Eulogy.

Megan Renee Levacy

East Tennessee State University

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Eulogy

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A thesis
presented to
the faculty of the Department of Art and Design
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Fine Arts in Painting

__________________________
by Megan Renee Levacy
May 2011

__________________________
Mira Gerard, Chair
Anita DeAngelis
Ralph Slatton

Keywords: art, painting, drawing, photography, observation, ornithology
ABSTRACT

Eulogy

by

Megan R. Levacy

The artist discusses the search for identity which underlies her Master of Fine Arts exhibition, *Eulogy*, hosted by the Carroll Reece Museum on the campus of East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee, from March 8 to May 6, 2011. This exhibit contains works which explore the artist's relationship with the natural world, ornithology, philosophy, psychology, poetry, and related personal influences.

The artist's thesis work consists of paintings, drawings, and photographs. The artist references her own investigation of poetry, philosophy, psychology, and personal history which have shaped a private sense of awareness. Also reviewed are the influences of artists such as Alexander Marshall, William Morris, Charles Burchfield, Rosamond Purcell, and Kiki Smith; the poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke and writings of Loren Eiseley; the ideas of philosophers G. W. F. Hegel and Slavoj Žižek, and art historian James Elkins.
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Additional appreciation is given to my family, without whom none of this would be possible. Special thanks to my mother for fostering many marigold moments as well as my artistic potential throughout my life, and to my father for my love of precision and order.

And, to my dear husband, Ryan Gutierrez, who is half of all I am, thank you for supporting my dream for the past decade, for your unflattering honesty and opinion despite your belief that you “don't know anything about art,” and for constantly helping me succeed.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Some of my earliest memories are of gardening with my mother and watching her create paintings of the rural landscapes in which I was raised. As with most childhood memories, I am not always sure where my own recollection ends and the stories of my family begin; however, there is little doubt that such early interactions have not only shaped who I am as an individual, but also my aesthetic as an artist.

When I was four, I came to my mother with the dried heads of dead marigolds and showed her that they contained hundreds of little slivers (seeds) that looked like what we planted in the garden. I was delighted by the surprise on her face and fascinated that such secrets could be attained. Although I was incapable of seeing the poetic ramifications of such an interaction at the time, the excitement of exploration and discovery was a connection that I was able to understand.

The way I choose to communicate such moments has evolved as a result of many years spent learning about art not only in academia, but also from my mother, grandmother, and father. Both my mother and grandmother primarily paint subjects such as landscapes, still life arrangements, plants, and animals. Each of these paintings focuses on many formal qualities employed by the masters like compositional structure and lighting and more impressionistic techniques that suggest atmosphere and emotion. When I
was twelve, my mother asked me to stand in front of one of her paintings and tell her where my eye went first, then next, and so on, until it had moved throughout the canvas to the upper corner where the light crested on a pasture of the donkey we heard braying everyday. The pasture was the main subject of the painting, but my mother explained that she wanted viewers to follow the same path my own eyes had just taken in order to discover it on their own. Using the end of her paintbrush, she showed me what she had done in order to make my eye move throughout the composition. Despite many museum outings and an earnest love of art, it was in that moment I realized that artists have the ability to lead someone else on a journey – that they could share not only their discoveries, but also the exploration itself.

Additionally, my father showed me how precision and detail could help communicate ideas by teaching me how to create more diagrammatic depictions of the world from a bird's-eye view, a process which mirrored the drafting plans he created as a piping designer. My father taught me how to see things from above, how to flatten them out so that they could be easily distributed and organized in space – I found that the order of such things could be calming and dependable.

I am intensely engaged by the natural world and my desire to explore connections manifests visually in forms which reference nature in both realistic and abstracted ways. I view my work, and the process of creating it, as a form of *marigold moment* in which intense observation leads to deeper, more meaningful discoveries.
When I began my degree program, I suffered from the misconception that any work I found easy to create should be classified as a study for a larger, more complex piece. I shied away from the simple, natural subject matter I was more instinctively drawn to as significant work in its own right. Instead, I compiled these ideas together to create what I believed to be more complete thoughts. The resulting work was not overly compelling; the things I intended to say were obscured by my inability to recognize that complex ideas and layered meanings can be understood without excessive detailing of every aspect visually within a composition. During this time my successful works were quiet, unassuming studies done with a sense of self-confidence and clarity that escaped larger, more in-depth pieces.

In *Untitled (Collapse Series #2)* [Fig.1], I tried to communicate my thoughts about my recent move, which took me further away from my family in order to

![Fig. 1 Untitled (Collapse Series #2)](image)
attend school. I layered images which personally symbolized this theme such as doilies and diagrams of flowers which signified my connection to my mother and grandmother, bees which explored the topic of colony collapse as a metaphor for my own feelings of weakened family relationships, and a crow which represented my anxiety and acted as a harbinger of greater disconnection I feared would result from my relocation. While any of these ideas would have been engaging on their own, the meaning behind the work was buried beneath multiple layers of symbolism and, in the end, none of them were clearly conveyed in the final work.

While working on *Untitled (Collapse Series #2)*, I was also working on a series of studies, called the Bagworm Series, and on various watercolor paintings of collected ephemera as ways to explore media techniques while I worked on developing my understanding of my content. These works were more straightforward and poetic in their content yet continued to speak of the same struggles I was exploring in the Collapse Series. *Skeleton* [Fig. 2] depicts the twisting spine of a large leaf that has been devoured down to its rind by insects as it spins and curls in on itself in death. Similarly, *Untitled (Bagworm Series #1)* [Fig. 3] illustrates the wet nests of bagworm moths which have begun to deteriorate as a result of the elements. Both of these works feature subject matter from my yard and personally reference the amount of time I spent outdoors as I tried to establish a
connection with my new home.

By paring down my compositions to the most essential elements I find that my individual voice is more effectively communicated. The natural subject matter I was originally attracted to became predominant components in each new exploration and evolved into my primary focus. Objects from nature such as seeds, leaves, insects, birds, and trees not only engage me on a personal level but serve as iconographic elements which support my aesthetic and intent; the end result is less detached and more honest. My current body of work is representative of a great deal of sifting. Although I explore the same ideas I have been working with for almost a decade, both the process and the product have been refined and cultivated. *Eulogy* is comprised of works that reference my investigation of identity, connection, death, and idealism.

