

# ORGANIC-DIGITAL MASHUP

By Jesse Phelps

Walking down Matilija Street and glancing toward the Porch Gallery, it's likely the first thing you'll notice is the neon "JPEG Mountain" sign hanging out front. If you let your eye be subsequently drawn in through the window to the interior, it will find a gorgeous moiré pattern adorning an interior wall, buzzing with color.

Only once you enter the gallery and look much more closely will you see it's entirely made of balloon shapes, each individually colored cyan, magenta, yellow or black. Together in print, and seen from a distance, the four hues of the CMYK subtractive color model harmonize and merge on their white background, subduing its brightness and giving the illusion of a fuller spectrum.

Titled "To See Me Take a Picture, CMYK," the print typifies ideas present throughout the work of Ojai artist Cassandra C. Jones. Deftly and painstakingly using technology to curate and rearrange found digital images, Jones creates collage works that sing with tint and metaphor.

Gallery co-director Lisa Casoni says all the ideas in play in the art made teaming up with Jones a no-brainer. "We loved the concept behind how she works and what she was working on."

Aside from her own archival copy, Jones creates only two renderings of each piece, maintaining value through scarcity. Space is respected in the gallery show, which dedicates plenty of wall around each individual piece.

Jones, who holds a BFA from California College of Art and her MFA from Carnegie Mellon University, has an analytical mind. Her art is intellectual, high-concept and filled with meaning; some of the work challenges and inspires, perhaps, discomfort, even as it soothes the eye.

Some of the metaphors, however, find power in simplicity and accessibility. A piece entitled "Fresh Water" takes a sunset seen through a single drop of water and duplicates the drop many times over, arranging it, pearl-like, into a necklace shape. The result is both dramatic and beautiful, and the message is clear: water, now more than ever, is so very precious.

"That she turns (a single drop of water) into something that looks like a luxury item is just mind blowing to me. It's very thoughtful, it's very elegant, it's very smart," says Casoni.

The gallery's back room features a wallpaper with yoga girls repeatedly bent back to touch their mirror images. The color palette suggests the work's Grecian inspiration in a medieval village called Pyrgi, known for its stunning, decorative black-and-white plaster carvings called "Xysta," also the name of the installation.

Jones, describing the piece, says, "I feel like it was a really good metaphor for how we can shape ourselves, how malleable we are."

Jones says her present journey began with a promised trip to Greece with her grandmother during grad school. Feeling somewhat bored in a small, remote village, she ultimately turned to her own interior, examining photo albums of family and sunsets. She collected photographs of those sunsets and went to an internet café (this was 2003) with 10,000 photos and made a video from 1,500 of them.

It became her thesis project and it launched her career, ultimately showing it in "100 venues all over the world." She says, "It was its own snapshot into, sort of, a global culture. I saw things I had never seen through pictures of sunsets."

The experience of combining curation of found images with repetition to create a new dialectic hooked her, she says. "I wanted to look at photos every day. I wanted to dive into this as a life-long project."

Not long later, Jones met her husband, Mikael Jorgensen, keyboardist for the popular rock band Wilco, in New York. She says their mutual love of technology helped bring them together. "He's doing it sonically, I'm doing it visually. We're just technophiliacs."

Jones came frequently to Ojai to work in a studio on her parents' property over the years before the couple eventually moved here. She describes a simultaneous appreciation and fear of nature, informing, perhaps, her approach that attempts to replicate and juxtapose its forms with her distinctly digital aesthetic.

