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# Research-Based Studio Art as a Strategy to Support Inter-Disciplinary Learning

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RESEARCH-BASED STUDIO ART AS A STRATEGY TO SUPPORT INTER-  
DISCIPLINARY LEARNING

by

DENIS M. BYRD

Under the Direction of Melanie Davenport

Abstract

This studio-based thesis study discusses historical research as a motivation for art creation. Incorporating historical research on the naturalist and explorer William Bartram this paper explores the ways history may serve as inspiration for art-production. This paper also examines how making art may act as a form of research. Additionally, it explores how this strategy may be implemented in the classroom, with the intention of leading to greater engagement and understanding by students within their research area as well as their artistry.

INDEX WORDS: Art Education, Inter-disciplinary education, Research-based art, Plein air painting, William Bartram



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DISCIPLINARY LEARNING

by

DENIS M. BYRD

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Art Education

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

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2014

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August 2014

## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my wife, Jessica, who has been a source of support and encouragement throughout this process. In addition, I would also like to dedicate this thesis to my mother, Jean E. Byrd and everyone else who has encouraged my creative endeavors through the years: Robert Putnam, Pat Hutson, and Charles Y. Walls. Finally, to Ted Key, whose love of history and tales of Georgia's Native American and Colonial past still inspire me and my research.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Description of Study

As a child, I found art and history to be inseparable. When I studied history in school the pages were illustrated with art depicting famous historical incidents. My vision of history was shaped by these images depicting our shared past. Emanuel Leutze's (1851) painting of *Washington Crossing the Delaware* was etched into my mind as fact, not an artistic representation. It is impossible to tell the story of human civilization without art. It is art that links us to our past and highlights our humanity. Art is vital to capturing our imaginations. I still remember first seeing Frederick Remington's (1898) painting of *The Charge of the Rough Riders* in Middle School. The opposite page showed the portrait of their commander and future President Theodore Roosevelt by John Singer Sargent (1903). I headed to the library; I was on a quest to learn more about this character in American history as well as the artwork that portrayed him. This eventually led me to search for the artists. I wanted to know who they were and if possible figure out their secrets. I wanted to draw and paint as they did. This began a process that not only informed my development as an artist but my knowledge of other subjects as a middle school student.

Growing up in the South, specifically in Georgia, American history started with the Civil War in popular culture. Of course, there might be a little history before that. *Gone with the Wind* (Mitchell, 1936) did begin its story just prior to secession. However, there were hints of Georgia's Native American past. Several names dotted the map here or there, such as Chattahoochee, Ocmulgee, and Cherokee. We might find a random arrowhead in our yard, remnants of the lands distant past. It is understandable that the Civil War, one of America's

greatest tragedies, would over shadow Georgia's and much of the South's Colonial and Native American past. The War Between the States ravaged much of Georgia and saw Atlanta burned to the ground. Out of these horrific events arose not only the modern city of Atlanta but also the mythology and the fairy tale of the Antebellum South. Unfortunately, this masked two other great tragedies in the history of Georgia: The enslavement of millions of Africans and the removal of the so-called Five Civilized Tribes that once inhabited the Southeast. Both groups contributed significantly to southern culture in ways that are often forgotten or hidden from the casual observer.

It was in 8<sup>th</sup> grade that I first met Ted Key, my Georgia history teacher. The same year I was also scheduled to take art with Robert Putnam. Both teachers had a reputation for excellence and inspired teaching. My first day in Georgia History, Mr. Key shared this opening monologue with the class: I am going to tell you one of the most amazing stories you have ever heard. It is the story of the people who lived in this land, the State of Georgia. It is full of drama and intrigue, and sadness and hope. When this year is finished you will ask, "Why has no one ever made a film of these stories?"

Key, a native of Florida, was known for his passion for his adopted state and for its Native American past. It was in his class that I first heard the stories of the Muscogee and Cherokee. We explored Georgia's brief period of Spanish influence and later British Colonization before investigating the modern era. I felt an enduring excitement learning about the exploits of the adventurers and explorers who inhabited the same locale we do; these figures who were absent from much of the grand narrative of American History but were so vital to the story of Georgia's past.

Simultaneously, I was taking Mr. Putnam's art class. This was the year we first starting learning the "tricks" of art. We were introduced to perspective and value and my first experience with clay. This was also my first exposure to art history and where we began to see how art and history intersect. Robert Putnam was not just a skilled artist and teacher but also a gifted musician. After school, music could be heard coming from the art room and one would find Mr. Putnam on guitar and the band teacher, Mr. Davis, on banjo picking an old time tune. While making art, he would tell us folk stories from Appalachia. Interwoven between these he might explain how the techniques we were using to make a coil pot were used by Native Americans and later settlers on the Appalachian Frontier. This provided a broader context to the art process and helped us to see a link between the art we were creating and the history we studied.