What I did not realize during my first few semesters was that just because something gives me a sense of fulfillment and excitement does not mean that the creation is any easier than the process that goes into something else – it is simply more enjoyable. For me, these feelings facilitate work that is more inspired and contemplative. *Eulogy* is not only an exhibition of work which, as the title suggests, reflects upon life and humanity as a whole but also one which catalogs a process of self-discovery and acceptance.
CHAPTER 3

OBSERVATION

“Art should be thought of not as product or artifact but as an act or process of expression through which the artist clarifies her inchoate emotions and states of mind.”
~ Stephen Davies, The Philosophy of Art

For me, the act of creating work involves much more than making marks or capturing images. I am constantly distracted by the small random elements of nature I encounter throughout my general everyday routine. Understandably, this leads to the act of collecting. I am specifically drawn to items such as broken seed pods, dried leaves, haphazard feathers, and dead insects. Throughout my observation of an object I am quite aware of how much I am truly observing myself. Art critic James Elkins writes, “[V]ision helps us know what we are like: we watch versions of ourselves in people and objects, and by attending to them we adjust our sense of what we are” (201). In The Object Stares Back, Elkins discusses how the act of seeing is also a type of blindness because there are things we cannot grasp, things that we do not want to see, and other things that we just are not ready to see – by addressing our inherent blindness we are capable of attaining a greater understanding of ourselves (205).

Once I have chosen an object for study, I begin my observational process with photography. Unlike drawings and paintings, photography separates the observer from what is being observed. While this allows nature to remain “as is” without the interference of
humanity, it also creates an expectation that humans and nature must in some ways operate independently from one another (Brower 59). “The possibility of observing from a safe distance grants both a temporal remove... and the disengaged but empowering anonymity that comes from being the subject of a voracious gaze whose object is confined and subordinated”; however, “this very distance changes the status of the object, which loses its commonness to become a thing worthy of such attention” (Olalquiaga 31). Through the lens of a camera I can view an object in unfamiliar ways. The fact that the camera separates me from my subject helps me explore relationships which are themselves more superficial. Until I recognized how alienating the photographic process was for me, I often worked from original photographs rather than from life. In doing so, I restricted my understanding to formal surface elements. As I became more aware of this phenomenon, I began to integrate sketching into my observational process in addition to photography. I now work almost exclusively from still life arrangements and rely on photography as merely another step in the process of seeing.

Working from life is important to me as relationships and connections such as these have become a key element within my work. The act of drawing is like a meditation on what I am thinking – it is “thinking raised to the level of meditation” (Birkerts 9). The associations I discover during the sketching process are, for me, as much of a subject as the objects I am depicting. Waxwing Sketch [Fig. 4] is an example of

**Fig. 4 Waxwing Sketch**
graphite on paper  
6 x 9 inches, 2010
such observation. As I was making this drawing I was strongly affected by the odd contortion of the head of the study skin I was using as a model. The position conjured up associations to Klimt's Kiss, and expressed some of the internal discomfort I felt as I began to draw closer to more personal content within my work. When I apply these connections to the subjects themselves, I am, in a way, turning them into symbols (Olalquiaga 118). Through the documentation of my visual search I begin to uncover aspects I easily overlook through the lens of a camera. By interacting with nature in a more intimate way, I am able to explore facets of my conscious and subconscious. “That intense look at something,” artist Michal Rovner says, “is a kind of monogamy... selecting something to be occupied with for a very long time,” and this is “a very important journey, no matter what the subject matter is” (Rovner).

Over time, my experiences with each subject evolves and shapes my comprehension of the actual content I am working with – content that can reveal an internal dialog about who I am as an individual. Rilke writes: “Whatever image you take within you deeply, / even for a moment in a lifetime of pain, / see how it reveals the whole” (Rilke “Part Two, Sonnet XIX” Sonnets to Orpheus). It is easy to see ourselves in other things and – if we try hard enough – everything can be related back to ourselves (Elkins 22). The creation of personal symbols is a way to claim the object as my own and signify the connections I have established either with the object or because of the object. In the end, “the object is in its essential nature the same as the process; the latter is the unfolding and distinguishing of the elements involved; the object is these same elements taken and held together as a single totality” (Hegel 162).
While I acknowledge that there are certain devices I am consistently drawn to such as formal and traditional compositional structures, grid-like formations, icon-like centering, and muted color schemes, I try to allow the content to dictate my choices. I use sparse compositions when I want to leave the interpretation of content more open and favor more complex frameworks when I want to direct attention to one specific idea over another (Arnheim 55). The central placements of objects within a composition command attention; “they present themselves without distortion and from a comfortable distance... [and] although we can step forward and reach the object, we experience it as possessing its own space and occupying a vertical region of its own” (Arnheim 38).

*Untitled (Cardinal: Red)* [Fig. 5] is an example of such placement. The lack of elements in the negative space also places a greater importance on the Cardinal and reinforces a symbolic connotation because there is nothing to relate to within the composition.
I frequently revisit subject matter multiple times and create multiple “series” or small groupings of two to five. I may also work in multiple media until what evolves feels correct and appropriate for my original concept. Because it is “impossible to make the essential character of the thing in question present,” it becomes necessary to provide a number of perspectives if one ever hopes to have a firm grasp on the nature of a thing (Ranciere 110) In *Untitled (Eulogy Series #3)* [Fig. 6], I inverted the ways in which I had been placing the patterned element in the background of my composition by overlaying the patterning onto the body of the birds. This was not as successful as I had intended and drew too far away from the previous two works in the series. I may not always know what is wrong with a piece when I decide to start again, but eventually I come to a realization which helps propel me further; this leads to the creation of a large collection of pieces and certain patterns begin to emerge. Once these patterns are identified my work becomes further enriched by applied associations, and the nature of the content shifts to include these perspectives and expands to explore new ones.
While my creative process is sometimes maze-like, with assorted twists and turns which lead to unexpected discoveries and diversions, the actual physical creation of the work itself is more like a labyrinth. I invest a lot of time and energy into my preliminary investigations; and once I arrive at an outcome, the methodical and controlled execution of a composition is comforting and somewhat cathartic. The result is calculated in such a way that the goal is clear and the path is set – I need only follow it through to the end.

When I create a final composition, I continue to work from life, using the photos and sketches I have already created as references. Regardless of the media chosen, working from life in the final stages of creation enables me to continually engage with the subject and provides a better model from which to work.

Repetition is a dominant aspect of both my process and imagery and a component of my art practice that has always been a source of meditation. I am drawn to these moments for the same reason I find significance in the process of sketching as a means of observation. The “Eulogy Series” is one of the most prevalent examples of literal repetition in my work. In *Untitled (Eulogy Series #4)* [Fig. 7] and *Untitled (Eulogy Series #5)* [Fig. 8] the same pattern, based on a motif from a William Morris wallpaper design, is repeated in a horizontal strip behind the image of an ornithological specimen. The pattern was created from an original drawing made
on tracing paper which was then laid out and repeated behind the image of the birds. From transfer to completion, each motif was outlined and reworked four times.

