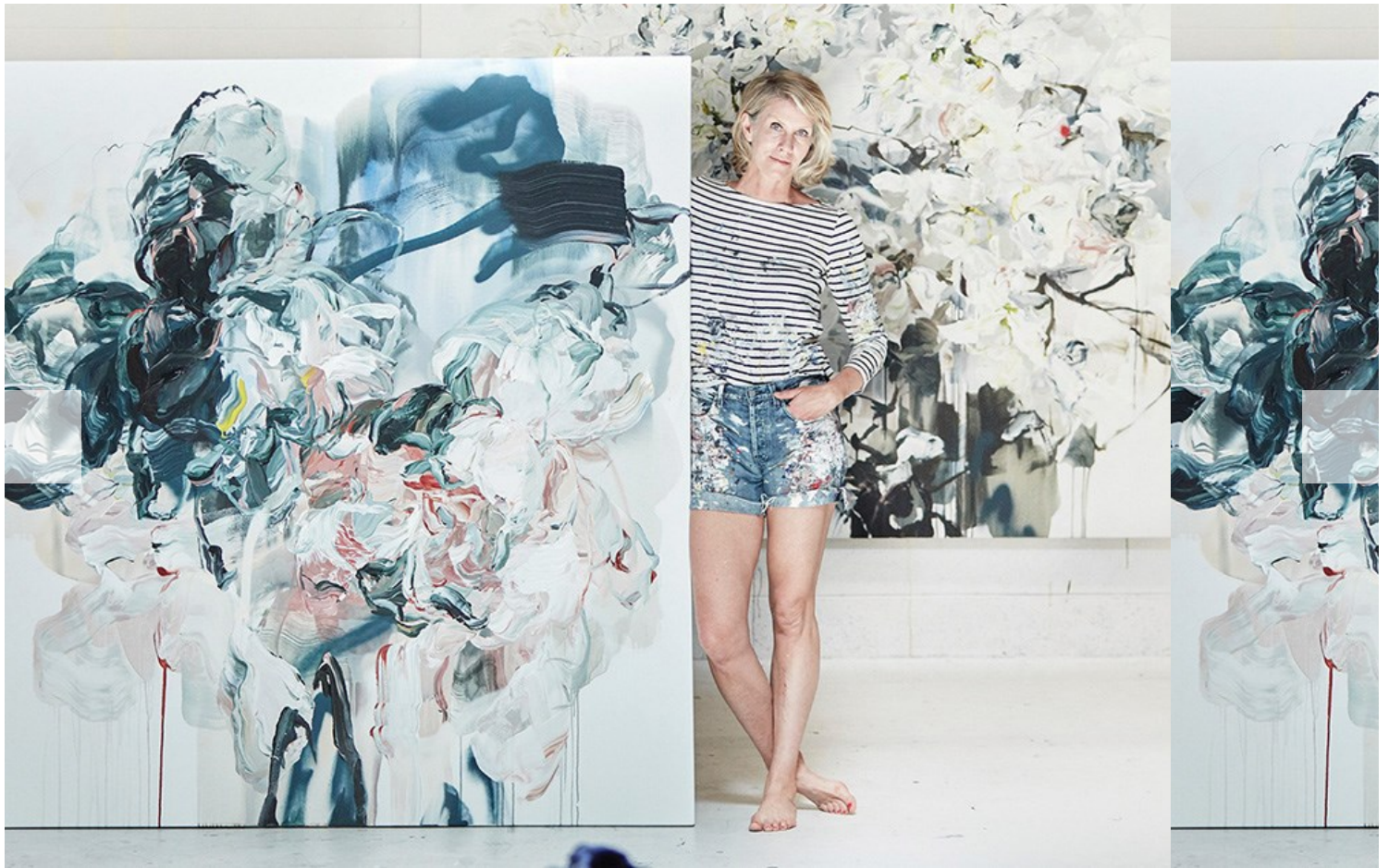


# Bobbie Burgers plays chess with the paint in her latest work

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1 / 2 In Sheltered State, Bobbie Burgers explores the process of decay, transformation and metamorphosis using flower parts and petals. | Supplied

**Bobbie Burgers: Sheltered State, Ferry Building Gallery, as part of West Vancouver's Harmony Arts Festival, Aug. 2-11. Opening Reception: Friday, Aug. 2, 6-8 p.m.**

Is it a mass of flower petals held in place by a black centre of stamens, the dark blue hues a symbol of advancing, yet inevitable, decay?

