

[www.erikabhess.com](http://www.erikabhess.com)

**2022**

# **ERIKA B HESS**



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**PAINTER  
PODCASTER  
CURATOR**

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Erika b Hess is a painter, curator, writer, and host of the art podcast I Like Your Work. Hess's work has been exhibited nationally including in NYC, Brooklyn, Detroit, L.A., Boston, and Philadelphia. Recent solo exhibitions include Marietta College (Marietta, OH) and MUSA Collective (Boston, MA). Recent group exhibitions include Contemporary Art Matters (NYC, Columbus, and Artsy) BHG Gallery (Canada), Co-Worker Gallery (Toledo, OH), and The Yard (Brooklyn, NYC).

She has been featured in various publications including Boston University CFA Alumni Magazine, Art New England, ArtScope, AllSHEMakes, and Visionary Art Magazine. Hess has curated and juried exhibitions, publications, and awards including Create Magazine, Friend of the Artist, Cambridge Art Association (Cambridge, MA), Gallery 263 (Cambridge, MA) AllSheMakes, Arts to Hearts, Riffe Gallery (Columbus, OH), and she has served on panels at SCOPE (Miami), Cleveland Institute of Art, and Boston University and frequently lectures at colleges such as Wellesley University, Massachusetts College of Art & Design, Missouri State University, Eastern Michigan University, and many others.

Hess maintains an active studio practice in Columbus, OH, and in Long Island City in New York where she keeps a selected inventory of work. She is represented by Contemporary Art Matters in Columbus, OH.

Hess received her MFA from Boston University.