Compared to the unpredictable process I begin with, the controlled and finely executed stages near completion promote reflection and facilitate a deeper sense of connectivity. These insights create a greater understanding of my work and of myself; therefore, I uncover additional meaning or interpretations to a work after completion.
Patterning plays a significant role in a large number of my works, either literally or metaphorically. Through iconographic references, many artists attempt to resolve the need to understand the intangible in a tangible way, to systematically establish order, and to facilitate a connection with past associations (Hapgood 8). Despite the fact that all repeated motifs are essentially symbolic, it is the subtext of the patterns themselves that “form a contemporary narrative” (Woods 22). My interest in the suggestive undertones of patterning led me to study William Morris and wallpaper.

Through repetition of forms, the motifs used in wallpaper are “transformed” in an orderly and controlled manner, and in the process of repetition, they can become essentially “meaningless” (Saunders 29). It is because of this that wallpaper “is generally regarded as ‘merely’ decorative,” says Christine Woods, a curator with expert knowledge of the history of wallpaper (12). Woods believes that “wallpaper softens, humanizes,” and signifies that someone is a part of “the civilized world” (12-3). Not only does this view of “being” civilized further separate humans from nature, decorative iterations of natural images are then put up as physical and metaphoric barriers that prevent a direct relationship with nature. “Wallpaper obliterates the past,” says Woods, “it covers up the cracks, the dirt, the evidence – it wipes the slate clean, and enables new beginnings” (13). The use and reference to wallpaper within
contemporary art “engages the viewer in a radically different dialogue” than it has historically had, “one that employs some aspects of the traditional visual language of wallpaper, but also uses its power to challenge, oppose and disturb” (Woods 22). In several of my works I make reference to wallpaper by incorporating repetitive swirling linear simplifications of flowers and plants which are based on historic and contemporary designs. These elements serve as a silent witness to the traditional ways in which society interacts with nature and provide a background with a distinctly separate point of view from the subject matter.

In Bird (In Memory of Morris) [Fig. 9] I extract the simplified bird forms from the patterns and replace them with a highly rendered depiction of an ornithological specimen. Although the birds in Morris' painting are full of life and action, I extract them from their setting and depict a dead field sparrow in an almost perched position in their place. By using delicately beautiful bird corpses I intend to question preconceived expectation of such juxtapositions. Bird (In Memory of Morris) directly references a pattern by William Morris called Bird and, more specifically, an unfinished preliminary painting he made while creating the pattern. I used the color scheme from this piece, although muted, along with a pattern which references the actual foliage in the work. Because the unfinished quality of the painting appeals to

Fig. 9 Bird (In Memory of Morris)
gouache on paper diptych, 15 x 19.5 inches each, 2010
me, I chose to reduce the patterning to simple lines. My association with the unfinished state of Morris's study to early drawings and paintings by natural history explorers reflects my own preliminary process of creating work.
I find that my interest in the world around me, mixed with more obsessive tendencies which drive me to over-analyze and pick apart things I find curious, leads to multiple bodies of work. I pursue a large majority of the ideas that evolve through my creative process and often end up running parallel to my earlier ones. The result is an odd parallax in which my view of the object shifts as a result of my perspective. Contemporary philosopher Slavoj Žižek explains that the parallax gap is the “unfathomable X which forever eludes the symbolic grasp, and thus causes the multiplicity of the symbolic perspective” (“Parallax” 18).

In addition to the content, the underlying multiplicity of symbolism creates its own tension. While exploring the juxtaposition of somewhat realistically depicted dead birds with idealized patterns of plants, I became aware of a certain degree of cognitive dissonance inherent in compositions like *Bird (In Memory of Morris)* [Fig. 9]. Although the majority of
my concepts become distilled into their purest elements by the time they are translated into visual compositions, the “Eulogy Series” of work synthesizes two conflicting concepts simultaneously. In works such as Untitled (Eulogy Series #1) [Fig. 10] and Untitled (Eulogy Series #2) [Fig. 11], the use of a dead bird in a confrontational iconic position is intended to critique humanity's willingness to look past the harsher reality of nature in favor of the the more idealized version represented in the background of each composition. However, the bird is idealized because of its placement and obvious symbolism and therefore contradicts its intended role. The result is a piece which expresses an inability to reduce the dissonance I feel between my own desire to have an un-romanticised relationship with nature and my genuine enjoyment of stylized depictions of the natural world.

A piece by Alexander Marshall called Purple Crocuses, Cloth of Gold Crocus, Liverwort, Double Dorm, Poppy Anemones and Jay, c. 1750-82, exhibits similar paradoxes by overlaying an articulated three-dimensional painting of a dead Bluejay on a cluster of seven flat two-dimensional flower paintings in a grid-like formation. This work has been of particular importance to me from its discovery forward. Through a study of Purple Crocuses and other similar works by Marshall and other early explorers, I came to appreciate the poetic synergy between the birds and patterning I was already exploring in a new way and embrace a new connection with history I had not anticipated.
I am conscious of the fact that the subject matter of dead animals can cause discomfort in most viewers and has the potential to shut down lines of communication when a person becomes physiologically distressed. I believe that my work does not facilitate such intense or negative reactions because of the way in which the subject matter is presented. In creating images which are delicately handled and beautifully rendered, using muted, calming colors, and media like gouache and graphite which have a soft matte finish, I create compositions which refrain from jarring or abrasive connotations.
I struggle with the inherent discord evident in my relationship with the natural world. According to Celeste Olalquiaga, author of *The Artificial Kingdom*, nature has become an “icon of itself” (44). Nature is inherently “other” and man's understanding is generally based on principles of self-sameness and empathy (Olalquiaga 44). Because “‘nature' is already, in itself, turbulent, imbalanced,” it is more likely that our misguided identification with nature is simply a recognition of similarity – of connection (Žižek, “Awry” 38). Because “man stands... between the two most disparate kingdoms upon earth: the flesh and the spirit” it is not so surprising that we seek a bit of ourselves in what surrounds us – that we find ourselves applying properties and meanings to what we find mysterious (Eiseley, “Factor” 257). One of my most important concerns as an artist is to search out these moments of interconnectedness.
It can be difficult to see the world for what it is when much of what we are faced with is unpleasant. James Elkins reasons that “out of the whole world, we see almost nothing, and all the things that are out there show how unexpected and finally how uncontrollably frightening the world can be” (51). In order to elevate this fear, humanity has created a vision of nature that resists the real, favoring idealization and symbolism (Eiseley, “Nature” 296). *Inverted Reflections* [Fig. 12] addresses this concept while also exploring the dichotomous perspective I have of nature. In the left-hand side of the diptych, a fairly articulated grouping of leaves hangs from the top of the format. An inverted reflection which has been reduced to simplified stylized lines is positioned directly below and behind the more realistic depiction of the plant. In the opposing composition, this same device is repeated but inverted again so that the more realistic version of the foliage is raising from the bottom of the format.

