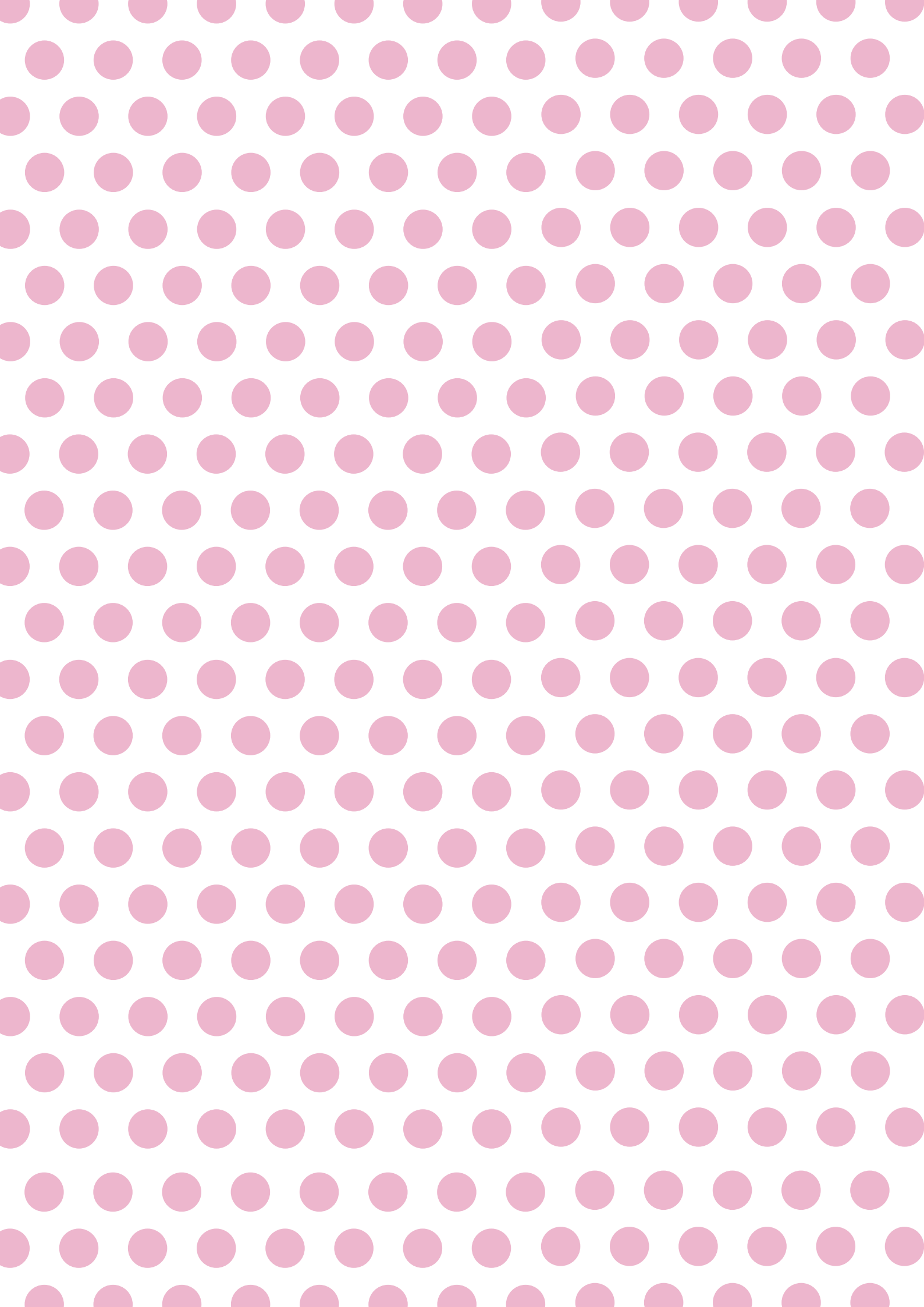




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Well Aren't You Fancy Now, 2024
Mixed Media Assemblage including Wooden Spoon Holder, Plaster, Silver Spoons,
Acrylic Nails, Rhinestones, Acrylic Paint, Rubber Snake, 20 x 9.5 x 3 inches

Building Ideas through
Language, Fragments,
and Associations

with

Nicole Bricker



Hi Nicole, thank you for taking your time to answer our questions. Let's start with a quick time travel—what are some of your earliest memories of making things by hand?

