

## Lou Haney

### Artist Statement

I create paintings of domestic spaces that use nostalgia as a means of temporary escape from the chaotic and often corrupt realities of modern life. Through water-based paint, fiber art, and mixed media, I explore themes of memory, yearning, and femininity, evoking a tension between fantasy and reality. Inspired by the Pattern & Decoration Movement of the 1970s and '80s, my work incorporates floral imagery, pattern, and ornamentation, dismantling the hierarchy between fine art and craft. Layers of floral motifs and decorated surfaces mirror the interiors of my past, transporting the viewer into imagined spaces where charm and excess coexist. Floral patterns, potted plants, and scenic wallpapers gesture toward nature yet remain ornament—curated versions of the organic world, frozen in time. By blurring the line between art and design, I invite the viewer to reconsider the relationship between the domestic and the decorative, elevating the everyday into something both personal and universal.

Through years of teaching the history of women in art—and raising a daughter who revels in pink and glitter—I have come to embrace the unapologetic femininity of my own aesthetic, leaning into ornamentation and excess as acts of both joy and quiet defiance. This sensibility took root early in my life. My journey into the world of pattern and ornamentation began in my first real job as an assistant for a small-town interior designer. There, I spent countless hours poring over wallpaper books and fabric samples, fascinated by how a subtle change in color could transform a pattern's character and emotional weight. It was in those quiet hours that I discovered that pattern is memory made visible—a storyteller of time and place, weaving its way into my work.

Though I was born in the 1970s, childhood visits to my grandparents' home in rural West Tennessee felt like stepping into a 1960s time capsule. I would flip through old magazines my grandmother had kept, immersing myself in a world that was both distant and familiar. Those magazines, particularly *Better Homes and Gardens*, became a window to a time I never fully experienced, but through which I could retreat—much like I do today when browsing used bookstores or stumbling upon vintage magazines. That sense of nostalgia has never faded—it remains a constant thread in my work.

Influenced by Matisse and the bold aesthetic of Pop Art, my paintings play with flatness, drawing the viewer into the picture. Through skewed perspectives, exaggerated scale, and heightened saturation, I transform the domestic into something surreal—where beauty teeters on excess, and familiarity tilts into the uncanny. Quiet, off-kilter scenes—bright sunsets, flower fields, or tidy bedrooms—feel strangely empty, yet hauntingly familiar. Traces of human presence linger in the subtlest details: a window left ajar, a half-finished drink, or the ghost of a cigarette resting in an ashtray.

The *Dream Home* series emerged during the darkest moments of the pandemic. In that time of uncertainty and isolation, I was drawn to creating idealized, comforting interiors—spaces that offered a retreat from the claustrophobic atmosphere of the real world. These rooms were born from a longing for a safer, more serene time that never truly existed, offering a form of visual solace in an era of crisis. Yet beneath their inviting surfaces lies a quiet tension in the realization that nostalgia can be as much a

distortion as it is a comfort. In painting these domestic reveries, I built a dream to step inside—a fragile shelter of memory that soothes even as it stirs deeper questions about the past, the present, and the spaces we carry within us.

My work is a meditation on the past—on the perceived innocence and simplicity that we often yearn for when the present feels fractured and unstable. Through illusion, decoration, and recollection, nostalgia becomes both a refuge and a mirror, offering a fleeting escape from the present while conjuring a past that was far from perfect.