# ABOUT



THE NEW YORKER

SCOPE

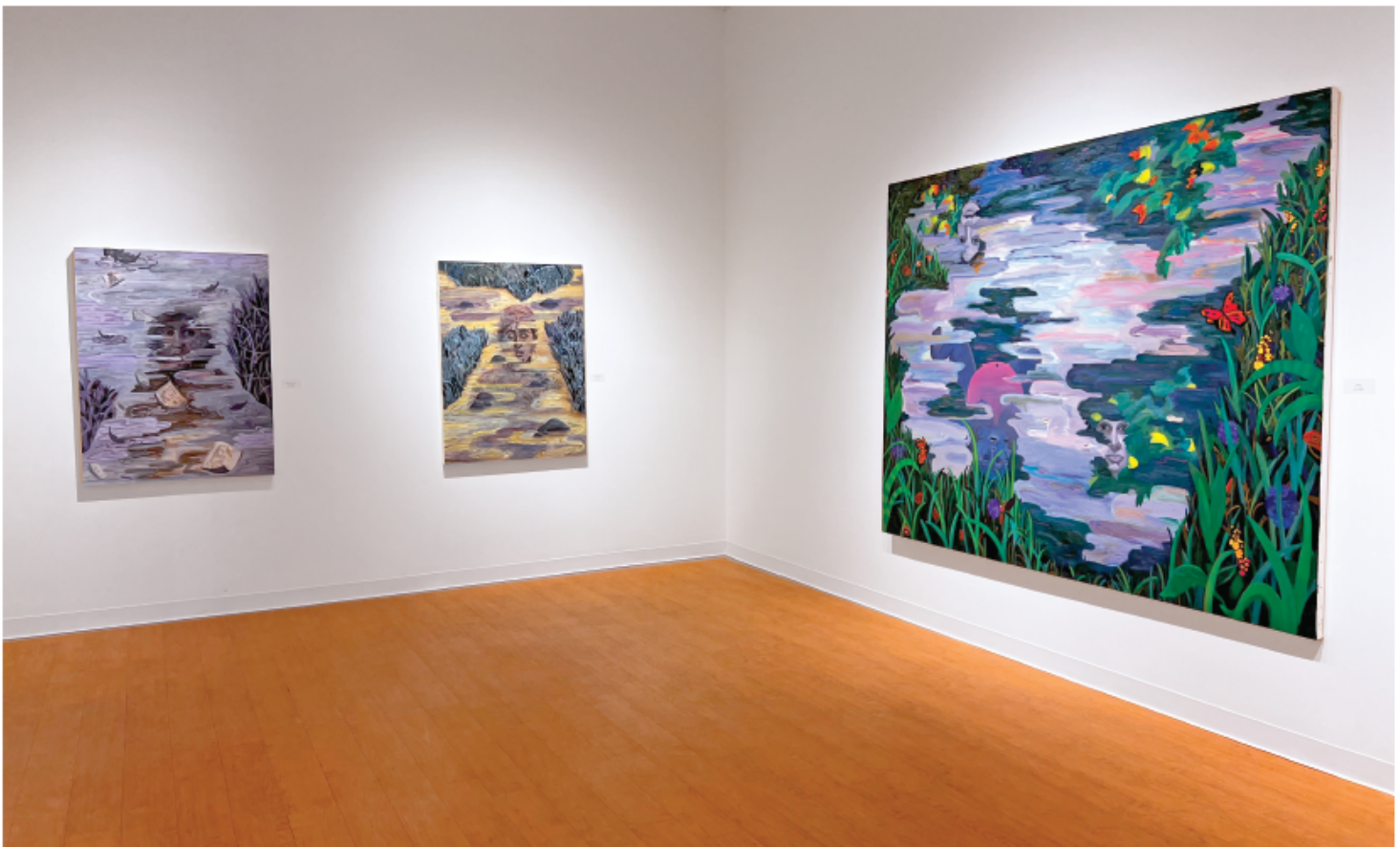


ARTGIRLRISING

**TO SCHEDULE A STUDIO  
VIST IN NYC, COLUMBUS  
OR VIA ZOOM CONTACT  
ERIKABHESS@GMAIL.COM**



**STUDIOS: COLUMBUS, OH/NYC**





# **SOLO EXHIBITIONS**



**HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN SINCE YOU'VE BEEN OUTSIDE  
MARIETTA COLLEGE  
2022**



## ***How Long Has it Been Since You Have Been Outside?***

The title of Erika Hess' exhibition of recent paintings is presented as a question: "How Long Has it Been Since You Have Been Outside?" Taken literally, Hess might appear to be asking her audience where they have been spending their time during the anxious months of the COVID-19 pandemic, but the real intent of the question is to open up metaphors. The semi-abstract landscapes of the artist's new canvases depict what the artists calls "re-imagined birth and death spaces as psychological landscapes." It may sound heavy—especially coming from an artist and podcaster known for her lively and optimistic demeanor— but the gravitas is intentional. This body of work reflects a genuine commitment to self-exploration and emotional honesty in response to challenging events. Seen as a group these paintings are intended to take viewer's outside the normal perimeters of the mundane towards a deeper state of consciousness.

Inspired by a friend's tragic loss, "Lost" is an act of artistic empathy that comes from a very deep place, one of a series of paintings that use the imagery of water to discuss emotional states. The artist's third child arrived several months into the COVID-19 pandemic and after her son's birth—which came with complications—she found herself suffering from postpartum depression. While nursing her son and worrying about his future Hess often stared at a pond across the street, internalizing the view and loading it with associations. Later, when a friend she had met during her maternity lost her baby, the awful news poured itself into "Lost," which was painted in a single emotional day. Activated by a beautiful/ugly palette of warm and cool hues, "Lost" has a kind of inescapable immediacy that speaks of pain without literally illustrating it. Irregular and amorphous—like the inkblots used in a Rorschach test—the streaky orange pond is a place where unconscious feelings are summoned to the surface then contained by a field of sonorous blues.

"Birthing Pains," which shares its palette and water imagery with "Lost," moves towards greater specificity. "I work in between different paintings until something grabs me," Hess explains and the presence of a triple-faced woman activates this work. Inspired by Renaissance "Trifacial Trinities" of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost (these depictions were censored as "Pagan" by Pope Urban in 1628) the central figure of "Birthing Pains" rises from a woven matrix of floating, horizontal brushstrokes. She sees everything—the past, present and future—and is surrounded by red hands raising themselves towards the surface, reaching upwards towards the surface. The hands suggest multiple interpretations including hope and the subconscious.

In this personal mythological zone—which Hess describes as a "space where everything aligns"—time stands still as birth and death are present as counterforces. Painted with gusto, with alternating fields of thin, thick and squirted paint, the canvas has a visceral physicality that adds to its impact. Both secular and cosmic "Birthing Pains" contains a feminist creation myth that simultaneously refers to

birth, consciousness and loss. Hess likes revisiting and updating themes from the past and "Birthing Pains" carries echoes of Botticelli's Renaissance "Venus," who is best described as a weightless Neo-Platonic ideal. Hess' self-aware goddess can be seen as an emotionally charged icon of womanhood that embodies a less-idealized but more conscious deity born into anxious times.

