimcqueen.com/portfolio/elysian-dreams/>



MELISSA



PSYCHE



MEDUSA



AMPHITRITE



SELENE



CALLIOPE

WHIMSICAL WORLDS



QUEER FLOCK



ONDINE



THE TROUBLESOME
MUSINGS OF MISS VICTORIA



BIRDHOUSE IN YOUR SOUL



FAMILY PORTRAIT



PORTRAIT OF A
SEAMSTRESS

AMANDA PALMER AND THE DRESDEN DOLLS

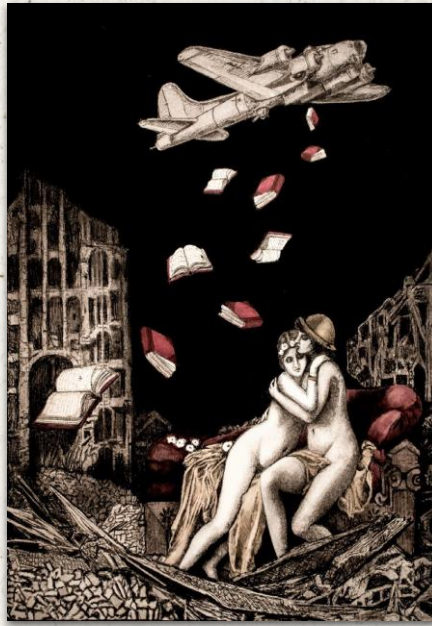
These from a collection of work created for the Dresden Dolls and Amanda Palmer with whom I have collaborated a number of times, used to create posters for their 2023 and 2024 tours.

<https://nikimcqueen.com/in-unison/>.



REUNITED

Main tour artwork for 2023 tour

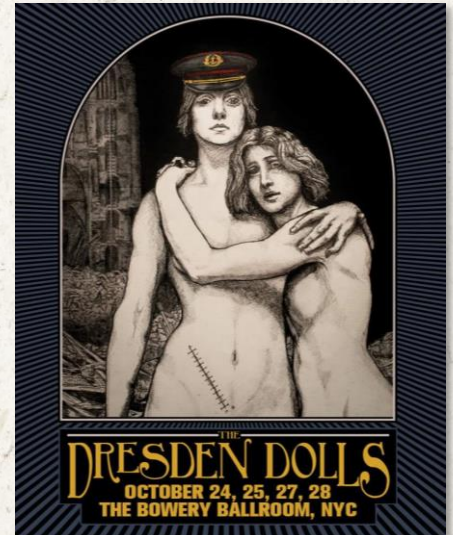
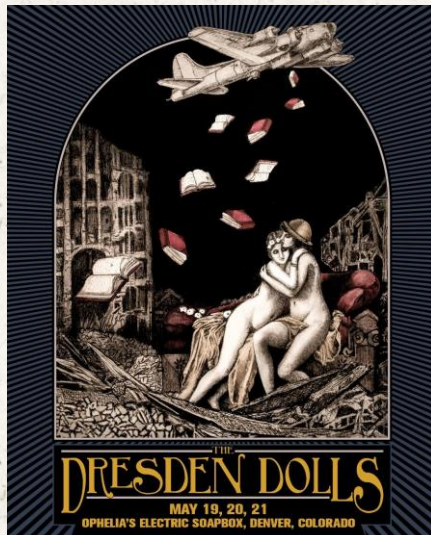
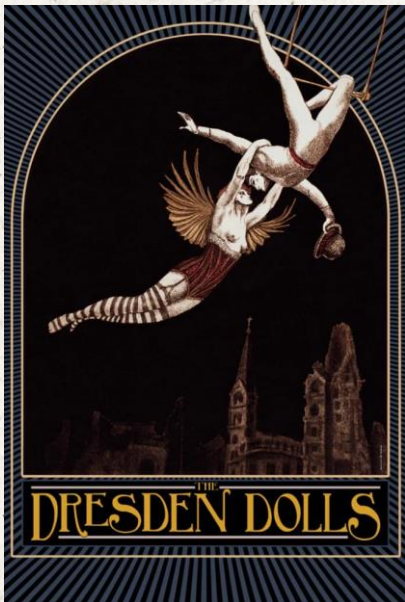


