

# MAIA PALMER

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## STATEMENT OF CREATIVE PRODUCTION INTEREST AND AGENDA

Much of my work is inspired by my experiences teaching English as a Second Language and by my passion for linguistics. As an ESL teacher, I was privy to a host of challenging and highly personal stories of immigration. The experience altered my world view, and created a desire to use my art as a means to convey the complex yet fragile stories of others.

Consider conversation as a medium, analogous to paint for the painter, or clay for the sculptor; the act of dialogue becomes an aesthetic act of collaborative creation. I use the language of art as a means of initiating communication; my subject becomes my partner in conversation. As we build verbal connections, our capacity for understanding ourselves and others expands in tandem with the flow of conversation. My portraits capture those moments of shared experience, revealing fragments of a hidden narrative frozen in time.

I use portraiture as a vehicle for storytelling, recreating the essence of memories in color, light, and texture. My work merges real people with imagery and text laden with both historical and personal value. These patterns and repetition of iconographic symbols convert my paintings into a state consistent with the concept of memory. By allowing a spatial ambiguity, the paintings take on a universal sense of nostalgia, leaving it up to the viewer to decode the images according to their own associations and experiences.

My work has moved through many iterations of portraiture; animated interviews, storybook iconography, and an investigation of my own identity filtered through the veil of chronic migraines. I have recently begun working on a new series of dialogical portraits. I choose to create visual narratives of friends who are actively challenging societal norms and creating the change they wish to see in the world. This is because over the past few years, I have felt helpless as I watch a narrative of hate, racism and fear of the “other” unfold in our country. By investigating these territories through portraiture and the sharing of stories, I create opportunities to build relationships, and to increase our capacity to recognize and celebrate our shared humanity.

As I move forward, my work will be guided by the overarching question of how can I leverage the power of my white privilege to amplify the voices, stories, and goals of those whose voices are frequently silenced? The answer will be ultimately guided by the outcome of my conversations with collaborators, based on their individual needs and goals. Throughout these collaborative works, I aim for my work to pose several inquiries. How can I capture multiple inner perspectives of a person through portraiture? How can I best highlight the disparities between these multiple perspectives – a person’s inner self-reflection versus their outward projection? Through collaborative discourse, how will my understanding of self, their understanding of self, and our collective understanding of societal expectations and norms expand and collapse?