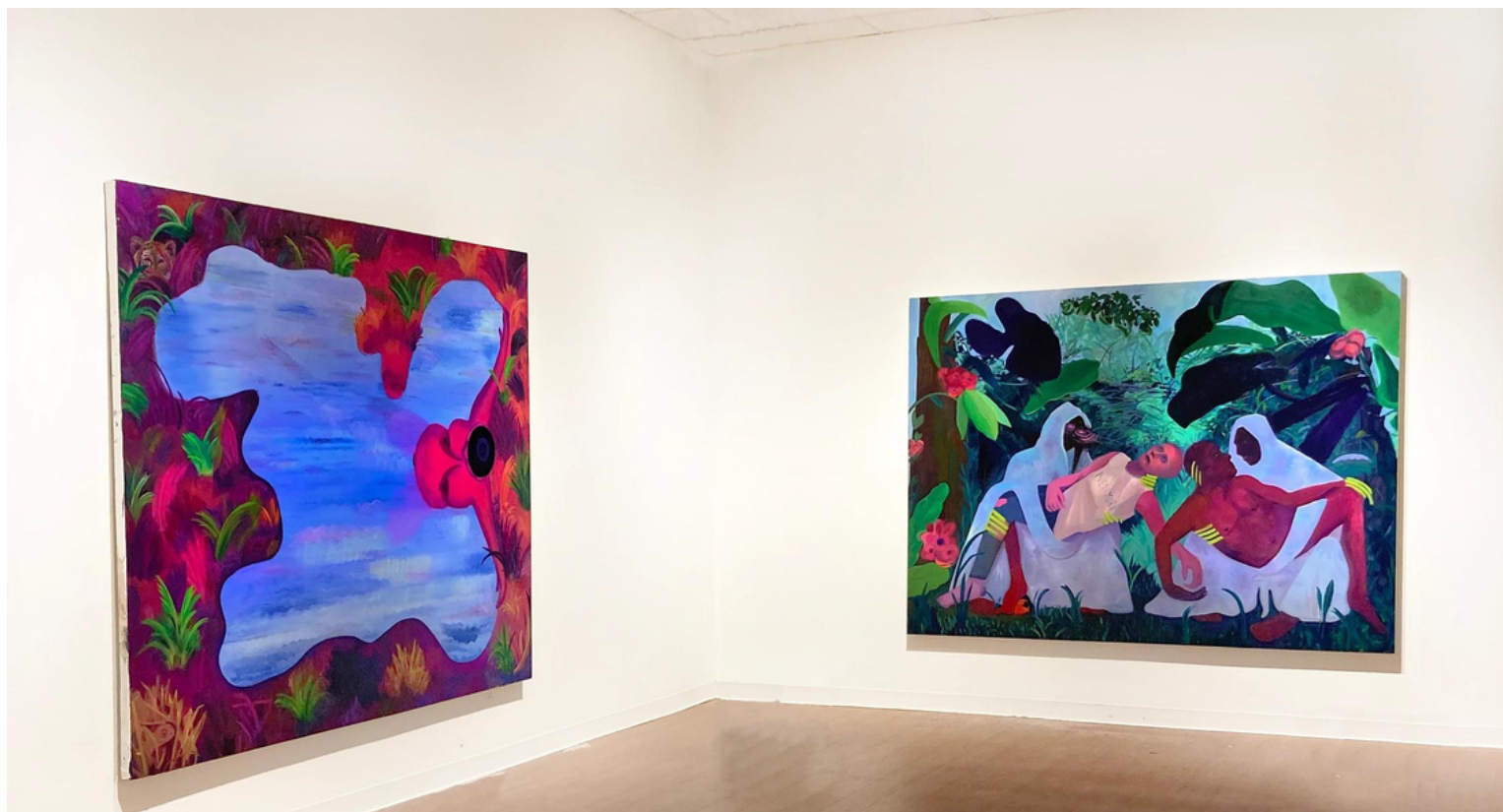
Renaissance themes are also updated and secularized in "Give Me Eyes So I Can See," a double Pietà that uses two human figures to reference multiple tragedies: AIDS and COVID deaths in New York City and the racially charged murder of George Floyd by a police officer. Supported by robed figures that symbolize both comfort and death itself, the two men reach towards each other to almost touch hands. It is a gesture that is both moving and tantalizingly incomplete. Surrounded by a stylized Eden that both shields and threatens they enact an other-worldly drama with moral implications. When Hess showed the work to visiting art dealer, she offered an opinion that summed up what the artist was feeling when she painted it: "The world is a messed up place at this time."

