



Grant Wood Art Colony

4-1-2015

Michele Lauriat - Careena Melia - Serhat Tanyolacar: The Grant Wood Art Colony, 2014–15

University of Iowa School of Art & Art History

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THE
GRANT WOOD
ART COLONY
2014-15



MICHELE LAURIAT
CAREENA MELIA
SERHAT TANYOLACAR





Grant Wood and His Pupils
Courtesy of the Figge Art Museum Grant Wood Archive
Scrapbook #8

FROM THE DIRECTOR

The roots of Grant Wood's artist colonies date back to the 1920s and 1930s when Wood gathered writers, artists, and craftspeople to collaborate in Cedar Rapids, Stone City, and Iowa City. His vision to form a community of kindred spirits has materialized at The University of Iowa through the Grant Wood Art Colony. The mission of the colony is to nurture creative work and teaching in disciplines relevant to Wood's life and work.

The success of last year's expansion to include a Performing Arts Fellowship and the growing interest in outreach and engagement precipitated the appointment of a full-time director and the Colony's transition to the Office of the Provost. As the new director, I appreciate the passion, energy, and expertise that has cultivated this program. The fellowship continues to be one of the most generous and competitive of its kind. In addition to their teaching assignments as Visiting Assistant Professors, the Fellows have ample time to create work and engage Iowans.

The University of Iowa hosted three exceptional Fellows this year. Michele Lauriat, the Painting and Drawing Fellow, expanded her *beyond|return* series as well as the minds of her students. Serhat Tanyolacar, the Printmaking Fellow, explored political issues in his performance pieces and utilized the University of Iowa's state-of-the-art printmaking facility. *return |beyond*, the culminating exhibition of Lauriat's and Tanyolacar's work, was held in the Levitt Gallery of Art Building West on The University of Iowa campus in April 2015. Careena Melia, the Theater Fellow, advanced her *Gertrude Bell Project* while introducing her Collaborative Process students to Grant Wood. Melia's final presentation was on April 25, 2015. This catalogue documents *return |beyond* and *The Gertrude Bell Project*.

With world-class artists-in-residence instructing and creating and a growing base of scholars expanding the comprehension of Wood's life and legacy, the Colony now looks to the future. In 2016, the Grant Wood Art Colony will celebrate the 125th anniversary of Grant Wood's birth and the opening of the new Studio Arts building. We will welcome new Painting and Drawing, Printmaking, and Music Fellows to the Colony. Public engagement will be expanded to ensure all Iowans benefit from Grant Wood's legacy—the Grant Wood Art Colony.

Maura Pilcher
Director, Grant Wood Art Colony
May 2015



MICHELE LAURIAT

Michele Lauriat is the 2014-15 Grant Wood Fellow in Painting and Drawing at the University of Iowa. She earned her BFA in 2002 at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and her MFA in 2011 at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Lauriat makes oversized landscape drawings using mixed media on paper (primarily gouache, watercolor, graphite, charcoal, and wax pencil). Her drawings have been exhibited nationally, including solo shows in Chicago, Vermont, and Massachusetts. In 2012, Lauriat participated in artist residencies at Zion National Park, Walnut Canyon and Wupatki Point National Monuments, and Grand Canyon National Park. Her notables include nominations for the Blanche E. Colman Award and the Dedalus Foundation Fellowship, as well as the following awards: *What is life worth?*, a Feinberg Family Award; New Art 2002 at MPG Boston; and the Boit Award from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Among her other accomplishments, Lauriat managed SM&KK Studios Pop-up Gallery in Chicago, is a UMass Arts Council Grant Recipient, and ran a successful Kickstarter campaign. Lauriat's work will be part of an upcoming landscape exhibition at the Fitchburg Art Museum in Massachusetts.



Untitled from the series *beyond | return*
2015, gouache, watercolor, and dry media on paper
55"x65"



Untitled from the series *beyond | return*
2015, gouache, watercolor, and dry media on paper
55"x65"

FINDING HER WAY

Michele Lauriat is a landscape artist, part of a western tradition that extends back hundreds of years and comes with a number of philosophical and pictorial expectations. The vista, the prospect, the focal point, the framing device lead us into the place pictured, be it bucolic or frighteningly sublime.

