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[Interview: Edie Nadelhaft](#)

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Curiosity is always a good thing. [Edie Nadelhaft](#) is all about making ordinary images very, very interesting.. by blowing them up. You can't help but do double-takes when you see her artwork. Macro painting definitely stimulates the mind in a very relaxing way. So come one, come all. Welcome to Edie's world.



Welshie: *With the latest opening of your Oh Cow! exhibition, let's go back in time and tell us about your first artwork exhibit. What made you decide to show your work in a gallery?*

Eddie: Hmmmm—this might sound odd but I actually not sure about my first exhibition. I think it might have been at the Trident Booksellers Caf  on Newberry Street in Boston. I did have a show there but am not gonna swear to it being my first. I liked that space because it was not a gallery but extremely prominent from a traffic and visibility standpoint. They were lovely people - I personally spent endless hours reading their books and magazines for free under their benevolent gaze (as in, they didn t demand that I buy something or get out!). They were very artist-friendly, plus there were always lots of good looking Berkley students to look at in there. And Tarot readers. They had a rotating cast of Tarot card readers too.

Welshie:*How's the Oh Cow! Art show going? What has been the general response to it?*

Eddie: The response has been phenomenal! A number of works have sold, and The Flushing Times ran a nice piece on the show in late July for which I was interviewed.



Welshie:*Tell us little bit about your painting process? Most of your paintings use multiple canvases like a grid instead of one huge canvas. Any reason in particular?*

Eddie: Actually, most of my work is not paneled. I started doing the panels to shake things up a bit around the time I did the first large-scale bovine portrait. At the time, I had been working on a painting of a couple of cows (the exception to the single portrait) and kept obsessing over this - forgive me - cow lick ha ha!, I realized that what I really seemed to want to do was make a painting of that hair formation, not man-handle a detail on a larger work. So I did! The result was awesome. It opened up a whole new process for me. It was very liberating because when I do the paneled works, I use a little cardboard window so I only see the piece of the picture that I am painting. This results in me making what are often completely abstract paintings. Only once the panel is finished do I put it together with the others in the context of the whole image. Kind of like a jigsaw puzzle.



Welshie: *Out of all your painting series, Cherry Bitters intrigues me the most. I wonder why. I'm curious to know if there's any meaning behind the imagery.*

Eddie: Those are some of my favorites as well. There is no deep hidden meaning there, though. I intentionally strip out all context for my subject-whatever it may be-so that the viewer may focus entirely on the thing itself and the paint that describes it. In all of my work, I try to depict the sheer essence of the thing represented, be it the sweet sloppy pleasure of eating a cherry or the daiphanous wing of a fly. Interpretation is open game as far as I'm concerned. As long as you feel something!

Welshie: *Whose lips were those modeled from?*

Eddie: Those are my lips. I take high resolution digital photographs of myself and print 'em out at about 8" x 8" so I can see what I'm working on. You'd be surprised how hard it is to paint while holding a cherry in your teeth without drooling while trying to get all that fine detail down on canvas

Welshie: *I read once on a interview you did that you also work as a web designer. Is this something you'd like to pursue full-time or will it only remain as a part-time gig?*

Eddie: I'm pretty much over it-please don't print that hahaha! No seriously, I got into the field b/c it was challenging and exciting and a ton more intellectually stimulating than bar tending and waiting tables which I had done prior to that. It turned out to be very lucrative and I rode the dot com wave for some time, really enjoying it. I still do it part-time but I am primarily focused on painting now.



Welshie: *Talk about obsession. Edie, what attracted you to cows in the first place?*

Edie: I have never had any particular interest in cows, but that all changed a few years ago when I rode my motorcycle down to a farm in Bucks County, PA where my husband's family had been dairy farmers for over 200 years. I met Harold Haldeman, my mother in law Betty's cousin, who at that time was in his 80's, still worked the farm despite having been run over by a tractor, and drove that same tractor on the highway when his son refused to humor him with a ride to their other property.

Harold was a very interesting man, very different from us in so many ways yet completely non-plused by our black leather attire and flashy rides. He showed us around, fed us cake and talked about life on the farm. As we stood chatting near a fence, I noticed a number of cows about 20 feet from where we were standing. As we talked, it seemed to me that the cows were getting closer. Within about 10 minutes they were inches front of us nuzzling each other and angling for pats on the snout. I asked Harold why they had come over to us expecting it to have something to do with his taking care of them, but he said that wasn't it at all, that "They are very curious creatures".

Wow. I had thought them charming in an abstract landscape-y kind of way, and I'd felt compassionate regarding their treatment in an agricultural context but this, this was a whole new perspective for me: a personality trait. That sparked my interest. That and the sheer magnitude of the creatures. Later that day we went inside the barn where I had my first encounter with a bovine friend in an enclosed space, and I have to tell you, this may sound stupid, but all I could think was they are HUMONGOUS. Another contradiction.

