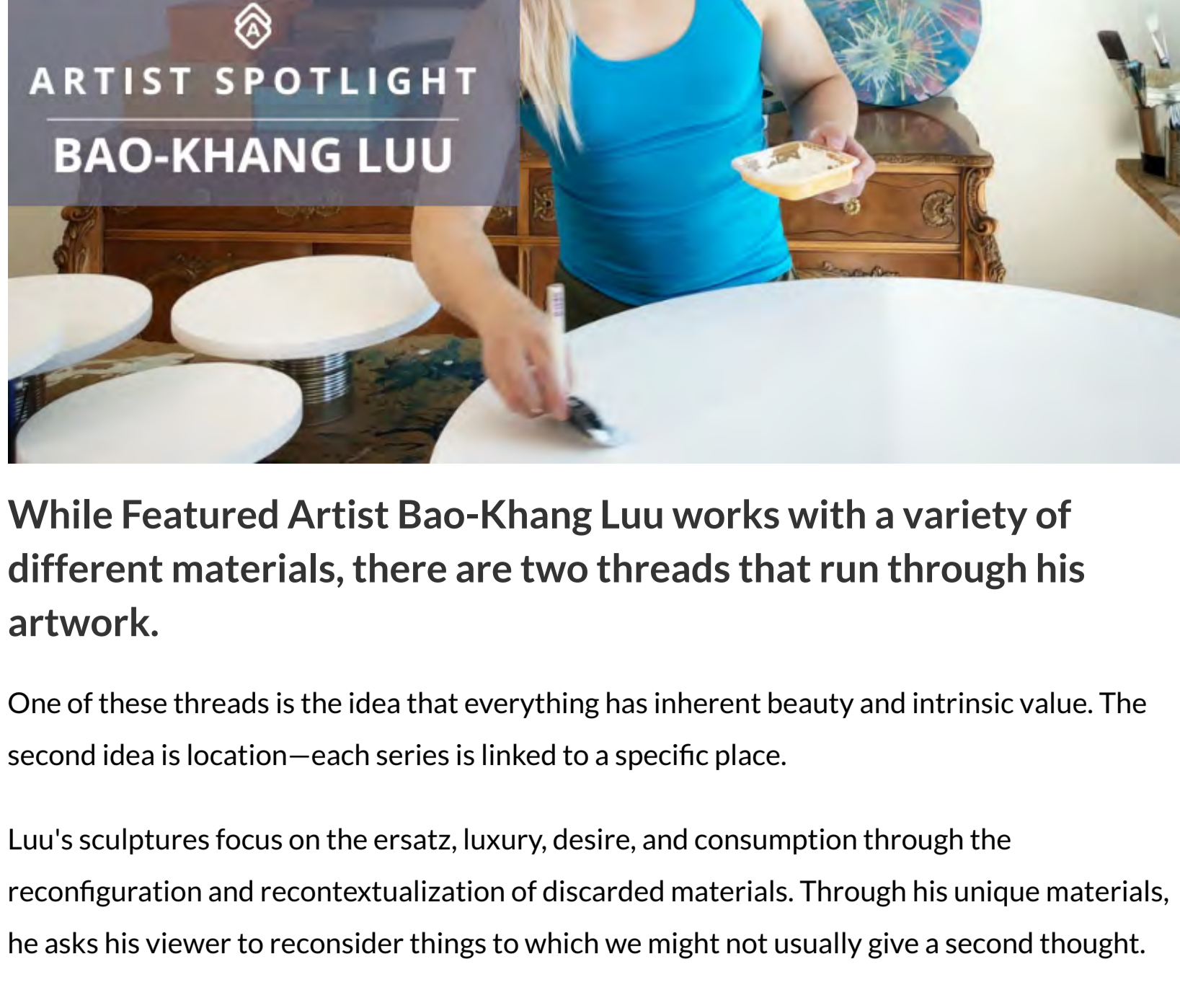


This Artist Turns Mundane Discarded Objects Into Works of Art

Paige Simianer | January 13, 2023

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ARTIST SPOTLIGHT BAO-KHANG LUU

While featured artist Bao-Khang Luu works with a variety of different materials, there are two threads that run through his artwork.