Lauriat disrupts those expectations with landscapes that obscure the way in, and make a virtue of thickets of lines and shapes. As a New England artist, she is used to a complex environment—dense woods, crowded neighborhoods, uneven fields. One piece in the exhibition *return | beyond*, from her *Spot Pond* series, captures New England's feathery, hemmed-in Eastern woods. Paired with it, *Untitled* from the series *Coralville Lake (Woodpecker Trail)*, similarly piles the lushness of Iowa woodlands into the center of the piece, with transparent tree trunks barely seen through the crush of greenery. Here we see Lauriat's genius at creating clarity out of complexity. She understands the woods.

She is the first to admit, however, that Iowa gave her trouble. Horizontal, monotonous, an entirely unfamiliar data set, she wrestled with finding the means to picture this unfamiliar place. Her breakthrough came when she imposed a geometry over the landscape and when she focused on the environment in town. Seeking a bit more privacy, she put snowflake decals on her windows and found a new way to frame the view. The first painting that resulted, in the series *beyond | return*, builds around a dominant pink and lavender striped tree trunk, a surprisingly clear focal point. Dancing across the surface, over all the surrounding lines of branches, shadows, hints of structures, and sprays of leaves, is a geometry of inverted V's that is barely there. More like a flock of birds across the surface, the marks feel like the wind across a dense scrum of impressions.

On her blog, Lauriat wrote about another neighborhood at another time, "I wanted the stability and the comfort and the light; and I rejected the order—and the stability." In her Iowa paintings, she wrestles with the same attraction and repulsion, seeking order, almost resorting to one-point perspective, clinging to geometries (though not the expected Midwestern rows and grids). In the most recent work in the exhibition, depicting her Iowa City backyard, the chartreuse and pink spring growth and the lavender shadows weave in and out of diamond shapes now more felt than seen. She has found a way to move beyond first impressions and to use the organic glow of an Iowa spring to transform rather than reject the order she once needed to impose.

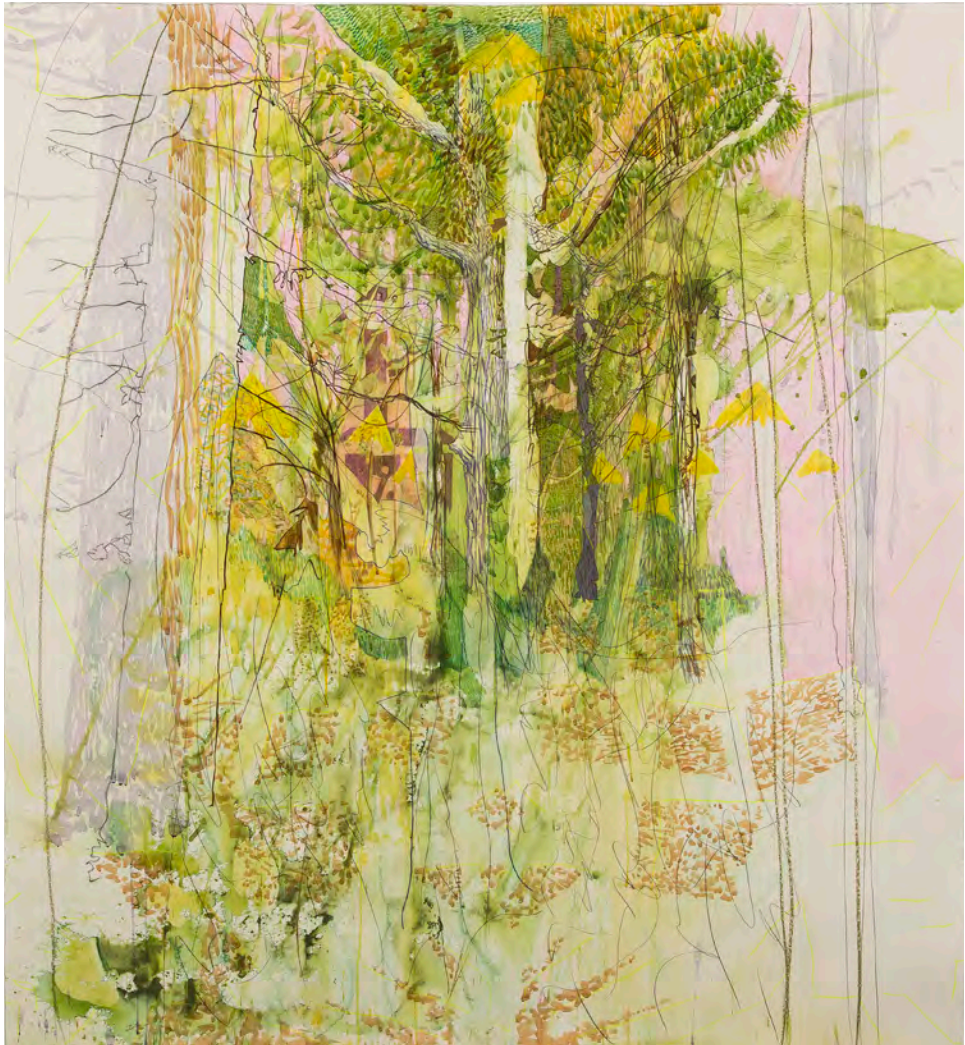
Lesley Wright
Director, Faulconer Gallery
May 2015

