

Angel's path from bartender to renowned blockchain artist is characterised by resilience and an unshakeable creative urge. She sits down with Mariquita de Boissière to talk about the healing power of colour and how not sweating the small things can lead to creative breakthroughs.

Best known for her colour-drenched, ethereal tributes to oceanic sunrises, Angel's photography has been featured in collections that span NFT NYC, Los Angeles, and Chicago, as well as the **metaverse**. Self-taught, the Hispanic artist champions analogue over digital, shooting not only on film but also developing the rolls herself at home.

Combining a resolutely DIY approach to her art with a poeticism and a philosophical depth almost beyond her years, the tables were turned last year when Angel was invited by international artist, Fer Caggiano, to star as the subject in her **'Dare to Dream'** collection. Featuring alongside names such as **Brittany Pierre**, **Lori Grace Bailey**, and Reece Witherspoon, the project uplifts an array of women and non-binary people in the NFT community who inspire and help to push the culture forward on the blockchain.

While Angel continues to make waves within web3 — establishing a name and a living for herself as a full-time artist — she recounts how her initial reaction to NFTs was one of scepticism. "A lot of my photography friends got into it. I was rooting for them and retweeting their work," recalls the Texas-based artist. "I was excited for them but I was also really scared because I thought it was all fake."



Thankful, from Angel's Pink Surge collection.

In semi-disbelief, Angel watched on as colleagues struck out and achieved life-long dreams on the back of successful NFT releases. She describes receiving an impassioned DM from a fellow photographer. "She told me, 'if you want to make a living from your art, you need to make NFTs,'" Angel explains. "We were all selling prints before and I was making decent enough money. But I was still a bartender".

Angel traces her fascination for drawing and photography back to childhood. At school, she was encouraged to explore her artistic side. "I was really good creatively," she divulges. "In high school, I picked up a camera and started taking photos for our journalism class." Angel's journey into photography may have begun early in life, but it was to prove far from linear, marked by challenges and obstacles. Though Angel enjoyed artistic subjects, she felt unable to fully apply herself. Growing up in a single-parent household, her memories are punctuated by a series of relocations. "It was hard to stick to one thing," she tells me.

"My art sets me free in so many ways."

— Angel

One thing that did stick for Angel was a dream of going to college and embarking upon a career in medicine. But it wasn't to be. The artist recalls the moment when her mother broke the news to her that her college dream was beyond their means. "That's when I started bartending. I didn't know where to go," she recalls.

Fast forward to today, Angel's photography is owned by prominent collectors and she uses her platform to raise awareness issues that are close to her heart. Pieces like **'The Leap'** and **'Going Under'**, as well as her **'A Safe Ride Home'** collection, explore some of the challenges that Angel has navigated and the resilience strategies she has adopted over time.



Rainbow Road, by Angel.

She speaks candidly about her experience living with depression and anxiety, as well as her shifting relationship with her art. Whether wading through the drudge of insomnia or the destabilising grief of a creative block, there is a tenacity — and ultimately an optimism — to Angel's artistic approach that refuses to take 'no' for an answer; one that leans into duress and uncovers new edges of expression on the other side.

Her discovery of colour manipulation represents one such breakthrough. "I love looking at my photos and all the colour in them. It gives me a lot of serotonin and dopamine," Angel says. With her face slightly tilted, she adds, "my mind is really dark but, deep down in my heart, I'm a happy person. I'm not what this mental illness makes me. That's why I exaggerate colours and I make everything really bright."

“In web3, we can use our power for so much more. We can come together and really make a change.”

— Angel

Drawing upon, and contrasting, vibrant pinks and oranges with saturated blues and purples, Angel uses colour to reimagine the world around her. "You wouldn't see a lot of these colours in real life, but when they come through in my photos, it feels tangible, like it could be real." For the avant-garde artist, this alternate reality offers a very real refuge. "My art has helped me a lot mentally," she says. "It sets me free in so many ways."

The otherworldly quality of Angel's work bypasses the filters of ordinary perception, inspiring an instant identification in the minds of spectators. "I want people to look at my photos and think 'oh, I could have been there. This could be a memory of mine from the past, maybe from a past life. Did I see this in a dream?'" Enthusiastically, she continues, "That's how I like my photos to feel, that's why they're covered in dust. I love the grain to show through because I want to create that sense of nostalgia."



Wabi-Sabi, by Angel.

Angel's distinctive use of texture emerged by chance. Unhappy with the way her photos were being processed, the artist "hit up YouTube University" and taught herself to develop her own film. Armed with a set of chemicals ordered online, a timer, and a thermometer, Angel converted her wardrobe into a makeshift darkroom.

"One time, I developed my film and left it out for a bit," she confesses. "I have dogs and the film got covered in fur and dust. At first, I was like, 'damn, this is messed up. What the heck?,' but when I scanned it, I was amazed. I loved the effect." Laughing, she adds, "you usually need Photoshop to get that kind of effect. But I have three dogs; I have dust everywhere!"

"I think that letting go of little things like that makes life easier."

— Angel

Released last year on SuperRare, *'Wabi-Sabi'* captures Angel's commitment to finding beauty in chaos. Inspired by the hard-to-pin-down Japanese philosophy of the same name, the description urges that we "find perfection in imperfection. For without it, the former would not exist." Sharing her motivation for shooting the piece and how it grounds her in the day-to-day, Angel explains, "I like embracing the natural cycle of life. Dust is in the air, it's going to get on my film and that's just how it is. I think that letting go of little things like that makes life easier."

Knowing what to hold on to and what to let go of over the years is an intuition that has helped cement Angel's career as a full-time photographer in web3. Another factor is her unfaltering determination. Casting her mind back, she recounts how she built a following and connected with other artists while holding down her bartending job. "I was in every Twitter Space I could be. I'd wake up before work and would jump into the shower while waiting my turn because it could take forever to get around to me. If they said my name, I would cut off the shower, grab my phone and introduce myself."

*When Two Stars Collide, by Angel.*

"I even started putting my AirPods in at work. I would be in Spaces while making drinks. I had to tell my friends, 'you need to take care of that customer because I'm in a Space.' I kept my voice low and made sure my managers didn't catch me." With a relieved sigh, she tells me it all worked out in the end. "I was able to quit that job and now I do web3 full time."

A big believer in "giving back", the film photographer has contributed to a **collaborative fundraiser release** to coincide with International Women's Day on March 8th. For her, web3's fundamental sense of community and unparalleled market access are forces that

can be used to change lives for the better. "In web3, we can use our power for so much more. Especially as artists. We can come together and really make a change."

Tags

Photography

North America

Share



Written by
Mariquita de Boissière



More from
Artistry



More from
Art

Mariquita (she/they) is a freelance writer who lives in La Paz, Bolivia. A late-dx autistic with ADHD, they are in an ongoing process of (re)discovery and self-expression. Originally from Brighton, UK, over the past decade, she amplifies movements for environmental justice and coordinates campaigns to resist the criminalisation of protest.

Suggested

Trending Articles

See all