Or is it a human heart, a quadrant of chambers tethered together by wiry capillaries, its vibrance dimming as waning love gives way to gravity and drains into its lowest part?

Considering it's a Bobbie Burgers painting – lushly created with tactile brushstrokes and guided by the artist's real-time emotions – it could be either.

The cover image for the Harmony Arts Festival is part of the West Vancouver artist's exhibit, Sheltered State, which opens the same day as the festival, Aug. 2, at the Ferry Building Gallery.

In these abstracted works on canvas and paper, Burgers explores the process of decay, transformation and metamorphosis using flower parts and petals.

"The title Sheltered State came to mind while I created this series of small collages," Burgers says. "I started these by creating dozens of drawings, and by layering and placing them, they started to feel cocoon-like to me — like they were either about to fold out, or were folding in to protect themselves ... as if they had made a protective shell around their fragility."

Burgers says the cover image actually is a flower, not a heart, although "I have seen that as well," she says.

"The humanity of the act of painting can be a mirror not only for the painter, but for what and how the viewer sees," she says. "It's a happy coincidence that [this piece] can be read as something as intriguing and emotional as the human heart."

Burgers has been following her own heart towards art since she was a child. She describes the need to create as a hunger that needs to be fed, "very much like an internal gnawing."

"It's like needing to exercise a muscle," she says. "I feel nervous and edgy when I have not been able to create for too long a period, a day or two and I get anxious, and I feel a great relief when I get ideas out, even if its other mediums that I am doing just for myself, ceramics, or even helping the kids with projects."



Bobbie Burgers first solo show, called *Waterworks and Pathways*, took place at the Ferry Building Gallery in 1995, when she was 19 years old. - Supplied

Burgers grew up in West Vancouver and after graduating from high school travelled to France for a year of study before returning home to take art history at the University of Victoria and then attend Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design (now the Emily Carr University of Art and Design). Her first solo show, called *Waterworks and Pathways*, took place at the Ferry Building Gallery in 1995, when she was 19 years old.

Burgers, now a married mother of four, went on to exhibit her work in galleries and private collections around the globe, and has become one of Canada's most popular contemporary artists.

Known for her coloured flower portraits, Burgers' recent shift to a darker palette of deep blues, reds and greys in her *Sheltered State* series combines drawing and collage — evoking both the fragility and resilience of nature in a chaotic world.

After all, “the process of painting and drawing includes so many real-life consequences,” Burgers says, “spills, drips, marks that need to be worked around. To me, the ability to problem solve and react to the situations or to play chess with the paint is the biggest gift of my mediums — and one of the last things in our lives that is unreplicable.

“I love the idea that it is my mark, my hand, caught in real time, with all the energy and layered emotions that wander through the subconscious while one paints.”

Burgers adds that “Maximalist minimalist came to mind as a way to label the two distinct emotional values I found arising in this series. The combined efforts of washes and thin veils of paint that hint at stains left by the energy of my subject, or ghosts of past beings, layer with strong energetic focused brushwork to create a push and pull and allow the viewer to fall in and out of focus.”

*Sheltered State* is just one of the highlights of the 29th annual Harmony Arts Festival, which runs Aug. 2-11 in West Vancouver along the waterfront on Argyle Avenue, from 14th to 16th Streets.

The free festival celebrating all things cultural includes musical performances, art exhibitions and culinary events. Festival sites include John Lawson Park, Millennium Park, Ambleside Landing, the Music Box, the Silk Purse and the Ferry Building Gallery.

Burgers says it is gratifying to come full circle to the Ferry Building Gallery, calling it “a vital part of the community.”

She adds however, that the homecoming makes her yearn for more.

“I have recently been a part of a committee to understand and recommend what is needed as part of West Vancouver's arts facilities, so although I love the Ferry Building, I believe strongly that we need more in our community,” Burgers says.

"I hope to see, in conjunction with the Ferry Building, much-needed new facilities that could showcase our talents, educate our children, host myriad dynamic activities that connect people to various art forms.

"How do we dream and use our imagination? We create places for people to gather and be inspired in and learn from."

For full details about the Harmony Arts Festival, visit [harmonyarts.ca](http://harmonyarts.ca).

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