

featured artist

NYC WOMEN'S ART COLLECTIVE

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A black and white portrait of Caroline Dunaway. She is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. Her right hand is resting against her face, with her fingers near her temple. She is wearing a dark, high-necked top. The background is a plain, dark grey.

CAROLINE DUNAWAY

ACTOR, WRITER, PRODUCER AND CREATOR SPEAKS ABOUT
UNAPOLOGETIC SELF-RESPECT AND OWNING YOUR POWER.

"Stop apologizing. You have every right to create."

WHERE ARE YOU FROM?

I was born in Northern California, grew up in Phoenix, lived in LA for six years, and now live in NYC.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN THE CITY?

My two-year anniversary just passed. I'm a toddler-New Yorker! I know where all the best public bathrooms are!

WHAT ARE YOUR CREATIVE AREAS OF EMPHASIS?

Acting in film/TV and comedy writing are my two main focuses right now. I studied improv and sketch comedy at The Groundlings & UCB and grew up doing musical theatre, so the blend of comedy plus singing is something I really enjoy pursuing. I co-wrote a full-length dark-comedy musical called *A Self-Help Guide To Killing Your Boss*, which sold out its 2016 Hollywood premiere, its subsequent run at The Los Angeles Theatre Co. in downtown LA, and its 2017 NYC premiere at The Alchemical in Manhattan. I'm so incredibly proud of this show. It's a female-centric dark comedy with kickass, dynamic characters. It's been described as "the millennial's musical" and was a finalist in the SheNYC Competition this past year. I released three self-produced EPs in college and have a background in songwriting, so I currently channel that into comedic cabarets I do around NYC.

I also have a Youtube sketch group called *Burnt Quiche* that focuses on highlighting women's issues of today through comedy. Our work has been featured on sites like Elizabeth Banks' *WhoHaha* and *Digg.com*. Lastly, I was a finalist in the *Women in Comedy Festival* this year, presided by Paul Feig (*The Office*, *Bridesmaids*, *Ghostbusters*). I love drama as well, though, and have been in a couple indie thrillers that were very bloody and fun. Keep an eye out for a horror movie about a creepy mermaid coming out soon...

WHAT ARE YOU CURRENTLY WORKING ON?

I just shot a commercial for *Poo-Pourri's* summer ad campaign and have a few other commercials coming out in the next month. I'm currently in the middle of re-writes for my musical, which we hope to stage for a full NYC run in the next year. I'm starting a new podcast called *The Cringe List*, which will focus on uniting listeners through all of our embarrassing stories. I just finished writing a musical/comedy TV pilot, and am working on two feature screenplays, one a comedy and one a thriller. Also, my sketch group has a new short out! I'm always working on something with *Burnt Quiche*, and we love collaborating with fellow NYC comedians, producers, editors, etc. Feel free to reach out!



WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SOMEONE PURSUING A ARTISTIC CAREER?

Any advice I'd give is the advice I'd give to my younger self: You can do it. Stop apologizing - you have every right to create. Humans were meant to make things! Stop procrastinating and just go for it. It doesn't have to be perfect. There are people who will support your work, and there are people who won't. Don't get too hung up on either category. Support yourself, set goals, congratulate yourself, and try not to get too distracted by the "comparison game" or the "fame game". So much of that world is carefully crafted anyway. The next time you catch yourself comparing your career to Miss Famous Teenage Actress-Model's career, remember that she probably had some VERY lucky connections that helped her get to that point early on in life. That's not her fault, but it's also very unfair to compare yourself to her. You've kicked ass, worked hard, and lived your own unique life. Own that. Also, I love you! (P.S. Do not eat an NYC hot dog while ALSO on an NYC boat ride - bad things will happen and you know it.)

WHAT DOES COMMUNITY MEAN TO YOU?

Community to me is any group of people who provides me with warmth, understanding, growth, laughter, meaningful conversation, and respect.

WHERE ARE YOUR FAVORITE PLACES IN THE CITY?