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

In the series *beyond |return*, I focus on the play of architectural shapes amongst the organic patterns of the landscape. I pay attention to the places where pattern overwhelms itself and breaks down, as well as the moments when chaos falls into a rhythm. Walking through my neighborhood, I notice the interactions between geometric shadows cast by rooftops, telephone poles, and wires, and the organic shapes cast by trees. I notice that on trash day there is an extra pattern on the street, a pattern that is both temporal and visual, as it emerges and then disappears one day every week.

While my motivation—or impulse—is a visual one, bringing the groundless aspect of my landscape drawings to the suburbs speaks to the instability of the stability seeker's haven: suburbia. It is a place where it is easy to find comfort in the patterns and the maintenance of order, and hard to see beyond. It is a place where time based scale shifts are limited, and often fabrications of nostalgia. Yet between housing bubbles, divorces, floods, sinkholes, tornadoes, hurricanes, and the poor economy, even well maintained homes seem like a bleak reminder that the bottom can fall out at any moment.

In these drawings, the interaction of pattern, order, design, chaos, and the push of organic systems direct my attention and mark making. My drawings begin with observations. I notice how the landscape shifts around me as I move through it. I notice how a bunch of leaves might start as a group, then separate out and become silhouettes of individual leaves, before becoming a group again. In the landscape, I create *plein air* drawings and photographs to use as source material. In my studio, I use water-based paints and dry media to create large, disjointed, landscape drawings. My process, taking me back and forth between control and chance, is one of chaos barely tethered. Not unlike our relationship with the landscape.



Untitled from the series Coralville Lake (Woodpecker Trail)
2015, gouache, watercolor, and dry media on paper
60"x55"



Untitled from the series *Spot Pond*
2015, gouache, watercolor, and dry media on paper
70"x55"



Untitled from the series *beyond | return*
2015, gouache, watercolor, and dry media on paper
55"x65"



Careena Melia is an Irish-born actress with 20 years of experience in theater, dance, film, and television. Fellowship projects have included *ICU*, an exploration of cancer and performance with Complicite Theatre Company (London) and the Grant Wood Art Colony (Iowa City); *Romeo and Juliet* with Shelter Theatre Group (New York City); *King Lear* with Island Shakespeare (New York City); *Women's Titus Project*, an exploration of Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* with an all-female ensemble (Iowa City); and *River Stories*, a devised theater workshop at the Iowa City Senior Center. Prior to her Grant Wood Fellowship, she created and originated the role of Hecate in Punchdrunk's award-winning production of *Sleep No More* at the American Repertory Theater and the current Off-Broadway run, for which she received a Drama League nomination for Distinguished Performance. Melia is the artistic director of Walden Shakespeare and received her MFA from the American Repertory Theater/Moscow Art Theater at Harvard University.



The Gertrude Bell Project
performed April 25, 2015
The University of Iowa



The Gertrude Bell Project
performed April 25, 2015
The University of Iowa

THE GERTRUDE BELL PROJECT

I am a playwright and actor. In 2007, I had the great pleasure of working with Careena Melia when she was pursuing her master's degree at ART Institute, Harvard. I was collaborating with her class at the Institute to create a new theater piece ultimately to be entitled *Ajax in Iraq*. Melia stood out not only for her unusual skillset (she is a gifted dancer as well as a compelling actor) but for her profound sensitivity, intelligence, and commitment to the process. As my thinking began to focus on American soldiers specifically in Iraq, I became interested in Gertrude Bell, the British diplomat who was integral to the shaping of modern Iraq, a woman who literally in some cases drew the map of the modern country. Because Melia had already impressed me as a remarkably astute collaborator, I thought she would be the ideal person to give the challenge of creating a short theatrical piece about Bell. I wanted to see what she would do with that material, knowing that she would be scrupulous in her research and I would learn from her. The only guidance I gave was that I told her I kept having an image of a woman in Victorian dress standing on a map of the Middle East, drawing the borders. Other than that, she was free to do whatever she liked. What she created in response to my challenge was so eloquent and cannily theatrical that it was one of the few student-generated pieces that I was able to adapt from directly when I put the final script together.

