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**A Slice of Life's Passage**

Documentation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Interdisciplinary Studies at Virginia Commonwealth University

by

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## **Artist's Statement**

Society and popular culture present their ideas of perfection through the media. I wish to reinvent these standards in my art, to show the beauty of the ordinary and the grace of the flawed. Beauty, by definition, is that which gives intense aesthetic pleasure. I think that aesthetic pleasure can be found in the commonplace and I use aspects of cropping, perspective, and scale to show these everyday items as extraordinary. I want people to realize the loveliness of a street lamp, the sensuality of a smile, or the poetry of an elbow. This is the underlying theme that runs through all of my work.

The evolution of the methods used to create this beauty is also important. Cropping images and adding textures to my supports has shaped my approach to realism. It has been quite a journey.

# **A Slice of Life's Passage**

## **Introduction**

I earned an undergraduate degree in art education and began my brief and unsatisfying teaching career in the mid-1980's in inner city Baltimore. Since then, I have owned and operated an art gallery and frame shop. I was proud of my business but I knew I wanted more for myself, and from myself. Several years ago, I was asked to substitute teach an art course at Germanna Community College. I found that I did, in fact, enjoy teaching and soon found myself on the faculty, teaching beginning drawing. This is when I decided to continue my own education through Virginia Commonwealth University's Master of Interdisciplinary Studies (MIS) program.

My goals for the program began as a way to teach more classes at the community college. With my master's degree, I wouldn't be limited to only teaching electives. This is what I told myself was the reason to enroll. In truth, the reason went much deeper. I needed to see how far I could take my art. I wanted to find my style. I wanted to expand beyond my comfort zone.

I can't remember who first mentioned this program to me. I wish I could, I would thank them profusely. It has had a life altering effect on me.

## **Artistic Vision**

I came to this program with very little knowledge of my own artistic vision.

I believe it was there all along but until asked the questions, I didn't know the answers. Now, I can tell you that I have a drive in me to show beauty in my art beyond the media's view of beauty as perfection. I am talking about the beauty we have all around us, everyday. It is the beauty of a curve of an object or the gradation of a shadow. It is in the things that we often overlook or typically don't think of as beautiful. This is what I want to show the viewer.

This course has helped me to find my style. I started in abstraction as a curiosity. I had always felt that my own abstract paintings didn't measure up to the masters and they felt like experiments or cheats. When I started layering and using texture, I was finally happy with my abstract work. But I missed the detailed renderings that I love to do. Combining an abstract ground with a full rendering satisfies my desire to do traditional drawings and my wish to be fresh and different. In doing the realistic work over the abstracted surface I have found a happy return to my detailed realistic roots with an infusion of the bright and new, with the abstract background. I have been thrilled with the textures and materials I have discovered.

I use cropping as a device to draw the viewer's attention to certain aspects of images. When I crop an image, several things can happen. First, I often portray the subject larger than life. This magnifies the details and directs the viewer's eye on the shapes, values, and shadows of the image. Secondly, I focus attention on the negative space and the compositional structure. The technique of cropping allows me to take an ordinary, perhaps even boring, object

from our daily lives and make it extraordinary. Suddenly, a streetlight is not about its function but rather about the curve of the wrought iron or the angle of the glass panels. The intricate or simple details of an object can be beautiful in and of themselves. If we can begin to see the splendor of a streetlamp, we will see true beauty all around us.

I have used several color palettes in developing my body of work, from bright jewel tones to the earthy hues of nature. The color choices that I have made reflect phases of my life, as well as the moods of my paintings. My color sensibilities continue to change and evolve. In a series of current works, I use the rich browns and yellow greens found in the natural color of a pond. In other pieces I have changed my palette to express another idea or mood.

In constructing my work I use mixed media techniques. I developed my approach by first experimenting with textures, both actual and implied. I transformed the surface of the canvas or board into a textural abstraction, over which I added a detailed drawn or painted image. The textured ground created an atmosphere or mood for the object or figurative element. I realized that through this process, I could incorporate the freedom of abstraction in the ground with the details of realism in figurative elements.

### **Painting and Drawing**

Textures, shapes, lines, and shadows have always played a huge role in my art. *Lamp Post* (Appendix, 1) is an example of how my cropping and color

enhancement transformed a simple object into a subject for art. First, I cropped out the surrounding elements to focus on the lamp post, the curve of the roofline, and three windows. I began to see these compositional elements as geometric shapes. This helped me to draw attention to the lamppost. I drew the lamp in detail so that all of the intricacies of the mechanism could be highlighted.

