

South Carolina State Museum

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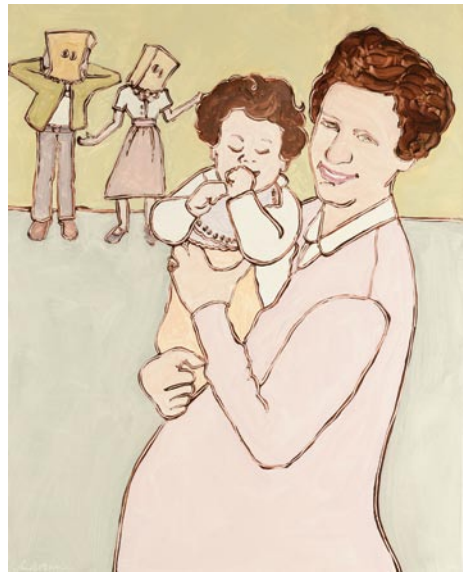
tional since it is entirely made up of works from his personal collection. It also includes sketches of his work, showing the progress from draft to completed work.”

A book of Kunstler’s paintings, also called, *For Us the Living*, will be available for purchase in the museum’s store, the Cotton Mill Exchange.

Vista Studios in Columbia, SC, Offers Works by Laurie B. McIntosh

Vista Studios in Columbia, SC, will present the exhibit, *All the In Between; My Story of Agnes*, featuring an exhibit of paintings telling the cradle to grave story of a life well lived by Laurie B. McIntosh, on view in Gallery 80808 from Oct. 19 through Nov. 6, 2012. A reception will be held on Oct. 19, from 5-9pm. A book signing and reading will be held on Oct. 21, from 3-5.

In the exhibition, visual artist Laurie Brownell McIntosh uses more than 70 painted panels to tell the cradle-to-grave story of her late mother, Agnes Smith Brownell. A scientist, artist, doctor’s wife, and mother, Agnes approached life with a kind of candor and pragmatism that left little room for sentimentality. From telling her thirsty and whining children to “swallow their spit,” to tending to her dying husband, to orchestrating a life of ritual in her widowhood, Agnes was a force to be reckoned with, eliciting emotions from her youngest daughter that were equal parts fear, reverence, and love.



Work by Laurie B. McIntosh

All the In Between: My Story of Agnes is a eulogy, a memorial, a work of art, and a kind of tribute that validates everything between the first and last breaths of a life well lived. There are no heroes or heroines in the story; no parables; no broken hearts or drama; no secrets to take to the grave. Yet the story is extraordinary in its simplicity. By capturing images of her mother’s life through the intimacy of her own interpretations, McIntosh allows her readers a rare kind of insight to the life of a stranger made close and personal for us through the nuance of her daughter’s familiarity. Yet, she does so without folly. Using paintings that are honest and straight forward, yet beautiful and tender, she tells the tale of her mother’s life with the kind of dignity that would have made Agnes proud.

The book, *All the In Between: My Story of Agnes* by Laurie B. McIntosh will be available online Oct. 19, 2012, at (www.amazon.com), (www.Barnesandnoble.com) and, (signed) at (www.MuddyFord-Press.com).

McIntosh offers the following from the Book Forward:

“Several years ago, I began forming the idea of pushing my art into a more narrative form. I wanted to say more through my images, to tell a story, to start a dialog with my audience. My professional life for the past 30 years has been that of a graphic designer, communicating ideas, information and interest, through color, shapes, design and images. It seemed only natural that my painting move in the same direction.

In 2011, I completed a series in oil pastels dealing with unspoken communication and the expressive relationships of single, iconic figures using layers of color,

Dr. James I. Robertson Jr., biographer of Stonewall Jackson and “dean” of Civil War historians, said “Mort Kunstler is the Civil War artist of our time - if not of all time.”

