

'Coeur Libre': interview with American artist Laurel Holloman Special

Posted Apr 6, 2012 by [Anca Dumitru](#)

After the successful opening of her first Parisian solo art show, Laurel Holloman shares her vision on 'Coeur Libre,' ('My Heart Is Free'), her newfound career as a painter, and looks ahead to new artistic horizons.

As reported previously by [Digital Journal](#), Holloman managed to finally stage an even art exhibition in the French capital city to showcase her work to the public for the first time since she transitioned from her acting career to painting at the end of 2009.

A day after the opening, the newly established artist kindly accepted to answer a few questions for Digital Journal in a candid interview where Holloman explained how connected she is with her art on a personal and emotional level.

Really pleased with the outcome of the opening night, the artist is grateful for the support of her fans and is hopeful that, throughout the duration of the show, people who are interested in the art world will come and see it. The exhibition has been installed in a 48-hour record time with the support of a small yet devoted team: "I had some wonderful installers from Venice, Italy, which were given to me as a great gift, because I don't know if I could have installed this by myself. I paint really large pieces and I need a lot of help hanging them right," said the artist. 18 paintings were initially part of the show, but in the end Holloman decided not to exhibit "I Walk Alone" and "She Burns My Eyes" in order to remain consistent with the show theme and composition.

As to Holloman's style, she can go with bold brush strokes and bright colors, but she could turn around and paint in black and white or with browns and oranges and create the same kind of emotion. "I feel like abstract art works really well when it has a certain movement to it," explains the painter.

When she planned this exhibition, Holloman had in mind a couple of key elements. "One was to show composition, color and use of brush stroke and make choices in that way," said the artist. Also, the paintings' titles connects them back to herself on a personal level. She also had to consider the large size of her work. Holloman's next challenge is going to be an exhibition in Venice, Italy, in July this year. "I'm going to paint larger than I've ever painted before. We'll see



how that goes. The space is enormous.”

While Holloman looks back to her evolution as an artist from December 2009 - when she worked on and donated a significant number of paintings to the Maassai Wilderness Conservation Trust - to where she is now, she believes her work back then wasn't nearly as complex as, for instance, the “Red Rain,” the centerpiece of the “Coeur Libre” exhibition. Those paintings were also inspired by what was going on in her life at that time as a mother of a little baby (“Unconditional Blonde”), and losing her identity as an actress (“Loss of Identity”).

Painting for the charities was the reason Holloman decided to put acting aside and just paint, because people around her saw how much happier she was this way, mostly her daughters. “It's not like I don't like acting, I do and I'm very grateful. But it's something that I've done and accomplished a lot in it. But the challenge of it is not as interesting to me anymore. And the roles for people my age are not quite as interesting,” elaborated the artist. Besides that, spending hours in a trailer on set, waiting to shoot a scene, was no longer appealing for the actress Laurel Holloman.

Now when she goes into her studio, she starts painting the minute she gets there and is creative the whole day. And above all, she has control over her work. “I think you reach an age, where you want to have more control over your creativity and your time, and I also love being a mother.”

The passion and drive about what she does exude in Holloman's dialogue. “When I start something that's artistic I have to feel really, really passionate about it and I was losing the passion for acting. And when I started painting, I had this feeling of the rush of it,” added the artist.

Looking at some of the sales she already made in the first days of her art show, one of Holloman's objectives is to see her price points go strong. “Female painters have lower price points than male painters, and I would like to exhibit more, as much as I can and keep making strong choices and paint bigger,” pointed out Holloman. Also, like any artist or painter, she has phases, but is clear about where she wants to head and what she wants to express as an artist. More technical paintings come with more variety and stronger choices.

Going into full time painting involved a number of challenges for the actress. Holloman explained as she was still auditioning for pilots she'd left to Europe to take on a large commission and missed the pilot season. “At that point, I had to make a choice. Because you see, I still have a team of people from that world that depend on me booking jobs, so I had to make a choice. And after that I'd just done a tour through Europe, like Madrid and London and Paris to educate myself,” said Holloman.

