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Before meeting Patrick Church, I'd never met anyone who so openly converted his heartbreak and pain into something so immeasurably positive and useful. Born into an unconventional family, Church spent his childhood around his mother, who was a ceramicist, and his father, who was an art collector. He attributes much of his early interest in the arts to them and the wide array of artists introduced to him early on. Church is a 23-year-old, U.K.-based artist, although, for the past several years, he has been traveling back and forth between England and Paris for work. Ever fixated on creating provocative, emotionally charged, large-scale paintings, Church only recently began designing various jackets and other garments adorned with his distinguishable faces and text. Painting on garments and merging his art with fashion has given new life to his work. He was able to bring an entirely different medium into the mix as he stood in front of an audience in Porto, Portugal, and performed, *You Touch Me When I'm Too Disgusted to Touch Myself* at the Wrong Weather gallery, which allowed awareness of his work and performance on an international level.

# Interview with Artist Patrick Church

By Sarah Elise Abramson

**What's the best advice you've ever been given?**

What's meant for you won't pass you by.

**What about making yourself so vulnerable, through your art, appeals to you? What does it satiate?**

It's just an outlet for me. Being in touch with my feelings and emotions and being able to display them for other people makes me feel empowered. I've never been afraid to show my feelings, and beyond that, push them to their limits. It takes my work to a different place. In doing this, people are able to connect with it on a more intimate level.

**Who are you painting?**

I'm usually painting myself, but I also paint past lovers and celebrity icons I find either interesting or hilarious, or a combination of the two. I enjoy exploring my body and everything that entails through my medium. Currently, I'm in the middle of a nude self-portrait project. I am going through quite an emotional time, so it helps me make sense of things.

**Who are you painting for?**

First and foremost, I paint for myself. It's always been quite a personal thing, extremely sacred. I find being able to put the images in

my head out into the world to be a powerful and freeing process. It also makes me feel incredibly vulnerable because my work is an extension of myself. I want people to connect with it and understand it. So, secondly, I'm painting for anyone who can connect with my work on a multitude of levels.

**What is your definition of love?**

Total infatuation. Total devotion. I need love that takes me to another world. I can't settle for anything less.



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**What makes you happy? Sad?**

Working makes me happy. I feel useless and physically sick if I don't make art. I love being around beautiful things, and I love being in Paris. Anything can happen in Paris. It's the place I am the happiest. When I don't work for prolonged periods of time, I become really detached from the world. I am my own worst enemy, and spending a lot of time alone makes me sad. I hate being alone for too long. I feel like I spend a lot of time in the past. Moving forward is quite



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tricky for me sometimes but something I'm always actively working on.

### What are some current obsessions?

I have booked myself onto a Reiki course. I am super-excited about learning to practice it! I had Reiki performed on me once before when I was much younger, and it made me extremely tired and emotional, but afterward I felt a total sense of calmness. I am such a chaotic person, so I remember it feeling very foreign and strange.

I love the work of Elke Krystufek. Her huge nude paintings are incomparable. I need to get over the fear of being frightened when I approach a canvas; I am always so scared everything will go wrong. I'm also rather obsessed with the idea of moving to America and driving down Route 66. I have dreamt of this for years.

### When did you realize painting was your favorite form of expression?

My creativity has always been encouraged ever since I was young. I am from quite a bohemian family, and I was always allowed to be myself. I used to want to be a fashion designer when I was really young. I didn't start painting until I was in high school. My art teacher was an amazing woman who really took me under her wing. She introduced me to painters like Stella Vine and Lucian Freud. From then on it was a great love affair! I'm obsessed with the actuality that I can document anything within my medium; there are no boundaries. I feel like I am only just beginning. There's so much more I want to paint.

### You mention painting being a very personal outlet. What was it like doing the performance of your series, *You Touch Me When I'm Too Disgusted to Touch Myself*? What were you trying to communicate within this performance?

I have never done a performance before, so I was insanely nervous and didn't know what to expect, and I didn't rehearse beforehand.



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I just wanted it to happen without any expectations. I find when I am painting around other people, my work always goes wrong. So, I made sure not to make eye contact with anyone in the room and just focus on what I was doing. My paintings are a mixture of playfulness, humiliation, heartbreak, failure and success. At the end of the performance, when I cut away all the clothing I had just spent hours painting, it felt phenomenal. The performance was about exploring my own self-worth, and by projecting my portrait again and again onto someone else, it seemed to take on this almost foreign and symbolic meaning.

### Can you describe your process to me?

It totally depends. With the nudes I am working on at the moment, I'll take a lot of photographs of myself and piece them together before I draw anything. Sometimes I paint myself or past lovers simply from memory. I often collect images I consider to be poignant or important to me, and I refer to these at a later date. Traveling between Paris and England for the past couple of years, I've been painting with acrylic because they are much easier to transport. However, I recently switched back to oil.

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*Losing You*, capsule collection for Glazed Shop Paris.

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From Patrick Church's performance art *You Touch Me When I'm Too Disgusted to Touch Myself* at Wrong Weather Gallery in Portugal.

3

*Kissing My Demons*, acrylic on canvas, 20 x 12". Private collection.

They are so different from each other.

### Do you feel like you make better art when you're heartbroken or in love?

I think my work is better when I am suffering because it gives me that need to make something worthwhile and valid.

### What is the epitome of vulnerability to you?

Letting someone break your heart over and over and over again.

### What keeps you motivated?

I take myself away from people for long periods of time when I work and totally shut myself off from the world. I used to be totally crazy when I was younger; I couldn't handle being alive. I wanted to destroy myself, push myself to my limits. My heart has been broken for nearly three years, and sometimes I feel like I am moving forward, but sometimes I feel like I will never escape this pain. It terrifies me and leaves me helpless, but at least I feel something. At least I felt love.

Contact Patrick Church at [www.patrickchurchartist.com](http://www.patrickchurchartist.com).

*Sarah Elise Abramson is a contemporary fine art photographer based in San Pedro, California—a mysterious post-industrial enclave whose offbeat countercultural history and proliferation of unusual sights, sounds and citizens is tailor-made for Abramson's obsession with everyday surrealism. In both her own photography and in her curatorial and editorial approach to exhibition projects and independent publications, her emphasis is on discovering the eccentric beauty in the things most people overlook. Found objects, hidden messages, secrets of the universe that hide in plain sight—throughout her studies at Parsons The New School for Design and Brooks Institute of Photography, and later at LaChapelle Studios, her work has evolved from finding to intuitively creating original daydreams and shared cosmologies.*