The play has received many productions since then but I will always be grateful to the original company and to no one more than Melia, whose professionalism, quiet passion, and perceptiveness were essential to whatever we got right. In the years since, as she has developed her ideas on Bell further in terms of dance, subtle use of primary texts, and staging ideas, I see her original and flexible aesthetic bringing new insights into this fascinating historical figure whose dramatic life begs to be explored in just this multi-faceted theatrical way. Melia lends to her idiosyncratic approach a dancer's intelligence, an actor's sensitivity, and a bracingly open technique. I feel certain that Bell herself, another empathetic and surprising redhead, would have approved. I am proud to have had anything to do with igniting that extraordinary fire all those years ago and look forward to the fruits of this fine theater artist's Grant Wood Fellowship.

Ellen McLaughlin
Playwright/Actor
May 2015

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

The Gertrude Bell Project is a performance piece that combines historical texts and images with creative dialogue, movement, music, and multimedia design to explore the life of Gertrude Bell. An avid traveler, writer, and scholar of Middle Eastern history and culture, Bell's life was unusual for a British woman of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Though a few biographies of Gertrude Bell have been published in the last several years, little if any information is commonly known about this extraordinary figure who helped draw the borders of modern-day Iraq.

A prolific author of travel books and remarkably detailed personal letters, Bell left behind a treasure trove of material on which to draw artistically. While vivid accounts of her treks through the desert are ripe for dramatization, Bell's maps and photographs offer rich imagistic context, and her infectious zest for life and adventure inspire a thrilling and expressive language of dialogue and movement.

Gertrude Bell's character furthermore presents a challenging and dramatic paradox. Bell was a woman of great intelligence and charisma who also adhered strictly to Victorian mores. The first woman to earn a history degree from Oxford, Bell ignored gender boundaries in academia and politics and yet was an anti-suffragist. Though she refused to be held back intellectually by assumptions about her sex, she obeyed social rules in her personal life, refusing to consummate her love for her soul mate—a married man. Bell also possessed a deep love and understanding of Arab culture, making many good friends among the desert tribes of the Middle East and ultimately settling in Baghdad, Iraq. Though she helped form the nation of Iraq after World War I and ultimately hoped for self-determination for its peoples, Bell also had great confidence in the British Empire's wisdom, strength, and right to dictate political matters in their vast territories.

Many of Bell's assertions and predictions about the political struggles in Iraq ring true today and the piece touches on such themes as orientalism, the nature of imperialism, and the cost of nation-building. Bell herself was not above mistakes in her assumptions and judgments about the welfare of the nation and its future, and she expressed a mixture of pride and regret about her involvement in the making of Iraq.

More than eight decades after her death, *The Gertrude Bell Project* imaginatively illuminates aspects of this intriguing and intrepid woman who shaped history.



The Gertrude Bell Project
performed April 25, 2015
The University of Iowa



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movement/ projections

The desert, there is no denying it, the desert looks terrible from
find myself in more or less peaceful routine of comparative civiliz
when my heart beats quicker and my eyes strain themselves to c
future.

Music

GERTRUDE- The sun sets in splendor, the stars shine out and
the terrors which I conjured up between house walls have fl
clothed once more in abiding security. Thus we turn towards th
all the powers that be, and the only thread which is not cut thr
this little book, which is the diary of my way kept for you.

