Hello! You are listening to *Curator on the Go Podcast*! Today I have a pleasure of speaking to Canadian abstract artist Linds Miyo.

Born and raised in California, her work strives to evoke the strong, direct light of her childhood. A trauma survivor, Linds is interested in the balance between intention and that which is beyond our control, the meeting place between our best efforts and happenstance. She often uses broad representational panes of textured black in her work, washing layers of colour over top - folding the dark relief of the past into multi-dimensional present-day, with honesty, happiness and sparkle. Linds Miyo lives and works in Toronto and is currently in studio residency at the Museum of Contemporary Art.

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***Curator on the Go:*** Hi Linds, thank you so much for joining me today. I am so excited to learn more about your unique story. Welcome!

***Linds:*** Hi! Thank you so much for having me!

***Curator on the Go:*** Thank you for being here! So, you identify yourself as woman / friend / partner / mother / trauma Survivor /​Listener / Observer and Activist. Let’s go back and talk about your background and why did you decide to be an artist?

***Linds:*** Oh my gosh… Is being an artist a decision? [laughs]

***Curator on the Go:*** That’s a good question!

***Linds:*** Yea. No, I’ve always been a creative person. I’ve always been a painter. I’ve started painting when I was a very young child and it was just always something that made me feel different than other things in my life. It just gave me this access to a certain calm and certain relaxed state that just made me feel really good. And I love sharing the work. I love for people to see my staff and knowing that it makes them happy as well… So, I’ve always been that painter and the person who was doing creative things, but I never thought that I can actually make money doing it. And so, I’ve always had what I call a “creative adjacent career.” I’ve worked in publishing, advertising, I was a creative director, I was a graphic designer… Like all of those types of things.

And it just got to a point, with my family, as a mother that working in advertising wasn’t fulfilling anymore, and the type of time and hours I was putting into it – I wasn’t feeling good about it. I kind of talked my partner and said: “Look! I really want to take some time.” Kind of for the very first time in my life, I guess, to be able to say: “I need time for myself and my own creative work and kind of see what I can do here as I haven’t given it to myself before.” And that has changed everything!

***Curator on the Go:*** Absolutely! When I asked you, what themes you would like to discuss on this podcast, one of them was the alternative paths to becoming an artist. I am very intrigued to hear what choices you had to make in your artistic path and why it took you so long to start developing your own artistic practice and not helping others to be artists or creatives?

***Linds:*** Yea… Like I said, you know I just never really thought… I mean… I am Japanese-German as my ethnic background, and growing up in a Japanese family, you know, being an artist not really something particularly culturally… yea… they were like: “yea, do what you want with your spare time but you know you need to have a real career.” Like when I was very young, I started working in marketing – I was doing websites and you know that kind of staff. It’s very easy to pick up clients that way and it’s easy to freelance. It’s easy to get an idea of what client is looking for. I think that is a very valuable experience in anything creative to be able to collaborate, to create path for yourself to create income, and to be able to make a creative path for yourself that lets you survive and move on to the next thing and figure out what you really want to do. I mean, that is really what my 20s were all about.

***Curator on the Go:*** I love the title of your recent collection – “WORK WITH WHAT YOU HAVE.” Can you tell me more about your art practice, where you compare a brushstroke to a memory, and your interest in the balance between intention and things that are beyond our control?

***Linds:*** Yea… These are good questions! Wow! This is so great! So, yes, my latest series is called “Work with what you have,” and it kind of came from this place of just taking a moment and, you know, having this moment of inclination of what’s next, what’s next, what’s next… What material do I want to work with? Do I need to go to the art supplies store and explore? I was always kind of flying from one thing to the next thing. I sat down one day and though that I want to create a series with what I have. I don’t want to work outside of that for a little while. I want to kind of explore different angles of what I can create within some interesting parameters. And I kind of challenged myself to sit down and said: “Ok, I going to choose I think like five colors honestly.” [laughs] And the colors are, seriously, they are a little bit weird – they are a little bit wonky. But somehow when you put them together – they work. And I think that’s like life [laughs] – that’s kind of how we do it. As you get older things just come together. And you think “wow, that is not how I expected them to work, but it did!”

