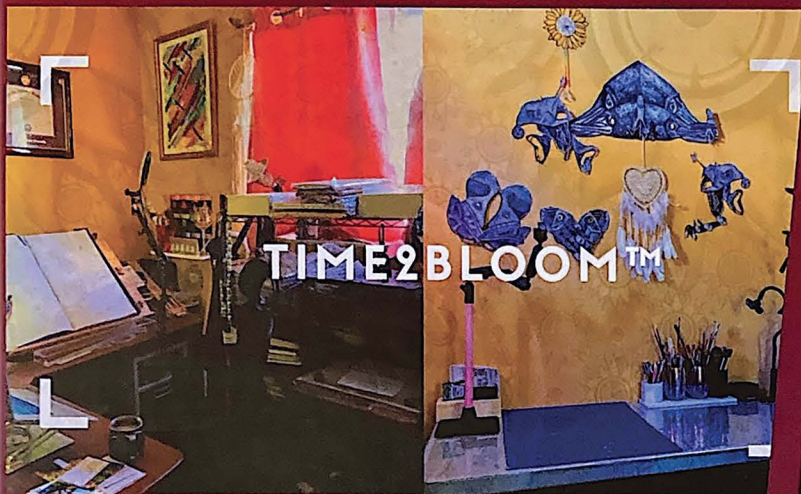


share insights and meaningful messages for a more just world is paramount. Despite the challenges, the most crucial aspect is persevering and aligning with like-minded individuals and opportunities that foster thriving.

In fall 2019, I completed Inner Engineering Online, a 7-session course providing tools and solutions for creating life on one's terms. Despite detesting envy or belittlement, overcoming limiting beliefs and negative energy has been challenging. Embracing imperfections is a valuable lesson for a perfectionist like me. Here's to rolling off small worries and focusing on the bigger picture!



How can folks who want to work with you connect?

I am actively seeking meaningful collaborations to enrich and share the unique facets of my creative journey. Acknowledging the significance of effectively managing stress, marketing, and finances, I recognize that collaboration is a cornerstone of success.

In my role as a part-time Event Coordinator at the esteemed Bonnet House Museum and Gardens, I contribute to the curation of unforgettable experiences for various occasions. The potential for collaboration with the Bonnet House Museum and Gardens is particularly exciting, with staff members and volunteers expressing genuine interest in my creative pursuits.

I've found inspiration in fellow FAU Alumni, particularly in the accomplished artist Kandy G Lopez. During a captivating Art Talk with Latin American Artists, Kandy, a Dominican-American artist, generously shared her artistic journey. Her ability to create profound art, even within the constraints of a modest space, resonated deeply with me. Kandy's focus on portraying minorities in art, highlighting the strength of those often overlooked and unheard, serves as a powerful reminder that the powerless possess unique strengths deserving recognition. As walking canvases and works of art, her creations beautifully emphasize that our image is the cover to our real-life stories.

I am currently collaborating with the Broward County Cultural Division, an opportunity that has significantly enriched my artistic pursuits. This collaboration has broadened my horizons and allowed me to connect with a diverse community of artists and creators.

I transitioned from feeling embarrassed about currently working in approximately a 64-square-foot space within my



bedroom to feeling empowered. As my approach to creativity has evolved beyond traditional norms, I have come to recognize myself as a contemporary artist, conceptual artist, functional artist, 21st-century symbolist/illuminator, and storyteller. This multifaceted identity encompasses roles as an author, illustrator, and designer.

For me, storytelling is a potent medium to convey messages and uphold the literary arts. In my ongoing "At the Garden" project, I leverage tools like Adobe InDesign, Canva, Adobe Stock, and Firefly for literary aspects, seamlessly integrating traditional illustration techniques. Moving forward, I am gradually shifting my focus towards working with illustrations on watercolor boards; additionally, embracing a fusion of traditional and digital mediums facilitated by Adobe Cloud, as it's more feasible to get more of my ideas out into the world and works well with my overall goals and direction.

My ultimate goal is to create visual and written narratives that not only provoke thought but also actively engage audiences in philosophical reflection. By blurring the boundaries between art and philosophy, I aspire to contribute meaningfully to the broader cultural conversation.

My collaborative vision extends beyond individual pursuits, aiming to collaborate with like-minded individuals and organizations. In the future, I envision exciting collaborations with a publishing company and/or animation studio, transforming my artistic expressions into widely shared narratives.