For further information check our SC Institutional Gallery listings, call the Museum at 803/898-4921 or visit (www.southcarolinastatemuseum.org).

texture and minimal line. As I worked through this series, I wanted to express even more; I wanted to tell a more complete story. I decided to explore this idea by using multiple canvases and images to push my art to a more narrative place. I kept in mind the storyboards designers create for pitching an idea to a client. They are simple in style and color with the main graphic element for communication being line.

At this point I knew the process I would use for my next body of work, but I did not know what the story was going to be or how long and detailed it would become. A not so small problem, but I kept a very open mind. I knew I wanted to tell the story of a person, possibly something historical and politically charged. It was, after all, art, and art should say something loud and universal.

During this time my life outside my studio was undergoing some big personal changes. My family was in the process of moving my 94-year-old mother, who had become immobile and confused, from her home in Greenville to a nursing home in my town of Columbia, where she would be more central to all her children. It would be dishonest to say I didn’t experience a lot of anxiety, not to mention a few sleepless nights, worrying about being the monkey in the middle and having the responsibility of Mom right here. But my siblings were great and they pitched in to do what needed doing.

Here’s the cool part. I would not trade the year we shared in Columbia for anything. It was stressful at times, to say the least, and most of the time she was not quite sure which daughter I was, but she knew I was hers and she knew she was loved. She taught me new things about life during that year, especially about the ending of life. I learned if you live long enough, life is a complete circle, physically and mentally. Your world becomes smaller and smaller and you can be content with that. Your mind may not hang on to all its memories but it holds on to the essence of those memories. Even toward the end, as I watched Mom slowly lose 94 years of memories, of people and places, trips, schools and life’s events, she never lost her feeling of joy. She could not remember if and when I was coming to see her, and she forgot I had been there before I was all the way out the door, but while I was there she had joy. She would light up like an infant who knows her parents are near.

Life is a circle.

Sometimes, when I would hang out with Mom, I would talk to her about my idea for the narrative art series I was planning. If it was a good day I think she was even listening a little. It was during one of the long scary nights toward the end when I realized the inspiration for my story was literally lying right in front of me. I could see it. I could visualize the whole piece from beginning to end. I have spent my whole life telling stories about Agnes. You see, Mom was not always the sweet lady I have described. Sweetness came to her very late in life. In her prime she was a brilliant woman ahead of her time. She was not a traditional “June Cleaver” mom in any way. She said what was on her mind and we never questioned where we stood, even if we might have liked to. All four children had a different perspective of her. Mine was from my role as the “old egg,” late-in-life baby of the family. I think I got the more mellow Agnes. Which is not saying much.

Daughter of the postmaster and oldest of three, Agnes left home in 1931 at the age of 16 to study Chemistry at The Georgia

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State College for Women. From there she went on to Duke University to pursue a graduate degree in Laboratory Technology. At Duke, Agnes met and fell in love with a young medical student by the name of Ike Brownell. She told us that she married a foreigner for us to have as a father; all the way from Washington State. He was the love of her life and they married in March of 1942.

After Duke, Agnes and Ike moved to Atlanta where Ike would practice his residency at Grady Hospital. Agnes did her part for the war by working for the Centers for Disease Control at Fort McPherson. Dad used to tell me that Mom was the first woman toxicologist in the country.

The Army sent them to South Dakota where Dad trained as a flight surgeon. Mom said her main job was as a beater for pheasant hunts on Dad’s days off.

In late 1945, just a few days after her 30th birthday with a husband leaving for France, Agnes began her life as a mother. A year later, a son followed the birth of the daughter and after several moves the family settled in Greenville, South Carolina, where Ike established the first psychiatric practice in the upstate.

Dad was dedicated to his practice, leaving Mom with the child-rearing duties of the family. At the age of 42, with two teenagers under her roof, the news came that another baby was on the way. Mom would tell me that she looked the doctor square in the eye and told him, “I will have one more baby for company.” My older siblings, who sometimes refer to themselves as “the original family,” told me how shocked they were with the news of their aging Mother having child number three. But the announcement of baby number four within the next year was an embarrassment beyond words.