The tone of Hess' work seems to be moving tentatively towards a more sanguine outlook. Her latest painting, "The Fall," has a tragic title, but its evaporating pond is rimmed by images of nature flourishing. The woman who appears twice reflected in the pond—looking out at us both upright and inverted—feels like a sober and contemplative self-portrait. "The Fall" has a new tenderness and lightness of color that indicates a kind of metaphorical change of seasons. Grief and reflection are present, but so is the onset of spring. Stepping outside has become at least a bit more pleasant.

"The more emotionally versatile we can be, the better off we are as individuals and as a society," Hess comments. "I attempt to be in the present moment while aware that the now is impermanent and loss is unavoidable." By using her art to step outside the sanitized views of mortality and grieving that permeate our culture, Hess has steadied herself and explored new emotional and psychological depths. If those viewing her work are inspired to do the same, that is the greatest compliment they can give to Hess and her art. Of course, they might also notice that she is a very original colorist as well.

- John Seed

*John Seed is a Professor Emeritus of Art and Art History at Mount San Jacinto College. His writings on art and artists have appeared in Arts of Asia, The Huffington Post, Hyperallergic and numerous other publications. Seed is also the author of "My Art World: Recollections and other Writings" and "Disrupted Realism: Paintings for a Distracted World." His next book, "More Disruption: Representation in Flux" will be released in early 2023.*



**HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN**

**SINCE YOU'VE BEEN OUTSIDE**

**ERIKA B HESS**

**FEB 03 THRU APR 14**

**RECEPTION:** Friday, March 10, 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.  
Saturday, March 11, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

**ARTIST'S TALK:** Friday, March 10, 7:00 p.m.

**ARTIST'S RESIDENCY:** Erika B. Hess, 1000 N. 1st St., Suite 100, Phoenix, AZ 85004

**ARTIST'S STATEMENT:** I have been thinking about the concept of 'being outside' for a long time. It's a simple idea, but it's so complex. It's about the connection between the inside and the outside, the self and the world. It's about the moment when you step out of your comfort zone and into the unknown. It's about the feeling of being alive and present in the world. It's about the beauty of the world and the wonder of existence. It's about the joy of being outside.

IN A PUDDLE, WE SEE THE WORLD AND OURSELVES REFLECTED TO US IN A NEW WAY. WE ASK, WHAT ELSE MY TRANSIENT FRIEND? WE LOOK DEEPER. OUR MINDS DRIFT. EXISTENCE EXPANDS IN PUDDLE DREAMS. OUR NEW PERSPECTIVE CARRIES US TO THE SACRED, THE HUMAN CONNECTION WE HAVE TO BODIES OF WATER, NO MATTER THEIR SIZE, AND WE APPRECIATE THE SILENT CONTEMPLATIVE MOMENT."