I try to embrace my idealism by choosing to use nature deliberately as an icon of itself within my work. By using the discourse and romanticism reinforced by society to address the implications of such behavior, I subvert traditional iconographic connotations and supplant a less evasive, though stylized, reality as a way to stimulate discussion and personal evaluation of preconceptions. I raise the status of
_transient objects in a state of decay or death as a way to question preconceptions. Unpleasant elements in my content are frequently disguised so that a viewer is seduced by the appealing qualities of the work. In the moment when attraction falls to recognition of death and decay there is an opportunity for a paradigmatic shift in which the viewer becomes confused by his/her own responses. It is my hope that the struggle to put things back into perspective facilitates deeper reflection about each viewer's individual perception of mortality.
Our relationship with our environment and other people is often a mirror for what is going on within our consciousness (Žižek, “Parallax” 148). Because it is not always easy to personally identify with the more inanimate aspects of nature, the unique livingness of animals enables us to relate to something “other” in a way that is more meaningful and also more reflective (Hillman 19). For many artists, including me, animals can be used as a symbol of a new kind of “being” – one that extends beyond our generally limited perception of self and allows us to see ourselves in ways we wouldn't ordinarily be capable of recognizing (Baker 153).

To some theorists like Steve Baker, the animal in art was of little importance prior to postmodernism because it did not have anything to say about itself; rather, it was only a symbol of something else (Garcia 31). In rendering the animal as little more than an icon or object, it is reduced to an indicator of something common and this has led to a situation in which many people no longer see the animal for what it is (Baker, “Wrong” 4). Essentially, the distance that is required in order to maintain an unburdened conscience is reflected visually through a sense of fantasy or a projected ideal (Brower 59). In this way, the relationship that humanity has with nature is arguably parallel to the relationship with animals. This makes the animal, which is easily subject to anthropomorphic connotation, a perfect subject to communicate over-arching concepts.
The use of living creatures in the majority of my work, specifically birds and butterflies, reflects my own personal identification with animals. While certain species would provide a more recognizable mirror for most, birds and butterflies have long held a heavily symbolic role in numerous cultures. “Animals are teachers of the multiplicity of meaning” and as metaphors, have the ability to create their own language that humanity can interpret” (Hillman 73). The transformation of the butterfly from a caterpillar and the more varied connotations associated with the ability birds have to fly have made both of these creatures common symbols of something “other” which humanity finds difficult to relate to in a more literal way. Because the bird and the butterfly can embody so many different metaphors, it is easier for a wider audience to individually identify with them. In depicting realistically rendered birds and butterflies in death rather than in life, I ask the viewer to confront certain elements of living, such as death, that are commonly repressed and shrouded in restrained discourse.

Fig. 13 Casualties
gouache on paper
6 x 9 inches each, 2010
Casualties [Fig. 13] is comprised of twelve individual paintings of butterflies, each on a different color of paper. Each butterfly is rendered as realistically as possible using gouache paint. The subjects were all collected from the sides of roads and in parking lots over the course of several months. Although these insects are casualties of motor vehicles, this is not readily apparent on first glance. During closer observation torn wings and missing limbs or antennae provide clues as to the reality of each insect's death. To me this work functions as both a Victorian collection of death images which memorialize life through the recognition of transience and as a series of cautionary icons of the fragility of nature and humanity's responsibility for the environment we inhabit. Their arrangement in a gridded format creates associations to patterning and wallpaper, further questioning repetitive cycles. “It is difficult to avoid the presence of death,” Jonathon Burt explains, and “within this arena of morbidity, the animal symbol or image is understood not so much as a sign of absence, or non-presence, but as a symptom of a deeper and more permanent loss” (157).
CHAPTER 10

INDIVIDUALITY

“We see our concepts of knowledge – what it is and is not – what emotion is made of, and what constitutes feeling and what constitutes fact, and where the difference lies – what we don't see is a reflection of our face, we see instead a reflection of our interior.”

~ David Byrne

Jonathan Burt proposes that “the notion of livingness... implies a state in which things can only ever be taken for granted – a state of neutral inactivity” (Burt 167). When this livingness is consciously removed, it can be argued that humanity might be more inclined to regard the animal in its otherness and that in the recognition of the animal's individuality we become more human. I use animals in my work because they personally facilitate introspection and self-awareness, but it is also important to me that the animal retain its own identity, sometimes more so than others. Regardless of which aspect I push in a work, the result remains the same. “We try to see something like ourselves, a reflection of the other, a doppelganger or a twin, or even just a part of us – a face, a hand or a foot, an eye, even a hair or a scrap of tissue” (Elkins 129). I like that birds and insects resist immediate associations such as these. Feathers, beaks, and claws do not immediately draw our empathy, but in the eyes, the gesture, the expression, we “make contact with the face of another” (Lingis 181-2).
The individuality of birds is often reduced to species identification. But, as anyone who has ever owned a house pet can attest, each animal is just as unique as any human being. I find that I have taken part in this type of idealization without realizing I was participating in such a blatant form of homogenization. “We imagine that seeing is entirely objective,” explains James Elkins, when in fact we are really incapable of being objective (33). In more typical noble bird poses the striking figures we identify are little more than text-book definitions of a species, lacking any real sense of identity. The choice to depict birds in ways which are non-traditional is an attempt to reinstate the individuality of each specimen.
Memento Mori [Fig. 14] is comprised of sixteen panels depicting birds in odd poses which conjure up associations of mugshots, school photos, and traditional busts or portraits. These types of images are generally reserved for the documentation of an individual as opposed to an example of a species. Because each appears to have an expression and or gesture that makes it an individual, the birds resist the connotation of merely representing a species. Additionally, the color is removed by the use of graphite, divesting each bird of part of its typical marks of identification. Once a viewer becomes aware that the portraits are not of the living but of the dead, the connotation of these images shifts toward that of postmortem photographs as suggested by the title. By separating birds from their traditional, or attributed, context I use them as icons which are “susceptible to the projection of cultural desires and anxieties” (Olalquiaga 52).
CHAPTER 11

CATALYST

When asked why I use birds specifically, as clearly there are many other creatures that hold significant symbolic connotations, I find it difficult to respond. My hesitation is possibly because I choose birds as my subject matter for many different reasons and their purpose not only changes between different bodies of work, it can also vary between specific pieces. At times birds have acted as a metaphor for myself, the soul, the embodiment of faith, as harbingers, omens, or cautionary figures, as mirrors, and also as icons of nature itself. I believe that I am drawn to birds because they have the capacity to symbolize a large span of emotions or concepts, but I am also cognizant of the personal relationship I have had with birds and my close associations with them to death, loss, and alienation.

