

Interview Transcript

Caitlin Mohr - SALA Podcast

00:00

[gentle music]

Steph 00:00

Hello and welcome to the SALA Podcast. My name is Steph and today I'm catching up with Caitlin Möhr, who is a self-taught artist working primarily with oil paint, but also clay and installation as well. Caitlin had two exhibitions in the 2022 SALA Festival, so we just had to get her on the podcast and hear more about her practice, and hopefully find out the secret to pulling off two shows one after the other. Before we get started, I'll just acknowledge that we are meeting on the traditional lands of the Kurna People and pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

Steph 00:54

Hello, Caitlin.

Caitlin 00:55

Hi, Steph.

Steph 00:56

Thanks for having me in your lounge room

Caitlin 00:58

Thank you for being in my lounge room.

Steph 01:01

Now we should I want to start from the beginning,

Caitlin 01:04

the beginning

Steph 01:05

the beginning; how did you find your way to visual art.

Caitlin 01:09

Um, I was really into art as a kid, just like I was quite a quiet child. So always like drawing or like making things with sticks and leaves. And just being alone and just like scribbling and stuff. So that's that's like the earliest I can remember being into art. And then I just did it throughout school and then in like, year 11 and 12. I took it a bit more seriously, but I was also really into, like science, and English and stuff. So I never really

Steph 01:42

Such a spread!

Caitlin 01:43

Such a spread. It's so hard to make decisions sometimes. But um, yeah, so as I never really thought of art as like a career, or like as a serious thing in my life. It was just something that I loved to do. So yeah,

Steph 01:58

yeah. And it's tricky. Do you keep it as a thing that you love to do? Or do you pursue? It's such a tricky thing isn't it?

Caitlin 02:03

Well, yeah. So where I am now: I'm pursuing it as much as I can. 'cause I went to uni, and I studied health sciences.

Steph 02:12

You did go with the science

Caitlin 02:13

I went with the science and I was gonna do my masters in osteopathy.

Steph 02:16

Wow.

Caitlin 02:17

So after I did my undergrad, I had a year off, and then I was gonna go do my masters. But in that year, I was like, 'ART', like, it was just really calling to me. And I was like, Oh, I think I'm gonna change my life around and go do that.

Steph 02:31

wow, that's actually massive.

Caitlin 02:33

Yeah, it was massive at the time. Now I feel like I've redirected, so I'm used to it now. But at the time, I was like, yeah, it was really intense. But really good. And then after that, yeah, everything started kind of making sense for me and I felt like it was really good decision.

Steph 02:50

Yeah.

Caitlin 02:51

And art became more meaningful for me as well

Steph 02:53

Yeah, so it sort of fell into place.

Caitlin 02:55

Yeah, definitely. Definitely.

Steph 02:56

So good. But you do work in the health industry though?

Caitlin 03:00

Yeah I do!

Steph 03:00

That's very cool. I think that's, you were saying before that, that you can draw on some of those [experiences] - we'll get to that.

Caitlin 03:07

We'll get to that.

Steph 03:10

And then, for anyone who's listening that might not have seen your work. How would you describe your work?

Caitlin 03:15

So with fancy words

Steph 03:20

or just non-fancy words

Caitlin 03:21

I describe it as abstract figurative surrealism.

Steph 03:25

Yeah. Cool.

Caitlin 03:26

If you're thinking of like a genre,

Steph 03:28

Yeah yeah. But give us the

Caitlin 03:30

but so yeah, I describe it as sort of using figures and symbolism to explore our inner worlds and our way of connecting to our inner worlds. So yeah, that's like a lot of bodies looking into themselves or like, weird positions or conjoined bodies to kind of show like dualism or like unity or things like that.

Steph 03:57

Yeah, I get a lot of like, very visceral dream kind of thing from the work.

Caitlin 04:03

I think because I studied health. We had this one topic where it was in the last year of my degree, we

had this topic where we actually worked with [cadavers](#) - I think that's how you say it. So like preserved bodies, and we had to like identify all the nerves and muscles and stuff. And I think that really contributed to just like, I don't know; I feel like I have a strong understanding of like, the physical body and how our kind of like psychological relationship with it

Steph 04:32

right, yeah,

Caitlin 04:33

because I feel like that's influences like the my overall style a lot

Steph 04:36

Yeah, gosh, that's amazing.

Caitlin 04:39

Thank you.