JOLENE POWELL  
DIRECTOR MARIETTA  
COLLEGE ART GALLERY











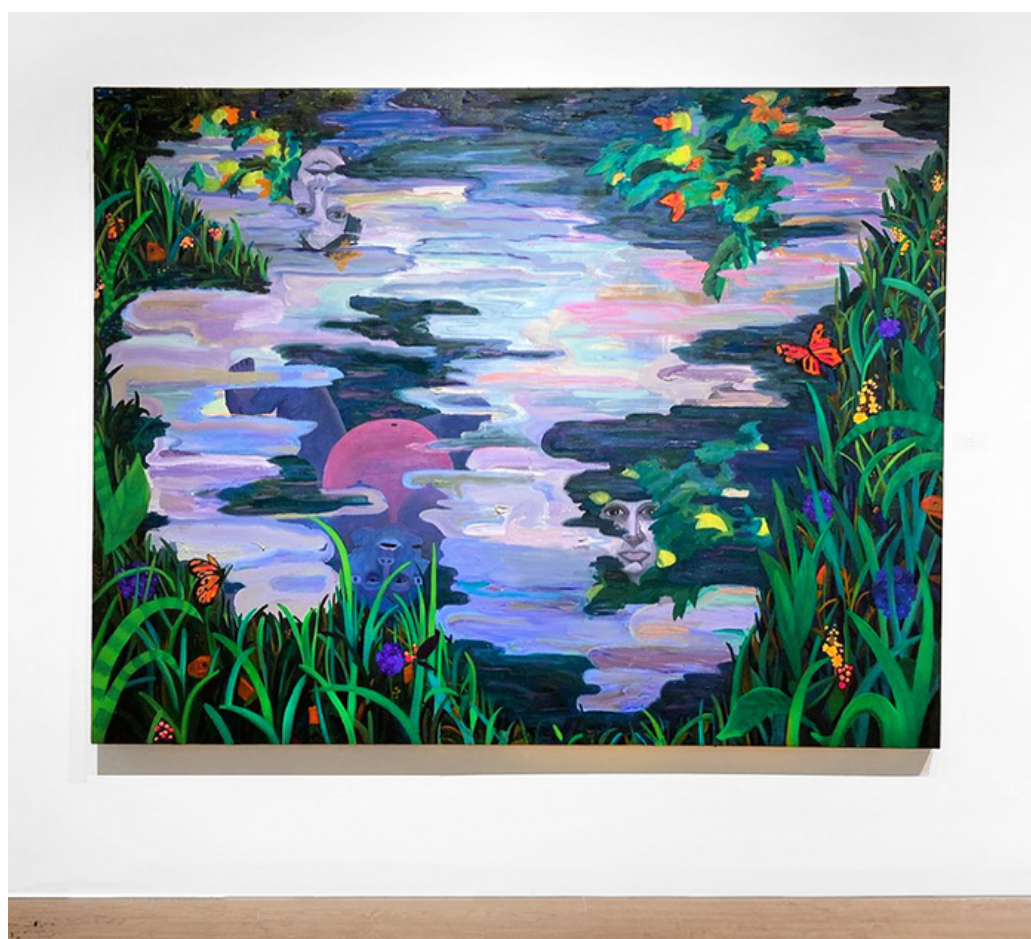






*Lost*, 2021, 24" x 30", Oil on birch panel





# SCOPE

## PANEL: MOTHERHOOD IN THE ARTS 2021





Erika B. Hess ('09)  
started the *I Like  
Your Work* podcast to  
connect artists and build  
a sense of community.



CONVER

SATION

# PODCASTERS ERIKA B. HESS AND ERIKA BLOCK ON THE ART OF STORYTELLING AND THE IMPORTANCE OF BUILDING COMMUNITY IN THE ARTS

Edited by Mara Sassoon

**ARTIST AND CURATOR** Erika B. Hess sits among the paints, brushes, palettes, and canvases that fill her converted garage studio at her home in Ohio. But on the desk in front of her are some very different tools—a big microphone and a laptop. In this space, she not only paints; she interviews her peers from the visual arts world, from painters and illustrators to curators and gallerists, for her podcast, *I Like Your Work*. On this day, Hess ('09) opens up Skype on her laptop and dials the Los Angeles-based abstract painter Tomory Dodge. The two launch into a discussion about Dodge's work—his use of color, his style of paint application—which eventually turns into a conversation about how taking up zen meditation has impacted his art.

Hess started *I Like Your Work* “to tell the stories of artists and create a dialogue that can lead to community. We see the work of artists and read their exhibition history, but when you hear about their lives, the day-to-day, you have a better understanding of their creations and can see yourself in their stories.”

Her conversations tackle issues many artists face, including work/life balance and managing finances. Through her podcast, she also partners with curators and galleries to host her own juried art shows. During the summers, she takes time off from the podcast to work on her paintings.