And, so, I started playing with these colors and just playing with this kind of feeling of painting. And, as you said, yes, a brushstroke can be a memory. It can be a feeling. My lines are clear thoughts and arcs are stories. You start to layer these things together and that is what life is, you know. We have thoughts and feelings and emotions and memories and stories, and all of that pilled all together is what we are doing every day. I want to feel those things. I want to be able to remember everything and feel everything. And I say that is how I create the future is by putting these things down on canvas that I can see what’s right in front of me and what I have!

***Curator on the Go:*** Absolutely! What a unique practice! What is your painting process? I know you are not using the easel and paint on the floor, am I right?

***Linds:*** Yea! I am always surprising my studio mates as they come in and I am on the floor and they can’t see me behind my piles of staff. [laughs]

***Curator on the Go:*** Did you find it’s easier for you to paint of the floor?

***Linds:*** I don’t know where that came from. Like I said, I started painting when I was a very small child and I think I was just always on the floor and again, that is sort of a work with what you have thing. The idea of an easel is just never really appeal to me [laughs]. I do move the paintings from the floor to the wall – that happens. But I guess my process is pretty minimalist. I don’t like to have a lot of equipment. I don’t like to have to rely on things. I just like to just move down on the floor and go to work.

***Curator on the Go:*** Let’s talk about putting your paintings on the wall. So, you’ve been exhibiting at solo and group shows. Tell me about your first art show, where it was and what feelings you had before and after it?

***Linds:*** Oh gosh…. So my first actual gallery show – it’s a gallery that is not around anymore – I want to say it was Artusiasm [laughs]. Do you know the gallery?

***Curator on the Go:*** Yes.

***Linds:*** Yea… That was my actual gallery show. It was really funny because the gallery was pretty casual I would say. It was a very entry gallery. So, I wasn’t available for the drop off time that they needed me to drop off the painting. So, I said: “You know, is there an alternative? What can I do here,” and they had me drop off the painting to the paint store across the street (it’s like a house paint store). So, there is like little lady in there, I went in with my paintings and like “hey, I am dropping this off for the gallery.” She is like: “yes, yes, just leave it right there.” I was just not what I’ve expected [laughs] for my first show, but, you know, you have to kind of roll with it and, you know, always have your humbleness and humility and just kind of move through the situation whatever required.

***Curator on the Go:*** Absolutely! Do you usually apply for the call for artists to get into the shows or you approach the galleries yourself to see if your work will fit into their upcoming exhibitions?

***Linds:*** It’s kind of a little bit of both. I think coming from a background in advertising and marketing as I do – a big part of being an artist to me is meeting everybody. I love meeting people. I love having the face to face conversation about the art and being able to talk about it, and kind of making that connection as human beings I think is so important. So, I am just always trying to connect, always trying to talk to everybody and asking friends of mine that are artists who do they know. We all have to collaborate and work together in this way. It’s great in Toronto because we have such a vibrant community of artists that are working not just here but internationally. And it’s been really fun kind of growing within that community, and I get so much great advice everywhere I go.

***Curator on the Go:*** Absolutely! Networking is key today! So, you’ve also exhibited your works at Toronto Outdoor Art Fair this year? What was your experience and did it match your expectations?

***Linds:*** Yes. It did! [laughs] Yea, Outdoor was an adventure. I would say it takes a lot of energy to do it. There is so much lead up and planning that goes into how you are going to organize your booth and how you are going to move everything and how you are going to set-up. I have little kids – so for me it’s a lot of time away from my family. But I just love the experience again of meeting people that necessarily look at art all the time. You know when people just walking through, and say: “Oh, you know, I’ve just got an ice cream at Nathan Phillips square and didn’t know there will be artists here.” They can come into my booth and we can talk about the work, art, trauma and all of these things that happen in our lives. Those conversations are really-really valuable to me.

***Curator on the Go:*** Absolutely! You also did another art fair called the Riverdale ArtWalk, right? Would you do this art fair again?

***Linds:*** So, I definitely preferred the Outdoor. I think Outdoor again is an investment of time, energy and resources, but it’s a force to be reckoned with. You know. [laughs] How else you describe it, but the Toronto Outdoor Fair it’s so well organized. The people who come to it – some are just wandering through but a lot of them are really serious collectors and are coming to the fair every year to find something new and be introduced to new art, new concepts, and new people. It’s just a different kind of feeling.

I think Riverdale was more of a weekend fair. It’s more … I really don’t know how to describe it… There were a lot of dog walkers that are really not interested in the art necessarily. I don’t know if I will do it again - it will depend on the situation and who else I knew that was doing it. But I acknowledge that I am an abstract painter. My work is not for everybody. That’s fine. I don’t expect everybody necessary to what to buy the work or even like the work. I still like having that dialogue and being able to talk about it. And certain fairs are abstract forward.