Transition/ music/ projections of the desert

GERTRUDE- We have had two delicious days of riding across
really beginning to enjoy it all. For now I must tell you that I
was almost inclined to turn back.

script excerpt from *The Gertrude Bell Project*

Serhat Tanyolacar is a Turkish-born printmaker, multi-media artist, political activist, and autism advocate. His latest large-scale relief prints focus on reconstructions of daily life imagery with the components of nostalgia and popular culture in critiques of contemporary political paradigms. His reconstructed narratives bring an absurd socio-political commentary over problems in politics, world economy, gender roles, nationality, and global culture. Tanyolacar defines the very beginning of the making of the art production as an information-gathering process, which relies on his own memories and the collection of global news. Using humor, satire, absurdity, and parody through public provocation allows him to have the ability to be a cultural producer rather than a political commentator. Although he has expertise in all traditional print media, Tanyolacar investigates innovative and progressive use of printmaking as inter-media. He is one of the early developers of laser cutter printmaking. He has been using laser cutter block/plate making for his latest relief/combination prints.

Tanyolacar has exhibited his works both nationally and globally. He has an 11-year-old son with an Autism Spectrum Disorder, who has inspired many of Tanyolacar's works and taught him a new perspective on helping and connecting with people with disabilities. As a Turkish citizen who believes in and defends freedom of speech and expression, Tanyolacar has been spreading awareness on continuous human-rights violations in his home country, the Republic of Turkey. He enacted his last public performance *Farewell (Elveda)* in multiple metropolitan areas of Turkey in March 2015. Tanyolacar wore a traditional, Ottoman-era kaftan in his performance as he criticized the Neo-Ottomanist foreign policy of the current Turkish Government. The Turkish Political Investigation Bureau in front of Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Presidential Palace in Ankara forcefully stopped the *Farewell* public performance on March 12, 2015.

SERHAT
TANYOLACAR





Atlas Carrying Turtle Island
2014, embossment, relief, laser engraving on Rives BFK
24"x34"



Circus in Town

2014, relief, embossment, laser engraving on Rives BFK
50"x50"

CONSTANT DISRUPTION

Like the mythological figure of Atlas, Serhat Tanyolacar bears the weight of pervasive moral and political corruption on his artistic shoulders. Turkish by birth and culture, resident in the U.S. since 2002, Tanyolacar learned early that the symbols of institutions often cloak a rigid adherence to authority that is at odds with personal freedom. His work skewers that authority with absurdity, humor, and anguished meanings.

His exhibition at The University of Iowa presented only his prints, not his public performances or their record. Worthy of close looking for both their imagery and content, Tanyolacar's prints linger in the mind as intriguing and peculiar, compelling and exasperating. His exhibition, shown without titles or explanations, began with works that predated his Grant Wood residency. He explained that he arranged the pieces as a visual manifesto (although I would not have seen them as such), perhaps challenging the conventions of art exhibitions from within. Like many of his political gestures, his protest was tantalizing but elusive.

Tanyolacar's printed surfaces are black, densely detailed, and embossed. On the computer, he adds and layers images and surfaces, crossing borders literally and figuratively. He then uses the computer to laser engrave wood printing plates. The wood itself—the grain, the brownish stain—adds an organic depth to the prints. He is a masterful printmaker, producing just a few exquisite prints from each plate. He is certainly not pumping out broadsides for the masses.