Clarinetist Erika Block (BUTT'96, CFA'02,'04) also balances her art with

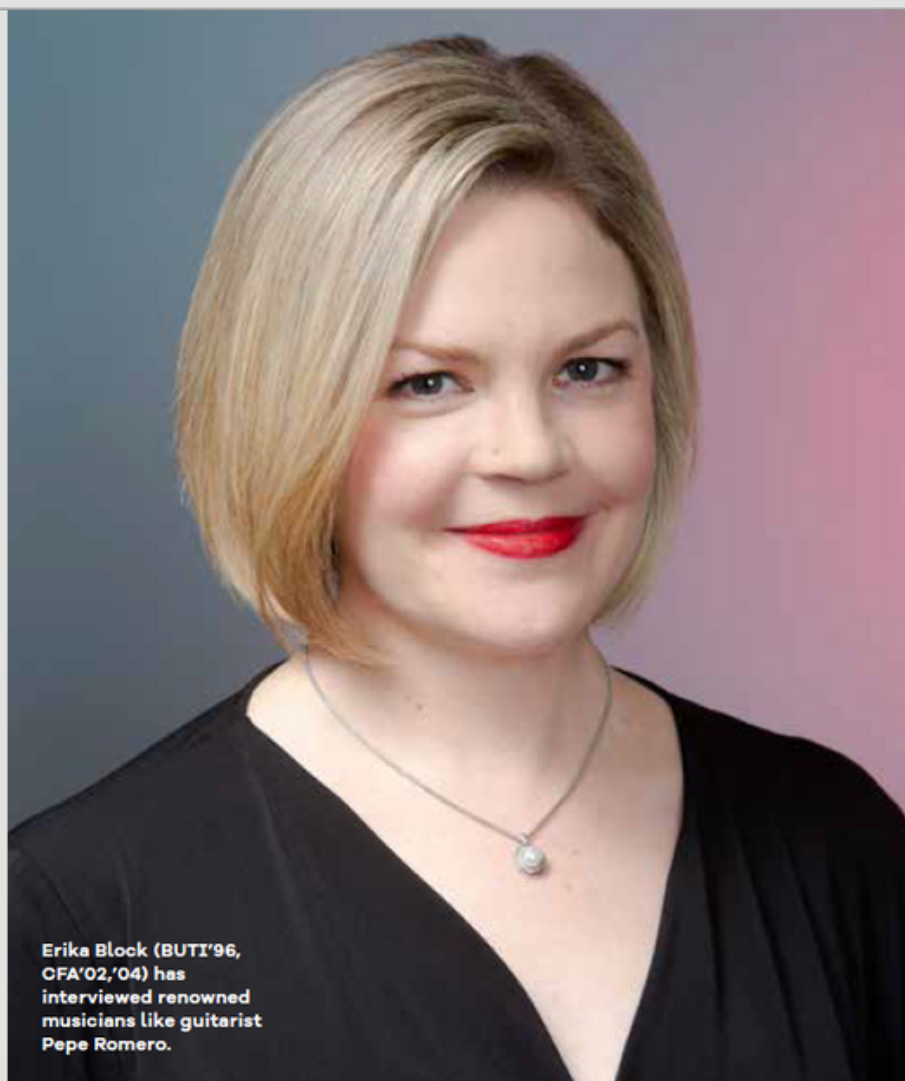
podcasting. Block, a clarinet instructor at Western Washington University, hosts *Inside the Notes*, in which she interviews fellow musicians from around the world, among them famed guitar player Pepe Romero; Richard Roberts, concertmaster of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra; and award-winning mezzo-soprano Jamie Barton. She conducts all of her interviews in person, fitting them into a busy schedule of teaching and playing in numerous music groups.

Both Hess and Block are in the second seasons of their podcasts. The two chatted by phone about their podcasting journeys and how artists can help each other succeed. They immediately bonded over their shared name—especially when Block revealed she was named after a Swiss alpine skier named Erika Hess.

**Erika B. Hess:** I'm so excited to connect with a fellow Erika from CFA. And it's exciting to connect with somebody who is in the arts and also podcasting. I'm eager to hear about why you started your podcast.

**Erika Block:** It's been an interesting journey. I ended up playing in a festival with this gentleman who used to play in the New York Philharmonic for 30 years. Right away he was like, “Hi, I'm Joe. Here's a crazy story.” He's an ultimate storyteller and just talked and talked. Then my husband and I went to dinner with him and he said the most insane things I've ever heard. It was amazing, eye-opening, and inspiring.





Erika Block (BUTI'96, CFA'02,'04) has interviewed renowned musicians like guitarist Pepe Romero.

When we left, I said to my husband, "Somebody has got to start recording things like this. Because there are so many other musicians who have so much to say too." My husband said, "You should do it."

It kind of exploded from there. Now, I can't imagine not doing it. I love it so much. We did 17 episodes last year. The way I do them is I stockpile and then release every two weeks. Then summertime is the time to gather, travel, and collect for the next year so that I'm not freaking out all year long.