Steph 04:41

I also don't know how to say cadaver

Caitlin 04:46

Cad-ah-ver I think,

Steph 04:46

okay, cool. You're the one that knows.

Caitlin 04:48

I hope I know!

04:51

[gentle music]

Steph 05:11

So you said that inner worlds is one of the sort of main things that you're looking into. What kind of like, is that through dreams? Or like reflection? Or how much of that is your inner world? How much of that is like other people telling you about their inner worlds?

Caitlin 05:26

Yeah. So I feel like I've always been in touch with my inner self. I feel like it's kind of a hard concept to understand if you've never been in touch with your inner self. And if you're constantly relating to your existence as an external experience. For me, it's always been very internal. And yeah, that's been since like, a really young age. So I think I've always just, the way that I've thought about life, and about things that I've gone through have been very much like, okay, like, what is this? Like, where, what is this coming from? Like, what can this teach me? When I go inside, and I see how I can grow from this, like, how does that affect me in the way that I relate to things that I go through, and the people that are in my life? So with my art, it's not so much that my artwork is a reflection of my inner world, it's more of a

reflection of that experience of looking inwards.

Steph 06:34

Okay. And that sort of framework

Caitlin 06:37

that kind of framework of sort of how I do that, I guess, or,

Steph 06:41

and maybe the language.

Caitlin 06:43

Yeah, I feel like it's the way that I talk about that experience, but not what I'm experiencing.

Steph 06:50

Yeah, no, I get that. That's great.

Caitlin 06:51

You know, yeah. So

Steph 06:53

it's almost like 'here is the vocabulary' of that.

Caitlin 06:58

Yeah But I feel I feel that changing in my practice a little bit. Like since my exhibitions that I've had this year. I'm feeling like I'm moving more towards more. Like, I don't know how to describe it, but more work that is coming from my inner world a bit more not so much of...

Steph 07:19

so you're daring to be a little bit more like, 'actually'

Caitlin 07:21

yeah well, I think it's because I'm understanding it a little bit more for myself. So it's less of, I think my art is sometimes a reminder to myself as well, to like, tap into that, because I find a lot of comfort in being introspective and being reflective and trying to see things from different angles. So I think I tried to pass that on to other people. But at the same time, it's like a big reminder for me, but I think I'm embodying that theme a bit more. So now that I'm embodying it. I feel like my art will change.

Steph 07:54

Yeah, I mean, and that's the whole- I love that the word for doing art is a 'practice'. So you know, it's nicely that you're like, 'actually, I'm starting to pull into this area'. Yeah, that's so cool. And yeah, it's, I mean, it's gotta serve yourself. Otherwise, you wouldn't be called to do it.

Caitlin 08:11

Yeah, exactly.

Steph 08:11

And I guess that kind of answers my next question of, yeah, what compels you to do it? So yeah, perfect. And did you like that introspection? Is it through any particular vehicle, like, I don't know, like a sort of yoga or meditation practice, or

Caitlin 08:25

Yeah so through a lot of things, definitely like yoga and meditation, and just mindfulness. And just when I'm faced with certain challenges, like how I deal with those is a practice for me. And each time that I have a new challenge, I kind of see how... I'm not always like, 'How can I'... I'm not like that neurotic,

Steph 08:49

quizzing yourself

Caitlin 08:51

but like, looking back on things. I'm like, Oh, I handled that situation differently. And from a place that felt more like true to my deeper self. Yeah, so that is a massive part of it. For me. It's just like, my daily life.

Steph 09:04

Yeah. And I guess it's like a muscle.

Caitlin 09:07

Yeah, but yoga, meditation, and like breathwork stuff is such a massive vehicle for that, because it kind of keeps me in touch with the body, and the mind and bringing the two together.

Steph 09:20

Those relationships are so cool.

Caitlin 09:22

Yeah, it's very powerful. Yeah, but in saying that, so other things that do, like compel me to create work is definitely like, I feel like more people need a bit of that in their lives is a bit more like just to just kind of pause and take a minute and just reassess what's important and reassess how they are functioning in their little worlds. And if they can do it, from a place that's more peaceful or kind, or just authentic to themselves and kinder to themselves.

Steph 09:57

Do you think it's a pace thing or just not having thought... it's tricky isn't it?