Some of my earliest memories are of making things by hand, whether that was drawing, coloring, or creating little worlds. I come from a family of creators, though not necessarily in the traditional fine art sense. Many of the women in my family made needle work like knitting, crochet, and needlepoint, which has directly influenced my practice today. My mom was endlessly crafty. My dad taught me that drawing was the foundation for everything, that if I could master it, I could make anything I wanted. My paternal grandparents made wonderfully strange handmade objects to sell at craft fairs, including hanging lamps made from plastic plant pots and dolls dressed in elaborate safety pin and bead clothing. It was inventive, resourceful, and unapologetically kitschy.

My great grandmother lived to be 100, and during her last year in a senior living community in northern Minnesota she spent her time, in her words, “teaching the kids to knit.” Looking back, I realize I come from a long line of people who made things by hand and shared them with others.

Your path towards pursuing art more seriously and eventually professionally wasn't linear, though. Could you tell us a bit about it and about your professional background?

Growing up in suburban Minneapolis in the 1980s, I was introduced to art more formally through school. I attended a state run arts high school, where I realized I was interested in many different creative disciplines. I later earned a degree in media studies and worked in film, news media, and advertising. Those careers were not the right fit for me long term, but they deeply shaped how I think about visual storytelling and communication. Like many women,

I made the decision to focus on raising my children, and during those years we moved frequently for my spouse's career. With every move, my creative practice evolved.

Before moving to New York, I began attending figure drawing sessions again for the first time in over a decade, and it completely reawakened my creative energy. Once I arrived in New York, I decided to seriously study oil painting at the National Academy. Learning those skills gave me confidence and expanded the way I think about image making and narrative.

In your practice you examine the visual language of Midwestern American suburbia, and before speaking about some of your works, I'd love to hear more about your personal connection to that region.

Midwestern suburbia occupies a very particular space in American culture and is often caricatured as unsophisticated, passive, ordinary, or overly sentimental. I think those perceptions flatten the complexity of the region and overlook the creativity, resilience, and strong sense of community embedded within it. In Minnesota, I experienced that community mindedness firsthand.

"Having lived through out the region, I see the Midwest as a place shaped by aspiration, practicality, care, and deeply personal forms of expression."

There is something uniquely revealing to me about the way people decorate their homes, preserve keepsakes, and build identity through everyday surroundings. The quiet rituals and visual language of everyday life may seem ordinary from the outside, but they hold deeply human stories worth preserving and examining.

There is a piece I'm curious to know more about, "Well, Aren't You Fancy Now?". What are the main themes of this piece and where does the title come from?

"My piece, "Well, Aren't You Fancy Now?", explores ornamentation, modesty, aspiration, and display within Midwestern suburban culture."

The work references the tradition of displaying souvenir spoons, objects that transform travel and memory into domestic decoration. I replaced the spoons with casts of my own fingers, turning the body itself into part of the work. The heavily bedazzled nails reference exaggerated self presentation that feels both celebratory and excessive.

The title comes from something I internalized growing up, the idea that you should present yourself well, but never in a way that feels boastful or draws too much attention. That tension between pride and modesty feels deeply rooted in Midwestern sensibilities. The phrase "Uff Da," common in Scandinavian American communities like the one I grew up in, acts as shorthand for overwhelm, disbelief, or reluctant acceptance. Beneath the ornamentation, discarded fragments and snakes suggest the discomfort and anxiety hidden underneath carefully constructed appearances.

Another piece I wanted to ask you about is "Nice Girls Don't Ask For Things".

"Nice Girls Don't Ask For Things," explores the institutionalized forms of gendered play and social conditioning that prepare girls for the expectations placed on women later in life. The work combines casts of my own hand with found and symbolic objects including lace, buttons, jewelry, and a horseshoe, all arranged within a reliquary like structure. Many of the materials reference domesticity, decoration, luck, politeness, and femininity, while the title speaks to the subtle lessons many women absorb about restraint, desirability, self sacrifice, and taking up as little space as possible.

The use of my hands is recurring throughout my work. I am a finger amputee due to an aggressive tumor, so hands exist in my work as both tools for making and records of vulnerability, adaptation, and survival. I return to them

often because hands are one of our most immediate forms of communication. They allow us to make, comfort, gesture, connect, and tell stories about ourselves and one another without language.

You work across different media such as mixed media sculptures, assemblages, and paintings. What do you treasure about working multidisciplinarily, and is there any medium that you feel especially drawn to?

I enjoy working across different media because it allows me to follow ideas wherever they naturally lead. Each material or process opens up a different way of thinking, and I like giving myself the freedom to move between them rather than forcing an idea into a single format. I tend to work in batches, immersing myself in one medium at a time through repetition, play, and variation. Once I step back and look at the larger body of work, I begin to see connections between the pieces and how smaller experiments contribute to a broader narrative. While I do not feel exclusively tied to one medium, I am especially drawn to sculpture and assemblage because of their physical relationship to objects, memory, and material history.

