

Stephanie Jucker Artist Statement

The painting in this exhibit, *Chatelaine*, is the first piece I have done that references the pandemic. I started it shortly after the attack on the Capitol in March and it is a response to the complex issues that came to a head that day.

As a narrative painter I value imagination and fantasy in our lives but feel that they have their place and should not be confused with reality. Cultures use mythical symbols like unicorns as emblems of their institutions but a functioning civilization knows the difference between make-believe and fact, between fiction and science.

After recently reading Daniel Defoe's "Journal of the Plague Year", about the bubonic plague of 1665, I was struck by how similar the human response is today. Back then many turned to superstition and magical thinking, while others exploited their fear, just as we see today.

In this piece the central figure, the *Chatelaine*, seems to be part citadel part reliquary. On the left is a rider carrying a banner that obscures their face, maybe they are wearing a white hood, and is that a letter Q on their back? On the right the rider is carrying the banner of science towards the lowered draw-bridge.

A chatelaine holds the keys to the castle and this painting suggests that she will choose carefully what to unlock and who to let in