



**L A A B h**

Justice at door step

## **LAABh Foundation**

### **Interview with Geoffrey Stein**

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Geoffrey Stein is a recovering lawyer. Geoffrey has been painting full-time since 2000 and has received a Certificate in painting from the New York Studio School in 2004, and a Masters in Fine Art from the Slade School of Fine Art, London in 2007. Since returning to the states, he has been a full-time painter, exhibiting throughout the

United States, in London, Paris, Dublin, and Reykjavik. He lives and paints in New York City and Westport, Connecticut with his wife of 32 years, Patricia.



**Gordon Brown, collage material from the Financial Times and acrylic on canvas, 30 x 30 inches, 2009  
Private collection, London.**

***Q. Hello, it's a pleasure to have you with us! Could you please tell us a little bit about yourself and your life at law school? What extra-curricular and co-curricular activities were you involved in?***

I have always made art. I made wood and metal sculptures as a kid; I was welding when I was eight years old. I worked as a photographer for the local paper in high school, and studied product design at Parsons School of Design in New York City before going to college and studying sociology at Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, NY. After graduating from Bard, and looking for a job in New York City during the recession of 1983, I fled to law school.



Geoffrey Stein, *Cerebral Dreams*, oil on acrylic on canvas, 60 x 30 inches, 2004

No.

***Q. Was the process of career change a difficult one? What factors did you take into consideration before making the switch? Looking back, do you think you might have wanted to do the entire process differently?***

At Albany Law School, I walked onto law review and, after graduating, clerked for a New York State appellate court. I then moved to New York City and spent a year at a small trial firm defending asbestos cases for a peripheral defendant. After a year of asbestos defense work, I changed firms and worked as an insurance/reinsurance litigator for 12 years, mainly representing Lloyd's and London Market Companies. During that time, I failed in my attempts to combine art and practicing law. I took drawing and anatomy classes all over New York City at night, on weekends and during vacations. In 1999, my wife heard me complaining, again, about being a lawyer. We don't have kids, and she said, "If you want to paint, go paint. But if you don't, you can never complain about being a lawyer again." So in February, 2000, thanks to some tough love, I quit my law job and started painting full time at the New York Studio School.



*Individual One*, acrylic, gesso, pencil and collage material from *The Mueller Report: The Final Report of the Special Counsel into Donald Trump, Russia and Collusion* on canvas, 20 x 30 inches, 2019

It is interesting to me that I quit, rather than take a leave of absence. It was very important for me to draw a line and move on. In hindsight, it probably would have been smarter to take a leave of absence.

***Q. What were some of the challenges that you faced as a part of the process of making a career switch from the legal field to a career as unconventional & Unique as visual art? How did you overcome them?***

It was very much a process to go from being a lawyer who made art at night, to being an artist who used to practice law. For the first three years I was painting, I worked as a contract lawyer at my old firm, in my old office, on my old cases. Then my cases started to settle and I began to resent the time at the firm when I was not painting. I have kept my New York State license and continue to listen to continuing legal education tapes every two years. I occasionally help artist friends by going to small claims court with them or helping to write bad faith letters to insurance companies.



**Mike Beyond New Years**, collage material from Greta Thunberg's September 23, 2019 speech before the United Nations Climate Action Summit, acrylic and pencil on canvas, 30 x 30 inches, 2021

***Q. What does a typical day in your life as an Artist look like? What advice would you give to budding artists who aspire to make this their career?***



**Painting wall, Westport Studio, 2021**

On a typical day, after the gym, reading and sending emails, and doing errands, I go to my studio, which is currently located at my wife Pat's and my house in Westport, Connecticut. The first thing I do in the studio is look at the collage or painting I am

working on as I drink my coffee. I tend to work on one or two pieces at a time. My painting wall runs the length of the studio. It is where I work and hang any pieces I am uncertain about. Opposite the painting wall is a wall with a desk that spans the length of the wall. I keep my laptop, on the desk and a printer. There are also clippings from magazines and photographs of work by artists I am interested in. I spend a lot of time looking at my work in progress and thinking about whether it is done or what my next move is. I listen to podcasts and the news most of the time I am in my studio.



Desk in Woodpeck Studio, 2021

I usually work until 7:00 or 8:00 pm, staring at the work in progress, putting pigment or collage on the canvas. At the end of each day I take a photo of the day's progress with my phone. I save all the progress photos for each painting, which allows me to see how the work is progressing and whether or not I made a wrong turn. From these, I create stop action GIFs of each collage being made.