***Curator on the Go:*** You also had a pop-up at Stackt Market. How did you get that opportunity?

***Linds:*** Honestly, I am not entirely sure how I’ve got that. [laughs]

***Curator on the Go:*** That’s an amazing answer!

***Linds:*** Yea, Stackt was just opening up I think. From what I understand, I think I was one of the first artists to sign up on a mailing list that I was interested in possibly displaying at Stackt Market. And I think it was literary within the first three weeks that Stackt was opened. So, I think they were just looking at who has expressed interest, and they got in touch and said: “hey, can you do a full show this weekend.” So, I want to say I confirmed on Wednesday or Thursday and set up everything on Saturday and had a full show for the weekend.

Yea, it was awesome! It was really spectacular and that was such a great experience because people were coming into this new space not knowing what to expect. And it’s so community-oriented of everybody in that neighborhood. Stackt has just really transformed that area of Toronto. Making it such a destination and so walkable now. So, it was really-really cool to meet people and just have everything up in one space. That was the most space that I’ve had in terms of being able to display my work. It’s way more than a booth at art fair for sure.

***Curator on the Go:*** Amazing! Where do you sell your works now and how do you promote yourself and your art??

***Linds:*** Uoohh.. boy… I sell anywhere I can. [laughs] I do a lot of work with Partial Gallery online. They do such a great job with promoting my work. I’ve done a studio tour with them, an interview with them before, and they’ve featured me several times on the website and in the newsletter. I have such respect for what they are doing. They are not only selling the work but they are also allowing people to rent the work and also industry to rent the work. So, if you want to try a painting in your home for a couple of month and make sure it’s the right piece for you before you make that investment – you can do that with Partial Gallery. And I haven’t had this personally this happen, but I know several friends have had their artworks featured on TV shows. Their artwork was on *Suites* because it was on Partial Gallery. Staff like that is really cool and being able to have an income stream from that is awesome! So, I really-really like them. They are great because they just allow open communication between the artist and the client straight away. And it’s been really great for me.

***Curator on the Go:*** I am happy that Partial Gallery worked for you because I know you’ve applied to another show and they wanted to charge you a huge hanging fee

***Linds:*** OMG. Yea!

***Curator on the Go:*** I was surprised!

***Linds:*** Yea! I don’t have the exact numbers right in front of me but it was like $250 for the hanging fee plus 50% commission. A big part of who I am as an artist, and I want to put it out there, I want to make art for real people! For people that don’t necessarily think about buying. I am not just trying to sell to art collectors who are like: “but I can only afford $10,000 for this piece right now.” That is just not who I am. I am a mom with kids. I am on a parent council. I want everybody to be able to afford and own a piece of my work if you would like to own a piece of my work. And I try very hard! I think my most expensive piece right now is $2000 and it’s a 4 foot painting. So, that’s speaking of a serious wall real estate. So, I really try to keep most of my work under a $1000 and I really value that! And if I am paying a $250 hanging fee plus a 50% commission, it makes no sense. And I don’t support that within the arts community. I don’t think that we do anything good for ourselves as local artists to be inaccessible. I think we’ve talked a lot about that already just within this time we’ve had about community and about making connections. I really want people to be able to afford the work if they want to own the work.

***Curator on the Go:*** Absolutely! I totally support you. So, you are really good at presenting your work. Do you plan your posts on Instagram in advance or go with the flow and talk about what you feel/do at that day?

***Linds:*** It’s kind of a little of both. I mean… You know I worked in advertising. I have an idea of how I want something to look. But at the same time, I am very concerned with authenticity, I don’t want things to feel too contrived. I have a planoly for hashtags and staff like that, but I am not setting up my posts well in advance or post them at any specific timing. If you see a post from me – it is something that I’ve just put together. [laughs]

***Curator on the Go:*** Absolutely! I am the same! I never plan posts.

***Linds:*** You have such a great voice for everything that you are talking about! It’s so reassuring within this community! [laughs]

***Curator on the Go:*** Thank you! I really appreciate that! So, I also know that you have a studio at MOCA where we’ve met a few weeks ago. Why have you decided to have your own studio space and how did you get into MOCA studios?