Before the end of the quarter both my Georgia History class and my Art class would collide. Both Mr. Key and Mr. Putnam were volunteers with the local historical society, *Historical Jonesboro*. The clay pots we had been making were ready to be fired but we were not going to fire these in the kiln as we had the small sculptures earlier that year. These would be fired using traditional Native American pit firing. Almost the entire 8<sup>th</sup> grade joined these two teachers at Stately Oaks Plantation, in Jonesboro, for their Native American Heritage Day. We all dressed in the traditional garb of the Creek/Muscogee who once lived along the Flint River nearby and were engaged in various demonstrations to educate the visiting public. Some were assigned to the cane baskets or the archery range but after noon we all gathered around the fire pit. The clay pots we had spent weeks building had been firing since early that morning. With much fanfare Mr. Putnam removes the clay shards with a long stick and gently pulls the first pot out. Setting it on the ground the heat from the pot ignites some of the surrounding leaves. This



experience brought the history to life. No longer was it relegated to the textbook but was something we could experience and touch with our hands.

The example of my 8<sup>th</sup> grade school year seems to indicate that subjects like art and history can be taught in conjunction for greater learning potential. Even today in other art forms, artists are performing similar activities. A group of artists, known as The Muir Project, spent the summer of 2011 hiking the John Muir Trail, named after the naturalist and Sierra Club founder, and documented their experience in sound, photography, and motion picture (Fitzpatrick, Serena, J., Serena, R., Trench, 2013). This leads me to the questions driving my thesis project: *Does art-making aid in our understanding of the world around us, other cultures and even our own history?* I sought to determine, through my own artwork, if research in a specific discipline, such as history, can lead to a deeper understanding of the research topic and provide artistic inspiration. *In addition, will a research-based approach to art creation provide a platform for greater artistic growth?* I hoped to gain insights into this through my own artistic process examining how my interest and research of an historical subject informs my own artwork. *Will documenting my research on a specific subject matter support more creative exploration?* I sought to uncover this through journaling and documentation of my work, discussed in Chapter Three.

## **1.2 Purpose**

Art, like most subjects is now taught in isolation. This is a concept that was alien through much of human history. Only in the past century and a half have we sought to separate the various subjects (Sayers, 1947). Art is often separated from academic classes and is not seen as an intellectual pursuit. This may result in a lack of funding or interest in the arts from district administrators, parents, and possibly students. However, I believe that art may serve as a link

between multiple subjects and engage students in various learning styles, and I sought to make a case for the inclusion of fine arts alongside academic subjects.

The overarching purpose of this study is to investigate how other subjects can be used to inform art education as the basis of art creation and how art-making can aid the study of other disciplines. Secondly, I feel that my own studio process revealed how historical research contributes to my own artwork. I have done this through a body of work that is built on research of William Bartram and the early history of the South. This series of paintings from locations around Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Tennessee followed the path of explorer and naturalist William Bartram. The landscapes depicted many of the locations described in his book and how they have changed in the past two hundred years. I began with *plein air* studies and expanded upon these in the studio with the intention that this arts based study would demonstrate how art can include an interdisciplinary approach. Creating work on site, combined with research about the history and people, gave me the opportunity to learn through experience not only about the artistic concepts involved in art-making but also about the culture, people, and environment which I hope to translate into implications for classroom practice.

### 1.3 Context

Bartram traveled much of the Southeast in the 1770s and was one of the first Englishmen to write about the geography, plant and animal life, and Native American culture of the South. As a naturalist and artist, Bartram was one of the first Europeans to explore and write about the Southeastern frontier. His writings and drawings chronicled the plant life and culture of the people he encountered on his journey. He gave some of the earliest descriptions of the large Native American towns before the encroachment of European settlement west. Bartram's journey through the Southeast began in Charleston, and he traveled south to Florida along the Georgia coast making stops in Savannah and Darien and St Augustine. His next path followed the Savannah River north as he explored Augusta and as far west as the Athens area. Continuing north he ventured into the modern town of Franklin, NC, then known as Watauga, a major Cherokee town (Kautz, 2006). For several weeks he ranged west into the Nantahala Mountains, until being encouraged to turn back west of the Appalachians because of tensions between the Cherokee and white settlers (Bartram, 1958/1998). Finally, his travels took him back to Augusta and west across the middle of Georgia where encountered more of the native Muskogeans and camped at the site of the Ocmulgee mounds in Macon. The journal of his travels, with his scientific descriptions of the plant life and animals, was published in 1791 and has been a window into the past of the Colonial South ever since. In the next chapter, I will explore in greater depth the story of Bartram's journey and my engagement with the Bartram Trail and Georgia history as inspiration for my paintings.