Caitlin 10:03

I think it depends on the person. I think it was like different. I think some people do just maybe need to slow down. And some people maybe do need it. Like, just actually think a bit about stuff, you know, ya

Steph 10:13

yeah, because if you've never been introspective, it may not come up that like, 'oh, there's something wrong', but when you do, it's like, 'oh'.

Caitlin 10:22

and that's I think I've had a lot of moments where I've had, like, whether it's through, you know, thinking about something a lot, or like through yoga or something. I've had a lot of moments where I'm just like, 'oh'.

Steph 10:33

haha yeah, that's the lightbulb

Caitlin 10:35

I feel like I remember what I want to do with my life, you know, and I forget that often. And I'm just like, ah, like, no shit like, this is what's important. Like, 'ah', so

Steph 10:45

yeah, those moments are great.

Caitlin 10:46

Yeah, totally. So I'm like, I feel like everyone needs a little bit of that.

Steph 10:51

Yeah. Is there a word for that? Apart from the light bulb?

Caitlin 10:55

The light bulb moment, I feel like the light bulb moment is the best one. Yeah I don't know.

Steph 11:02

Funnily enough it's more a visual than a word. But yeah. Which makes sense. Well, then, maybe because I this is how you came to my attention is through the two exhibitions that you had in SALA. One of them was a two people. It was you and Miles?

Caitlin 11:18

Miles Dunne, yeah

Steph 11:19

Yeah. And that was at The Lab?

Caitlin 11:21

Yeah.

Steph 11:22

Tell us a little bit about that one.

Caitlin 11:24

Um, yeah. So me and Miles have been friends for a while, we always wanted to do something together. And he was sort of doing a lot of work at The Lab. So we kind of had a bit of a foot in the door to do something there. But because I'm a painter, and the lab is a very digital kind of space, like a lot of the people that come through, they're doing digital, or like audio stuff. And I was like, How can I enter the

space? But I had already done. So last, was it last year? Yeah. start of last year, I created four paintings. And these were the first four paintings that I had made after I like decided I was going to commit to art.

Steph 12:04

Yeah.

Caitlin 12:05

So I wasn't really intending to put them in a show. And then once I had chatted to Miles earlier this year, or or maybe it was the end of last year, I was like, Oh, I've got these four paintings. And they they really did go together. Well, like we were all talking about the same thing and had like the same kind of color scheme. Yeah, the same feeling. And so it kind of fell into place. And he sort of interpreted my work, and then kind of responded to that. And then we collaborated together in that in the way that we would install the exhibition and with the audio that we made to play over the top over the top throughout. Yeah, yeah. Throughout the exhibition. So cool. Yeah. And it just came together really well.

Steph 12:49

That's so nice, because it is a challenge to go 'How do I bring my practice into this arena without forcing something?'

12:57

And because The Lab has so many events on it was it was like a pop up exhibition that went throughout August. So we had to install it, and then de-install it and then install it and then de-install it.

Steph 13:07

Wow what an experience!

Caitlin 13:08

Yeah, it wasn't too bad. Yeah, it was it was fine. And the way that we had... the system that we had for hanging and like taking down the stuff worked well. But that was that was kind of the some of the problems that we had to solve. How are we going to... How are we going to make this like really functional and safe and not too heavy? And yeah,

Steph 13:30

And sort of unique to that space as well

Caitlin 13:31

Yeah.

Steph 13:32

That's Interesting. Well, that's different, I guess then, to the show that came straight off after which was your first solo exhibition?

Caitlin 13:38

That was my first solo exhibition.

Steph 13:39

'ah' at Collective Haunt? Please tell us about that show.

Caitlin 13:42

So yeah, so that was like, I feel like that was my baby. Like, I just had a baby. So, so yeah, after I had finished those paintings that went into The Lab show, after those paintings, like they... I kind of just had this feeling that they weren't 'it'; like I just feel like it wasn't... feel like I hadn't hit the nail on the head in terms of my style. And the way that I wanted to paint and like the colors that I used, for example. So after those paintings, I once just did this little sketch on my iPad, like really brief and then I was like, 'Oh, this is cool. I should turn it into a painting'. And then I did and it was amazing. And I was like, Oh, like this is it! Yeah, and so then I was speaking to my mentor, [Solomon Kammer](#), about this painting and she sort of helped me kind of figure out how I could turn the the themes in that painting into a body of work. And because I have so many ideas and so many different influences, yeah, I felt very at the time I was like, I don't know, I had so many ideas for the exhibition. I was like, I don't know how to bring these together. And so Sol really helped me like, kind of brew it down to like the most important stuff. And so then from that first painting, the rest of them kind of grew.