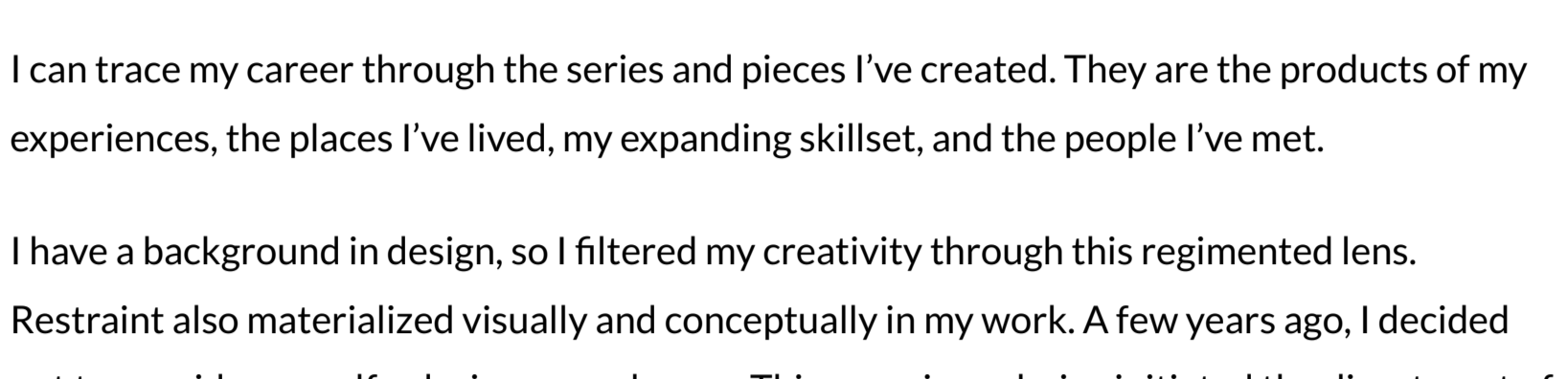
One of these threads is the idea that everything has inherent beauty and intrinsic value. The second idea is location—each series is linked to a specific place.

Luu's sculptures focus on the ersatz, luxury, desire, and consumption through the reconfiguration and recontextualization of discarded materials. Through his unique materials, he asks his viewer to reconsider things to which we might not usually give a second thought.

"Through my process, I imbue [the material] with more value. Gathering, cleaning, sorting, storing, and arranging it before it is even used," Luu explains.

Bao-Khang Luu's ultimate aim is to surprise and delight his audience while simultaneously shifting their perception of value.

Artwork Archive got the chance to chat with Bao-Khang Luu about his creative process, success, and his very recent life change. You can see more of [his work on Discovery](#) and learn more about his art practice below.



Bao-Khang Luu, "Une Reconfiguration 5", pine cone scales, wood, 22.5 x 33 x 3.125 in

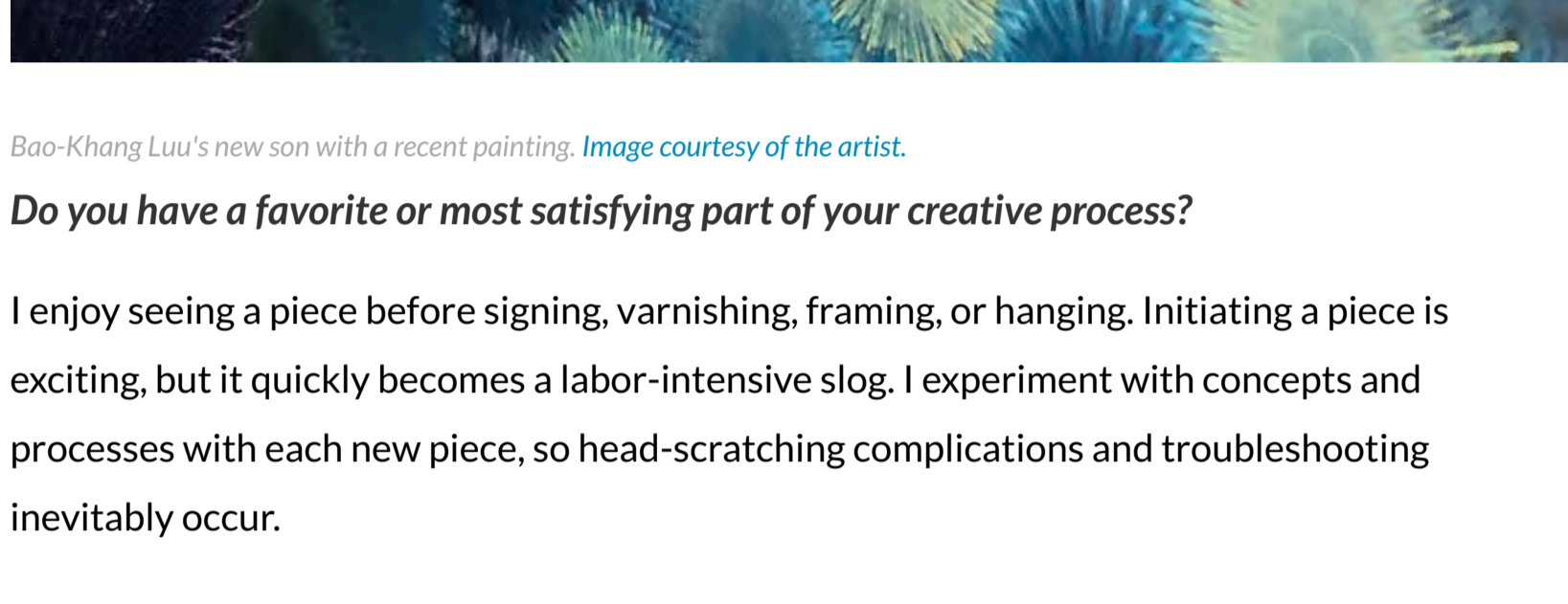
Has your work changed over time—do you find yourself understanding your art career through different periods of expression?