LOVE IN RUINS

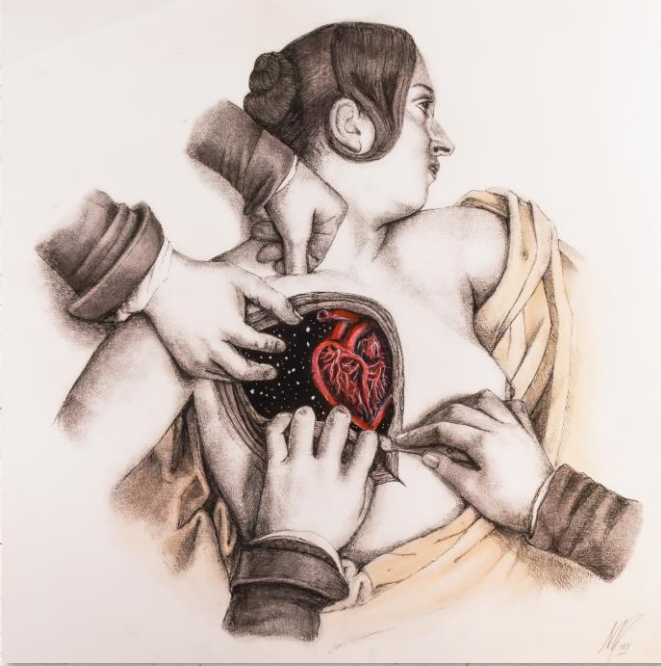


MY SALVATION

2023



AMANDA PALMER AND THE DRESDEN DOLLS

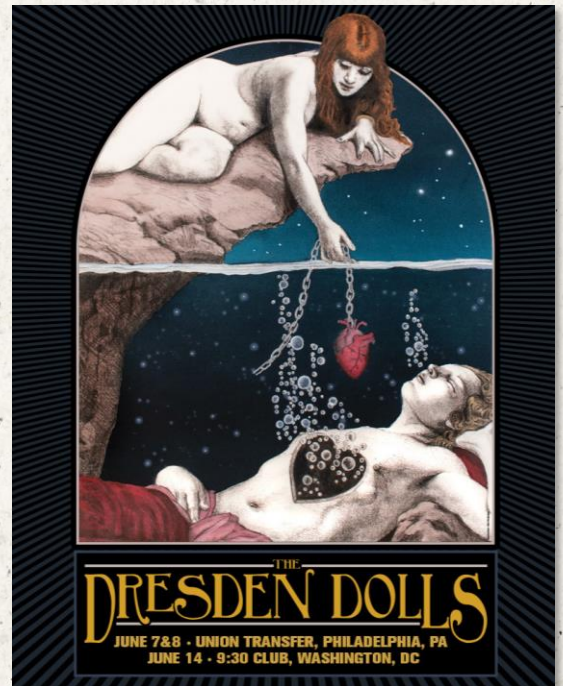
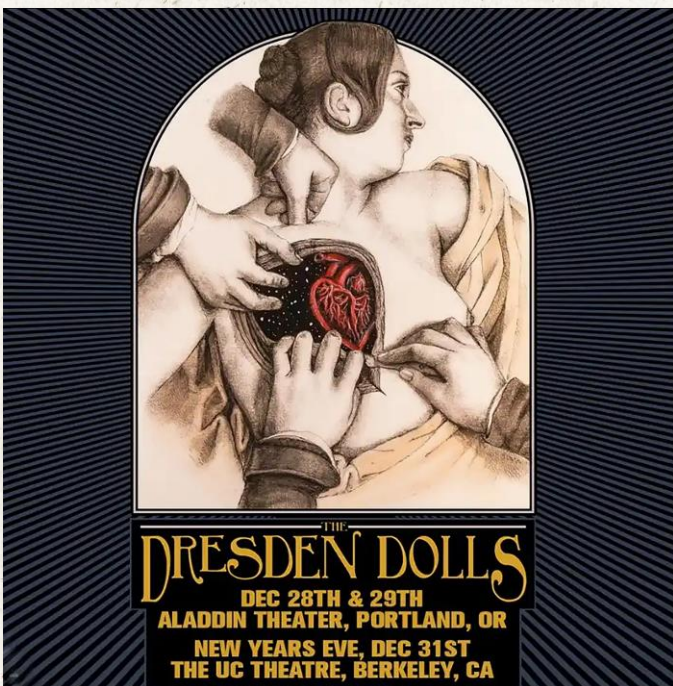


