“Principles for the Development of a Complete Mind: Study the science of art. Study the art of science. Develop your senses—especially learn how to see. Realize that everything connects to everything else.”

Leonardo da Vinci

Every four years it is the privilege of the College’s art gallery to host an exhibition of recent work by the current faculty of the Studio Art Department. The current offering, *The Art of Teaching*, displays the work of long-time professors Laura Pharis, Paige Critcher, and John Morgan, as well as the work of adjuncts Chatham Monk and Justin Rice.

In showcasing the professional accomplishments and individual aesthetic vision of these teachers, these quadrennial exhibitions demonstrate to students and to academic colleagues and the Sweet Briar community at large the rich creative lives of individuals who are otherwise most often, or only, encountered fulfilling prosaic roles in the classroom or at the committee table.

Karol A. Lawson
Director
Art Collection and Galleries and the Sweet Briar Museum
Visiting Assistant Professor, Arts Management Program

All works on view are loaned to the exhibition by the artists.

Please note: Visitors who wish to discuss the purchase of a work of art in this exhibition should contact the artist(s) directly. Their contact information is provided at the end of each statement. The art gallery staff does not represent the artists and the art gallery does not take a commission on any sales.
LAURA PHARIS

My work should speak for itself. It has dealt for a long time with dreams of alternate worlds rather than the 'real' world. Anomalies occur outside the expected course of events. They deviate from what is standard, normal, or expected. They may be someone or something that is quirky, rare, incongruous, or that does not “fit in”. Anomalies surprise us.

I was once classified as a Pre-Raphaelite (by art critic Dave Hickey, no less), and I do love John Everett Millais with his beautiful Ophelia floating downstream (probably revealing my slightly neurotic personality). I have been called a surrealist and have been fascinated by artists like Frida Kahlo, Rene Magritte, or more recently, Phyllis Bramson and Fred Stonehouse. Another mentor has called me a “Magic Realist”. Magic Realism is a genre of fiction and visual art in which magic is presented matter-of-factly, allowing the real and the fantastic to be received in the same stream of perception. I have read and been influenced by writers who are members of this fellowship: Jorge Luis Borges and Gabriel García Márquez, whose novel One Hundred Years of Solitude is a favorite. Other Magic Realists I have been influenced by are African-American novelist Toni Morrison, Indian-American writer Vikram Chandra, and Native American author Louise Erdrich.

Inspirations that went into making the images and figures in this show include but are not limited to:

- dreams;
- the materials I use and the pleasure I get from manipulating them;
- traditional songs, music and instruments;
- folk tales, fairy tales, myths and legends;
- boats, ships and old maps of earth or the heavens for out-of-body travel;
- the kingdoms of plants and animals;
  - images of various women, including small figurative sculptures which I have been advised not to call dolls, and which I swear are not self-portraits;
- Anglophilia—a great influence from and admiration for many things English, travel to the British Isles being by far my most frequent international travel destination.

My work contains evidence of religion, although no coherent system of belief is decipherable, except perhaps a suggestion of Sympathetic Magic (superstition or magic based on the belief that one object or event can affect another from a distance because of some kind of invisible connection between the two (like string theory.))

I think it’s about longing. I’m trying for beauty and some level of craft, although nothing I make can ever be perfect or free of errors, even if I tried (which I don’t).

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PAIGE CRITCHER

My work is characterized by a desire to look beyond the surface of an event or a thing and explore the deeply familiar qualities of a specific place. It is a continuous investigation through film and digital images, which also has recently included video. Photographic sensibility is one of inquisitiveness, and I look at subjects from a position that is personal and evocative.

The direction my work has taken in the last few years is one that explores the idea of boundaries within a visual and psychological approach to landscape. In regard to personal identity and sense of place, I seek information, diverse perspectives, and stories that examine the consequences of cultural values. There is a romantic desire to make even the mundane and the mildly tragic, beautiful to look at. Authenticity and artifice intertwine upon each other to express the conflict between nature as a vicarious experience, and the reality that we experience largely through the media.

This series explores personal boundaries that when set up, consciously or not, manifest themselves as outer obstacles. By using two disparate images juxtaposed together, a deeper meaning is conveyed, reinforcing the abstract theme of self-imposed isolation.

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JOHN D. MORGAN

For the last six years, I’ve been working in series. Each series is inspired by different things. The Tower Series was inspired, for example, by visiting the amazing folk art installation site by Simon Rodie, the Watts Towers in Los Angeles. Each tower has a different meaning.

There are four different series in this show.

In each series, I create a never-before-seen visual landscape that invites viewers in. I like for people to bring their own interpretations to my work, so I don’t want to explain the work itself. But I can talk about the inspirations.

Words have never been my medium; I’m a visual artist. Writing a statement is a painful process.

Making art: What is my process? For me, intuition is the most important part. That and showing up.

As I was sitting down to write my statement, my thoughts centered on how to explain my process while at the same time paying homage to the historical figures who had a major impact not only on me, but on all contemporary art. In the words of one of the artistic giants of the era:

“When you start working
Everybody is in your studio—
The past,
Your friends,
Enemies,
The art world,
And above all your own ideas—
All are there.
But as you continue painting,
They start leaving,
One by one,
And you are left completely alone,
Then if you’re lucky, you leave.”
—from John Cage

Often it’s not what I put in a piece, but what I take out or eliminate. While the images and objects come from many places and different cultures, I see them connected. Magical.

I start with an image or object and begin to add and subtract until it’s right. Time has nothing to do with this process. It works best when I’m completely unaware of time and place.

I try to always be open to edges, spaces between, interactions between black and white and color, and connections.

When none of this works. I sweep my studio. It’s an important part of the process.

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