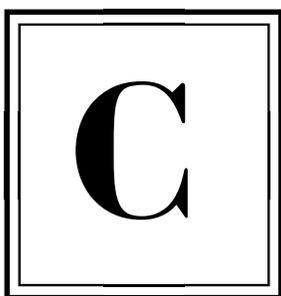
For the Anglophiles: Tea & Sympathy in Greenwich Village

For the cinephiles: *Syndicated Movie Theater in Bushwick*

For the romantics: Cheap red wine and an evening stroll in Central Park

For the history buffs: McSorley's Old Ale House on 7th St.

*Their trivia night is no joke. I accidentally went on "Kristen Stewart Trivia Night" and got SCHOOLED. Everyone cheats. Bring your phone and cheat.

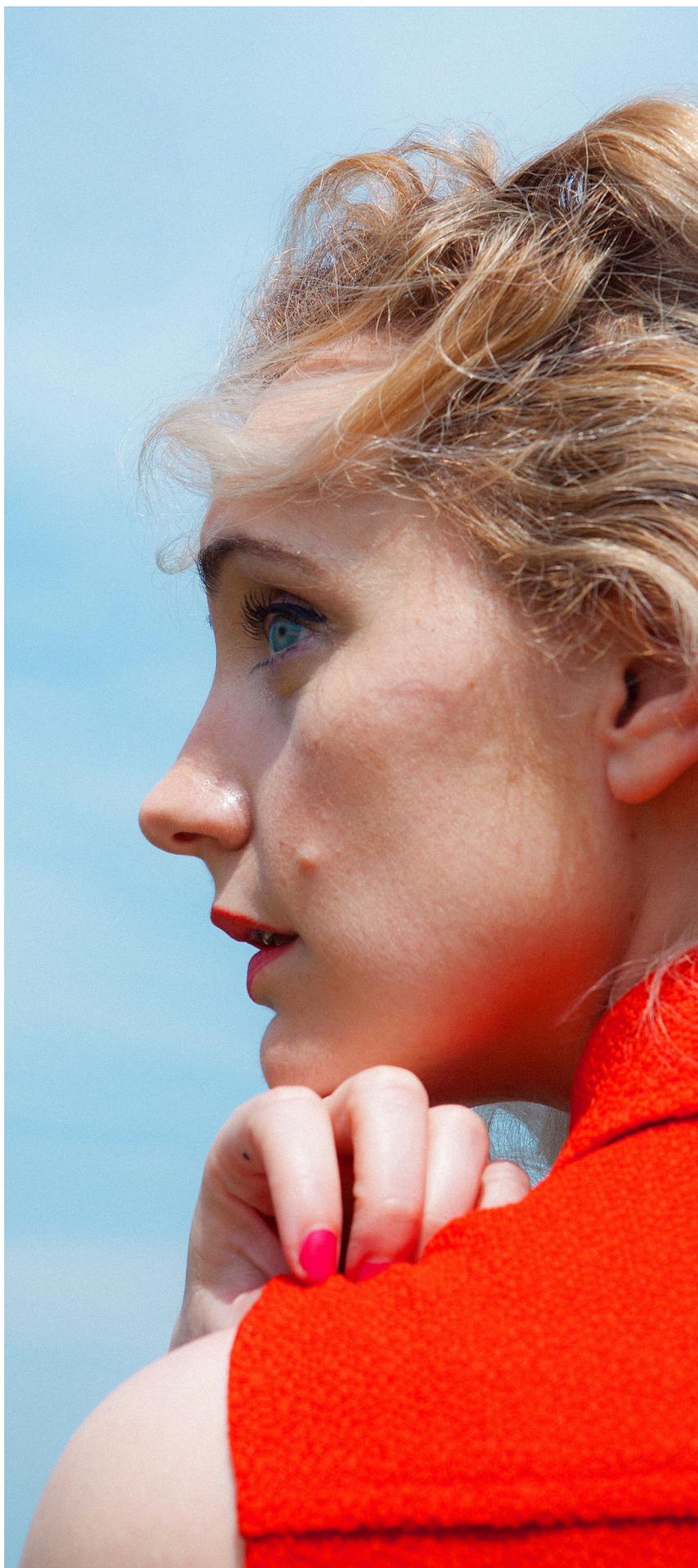


WHAT ADVERSITIES HAVE YOU BEEN FACED WITH/ HOW HAVE YOU PERSEVERED?