TAKE IT



ROCK BOTTOM

2024



THE PLAGUELAND CHRONICLES

Niki's personal journey through the COVID pandemic that swept the globe in 2020, in 35 works or 'Chapters', often incorporating the character of Alice in Wonderland (Plagueland) as a metaphor for her journey into a surreal new existence.

<https://nikimcqueen.com/portfolio/plagueland/>



ALICE IN PLAGUELAND CH 1: PANGOLIN PANIC



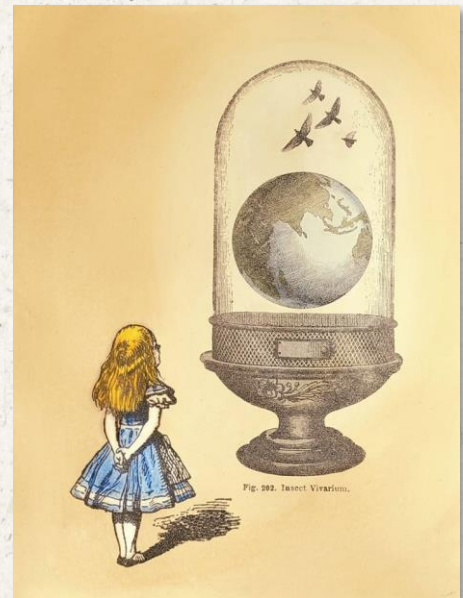
CH 13: OUT AND ABOUT



CH 3: BAT COUNTRY



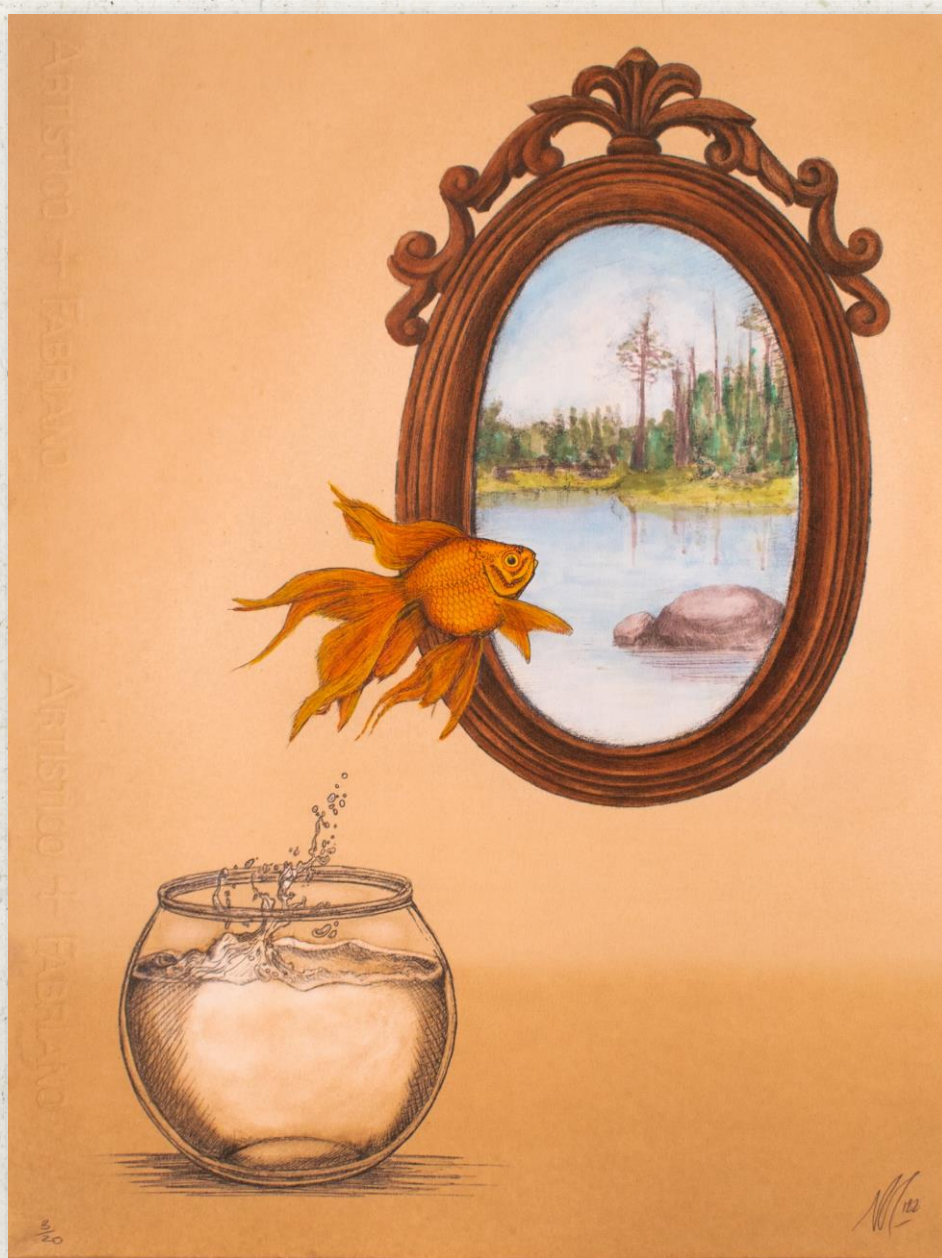
CH 18: LEARNING THE HARD WAY



CH 8: INTO ISOLATION

PORTFOLIO 2: LIFE BEYOND REASON

*This is a selection of available works from my
