



# About the Cover

## Illuminating Nature

Gary Singh

**A**t the base level of creative practice, artists often reap inspiration from their surroundings. Writers might eavesdrop on a conversation in a coffee shop and then use it in a novel, and a composer might transform sounds from his urban environment into an orchestral work. In Kelly Lanphier's case, working at the Aquarium of the Pacific in Long Beach, California, early on created a substantial interest in sea life that has focused and shaped her artwork.

During high school, Lanphier took art classes while volunteering at the aquarium, where she absorbed all she could about marine biology. Her role at the aquarium involved educating the public about the basics of oceanic environments. She took joy in disseminating marine knowledge to the masses. In particular, she became fascinated by bioluminescent phytoplankton and comb jellies. The subjects and subject matter still captivate her.

During that time, Lanphier continued to paint, so much so that her artwork began to dominate her life. She eventually left the aquarium to pursue painting full time, channeling her experiences into a creative passion. All those shifts teaching visitors about marine biology and oceanic organisms left a lasting impression. Throw in a simultaneous interest in space, and Lanphier's company GalaxSea Artworks ([www.galaxseaartworks.org](http://www.galaxseaartworks.org)) was born.

More specifically, the concepts of bioluminescence and biofluorescence became fuel that drove her to create ultraviolet (UV) reactive imagery and glow-in-the-dark paintings. In the same way that various species are biofluorescent—absorbing light, transforming it, and then redisplaying it—under UV light Lanphier's artwork glows and morphs into different colors.

After much experimentation with the interactive visuals created by UV light, Lanphier felt a natural next step would be to produce art pieces that viewers can experience using glasses with Chromadepth diffraction lenses. By adding the 3D element, Lanphier allows viewers to immerse

themselves in the various emerging layers of color in her work.

As her creative process has evolved and expanded, Lanphier never lost the aquarium's influence. In addition to vampire squid, she draws inspiration from swimming bristle worms, comb jellies, and *Mycena chlorophos*—a species of agaric fungus. Her mixed-media approach incorporates everything she learned taking college-level classes at the aquarium.

"I like to think that I have downloaded bits and pieces of the ocean into my consciousness that I now express through my work," Lanphier says. "By the time I graduated, I was working on new custom paintings every week."

### Mixed Media

Painted just a few months ago, the cover image, *High Tide*, is a mixture of oils and acrylics on stretched canvas. Depending on the viewer's angle and whether Chromadepth glasses are worn, different dimensions will emerge. Viewed only with UV light, the glow-in-the-dark *High Tide* offers viewers multiple layers of color. Because Lanphier's original canvas paintings are also 3D reactive, she includes a 9-bulb UV flashlight and Chromadepth

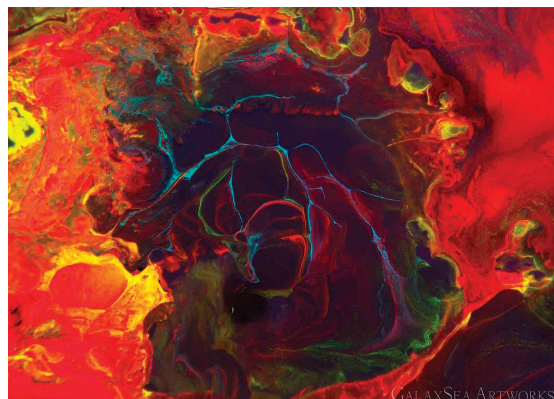


Figure 1. *Origin of Emotion A*. Kelly Lanphier creates mixed-media works of art that can be viewed with or without 3D glasses.

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**Figure 2. *Wisteria*.** Inspired by European rose gardens, this piece contains layers that changes colors under UV light and become 3D when viewed through Chromadepth glasses.



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**Figure 3. *Brain Plasma*.** As with many of her paintings, this piece reflects Lanphier’s fixation on bioluminescent underwater organisms.

3D glasses as part of the purchase price. Thus, Lanphier pieces can be viewed from different angles, under UV light, and with or without Chromadepth glasses—each generating a unique perspective and interactive experience.

Viewers often think Lanphier’s images are computer generated or even photographs, never realizing they are paintings. The artist says her inspiration for *High Tide* came from parallel universes, so that seems only fitting.

“I was listening to a podcast about virtual reality, which led me to start daydreaming about the multiverse theory,” Lanphier explains. “I was trying to visualize what a multiverse would physically look like, and I began expressing elements of that idea into my painting.”

Similarly, *Origin of Emotion A* (Figure 1) and *Wisteria* (Figure 2) are oil-based paintings inspired by nature. Both also come with Chromadepth glasses, and certain layers of *Wisteria* become fluorescent when viewed through the glasses.

“*Origin of Emotion A* reminds me of a familiar place I go to in my dreams mixed with an aerial

view of the Earth’s interior,” Lanphier says. “*Wisteria* is probably the most feminine and soft out of all of these works, as it was inspired by European rose gardens.”

Depending on the painting, Lanphier’s creative method varies. Sometimes she begins with a final image in mind, whereas other times she might experiment with novel approaches, trial and error being an important piece of the creative process. She might use Hubble telescope photos or images of sea creatures as a starting point, or she might ad lib the whole process. In any case, much inspiration came from being surrounded by aquatic life.

Speaking of which, *Brain Plasma* (see Figure 3) could be an oil painting, a photo of a sea creature, or a computer-generated image. But as with many of her paintings, *Brain Plasma* reflects Lanphier’s fixation on bioluminescent underwater organisms, at least partly due to her experience working at the aquarium.

### Open for Interpretation

To Lanphier, hearing how people interpret her visuals is often just as satisfying as painting them. While still in high school, Lanphier was already playing with viewers’ minds as she was posting her images on Instagram.

“I think it’s pretty cool when people can’t quite tell if my work is a scientific visualization, digitally created, or an actual painting,” Lanphier says, rattling off some of the wider-ranging interpretations of her work. “I’ve had some really interesting responses, some of the most memorable being that my art looks like a black hole, an oil spill, anatomical hearts and brains, animals eating each other, and cellular organisms.”

Other responses that stood out included a mummified god king, the Pokemon character Charizard, or a ghost man getting the rest of his soul sucked out of his chest. The interpretations go on and on.

“It allows the viewer to have a more unfiltered initial interpretation of my art,” she says.

Moving forward, Lanphier plans to continue producing interactive artwork that mirrors aspects of nature and the emotions she experiences. Next time the Aquarium of the Pacific puts out a call for interns, they may have another budding artist on their hands. Or maybe that should be part of the job description.

“I plan to inspire a deeper appreciation and curiosity for the polar opposites of our known universe,” Lanphier says. ❖

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