I can trace my career through the series and pieces I've created. They are the products of my experiences, the places I've lived, my expanding skillset, and the people I've met.

I have a background in design, so I filtered my creativity through this regimented lens. Restraint also materialized visually and conceptually in my work. A few years ago, I decided not to consider myself a designer any longer. This conscious choice initiated the divestment of decades of self-imposed constraints.

Working with an art coach, I retooled my creative process to be more guttural, intuitive, enjoyable, and, dare I say, self-indulgent.

Recently, I had my first child. I'm continuing the threads of my current series, but the baby has turned my working process upside-down. Thus far, I've resisted the urge to paint cute baby portraits by taking tons of photos and videos of him daily. However, I have plans to develop a baby-centric sculpture series.



Bao-Khang Luu's new son with a recent painting. Image courtesy of the artist.

Do you have a favorite or most satisfying part of your creative process?

I enjoy seeing a piece before signing, varnishing, framing, or hanging. Initiating a piece is exciting, but it quickly becomes a labor-intensive slog. I experiment with concepts and processes with each new piece, so head-scratching complications and troubleshooting inevitably occur.

I trudge through long periods of drudgery, self-doubt, and awkwardness.

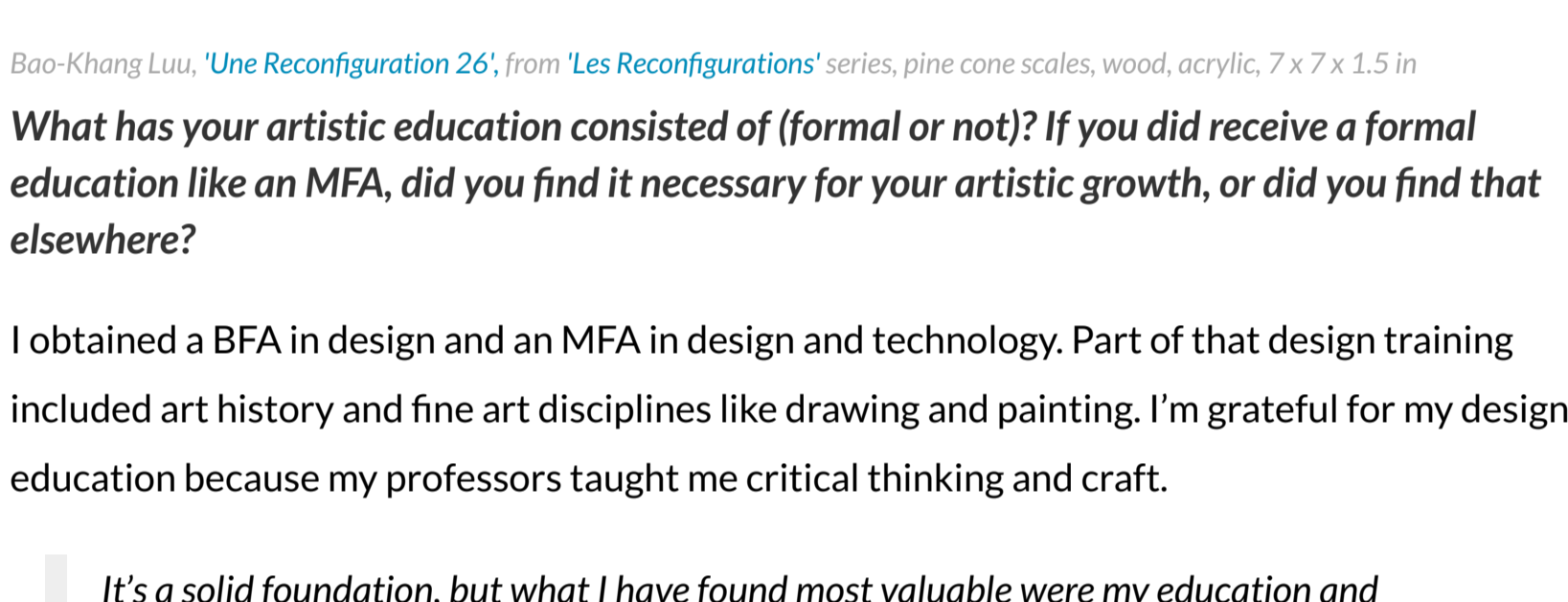
Pieces don't come together until the end when major elements are painted, separate parts are assembled, or final finishes are applied. It is as if artwork magically appears from the messiness of the middle. Seeing and touching whole, refined, and finished works validate my circuitous creative journey. That feels most satisfying.