Choosing arbitrary colors such as purple and fuchsia helped me to create a sense of mystery and bring attention to the extraordinary nature of an ordinary street lamp.

After perceiving the formal elements of a cropped composition as abstract shapes, I decided to explore the incorporation of abstraction within realism. With my roots in realism, the addition of abstraction was a challenge I felt worth exploring. I began slowly.

In my painting, *Five Panels for Three Plants* (Appendix, 2), I combined aspects of cropping and color on a large scale. The work was painted on five square masonite panels for a total of 24" x 120". In this particular piece, I wanted to evoke the feeling of looking skyward. I wanted the viewer to glimpse the tips of the plants, so that they would get the feeling of looking up on a beautiful day. To accomplish this, I depicted the tops of plants on an expanse of blue. The horizontal width contributed to the feeling of immensity. The cropping focused on just a part of the plant, exposing the intricacies of the leaves. By pointing out how lovely a leaf can be, I continued in my theme of the beauty of the ordinary.

This was my first mixed media piece. I began by priming the boards with



latex paint mixed with sand. The sand gave the surface the grit I would need for the pastel to adhere. I started placing colors with a layer of pastels. Then, I used a damp paint brush to blend and smooth the chalk. This textured and painterly field of blue comprised the ground for the imagery. Next, I carefully drew detailed leaves, but with bright arbitrary colors. The precision and control of the leaves, contrasting with the painterly and textured background, was the addition of abstraction that I wanted to achieve. I presented this piece by staggering the panels in both a vertical orientation and in the depth from the wall. Each panel had a frame of different depth. This piece became sculptural in its presentation.

My next piece was entitled *A Bee's Eye View* (Appendix, 3). In preparing the support, I also used sand and primer to create a surface on masonite. On this surface, I drew geometric shapes in pastel that I blurred with a damp brush. This was done in layer upon layer between which I applied a fixative, so that the layers of colors would not mix. This method produced a patina and a sense of depth. Over top of this abstract field of color, I drew the bee in pastel pencil, from behind, as if we are following it. In this piece, I combined abstraction in the treatment in the ground with the realistic depiction of a bee.

In my painting,  *Holding On*  (Appendix, 4) I wanted to blur the lines between abstraction and realism. The work is large, 60" x 36", and has many layers of media. First, I randomly applied bursts of black spray paint. The next layer was latex paint and sand. The figurative drawing, rendered in pastel, was the next layer. Lastly, I added acrylic paint to enhance the figures. The textures

of the ground were also the textures of the figures. This created an ambiguous relationship between background and figure, except for the strong contour lines and highlighted portions of the figures. This piece focuses on the embrace of a couple. The center of attention is the point that they touch, with the extremities of the people cropped out of the scene. I wanted to expose their intimacy and show the beauty of the emotion.

At this point, I began to increasingly use more textures on my supports. In the painting entitled *Pond Skater* (Appendix, 5), I employed materials such as stucco, lava chips, and pastel ground over sculpted foam core. The preparation of this surface became the focus. I was experimenting with texture, color, and lines to achieve a sense of depth and movement in the surface. I wanted the viewer to feel that they were looking at an organic surface. I drew and painted implied texture, as well as applied actual texture. I used acrylic paint and Prismacolor sticks for color. This piece is an example of pure abstraction that points to an organic surface reminiscent of moss, algae, or stagnant water. This series of work was strictly abstract but had a strong natural feel to it. I refer to this series affectionately as *The Pond Scum Series* (Appendix, 6).

In my next few paintings, I again layered textures with figurative elements. In *Leaping* (Appendix, 7), I prepared the surface first with acrylic paint. The next step was to paint on Pastel Ground with a large, bristle brush. Over this I rubbed on Prismacolor sticks to enhance the brush strokes. On this ground, I painted an image of the lower half of a dancer leaping. The textures and color nuances

worked together to blend with the figurative painting.

My painting techniques have changed and evolved through this program in several ways. My earliest art leaned heavily toward precise drawing. I came into this program wanting experience in abstract painting. What I found out was that I could combine these two approaches and media, which I had previously thought of as two different pursuits.

### **Photography**

My aesthetic in photography falls along the same lines as that of my paintings, finding the beauty of the ordinary. I have also worked to combine an abstract element with ones of realism.

