

## Art

# Painting the Stories of Artists Who Are Also Caretakers

Suzanne Schireson's women weave, paint, write, and weld in garages, backyards, vans, and other provisional spaces.



Lauren Moya Ford August 24, 2021



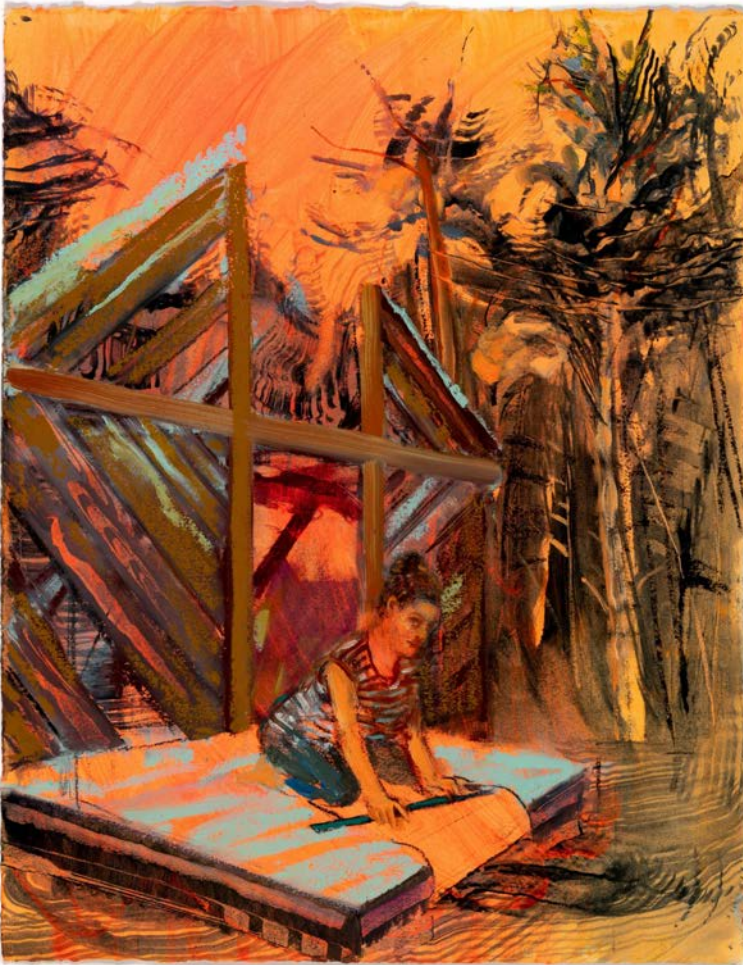
Installation view of Suzanne Schireson's painting "Backyard Frankenthaler" (2021) (photo by Jordan Whitten)

Shortly after her daughter was born, artist **Suzanne Schireson** started making pictures of solitary women immersed in their creative work. Painted in electric, fluorescent colors and loose, gestural strokes, Schireson's women weave, measure, paint, write, weld, and photograph in small garages, backyards, vans, tents, and other provisional spaces. The women work by night because — like the artist herself — their daylight hours are filled with other obligations.



“In quarantine, I occupied more time with those I cared for, making flashes of solitude particularly rare,” Schireson, who lives in Providence, Rhode Island, wrote in an email to Hyperallergic. “I am fascinated by stories of how mothers and artists sustain their practice while taking care of others.” Each of her latest paintings is based on a creative caretaker she knows personally, though they contain a strong autobiographical component, too. “I often use my own body in the mirror as a point of departure,” she said, noting that “sometimes I feel as though I am acting out a story.”

Five of Schireson’s latest oil paintings on paper are featured in **INSIDE ROOM**, a temporary exhibition in small art gallery boxes installed in residential areas throughout Asheville, North Carolina. **The art gallery boxes appeared in Asheville last spring** as a response to the pandemic’s shuttering of galleries and museums. Curators Suzanne Dittenber and Luke Whitlatch partnered with **Tiger Strikes Asteroid Greenville** and individual community members, who volunteered space in their front yards for ongoing exhibition projects. “We were especially interested in responding to the particular circumstance that COVID presented where people were spending most of their time in their homes and were eager to unplug and take walks,” Dittenber explained over email to Hyperallergic.