You mention you have two common threads throughout your work: the idea that everything has an inherent beauty and value, and the second thread relating to location and how each one of your series is connected to a specific place.

Can you speak more about this second thread?

Each series correlates to a specific place to which I personally connect. These aren't locales I've casually visited for a day on vacation. I'm invested in the local communities. Knowing and becoming part of places allows me to find meaningful, physical, and conceptual material for my work. Each material has a story linked to its place of origin.

My [Les Reconfiguration](#) series for example is specifically *Suisse Romande*. I lived in the Swiss Alps and worked diligently to learn the language and integrate. It is an homage to the little village where I gathered pine cones from paths and roadsides before each winter's first major snowfall. It is a tribute to the local *charpentrie* (carpenter) that graciously provided me with reclaimed wood. It's influenced by the local artists who encouraged and continue to support my art practice.



Bao-Khang Luu, "Une Reconfiguration 26", from "Les Reconfigurations" series, pine cone scales, wood, acrylic, 7 x 7 x 1.5 in

What has your artistic education consisted of (formal or not)? If you did receive a formal education like an MFA, did you find it necessary for your artistic growth, or did you find that elsewhere?

I obtained a BFA in design and an MFA in design and technology. Part of that design training included art history and fine art disciplines like drawing and painting. I'm grateful for my design education because my professors taught me critical thinking and craft.

