

# Ashley Johnson



Bremerton, WA

Email [ashley.johnson075@gmail.com](mailto:ashley.johnson075@gmail.com)  
Website [ashleyjohnsonstudio.com](http://ashleyjohnsonstudio.com)  
Instagram [@ashleyjohnson\\_studio](https://www.instagram.com/ashleyjohnson_studio)

## Artist Statement

There is an exchange that I am after, between human and non-human. While I am deeply looking, I also feel deeply looked at. My work is an attempt to convey my own becoming and dissolving that is inseparable from the generosity of the forest. At the core of my practice is a rigorous engagement with observational painting which allows me to inhabit both the poetry and the endurance of prolonged looking. This includes weekly life room sessions, plein-air landscape painting, and still-life painting. I see my observational work as a series of clues that reveal my visual proclivities and my formal seductions. My observational work informs my parallel practice of sketching out narrative scenes that engage with concepts more directly. I find each of these working modes to be thin on its own but potent when allowed to intermingle with one another.

I make paintings depicting figures immersed in the landscape, blurring the borders between figure and plant, and flickering between perspectives. I am building a body of work that begins to stitch together the observed body, the imagined body, the photographic body, and my living body physically building the image. Navigating and flipping between them throughout the act of making provides a rich soil of unanswered questions, allowing room for the paint to answer. Because for me how something is painted is just as important as what is being painted. I am physically building thickly layered oil paintings as bodily reenactments of an experience with the natural world. This looks like experimenting with different paint applications such as pouring, scraping, brushing, and sanding. This looks like an admitting to the connections and disconnections and leaving them both on the surface of the painting to be seen. I want to make paintings that communicate subject through the body of paint, that go beyond representation.

## Bio

For me, it is all about what the paint can hold and how it teaches me to hold. I was working as a critical care nurse in the Air Force while stationed in Biloxi, MS, and on Tuesday nights I drove two hours to the New Orleans Academy of Art to take an Intro to Drawing class. Filled with flashbacks of five years prior as I walked past the art department on my way to my nursing classes and watched the

students carrying their big drawing pads still haunted me years later. Somewhere on a freeway between New Orleans and Biloxi, Mississippi, with a big drawing pad in my backseat, I entered into a quiet knowing that my life had to change. I separated from the Air Force and spent the next four months walking the length of the west coast from the Canadian to the Mexican border, giving me thousands of miles to think, heal, and dream.

I began by hiking the state of Washington finding myself overwhelmed at the question of how one changes their life. I found some sort of strange comfort in the color green and thought that perhaps living among these generous green hues could teach me something about change. And so I moved to Bremerton, WA, and began studying painting under Kimberly Trowbridge in her Atelier program through Gage Academy of Art parallel to my part-time job as a Registered Nurse at St. Michael's Medical Center. It was here that I fell in love with oil paint, that thick-colored mud began its slow process of teaching me how to truly be with myself. After three years of study, I couldn't get enough and so I began applying to graduate school and spent the next two years completing my Masters of Fine Arts at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Graduate school is where I began piecing together my lineage as a painter, where I learned to interrogate the pictures I was making, and where I began reading and writing about art.

In the months since completing my graduate degree, I have had the incredible privilege to rejoin Kimberly Trowbridge in her Modern Color Atelier program as an instructor and mentor. Giving me a chance to give back to the same local creative community that nurtured and witnessed me six years ago. I have recently shown my work at the Fountainhead Gallery in Seattle, and am scheduled to be published in New American Paintings' upcoming MFA issue. I am also a recent recipient of an Elizebeth Greenshields Grant (2023) a Fred and Naomi Hazell Art scholarship recipient through PAFA (2021) and a two-time Dennis Evans and Nancy Mee Scholarship Recipient through Gage Academy of Art (2018, 2019).

### **Education**

2022	Masters of Fine Arts, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA
2017-2020	Certificate in painting, Gage Academy of Art, Trowbridge Atelier, Seattle, WA
2012	B.S. Nursing, Point Loma Nazarene University, San Diego, CA

### **Teaching**

2022 - present	Modern Color Atelier Instructor, Gage Academy of Art, Seattle WA
----------------	--

### **Group Exhibitions**

2022	Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition
2021	Fountainhead Gallery, Seattle, WA
2020	Best of Gage Group Show, Gage Academy of Art, Seattle, WA Spitting Image Self Portrait Show, Gage Academy of Art, Seattle, WA

## Awards/Honors

- 2023 Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation Grant
- 2021 Fred and Naomi Hazell Art scholarship, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts
- 2020 Merit Award, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA  
Staff Pick Award, Best of Gage Group Show, Gage Academy of Art, Seattle, WA
- 2019 Dennis Evans and Nancy Mee Scholarship Recipient, Gage Academy of Art, Seattle, WA
- 2018 Cultural Arts Foundation Grant Recipient, Poulsbo, WA  
Dennis Evans and Nancy Mee Scholarship Recipient, Gage Academy of Art, Seattle, WA

