



Sunlight peeks out from the horizon early in the morning, and Jill Schwartz is taking her usual walk around Cocoplum. Her camera is poised, ready to take a snapshot of a tree that's come to life before her. Jill is a self-taught photographer who uses her unique perspective to capture images of trees with the goal of enabling viewers to absorb the likeness to humans that she sees from behind the lens. Having lived in Islands of Cocoplum for over a decade, it was the very place that first inspired her photographic study of trees.

Jill's photographs are shown in the Galleries at Interiors by Steven G and have been displayed in shows nationally, from the Miami Research Corporate Art Collection to Las Lagunas Gallery in California. While she mainly uses Instagram and Facebook to get her work out there, she has had no trouble landing a spot in Art Basel twice and winning awards such as the Creative Image award for the Miami Photo Salon Festival in 2014. This year, she has applied to show her work at the Coconut Grove Art Festival.

Before going back to her passion for photography, Jill was actually an interior designer. She first fell in love with photography during a class in high school. Her bathroom was turned into a personal darkroom and she enjoyed every aspect of the process from shooting to developing images. Throughout her college years and post-graduation, Jill continued taking courses and practicing art. She dabbled in hand modeling, became a makeup artist, then began a career in interior design.

As a designer, Jill worked closely with building contractors to determine finishes for multiple new office buildings. The interior work she was involved with included wall coverings, paint colors, and flooring. Upon finishing those projects, she became an art advisor to the inhabitants of the new space. That's when she realized that she truly missed photography and decided to make it her main focus. Jill's concentration became solely on developing her collection. More recently, she has made an effort to push

herself into exploring the more surrealist side of the spectrum and incorporate the unexpected into her already unique images.

Throughout her life, Jill has always been drawn to nature and the animals that thrive on our planet. She loves to observe the intricacy of tree limbs and how rapidly their leaves come to life, then change colors and fall to the ground. "Trees offer so much to all of us. Food for some, a home to others, shade from the sun and heat with fire when we are cold," Jill remarks about the resourceful barks that populate alongside us. She believes that everything is interconnected and everything relies on that interconnection. Every day she takes in all of her surroundings and appreciates its beauty and value.

On one of her many walks through the neighborhood, she realized that trees have a gracefulness and almost human-like quality. They can be strong and sturdy with a certain toughness or ballerina-like and fragile. When viewing her collection, *Life's Comparison - A Study in Nature*, Jill hopes viewers get that sense of personification they emit. "I never look at a tree the same way," is the reaction that she receives. She loves how her audience is taking an extra moment to admire trees and discover that special something that makes each one unique. In their viewing, she also strives to expand awareness to the importance of trees for the stability of our planet.

Jill's collection is devised into three concepts: dream, move, and pose. *Dream* is the perfect positioning of sunlight that enhances a tree's texture to morph the woody plant into the soft, dreamy side of a woman or the robustness of man. Each

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tree has its own personality—a metamorphosis of reality. Her photographs become the keyhole into fantasy. When we see an image we interpret it within our own realm and discover the pleasure of a new impression. The lighting paired with her eye for enchantment merge together to create a dreamy finished product. Jill says, “Photography, as in all art, is especially all about the light. If the light is hitting it in that right moment, it’s perfect.” In a sense, she is also making people see things in a different light.

Dream leads to *move*, a concept inspired by the graceful ballerina. Jill visualizes a torso, two arms and two legs moving musically in the form of the sturdy structures in nature. “Unlike

a true ballerina, trees embody everlasting endurance,” Jill says, feeling that trees want to dance among us, almost as if they are saying, “*Look how wonderfully exquisite we are.*” Along with *dream* and *move* comes *pose*, the final element of her work. *Pose* is that moment when the sunlight hovers on a tree and reveals the image of a human-like form which Jill is drawn to. “With their curvaceous branches, Herculean limbs and sturdy trunks, trees emanate sensuality and desire to be acknowledged. Almost like a model posing for an Avedon portrait whose stature commands attention. They are the Exhibitionist and us the Explor-

er,” Jill envisions, “I look at the trees like they’re really a part of us. Each one I see has a personality.” Textures of her natural subjects are intensified and vividly captured by her preference in printing on Kodak Metallic Paper. Jill provides multiple sizes from 24 x 36 to 40 x 60 and price ranges from \$600-\$1650. She is also able to reproduce work on stretch canvas.

Jill’s true passion relies in capturing the beauty of nature. Often shaping perspectives and causing her viewers to appreciate their surroundings, she loves the impression her work leaves behind. Next time you’re walking around Cocoplum, take a look at the trees and see if you recognize her familiar spots. Maybe you’ll see the ballerinas-- the dancing limbs waving as you pass by.

