

BOLD JOURNEY



Meet Kelly Elkowitz

March 25, 2026



We're excited to introduce you to the always interesting and insightful Kelly Elkowitz. We hope you'll enjoy our conversation with Kelly below.

Hi Kelly, so happy to have you with us today and there is so much we want to ask you about. So many of us go through similar pain points throughout our journeys and so hearing about how others developed certain skills or qualities that we are struggling with can be helpful. Along those lines, we'd love to hear from you about how you developed your ability to take risk?

Naturally, I am a very cautious person. In art, though, I have always been confident in taking risks. Taking risks is an essential part of painting. Without any stakes, the work is just okay. To get a work from okay to great, you need to try something and risk destroying the okay piece. I was once told a bad piece is better than an okay piece because at least you feel something from it. I try to remember that.

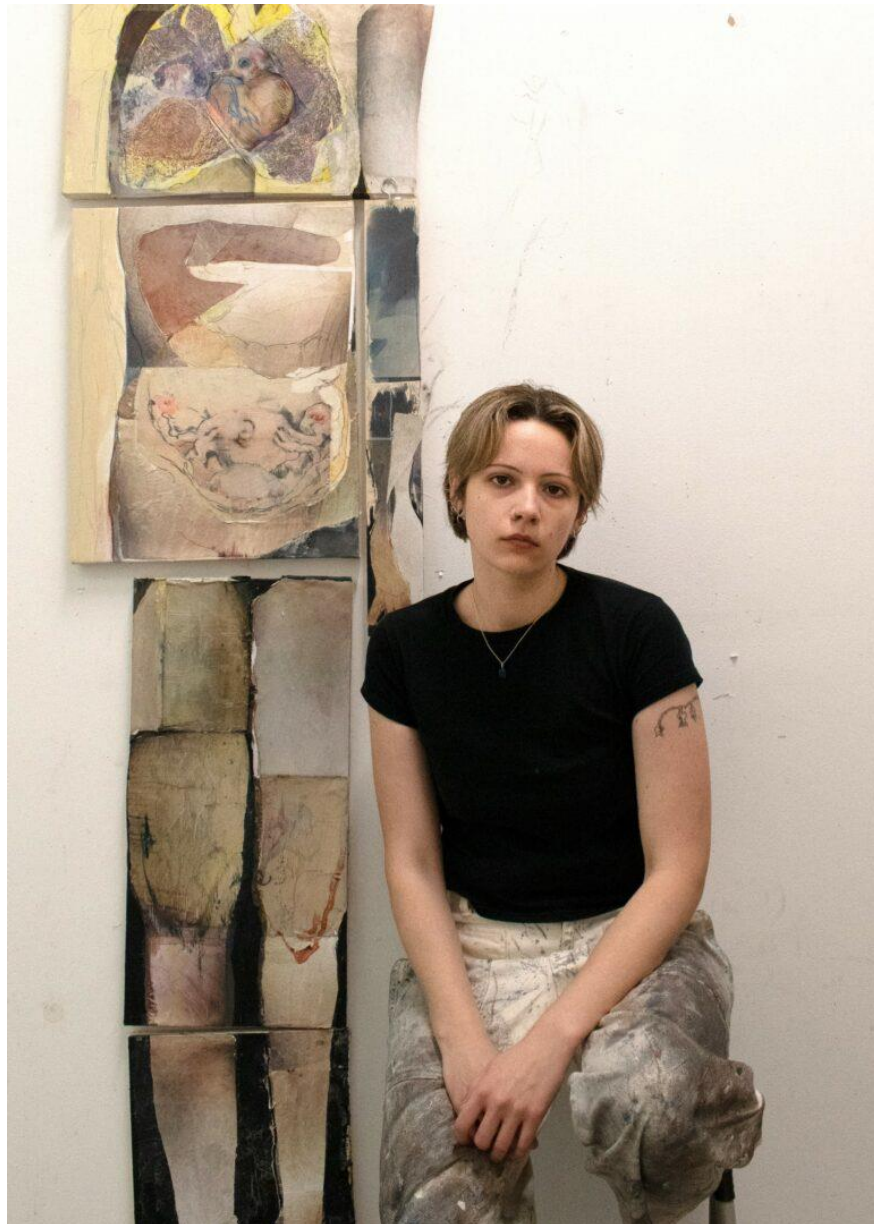


Painting has always been somewhere I felt I could escape and do what I wanted. Through painting, I could create what I wanted to see and reveal something about my own psyche. In the rest of my life, this confidence did not follow through. I felt nervous to be seen or judged, so I stayed quiet, especially when I was young. A year into college, I took a moment to imagine what I wanted for myself and realized I needed to take the first real risk of my life. So, I took the leap and decided to pursue art as my lifelong passion.

To take such a big risk, I have to have a mental safety net of preparation, confidence, and most importantly, the desire to try. Once I made this promise to myself that I would try to “make it,” I broke down what my goals were and just started taking steps toward them. Most practice with taking risks comes from small things, just saying yes to opportunities you see and thinking, how would I act if I were where I want to be? Then I embody that confidence and just try to move forward.

Appreciate the insights and wisdom. Before we dig deeper and ask you about the skills that matter and more, maybe you can tell our readers about yourself?

Hi, my name is Kelly Elkowitz, and I am a 24-year-old artist based in Brooklyn who creates anatomical constructions. My work centers on our physicality, using these constructed anatomies to better understand why we are who we are.