Steph 15:05

That's such a great momentum to go from that one and distill into a series like that must just be so satisfying.

15:12

It was! It was. yeah. And it was really fun. And I felt like it that style really... I felt like I had a lot of movement in there.

Steph 15:21

We had the tell me about the line, the thread

Caitlin 15:25

oh the blue strand?

Steph 15:26

Yeah. Tell me about that. So just to explain: it was depicted in the paintings, but then physically existed in the gallery space to connect most or all of the work?

Caitlin 15:37

So yeah, each painting that was in my solo show had, I painted a blue band. And so when I put it on the walls, I connected it with like a ribbon. It was like velvet threads, which extended from the lines in the painting. So it kind of made it look like

Steph 15:54

seamless

Caitlin 15:55

Yeah, the line went like through the paintings, and then up the walls, and then like back under. One of the superficial reasons that I did that was because I like to, I wanted to fill the space a bit more, I didn't

want it to just be paintings on white walls, I wanted it to have a bit more of like an immersiveness to it; I wanted people to kind of feel within the walls a little bit. But then the real meaning was, because so that exhibition was called an introspective journey. And each painting was like an exploration of a way of being introspective based on my own experiences. So for example, there was a painting that was like someone meditating. And there was lots going on around. And for me meditating is a, it allows me to be introspective. So I wanted to, through introspection, I find, I remember that everything is connected in so many ways. And yeah, just even the way that life unfolds and like good things that happen or bad things like I feel like they kind of all lead to certain places. So I feel like this is continuous, just like changing nature in the world, and within ourselves. And I wanted to just a really simple way to just express that. Yeah. And so I just thought, I'll just connect all the paintings because yeah, each thing is connected. Yeah. And what I'm saying so,

Steph 17:30

and I guess if you're talking about those different ways of being introspective, they're different inroads to one experience.

Caitlin 17:37

Yeah. 100%

Steph 17:39

Yeah that is very cool. Yeah. Well, it was very, very good.

Caitlin 17:42

Yeah. Thank you. I loved it.

Caitlin 17:44

[gentle music]

Steph 18:05

And did you have like, what was the response from... or did you have a favorite response from people seeing that show?

Caitlin 18:11

Yeah, um, well, I think with the opening night, for that exhibition, I had like a really good turnout. And Collective Haunt's not a massive gallery. So it filled out really quick and it just made me really chuffed. I was like, 'oh, yay; people are seeing my art!' And I had just been working on it for so long, and putting so much energy into it, and not sharing too much, so that it kind of teased people to come along. And then like just finally being able to let people see what had been going on for me for so long, was really good. And with each of the paintings, I had a little, like a little bit of text that was on the floor below each painting that was

Steph 18:53

oh actually on the ground?

Caitlin 18:54

Yeah. So it was, like really poetic. And just like a simple way of just kind of tying together the painting.

And I think that was because I feel like I've had a lot of responses to my work, where they're like, 'uh, what's that?' 'What's going on?' You know, and I'm just like, that's fine. I don't expect people to just be like, 'Oh, I understand'.

Steph 19:15

Inherently

Caitlin 19:16

Yeah. But I wanted to just have like little prompts just so people could kind of see what my angle was with the painting. And there was this one painting that I did, which was based on myself. It was like two of me connected like holding myself. And it was kind of expressing the duality that you can feel with yourself, like being in one place, but then feeling like you're not where you need to be and like there's this kind of separateness and with this painting, I just wanted to kind of bring that together and like, remind myself and people that like you need to accept all of yourself. Sounds a little bit, you know, 'eh', but like it was that was one of just the main themes and I had a lot of people come up to me and be like, oh, like I really resonated with that painting

Steph 20:00

Oh, that's so good

Caitlin 20:01

and I was like *exhale* yay. Like, I feel like those little moments where people were just like, oh, like, yeah, that was I felt that you know it kind of it just like, that's why I do I did it, you know, like I was kind of wanting, not wanting but that was my intention was to make people feel reminded of their inner strength or whatever it be.

Steph 20:23

And touch base with that. Yeah. And I mean it's funny because you say, Oh, this sounds so silly, but it's the painting that had the most connection. So it's like, well, some things you can't say with words, you say it visually. Perfect.

Caitlin 20:37

Yeah. So that was really good.