The photographic process is a unique endeavor. I have found it challenging on two levels. The first challenge in making a good photograph is the set up. I choose my subjects for the quality of their lines, shapes, and shadows. The second challenge is the work in the dark room. This is where the science meets the art. I have worked with filters to achieve differing degrees of contrast, as well as dodging and burning to enhance portions of the print.

Photographs are developed by exposing light sensitive paper to a bright light. This light is directed through the negative, creating a photograph. The terms dodging and burning describe aspects of manipulating the light. Dodging is briefly blocking the light on a portion of the print to create a lighter spot, and burning is allowing more light on a portion to darken the area. Normally, the light

is shone through a negative, which is held in a carrier that does not allow light past the edge of the negative. I have fashioned a new negative carrier with a rough edge. This process creates an uneven black border around the print, directing visual interest to the edges of the image.

Another darkroom technique that I found interesting is solarization. When developing a picture, one must work in only a “safe” light. This is a red light for black and white photography. The sensitive paper is not affected by this light. In a solarization, I turn an incandescent light on as the photo paper is in the developing solution. I must time this at the point that the image is beginning to appear. This creates an immediate darkening of the paper around the light grey tones of the image. I will quickly place it in the stop bath before it becomes black. Because the light was filtered through a solution, the grey tones created will have a rippled effect, similar to water that has been stirred. These are one of a kind prints due to the nature of the process. The photograph, *Driving* (Appendix, 8), is an example of solarization. The textures in the background were created by this method.

In the darkroom, I feel like a medieval alchemist, trying to change lead into gold. But, in this case the lead is the celluloid negative and the gold is the finished print. I enjoy the control over the contrast between light and dark, the variety of paper textures, results related to exposure times, and other variables in the process. In this day of digital technology, I am a throw-back to the older school of 35mm photography. While I see the usefulness of digital, I will continue

to work in the darkroom. I compose the picture on the scene, out of what man and nature has already created. It is my job to see the magic and show it to the viewers.

In the photo of *Mid Day at Mike's* (Appendix, 9), a baby grand piano is barely distinguishable as a hard-edged, glossy, black mass. The linen-like shadow created by light streaming through a screen door creates an abstract texture on the wall behind the piano. The vertical lines of the door jam next to the tall spiky cacti add to the contrasts of shapes and textures. All of these varied elements were combined to create an interesting abstraction of form. I wanted to reduce form to its essential qualities thereby once again showing an ideal beauty in the ordinary. In this photograph I used dodging. In the original image, there was a line of shrubs in the distance on the left side. I wanted this section to remain white. By dodging the area of the bushes I was able to prevent them from being in the photo, thus adding to the geometric and linear shapes and the overall abstract quality of the piece.

The patterns created by light and shadow add to the rich texture of abstraction that I want to include in my art. This is exemplified in the photograph entitled *Man Versus Nature, Man is Winning* (Appendix, 10). I wanted to show a multitude of tree branches crisscrossed by the electric lines. The contrast of the natural curving lines of the limbs next to the straight power lines was what I wanted the viewers to see. I wanted to show them the beauty of the chaotic that is man-made as well as nature-made, that is all around us.

My photographic style has been refined through the last five years. I feel that a photographer does not need to travel to the exotic regions of the world to find beauty. The beauty of the ordinary can be portrayed as extraordinary with the artist's eye and skills.

### **Conclusion**

Now that I have completed the MIS program, my next goal is to continue to create art in painting, drawing, and photography. This is a very simple statement that describes so much more. I have gained the confidence to declare myself an artist and to forge ahead with what I know to be my direction. I have been influenced by my teachers, as well as fellow students throughout this process. The critiques and the conversations in class and out of class have proved invaluable. This knowledge has been the real value of this course. I now have something to say and a voice with which to shout.

It is a new world out there and I am a young, strong, artist with ability and vision. Watch me soar.

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## Appendix

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Figure 1. *Lamp Post*, pastel on paper, 28" x 22", 2003

