

SHOW  
BUSINESS:  
STEPHANIE  
JONES  
RUBIANO

Doing her part to keep Austin weird, **Stephanie Jones Rubiano** lives and creates her mixed media art out of her home in the suburbs of that famous town. After several years of instructing and vending at art retreats such as Art Continuum, Artfest and Art & Soul, she decided to take her work to the next level and apply to juried art festivals. This bold move has taken her around the country and taught her a multitude of lessons in resilience, self-reliance and perseverance.







**Stephanie's  
Favorite Quote**  
 "Everything you  
 want is on the  
 other side of fear."  
 —Jack Canfield

# MINE

is the usual artist's tale of a creative childhood filled with coloring projects and imaginative play. Where my story diverges is when I chose to pursue the study of marine biology rather than art in college. After graduation, I worked as an environmental scientist for an oil company in Houston. It was early spring of 1997 when I wandered into a store dedicated to rubber stamps. An artist named Fred Mullett had visited the weekend before, leaving behind beautiful amalgamations of ink, imagery and paper. I immediately purchased fish stamps, (Hello—marine biologist here!), inks and the premier issue of "Somerset Studio" magazine—and down the rabbit hole I went! Ever the willing student, I proceeded to take classes in paper crafting, collaging, book binding, jewelry making, metal working, polymer clay, sewing and painting.

For the past 12 years, my artwork has centered on my fascination with antique photography. I find inspiration in the facial expressions, outfits and situations portrayed in the photographs and use them as jumping off points for my creations. I also enjoy collecting vintage and antique items because they have a story to tell as well.







In 2005, I created my first butterfly boxes, which combine antique images, uncommon objects, old papers and real butterfly wings into whimsical vignettes. On impulse, I answered a call from “Somerset Studio” for art featuring the theme “Wings and Things,” and was rewarded with an article and a cover in 2006! At the time, I was going through a divorce and dealing with severe self-doubt. This incredible validation of my artwork gave me the courage to continue on this path.

### Putting Myself Out There

My initial art show application was for a juried show in Austin in 2007. I fumbled my way through the application process and was completely floored when I was accepted into the show! It was a scramble to purchase a white tent, (a must for art festivals), create a sign and figure out how to display my art. My first set of business cards was printed with an inkjet printer on that perforated cardstock you buy at office supply stores. Despite all of the raw edges, I had a successful show! As an introvert, it was very difficult to spend the weekend talking to people about myself and my art, but the genuine interest shown by the patrons overcame my reticence and I began to enjoy the conversations.

One of my favorite things to do during the years I lived in Houston was attend the Bayou City Art Festival. It was a nationally-ranked festival—so far out of my league it seemed ridiculous to even apply. But you never know unless you try, so I applied for their 2008 fall show and received an invitation to participate. Although I had lived in Houston and knew the city fairly well, it was still a trial for me to pack all of my booth supplies and art into my father’s truck, maneuver that beast around the city, learn what was involved in a “load-in and load-out,” set up a booth on my own and sell my art for two days. To add to that stress, it was also the weekend before I was getting remarried!

Again, I had a fabulous response to my work and I even won second place overall out of 300 artists! Luckily for me, Texas is a very big state and we do love our art festivals. Over the next few years, I applied to many shows and was rejected by many shows. In fact, I applied to one one art festival six times before I finally juried in! I have taken part in events all over the state and even traveled as far as Chicago and New York City. Each show presented a unique situation with its own set of problems and resolutions. Some were logistical nightmares while others tested me with adverse weather conditions. Although I had to rely on myself for many things, the community of artists that works these festivals was always willing to lend a hand or offer advice, so I was never truly alone.

“I COMPLETELY AGREE WITH THE NOTION THAT THERE ARE NO ACCIDENTS IN LIFE. BUILD A NETWORK AND WORK HARD AT MAINTAINING IT.”