fairytale and fantasy portfolio.*



LIFE BEYOND REASON



THE GREAT ESCAPE
(2021)



THE ORCHARD
(2021)



CARRIED AWAY
(2021)



FAR, FAR AWAY
(2021)



THE GIFT
(2021)



CATCHING STARS
(2021)



I DREAM OF THE SEA
(2022)



BLOWFISH
(2021)



TIME FLIES
(2021)



WINGMILL
(2022)



MOONFISH
(2021)

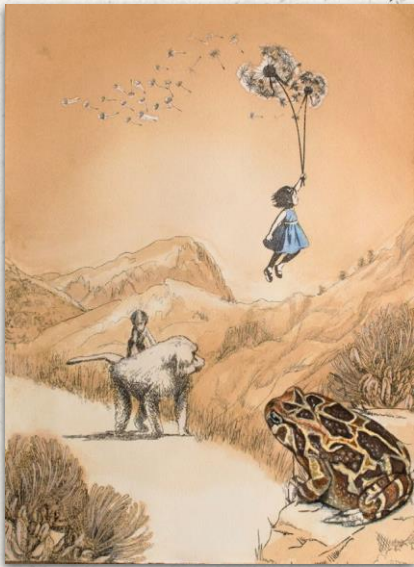


BALLOONFISH
(2023)

WHERE THE WIND BLOWS

This series of 10 works aims to raise awareness of threatened and endangered species, particularly in South and Southern Africa. Little Max has embarked on a journey to visit these beloved and beautiful creatures before they are gone forever.