## VOCABULARY

Attakulakulla – A Cherokee leader of the Overhill Cherokee in East Tennessee. Also known as Little Carpenter.

Bartram, John – The father of William Bartram. He was a naturalist and a member of the Royal Society in London.

Bartram Trail – A marked trail in northeast Georgia that follows the general area in which William Bartram traveled but represents only a portion of his explorations.

Bartram, William – An American naturalist who explored several states in the southeast and documented his explorations in a book first published in 1791 (Ray & Skove, Bartram Trail, p. 1).

Brandywine School – An art school as well as style of painting based in Chadds Ford, PA. It was founded by Howard Pyle.

Daisy Chain – A piece of webbing sewn onto a backpack used to attach additional gear.

Jore Mountains – This mountain range is also known as the Nantahala Mountains in Western North Carolina.

Muskogee – A Native American tribe originally inhabiting Georgia, Florida, and Alabama. Also known as the Creek.

Overhill Cherokee – This refers to the Cherokee living west of the Appalachian Mountains. While closely related to the towns east of the Appalachians, they often acted independently in terms of treaties and warfare.

*Plein air* – From French, meaning “open air”. A term used for painting outside the studio from life.

Pochade Box – From French meaning “quick sketch”. A small box used to carry art supplies and double as an easel.

Pyle, Howard – A prominent American teacher, artist, and illustrator. He is the founder of the Brandywine School.

Sticoe – Also spelled Stekoa, is the name of the Cherokee town that once existed at the site of Clayton, GA

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Art is often linked with history as the physical manifestation of a culture or as an illustration for a historical narrative. In these instances we are often observing the creations from past civilizations. *Is it possible for art creation to lead to greater understanding of history and cultures?* I will examine several studies that investigate the possible ways history may be taught through art creation. I have approached this study with an interest in broadening my knowledge of the research subject, and determine how research will inform my work and provide subject matter for future works.

#### 2.1 History Taught Through Art

Art has often served as a link between many disciplines. Examining the art of a particular culture helps one gain a sense of their lives, hopes and fears, and what they value as a culture. Art also can provide a way to connect with different cultures. Creating art provides a tangible link to people and past events. In the study by Kiddy and Woodward (2013), discussed below, we see how art production can be used as a tool to gain deeper insight into an historical era. The sort of personal experience one has creating or examining art within the context of historical events has the potential to provide greater learning opportunities.

Often, we use art as a visual representation of historical events and cultures. In some cases these may be examples of art from daily life and highlight the culture and in others may present an intentional representation glorifying a specific event such as *Trajan's Column* depicting the victory over the Dacians (Stephenson, 2004). These works of art allow us to glimpse inside a culture and they provide a historical record in a visual form though we must also maintain a critical eye as these works have cultural bias embedded within them (Holt, 1998).

Holt (1998) describes how he uses art as an entry point for discussion about significant events and attitudes within American history. One example the author discusses is how the depictions of Native Americans changes over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Portrayed as noble savages, they appeared almost like Greek or Roman gods in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century but by the 1880's the depictions became more menacing, reflecting the change in American attitudes (Holt, 1998). The topic then branches into a discussion about the portrayal of minority groups in art of the time and how it reflects American values and attitudes or about the changes in American society and westward expansion (Holt, 1998). This is one example of how art may be linked with history; another example includes art production along with history education.

As part of their research, professors at Albright College, Kiddy and Woodward (2013) taught a class that included Latin American history along with printmaking. The goal was to teach the historical component alongside art production giving students hands on understanding of the important influence of art as an agent of social change. As part of the class, students studied the background of the revolutions in Cuba and Mexico and the role of Latin American artists in disseminating ideas and information (Kiddy & Woodward, 2013). The historical background presented as the lecture portion of the class provided a research base for the creation of studio works. Throughout the process of creating the prints, the professors discuss elements of design as well as issues relating to the social situations in these countries, such as land reform. The methodology used in this class allows students, “an opportunity to think about those multiple images not as a partner in consumer culture, but as a method to make a change in the world around them” (Kiddy & Woodward, 2013, p. 189).

