

# A SMALL-TOWN STUDIO WITH **Big – City Energy**

BY ZOYA DIXON

I love the tiny town I live in, but my energy and artistic style are more in line with big-city vitality and brightness, rather than the country — and I love this about my studio as well. It's where my past meets my present, and the future looks bright ... possibly neon.

My studio is in the three-car garage of the house I share with my husband, our 7-year-old daughter, Rose, our doodle puppy, Butters, six very needy chickens, and an ongoing stream of friends, family, and neighbors dropping in for a drink, a chat, to pick up some eggs or salad from our garden, or kids popping over to play. We have a lot going on, always, and a mom's heartbeat is the drum that keeps this ship sailing in peace. While I am a part-time artist, I'm a full-time everything else: mother, wife, friend, family manager, organizer, travel agent, tennis coach, tennis player, chicken-keeper, cook, house cleaner. Having my own space, though not necessarily private but where my brain can do its own work, is an arguable necessity.

I do willingly share the space with Rose, who enjoys joining me in creating things. I want her to know that women and mothers can work from home, and be successful, and work hard at the things they want, and these can be different, unique, creative things. She has her own child-size table and chairs, as well as storage space, where she works on her own projects, like clay ornaments or paintings.

My studio is very simple and industrial, which is intentional, given the chaos of every other aspect of our lives. A friend of mine crafted two large mobile plywood stations, which are used for storage below, while sketching, painting, and ideating occur on the tabletop surface. I move these stations around as I need; sometimes they delineate a wall against our adjacent “gym zone,” and sometimes I push them up against the wall to make more open space. I like that the space is iterative, just like an artist's practice. For events, I move the stations outside onto the driveway, and people can post up in the studio, linger, and enjoy a glass of wine. ▸









# My Favorite Studio Albums

(Moms can rock out too!)

- "Un Verano Sin Ti" by **Bad Bunny**
- "In Times New Roman" by **Queens of the Stone Age**
  - "Era Vulgaris" by **Queens of the Stone Age**
  - "After Hours" by **The Weeknd**
  - "Nuances" by **Les Gordon**
- "The Last Goodbye" by **ODESZA**
  - "Dopamine" by **Borns**
- "Modern Country" by **William Tyler**
  - "Fear Inoculum" by **Tool**
  - "Ohms" by **Deftones**







I am lucky that both sides of the garage open up: one to a beautiful view of the Santa Lucia Mountains in the front, and the other to our lovely vegetable garden and apricot tree in the back. Usually, our escape-artist chicken, Lady, is roaming around and will walk over for a pet. And the dog is (always) underfoot. I use sand in my work, so there's usually some strewn about on the floor, and different buckets and bins denote the different places I've gathered from (Los Angeles, Cambria, etc.). >

A cool neon on the wall sign asks, "Is this art?" — a good thing to keep in mind when I'm in here. It is a space filled with creativity and potential. It's also usually bumping with music: loud and edgy. As my friend, photographer, and social media manager Katya has said, "It sounds like a club in here," which I love — vibrancy, creativity, a place to let loose. It can also get really hot in here in the summer, hence my preference for crop tops; I just turned 40, and I will rock those for as long as I can.





My first memory of creating something as a kid was painting outside in my grandmother's garden when I was 11, on a small 4" x 6" canvas. I painted some irises, and I loved it. When I was 30, I added to the painting, and it looked striking; I still have it up in my house today. I'm really proud of that tiny little thing. I love that it has had many iterations and that it sparked something in me for life.

I fondly remember going to see Georgia O'Keeffe's residence in Abiquiu, New Mexico, when I was six months pregnant with Rose. We were about to move to California, and I hadn't yet seen her home and studio. I went on a random weekday and couldn't find a friend to go with, so I ventured out by myself in my ancient car in the heat, and went on the tour, which was everything I had hoped it would be. Years later, I would drive myself and Rose back out to Albuquerque by ourselves for my art show, in a rented van filled with my art, and three days of driving in the open desert ahead of us. I think these different experiences are great for young girls to experience. I am proud that we made that trip, just the two of us. *Life is full of surprises and adventure, and can be rewarding in unexpected ways if you open up your heart to it.* >







A native Chicagoan and second-generation Ukrainian-American, Zoya Dixon attended Occidental College in Los Angeles (B.A. in psychology), followed by the Illinois Institute of Art, Chicago (B.A. in interior Design). She studied abroad in Paris, France, and also lived in Orange County, California, and Albuquerque, New Mexico. An early interest in urban planning allowed Zoya to research, publish, and present her work at international conferences in Turkey, Germany, and Sweden, while working for nearly a decade in downtown advocacy nonprofits. Currently, she is pursuing her passion for the arts by running her own small art studio. Zoya employs sand and bright textures in her work, which tends to be large in scale and abstract in nature. She is looking forward to hosting her first Open Studio weekend on October 21–22, when she will open up her studio space to the public. You can find her work at [zoyadixon.com](http://zoyadixon.com) or follow her on Instagram and Facebook (@zoyadixonarts).

Photography by Kateryna Shyshlenko (Instagram: @wildandfreegal).