MELISSA ALLEGORIES

ALRIGHT – SO TODAY WE'VE GOT THE HONOR OF INTRODUCING YOU TO MELISSA ALLEGORIES. WE THINK YOU'LL ENJOY OUR CONVERSATION, WE'VE SHARED IT BELOW.

Hi Melissa, appreciate you sitting with us today to share your wisdom with our readers. So, let's start with resilience – where do you get your resilience from?

Resilience, to me, is an ongoing journey rooted in intentional self-growth. I've encapsulated some insights in my book, "At the Garden: Insights for Self-Actualization and Human Flourishing" (available on <https://www.visualwriting.art/at-the-garden.html> and ISSUU: https://issuu.com/time2bloom/docs/insights_for_self-actualization_and_human_flourish). In Section 1: Personal Growth and Resilience, I elaborate on several principles, such as voluntary discomfort and delayed gratification. Here's an excerpt:

Page 1 – "Voluntary Discomfort and Delayed Gratification":

"Pain can be a catalyst for growth when it is understood and manageable. Achieving long-term contentment requires developing resilience. Every experience, whether positive or negative, offers opportunities for learning. Love with purpose, hope for the greater good, and belief in our capabilities accelerate healing and growth. Our primary goal is



self-enhancement through self-actualization, which, in turn, influences others through causality. Analyzing decision-making processes by distancing ourselves from problems can reduce distress. Embracing voluntary difficulties fosters resilience."



To unpack this a bit, when faced with challenges, it's all too tempting to seek immediate solace in pleasures like drugs, sugars, or even sex—reacting rather than responding.

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Voluntary discomfort, as explored in my book, involves purposefully immersing ourselves in situations that trigger instinctive responses. By willingly subjecting ourselves to discomfort, we enhance our ability to tolerate and respond strategically. This approach equips us with the experiential armor to navigate unexpected challenges with resilience.

This philosophy transcends religious beliefs, emphasizing that understanding consequences doesn't require faith in a higher power. It's about confronting



emotions head-on, preventing them from dictating our actions and lives. Whether grappling with personal or professional challenges, this journey demands continuous self-analysis, optimism, and expressive release. It involves transcending negative emotions by cultivating positive habits, like exercise and balanced hedonism, without succumbing to excess.

Resilience, in this context, is an ongoing commitment—demanding constant self-reflection, embracing mistakes as lessons, and a dedication to self-improvement for the greater good.

As an intuitive and empath, grappling with emotionally invested experiences, such as heartbreak, remains a personal challenge. The journey involves continuous self-analysis, optimism, and expressive release. To transcend negative emotions, I advocate cultivating good habits through practicing secular virtues, such as temperance. Resilience, then, becomes a continuous effort—demanding constant self-reflection, acceptance of mistakes, and a commitment to self-improvement, all in service of the greater good.

In essence, resilience is not a static trait but a dynamic process of navigating challenges, learning, and evolving towards self-actualization.

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?

About Melissa Allegories: Crafting Narratives through Visual Arts and Words

I am Melissa Hernandez, known in the artistic realm as Melissa Allegories. My creative journey revolves around the



intricate art of storytelling, where I employ allegoría as a literary device, known for its veiled and figurative language. In my creative studio and written works, I merge imagery with diverse artistic techniques to construct narratives that are both enchanting and enigmatic.

Originally adopting the title of “artist-philosopher,” I delve deeply into life’s complexities, drawing wisdom from thinkers like Sam Harris and Sadhguru. This intellectual exploration finds expression in my visual arts and written compositions, a task that has led me to reassess and refine my approach several times.

Establishing Smile Sweet Sunflower LLC. in July 2022 marked a pivotal moment, allowing me to pursue my grand vision: an evolving narrative that speaks of human values, particularly hope, as a catalyst for inspiring self-actualization and cultivating human flourishing. The project, *MelissAllegories*, encompasses a cohesive narrative art collection within a world called *Lében* (German for Life). It consists of five distinct groups/worlds: *At the Garden*, *The Deep-Sea*, *Caged-City*, *Inside the Cave*, and *The Electric Forest*.

My creative path faced years of stagnation and unexpected detours, finally aligning with my goals in 2023. An honor that truly humbles me, I received the Broward County Cultural Division’s Artist Support Grant in September 2023, a recognition that both challenges and rewards me on my artistic journey.