**EH:** I know, because so much time goes into it, right?

**EB:** Oh my God, yes.

**EH:** I do the same thing—taking the summer off. Or I travel, and I can go to artists' studios and talk to them and see their work. I've been releasing weekly. It's a lot of behind-the-scenes work, which is actually really enjoyable for me.

I come from a visual arts background, so I wasn't sure what it was going to be like working with sound and trying to weave the story together and introduce it to an audience. But it's been such a delight to do.

**"I can't believe I'm getting to meet these people. First of all, I would be perfectly happy with a handshake and an autograph. And then it's, okay, now here's an hour I have to sit and talk with you."**

ERIKA BLOCK (BUTI'96, CFA'02,'04)

I think the other really interesting thing about podcasting—and I'm interested if you would agree or not—is how it puts you in contact with people who you've always wanted to meet, and how exciting it is to be able to ask the questions that you've been wanting to ask.

**EB:** It feels like when people say something like, "If you could have coffee with any two people in the world, who would it be?" It feels like that over and over again. I can't believe I'm getting to meet these people. First of all, I would be perfectly happy with a handshake and an autograph. And then it's, okay, now here's an hour I have to sit and talk with you. It's ridiculous. Then by the time you're done with the interview, you're friends, because you shared this journey of discussion. You exchange phone numbers and, eventually, you have a whole new network.

**EH:** That makes me think about something I think we're both interested in—this idea of building community in the arts. Podcasting is just such a wonderful way to connect with people.

There's a painter I've looked up to for a long time, Joanne Greenbaum. I ended up interviewing a curator who works with her and that's how I then got the introduction to Joanne. I traveled to New York and went to her studio and talked to her. This was during the polar vortex.

**EB:** That's crazy.

**EH:** I know, right? We were freezing.

It was just this moment of thinking, "Oh my gosh, I have studied your work. I have read interviews with you. And now I get to sit here and talk to you, look at your paintings, and hear your story." It was an incredible experience. Like you said, you continue to meet new people and connect them with each other as well and that's another cool thing, right?

**EB:** Absolutely, and I think you'll agree in all of the arts, the network is so small and the world really is so tiny that you realize that all of these different people are connected. So, I think it's important to boost community pride and the sense of here we are doing the same thing, with our whole hearts, as hard as we can.

**EH:** I think another reason I love podcasting is because it's a way to add to the dialogue and create opportunities for others. Even some of these really well-known artists are flattered that people want to hear their story, and that



somebody is taking an interest in recording it and sharing it on a new platform.

**EB:** Yes. It's a win-win for everyone. I'm hoping that by having it recorded, people have the opportunity to hear someone's story in their own voice, which to me makes a huge difference. You hear their voice inflections, their view from their experience, firsthand. We're getting the most honest possible version of stories that we can get when we record straight from the source.

I've found so many times after I've finished a recording, I'm so wrapped up with excitement and adrenaline. When I'm editing and listening to it, it's like I'm reliving it again; I can listen to it five times and get something different every time.

**EH:** I love hearing that you get totally jazzed after an interview.

**EB:** Oh man, yeah. I'm a mess.

This past summer, I had the chance to come to Boston—it was this crazy adventure to get to the home of one of the most famous clarinet player soloists of all time, Richard Stoltzman [an adjunct professor of music at CFA]. He's a legend. The plan was that we were supposed to talk for an hour and a half, from 1 to 2:30, but he talked and talked, and it took him so long to jog his memory. He was like, "I hadn't thought about these things in years," and then all of a sudden, the memories started coming out.

We talked until five o'clock at night. And I was so tired and so excited from the wealth of information, the fact that it happened at all, the fact that I got some incredible stories. Editing that to one episode was so hard.

**EH:** You're inspiring me. I need to get out to some of the older artists who I love. I mean, these are people who I'd love to meet, so I'm going to make the leap.

**EB:** You've got to. For me, it's all about the younger students. Podcasting is something they will accept and try. They will put on Spotify, stick their headphones in their ears, and listen. If I can get them to learn about storytelling from hearing good storytelling, then I'm doing a service to their musicality. That's what music is. It's telling stories, learning how to play with detail, and learning how to lure your audience in.

## "You feel like yes, what I'm doing is actually helping people."

ERIKA HESS ('09)

I'm curious—does your audience go beyond North America into the rest of the world?

**EH:** It has been a revelation to see how many people outside of the US listen to the podcast. I have no idea how they discover me.

