

UNC at Chapel Hill in Chapel Hill, NC, Features Two New Exhibitions

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in Chapel Hill, NC, is presenting *Drawing Attention* and *Visions of Venice*: Etchings by James McNeill Whistler from the Collection of Ambassador C. Boyden Gray, on view at the Ackland Art Museum, through Sept. 12, 2021.

In its collections, exhibitions, and programs, the Ackland has always paid special attention to works on paper. This exhibition presents around seventy European and American drawings, watercolors, and collages, selected from well over 570 acquired both by gift and by purchase over the past twelve years. *Drawing Attention* continues a series of exhibitions presenting recent acquisitions of light-sensitive works, following *PhotoVision*, 2014, which featured photographs, and *One of Many*, 2017, which featured prints.

With preference given to works not recently displayed or not scheduled for exhibition in the near future, the works in the exhibition showcase a broad chronological span, from the 16th to the 21st centuries, and a variety of techniques and functions. The display includes works by a wide range of artists, including Domenichino, Jan van Goyen, Thomas Gainsborough, Edgar Degas, Otto Dix, Robert Motherwell, Thornton Dial, Marcel Dzama, and Lauren Frances Adams.

The works are presented in ten thematic sections: Varieties of Portraiture; American Abstraction of the 1960s; Fantasy and Transformation; Image and Text in Contemporary Art; German Modernism; Christian Piety; Landscapes and Architectures; Cartoon and Caricature; Sketches and Studies in Nineteenth-Century France and Britain; and a special wall devoted to Very Recent Arrivals which can accommodate new acquisitions made even during the run of the show.

Drawing Attention, organized by Peter Nisbet, deputy director for curatorial affairs, has been made possible by generous support from the Ackland's National Advisory Board.

In 1879, American artist James McNeill Whistler was commissioned by the Fine Art Society, a commercial gallery in London, to produce twelve etchings of Venice over a three-month period. Finding a seemingly endless source of subject matter, the artist stayed in the city for fourteen months, creating fifty-one etchings, one hundred pastels, and numerous paintings.

This exhibition showcases thirty of Whistler's etchings of Venice on loan from the private collection of Ambassador C. Boyden Gray. Presented in two sections



James McNeill Whistler, American, active in England and France, 1834-1903, "The Palaces" (detail), 1879-1880, etching, frame: 17 15/16 x 21 7/8 x 1 1/4 in. (45.6 x 55.6 x 3.2 cm). Collection of Ambassador C. Boyden Gray, L2021.21.28.

— Whistler's "First Venice Set" published in 1880, and his "Second Venice Set" published in 1886 — the installation explores some of the artist's most picturesque and atmospheric views of what Whistler called, "a marvellous City — the Sapphire of the Seas!"

In addition to views of Venice suspended between sea and sky, Whistler depicted sites unknown to the average tourist, such as back alleyways, obscure canals, and working-class neighborhoods, that challenged the expectations of nineteenth-century viewers. Through his use of varied lines, compelling compositional motifs, and creative printing techniques, Whistler reveals his unique vision of Venice, the timeless beauty of which still captivates us today.

Visions of Venice, organized by Dana Cowen, Sheldon Peck Curator for European and American Art before 1950, has been made possible by generous support from the Ackland's Director's Circle.

Featuring a year-round calendar of special exhibitions and dynamic public programs, the Ackland Art Museum on UNC-Chapel Hill's historic campus is a local museum with a global outlook that bridges campus and community. Admission to the Ackland is free and accessible to all. The Ackland's holdings include more than 19,000 works of art. The collection spans cultures and time periods, showcasing the breadth of human creativity. A vital teaching resource, the museum's mission is the art of understanding. Visitors can connect with the complexity and beauty of the wider world by getting close to art — the familiar, the unexpected, the challenging. The Ackland Art Museum is located on South Columbia Street on the UNC Chapel Hill campus.

For further information check our NC Institutional Gallery listings or visit (ackland.org).

City of Raleigh, NC, Features Works by Julia Caston

The City of Raleigh, NC, is presenting *Julia and the Pandemic Art Factory*, on view in the Block Gallery, through July 23, 2021.

Typically creating performance and outward-facing work, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic artist Julia Caston dove deeper into her drawing practice. In this exhibition, *Julia and the Pandemic Art Factory*, Caston showcases drawing and sculptural works, including two 30-foot scroll drawings, the artist's most ambitious and largest drawing project to date. These colorful and collaborative works aim to inspire joy in the midst of difficult times.

Caston offered the following Artist Statement, "At the beginning of the pandemic, I felt like some kind of superhero. All my coworkers and friends were freaking out and full of anxiety. Having managed the moderate to severe symptoms of a diagnosed anxiety disorder for almost a decade, I felt uniquely prepared for this situation. I had a bevy of coping skills, self-care routines, and self-soothing techniques that I believed made me an expert. I had practically been training for this moment my whole life! I figured that I would ride everything out and it would be over in a few months, and I will have



Works by Julia Caston

gotten to spend extra time in the studio."