***Linds:*** So, MOCA is a beautiful space. I want to thank you so much for making the time to come by. It was so lovely to have you there! I really got started with painting full time about a year ago, just over a year ago and I actually met a curator at a mommy meet up who had referred me originally to AKIN. And Akin is Toronto non-profit that has studio space for artists. They have multiple locations all over the city. I think there are three or four hundred artists now with Akin throughout the city. Their studio spaces are really affordable, and I had no idea that affordable studio space was available in Toronto. It absolutely transformed my life. I met that curator, she said “you have to check Akin for studio space,” and I was like “studio space… you are nuts… there is no way I can afford it the studio space.” She is like “really, you can!”

I went to see space at Akin Lansdowne, just a few blocks from MOCA, and it’s just a few blocks from my kids’ school and I just felt in love with the space. And the space was $200 a month, and I was like “what? Really?” [laughs] So, I got a little studio space and I started making work. It’s been absolutely glorious! And I was encouraged this year to apply for MOCA, and I said: “you know, I am not ready, there is no way in hell they will give me a MOCA space.” It’s a really big application and very-very competitive, and I think I’ve submitted 10 pages of materials to them. And I guess I just got lucky because I got a MOCA space and it’s beautiful and I am so excited about it because again – community engagement. We have a lot of opportunities for open studios and people coming in to see what we are working on at MOCA. Yea, it’s just amazing. I am so thrilled.

***Curator on the Go:*** Absolutely! I believe that working alongside with other artists always inspires you and give you more opportunities to discuss your ideas, get advice and just be creative any time as its your personal studio. Do you have moments when you wanted to be just “I want to be alone! I have a lot of people around me?”

***Linds:*** [laughs]

***Linds:*** Don’t we all have these moments? Of course! Yea! But I think having studio space … I know that you’ve talked a lot about it on Instagram and also on the podcast and in your blog as well that artists need to invest in themselves! You know, you need to make the space. So, even if there are times when I prefer to just not have a lot of people around me, it’s the investment of myself of being able to pay for the space to make my work and dedicate the time and energy to that. I just think there is no amount of value – that is a priceless thing for me to be able to take this time in my life to make to make work and have space that is dedicated to making it. I don’t have little children throwing food at me, any laundry to do or anything like that as my home life is crazy. [laughs]

***Curator on the Go:*** Yea! You are a working mama. How do you manage and find a balance between your career and family because it’s so important? I don’t have kids yet, but I always have this thought that I might work too much, especially during the weekends when my husband is home and we can spend the day together.

***Linds:*** Yea. I think, as women, we put way much pressure on ourselves with that idea that we have to work because we have such ethics around this. That is a lot! I feel the same! I feel like it’s really difficult to make a balance, but I’ll tell you a little story about being an artist mama because I think it’s eliminating.

A few months ago, I was looking for some artists’ residences in Canada and again, you apply for your artist residency way down the line. So, this was one for a month. It’s a studio, I am not going to say the place, it’s very far from here and I would have to travel there and I would stay there for months. And this, you know, two years down the line. It was by invitation only residency. So, I was just kind of inquired and said: “You know, how do I go about just in term of introducing myself and introducing my work to you as I like to get an invitation in the future.” And the answer I got back was: “well, we don’t accommodate families.” And I was just like “what? What decade are we living in?” [laughs] What? I didn’t say anything about my family. I guess they must have gone… I definitely mentioned that I am a mom, but it’s not like my Instagram has pics of my kids all over the place. I have a personal account for that. I don’t really need to advertise that all over the place. So, I think it was just they literally looked at my Instagram and it says artist mama in my profile and that’s it. That was the answer I got. I was like: “Oh, wow! That is such a small minded …. ”

***Curator on the Go:*** I know….

***Linds:*** And I did respond back and I said: “Look, we as a family really want to make sure, I have 2 little girls. Dad can travel for work and mom can travel for work too!” And if we are talking a few years down the line, my kids are more than able to survive without me and stay home with dad. Mom can go and do an artist residency!

***Curator on the Go:*** Absolutely!

***Linds:*** I really know what to do and I want to express that to my kids. I want them to see that mom can do what mom needs to do. Mom can do my art and can do my business. That is not something that because I am a mom I am going to miss out on these opportunities. That’s not where my head is right now. Really interesting…

***Curator on the Go:*** Yea… Move on. there are so many other amazing residences

***Linds:*** Yea… but I think you never know when you are getting a response like that.

***Curator on the Go:*** I talk a lot on this podcast about personal branding. I know that you have a business name ( Wonder&Story), that you’ve registered and got license) – you are ahead of the game already. You work hard on building your brand. How did you come to an understanding that it’s important to see yourself as creative entrepreneurs to be successful?