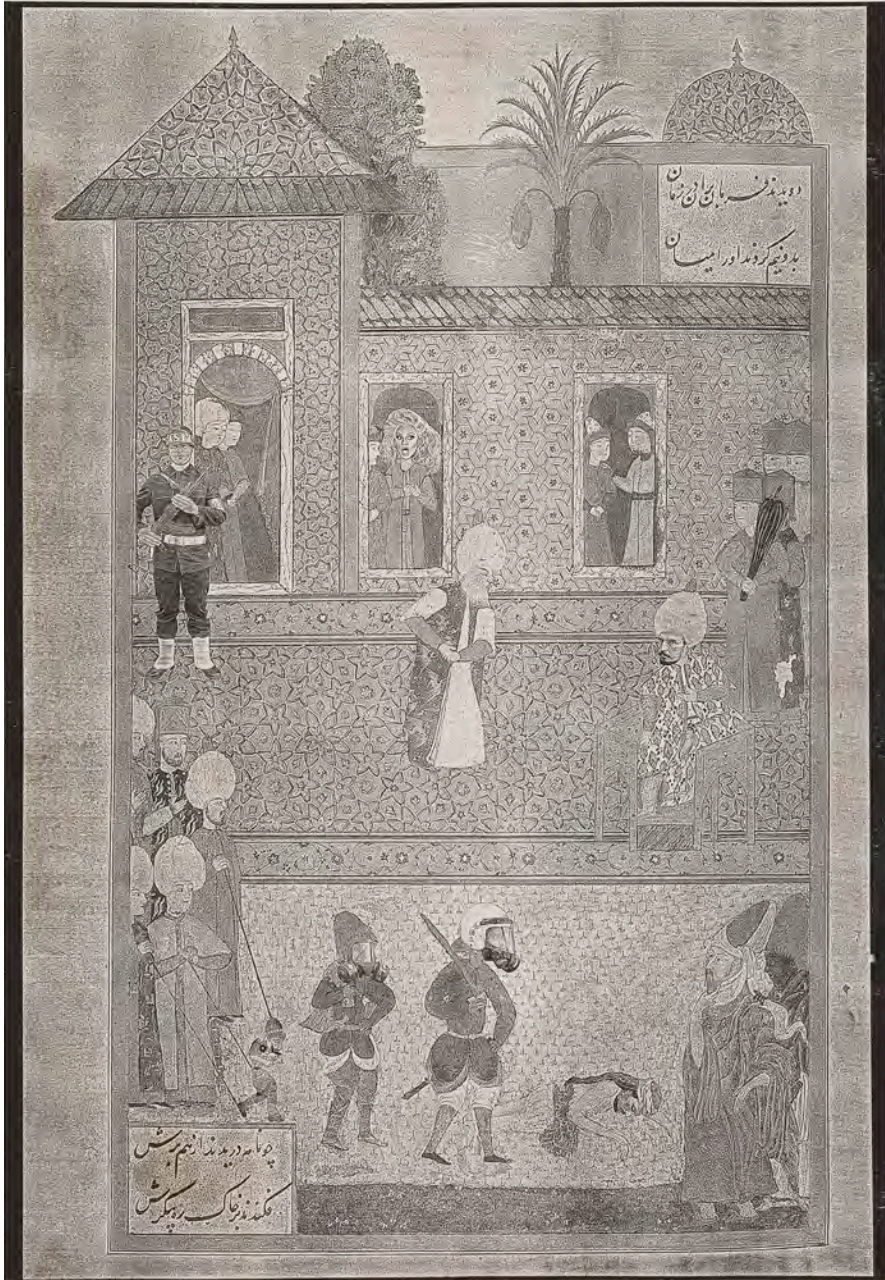
The exhibition finishes with six of the new works created in Iowa City. The newer works lack some of the velvety blackness of the early prints, but they have a more manic absurdity. Often his pieces begin with monumental Turkish buildings and cultural artifacts (ancient towers, Ottoman miniatures, public sculpture). Then he disrupts the iconic images with the culturally unexpected: sumo wrestlers, penguins, Big Bird, porn, Dumbo the elephant, Sarah Palin, and his own face. The constant disruption leaves the viewer questioning the inclusion of every element, attempting to generate relationships between the pieces, and wondering what went missing in the process.

As a manifesto of individual artistic freedom against authoritarian rules, Tanyolacar's work pushes the question, "what can we accept?" Like a modern day Goya, his prints may not make sense, but they stop us in our tracks, pull us in, deny us complacency, and demand that we attend to the folly all around.

Lesley Wright
Director, Faulconer Gallery
May 2015



Sername (Page 2)
2014, relief, embossment, laser engraving
28"x42"



Sername (Page 10)
2014, relief, embossment, laser engraving
28"x42"

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

As an artist, my purpose in artistic production is to use my daily life experience in satirical and ironical reconstructions of these experiences towards the critiques of socio-political paradigms. The reconstructed art product then intends to create a visual dialogue between itself and its audiences who may come to a realization of today's social, political, or environmental (global) issues.

