

By Joan Tapper

# Double Takes

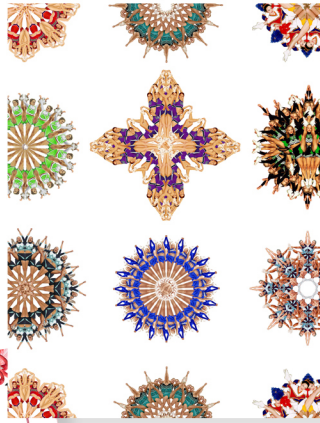
The work of digital artist Cassandra C. Jones is more than meets the eye.



Enter a gallery installation of wallpaper art by Ojai-based artist Cassandra C. Jones ([cassandraciones.com](http://cassandraciones.com)) and you're likely to be struck by the elaborate patterns and vivid colors. But there's much more here than is evident at first glance. When you look more closely, you realize that what seem to be snowflakes are actually cheerleaders. Tendrils of foliage devolve into flamingoes. A giant bear is composed of tiny yellow lovebirds. "You must engage with the art or you'll miss it," Jones says. "Every idea requires you to take a second look—either to look close up or to step back."

So her recent shows have featured not only wall art that requires intimate inspection but also works that—when viewed from 30 feet away—form a subtle, previously unnoticed pattern.

As different as the pieces are, there's an underlying connection, Jones says. She invariably begins by searching stock photo sources



online and almost always places her selections on a white background. Then she digitally cuts, pastes, resizes, and tilts the images, or parts of them, to create her own art.

## Stock Images Reimagined

The first piece of hers that attracted attention, however, was a five-minute video called *Eventide*, a project that she started when she accompanied her Greek-born grandmother to her native island of Chios. With little to do during the two-month sojourn, Jones began

looking at pictures of sunsets around the world that were available on the Web, scrolling through about 10,000 images before making her choices. Aligning the sun and horizon in each image, she put together a video in which viewers could watch the sun set 1,400 times. It was a hit at film festivals and with galleries and eventually inspired her to look for other collections of stock images as a basis for her art.

Her *Good Cheer* installation, for example, originated with a \$1.99 disk of cheerleader photos that she found on eBay.

The pictures she chose all show one leg raised, providing > some nuanced social commentary. They're essentially crotch shots, Jones notes, which adds ethical ambiguity to otherwise wholesome ideas of cheerleaders. Since she created it in 2005, it has been a gallery favorite, printed anew for as many as four shows a year around the country and available to collectors as a mounted wallpaper panel.

Jones went on to produce her *Rara Avis* wallpaper, using flamingoes to create a shocking-pink floral image in which avian bodies become flowers, and beaks, legs, and toes are twined into stems and buds. "I was interested in how nature photographers were subconsciously influenced by the kitschy lawn ornament version of a pink flamingo when choosing the perfect shot or composition of a real pink flamingo," she says. "I have always been fascinated by tiny details, and that includes being able to focus in on small parts of things that are very ornate. I want the viewer to see those things with me."

She returned to her family's Hellenic heritage with *Xysta*, an installation named for the incised black-and-white designs that decorate some houses on Chios. Jones' geometric flourishes, however, are composed of women in dance and yoga poses, alluding, she says, to the way the island women have carved out their lives.

## At Work in Ojai

Over the past four-plus years, Jones—who grew up in Texas and Southern California before earning a couple of fine art degrees, traveling, living abroad, and settling for a while in Brooklyn—has created her digital art in an Ojai garage-turned-studio that's part of a family compound. Her husband, rock band Wilco keyboardist Mikael Jorgensen, works in the garage space right next door. "We love it here," she says. "There's a great professional network of artists, musicians, actors, dancers, and writers in this area. Most of our friends had already established their careers before moving here. They can live anywhere while still maintaining those careers, but they live here because this is where they have chosen to be."

Hanging on the studio wall are works in progress, including a grid of nine collages composed of photos of lightning bolts all shot at night. Jones overlaps the images so that the bolts form circles that illustrate the kinds of lines described in drawing classes—bold, thin, or serrated, for example.

There's also a commission entitled *Ritual and Desire* for the Wichita Art Museum, part of an exhibit opening May 20 that highlights that institution's decorative glass objects. Jones is using photos of specific pieces—a blue vase, an amber candlestick, or a green glass, perhaps—to create 31 different columns for a wallpaper installation that will be added to the museum's permanent digital collection.

May promises to be a busy month for Jones. She and local photographer-animator Joel Fox and his animation partner, Jennifer Day, are also designing the set for *Brundibár*, a historic children's opera that will be performed by 200 youngsters from Ojai Youth Opera at Libbey Bowl on May 13 and at the Lobero Theater on May 20 and 21.

As for the future, Jones is thinking about redoing the sunset video she first put together years ago, now that so much more high-resolution still imagery is available from around the globe. "There's a thread," she says. "It shows we're all connected. I want to make you feel that I've just circled the world." ♦