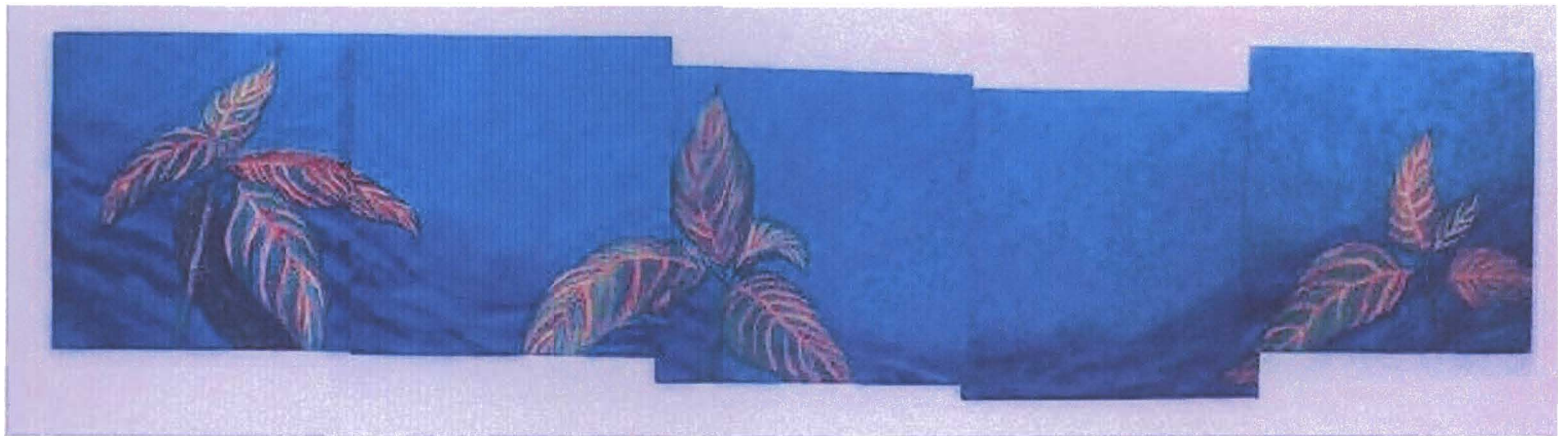


Figure 2. *Five Panels For Three Plants*, pastel on masonite, 24" x 120", 2004.



Figure 3. *Bee's Eye View*, mixed media on masonite, 24" x 24", 2004.



Figure 4. *Holding On*, mixed media on paper, 60" x 36", 2003.



Figure 5. *Pond Skater*, mixed media on foam core, 24" x 24", 2005.