***Curator on the Go:*** Absolutely!

***Linds:*** My entire career has been about that! I mean, going back when I was early 20s just making websites. You have to have an identity. You have to be in control of what you are putting out there. It has to make sense. It has to have a look and a feel to it that’s able to communicate with the world what you are trying to achieve. And I think art is no different. You know. Like it’s an extension of me as a person, but it’s also a business. I wanted to be able to, I think this is important to talk about right here actually, of why I have a business name as well as artist name. Because depending on different types of art fairs, some of them will accept the business name and some of them wouldn’t. And I think it is really important to be able to diversify your income stream and if there is something I wanted to do with just prints – I might just do it under the business name because I don’t necessary need to identify myself as an artist. When I do something with large canvases, obviously, my artist’s name needs to go first and my business name going to go second. There are different applications for the use of that and as a business you need to be aware of that going into it.

***Curator on the Go:*** Yea, absolutely! And everything you have, your social media, your website – it has the same vibe and I really like it. So, you can easily identify the artist.You made your website yourself, but do you outsource help sometimes or you prefer to do everything yourself?

***Linds:*** I prefer to do everything myself. [laughs] I am awful. Yea, I can’t really imagine a time when I would give that up. I like being in control of that kind of staff.

***Curator on the Go:*** No problem. I hear you. I am the same!

***Linds:*** Yea, but again with branding, I feel that making your work is as much as you branding as the branding itself. You know, your work needs to be recognizable. You need to be able to have someone look at your piece and say: “Oh, I know that artist.” That is something that needs to carry over.

***Curator on the Go:*** Absolutely, sowhat is your dream project and/or who is your dream client?

***Linds:*** oh jeez….. [laughs] I don’t even know. That is such a big question. I mean, literally a year and a bit ago – 6 month ago I couldn’t imagine having a MOCA studio. So, it’s very open right now. My mind is open. I don’t know where this is all going yet but I am really excited to kind of make my way and make my work and see where things are headed!

***Curator on the Go:*** Absolutely! We will talk in a year and get back to the same question.

***Curator on the Go:*** What is one piece of advice you would give to emerging artists?

***Linds:*** Be open! Talk to everyone! [laughs] Talk to everyone! Ask what people think about your art. I think I was really surprised getting started that generally in the community not a lot of people would volunteer what they actually think about your work. You need to ask the questions, you know.

***Curator on the Go:*** Absolutely! And you need to approach them in the right way because every time I open my Instagram, I have so many questions: “you are a curator, what do you think about my art?” You should first introduce yourself, start a conversation like not randomly send 100 questions to professionals and expect everyone to answer. It’s not working this way! Just make it personal!

***Linds:*** Pretty disrespectful! It’s good when we can have that one on one contact with somebody and introduce that as a conversation and as an exchange. It needs to go both ways – not just

***Curator on the Go:*** Do you have any exciting projects, collaborations or exhibitions coming up that you'd like to share?

***Linds:*** I believe, that my next big solo show is going to be at Queen Shop on Bloor. That will be up for Nov – Dec and I need to confirm, but I am pretty sure that we are going to go for Nov 18th as the opening for that show. So, I hope that you can be there and all of your listeners and Instagram followers can be there as well. It’s going to be a great show – I’ve got a lot of fresh work that’s going to go up for that! It’s nice that it’s going up for the holiday time and hopefully give people some gift ideas going into the holidays!

***Curator on the Go:*** Absolutely! I will share the post with my followers! And how anyone can come and see you at your studio?

***Linds:*** They can just get in touch with me! Reach out! I am open! I am friendly!

***Curator on the Go:*** Where my listeners can find you online?

***Linds:*** SO online, my business name is Wonder&Story and everything is under wonder and story. And I am artist Linds Miyo! I am so happy to be on this show today! Thank you so much for talking with me!

[https://www.wonderandstory.com](https://www.wonderandstory.com/)

***Curator on the Go:*** Thank you so much for sharing your story today! I am excited to see your new works and projects and of course I will come and support you at your show!

***Linds:*** Yaaaay! I always love seeing you and chatting with you! We always love such a good time!

***Curator on the Go:*** Thank you!