

TESS GUINERY

Woman, lover, mumma, maker:

My heart, hands and soul lean into creating, instinctively— and whether I'm doing it subconsciously, intentionally, amidst the mundane, the routine or in time set aside in my studio—I feel most alive when I'm creating.

COULD YOU BEGIN BY TELLING US A BIT ABOUT YOUR CAREER PATH SO FAR AND WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO WHERE YOU ARE TODAY?

I was born and raised for the first 7 years of my life on the small island of Phillip Island, Australia. I recognise from where I stand now there's a significant part of me that has resonance with small town living due to my early childhood and where my life began. In saying that, I am equal parts lover of the slowness small town brings and equal parts curious in nature, and so my love for new experiences has led me to many interesting places geographically—some I have visited and some I have had the opportunity to live in. So after a large 38 years of being human, with travel and creativity and exploring different mediums of expression in different places, I find myself here, right now in a town that feels quickly familiar, a place I'm living in a real life love-story with, eagerly happy to kiss the ground (for longer than just a little while).

12 years ago I married my best friend and together we have 3 spirited daughters (age 8 and 4 year old twins). Caleb, my husband, is a stuntman in the film industry which has lent favourably to our love for adventure and travel. We have been blessed to show our daughters so much of the world due to his job. We just celebrated our 12th wedding anniversary and as I look back from where we began and where we have come,



PHENOMENE MAGAZINE

I am just so darn proud of us and the family we are creating—life isn't perfect of course, but it is beautiful!

As far back as the small age of 3, I remember feeling deeply about how I was designed to live—creativity being instinctive. I feel blessed that my mother nurtured this in my siblings and I, making space for us to live in resonance with our natural state of being. My mother's intention carved an understanding that art isn't just something "we do" but something "we live". What my mother cultivated in me has allowed me to feel at home in choosing the creative route in almost every life decision all the way to now. All my career choices and major life decisions have been chosen with the inclination that expression is important. I believe art is in the everyday.

IS THIS A PATH YOU ALWAYS DREAMED OF TAKING? [I.E. IN A WORLD FULL OF POSSIBILITIES, WAS YOUR CAREER DIRECTION ALWAYS CLEAR?]

I've always known that I wanted to live a creative life but where that would lead me I haven't always been sure—one thing I have learnt along the way is that by choosing the creative path we are saying yes to a way that has many bends and turns, with valleys and mountains and if you can flow with the river of it all, you somehow always end up where you need to be.

COULD YOU SHARE THE STORY OF HOW YOUR POETRY CAREER BEGAN? [WHAT FIRST SPARKED YOUR LOVE OF WRITING AND HOW DID YOUR TIME IN SOUTH AFRICA PLAY A PART IN THIS?]

Circa 2017 whilst living in Cape Town, South Africa for a season, I felt a conviction to pause my career path as a designer, giving it all up to allow air and space for the artist within, I had no intention to pursue anything in this time except the allowance of playfulness for art's sake. It was here that I started writing down small personal revelations that came out as prose and poetry. The medium of ink felt instinctive to express what my heart wanted to say in this time and from here, in a completely unplanned manner, my first book was born.

AS WELL AS BEING A TALENTED WORDSMITH, YOU'RE ALSO A DANCER AND DESIGNER. HOW DO THESE DIFFERENT ART FORMS INTERSECT IN YOUR WORK?

Dance has been an anchor in my journey of creative expression, it's here in this medium I feel most at home. There's something about the way dance intersects and holds hands with so many other mediums acting almost like an electric undercurrent. Dance is like a wave that other mediums can sit upon, a framework to see art move from a flat dimension into something that has a body. Choreography is essentially a form of story-telling and when we break all the mediums down whether it's paint, music, photography or poetry— they are all acting tools in the art and articulation of storytelling.

Art is telling a story...

Studying design back almost 13 years ago has played a beautiful part in equipping me with the practical tools needed to execute my ideas from dreamstate to reality. The ability to design is the ability to not let ideas get trapped inside of us, with a toolkit such as this, I have no excuse not to birth the things that need to come earthside.

So early on when I first began to dabble and play with pieces of prose and poetry, I remember it very clearly feeling rhythmic, I could see the words almost twirling with a sense of movement and fullness. It's like what I was trying to say came out in the same way a dance would. It was very childlike and strangely had a familiar sense about it. It was imperfect but it all felt necessary in my journey of storytelling and expressing a particular part of my heart. From this uninhibited sense of play, my 3 books were born, each in a season of their own. Publishing a book was never something I really set out intentionally to do, but that's the magic about creativity, you never really know where you'll end up.

Photography top by
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YOU'RE MOTHER TO THREE LOVELY GIRLS. CAN YOU TELL US HOW MOTHERHOOD CHANGED OR IMPACTED YOUR CREATIVE JOURNEY OVER THE YEARS?

