

# Jennifer Konanz

## Artist Statement & Bio

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### Artist, Designer & Sign Painter

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After receiving my BFA at the University of Alberta where I spent most of my energy focusing on printmaking and sculpture, I decided I wanted to branch out into graphic design. I obtained a certificate in Graphic Communications from NAIT and shortly after, I began working in the sign industry in large format architectural printing. Here I learned how to plan large-scale graphic projects from mock-up to installation. Soon I stumbled by chance on a local Calgary sign painter looking for an apprentice. I jumped at the chance and stepped into a world of typography and also away from the computer which allowed me to return to working with my hands. Once I learned what I needed to, I struck out on my own to start my own business, Konanz & Co. (formerly Dessart Studio Ltd.) The goal was to set myself up in an environment where I would be able to take on more creative projects, learn more about sign painting and provide "artful" design for companies. I wanted to get involved in an area that was a healthy mixture of both art and design where I could support myself financially AND work in the studio every day.

Three years later and that's what I am doing. Running my practice as a business has helped me gain experience in managing my own commercial projects from start to finish - quoting, estimating materials, timelines, planning, and then executing the project with my own hands (sometimes with a helper or two!). I'm constantly learning more about hand-lettering and typography, attending workshops on new processes, and doing my own experimentation. The outdoor work I create has to last, so I put great effort in ensuring material longevity.

My personal love for heritage design - old typography, signs, and architecture I see comes through in all my work. Even in my commercially commissioned signs and murals, it seems that the hand-painting is so connected to these traditions that even when designing collaboratively with the clients, some reference to heritage letters or the like always peeks through. Even in projects that are not meant to explicitly be "heritage", my approach to lettering and images always starts with a browse through some old type catalogues or books from my constantly growing library.

Typically I have been working in painting and gilding projects, but the opportunity to transform my imagery into the 3-D is something that I am very excited about and have been currently preparing for. Because I work closely with my partner, an industrial designer, his interests in manufacturing and metal casting processes have got me planning how to use these processes in my work.

I like to make bodies of artistic work that draw on my experience as both a graphic designer and now sign maker. The struggle between my hybrid identity as a designer and artist tends to come out in all my work and is a common theme in most everything I make these days. I am technically part of both communities, but often feel like I don't quite belong to either. I either feel like an artist doing design, or like a designer masquerading as an artist. The tensions that exist between designerly "rules" and straightforward communication often are at odds with the artistic tendencies to question standard quo's and obscure meanings. When working on concepts for a body of artwork, I find it useful to draw on these tensions and let them naturally become the source of the work.