As an only child, I have always had particularly close relationships with animals. On my thirteenth birthday I was given a parakeet whom I named Shay. I was
slightly afraid of her at first. She was something unfamiliar to me. I was timid around her – afraid I would break her or hurt her wings. Her feet and beak were sharp, and she could sense I was fearful; this made her defensive and anxious. In the first month I had her, I never held Shay for more than a few seconds at a time. I talked to her often, but I remained a bit separate from her in general because we did not physically interact. As I began to come around to the idea that she would not break in my hands, she became ill. Her condition worsened quickly, and in the span of one day she lost the use of her legs and could not eat, drink, or stand on her own. I held Shay for hours in my hand as the life slipped away from her. I did not want her to be alone and I regretted not having given her more physical attention until her death. Before this, my perception of mortality was little more than an abstract concept I was kept apart from through words and ritual. When Shay's heart stilled beneath my fingers I was unable to look away, to separate myself – to not see.

Creating the parakeet panel of *Memento Mori* [Fig. 15], was a challenge for me because of my deeply emotional response resulting from my personal memories of my own parakeet. In a collection that is almost entirely comprised of common birds of the region, a parakeet is a remarkable oddity. Judging from the tag information I believed that the parakeet was likely donated by the owner to be preserved for many years. I later learned that this bird was once the beloved pet of a current ornithology professor during his time in graduate school. Much care was taken in the preservation of the skin. As parakeets are typically kept as pets, they are often viewed more individually than other species. Despite the remainder of the panels in *Memento Mori* depicting images of birds I encounter locally on a regular basis, I felt that the parakeet was uniquely significant to my thesis. The inclusion of the parakeet in this grouping of work not only provides a bit of variety but also a different perspective of humanity's relationship with birds as individuals.
“It is to the seeds of death within us that we must address ourselves.”
~ Loren Eiseley “The Lethal Factor”

I am personally captivated by the beauty that can be found in decay – at the transformation of matter. Eiseley observes that “form, once arisen, clings to its identity” suggesting that even in death, there is something that remains of the individual (“Thrower” 176). The fact that my subjects are dead is unavoidable. “Mortality is a gift that reveals the integrity of our lives, discloses their uniqueness and worth” (Barrows and Macy 18). I view *Inverted Reflections* [Fig. 12] as a further exploration of the way society manages our interactions with death and the ways in which our experiences with mortality are simplified and dressed up with euphemisms and ceremony. The nineteenth century experienced a radical shift in the everyday experience of death as a result of industrialization. As cities expanded, many cemeteries, once given a prominent place alongside the living, were relegated to the edges of society (Olalquiaga 283). As a result of such altered association, the focus of many mourners was placed more on the living rather than the deceased (Olalquiaga 282). Modern society has systematically sought to minimize the significance of mortality because it is something unpleasant and distressing (Hope 68).
We are “participants in a culture that does not accept death and seeks to capture life at whatever cost,” and because my life has been spent holding similar perceptions, the Victorian era is a direct contrast to my general perception of death and mourning (Olalquiaga 68). My interest in excessive ornament and pattern alone cultivates an interest in the Victorian aesthetic; however, the Victorian era's infatuation with these things, combined with an obsession with mortality, strongly affects the way I address my subject matter in my own work. I am drawn to the overly dramatic quality that many artifacts from this time possess – decorative embellishment of surfaces, an interest in taxidermy, and postmortem photography are elements from the Victorian era I am aware of and occasionally reference directly in my work.

Untitled (Eulogy Series #7) [Fig. 16] is one of several pinhole photographs which were taken after I became interested in Victorian death portraits. In order to create a stronger visual reference to this influence, I chose to use this media because, although a pinhole camera has an unlimited depth-of-field, it also has very limited clarity. This produces an image which resembles the more hazy appearance of older daguerreotype and tintype photographs. I began by taking photos of the study skins I was working from in my paintings surrounded by living foliage. I cataloged these photographs with the “Eulogy Series” because I feel that the vines appear stylized in a
way similar to the patterning in my earlier paintings and drawings in the series.
CHAPTER 13

SPECIMEN

“Time is the obvious agency of change, the power that pulls apart, dissolves, and corrupts, but which also yields up to the artist the beauty of vestiges, the delicacy of remnant form.”
~ Sven Birkerts

Using study skins borrowed from the ornithology department at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, Tennessee, has helped me develop my physical skill in rendering birds and has also provided an unexpected perspective on mortality and identity. As *other* – as *object* – a dead bird becomes a vehicle for our own projections. However, I am interested in the possibility that through study and observation of these animals in death, a sense of individuality can still be identified. In their death, these birds are more real to me then the birds in my yard with which I interact primarily through photography. I believe that this connection evolved from the first moment I was introduced to the ornithology department. I approached the collection seeking to obtain details needed in order to reproduce photographs such as *Wren Seeking* [Fig. 17] and *Junco Watching* [Fig. 18] in watercolor. I was quickly overwhelmed by the physicality of death, most directly noted in the study skins' lack of eyes [Fig. 19]. In my photographs I try to capture some moment of personality or individuality – more often than not these moments are expressed through a tilt of head or expression in the eyes.
Despite my first obvious response to missing eyes, when faced with the unexpected physicality of the specimens I became obsessed with the “toe tags” which identified each bird simply by its scientific name and measurements instead of focusing on the very thing that first caught my attention. Bird feet became the aspect which most conveyed a sense of character because each bird's reptilian toes had been preserved in different ways. The fact that the tag was attached to these toes served as a powerful metaphor for our own human deaths. In this way, I was able to reconnect with these birds as I had hoped to do through my photography. My attention soon moved from feet to feathers, many of which were a little worse for wear, and then to the head and “face” of the bird. It is as though I subconsciously had to move from the feet up as a way to prepare myself to actually address the lack of eyes. Once I was mentally prepared to deal with the full body of each bird I became almost hyper-aware of the bird as a once-living creature. This changed my interaction with the birds significantly.
In some ways I found it easier to divorce myself from this comprehension in the beginning because to see the study skins as husks was too uncomfortable. From the corner of my eye I would experience that moment of panic that a bird had just moved. I became unnerved by the environment. It is important to note that until this point I had been working in the room perfumed by an intense mixture of mothballs and formaldehyde for hours at a time. I started getting headaches after a while, and when I pushed too far I started vomiting – obvious signs that the toxins from the mothballs used to keep the specimens free from infestation were pervading my body. It was clear to me that I could no longer view these birds objectively in such surroundings. With permission, I began to work in my studio. In the comforting environment of my private creative space, filled with the scent of incense – not chemicals – my relationship with each bird took on entirely new dimensions. I do feel as though I bring back a bit of “life” to these birds but the manifestation of this is not apparent in the way humanity typically views life and death. I revive these birds in some ways by making them more “real” in my mind and in the mind of the viewer. These birds become real to me because of my intimate interactions with them.