<https://nikimcqueen.com/portfolio/where-the-wind-blows>



FYNBOS WINDS



RIVERINE WINDS



BUSHVELD WINDS



WISE WINDS



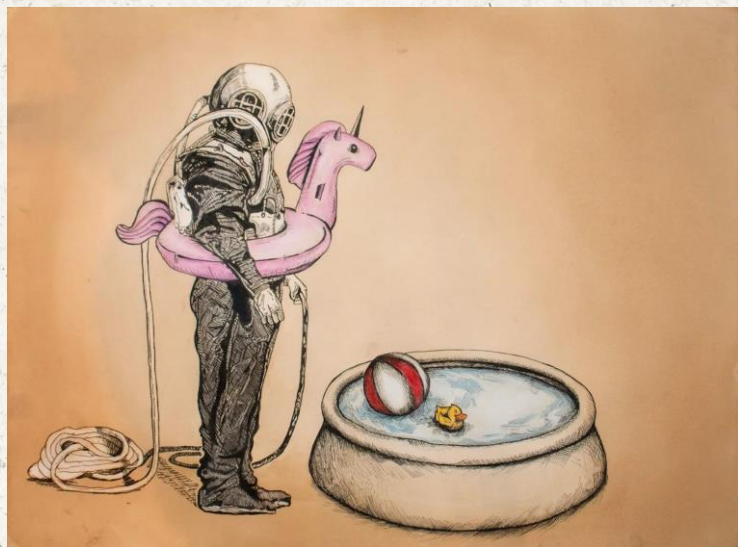
WILD WINDS



HARDLAND WINDS

NOTABLE WORKS

The following are some of the works that have placed in or won awards or been published or globally recognized.



SUMMER IN PLAGUELAND

Placed in the top 100 in the Sasol New Signatures Competition 2021



WONDER

Placed in the top 40 of the Vuleka Competition 2021



THE DANDY LION (L)



F-STOP: REPURPOSING
THE GAZE (L)

DEER ME: SELF PORTRAIT
FEB 2022 (R)

Both placed in the top 40 of the
Vuleka Competition 2022

KEEPER OF LIGHT (R)

Both went viral on social media,
garnering over 10000 likes
collectively, and over 3000
comments. Audience reach
impressions were over 1 million



NOTABLE WORKS



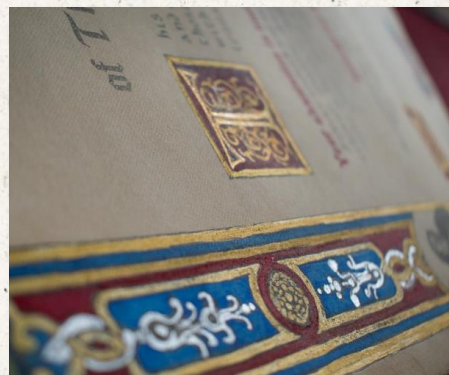
REUNITED

The main 'hero' image for [The Dresden Dolls](#)' reunion tour in 2023. I have made over 10 tour posters for the band to date, who are based in the USA, but have a large global following.



ESCAPE TO LOVE

This was created for a solo show by [Amanda Palmer](#), lead singer for The Dresden Dolls, bestselling author, internet personality and well-known civil rights activist. I have created several works for Amanda since, including the album cover for her 2023 single.



INDULGENCE

This was created for [Nathan Monk](#), ([Father Nathan Monk](#) on Facebook), bestselling author of *Russian Sleeper Cell* and internationally renowned human rights and gay rights activist.

PRESENTATION

DOCUMENTATION

Each work is accompanied by a certificate of authenticity, presented in a custom-made envelope, wax-sealed.



FRAMING

I float-frame my work with a simple contemporary wooden frame to accentuate the deckled edges of the work, choosing a wood colour which compliments the artwork.



CONTACT AND WEB DETAILS



CONTACT DETAILS:

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WEBSITE:

<https://nikimcqueen.com/>

SOCIAL MEDIA:

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/nikimcqueenart/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/lifebeyondreason/>

Threads: <https://www.threads.net/@nikimcqueenart>

Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/NikiMcQueen>

Etsy: <https://nikimcqueenart.etsy.com>

I am more than happy to provide any additional information you require, including exact prices per work, various commission rates, full terms, a detailed breakdown of my portfolio and collections.

Please feel free to ask me anything!

Many thanks,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, featuring a large, sweeping 'N' and 'M' that are connected, with a horizontal line extending to the right.

NIKI MCQUEEN