Growing and birthing my three daughters has been the ultimate and pinnacle creative process of my lifetime. I believe nothing I have created before them or further go on to make could sit perched of more importance than the making of them. I truly believe the heart, mind and spirit of a woman dramatically changes when becoming a mother. The creativity that follows this moment in a woman's life is very instinctive because something shifts and awakens after giving birth— and there will never be enough words or even the right ones to describe purely as to what

that is, but the art that follows comes from a new place, a place that is very alive.

Having my daughters has also brought me the daily challenge of surrendering how I once used to show up creatively. Everything looks different after becoming a mother. This has been somewhat an awkward part of the journey for me because after giving birth I was still very much me (old parts and all) whilst entering the new and unknown paradigm of motherhood. Nothing can prepare a heart for what happens in those early days and the monumental shifts that becoming a mother brings. Essentially, it's entering a whole new way of doing life, whilst still being very much in touch with how you once did things. What once was,



can't continue as it did. This new world required a rewiring of how I saw the world around me, a shedding, steering me to be more disciplined in knowing how I could do what I do creatively but with a new framework and lots of flexibility. At times it has been hard for me to accept the ever evolving changes of this rhythm but I am willing to hold the tension of it all and lean into it season upon season.

I love being a mumma, I have learnt that creativity is an essential part of who I am as a woman and I cannot resist this part of me or be separate from it, but the way I do it must be flexible. I'm always learning.

HOW HAS YOUR MARRIAGE INFLUENCED YOUR CREATIVE WORK?

When we love and are loved well, there is an overflow—I believe this overflow translates passionately into creativity. My relationships are a major catalyst for my most passionate creative work. My relationship with my husband is paramount in this, within our dynamic aka love-fire, I feel seen, heard and held, truthfully—I feel loved and cared for deeply. To have someone in my corner has been one of the most beautiful things I have ever experienced. Truth be told, love really does set us free.

WE'D LOVE TO HEAR MORE ABOUT WHAT INSPIRES YOUR WORK AS AN ARTIST AND CREATOR... WHERE WOULD YOU SAY YOU DRAW YOUR INSPIRATION FROM?

The pursuit of seeing beauty and being awake to it is the undercurrent and leading of where I find all my inspiration. I seek it through conversation and electric communion in my prayer life, it's here, my eyes become awake to beauty and from this place, I create.

DO YOU HAVE ANY TIPS FOR COMBATTING CREATIVE DRY SPELLS? FOR EXAMPLE, WHAT RE-IGNITES YOUR IMAGINATION AND CURIOSITY WHEN EXPERIENCING A CREATIVE BLOCK?

Knowing my season.

Sometimes it comes down to the simplicity of just needing to drink a glass of water or move my body and other times it's taking a closer look at the season I'm in and understanding what is needed there—maybe it's a time to rest, or reflect or a time to sow into experiencing rather than making. I think instinct is helpful in reading the tides and the awareness of this helps ignite what needs igniting.

POETRY, IN ALL ITS WONDER AND BEAUTY, CAN BE AN INCREDIBLY VULNERABLE ARTISTIC EXPRESSION. HAVE YOU EVER GRAPPLED WITH FEAR WHEN IT COMES TO SHARING YOUR WORK? IF SO, DO YOU HAVE ANY WORDS OF WISDOM FOR CREATIVES WHO MIGHT BE LACKING THE COURAGE TO SHARE THEIR ART OR PUT THEIR CREATIVE WORK 'OUT THERE'?

Every. Single. Day...

But I believe what we give light and water to, grows. We get to choose what grows, it can either be fear or courage, only we get to choose that for ourselves. For me, I have had to get over myself, release outcomes and let myself experience a zillion trillion vulnerability hangovers to learn, it's all worth it.



Photography by @_housefrau
Styled by @twahnmcMahon

WHAT UNDERLYING MESSAGE OR STORY DO YOU HOPE YOUR ART WILL COMMUNICATE WITH THE WORLD AROUND YOU?

Truth, because where there is truth there is beauty.

IF CRITICISM ARISES (WHETHER THAT'S SELF-CRITICISM OR THE OPINIONS OF OTHERS), HOW DO YOU PERSONALLY NAVIGATE THIS?

Criticism is an unavoidable part in putting your work out there. I learnt early that the trade-off for not being criticized is me not expressing myself—the cost of avoiding criticism is too high. There will be people who despise my work and people who connect with it—and that's ok. I think accepting this has been of importance when working through even some of the hardest of criticisms. Not attaching my worth to what I produce is also key in not allowing criticism to hit deeper than it needs to. It can be a really cruel world out there and often the most unwarranted cruelty comes from persons who are unresolved within themselves, when you can acknowledge this, it becomes easier to have grace and move gently through even some of the hardest moments. Conversation and constructive criticism—I'm all here for that, it sharpens, strengthens and makes me better. Having people in my life that can be honest and give me constructive feedback and genuinely want the best for me is important. Have people that see you, know you and can give it to you straight with the good intention, this is medicine for the soul and counteracts much.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR DREAMS FOR THE FUTURE. WHAT CAN WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING NEXT?

Presence is my current dream and I'm looking forward to writing more. Who knows what this combination will bring—I hope it will be beautiful.

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