

Waterworks Visual Arts Center in Salisbury, NC, Offers New Exhibits

The Waterworks Visual Arts Center in Salisbury, NC, will present *Beyond The Surface*, including three autonomous exhibits: *Sacred Spaces 360*, featuring works by Will James; *The Weight of All That Is*, featuring works by Liz McKay; and *It's in the Genes: A Mother and Daughter Show*, featuring works by Phyllis Steimel and her daughter Beth Barger, all on view from Sept. 13 through Jan. 28, 2022. Waterworks invites everyone to come out and meet the artists on Sept. 17, from 6-7:30pm. There is no cost for this event, but an RSVP is requested by e-mail at (admin@waterworks.org) as light refreshments will be offered.

In keeping abreast of the flood of information that overflows our in boxes and living rooms, many of us have become expert surfers, skimming the surface to glean some understanding of our world and ourselves. Waterworks Visual Arts Center invites you to delve deeper, beyond the surface, where personal connections form, understanding is shared, and similarities are recognized.

On the surface, three autonomous exhibits flow from gallery to gallery imbibing an appreciation of North Carolina's Piedmont region as interpreted by four regional artists. Through his 360° photography, Will James draws viewers inside the worship sanctuaries of churches in Salisbury and nearby communities in his on-going series entitled *Sacred Spaces 360*. Liz McKay confronts current subjects and difficult situations in multimedia paintings that feature metaphorical ovoid stones, in her series named *The Weight of All That Is*. Colorful and nostalgic paintings, captured en Plein Air by duo Phyllis Steimel and her daughter Beth Barger comprise the aptly named exhibit, *It's in the Genes: A Mother and Daughter Show*.



Work by Will James

Beyond the Surface, the sum of these three groupings, begs its audience to sense and identify with the artists' personal connections: notably that family lineages pass talents, characteristics, traditions, and place from generation to generation. The artists' unique depictions of handmade and nature-made beauty will awe visitors. The variety of perspective, opinion, and life experiences presented in *Beyond the Surface* is exactly what makes the world more colorful and interesting.

James, and also mother-daughter painters Steimel and Barger, credit their artistic abilities as inherited gifts. James grew up in a household appreciative of art. His father was also an amateur photographer and his grandfather painted colorful scenes of the Rocky Mountain West. Steimel's mother (Barger's grandmother) was a trained artist who was fascinated by faces, and Steimel found inspiration in her mother's ability to capture life on paper. Lovingly, she passed on the art that fulfills her, to her daughter.

A 45-year career practicing law for US government agencies in countries with emerging economies sent James across Europe and Central Asia. He captured the structures and scenery from his travels, refining his abilities and confidence until he took his amateur photography to a semi-professional level. Inspired by the works of Candida Höfer, a German photographer known for her lifetime of capturing "portraits" of some of the world's most iconic buildings, James' current project is to photograph the interior spaces of church sanctuaries throughout Rowan and other Piedmont counties. He does so in a 360° equi-rectangular format. The resulting large scale photographs – ranging from six to seven by three feet – accomplish a maximum degree of focus, sharpness, and depth of field. The photographs high



Work by Phyllis Steimel

range of luminosity reveals details, both in shadow areas as well as in normally bright areas, such as windows.

Liz McKay paused her artistic career to focus on raising her family, and at mid-life found herself challenged to regain her footing as "a creative." Drawing on personal obstacles and experiences, McKay uses her talent to approach and deal with life as it comes. Creating the paintings in her exhibit, *The Weight of All That Is*, is therapeutic for McKay. She features large ovoid stones to represent the weight of current social, political and climate crises.



Work by Beth Barger

"The scale of these stone-shaped forms, balancing precariously within their surroundings, projects a sense of tension not unlike that which we feel when faced with subjects and situations we'd rather not acknowledge; much less discuss openly for fear of rejection or hostile repercussion," explains McKay. Her most recent paintings relate to the threat of global climate change, specifically the loss of polar ice. "Still, within these images, the stones are present; the threat of their crushing weight lying just below the surface."