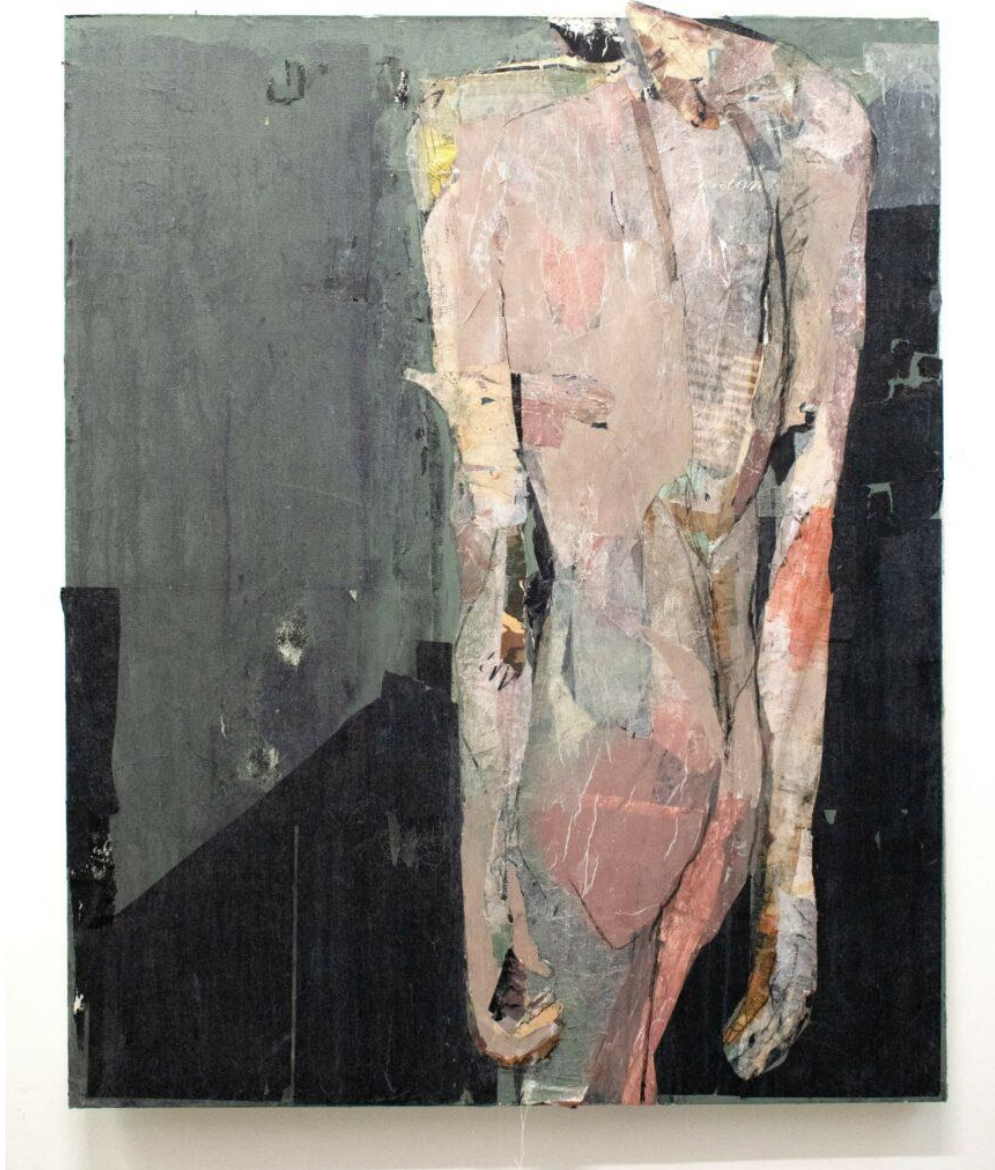




Courtesy of SLAG&RX and the Artist, Kelly Elkowitz.

Currently, I am developing a body of work inspired by Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. At the center of this is an 8-foot-tall creature (which you can see a glimpse of in one of my photos). I created this creature on six separate canvases, using inkjet prints of scans of my own skin to construct both the internal and external anatomy. I layer these printed skins with additional materials to build both the surface and interior of the body, constructing a figure that feels as close to reality as possible. The work is not necessarily a self-portrait, but exists somewhere within the uncanny space between what is real and what is imagined.

This past year, I had my debut solo exhibition at SLAG&RX, *Four Temperaments*, inspired by the ancient medical theory that the balance of four bodily fluids determines personality, or temperament. This year has been a major step in both my career and me personally.



If you had to pick three qualities that are most important to develop, which three would you say matter most?

I think for me, vulnerability, willingness to learn, and perseverance have been the most important. You have to be both confident and vulnerable with yourself, especially when making artwork. My favorite paintings are the ones that feel truly raw, where you can look at a piece and clearly see the artist's emotions within it.