As human beings, we think of cows as gentle and slow "not threatening at all. Which I think is mostly true, but there's no escaping the instinctual response one has when confronted at such close range with a MUCH BIGGER CRITTER.



Welshie: *When I look at your cow portraits, especially the macro paintings, I couldn't help but giggle. Have you ever intended them on being funny?*

Edie: Of course they're funny! So glad you get that. I think everything in life is at least absurd if not out and out funny. Except cancer. Cancer is not funny.

Some of them are sad, or contemplative or maybe even a little hostile looking, but the body of work, as a whole is a bit silly on a lot of levels. For one thing, if you look at the history of portraiture, it's all about very rich and/or prominent religious figures immortalized in often self-important displays of wealth and power. So, here I am elevating cattle (a traditional symbol of wealth, btw) to that same stature. But aside from that, the "girls" keep me amused. They have great faces and it is impossible not to anthropomorphize this work.



Welshie: *Of course, more cows, the better. However, are you interested in expanding your portraits beyond bovines, say from cats, dogs, to more exotic animals?*

Edie: Funny you should ask about that. I have recently been offered a grant by the Catskill Center for Conservation & Development to stay in the area for a week to gather source imagery for paintings that will be mounted in a solo show next season at their Erpf Gallery. It seems there are some fancy goats up there that need paintinâ€™™ 😊



Welshie: *Interestingly, you also paint fly portraits. Do you look at each fly as having its own personality? Personally, White Fly is my favorite. Which one is yours?*

Eddie: Naw. Flies are vermin. One of the things that interested me about flies is the contradiction embodied in something that is so beautiful when observed at close range but is ultimately associated (quite rightly) with excrement and death. “[Handsome Hu](#)” is my favorite. He’s™s poised on a paint sampler. I thought that was funny, speaking of humor in my work. Since paint samples are for decorating, and decorating or beautifying the home, is most obviously at odds with the creepy little creature. And of course decorating, make up, wealth everything we do in a cosmetic and/or material sense is ultimately a denial of our mortality. That makes it even funnier-right? (see “The Denial of Death” by Ernest Becker)



Welshie: *What other things are you into, aside from painting and web design?*

Eddie: Motorcycling, long walks on the beach—I'm a Sagittarius (and a smart ass in case you hadn't noticed;-)).

Welshie: *I noticed the electric guitar you're holding in one of your published photos. Was it only a prop or are you a rocker at heart?*

Eddie: I am an ardent admirer of sexy rockers, but I personally, do not make the rock. That belongs to my husband. It's one of seven that he owns I think. He's the musician in the family.

Welshie: *This is something that I have to ask on every interview. What advice can you give to someone pursuing art as a major career option?*

Eddie: OK, this might sound corny but here goes: Make art for the love of it. Or b/c you can't NOT do it. Exposure and material rewards are great but they can be elusive and they aren't good reasons to do something so all-consuming and difficult. I think it can be hard to maintain the brutal honesty and vision required to make meaningful art if that is your primary motivation. Inspiration is the most powerful thing in my life. It is the thing I am most grateful for. Without that, life is dull no matter how much money or press you get.



Welshie: *Are you working on some projects right now which you can leak some info about? Anything you are working on at the moment that you are excited about?*

Eddie: Flesh. And more bugs. Exotic bugs if you must know. Purchased from the entomology department at Evolution. See “Palmed Beetle” on [my website’s home page](#) for a sneak peek.

Welshie: *Eddie, anything you’d like to add? Thank yous?*

Eddie: I want to thank you and Honey for showing an interest in my work and my story. And Ron Raymond (aka Arena Bound) because he RAWKs and I love him. There are so many friends and family members whose support and confidence in me has been pivotal to my success that I’m kinda scared to try to name them lest I forget someone in my Monday morning, under-caffeinated state; BUT, I have to mention Michael Costello, one of my oldest friends and a wonderful painter whose faith in me has never wavered, my sister Marilyn Hirsch, a couple of teachers-Scott Richter and Kofi Kayiga, my friend John Moore who kept me and my work in his thoughts, any collector who bought my work early on, and Karin Sanders cuz she’s awesome! I think that’s about it. Thank you!



Well there you have it. Another end to a fantastic and entertaining interview. We definitely had fun interviewing Edie. A big thank you to her as always. And we wish her moooooore success in the future. (get it? mooo.. oore.. OK I'll stop).

Links here:

<http://www.edienadelhaft.com/>

<http://www.sweet-station.com/blog/?p=4142>

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YES, such a wonderful interview. Kudos to Welshie. and great stuff Edie, and keep up the awesome work!!

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Nice pair of lips!!! Nice cows!!! Nice interview!!!

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1. [8oinks — Blog — Biters and Pills by Edie Nadelhaft](#) - Sep 6th, 2009

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