A Plein Air workshop taken together in Brittany, France, launched Steimel and Barger's painting partnership. Steimel received her art training at Syracuse University, and daughter Barger majored in art at East Carolina University. Carting easels, brushes and paints to favorite locals is their absolute favorite way to share their passion. In addition to France, this pair have painted in New Mexico, Topsail Beach and the North Carolina mountains. Steimel shares her expertise with other Plein Air painters through Plein Air Carolina, of which she is co-founder. Barger sums it up. "From my Grandma, to my Mom, to me, it really is "in the genes... they bring me daily joy."

There is always more to see, beyond the surface. It's where people connect, learn and begin to understand one another. Waterworks Visual Arts Center provides diverse opportunities in the visual arts for all people.

Waterworks Visual Arts Center is a 501c3 nonprofit organization accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. Waterworks' mission is to provide diverse opportunities in the visual arts for all people through exhibitions, education, and outreach. Funding sources: individual memberships, corporations and businesses, foundations, the City of Salisbury, and Rowan County, the NC Arts Council, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Waterworks Visual Arts Center is located one block east of N. Main Street, on East Liberty in downtown Salisbury.

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

The Together While Apart Art Project



The Together While Apart Art Project on display at Hickory Museum of Art September 25 - February 6, 2022

19 Artists from 8 states came together from afar to combat isolation, loneliness, and unhappiness during the pandemic. They created one large collaborative piece of art to promote Hope and Healing. Each individual square was cut from a recycled box.



Follow the project's journey on Instagram @togetherwhileapartartproject



Included in Smithsonian's Stories of 2020

Hickory Museum of Art
243 Third Avenue NE
Hickory, NC 28601
828.327.8576 • hickoryart.org



Davidson College in Davidson, NC, Features Works by Liên Trương

Davidson College in Davidson, NC, is presenting *Liên Trương: From the Earth Rise Radiant Beings*, on view in the Van Every/Smith Galleries, through Oct. 3, 2021. An Artist Talk with Liên Trương will be offered on Sept. 9, beginning at 6pm, in the Semans Lecture Hall, at the Belk Visual Art Center. A reception will begin at 7pm in the Van Every Gallery.

The exhibition presents recent works by Trương that examine, illuminate, and interrogate notions of heritage and the influences that form belief systems. Exploring these artworks in the current moment—a year and a half marked by illness, death, anxiety, isolation, division, and increasing racial injustices, including recent attacks on Asians, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders—adds another dimension to an already physically and conceptually layered artistic practice tied up in social, cultural, and political histories.

The exhibition presents works from several different series and demonstrates Trương's ability to expertly weave together various references. *The Sky is Not Sacred* is a two-part collaboration between Hồng-An Trương and Liên Trương. In the large-scale oil triptych on Arches paper, the red-hued sky, storm clouds, and choppy sea may bring an old adage to mind: "Red sky at night, sailors' delight; red sky in morning, sailors take warning." Predating meteorology, the saying is just one of many rhymes, stories, and axioms that combines folklore and science in order to make sense of weather phenomena. A red sky in the morning often indicates high water content in the atmosphere, thus, rain ahead.

The artists are not interested in meteorology per se, but rather in the aesthetic theories and ideologies communicated through the genre of landscape painting. In the related video of the same title, the



Liên Trương, "A Mute Cacophony Inside the Womb", 2021, Oil, silk, acrylic, copper pigment, enamel on canvas, Diptych, 84 x 72 inches, Courtesy of the Artist and Turner Carroll Gallery, Santa Fe, New Mexico, Photography: Peter Paul Geoffrion

artists examine clouds and stormy weather in various ways, including as a device of British painter John Constable, known for his extensive study of clouds and the sky, which he believed to be "the chief Organ of sentiment" present across the genre of landscape painting.

The Sky is Not Sacred also upends the notion of the sky as a divine space. The two artists instead position the sky as a place of potential disaster and war. In particular, the work highlights weather control techniques used during the American War in Vietnam between March 20, 1967, and July 5, 1972. The United States Air Force used cloud-seeding technology to extend the monsoon season to "make mud, not war," impeding the transport of North Vietnamese troops and supplies.

Trương's miniature oil painting series, *Translatio Imperii*, further positions the

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