Fig. 19 Study Skin
digital photograph, 2010
In a number of pieces I have chosen Carolina Wrens as my primary focus. I have a number of Wrens in my backyard, some which nest multiple times a year outside my back door. This creates numerous opportunities for me to observe these living birds first hand. After many hours of watching them build nests and raise young I am able to recognize each individual bird. Because of the personal significance of this relationship, I am continually drawn to the six Wren specimens in the ornithology collection. *Untitled (Eulogy Series #3)* [Fig. 6], *Untitled (Eulogy Series #1)* [Fig. 10] and several individual panels in *Memento Mori* [Fig. 20] are of this specific species and like the Wrens in my yard, each specimen is unique.

Upon a more in-depth look at the ways in which I deal with death and, in specific, ornithology specimens, I am reminded of some of Kiki Smith's prints which have inspired me for a number of years. As most of her figurative work has developed out of a fascination with mortality and an earnest interest in the sacredness of the human form, Smith's work appeals to my interests both thematically and visually (Langer 6). When asked why she is drawn to animals and
nature in her later work, Smith says that her desire for change in the world allowed for a deeper understanding of the “symbolic morphing of animals and humans” (Weitman 98). Smith's interest lies not so much in animals or nature specifically but in the “relationship of nature and human nature” (Weitman 98). Smith used birds as symbols for the spirit within her work and identified with birds on many personal levels (Weitman 31). Through Smith's work, I gain added confidence to explore ornithological specimens. Smith worked directly with natural history collections to create pieces like How I Know I'm Here, Flight Mound, Destruction of Birds, and White Mammals, all of which echo strong reactions and associations to the stiff form of scientific specimens (Weitman 31). In works such as these, Smith “accentuates the specimens' status as corpses” (Weitman 32). Works such as Untitled (Eulogy Series #1) [Fig. 10], Untitled (Eulogy Series #2) [Fig. 11], and Untitled (Cardinal: Red) [Fig. 5] use a similar vertical format, as well as indicators of the specimens' death such as identification tags, although the devices used were without conscious reference to Smith's work.
CHAPTER 14

REVELATIONS

“I realized that for me the only divine reality is the unspeakable beauty of the world as it is.”
~ Charles Burchfield

In the studio I am often overwhelmed by my process – by my work. When I must confront difficult or personal content, I tend to pull myself back from my work – edit myself out. I take comfort in artists like Charles Burchfield because he felt a similar restlessness in the studio and also found it hard to deal with the degree to which personal struggle manifested in his work (Baur 53–4). In the beginning of his career Burchfield believed that he could find certain truths in nature through direct observation, only to believe later that only more abstract representations could communicate the essence of what he witnessed in nature (Weekly 15). I have recently found a renewed appreciation for the potential of abstraction. Over the past year I have struggled to reconcile my desire to work more abstractly with my desire to work in a realistic manner. I have come to the conclusion that both aspects can find a degree of harmony with one another.
Rosamond Purcell is an artist who, like Kiki Smith, has a specific interest in natural history collections. Many of Purcell's works are compilations of a variety of photographs of specimens arranged so as to suggest deeper meaning and an underlying theme of decay as something that reveals truth. These pieces are “beautiful in themselves – each an instance of the shapes and shadings of the world ambushed by the artist's eye – they also induce, in the echo-life of delayed recognition, the most provocative meditation on... defining paradoxes” (Birkerts 11). In Rebus, actual insect legs are arranged significantly on a piece of paper with leaf designs, creating a juxtaposition similar to Marshall's Purple Crocuses. The decorative depiction of nature serves as a “middle ground between the indecipherable signs” and the “authentic natural remnant” of the insect parts (Birkerts 13). Purcell “is endlessly interested in how the eye...projects meanings and thematic resonances on specific shapes and arrangements of shape” (Birkerts 13). Pieces like Rebus create a view of nature and death as the ultimate revealor of truth (Birkerts 11). In studying Purcell's work, I began to re-evaluate my perception of photography's ability to observe and document intangible concepts.
With the same pin-hole camera used to take photographs of the ornithology study skins, I began taking pictures of insects and items from my collection of ephemeral objects. The resulting images, such as *Untitled (Butterflies: Pink)* [Fig. 21], opened my eyes to the additional metaphoric potential of my subject matter. I began to pull out works done months before like *Ascension* [Fig. 22], which I had considered separate from my main body of work, and examine them with an entirely different attitude. When I first created *Ascension*, it was a work I immediately loved but simultaneously doubted. For all my intentions I was blinded to my more abstracted works by my desire to move away from the idealism I was attracted to in the imagery.

In unifying the impulses towards realism, fantasy, nature, and the works of humanity, Burchfield was able to unify his style and voice as an artist (Baur 76, 79). In learning to accept my own limitations, natural instincts, and aesthetic, as well as the dissonance among my perceptions, I have started to come to a better understanding of my work and of myself as an artist.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


CATALOG OF EXHIBITION

The following images document the nineteen works that comprise my thesis exhibition, *Eulogy*, held at the Carroll Reece Museum on the campus of East Tennessee State University from March 8 to May 6, 2011. All works were completed in 2010 and 2011.
The floral patterning in this painting is my interpretation of a piece of fabric I found which had small brown nondescript birds in foliage. When I began working with the ornithology specimens, I began having dreams about birds coming back to life. In one dream, the birds in this fabric came to life and emerged from the pattern as real birds. I began contemplating the way I idealize birds and nature and how this perspective affects my ability to have more meaningful interactions with my environment. This work directly addresses the conflict within myself to have a less romanticized relationship with the natural world while still admiring and enjoying stylized representations.