Personal experience has been shown to improve student learning. Wallace and Beidler (1968) examined how personal experience affects student learning in history. The lesson they

analyzed had students record the activities of their day and then recount them as a historical record (Wallace & Beidler, 1968). To ensure that student improvement in the class was not due to the increased attention from the researchers, the experiment was extended to thirty days. Students were then asked to place their entries out of order and attempt to retell the events in chronological order (Wallace & Beidler, 1968). Students then examined a popularized account of Franklin's life and compared it with his autobiography and the experimental group noted several discrepancies while the control groups did not (Wallace & Beidler, 1968). The experimental group was more inclined to show skepticism of the popularized account of Franklin's life. This is specifically evident in the events surrounding his experiments with electricity and the kite flying story as recounted in the popular telling (Wallace & Beidler, 1968). This experiment demonstrates how personal experience can help one gain better understanding and insight of history. In a similar way, a visual journal or series sketches might also help one to observe history or their surroundings with a new eye.

Art is inherently a personal experience and it has the potential to move history beyond just facts and dates into something deeply personal. Two types of learning are involved using this sort of interdisciplinary approach; "theoretical learning and experiential learning" (Lachapelle, 1997, p. 139). When these two approaches are combined greater growth and development occur. One's theoretical knowledge fills in the gaps that occur when experiencing a work of art or creating art, and in return art has the ability to fill the gaps in theoretical knowledge (Lachapelle, 1997). Experiencing art first hand as well as studying the history and interpretations serves to enhance one's aesthetic experience (Dewey, 1934). These combine to create a more complete picture than using either approach alone.



## 2.2 Research-based Art

The use of research-based art production is not limited to history but can be expanded to any subject to create an interdisciplinary curriculum. Give the similarities between art and literature many of the same ideas apply. Newland (2013) created a curriculum integrating the language arts and visual art. Students focused on several key aspects: visualization, visual idioms, narrative, and metaphors. To encourage visual thinking in the elementary grades, students were asked to draw the story and focus on the key parts. This not only encouraged the creation of mental images associated with the literature but also a critical analysis of what they were reading. In another exercise, Newland (2013) had students respond with a written narrative based on a clay sculpture she had created. This use of an interdisciplinary curriculum helps students to make connections between disciplines as well as improving their comprehension (Newland, 2013). While evidence shows this improves reading comprehension it also improves a student's ability to think visually and develop meaningful connections through their artwork.

Eubanks (2012) suggests research-based art should form a “‘functional integration’ of disciplines... that includes the artist, the work, and the ideas behind the work” (p. 52). To attain this, interdisciplinary art should be organized around themes. Themes give structure to isolated ideas and help create form (Ulbricht, 1998). Research can help students interpret a broad range of ideas. In a lesson outlined by Lynette Henderson (2013), students were asked to create a tableaux based on a prominent figure in California history. Henderson (2013) observed, “As students researched, they discovered that a specific storyline depended on a point of view. The point of view represented in a historical account determined if the changes were good or bad and for whom” (p. 23). The development of themes allows for students to create a body of work with deeper meaning as well explore their place within a larger society.

An interdisciplinary approach offers possibilities for students to learn through the experience of researching and creating art. This may include the physical act of creation or incorporating topics as they present themselves within the process. A lesson involving landscape painting or photography can lend itself to greater knowledge of environmental issues, wildlife, and the community (Aucoin, 2011). This sort of hands-on-experience can help students develop a sense of place and interest within their own community and environment (Aucoin, 2011). Experience plays a vital role in our learning; our senses are constantly absorbing the world around us and when a work of art is created these experiences enrich artistic creation (Dewey, 1934). Dewey (1938) points out that the amount of experience is not as important as the quality and that a quality experience will engage the student in the learning process.

Research as a basis for studio production can help students link their personal interests with art creation and provide a framework for interdisciplinary art education. By utilizing elements from academic subjects, a research-based studio project can reinforce what a student is learning in their academic classes as well providing a starting point of interest for a student's art creation. Students also learn to see the world in broader terms and as inter-related, rather than in terms of isolated subjects. Dewey proposed a similar idea early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and put it into practice with the Laboratory School at the University of Chicago (Ulbricht, 1998). The curriculum, based on Dewey's ideas, at the Laboratory school was designed to follow the child's natural development and "curriculum integration was expected to occur naturally as teachers designed activities to explore important problems" (Ulbricht, 1998, p. 14). This sort of approach to art-making allows students to learn through the experience of creating art. Not only are they learning the technical skills necessary for successful art-making but through the research and hands-on production they are applying academic knowledge from various disciplines. Using

visual media along with other subjects also gives students more than one way of engaging with the material (Russell, 2013).