I read that you begin all of your works with writing and color mapping. Could you tell us more about that and also about the following stages in your creative process?

I love writing alongside my art making, and much of what I do begins through lists. During a critique once, someone asked me if my visual work was “a list or a poem,” and my answer was “yes.” Writing has become my way of sketching.

“Instead of drawing out ideas, I build them through language, fragments, and associations.”

When I begin a piece, I usually already have constructed elements, collected objects, photographs, or materials that I want to investigate. Sometimes it starts with a phrase, a



Passing Notes, 2025, Mixed Media Assemblage including Plaster, Acrylic Nail, Rhinestones, Nail Polish, Paper, Liquid Rubber, Marble Base, 8 x 3 x 3 inches

memory, or a specific object. I write constantly throughout the process, usually on Post it notes or painters tape on a wall, allowing ideas and narratives to slowly form connections.

As ideas begin to solidify, I move into what I call color mapping. I use Color Aid paper organized in trading card sleeves inside binders, which honestly feels a bit like baseball card collections to me. I build palettes based on the emotional direction of the work, then mix paints directly to those references and document the formulas as I go. Much of it exists in a personal shorthand that probably looks chaotic from the outside, but it allows me to think visually, materially, and emotionally all at once.

Speaking of the process, what have you been working on? And are there any future projects or events you'd like to share with us?

I recently closed out a group show at Trailer Box Projects where I exhibited “Nice Girls Don’t Ask For Things.” This

summer I will also be part of a group exhibition at Still River Editions in Danbury, Connecticut, where I will present the first in what I hope becomes an ongoing series of cyanotype based collage works. I have also been spending this summer developing new cyanotype works that I hope will grow into a larger ongoing series. At the moment, though, my biggest project is relocating from Connecticut to Baltimore.

“I am trading rural woods for city living, which feels like a major personal and creative shift that I am very excited about.”

I also have several curatorial projects ahead through my project space, Anonymous Society, including an upcoming exhibition titled What Nature Remembers.

We’re reaching the end of our conversation already, so I have four last questions for you to wrap this up. First, what have you been interested in or inspired by lately?

Lately I have been revisiting *The Handmaid’s Tale* and reading *The Testaments* while also watching the series adaptation. It all feels incredibly timely right now. I have also been reading constantly. Honestly, if someone wanted to pay me to read books all day, I would gladly take that job. Susan Sontag’s *Notes on Camp* has been especially inspiring in relation to humor, taste, and kitsch within my own work. I also loved *Art Talk: Conversations with 15 Women Artists* by Cindy Nemser, which I originally picked up for the Alice Neel interview and then could not put down. I also always recommend *Writing Down the Bones* by Natalie Goldberg.

Are there any fellow emerging artists you’d like to recommend to us and our readers?

Yes, I’d like to recommend Katie Bassett (@katiebassettstudio), Sonja Langford (@sonjalangford) and Tiffany Wong (@tiffanywllart).

Please describe your work in three words to a stranger.

Tender, uncanny, nostalgic

And last one, please complete the following sentence:

To me, art...

...is cultural evidence of our shared humanity and our need to connect with one another.



Nice Girls Don't Ask For Things, 2026, Mixed Media Assemblage including Wood, Plaster, Gold Findings, Graphite, Acrylic Ink, Liquid Rubber, Gilding Wax, Lace Curtain, Mirror, Transparency, Plastic Bottle, Buttons, 31 x 7.5 x 5 inches



Up left: **Soft Hands Make Strong Claws**, 2025, Mixed Media Assemblage including Paper, Acrylic Paint, Plaster, Ink from Guns, Liquid Rubber, Acrylic Nail, Nail Polish, Rhinestones, Hot Glue, Brass and Glass Lamp, Injection Molded Plant, 22 x 16 x 6 inches

Up right: **The Gospel According to Regrets**, 2025 Mixed Media Assemblage including Glass, Plaster, Acrylic Nail, Nail Polish, Rhinestones, Metal Findings, Wood, Injection Molded Plastic Flowers, 12 x 6 x 3 inches

Down left: **If We Could Eat Shame Like Candy**, 2024, Mixed Media Assemblage including Plaster and Gold Leaf, 2 x 10 x 4 inches

Down right: **Residue of Habit**, 2026, Mixed Media Assemblage including Glass Ashtray, Plaster, Acrylic Paint, Liquid Rubber, Wood Ashes, Doily, 6 x 6 x 2 inches



You Didn't Hear It From Me, 2026
Mixed Media Assemblage including Plaster, Wood, Liquid Rubber, Acrylic Paint,
Doily, Shell, Pearl, Vintage Teapot, 10 x 14 x 7 inches