**Untitled (Eulogy Series # 1)**
gouache on paper 12 x 18 inches, 2010
My choice of birds is greatly influenced by the species I encounter in my yard on a daily basis. In handling the study skins which correspond to more familiar birds, I begin to see the how little I really see. I am particularly fascinated by how much my sense of scale is inaccurate. I painted this Chickadee almost 50% larger than it is in reality because this was how big I thought the bird was. The juxtaposition of the almost absurdly large tag compared to the tiny, fragile body served as another reminder of my misconceptions, and I felt that it was important to maintain this element in the final piece. I chose to reduce the plants to outlines and increase the detail in the bird because, at this point, I was beginning to see more than I ever had before.
During my investigation of the ways nature is depicted throughout history, I discovered the work of William Morris. I became enamored with Morris's patterns and created *Bird (In Memory of Morris)* which references his pattern called 'Bird.' I loosely interpreted the patterning and color of this work and extracted the birds from the pattern like I did early with fabric.
While working on previous works, I felt a sense of sadness when I began to paint over my preliminary drawings. This remorse helped me realize how important the act of drawing was in my observational process. Although most of these works represent each bird at or near scale, this drawing is many times larger, creating a uniquely magnified view of minute details. The patterning is based on a motif created by William Morris.

Untitled (Eulogy Series # 4)
graphite on paper, 22 x 30 inches, 2010
I like how the tag, which is often so prominent in my work, is almost hidden in this work due to its positioning beneath the bird's body. The bird looks up into the emptiness of the composition with the patterning and ID tag below its form. Many of the works in the “Eulogy Series” directly address conflicting content; however, this specific work feels more serene and psychologically resolved because of the compositional layout.

Untitled (Eulogy Series # 5)
graphite on paper, 22 x 30 inches, 2010
Closely working with the study skins caused me to reconsider how direct observation can be just as deceptive as perception. When viewed from a distance, forms like the bodies of birds appear quite similar to the stylized motifs I favor. Additionally, the apparent randomness of birds ascending in a flock creates a kind of pattern of its own. Many of my works are highly detailed as a result of close observation; however, a piece like *Ascension* examines how extensively my perception of my subject is distorted and idealized when seen from a distance.
This work is based on a photograph taken of two groups of intersecting migrating geese across Crowley's Ridge between Jonesboro and Beebe, Arkansas. I created this piece while reflecting on how migration patterns of both people and birds are threatened by the ever changing face of civilization. Specifically, I wanted to explore how my increasing distance from home has shaped my sense of place and identity.

**Untitled (Crowley’s Ridge Migration)**
gouache on vellum, 24 x 36 inches, 2010
Memento Mori investigates questions of identity more directly than my abstracted groupings of birds by isolating single specimens in a format which references traditional busts and portraiture. Each bird is divested of its color as a way to emphasize the individuality and character of each animal rather than its species as a whole. I titled this piece Memento Mori as a historical reference to both Victorian postmortem photographs as well as an indicator that the subjects are in fact deceased.
Each of the butterflies in this work was collected from the sides of roads, parking lots, and the grill of my car. The moth was found in the painting studio in the box of a window fan my first day of school. Each insect was a casualty of humanity rather than its natural predator – the bird.

Casualties

gouache on paper, 6 x 9 each, 2010
After recognizing how much I learn about myself through the study of natural subjects, I began to puzzle over ways to express this concept more clearly. The outline of each form is an inverted mirror image of the fully rendered plants. The reflection is almost invisible and hard to see as a metaphor for the sometimes elusive quality of such revelations.

**Inverted Reflections**
gouache on paper, 8 x 16 inches each, 2011
I started taking pinhole photos as a way to replicate some of the hazy atmospheric effects of old photographs like daguerreotypes. My fascination with the psychology of postmortem photographs was the catalyst in a series of pinhole photos of the study skins I use as models in the remainder of my work.

**Untitled (Eulogy Series # 6)**

*pinhole photograph, 4 x 5 inches, 2011*
I used a live house plant from my studio to create a setting which was reminiscent of earlier works in the “Eulogy Series” which juxtaposed plants and birds.

Untitled (Eulogy Series # 7)

pinhole photograph, 4 x 5 inches, 2011
Although these photos were captured on 35mm color film, I digitally converted them to black and white to maintain a more relatable association to old photographs.

**Untitled (Eulogy Series # 8)**
*pinhole photograph, 4 x 5 inches, 2011*
In the process of trying to figure out how to control the results of my pinhole photographs, I experimented by taking abstract photos with my DSLR. By manually altering the shutter speed, aperture, and exposure I was able to achieve interesting effects without digital manipulation. The resulting photographs provide a perspective which more closely resembles my estimate of my true perception of my subjects.

Untitled (Butterflies: Pink)
digital photographs, 6 x 8 inches each, 2011
In a fit of frustration with another painting I hastily pulled out several sheets of colored paper I bought but resisted using. The paper was brightly colored and garish when compared to my typically subdued color palette. I played with different birds on each sheet and was instinctively drawn to the combination of a Yellow-Breasted Chat on a piece of pink paper. Despite multiple sketches exploring the addition of other elements to the composition, the original incarnation has never been altered.

**Untitled (Yellow-Breasted Chat: Pink)**
gouache on paper, 16 x 20 inches, 2010
Because of my experience with the Chat on pink paper, I began to experiment with other brightly colored papers. In *Memento Mori* I completely removed all color from the imagery as a way to place greater focus on individuality; however, color is just as important to the identity of each bird. There are many slight variations in color between individuals within any given species. In this work I was inspired by the prominence of brown and yellow-orange in the breast of the large Jay specimen, and also by the repetition and proportion of color throughout the skin.

**Untitled (Blue Jay: Yellow-Orange)**
gouache on paper, 16 x 20 inches, 2011
When we first moved into our house in Johnson City, there were a pair of Mourning Doves which cooed in the tree off our porch every day. After a few months we only saw one dove. This solitary dove returned for several months but disappeared one day and never returned. We now have a new pair of Mourning Doves and their offspring, but I always find myself looking for the solitary bird. This particular study skin is perhaps one of the most well kept skins in the ornithology collection. The subtle contrast of complementary colors in the bird's breast directed my color choice.

**Untitled (Mourning Dove: Coneflower-Blue)**
gouache on paper, 16 x 20 inches, 2011
I have never seen an Indigo Bunting in my yard; however, I have miss-identified an Eastern Bluebird numerous times as an Indigo Bunting. Similarly to the realization that my perception of the true size of a Chickadee was incorrect, I could not conceive of just how bright a Bunting is. The feathers of a Bunting appear almost iridescent and seem to glow with the richest of jewel tones. In order to bring out the intensity of the color, I placed the Bunting on a similarly bright color which in turn appears less saturated because of the proximity. In this work, the color functions somewhat like the tag compared to the small Chickadee in Untitled (Eulogy Series #2) [Fig. 11].

**Untitled (Indigo Bunting: Violet)**
gouache on paper, 16 x 20 inches, 2011
Placing a brilliant red Cardinal on a red background is a playful comment on the loud, showy nature of the species as a whole. Cardinals are by far the most obvious and easily spotted backyard bird. It was interesting to me to see this bird in a situation in which it actually blended with its environment. I was drawn to the inverted orientation because the situation is itself inverted from our everyday encounters with the species.

