women united
ART MAGAZINE
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HIGHLIGHTING EXTRAORDINARY WOMEN CREATIVES,
INSPIRING INDUSTRY LEADERS & REMARKABLE ART ORGANISATIONS

CARMET Valerie

"As children, toys become kingdoms, imaginary friends, heroes, monsters, and entire universes where anything feels possible. Those imagined worlds continue to shape how we dream, remember, and envision ourselves long into adulthood.
In my ToyBox Collection, I transform thousands of discarded toys into sculptural assemblages that blur the boundaries between memory and imagination. Familiar objects lose their original purpose to become symbols of hope, transformation, identity, and possibility. Individually forgotten, together they create shared dreamscapes that invite viewers to reconnect with the limitless creativity of childhood. For me, dreaming is not an escape from reality – it is where new realities begin. Every piece is an invitation to imagine a world that has yet to exist."

Valerie Carmet is a French-American contemporary Pop Art assemblage artist whose work explores the intersection of memory, imagination, identity, and sustainability. Best known for her ongoing series, *The ToyBox Collection: Not Intended for Small Children*, she transforms thousands of discarded and recycled toys into vibrant sculptural artworks that blur the boundaries between childhood memories and imagined worlds. Rooted in Pop Art and assemblage, her work invites viewers to revisit the limitless imagination of youth while reflecting on consumer culture and the emotional value of the objects we discard. By giving forgotten toys a second life, Carmet challenges notions of waste and overconsumption, transforming symbols of mass production into narratives of renewal, hope, and possibility. Her work has been exhibited internationally and is held in private collections worldwide.

valeriecarmet.com
Miami, FL | United States

VALERIE CARMET
Twisted
Mixed media, 64 x 51 x 4 in

IF SOMEONE COULD SPEND ONE DAY IN YOUR STUDIO WITHOUT SPEAKING, WHAT MOMENTS WOULD THEY WITNESS THAT REVEAL THE MOST ABOUT WHO YOU ARE AS AN ARTIST?

If someone spent a day in my studio without speaking, they would probably think they had walked into a one-woman performance.

There is always music playing. I sing – badly and without inhibition – and I dance around the studio while searching for the next toy or stepping back to look at a piece. My studio is full of movement because I believe creativity has its own rhythm, and I rarely stay still.

They would also catch me talking to myself. I ask questions, challenge decisions, celebrate small breakthroughs, and just as often tell myself, "No, that's not right." I'm my own toughest critic. Every piece goes through countless adjustments until it feels emotionally and visually honest.

They would see moments of complete focus interrupted by bursts of laughter, curiosity, and play. Working with toys means constantly rediscovering them – turning over a tiny plastic object and suddenly seeing an entirely different possibility.

Most of all, they would witness that my work is built on intuition. There is no rigid plan, only thousands of individual pieces gradually finding their place until they begin telling a story. It often looks like chaos before it becomes harmony, but somewhere between the music, the mess, and the conversations I have with myself, a new world slowly comes to life.

LOOKING BACK, CAN YOU IDENTIFY A QUIET MOMENT – NOT NECESSARILY A MAJOR ACHIEVEMENT – THAT CHANGED THE DIRECTION OF YOUR ARTISTIC JOURNEY? WHAT MADE IT SO SIGNIFICANT?

Looking back, the moment that profoundly changed the direction of my artistic journey was not a major exhibition or a career milestone – it was a quiet moment at home while I was cleaning out my children's bedrooms.

At the time, I was already an artist, working in another medium and developing my own visual language. As I sorted through piles of toys my children had outgrown, I found myself unable to simply throw them away. These objects carried memories of imagination, play, and childhood moments that felt too meaningful to become waste.

Instead, I decided to transform them into an artwork. That first experiment unexpectedly opened the door to an entirely new body of work: *The ToyBox Collection: Not Intended for Small Children*. What began as a personal act of preservation became a complete shift in my artistic practice.

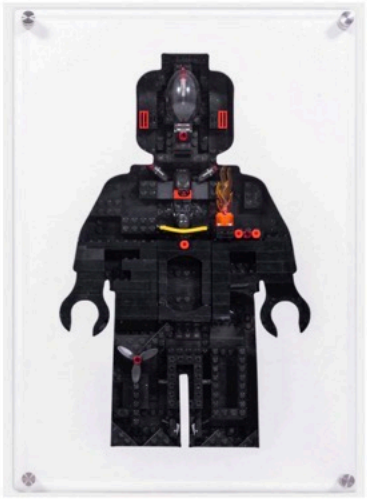
The toys changed everything. They introduced a new material language, a new way of storytelling, and a deeper connection between my personal history and universal themes of memory, identity, consumerism, and sustainability.

That quiet moment taught me that sometimes the most transformative ideas emerge from everyday life. I did not set out to reinvent my work – I simply followed an emotional connection to objects that others had forgotten. In giving those toys a second life, I discovered a new artistic path and a way to turn memories into contemporary narratives.

"What began as a personal act of preservation became a complete shift in my artistic practice."

TOP
God Save the Ol
Mixed media, 22 x 36 x 4 in

BOTTOM
Good Boy Gone Bad
Mixed media, 60 x 50 x 7 in



WHEN SOMEONE STANDS IN FRONT OF YOUR WORK FOR THE FIRST TIME, WHAT DO YOU HOPE THEY LEAVE WITH – NOT IN TERMS OF INTERPRETATION, BUT IN TERMS OF FEELING?

When someone first encounters my work, I hope they experience a sense of wonder before anything else. I want viewers to smile before they understand why.

My pieces are colorful, playful, and immediately inviting, but beneath that first moment of joy, I hope a deeper emotional connection begins to emerge. I want them to experience a spark of recognition – the feeling of encountering a forgotten childhood memory, a familiar object, or a part of themselves they have not visited in years.

I hope my work reminds people that the objects we surround ourselves with carry stories, emotions, and meaning. That something discarded can be transformed, that memories can be preserved, and that imagination does not disappear as we grow older – it simply evolves.

Ultimately, I want people to leave with a feeling of possibility: a renewed sense of curiosity and the belief that even ordinary fragments of our lives can become something unexpected, meaningful, and beautiful.

IMAGINE SOMEONE DISCOVERS YOUR WORK FIFTY YEARS FROM NOW WITHOUT KNOWING ANYTHING ABOUT YOU. WHAT WOULD YOU HOPE THEY UNDERSTAND ABOUT THE PERSON WHO CREATED IT?

My hope is that my paintings reflect the way I try to move through life: with a desire to experience the full depth and richness of what life has to offer. Someone who paid attention, who saw beauty in everything and everyone, noticed the details others might overlook, and whose work became a reflection of that way of seeing. A record of a perspective shaped by optimism, intention, and a belief that beauty is something we cultivate through the way we choose to experience the world. I hope my work invites others to consider how the way we choose to see the world shapes the way we experience it.

TOP
I Burn For You
Mixed media, 17 x 14 x 4 in

BOTTOM
Welcome to Miami
Mixed media, 60 x 70 x 5.25 in