Steph 20:39

That is good. I'll have to put that particular painting in the show notes.

Caitlin 20:43

Yeah, for sure.

Steph 20:45

And what I mean, not to rush you, because you've just done two shows, which is a feat in itself. And I'm glad you've had a little bit of a rest time. Because that's a lot and a lot of a changing pace to have such an intensive of making and then have it all out in the world and be like, Oh, what do I do now? But do you have next steps or future goals in your practice? You know, not that they have to be right now. But

Caitlin 21:12

Yeah. I definitely want to do more exhibitions. I think I want to do bigger paintings maybe.

Steph 21:20

Nice.

Caitlin 21:20

Just a little bit. Maybe? I don't know, maybe not. I definitely have things that I need to work on, just in terms of actual painting and technique. And I just did a workshop with Sol, Solomon Kammer, which just reminded me how much like; I know that I can paint good, but there's also because I'm self taught. I'm like, I cut a lot of corners. And I know that I could take time to like, learn things a little bit more and finesse things a little bit more. So at the moment, I'm really focusing on doing that.

Steph 21:51

Yeah, that sort of development.

Caitlin 21:52

Yeah. And then I feel like once I kind of down pack... down pack? that a little bit,

Steph 21:58

get that down pat, I think

Caitlin 21:59

Yeah. Then I think I know what I want to paint next, because I have some really big ideas, but I don't feel like I'm ready to tackle them just yet.

Steph 22:11

Well, that's a good position to be in.

Caitlin 22:13

Yeah, but I definitely am wanting to do some more exhibitions. I've got a group show at [Floating Goose](#) in May

Steph 22:20

excellent

Caitlin 22:20

on topic of menstruation.

Steph 22:23

I love that,

Caitlin 22:23

which is really cool, because I've been really getting into like learning about the womb and like, the body

Steph 22:29

all that interest in the body

Caitlin 22:30

Yeah, so I think that's gonna be really nice.

Steph 22:33

How many people do know in that show? Roughly?

Caitlin 22:35

I'm actually not too sure.

Steph 22:37

Okay. Well, we will stay tuned.

Caitlin 22:38

Yeah, but it's in May.

Steph 22:40

Yeah at Floating Goose.

Caitlin 22:42

And I think it will be really cool exhibition. And I've got some little projects for some bands for like album covers and stuff. But that's just

Steph 22:51

oh I can definitely see your work on album covers, yeah.

Caitlin 22:56

Oh, and I'm also like, I've been making music.

Steph 22:59

Oh, what don't you do!?

Caitlin 23:01

Yeah, in this last few months. I've just been really into music. And I'm thinking about how I can bring together my art, like my visual arts with my music practice. And I have some really cool ideas. I'm just like, stay tuned.

Steph 23:15

Yes. When you have the light bulb moment, you will know Yeah. Oh, that's so good. Nice, and comforting to have the ideas and be like no I'll get to that when I get to that, when I'm ready, when I've built those foundations more or

Caitlin 23:26

yeah, definitely

Steph 23:27

as much as you want to. And very cool to have Sol as a mentor.

Caitlin 23:31

Yeah, she's amazing.

Steph 23:32

I know she's also self-taught. So very, very cool. Yeah. And was that just one of the recent workshops that she did?

Caitlin 23:39

Yeah, that was that last week? Yeah, it was last week.

Steph 23:43

honestly that recent

Caitlin 23:46

Yeah, it was really good. And intensive.

Steph 23:49

Hopefully she does some more of them, if they're quite good.

23:51

Yeah, well I think she's got one coming up in January and then two [workshops](#) in June and July.

Steph 23:59

Servicing the needs of the people!

Caitlin 24:01

Totally

Steph 24:01

Excellent. Thank you Sol! Wonderful. Well, I won't hassle you to give me any more details about what you're gonna do next because I feel like you're still catching your breath from the year that was. But for people that want to follow along with what you're doing where can they find you and keep in touch and up-to-date?

Caitlin 24:22

I'm so I've got [Instagram](#).

Steph 24:24

Perfect.

Caitlin 24:24

Yeah and a [website](#).

Steph 24:27

Oh, good on you.

Caitlin 24:29

Yeah. And people can sign up to my mailing list if they want to hear about what's coming along.

Steph 24:36

Excellent. Well you've made it very easy. Wonderful. Thank you for your time and we'll see what you do next.

25:16

[gentle music]