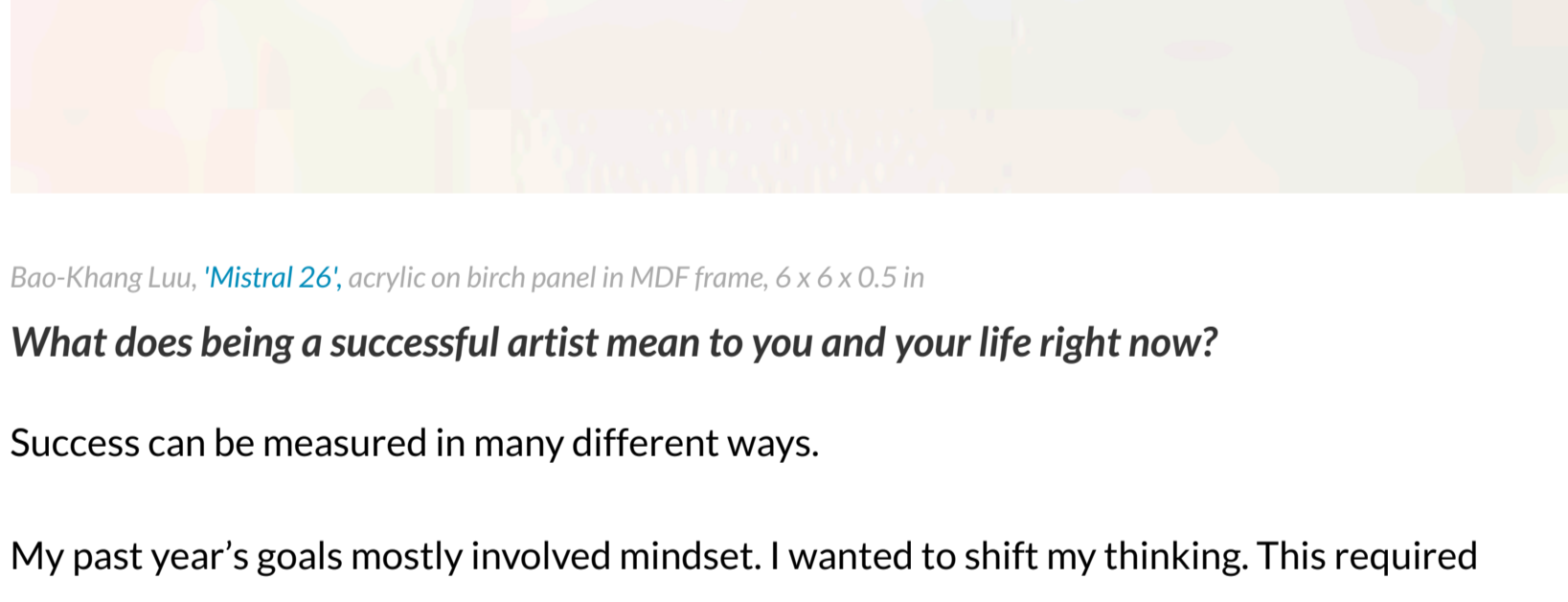
It's a solid foundation, but what I have found most valuable were my education and experience outside of design and the visual arts.

My years in dance companies, studies in microbiology, late nights programming, and stints in Silicon Alley broadened my skillset and views on the possibilities and synergies of art. The breadth of my experience allows me to view everything as art. I may have specific tastes in art I would collect and display in my home, but I would never wholeheartedly say something is not art or good art.

Is there anything, in particular, you're working on right now that has you excited?

I am developing multiple series concurrently. They are all quite different, but the general direction is to make everything more colorful and volumetric and bring it into the viewer's personal space to interact with.

[Les Reconfiguration](#) wall sculptures are being reworked to sit on tables. [Mistral](#) future paintings will be rendered inside marble vessels. I'm working out techniques to weave more volume into Boole light sculptures. I am planning a series of baby clothes sculptures made from plastic bags and detritus.



Bao-Khang Luu, "Mistral 26", acrylic on birch panel in MDF frame, 6 x 6 x 0.5 in

What does being a successful artist mean to you and your life right now?

Success can be measured in many different ways.

My past year's goals mostly involved mindset. I wanted to shift my thinking. This required reading, writing, and candid sessions with my art coach. It was tougher than I thought it would be! I also wanted to build my network and reach.

As I mentioned, I just had my first child this summer. Parenting is no joke. I am always exhausted; so right now, being able to work on my art consistently is a success. I achieved all the goals I set for myself, so it was a fruitful year.