She then focused her attention on the art and design world, and parenting her daughters. Holloman believes she won't be happy unless she spends the next five years painting, and if it's

not satisfying in that time frame, then maybe she'll go back. "I don't miss acting," added Holloman.

The moment her six-year old daughter told her: "Mommy, I like you so much better as a painter than an actress," Holloman realized there's something about painting that relaxes her and satisfies her, something she no longer found in acting. She leaves though an open door to it: "I love that it is something I can go back to if I want to. I've accomplished a lot in that medium and I could go back."

As an actor whose biggest TV role spans over six seasons in Showtime's hit lesbian drama *The L Word*, Holloman thinks acting is a different medium now: "We still have a lot of reality TV and things like that, and it's trickier. It's a different world."

She keeps enjoying some of the best Showtime's TV shows like *Shameless* and *House of Lies*, but admits she hardly watches television since she's painting. She still didn't watch all *The L Word* yet.

While she studied both painting and sculpting, color was the factor that's drawn Holloman to painting. It's something she has constantly in her mind. She also takes a lot of pictures to usually paint from and feel inspired.

One of Holloman's paintings illustrates the cover of her brother's first novel [[Shades of Gray](#) by Andy Holloman]. She explained the creation process of it: "That painting is like two paintings in one. It started out, inspired by this amazing painter, Paul Jenkins, who does pour painting. So, it's like he does lots of different pours and oils and he also does water color. I pour painted it but I used a resin, so it hardened really quickly, and when I over-poured it, it bubbled and created that texture that you see on it, and then I went through a phase where I was working with gold and silvers, and I just knew that I wasn't going to use the painting, that colorful painting that was sort of inspired by this Paul Jenkins style."

"I was like, 'Oh, I have this canvas, I'm not sure... This painting is not working.' But I'm really into these metallics so I hand rubbed that painting with gold and silver, and that's what came from it. And once I did that, I realized that painting said so much more. And later I thought, 'There are two paintings. There's a gold painting or a silver painting, and then there's the painting behind it.' And so I back-lit it and when I've done that, the painting underneath came out of the gold. And the same thing happened with "Blue Valentine." And I realized that I had something. And so I wanted, and all these have paintings underneath. There's like a duality with everything. It's all in here."



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Laurel Holloman and Coeur Libre's piece de resistance "Red Rain"

Holloman described her creation process as something that she builds and grows. The painting always tells her where to go, but she controls it to some extent. "If you look at this painting ["Red Rain"], I've blended all the top and then I let all these colors show through and so this is a conscious choice to have more color on this side and a choice to have this green. Because I want it to look like a place with grass or like something growing. At those moments you can control it. I under paint a lot, I use a lot of under painting white, and like that's what "Spring Forward" is. I like things that give a ghost-like quality, like even "It's You, It's All For You". I like things that look suspended. I like images that look suspended like they're hanging in the air somehow and anything that has a good three dimensions."

"Coeur Libre" is a collection of paintings that resonates with Holloman. Two simultaneous main aspects of her life are at the core of it: freeing herself from her acting career and leaving a nine-year relationship. Although associated with a loss, she gained something from these experiences: breaking out and having the courage to be on her own while doing something else, something that makes her happier. "I think we have to wake up every day and do something that we love, if we can. Or at least try," adds Holloman, pointing out she was also encouraged to follow

her heart by her parents, who accompanied her in Paris. "Life works best if you have gratitude," concluded the artist.

Holloman tries not to let other people influence her paintings. She doesn't paint to please. Whether there's something harsh or warm in a painting, she just leaves it as it is. She paints to grow, express and move forward.

"Coeur Libre" exhibition is open to the public from April 4 to April 21, 2012 at the [Mairie de 5e](#) (Salle Rene Capitant), 21 place du Panthéon, 75005, Paris.

For details on Laurel Holloman art work please visit her [studio website](#).