

# FOCUSED

## *on the Purity*

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Mark Accetelli Onyx

## MARK ACETELLI CAPTURES A MINIMALIST TRUTH TO CONVEY MAXIMUM EMOTION

**P**erched high up in his studio on the top floor of Bendix Building in DTLA, one can find Mark Acetelli deep in thought, creating art that seeks to evoke a feeling rather than giving the viewer a defined image. His work carefully balances on the verge of dreams and reality, echoing the possibilities of the mind's eye and inviting us on an adventure of what could be rather than what is. Pulling inspiration from an intensely personal introspective journey of life, the ever-changing complexity of love, loss, birth, and death—Acetelli's anonymous faceless figures and neo-expressionism tinted work takes us on a journey filled with depth.

The dreamlike worlds Acetelli creates are something enate in him. Much like the music he creates, his paintings are ethereal, in tune with the infinite that one cannot truly dissect. His work has been a process of twenty years of taking away rather than adding, using minimalist palette, but maximum emotion. From an early age, art has been an escape for Acetelli. Being an only child, it often filled the role of a sibling or a playmate. Surrounded by his mother's music, he was always wrapped in something creative, so it became a part of him, part of the artist's DNA.

**At one point did you realized that you are going to be a painter rather than musician?**

*It was a little later in my life. I've always wanted to be a professional musician. My expressive view towards the world was through music. I took a break from music and bought a paint set. My mom is a painter, so why don't I try painting while I figure out what I want to do musically? I started painting and that was the best feeling I've ever had. It was so freeing. I could put all my emotions on the canvas. I didn't need a drummer, I didn't need a singer, I didn't need a bass player to put my vision together. It was just me. I am self-taught, but I educated myself as much as I could to express myself as much as I could. Because I felt like this was my true calling. You know?!*

**Do you ever play guitar in your studio to pull inspiration from music?**

*Oh yeah! I pull it out every once and a while. If I am not feeling it on the canvas, I can surely find something to play on the guitar. A lot of times when I play, I see colors, I feel them. I can create something in my head.*

