



left, Consulting the Almanac, oil on canvas, 28" x 20"

above, A Shrimp on the Barbie, oil on canvas, 30" x 30"

Forever the Farmer's Daughter

written by Lorie Lee Steiner

In art, as in life, Angela Morgan is one expressive gal who just can't resist colouring outside the lines. With effervescent glee, this farmer's daughter calls up the carefree days of her childhood in rural Saskatchewan and vividly reinvents them on canvas. Through boisterous paintings and prose, Angela infuses both her work and surroundings with character, charisma and bubbles galore!

Now with children of her own, Angela realizes how much growing up on the prairies continues to influence her thoughts and passions. "I come from a long line of farmers on both my mother's side and my father's side. I adore a good thunderstorm and know there is nothing better than a spring rain after all the seeding is done. An overturned ten gallon pail still looks like a good place to sit and eat lunch, and I know I will never be too old to join Dad on the combine for

left, It's not a mystery, It's Just The Past, oil on canvas, 72" x 30"



right, All Superheroes Wear Kick Ass Underwear, oil on canvas, 36" x 36"





Like Taking Sand to the Beach, oil on canvas, 24" x 60"

a few rounds. The prairies have a hold on me and I often celebrate my colourful beginnings in my paintings."

Home Sweet Homes

Angela grew up in the town of Pense (pop. 500) outside of Regina, Saskatchewan – a province rumoured to generate some of Canada's most prolific and talented musicians, artist and writers, mostly due to those long cold winters. "My winters were spent in rinks, figure skating or watching hockey," says Angela. "Summers were, for me, the most creative time. Finally things came to life again! The gardens, the ripening of the wheat, flax and canola fields, summer storms rolling in, the line of red, rust and orange boxcars travelling the horizon carrying the crops away. Fall time was precious, as we only got a few short weeks to enjoy

the vibrant colours of the trees and grasses."

This small town was also home to Joe Fafard, and Angela recalls the privilege of knowing his daughters and spending time in his studio. "I remember gazing at his wall of ceramic glazes and feeling the tingle of... Possibility? Little did I know until much older what an amazing experience that was."

Angela grew up believing she could do anything, which included heading off to North Dakota on a basketball scholarship to Bismarck State College. "I intended to pursue a business degree, then segue into fashion design once I got a handle on how to be a financial guru. Hah! I took a sculpture class as an elective and loved it. The art department was run by Richard Sammons, who quickly became my hero. His passion for art, his students and the creative process inspired me,

and it was he who suggested I switch majors and move on over to Fine Arts."

Living in the mountainous region of Fernie, BC for the last 12 years has given Angela a new appreciation for the prairies. A trip back home brings the anticipation of seeing all the sky at once. The land draws her in – the crops and their colours and the enormous living tapestry they weave. She has tried to paint landscapes but doesn't believe the canvases measure up to what she feels and sees. People are what really light her creative fire.

"I grew up with a prairie town's fair share of characters and inimitable personalities. The people of my youth were from all sorts of backgrounds, of all shapes and sizes, mannerisms and dreams, with unique tastes, quirks and habits. My work celebrates these many aspects of personality and humanity." From the time she arrived, Angela found the Fernie

community awash with artistic opportunities. Exhibitions at the local Arts Station and fabulous local restaurants were priceless to a "very green emerging artist." With the tourism draw of world class skiing, fly fishing and mountain biking, the scenic town attracts visitors from all over the world. "Fernie has been a huge part of the growth of my career as an artist," says a grateful Angela. "The exposure I first received here was truly serendipitous."

Balancing Work & Play

Angela's studio is nestled in the convergence of three valleys in the lower eastern corner of BC. The Elk River meanders through the town and the Three Sisters (range/mountain) stand sentinel. It's a place she finds conducive to the creative spirit; where lifestyle can be balanced with work and

play. "Studio – the word thrills me. The implied creativity, the idea that anything could be going on in there. I have a library of thousands of books that I must have around me. I am organized. I am disciplined. I work best under pressure. I burst."

Inspiration is fuelled by well-known creators such as illustrator, Lisbeth Zwerger and designers Alexander McQueen and Canadian favourite, Lida Baday. "I paint fashion, I dream of wonderful things to wear," Angela gushes. "I have a lipstick fetish, fawn over the colours. How many beautiful shades of red are there? I love to go to my show

openings and never miss the opportunity to arrive in something fabulous! OMG, Fluevog, the sweetest shoes ever. Jewellery, silver baubles, I buy a piece of Karen Chopik for every show I do."

More than a visual treat, Angela says her shows offer a distinct olfactory experience. "Gotta love the smell of oils. My first experience with art was in my grandma's painting space, an upstairs bedroom where she also kept her sewing machine and her stack of shoeboxes filled with the most gorgeous shoes. Grandma painted landscapes, buildings and scenes that captured the wind, the

We Don't Worry About It When It Rains, oil on canvas, 36" x 36"



Unfolding of a Journey, oil on canvas, 36" x 36"

feel and the look of life on the prairies. In a recent visit to my studio, Gram declared that I had more dried out oil paint on the palette than she has used in a lifetime."

