

**Shamanic Paintings (1-9)**  
Jillian Mamey Critelli  
Mirroring Resilience Artist Intensive Exhibition  
September 22, 2018

While Jillian Mamey Critelli's *Shamanic Paintings (1-9)* make an impact all by themselves, the story of their creation is striking as well, and perfectly fits the theme of Mirroring Resilience and its emphasis on artists' overcoming adversity in order to create.

A little less than a year ago, October 7th, 2017, Jillian, her mother and her husband were on their way to a wedding in Santa Barbara, walking down State Street at 1pm, when an impaired driver in a pickup truck jumped the curb onto the sidewalk behind them. At full speed, it took out street signs and telephone poles before crashing into the side of a building. Thankfully it avoided direct impact, but along the way the truck dislodged the base of a sign pole. "It was the bowling ball. We were the pins," is how Jill describes the huge concrete cylinder that was launched at her legs, throwing her into the air and fracturing her fibula.

If you can believe it, Jill had signed up for training to become a fitness instructor two days before this accident, after a lot of soul searching about a new direction for her life. Instead, she found herself with a broken leg, in a heavy boot and a wheelchair, and a long road to recovery ahead.

But she persevered. And her first attempt to walk more than a few feet unassisted was to an open house at La Maida Institute, located in her neighborhood. The idea of yoga and meditation classes as part of a recovery program for her body, mind, and soul appealed to Jill, and soon after she signed up to become a member.

During the ensuing months, Jill began to work with alternative healing and inspiration, and sought an answer to the question of "why."

Why had this happened?

What direction was her life headed?

Most importantly, where had her love for art gone?

Jill grew up in a deeply artistic family and went to art school (both Pratt Institute in Brooklyn and Art Center in Pasadena), but had left "art" behind for business 10 years ago. Marketing, specifically. It always seemed like a good compromise, to stay creative while working professionally, but there was still one piece missing from her life.

That's when a series of events changed everything. If you don't believe in magic, listen to this...

During the summer, Jill wrote down the intention to begin making art again and display her work in an exhibition within the year. It didn't take a year. Within days, a Facebook post appeared for Mirroring Resilience: an art program in the same place Jill discovered because of her accident. (Without the accident, she may never have found it at all...)

But what would her art be? She hadn't created in 10 years, and her medium had always been photography, performance and video.

In her search for inspiration, Jill had been given the phone number of a woman named "Anne" in Texas, who claims the ability to channel spirits that can read a person's "Akashic Record." The so-called "Book of Life," the Akashic Records are metaphysical documents that provide concrete answers about things like past lives, emotional blockages, relationships, and purpose.

Without prompting -- all Anne knew was that Jill worked in marketing -- the spirits told Jill her purpose was to be an artist. When asked what kind of work she would create, they told her acrylic paint. "We see huge canvases people stand in front of and get lost in," were their exact words, and that Jill should meditate on the whale, one of her spirit animals, 18 to 20 times until the images she would paint appeared. They gave the date of July 29th as the beginning of her inspiration (the exact date of the first Mirroring Resilience workshop), with a "hyperdrive of creativity" between September 1st and 20th (leading up to the show, when Jill painted 6 of her 9 canvases in under 20 days).

Does all this sound crazy? It is crazy. But it's also true. After some frustrating early attempts on small canvases, Jill kept meditating on that whale and decided to go bigger: a 3'x3' canvas.

It went smoothly, so she thought even bigger: a pair of canvases, side by side.  
No, not big enough. What about a 6'x6' four-canvas square?  
Still not big enough. Six canvases? More?

The final piece is nine 3'x3' canvases, 9'x9' together, too large to assemble in Jill's tiny apartment, but just right for the grand La Maida Institute and the Mirroring Resilience exhibition.

Whether these pieces represent a standalone piece, or the start of something even bigger, Jill's powerful story provides us two key lessons:

Within our greatest disappointments and setbacks are the seeds of our greatest triumphs, if only we seek how to endure and ultimately transform them.

With the right inspiration, a decade of creative frustration can be erased in an instant. We never know what the future holds, but if we're open to magic, we may find it.

Jill is currently in the process of creating a website to showcase and sell her work, and provide updates on future exhibitions. In the meantime, you can follow her on Instagram: @Jillspics.

Thank you, and we hope you enjoy the show!