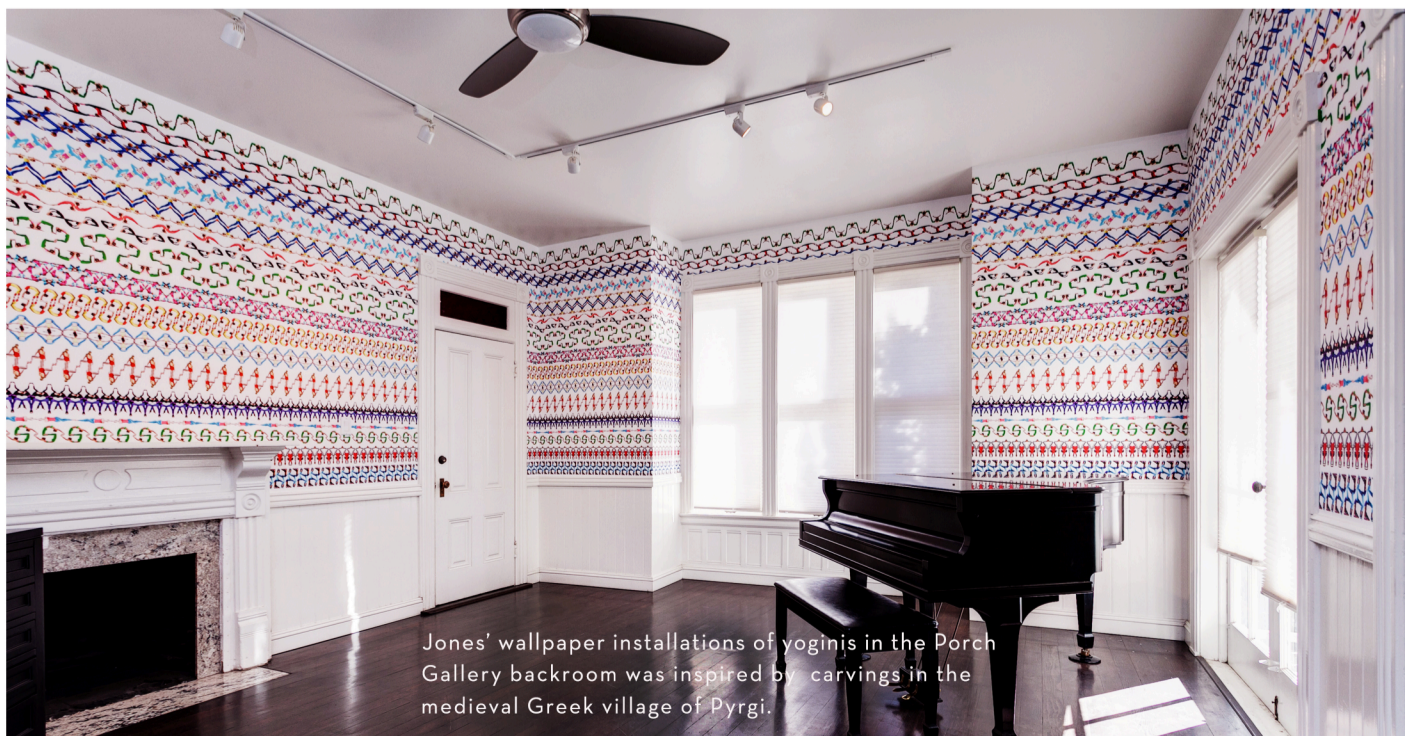
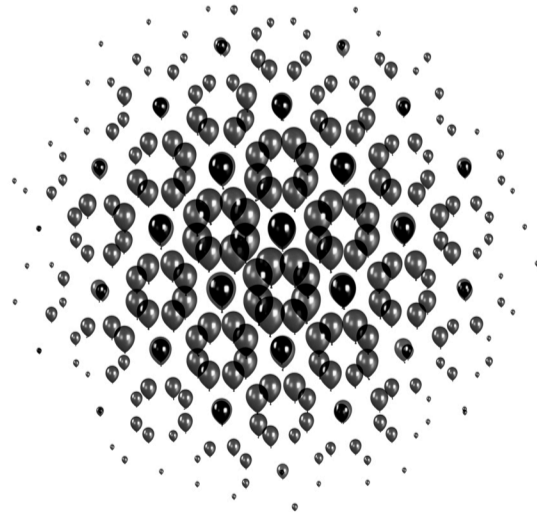
This is exemplified by a piece hanging in the hallway at the Porch gallery, "Orchid Seeding 2." It features balloons reshaped into an architectural, but convincing, white orchid, dropping seeds. "The piece is about ideas that spread, and the seeds that get planted from people you know," says Jones.

Casoni says the piece that really inspired Porch to team up with Jones is "Accumulation of Nameless Energies." Here Jones recombines and layers a single image of a yellow bird hundreds of times into a standing bear, at once menacing, pretty, bold and incredibly detailed.

There's no question the show at Porch is a harmonious marriage of artist, art and space. Jones said she's found a home in Ojai—despite her desire never to take hikes—complete with an extremely artistically talented circle of friends. These people, she says, often make a living out of town before coming back to our tranquil, bucolic paradise. The show at Porch is a way of encouraging more of this talent to express itself on the home front.

"We can do it here," she says. "When Porch Gallery approached me, I completely jumped at the chance."

"JPEG Mountain" can be experienced at Porch Gallery, Ojai through Dec. 4. ☺



Jones' wallpaper installations of yoginis in the Porch Gallery backroom was inspired by carvings in the medieval Greek village of Pyrgi.