

Craven Allen Gallery

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MJ Sharp's fascination with preserving the human relationship to night and darkness.

As a Fulbright Scholar to the UK, MJ Sharp collaborated with a nocturnal ecologist who is also concerned about escalating light pollution and our loss of night and darkness. Archaeologists in Cornwall have newly discovered evidence that prehistoric peoples visited ancient megalithic sites in low light or at night. Sharp was intrigued and set out to photograph these ancient sites at night, hoping that it "might be restorative for present-day people who have lost access to their evolutionary birthright of experiencing darkness and night."

Craven Allen is pleased to show and offer the first printed work from this important body of images, which up to now have only been seen as projections, most recently in her solo show at the College of Wooster Art Museum in Ohio. Also on display for the first time will be still lifes from the past from the past five years, and select night landscapes that have not been previously shown.

In the two decades that MJ Sharp has been exploring "the dark and the liminal" in her photography, the increasing effects of light pollution have only strengthened her connection to this unique photographic approach. "A vanishingly small percentage of our evolutionary time as human beings has been spent in artificial light" she explains, "now, for a large percentage of the world's population, the experience of night is quickly becoming a boutique and exceptional one."

This is MJ Sharp's second solo exhibition at Craven Allen Gallery.



Work by MJ Sharp

MJ Sharp offered the following statement, "I started photographing exclusively at night just over 20 years ago, and the drive to spend time in quiet, dark places and wait for them to reveal themselves feels even more relevant today. The "attention economy" is a concept that goes back over 50 years. Psychologist and economist Herbert Simon went on to posit that "a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention," a societal ill that has exploded in the years since."

"While a moonlit prehistoric quoit in Cornwall and a dimly illuminated botanical study in Durham would seem to have little in common, the focused attention



Work by MJ Sharp

they inspire is, in fact, quite similar," adds Sharp. "Long looking and the resultant long exposures produce a kind of intermediate reality that is not available in real time. I experience most of my subjects as dark and undifferentiated monochromes, but when I'm lucky, the alchemy of photography turns them into luscious and detailed scenes that invite immersion and contemplation."

An East Tennessee native, photographer MJ Sharp has been happily based in Durham, NC, for most of her adult life. She worked closely with writers and reporters on both short and longform journalism stories as the staff photographer and photography editor at the *Independent* in Durham for most of the 1990's. During much of that time she also freelanced regionally for the *New York Times*, the *New York Times Magazine*, PBS's *Frontline*, the *Columbia Journalism Review*, and the Ford Foundation, among others. She taught at the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University from 2012 — 2022 and helped found the Duke Faculty Union. She has done personal art and documentary photography for the past twenty years, culminating in a Fulbright Scholar Award in 2021/2022 to the University of Exeter, UK, where she collaborated with nocturnal ecologist Dr. Kevin Gaston to explore the effects of light pollution.

Sharp's artwork is included in the collections of the Akron Art Museum, the Asheville Museum of Art, the Cassilhaus Collection, The Henry-Copeland Art Collection at UNC-Chapel Hill, the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, the North Carolina Museum of Art, and the US-UK Fulbright Commission Art Collection (London), as well as many private collections.

For further information check our NC Commercial Gallery listings, call the gallery at 919/286-4837 or visit (www.cravenallengallery.com).

Town of Cary, NC, Presents Several New Exhibits at the Cary Arts Center

The Town of Cary, NC, is presenting several exhibitions on view at the Cary Arts Center, located on Dry Avenue in downtown Cary.

On view in the Cary Arts Center Gallery, through Mar. 21, 2025, will be works by Jo-Ann Morgan. The wall-mounted hangings are constructed in layered cotton fabric. Because they resemble quilted comforters, which are familiar and approachable, the medium is ideal for addressing provocative topics related to social justice and inequality. Despite the unsettling themes, these stitched fabric pictures offer a soothing counterpoint to the harsh events of contemporary reality.

If there is a message running throughout this work is "seeking comfort in a fraught world." Art can be a way to process events and experiences that are almost too much to bear.

On view in the Cary Arts Center Principal's Hall, through Mar. 23, 2025, are works by Lisa Carl. Carl says, "My paintings celebrate color, organic movement, inorganic stasis, and objects left behind. Encaustic paint is the perfect medium for these



Work by Jo Ann Morgan

celebrations: its lush, translucent colors, the organic liquid and accretion patterns it creates, and the endless possibilities it offers for layering, incision, and incorporating objects."

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PAM TOLL

Artist Talk: Thursday,
January 23, 2025, 5 p.m.
in the CAB Art Gallery

Reception: Thursday,
January 23, 2025
5:30 - 7 p.m.