Research-based art production is not a new concept and I feel that I and my future students will be following a path sent trod by many artists before them. From Leonardo da Vinci to artists working today, research has formed the backbone of artistic creation. The production of art has always been based on some sort of research whether it is scientific, historical, cultural, social or introspective artists must begin with research. There are many examples and almost any artist I name could be an example of the researcher/artist. As an educator, it important to find a personal connection to facilitate a student's learning. The connections students make help to foster their interest and promote lifelong learning. Research-based studio practice allows students an opportunity to explore their interests and is a strong motivating force for further learning (Wagner, 2008). Students who have discovered a subject about which they are passionate are more likely to work harder and be more engaged (Wagner, 2008). Students who are intrinsically motivated by their interests are also more likely to learn the art skills necessary to express those ideas (Rabkin & Redmond, 2004). I hope that my own experience in this thesis project will provide insights I can utilize in the classroom.

Through the long history of art, the concept of researched-based art-making has been practiced for various reasons. Leonardo made countless scientific explorations within the confines of his sketch book, Georges Seurat studied treatises on how light functions to better inform his art work, and Gericault researched human events as a social statement within his work (Eubanks, 2012). Howard Pyle was known for extensive research into the subjects of his paintings including the costuming and landscape of his subject. Pyle infused his art with a love of history and the local landscape of the Brandywine River Valley. He fostered this passion with

his students as he encouraged them to become deeply involved with the subjects they painted, “it meant immersion in one’s subject, feeling its mood in one’s very bones...” (Pitz, 1975, p. 158).

Joe Peragine is a painter, sculptor and film maker has undertaken exhaustive research on Sherman tanks for his work and they act as a metaphor for the artist’s own insecurities and frailties (Eubanks, 2012). Many artists have used research to fuel the work and are examples for students to follow. Below, I will discuss a few examples.

**2.2.1 Gericault.** Gericault (1819) undertook a tremendous amount of research for his painting of the Raft of the Medusa. He pored over reports of the shipwreck and interviewed survivors so he could depict the events more accurately (Eubanks, 2012). Gericault even spent time in the morgue to aid his drawing of the figures in the composition (Eubanks, 2012). After this extensive research he began a series of sketches before deciding on a final composition (Eubanks, 2012). The preliminary research conducted by Gericault helped to provide context for the work and allowed the artist to develop a composition that best captures the incident. This provides a well-known example from art history of extensive research-based art and the painting itself has become an artifact documenting the historical ship wreck of the Medusa. Students may look to this as one of many examples to follow when conducting research for their art.

**2.2.2 Howard Pyle.** Howard Pyle immersed himself in his subjects and encouraged his students to do the same (Pitz, 1975). This often took the form of dramatic productions, elaborate costumes, or long periods in the countryside surrounding Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania (Pitz, 1975). He demanded his students not only be industrious in the studio but also be physically active (Pitz, 1975). This focus on physicality is based on his belief that artists must understand how the figure moves and being physically active will give them a greater understanding of the human form and motion (Pitz, 1975). His students were encouraged to live in the moment of the

subject depicted, extolling them, “one must imagine and feel it all vividly” (Schiller, 2012, p. 43). It was this form of experience that Pyle felt would enhance the art of his students and, though not his intent, they were engaged in a form of interdisciplinary study. Encompassing all these varied elements not only makes for well-rounded individuals but engaging and informed artists.

As a young man, Howard Pyle had an intense appetite for American history and would accumulate a vast wealth of knowledge to draw upon as an artist (Pitz, 1975). While conducting his own personal research, he came upon the diaries of John and William Bartram, Quaker naturalists from Philadelphia (Pitz, 1975). This became the basis for a series of drawings based on their diaries and their house and gardens in Philadelphia (Pitz, 1975). The Bartrams had largely been forgotten by 19th century American society, but Pyle developed these drawings into one of his first successful articles for *Harpers* launching his career (Pitz, 1975). In 1903, towards the end of his career, Scribner’s approached Howard Pyle regarding a retelling of the King Arthur tales, which he would write and illustrate (Pitz, 1975). Pyle embraced this work and for nearly 10 years read and dissected Arthurian legends from various sources, going to the root of the legend (Pitz, 1975). While conducting his research Pyle completed numerous drawings and paintings. It was during this phase of research and reflection that his art took on a darker quality and contained more elements of the mysticism embodied in some of the early Celtic legends (Pitz, 1975). Pyle was not only an avid researcher but also an artist and teacher who encouraged his students to experience their subjects first hand as part of their research. Pyle’s use of traditional research and experiential research is an inspiration to me, and may be a good model for my students as well.