**Untitled (Cardinal: Red)**
gouache on paper, 16 x 20 inches, 2011
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EDUCATION
2011   M.F.A. Studio Art, Emphasis in Painting, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN
2008   M.A. Studio Art, Emphasis in Painting, Arkansas State University, Jonesboro, AR
2006   B.F.A. Studio Art, *cum laude*, Emphasis in Printmaking and Photography, Arkansas State University, Jonesboro, AR

ACADEMIC POSITIONS
2010 – 2011   Instructor of Record, Graduate Teaching, Color Theory, ETSU
2010   Instructor of Record, Graduate Teaching, Watercolor: On Location, ETSU
2009 – 2010   Instructor of Record, Graduate Teaching, 2D Design, ETSU
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2006 – 2008   Graduate Assistant, Painting, ASU; Supervising Professor: Thomas Chaffee
2007   Instructor of Record, Graduate Teaching, Survey: Fine Arts Visual, ASU
2005 – 2006   Grant-In-Aid, Ceramics, ASU; Supervising Professor: Bill Rowe

EXHIBITIONS
2011   *Mountain Visions 2011* (Juror: Greg Shelnutt), Carroll Reece Museum, Johnson City, TN
       *4x4: an Evening of Miniature Masterpieces*, Johnson City Area Arts Council Gallery, Johnson City, TN
       *Composed*, Carroll Reece Museum, Johnson City, TN
2010

Transverse Orientation, Nelson Fine Art, Johnson City, TN

Arts in the Airport Fall 2010 Exhibition, Knoxville McGee Tyson Airport, Knoxville, TN

Shoe Box Show, A1ArtsLab, Knoxville, TN

Stimulus: An Annual Graduate Student Exhibition, Carroll Reece Museum, Johnson City, TN

2009

Slocumb Arts Holiday Fundraiser, Slocumb Galleries, ETSU, Johnson City, TN

Figure Works, SR404 Gallery, Johnson City, TN

Adsmarts Creativity Auction, The Charles, Johnson City, TN

Impressions (Juror: David Mazure), Tipton Gallery, Johnson City, TN

2009

Oh Chaos, Flood Gallery and Arts Center, Asheville, NC

Look at the Mess We Made, Carroll Reece Museum, ETSU, Johnson City, TN

2008

Annual Post-Card Show and Auction, Slocumb Gallery, ETSU, Johnson City, TN

Jonesboro Rotary Club's 2008 Metro Wine and Art Extravaganza, Holiday Inn, Jonesboro, AR

The Un-naming of Things: M.A. Thesis Exhibition, FAC Gallery, ASU, Jonesboro, AR

Art Student Union's '08 Student Show (Juror: Maria Buszek), FAC Gallery, ASU, Jonesboro, AR

2007

3rd Annual Self-Portrait Exhibition (Juror: Matthew Ivan Cherry), 33 Collective Gallery, Chicago, IL

Art Student Union’s ’07 Student Show (Juror: Helena Reckitt), FAC Gallery, ASU, Jonesboro, AR

Graduate Work, FAC Gallery, ASU, Jonesboro, AR

2006

Dwelling: 2006 Spring Senior Exhibition, B.F.A. Exhibition, Bradbury Gallery, Jonesboro, AR

Spring ’06 Showcase, Printmaker’s Gallery, ASU, Jonesboro, AR
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2005

Spring ‘05 Showcase, Printmaker’s Gallery, ASU, Jonesboro, AR

TWELVE, Edge Coffee House, Jonesboro, AR

Art Student Union’s ‘05 Student Show (Juror: Chris Valle), FAC Gallery, ASU, Jonesboro, AR

2004

Fall Showcase, Printmaker’s Gallery, ASU, Jonesboro, AR

Fall ’04 Portfolio Exchange Exhibition, Printmaker’s Gallery, ASU, Jonesboro, AR

Spring ‘04 Portfolio Exchange Exhibition, Printmaker’s Gallery, ASU, Jonesboro, AR

Spring Showcase, Printmaker’s Gallery, ASU, Jonesboro, AR

2003

Fall ’03 Portfolio Exchange Exhibition, Printmaker’s Gallery, ASU, Jonesboro, AR

Fall Showcase, Printmaker’s Gallery, ASU, Jonesboro, AR

ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCE

2010 – 2011  Vice President, Slocumb Galleries Societies Club (SGSC – Founding Member), ETSU, Johnson City, TN

2009 – 2011  President, Graduate Fine Arts Association (GFAA – Founding Member), ETSU, Johnson City, TN

2010  Contributor, Centennial Fund-raiser and Silent Auction, ETSU, Johnson City, TN

Attendee, CAA workshop: Professionalizing and Enhancing Your Art Practice, Birmingham, AL

Event co-organizer, grant proponent, and panel facilitator, Crafting Contemporary Art: Studio Craft in Appalachia, ETSU, Johnson City, TN

Member, Collage Art Association (CAA)

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2009  Attendee, F.A.T.E. Regional Forum: Collaborations in the Foundation, Boone, NC
2006 – 2008  Student Representative, Graduate Student Grievance Committee, ASU, Jonesboro, AR
2004 – 2008  Student Representative, Library Acquisitions Committee, ASU, Fine Arts Department, Dr. Temma Balducci, chair
2007  Exhibition Coordinator, Graduate Work, FAC Gallery, ASU, Jonesboro, AR
2006  Cover art, Undergraduate Scholar's Day 2006 catalog, ASU, Jonesboro, AR
2006  Portfolio exchange, Mid-American Print Council Conference, Athens, Ohio
  Portfolio exchange, Southern Graphics Council Conference, Madison, Wisconsin
2005 – 2006  President, Print Club, ASU, Jonesboro, AR
2005  Presenter, Undergraduate Scholar's Day 2005, ASU, Jonesboro, AR
2003 – 2005  Member, Print Club, ASU, Jonesboro, AR
2004  Restoration Exhibition, ASU Museum, ASU, Jonesboro, AR

RECOGNITION & AWARDS

2003 – 2006  Art Scholarship (Artistic Merit), ASU
2004 – 2006  Presidents List, ASU
2005  Second Place, Art Student Union’s ‘05 Student Show, FAC Gallery, ASU; Juror: Chris Valle
2004  Who’s Who Among Americas' College Students, ASU
2002 – 2003  Dean's List, ASU
2001 – 2004  President’s Scholarship (Academic Merit), ASU
2001 – 2004  Arkansas Academic Scholarship (Academic Merit), ASU
2001 – 2004  Larry Barnes Memorial Scholarship (Academic Merit), ASU