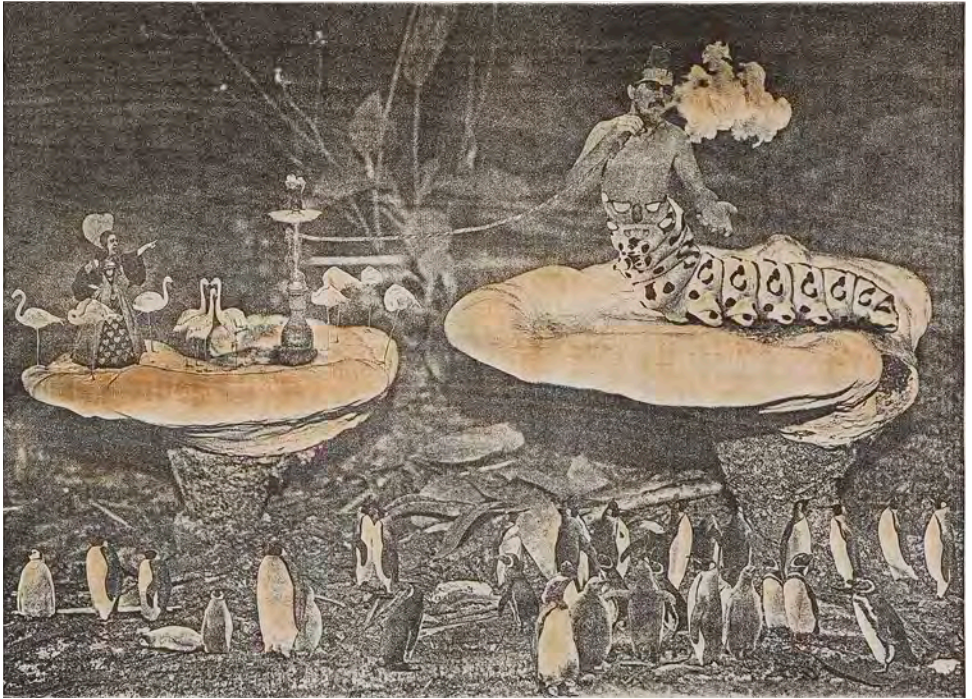
In my studio/research practices, I have been seeking for and experimenting poetically absurd and innovative strategies to create (more universal, provocative and humorous) dialogues between the art work and the audience even if the subject is specifically the distant other, the Orient.

I have been one of the pioneers and developers of laser engraving technique in printmaking. Since the beginning of 2013, I have been successfully using a combination printing technique which involves relief printing, embossment, engraving, digital photo manipulation, and drawing.

My major work with this new technique is a printmaking series which I titled *Sername*. *Sername* has 20 pages of reconstructed and heavily-manipulated Ottoman miniatures, which criticize the popular culture, Western conception and imagery of the Orient, the corruption and absurdity in politics (more particularly, Neo-Ottomanism policy of the Justice and Development Party in Turkey), and all our social norms such as ambiguous morality.

From February 2–March 14, 2015, I enacted a series of public *Farewell (Elveda)* performances in various states of America as well as in metropolitan areas of the Republic of Turkey. These performances have been able to convey multiple the critiques and dialogues on Neo-Ottomanism and the stereotypical cultural identity of the Orient and Oriental in Western conception. I have planned *Elveda* as my farewell to my home country. After December 2015, I am not allowed to enter Turkey without mandatory and forced military service in the Turkish Armed Forces.

I prioritize my future works as in following: human rights and freedom of speech and expression (especially in academia); peace projects/site specific installations between Northern and Southern Cyprus and between Palestine and Israel; criticizing corporate business hierarchy in higher education and advocating for completely free-education; agricultural monopoly and modern agriculture's impact on water sources; developing multiple color prints (with powdered pigments) for laser-engraving combination printmaking techniques; writing a guidebook for laser-engraving and CNC combination printmaking techniques.



Wonderland
2014, combination printmaking
20"x30"

MISSION

The Grant Wood Art Colony seeks to provide a creative home for the next generation of artists and continue Grant Wood's creative advocacy in the School of Art & Art History and the Division of Performing Arts at The University of Iowa through artist residencies, teaching fellowships, symposia, and community programs.

VISION

The mission of the Colony is to nurture creative work and teaching in disciplines relevant to the art and life of Grant Wood—studio art, art history, the performing arts, and eventually expanding to a variety of disciplines. The program exemplifies The University of Iowa's historic commitment to creative work and pioneering of the MFA degree. The Grant Wood Art Colony will further embody the "Iowa Idea" of bringing artists and scholars together in an academic context, as first formulated in the 1920s. Our long-term goal is to create a vibrant colony and cultural center, woven together by gardens and studio space.

FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

The Grant Wood Fellowship program currently provides three one-year fellowships. Fellows are selected through a national competition and provided with furnished living quarters at the Grant Wood Art Colony. During the academic year, each Fellow teaches two courses at the School of Art & Art History or Division of Performing Arts, leaving the rest of the time for the artist's own work and research. A teaching salary, benefits, and studio are provided.

Grant Wood Art Colony

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<http://art.uiowa.edu/grant-wood-art-colony>



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