**2.2.3 Joe Peragine.** Hell on Wheels, an exhibition by Joe Peragine draws from his

extensive research on Sherman tanks. His work uses the Sherman tank as a metaphor for the insecurities and vulnerabilities of the artist (Eubanks, 2012). Learning how vulnerable the tanks were despite their appearance, he pored over endless diagrams and schematics, creating drawings and making tanks out of cardboard and cloth (Eubanks, 2012). The research is internalized and Peragine states that "...I run down a lot of paths in hopes that they will meet up at some point" (Eubanks, 2012, p. 51). The depth of research conducted by Peragine not only informs his work but also influences its development as is evident by the Sherman tanks morphing into cloth sculptures, representing their vulnerability. While Gericault and Pyle provide examples from art history, Peragine is an example of a contemporary artist using research for his art creation process. Through his work students are able to witness how a living artist uses this process in their work.

### **2.3 *Plein air* Painting**

Painting *en plein air* or painting in the open air has a long tradition, though the medium has changed over the years. Artists of the Renaissance often worked from outdoor sketches generally in watercolor but during the time of the Romantic landscape painters there was a shift to the oil study (Isaacson, 1994). There was not only a shift of material but also philosophy. Artists like John Constable encouraged artists to learn from nature and forget the conventions of the studio. Painting *en plein air* still only represented an intermediary step until the 1860s and the Impressionist movement (Isaacson, 1994). Artists like Monet, Cezanne, and Pissarro took their easels into the open air and no longer were these studies for larger studio work but they were exhibited as finished work. From France this idea crossed the Atlantic with artists like William Merritt Chase who helped introduce Impressionism to the United States (May, 2011).

In Constable's memoirs he argues against convention and a return to the study of nature, "nature contains nothing that is ugly, nothing that warrants the distorting corrections of academic artists" (Isaacson, 1994, p. 428). Constable's approach asks artists to forget what they have learned and go before nature with humility. This way of painting rejects formulas and trickery, rather the artist becomes an honest interpreter of nature and is constantly presented with new problems and unique solutions. Constable did not show his *plein air* studies; instead they were references for his larger studio work that presented a more polished version of his slap dash oil sketches. Studying directly from nature, these studies became a form of research where Constable studied the phenomena he witnessed outside the studio. Constable's work later provided inspiration for the Impressionists in the 1860's.

Though *plein air* painting was not new in the 1860s, displaying it was. Artists were expected to submit highly refined works with no evidence of brush work to the Academy. The artists of the Impressionist movement however exhibited their *plein air* work as finished pieces invoking the criticism that their work was unfinished. The Impressionists felt they were freeing themselves from the constraints of the French Academy who stressed formulas and conventions for art (Isaacson, 1994). Painting outside the studio, they used brighter colors that more closely resembled those seen in nature. In a letter to Emile Bernard in 1905 Cezanne encourages artists to study from nature and express what we see according to our own temperaments (Isaacson, 1994, p. 434). Monet echoes this sentiment in his letters to Frederic Bazille: "Don't you think that directly in nature and alone one does better?" (Isaacson, 1994, p. 433). It is because of the Impressionists that *plein air* moved from an activity searching for ideas to an expression of the painter's response to nature.

William Merritt Chase was an early advocate for Impressionism in the United States. Trained in Munich he used the dark earthy palette of the German School but after receiving criticism and a changing American aesthetic, he adopted the brighter colors and technique of Impressionist painters in Europe (May, S., 2011). An influential instructor, Chase taught at The Art Students League and various other locations in New York. In 1890 Chase was asked to be the instructor for a *plein air* school in Shinnecock Hills on Long Island (Schaffner & Zabar, 2010). The hills around Shinnecock provided ample subject matter for Chase's students and the school would become one of the most famous and influential summer outdoor painting schools in the country (Schaffner & Zabar, 2010). Chase's school also provided continuing education opportunities for art educators during the summer months. Irene Weir, the art supervisor for the Boston suburb of Brookline, believed art teachers needed to be artists as well as art educators and encouraged the teachers in her district to attend Chase's Shinnecock summer school (Stankiewicz, 2001).

Many Impressionist also investigated the science of light and how this could be reproduced in their paintings. Seurat studied scientific treatises so that he might better understand how the laws of physics could be used to recreate the effect of light in his paintings (Eubanks, 2012). The scientific research undertaken by Seurat helped him to develop his formula for optical painting (Eubanks, 2012). For other artists, painting *en plein air* offers the opportunity to study nature with greater intensity, not unlike a scientist. Chase encouraged his students to observe how the air seems to vibrate or how the light bouncing off an object can make it appear to be a different color (Ness, 1973). Monet explored how an awareness through direct observation would affect the shape, size, and speed of his brush strokes (Isaacson, 1994). Contemporary artist Mark Messersmith, creates *plein air* work that acts as a point of inspiration



for his studio work. His observations from nature inform his work and depict the conflict between wildlife and humans in North Florida where he paints (Anderson & Fraser, 2014). In a similar role as a scientist he studies the affects humans have on the natural world through his *plein air* work (Anderson & Fraser, 2014). These examples demonstrate how the artist can also fill the role of a scientist through the use of observation in their work.