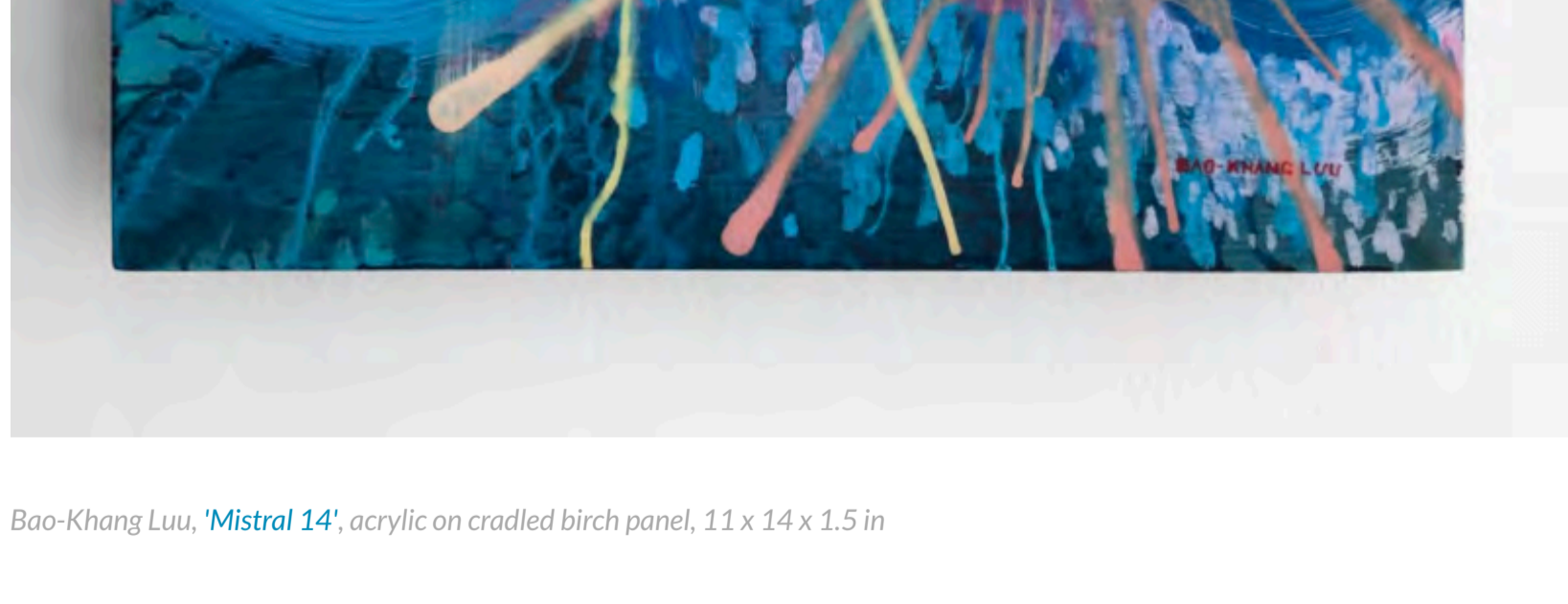
I've yet to come up with my next set of goals, but I think it might include more concrete things like the number of completed pieces and sales.

Why did you decide to use Artwork Archive to inventory/manage your artwork?

It was becoming increasingly cumbersome to keep track of all my pieces and their corresponding information like submissions, sales, exhibitions, and documents.

[Artwork Archive](#) is a comprehensive repository, and, more importantly, it is interconnected. I can see how all my artwork, [expenses](#), [exhibitions](#), and other data points relate.

Accessing information is quick and easy.



Bao-Khang Luu, "Mistral 14", acrylic on cradled birch panel, 11 x 14 x 1.5 in

How do you use Artwork Archive on a daily basis?

I regularly track daily expenses and manage an ever-growing [network of contacts](#). I also keep tabs on my inventory.

When creating new work, [applying to shows](#), exhibiting, and [making sales](#), it's crucial to know the availability of pieces. I've used "Reports/My Docs" to create labels, catalogs, and certificates of authenticity, and I'm looking forward to diving into it further to help [simplify tax filing](#).

Currently, my favorite feature is "Add to Schedule" for calls-to-entry because it's easy to use and simplifies the application process. I'm always excited to discover more amazing features to integrate into my workflow.

What advice would you give an emerging artist during this time?

Be true to yourself.

Create work that reflects your perspective and experiences. If you are genuine, you'll be able to amass an audience that truly connects to your work. Being true to yourself can also help you to stay motivated. When you create work that is meaningful to you, you are more likely to stay engaged as you face the challenges of an art career.

Authenticity can be a potent tool in developing an art career.

Network and don't be ashamed to market yourself.

Attend events, join professional organizations, reach out to people you admire, and use social media. Cultivate relationships with other artists, vendors, galleries, and collectors, but don't discount those who don't appear to be part of the art world. You never know where your next introduction, opportunity, or sale will come from.

Use Artwork Archive!

Art production is only a fraction of what professional artists do. A reliable platform that manages and tracks your art business will allow you to direct more energy to artmaking. Start using Artwork Archive sooner rather than later. It's easier to set up and get all your work and records into the platform while your body of work is smaller.

Bao-Khang Luu, "Une Reconfiguration 25", pine cone scales, wood, acrylic, 12 x 28.75 x 2.75 in

Bao-Khang Luu uses Artwork Archive to track his artwork, stay in touch with his contact list, and apply for more opportunities.

You can make an online portfolio, catalog your artwork, and generate reports like inventory reports, tear sheets, and invoices in seconds with Artwork Archive. Take a look at [Artwork Archive's free trial](#) and start growing your art business.