“At the Garden” takes precedence within *Lében*, exploring human values, inspiring self-actualization, and delving into personal growth and enlightenment. This narrative incorporates metaphors representing secular, ethical, and logical principles, woven into different settings with interconnected characters. Central to *Lében*, “At the Garden” delves into themes of temperance, harmony, enlightenment, self-actualization, and human flourishing. Each composition includes animals, mammals, and/or sea creatures, contributing to the multifaceted storytelling experience.

My authored work, “At the Garden: Unveiling the Secrets of *Lében*’s Enchanted Realm,” presents five introductory chapters: “The Iris Family: Wings of Adversity,” “Roots of Sanctuary: A Golden Eagle’s Journey,” “A Kingdom’s Fall: ScarCity Saga,” “Shattered Utopia: A Saga Unveiled,” and “Garden Revelations: Love’s Awakening and Freedom’s Echo.” These chapters offer glimpses into this captivating narrative.



Accessible for free via <https://www.visualwriting.art/at-the-garden.html>, along with a booklet of insights, my goal is to provide you, the audience, with a captivating glimpse into the depth and richness of my narrative. To enhance your experience, I combine illustrations, audio elements, and potentially offer prints and the complete novel for sale in the near future. Excitingly, plans for an on-site exhibition in Broward County, Florida, in 2024 are underway, adding another layer to our shared artistic journey.

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

Tactical or strategic planning and adaptation, cultivating a deep sense of self, and remaining humble and open-minded to new knowledge and experiences are three crucial qualities that have profoundly impacted my journey.

In contemporary art, innovation manifests through the cultivation of authentic styles. As artistic expression is deeply tied to the creator’s identity, it’s essential for every artist to align their style with their interests authentically. This alignment ensures that the artistic message feels genuine and true to the artist’s identity.

Life is what we make it, so let us make it worthwhile. Unfortunately, not all of us are provided with an environment conducive to self-actualization. Many remain at the bottom of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, struggling for survival, tasting only fragments of creativity and beauty, falling into a harsh reality with despair. Failures can be crippling, detrimental to the ego, without a supportive figure. However, failure is not the key to success or self-actualization; instead, it’s continuous adaptation through strategic planning, acquiring knowledge, and utilizing resources for improvement.

In fifth grade, my teacher covered the cost of my end-of-year field trip ticket for



ice skating. Though inexperienced, once on the ice, I instinctively excelled. In that moment, I found myself wanting to be in my classmate’s position, receiving abundant care and support. This early lesson led me to heavily rely on intuition to navigate life’s obstacles. However, I’ve learned that it’s crucial to ask for help when needed. Now, I’m navigating the learning process of when and from whom to seek help, aiming to surround myself with like-minded individuals who appreciate my peculiarities.

“The path to moral excellence is not an easy one, for it requires constant self-reflection, self-discipline, and the unwavering determination to choose righteousness over expediency.” — Marcus Aurelius

If you have a project or idea that can serve humanity and needs funding, don’t let ego or pride hinder its manifestation. For those in Broward County, Florida, explore the Broward County Cultural Division’s Artist Support Grant at <https://www.broward.org/Arts/Funding/Pages/artists.aspx>. Remember to consider budgeting, marketing, and establishing a free community event when applying.

Embarking on this creative journey has been an uphill climb. The writing process, filled with edits and imperfections, tests my perseverance, deepening my appreciation for the craft. I’m grateful for the Broward County Cultural Division and the jurors whose feedback shifted my focus to the literary essence of my project. Embracing the beauty and challenge of this opportunity, it’s fascinating to see where I’ll gravitate under the pressure of time constraints to meet deadlines.

Over the past few years, I’ve taken risks, faced fears inhibiting my growth, and pushed myself to tackle creative endeavors. In January 2021, I acquired knowledge and skills through the National Society of Leadership and Success, helping establish Smile Sweet Sunflower LLC. Despite initial doubts, the program became pivotal for my growth, pushing me to rebuild my social presence. While acknowledging the necessity of sustaining my artistic endeavors, I have discovered that creating art solely for commercial purposes feels distinctly different from crafting art to convey something profound. Hence, prioritizing financial gain cannot compromise the aesthetics and meaning behind my work; maintaining the original intention to