## 2.4 William Bartram

The name of William Bartram first became known to me while reading the book *Cold Mountain* by Charles Frazier. *Bartram's Travels* is the book Ada Munro gave to Inman before he departed with his regiment for the war (Frazier, 1997). It was meant to remind him of home since Bartram, an explorer from an earlier generation, wrote about the western mountains of North Carolina where Inman was from. Bartram's book played a key role linking the two main characters during their separation. Despite a deep interest in the Colonial American history I had never heard of Bartram before. Curious about Bartram, I purchased the naturalist's edition of Bartram's travels and discovered that not only did his journeys cover the mountains of North Carolina but much of Georgia, Florida, and Alabama.

The south of Bartram's time, just prior to the American Revolution, was a wild and exotic country filled with strange and dangerous animals and peoples. It remained relatively unexplored and except for the accounts of De Soto's expedition very little was known about the native plants, animals and native peoples of the South. After Florida was ceded to the British as war reparations for Spain's involvement in the French and Indian War, British settlers moved into the former Spanish territory setting up plantations and trading posts.

Born in Philadelphia to a prominent Quaker family, Bartram showed early artistic talent and at age fourteen accompanied his father, John Bartram, to the Catskill Mountains (Cashin,

2000). John Bartram was a naturalist in his own right and sets the example William is to follow on his own travels. John collected specimens of American plants and sent them to Peter Collinson, a politically well-connected merchant in London. It was through Collinson that the elder Bartram is elected a member of the Royal Society and becomes acquainted with Sir Hans Sloane founder of the British Museum and Dr. John Fothergill the owner of the largest private garden in London (Cashin, 2000). William, however, continued to remain restless and unsettled preferring a life outdoors. He was offered a position in a printing shop by his father's friend, Benjamin Franklin, but he disliked the confinement of the printing shop. Dissatisfied with life in Philadelphia and his father's effort to engage him in some sort of profitable business, he embarked on extended visit to his uncle William Bartram in Charleston.

Through his contacts in London, John Bartram is named as the King's botanist and tasked with exploring the newly acquired territory of Florida (Cashin, 2000). John rendezvoused with his son in Charlestown, South Carolina in 1765 and together they head south to explore the territory of East Florida at the mouth of the St. Johns River near present day Jacksonville, Florida. This trip helped to shape the course of William Bartram's future. Falling in love with the land he has explored, he decided to remain in Florida as an indigo planter. Despite deep concerns, his father secured the loans necessary for William to purchase land and set up a plantation. A year later when Henry Laurens' visited Bartram's indigo plantation, he found it failing and Bartram starving. Lauren's rescues William and brings him back to Charleston. Broken by another failed venture William returns to his father's home in Philadelphia (Cashin, 2000).

In 1772 William desired to flee Philadelphia once again, this time due to the harassment of creditors seeking payment for his failed business venture in Florida (Cashin, 2000). He sought

refuge back in Charleston and, writing to Dr. Fothergill, he proposed an expedition to explore Florida and Indian Country, sending back samples and his writings. Fothergill was enthusiastic about the idea and agreed to fund the entire expedition. The material he collected and his journal would form the basis of *Bartram's Travels* first published in 1791.

**2.4.1 Bartram's Travels.** Bartram's journal, sketches, and specimens were originally meant only for Dr. Fothergill but, due to the growing tensions between the colonies and Great Britain, they seemed to take on a new importance to Bartram (Cashin, 2000). As a Quaker, Bartram was a lifelong pacifist and hated discussions of war and violence on the frontier. His neutral position was beneficial as he navigated between increasingly hostile Native tribes, Colonial Settlers, and British Colonial agents. Despite this, it is evident in the years between his journey and the publishing of *Travels* that Bartram saw his journal as part of a new American narrative. Bartram also showed keen interest in the manners and customs of the Native Tribes of the south and even a great deal of concern for their well-being as demonstrated by his 1793 Introduction for *Bartram's Travels* (1958/1998). He openly questioned whether the adoption of European ways and habits by coercion or by force would really be beneficial to Native Americans or American Society (Bartram, 1958/1998). He argued that a way could be found for both worlds to coexist peacefully: "We ought to consider them as they are in reality, as our Brethren and fellow citizens, and treat them as such..." (Cashin, 2000, p. 259). Bartram (1958/1998) hoped that Christian love and charity would prevail and lead to an equitable solution between the United States and the Native American tribes.