At the age of 51, the age I am now, my mother found herself planning a wedding for her oldest daughter, with a son in college, while raising two six and seven year-old little girls.

I cannot imagine.

Agnes managed the house, the home, the children and the drama that goes along with all these jobs. She had a full life outside the house, volunteering for the museum and Scout troops, serving on boards, attending church circles and bridge clubs – and she had her art. Painting had been a part of her life beginning in Mrs. Tuggle’s class at the age of 12. Agnes pursued her art through college and the rest of her life, well into her mid-90s.

I spent most of my youth flying below the radar and staying out of the way of my barely older sister. I think I saw my role as the peace keeper and the clown, and probably did a poor job at both. I loved my mother, I feared my mother and I revered my mother. By the time I left home I knew my mother only as well as she wanted me to know her.



Work by Laurie B. McIntosh

My father loved to travel and Mom was usually by his side. She went reluctantly, yet, by the time they returned home, she claimed the whole trip was her idea in the first place. Their relationship seemed complicated to me as I grew into a teenager. They did not seem to see eye to eye on much and when he was home, the air between them seemed tense and fragile. He was always bigger than life; tall, handsome and charming through and through. Laughter came easily to him. She was a force of her own. She could be charming and funny too, but it did not happen often or easily.

After 33 years with children in her house, Agnes finally began the empty nest chapter of her life. During these years I was so busy being a college student - a 20 something worker bee, bride and new wife that I was not sure what was going on in the life of



Work by Laurie B. McIntosh

Agnes. I’d like to think these were happier years spent traveling and playing and getting to know herself and Dad all over again. It was hard to tell because when I would arrive home I was always greeted by the same stubborn Agnes who picked at my appearance, questioned my judgement on some issue or another, and generally drove me crazy over nothing.

After 12 years her empty nest chapter ended abruptly when Dad was diagnosed with esophageal cancer. Radiation, hospitalizations, ICU and feeding tubes sucked away the life they had known. All the children tried to be there to help but she carried the weight of it all. While watching and listening to my parents during this time I learned how much they truly loved each other. In January of 1993, after 50 years of being his wife, Agnes began her life as a widow.

I will never forget a conversation I had with Dad about his cancer and his impending end. He held my hand and looked me in the eye and with the most serious tone said, “You don’t think any of us are getting out of this thing alive, do you?” That was the first time I truly realized that none of us do.

After Dad’s death, Agnes filled her days with routines. First came the newspaper. In true Agnes style she orchestrated this right down to where the paper boy left it by the door each morning. If I was visiting and accidentally left my car in the driveway, thus interfering with her early morning routine, there was hell to pay. It would not have been difficult to catch me barefoot in my night gown, in the middle of the night, moving my car to keep me out of harm’s way the next morning.

Next in her routine came the coffee. Always made with the percolator, always hot and black, and always served in the same coffee-stained cup with the words “What a Gal” painted down the side. Every evening the percolator was prepared for 3 cups so the only task left for the morning was to plug it in. The first cup was drunk with one piece of toast and strawberry jelly and the other two were sipped while she read the paper in the living room. (A hundred more of these routines went on every day, of every month, of every year.)

Another of her routines was watching the Weather Channel in the afternoon. If I wanted to know if it was going to rain, anywhere in the world, I would call Agnes. However, she would not call me because a call to me was “long distance.” So instead, she called my brother who lived in town. She called him and she called him and she called him ... about anything and everything. He finally got an answering machine that would screen these calls and to this day that machine is still the only thing that answers that number.

Agnes spent many afternoons painting. When my older sister figured out Mom was not painting because she could no longer control a watercolor brush, she introduced Mom to large water soluble crayons, similar to those used by small children. She was an avid letter writer, so she began drawing and painting her own cards for writing her friends and family. She painted flowers, birds, landscapes and abstracts. I have drawers full of them. We all do. Some days I would receive two or three in the mail with just a simple, quick note scribbled inside.

In her 93rd year, Agnes fell. For a little

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