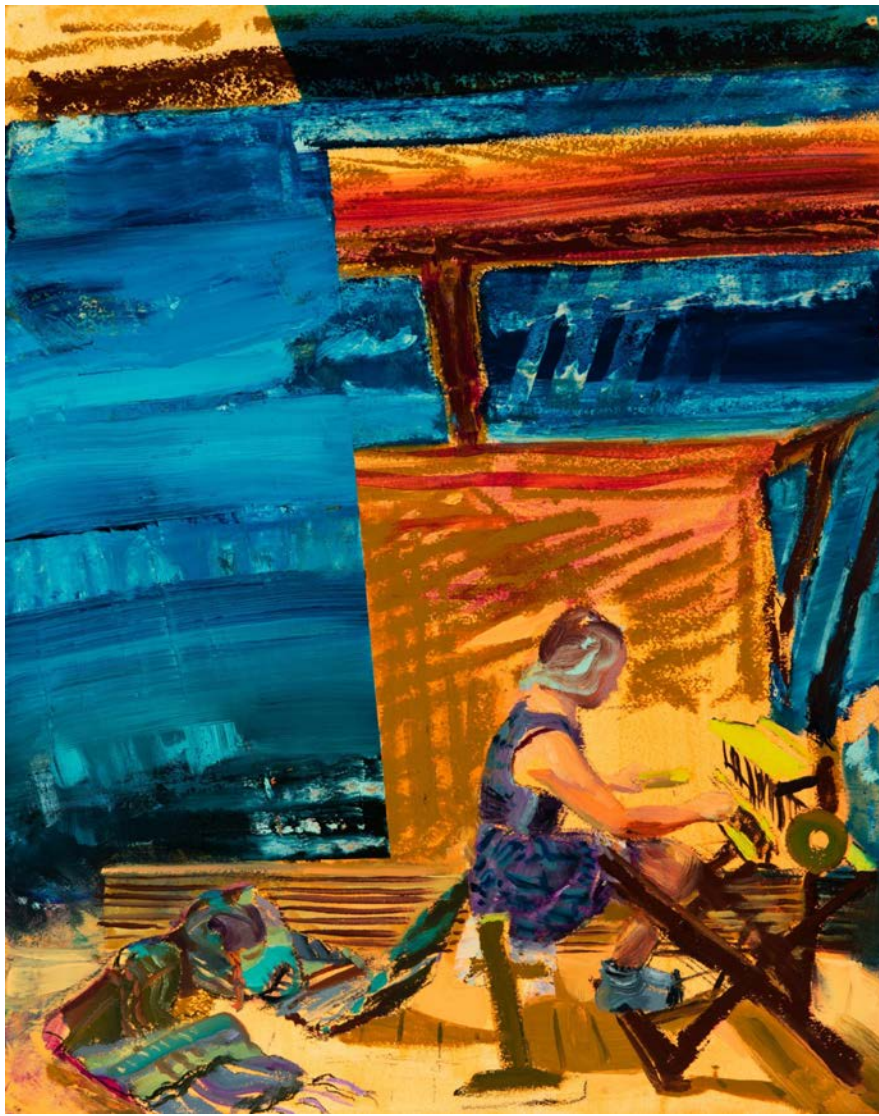
Suzanne Schireson, “Architect” (2021), oil paint on paper, 20 x 16 inches  
(all images courtesy the artist)

A flux between indoor and outdoor spaces appears in Schireson’s work. In “Architect” (all works from 2021), a woman draws her blueprint in a mere skeleton of a studio that’s open to the nearby trees. Again, in “Night Weaver,” the woman’s studio is a mere suggestion of a shelter, without a solid or fixed construction. “Increasingly the buildings struggle to hold them, or the women get to work before the structure is even complete,” Schireson remarked.

The artist’s searing neon colors convey her figures’ passionate dedication to their work while reminding us of the cacophony of distractions that await them in their daily lives. With speedy palette knife scrapes and economical zig-zag marks, the paintings also seem to have been produced in this kind of creative whirlwind. However, her figures are finessed with a quick but careful hand. Schireson imbues their features and actions with a sort of soft specificity that’s open ended enough for us to imagine ourselves in their places.

Ultimately, Schireson’s pictures are about the space and time that we give ourselves, even if it’s only in our mind. As the disruptions of the pandemic drag on, her paintings remind us that our creative urges are powerful and

essential. As she said, her works “are not about escape; they are about a deep desire to reflect and refuel.”



Suzanne Schireson, "Night Weaver" (2021), oil paint on paper, 20 x 16 inches





Installation view of Suzanne Schireson's painting "Home Plate Dig Site" (2021) (photo by Jordan Whitten)





Suzanne Schireson, "10th Street Shed" (2021), oil paint on paper, 19 x 16 inches

**Suzanne Schireson: INSIDE ROOM** continues at the Art Gallery Boxes in Asheville, North Carolina through September 3. The boxes are located in the front yards of private homes at the following Asheville addresses: 76 Gertrude Place, 135 Lookout Drive, 65 Kenilworth Road, 74 Tacoma Circle, and 30 Virginia Avenue.