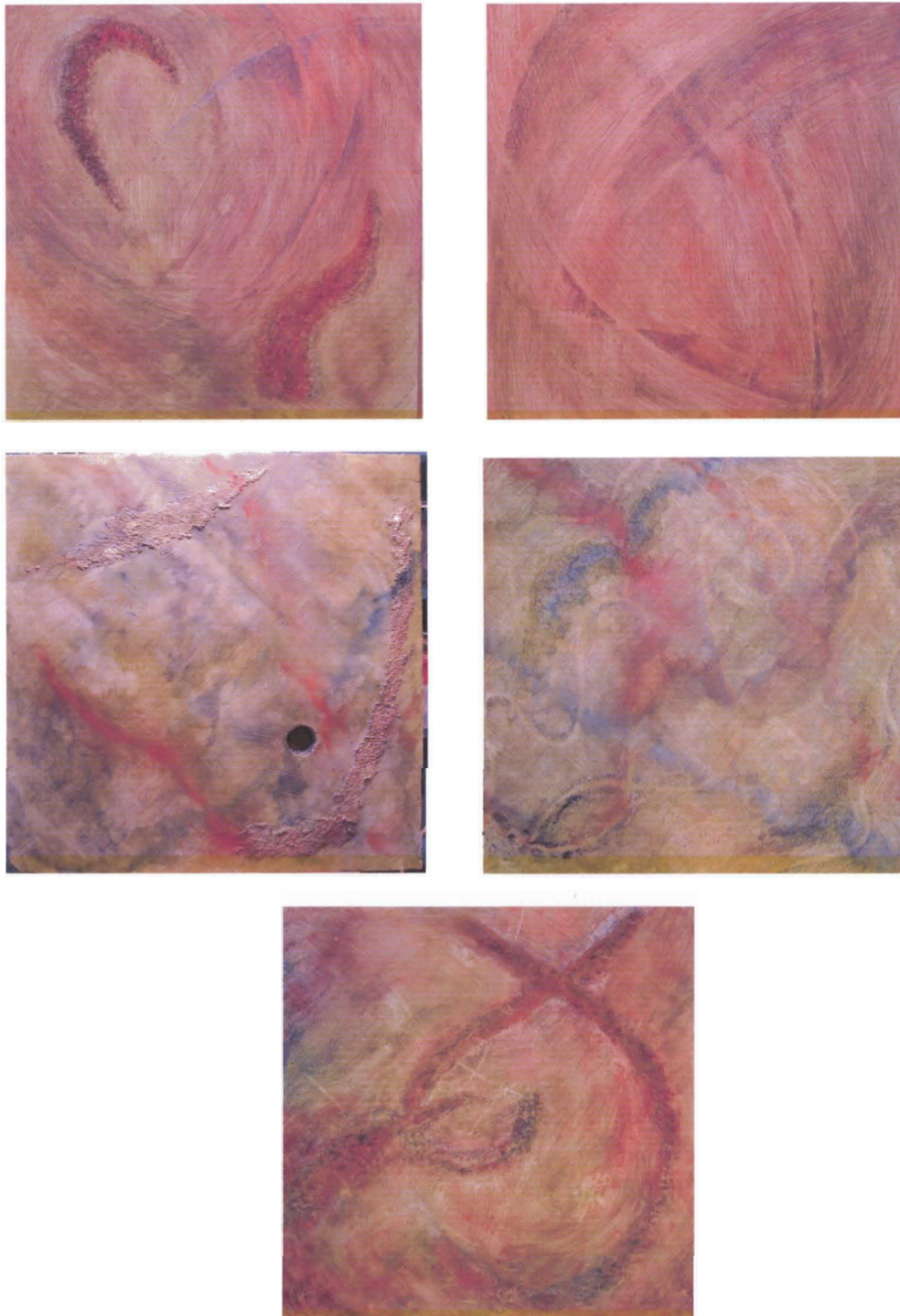


Figure 6. *The Pond Scum Series*, mixed media on foam core, 24" x 24" each, 2005.



Figure 7. *Leaping*, acrylic on matboard, 10" x 22", 2006.



Figure 8. *Driving*, solarization photograph, 8" x 10", 2006.





Figure 9. *Mid Day at Mike's*, photograph, 8" x 10", 2004.



Figure 10. *Nature Versus Man, Man is Winning*, photograph, 10" x 8", 2005.

## **CEEBS**

AKA Cheryl T. Bosch

### **EDUCATION**

- |      |   |
|------|---|
| 2006 | Master of Interdisciplinary Studies<br>Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA.<br>Dual focus ~ Painting and Photography |
| 1985 | Bachelor of Science - Art Education<br>Edinboro University, Edinboro, PA.   |

### **RELATED EDUCATION**

- |           |   |
|-----------|---|
| 1991-1993 | Enameling Techniques, Jewelry Fabrication,<br>Darkroom Techniques<br>Hand Workshop, Richmond, VA. |
| 1989      | Specialty Mat Cutting, Advanced Framing Techniques<br>Roanoke Framing School, Charlotte, NC.      |

### **TEACHING EXPERIENCES**

- |              |  |
|--------------|--|
| 2001-Present | Beginning Drawing<br>Germanna Community College, Fredericksburg, VA.                 |
| 1985-1986    | Ninth Grade Art<br>Mergenthaller Vocational Technical High School,<br>Baltimore, MD. |

### **PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES**

- |              |   |
|--------------|---|
| 1986-Present | Owner/Manager<br>Frame Designs Gallery, Fredericksburg, VA. |
|--------------|---|

**SOLO EXHIBITIONS**

- 2006                    *30-some Credits for ceEBs*, Master of Interdisciplinary Studies Thesis Exhibition, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond Virginia.  
The Wounded Bookstore, Fredericksburg, VA.
- 2006                    *Textures and Tones*  
Fredericksburg Center for the Creative Arts,  
Fredericksburg, VA.

**TWO PERSON EXHIBITIONS**

- 2002                    *View Points*, with Bob Worthy  
Frame Designs Gallery, Fredericksburg, VA.
- 2001                    *Media*, with Richard Dawson  
Shockoe Bottom Art Gallery, Richmond, VA.

**GROUP EXHIBITIONS**

- 2003                    *Transference*, Photo Transfer  
Art First Gallery, Fredericksburg, VA.
- 2002, 2001, 1999, 1998, 1996, 1995, 1989  
*Community Art Show*  
Community Center, Fredericksburg, VA.
- 2002, 2000, 1999, 1992  
*Community Photography Show*  
Community Center, Fredericksburg, VA.

**AWARDS**

- 2005                    *Virginia's Best Artists*, book and online competition  
Kennedy Publications, Williamsburg, VA.  
1<sup>st</sup> place - Acrylics  
2<sup>nd</sup> place - Mixed Medium