—Stephanie Jones Rubiano







## STEPHANIE'S SAGE ADVICE: HOW TO BREAK INTO THE ART WORLD.

**PRODUCE A CONSISTENT BODY OF RECOGNIZABLE WORK.** Generally, about 20 pieces will give you a good base to work from.

**TRY A LOCAL ART SHOW.** Many cities have local events where you can dip your toe in the proverbial water without a lot of cost outlay. Have plenty of business cards with you.

**LEARN PHOTOGRAPHY OR HIRE A PHOTOGRAPHER.** This is not the time to scrimp. The four photos that are presented to a jury in the slide show of applicants are your one and only chance to make a good impression. Usually, in the first run through, jurors are simply voting yes or no based on those photos.

**REGISTER FOR SHOWS ON ZAPPLICATION.ORG.** Almost all juried art shows in the nation are part of this online system that accepts multiple show applications via one portal. Generally, shows require four images of your artwork and a booth shot.

**APPLY MORE THAN ONCE.** Just because you are not accepted to a show one year does not mean you should not try again the next. Art festivals want to keep a fresh mix of artists, so generally the jurors making up the jury are switched out each year.

**DO YOUR RESEARCH.** Learn about the shows you are applying to by visiting their websites, attending the shows and joining an artists' group on Facebook.

**CULTIVATE A THICK SKIN.** Everyone will have an opinion about your artwork that they are happy to share with you, good or bad! That is the purpose of art, after all. I have had people stand in the middle of my booth and completely tear down my work. The flipside is that you have many more people who walk into your booth and instantly fall in love with what you do!

**BUILD A NETWORK.** Keep in touch with those you meet along your pathway that will support, encourage and champion you. My participation here is due to the founders of Women's Leadership LIVE, Debbie Saviano and Stacey Schieffelin. These women are advocates for women like myself, who have a desire to be their own boss and have the aptitude to maintain it.



Participating in art shows is one of the best ways for an artist to get their name and artwork out there. After all, your art isn't going to be seen or sold sitting in a guest room. Art shows are a prime networking opportunity. You never know who will walk into your booth or take a business card home. I have had the opportunity to be in magazines, festival advertisements, newspapers, interviewed on TV and radio and asked to show in galleries, all because I got out of my house and my comfort zone and decided to carve out a spot in the public eye. Taking part in shows has fostered one of the biggest personal growth periods of my life. I have built confidence in myself and my work, cultivated a network of business contacts and friendships and learned important life lessons along the way.

### Making It Work

In 2016, my daughter was in junior high and very busy with academics, orchestra and after school clubs. This meant that I, too, was very busy with academics, orchestra and after school clubs. I hated to miss any performances, test reviews or projects, but it did happen because dates for art festivals are set almost a year in advance. Knowing our lives would become more hectic with high school on the horizon, I decided to taper off my show schedule and shift my focus to a new business venture. I took an online course with Stephanie Lee on how to create an online course and spent the summer learning how to film

workshops, edit video and set up and maintain a website. It was a serious learning curve that sometimes felt more like a wall, but I was up for the challenge! I am in the process of taking marketing classes because it is one thing to sell to people who walk into your booth and quite another to hawk your wares on the vast space of the internet.

I have plenty of nights where sleep eludes me as I battle the anxiety that comes with starting over and building a new business. The feedback from my online students has been very positive, and I know I am offering a quality product based upon my 17 years of teaching experience. I feel it is only a matter of time before I reach my goal of a new, sustainable home-based business. I do love working out of my house, because it is a space filled with light, love and art. It has been a good fit for this part of my life. It's full of my collections that inspire me daily. I saw out my wood shapes standing at my kitchen counter, where I can watch my daughter work on homework at the kitchen table. I look up at my walls and see artwork created by friends and remember our times together. And I'm already planning for the next stage of life with my wonderfully supportive husband, making plans for a dedicated separate studio space where I can work and host art workshops with guest instructors. Watch out 2018!



Learn more about Stephanie and her art at [StephanieRubiano.com](http://StephanieRubiano.com).