

When did you start your photography?

I began photography only 4 years ago, after going blind 5 years ago. Surgeries saved my vision (mostly) and once I could see again, I was so disappointed in how flat and ugly "reality" was. You see, when I was blind -for about 9 months/1 year- I had been sighted all my previous 40 years and while I maneuvered around the world in a new way, with a "twig" or "stick" as we call them (a blind cane), I envisioned reality to look so much more vibrant than it was. When I could SEE again, it was flat. And suddenly, I found a camera and realized I could make the world look as bold and vibrant as I wanted...

Did you attend schooling for it?

Not really. I met a mentor, Mike Riches, at Portland Community College's Darkroom. He had been a professional film photographer for 40+ years, and he taught me everything I wanted to know. He gave me assignments if I asked for them and he directed me toward "the greats" and their biographies, etc. With a shot on my first roll of film, bought at a thrift store for \$15, I got a photograph into a NY show: Krappy Kamera at Soho Photo Gallery.

What is your basic background?

This is funny because my basic background is not artsy at all. And yet, that is where I find my destiny and potential; in art. I got a master's degree in Conflict Resolution and even attended a Ph.D. program in Canada for Peace & Conflict Studies. I had some sort of vaporous goal to "save the world" somehow and I worked as an Administrative Assistant for all my adult life, until now.

What opportunities or struggles have you had/faced to get where you are now?

Well, there are too many to list here. Most recently I have gone blind and recovered. I have died and come back to life with a failed liver, even. (Dying on video interviewing the famous photographer Ben Von Wong, no less.) But what is important is that I walk around in a miracle mindset. I am grateful for the simple everyday things and I am organized and ready for the opportunity. That is luck, right? Preparedness and opportunity. Most importantly, and this is a quote from an anonymous source, "I don't believe in miracles. I rely on them."

Where do you see yourself going from here?

I want to constantly improve and learn more about the art of photography. I want to pursue my never-ending ideas and visions with others - with true enthusiasm - and have fun. I'd love to continue making bold statements in my art and pursue the ever out-of-reach "greatness" in art and spirit.

What advice or message would you like to give future artists?

Future artists...Pain is important, but so is healing and joy. You don't need to create out of pain and you don't need to struggle. Feel your way into your work and get lost, but always come back. Stay grounded and yet, also - always - fly to the moon. We are contradictions ourselves being infinite spirits in a mortal human body. Embrace love, embrace your limited-ness as human but never forget you are an infinite soul and there is truly no limit to you or our universe.

What did you seek to portray with the cover photo?

The cover photo is one of a fine art series entitled: ALL SEEING EYES. This is the statement:

As women and identifying females everywhere, we see, we act. Our voices are not loudly heard or read, or broadcasted as often, but we act - many times without fanfare. We see all that goes on around us and we work tirelessly for our families, for our societies, for our communities and yes, sometimes, we get to work for ourselves. We see the misogyny, we see the harassment, the violence, and the global policy enacted against us. We also see those that support our voices and our causes. We are expected to be beautiful, wear glass slippers, cook, clean, take care of families, have children and never complain. But world, we are here. We exist and there are enough of us that SEE. That act. That vote. That work. We do all the above and more. We clean our homes, we take care of our families, we do the emotional work without value or pay and we continue to fight for equality because we are strong. Supporting women's voices is about changing the way the world perceives the strength of a woman. We continue toward progress. WE SEE THIS ALL.

Body Painter & H/MUA: @amanda_mcgahay

Background painter & Photographer: @jadybates

Models: @littleprettyhellion, @artfulicon1, @ambernicotra, @margo_bae, @ishtar_unveiled, & @amanda_mcgahay

Find more of Jady's work on Facebook @jadybatesphotographer and Instagram/Twitter @jadybates.