Studio practice consists of 7 to 9 week periods when Angela paints every day, followed by 2 to 4 weeks of vacation and travel time. She notes, "Something that always stuck with me was advice from one of my painting professors, who lectured us that we had to paint what we knew. If you've never been to Venice don't paint the bloody canals, if you've never eaten at a café in Paris by streetlight, don't paint it! That advice still keeps me grounded. Prior to my pregnancy with twins, I painted these lovely sexy elongated lithe figures, and as my pregnancy wore on my figures morphed and changed. The shapes filled out, became more voluptuous and full figured. I didn't realize this change had occurred until a year later, looking back on my work it was easily recognizable."

Angela's life isn't all cocktail parties, canapés in the garden and days at the beach, but it is definitely fun and diverse. As is her list of fave

artists: "Rachel Berman for her stories, Sophie Jodoin for the breathtaking ability to scare me, Jenny Saville for scale, Mary Pratt for simple moments of wonder, Bo Bartlett for composition, Waterhouse for romance, Jylian Gustlin because she's so amazing, Vitaly Medvedkovsky for intrigue, Alan Wylie because he's just perfect, Charles Malinsky for sexy and sexier. I'm drawn to black and white, even though I infuse my paintings with colour. I also like the melancholy drama of some of these artists. A contrast to the themes that define my work."

Help!

Beginner or pro, everyone needs a little help now and then. Angela admits, "I only had 25 - 30 hours a week to work when I first gave it a go at being a professional artist. Unfortunately half those hours were spent on mundane details. I am a firm believer in doing what you do best and decided to get someone in to help me organize, so I could dedicate my precious working time to actual painting."

The third person to apply was Judy. She sat



Angela M. ...



previous page, Born with Aplomb and Disguise, oil on canvas, 36" x 48"
 above, I Liked The Colour Of His Voice, oil on canvas, 24" x 24"

down, looked at Angela, at the space, and proceeded to interview her potential employer! Angela jokes, "Judy hired me then, I mean I hired Judy, and it has been the best thing I have ever done for my studio practice. She keeps me on schedule, accountable, organized, professional and sane!"

Well-meaning friends and family are always proffering new subject ideas – 'you should paint this,' or 'here's a great title.' Angela relates, "I received a phone call from an uncle, known for his extremely analytical and logical approach to the world, declaring that he had just seen a painting of mine at a bus stop. Thinking this odd, I asked what he meant. He insisted – he had seen three older ladies in their finery sitting together on a bus stop bench laughing and chatting away, eating the largest ice cream cones. THEY were the painting. He said he understood now where I got my ideas from. He got it! I think if we take time to really look around we can be constantly amazed at the

quirkiness and craziness of the world we live in."

For that reason, Angela keeps 3 or 4 sketchbooks of various sizes on the go at all times. Little ones for her purse, another for the vehicle, a big bedside one – because you never know when an idea will present itself.

Buckets of Energy

"Play is a big part of my life," says Angela. "I have four children between the ages of 9 and 12 that are dynamic, creative, curious and energetic. Family life has invariably snuck into my paintings in the form of subject matter and inspiration. There is a delight in the world at this age of childhood, and spending time with family and friends has reopened my eyes to those magical moments of youth."

One day, when her daughter was four years old she walked around the studio, carefully eyeing up weeks of production. "Nice, Mom," she said, "but you're not a very good painter are you?"



above, Moving Into Uncharted Territory, oil on canvas, 18" x 36"

below, The Clock Is Ticking, oil on canvas, 24" x 36"





Keeping the Memories of the Year to Myself, oil on canvas, 24" x 30"



You Were Going To Tell Me Something, oil on canvas, 40" x 20"



left, YMurder Is Only Half The Act, oil on canvas, 32" x 24"
above, The Icing, oil on canvas, 32" x 32"

Taken aback, Angela replied, "Why honey?"

"Well, Mom, because you just can't stay in the lines can you?"

It's true. Angela's delightful, unrestrained passion spills right out the door into the garden. The more chaotic and random the planting, the happier she is. Her greenhouse overflows with garage sale & antique shop treasures – tin buckets of every colour, anything she can plant a flower in that is old, rusted and hiding secrets comes home. That same colourful imagination shines through in every facet of Angela's busy life. "I gave my Grandad a small painting of a woman with blue eye shadow and red lips. He had it in his living room and had to ban it to the front hallway. Said she wouldn't stop talking. I know. Late at night sometimes in my studio, all these girls I paint get loud and obnoxious. There are some running conversations I have had with paintings for weeks

that have exhausted me."

With a seemingly endless flow of energy, Angela keeps her social calendar jam-packed – hosting dinner parties, ice skating and lobster and poutine-eating winter frolics; garden parties and BBQs; Christmas cocktail parties that end at 6 am with breakfast for 50. She says, "I love to gather people together – it gives me the energy to slink off to the studio once again and hole up for weeks to be creative. Cliché, but those types of nights feed the soul."

See the entrancing paintings of Angela Morgan at her working studio: 598 Second Avenue, Uptown Fernie, BC.

And at the following fine galleries:

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