"Of course, this is not what happened," added Caston. "It is over a year later, and life looks much different than what we thought of as normal. And the pandemic did catch up with me after all. In February of 2021, I had a slow nervous breakdown from COVID exhaustion and had to take a week off work. So, what exactly does all of this have to do with this exhibition? Somehow, against all odds, I managed to make art during this time. There were definitely fits and starts and weeks at a time that I did not set foot in the studio, but I somehow kept creating, no matter what. Normally, my practice is very performative and outward-facing. I create in-person interactions in public spaces as part of my practice. Much of this work had to shift online and adapt itself to

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Zoom. I also dove deeper into my drawing practice. In this exhibition, you will see two 30-foot scrolls of drawings I created, which is my most ambitious and largest drawing project to date."

"I found ways to keep collaborating with fellow artists over distance via mail. Featured in this exhibition are 11 collaborative coloring pages that I made with students from the University of North Carolina Greensboro. To make these drawings, I had the students send me words and images for inspiration, after which I created coloring pages that I mailed to them. The students completed the pages in a variety of ways. I also created a trans-Atlantic sculpture collaboration about the joy of food with artist Caroline Bugby, who mailed me her soft sculpture components from England. However, despite all of these logistics over the past year, the biggest challenge was allowing myself to feel joy - specifically, the joy of making. The murders and protests over the summer of 2020 affected me deeply, and I launched a project that had been on the backburner for a long time up to that point. I partnered with artist and art therapist Alby Gyimah-Boadi, and we offered a pilot session of Art Therapy for Activists, an initiative that provided free Zoom art therapy workshops to BIPOC activists and change-makers. There are plans in the works to continue this project this coming autumn."

"I hope that you enjoy this exhibition, and, more than anything else, that it can add a glimmer of joy to your day, no matter your circumstance," says Caston.

Julia Caston is an artist who creates empathetic experiences, events, and objects. Her art practice focuses on creating

deep connections between participants and collaborators, with a focus on social justice and antiracism. She received her BA from Columbia University, NY, and her MFA from The University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Caston has completed several artist residencies including the Kimmel Harding Nelson Center for the Arts Residency, Nebraska City, NE, and the Brightwork Fellowship at Anchorlight, Raleigh, NC. She has been the recipient of multiple commissions from the City of Raleigh and has exhibited her work throughout North America. Caston is from Minneapolis and lives and works in Raleigh. She is currently the Intern Coordinator and Outreach Assistant at the North Carolina Museum of Art.

Connecting local artists to community through ongoing exhibitions and public outreach, the Block Gallery was dedicated in 2006 to honor Miriam Preston Block, a former Raleigh City Council member and community leader. Greeting all visitors to the Upchurch Government Complex, the gallery's marble walls and elegant staircase provide an ideal setting for showcasing original artworks. Exhibits change every eight to 12 weeks.

The Office of Raleigh Arts, a part of the City of Raleigh's Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Department, fosters and promotes the arts in Raleigh by administering the programs of the Raleigh Arts Commission and the Public Art and Design Board and supporting the Pullen and Sertoma Arts Centers.

For further information check our NC Institutional Gallery listings, call Stacy Bloom Rexrode at 919/996-4687 or e-mail to (stacy.bloom-rexrode@raleighnc.gov).

Hillsborough Gallery of Arts in Hillsborough, NC, Offers Works by Three Gallery Artists

Hillsborough Gallery of Arts in Hillsborough, NC, is presenting *INTANGIBLES*, featuring works by Garry Childs, Pat Merriman, and Nancy Smith, on view through July 25, 2021.

Three of HGAs artists present a show of new work created during the pandemic.

Garry Childs began making pots almost 50 years ago in a high school art class at the age of 16 and has been a studio potter producing functional Terra Cotta since 1982. While he has picked up tips and techniques from many other potters over the years, he is primarily self-taught.

"All of my pots are wheel thrown, some are 'coil and throw,' a technique where a coil of clay is joined to the lip of a thrown form and pulled up to an additional height," says Childs. "Very large pieces can be constructed by using several coils in this manner. The pots are glazed after drying to a leather hard condition. The patterns are achieved by carving through the unfired glazes into the still damp clay. Additional color is sometimes applied by brushing and spraying pigments over the glaze."

Painter Pat Merriman loves traveling, but that became an intangible dream during the pandemic. "Because of my age, I was restricted to home and isolated from people. I filled my time with creating art and decided to take an online painting class via zoom" says Merriman. "Virtually, I was again able to travel. My work reflects the journey I took with instructor James Keul as my tour guide. I created 10 small paintings of scenes including Norway, Brookline MS, Little Italy in NYC, the Brooklyn Bridge and some closer to home in Durham, NC. I hope you enjoy the tour."

For painter Nancy Smith the idea for this new series of paintings came out of nowhere. "I had been in a dry spell for months. I wasn't excited about painting anything, so instead, I straightened up my studio. I pulled out old paintings, some unfinished, that friends had passed along. As I picked up one my deceased friend had done, I was overcome by memories and feelings as intangible as a half-remembered dream."

"That unseen creative force, called

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