Starting out is always difficult. As an artist, you not only need to make strong work, but also develop the confidence to present it and advocate for yourself. There are a lot of incredibly talented artists, and you have to trust your own eye and your work to believe that you can succeed amongst the sea of great artists. The best way I've learned to do this is by speaking with artists who are in the position I hope to be in one day. I listen to anyone who wants to share their story with me. Then, from all the advice, you have to filter through it all and take what is true for you to guide your own path.





Courtesy of SLAG&RX and the Artist, Kelly Elkowitz.

Awesome, really appreciate you opening up with us today and before we close maybe you can share a book recommendation with us. Has there been a book that's been impactful in your growth and development?

I have a small list of books I have been thinking about a lot lately. These books were important for me in college to help understand the reality of making art. They demystified painting, showing the work and preparation that goes into art-making. The first two were assigned to me by Jim Lee, when he was my former Painting Professor. So, thanks Jim, for the recommendations.

Interviews with Francis Bacon by David Sylvester

How to See by David Salle

Manifestos of Surrealism by André Breton



More recently, Kurt Vonnegut's *Palm Sunday* has unexpectedly changed my perception of what a collage can be. In the book, he combines disparate stories into something that ultimately forms an autobiography. These fragments, some not even directly about the author, reveal more of him than any linear autobiography could. Through fragmentation, we can better understand someone than through a single story.

Visually, this has influenced my work. As the fragments come together, something more whole than the individual pieces alone emerges.