I used to suffer pretty intensely from “Doormat Syndrome”. I grew up in a very religious household and was raised to be a hardcore people-pleaser, taught never to cause trouble or inconvenience others. This mindset can be absolutely lethal, and it ultimately sucked the life right out of me. Until my early twenties, I had no boundaries, constantly found ways to apologize for who I was and what I wanted, and let people (even close friends) walk all over me. It was only a few years ago that I realized how unhappy I was, and I now make an active effort to honor and respect myself by establishing boundaries early on in all of my relationships. Since I made that decision, my life has changed in amazing ways. The right people respond to my strength instead of my passivity, and the wrong people have ultimately hit the road.

WHY ARE THE ARTS IMPORTANT TO YOU?

The arts provide individuals with a voice, and have given me a way to communicate my feelings when I couldn't in my daily life. A major upside of our tech-run world is that most of us have the ability to share our creativity on a public platform, and can quickly connect with other artists in seconds. I consider this a privilege and am so grateful to have access to worlds of creativity outside of my own.



"I want to understand how people feel and what makes them tick."



DO YOU HAVE A SURVIVAL JOB?

Oh, yes. I've worked so many day jobs - from the profoundly boring to the downright bizarre. To name a few: a gourmet sandwich-maker, church vocalist, celebrity nanny, Williams-Sonoma Holiday Greeter, Einstein Bagels dishwasher, graphic designer, and nursing home caretaker. Working side gigs is a part of life as a hustling creative. I also think it's an undervalued part of growing as an artist and expanding your worldview. In order to make art that connects with people, I want to understand how people feel and what makes them tick on a daily basis. Most people work all day and they work hard, at jobs they don't necessarily like. I personally connect most with actors who have worked a few other jobs before becoming actors. There's a kind of depth and understanding they possess that I connect with on screen. (Or at least that's what I've told myself over the years, while drooling with boredom in the last half hour of a double shift...)

WHAT ARE YOUR MUST READS, MUST LISTEN'S, MUST WATCH?

Must read: *Hunting & Gathering* by Anna Gavalda; *Acting in Film* by Michael Caine; *The Magic of Believing* by Claude Bristol

Must listen: I will listen to literally ANYTHING Enya makes. I'm also a big Leon Bridges fan

Must see: *Won't You Be My Neighbor?* (documentary), *30 Rock* in its entirety, *Big Fish* (Tim Burton), *The Comeback Kid* (John Mulaney's standup)



WHAT KEEPS YOU ENERGIZED? BALANCED?

This thing I do called “walking around in my socks”. I basically just spend a day in sweatpants and big, rollover socks walking around my apartment for no reason. It’s amazing, I highly recommend it. Aside from that: I’m fierce about alone time, watching period pieces, eating scones, whining on the phone to my sister, laughing at old Monty Python sketches, slowly morphing into the plump, elderly British woman I was born to be, etc., etc.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE/MOST EFFECTIVE WORK OF ART YOU’VE SEEN RECENTLY?

In college, I saved up for months to buy myself a front row seat to John Williams conducting the LA Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl. None of my friends wanted to go, so I went on a solo date and spent the night listening to him play his greatest film score pieces. It was one of the most moving experiences of my life. Julie Andrews hosted the concert, and at one point came out and sang “Moon River” as the orchestra played along. I absolutely lost it. I cried so hard I remember hearing the guy next to me ask his friends if he should “help the girl next to us.” Worth it.

HOW CAN WE SUPPORT FEMALE-IDENTIFYING AND GENDERQUEER ARTISTS

The same way we can support all female artists: by sharing their work, including them in our stories, treating them as unique individuals, not pigeonholing them in labels. I know I can do more when it comes to this - I’m learning as well.

WHERE CAN WE FIND YOUR WORK, CAROLINE?

I’m always open to collaboration. I’d love for you to reach out on Instagram or Facebook!

Instagram: @carolinemdunaway

Facebook: Caroline Dunaway

thank you, caroline!



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