I once got a message from a woman in Berlin. She said she was out walking her dog in the snow. She was listening to my podcast, and just started crying in the middle of a park because she had moved to Berlin to pursue

her artistic career, and had given up on the idea of having children—she had just decided it couldn't happen. On the episode she was listening to, I was interviewing an artist who was talking about the decision to have kids. This artist has children and

she's still showing work and has representation at three galleries. It was such a shock to this woman in Berlin. It was so wonderful to see the podcast had a positive impact on her. I was also thinking, "You're in Berlin in the snow listening to me?" You feel like yes, what I'm doing is actually helping people.

LISTEN TO AN  
EPISODE OF  
EACH PODCAST  
AT [BU.EDU/CFA-MAGAZINE](http://BU.EDU/CFA-MAGAZINE).

**EB:** Now, everybody I interview talks about two things: how somebody, either a teacher, a mentor, a parent, or grandparent, pushed them and guided them. They also talk about how they built a network and how it worked for them. You know, they stayed close with their college colleagues, met people at summer festivals, and the doors opened.

Is the art world similar? Does it have anything like that?

**EH:** Oh, yeah. I meet so many generous artists who have kept up their network and who are interested in supporting others' careers. You can't really move forward with the mentality of, "This is my career. I only focus on me."

I interviewed Lisa Congdon, an artist who started her career a little later in life. She said that the reason she tries to help so many younger artists now is because somebody helped her, and she would not be where she is today without that support.

**EB:** I think that's something that is beautiful about the arts in general. We owe it to the next generation to tell them what we've learned. It's leaving a painting or a piece of music, leaving what you have to say. Then they learn something from that and pass it down. It's built in a beautiful way. Podcasting just makes the perfect platform to continue broadening how that gets shared.

**EH:** I think you put that beautifully. We get to share those stories and make it a little bit more democratic in some ways. Not everybody can have these experiences and, through a podcast, a few more people can. ●

# CURATION

2022 Visiting Curator: Women's United Art

2021 Visiting Curator: Studio Visit Podcast

2021 Visiting Curator: Create Magazine

2021 Visiting Curator: Arts to Hearts

2021 Juror: Cambridge Art Association,  
Cambridge, MA, July 2021

2021 Curator: Build It- Riffe Gallery, Columbus,  
OH

2020 Curator: Be. Long., Dutoit Gallery, November  
2019







Full CV available upon request

**ERIKA B HESS**

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## **EDUCATION**

**2009 BOSTON UNIVERSITY MASTER OF FINE ART**

**2006 WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY BACHELOR OF FINE ART**

**REPRESENTED BY CONTEMPORARY ART MATTERS, COLUMBUS, OH**

**FLATFILE 2022: PEEPSPACE, TARRYTOWN, NY**

## **SOLO EXHIBITIONS**

**2022 HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN SINCE YOU'VE BEEN OUTSIDE MARIETTA  
COLLEGE MARIETTA, OH**

**2018 LOVE LETTERS FROM THE EDGE OF THE WORLD WANDERLIFE  
GALLERY PHILADELPHIA, PA**

**2017 VIEWING LIGHT, MAIN HALL NEWTON FREE LIBRARY NEWTON, MA**

**2017 THE LINE BETWEEN THE PAST AND THE PRESENT, MUSA COLLECTIVE  
BOSTON, MA**

**2014 AUTO RESPOND: OUT OF THE OFFICE MICRO ART SPACE CLEVELAND,  
OH**

## **SELECTED EXHIBITIONS**

**2021 SUMMER IN THE CITY, CURATED BY CONTEMPORARY ART MATTERS,  
ARTSY/NYC**

**2019 INDOOR VOICES, THE YARD, CURATED BY KIRSTIN LAMB, BROOKLYN, NY**

**2019 HUMANFIGURE, HESS GALLERY, PINE MANOR COLLEGE, CURATED BY  
CAROLYN WIRTH. NEWTON, MA.**

**2019 VISION AND VERSE, WILSON GALLERY, ANDERSON UNIVERSITY, IN**

**2018 LET'S DANCE, BASEMENT PROJECTS, CA**



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2022

# ERIKA B HESS



Please feel free to email me  
at [erikabhess@gmail.com](mailto:erikabhess@gmail.com) to  
inquire about work, features,  
or to schedule a studio visit.

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