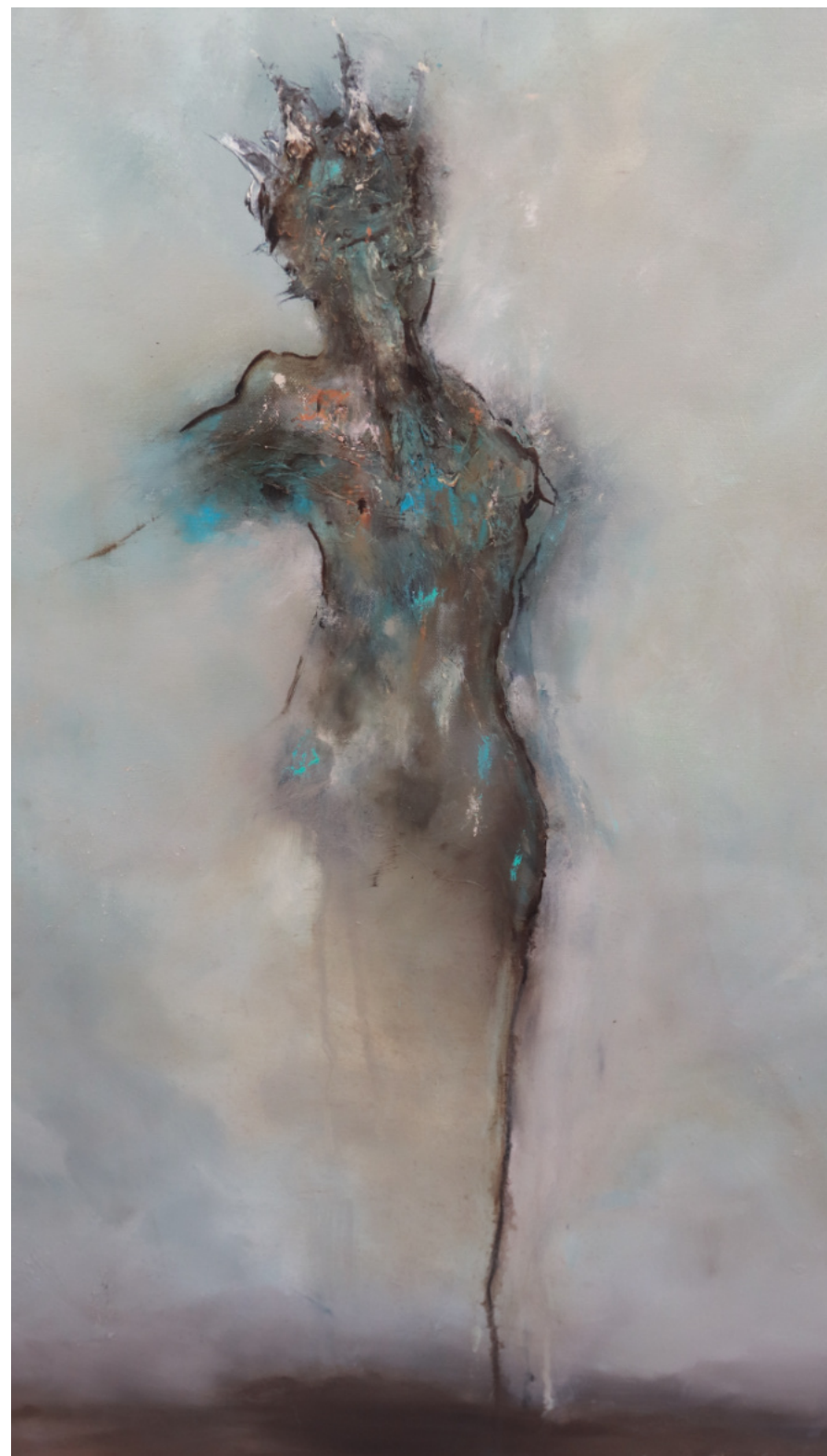




*It loosens me up a bit and I can go back to the canvas and execute whatever is in the ether.*

**You often pull inspiration from your surroundings? How much of that comes to you and pushes you to pick up a brush?**

*It's like a therapy for me. When I get up here to my studio, it's like going to church. I can find my solitude here. A lot of my work is trying to find solitude in chaos. I want to paint my reality. I try to bring temperature down, I try to bring a peace of mind, solitude to the work so that when people experience it, they pause to feel*



*something. Something that they have a dialogue with that's soothing, calming, reassuring. That's where I have been residing lately with these works. I have a series called Nocturns, which are very quiet. Almost like Beethoven's sonata. Space between the notes, colors are soothing, they are peaceful for me to look at and to create. That's how I deal with everything that's going on in the world. I go on hikes almost every morning after I drop my daughter off. I can see DTLA from where I hike – that's the jungle. That's the concrete jungle I will be going to momentarily. I try to take it all in, I take pictures of the mountains, especially when it's foggy. I bring all that back to the concrete jungle and it resurfaces on canvases in my work.*

*(Above)L: Dance of Lucia; R: The Little Prince.*



Mark Acetelli *The Past Becomes the Future*





**So almost like a meditation?**

*Yes, it is a meditation! Being a Zen monk and focused on just purity and honesty in my work. And it's not convoluted by anything else but the truth that comes into me and comes out on to the canvas.*

**How much of your daily life is spent in businessman shoes? How do you switch it on and off between two such drastically different worlds?**

*Every successful artist must be a little bit business savvy to survive, market yourself, to thrive. I've learned through my life of painting for over 20 years, there's a time where you must take off the artist hat and put on the business hat and really learn how to run a business, pay bills, to manage a budget. It's like anything else. I go to work, and I paint, but also on the days I am not painting, I'm working on the business and doing that side that I cannot stand, but I had to learn how to do it. I've gone through trial and error, I've asked mentors, I have a good accountant. All these things go into being a successful artist. It's not just showing up to paint which is the main thing. But also running a business like a business and growing it is a whole other art that you must either learn to embrace or get a business manager and let them handle it. I like to have my hands in everything that I do because it keeps me more present.*

**Speaking of business, what is the biggest challenge in today's world as an artist with digital world and AI?**

*That's something interesting and scary in the same breath. I think an artist's job is to stay relevant in all the noise. Keep showing up, doing the best that you can, but there's a lot of things that are out of your control. It's a bit of a scary situation when you put all this time and energy into the paintings and then release it to the world. It might be a hit, or it might be a dud. You just don't know. You must let go, let it be and be okay with it. That's one of the biggest lessons that I have learned – not to freak out, to have faith in the process, faith in your work and know that you can only do so much. Your work is not for everybody, and art life is not for everybody. If you want a paycheck every month, then art life is not for you. I like to create, but there's a lot of work that goes into it, a lot of worry, a lot of unknowns. You really have to have a thick skin, because you will get picked apart.*

— dC