Upon reaching Charleston, Bartram met with John Stuart, the Indian Superintendent and learned of conference with the Cherokee, Creek, and British officials to be held in Augusta, Ga (Cashin, 2000). Stuart offered to introduce Bartram to the principle leaders of the Creek and

Cherokee in order to facilitate his travel through their nations (Bartram, 1958/1998). The conference held in 1773 was intended to settle the border between the Creek, Cherokee, and British Territories. The Cherokee had become indebted to traders in the area and to pay their debt they offered to cede the land between the Oconee and Savannah Rivers, an area that includes present-day Athens, Ga. This land, however, was also claimed by the Creek. Stuart also opposed private ceding of land as repayment of debt because he distrusted the frontier traders and feared such land deals could lead to further conflict between colonist and Native Americans (Cashin, 2000).

Since the conference was several months away, Bartram made plans to spend the intervening months along the Georgia coast exploring the islands and Altamaha River (Kautz, 2006). In 1773, Bartram took a ship for Savannah with letters of recommendation from John Stuart. Once properly supplied he headed for the town of Sunbury south of Savannah. Bartram predicted Sunbury would surpass Savannah in importance one day (1958/1998). The town was a port that saw nearly as much seagoing traffic as Savannah and it was the home to several prominent Georgians such as Lyman Hall and Button Gwinnett, both signers of the Declaration of Independence (Kautz, 2006). Today the city is a ghost town near the Savannah suburb of Richmond Hill (Kautz, 2006). Its great plantations and port were decimated during the hurricanes of 1804 and 1824 and without trade the town withered until little remained of the great port city (Kautz, 2006).

Bartram continued his exploration of the coast of Georgia assisted by the Scots living in the community of Darien, thanks to the contacts provided by Stuart. His travels took him to Sapelo Island, St Simon's Island, the ruins of Fort King George, and up the Altamaha River. Returning to Savannah, he then sailed up the Savannah River to Augusta to attend the conference

between the Creek, Cherokee, and British. This meeting provided him with a first glimpse of the tribes he would encounter along his journey. Joining the survey team, Bartram collected samples along the Oconee River and wrote of a place he called the great buffalo lick (Bartram, 1958/1998). The site is believed to be located in Oglethorpe County near the town of Philomath not far from Athens (Kautz, 2006). Buffalo no longer roamed the area during Bartram's time, but only thirty years earlier James Oglethorpe wrote of hunting buffalo on the prairie just outside of Savannah (Kautz, 2006). Bartram blamed the encroachment of European hunters for the disappearance of Buffalo in Georgia over the span of thirty years (Bartram, 1958/1998).

Bartram's next trip would be back to Florida, where he had once explored with his father. In April, 1775 Bartram once again set off for Augusta, this time his goal was the territory north in the Appalachians inhabited by the Cherokee. His journey follows the path up the Savannah River as far as he can navigate and then on foot north through South Carolina and the north-east corner of Georgia. His first destination was Fort Prince George in present-day Pickens County South Carolina. The Fort was built on the site of burned Cherokee village Keowee and operated more as a trading post for the British than a military installation (Bartram, 1958/1998). Without the promised Cherokee guide, Bartram continued alone on foot toward the villages in the mountains crossing back into Georgia near the Cherokee town of Sticoe, now known as Clayton. This portion of his path that crossed the Chattooga River forms the marked portion of the Bartram Trail in Georgia (Ray & Skove, 2011). This path follows part of an old road that existed during Bartram's time and continues into North Carolina to the Cherokee town "Whatoga" now Franklin, North Carolina (Ray & Skove, 2011). Much of the land is now part of the Chattahoochee National Forest, and though much of the area was logged and replanted in the time since Bartram first visited, many of the sites he wrote about are still visible.

Following the trail from War Woman Dell he discovers a cascading waterfall he calls Falling Creek, today it is known as Martin's Creek Falls (Ray & Skove, 2011). "I here seated myself on the moss clad rocks, under the shade of spreading trees and floriferous fragrant shrubs, in full view of the cascades" (Bartram, 1958/1998, p. 216). According to Bartram the area was covered with Magnolia trees that still grow along the banks today (1958/1998). What Bartram does not tell us is the violent past of the territory he travelled. A Quaker, Bartram disliked talk of war and often avoided it in his writings. However, the road he traveled was the wagon road cut by the British military for the 1761 invasion of Cherokee Country (Cashin, 2000). The expedition included most of the notable families of the Carolinas and Georgia and many individuals who would play a prominent role in the American Revolution years later. Heading north the British burned the town of Keowee near Clemson University. Bartram remarked on the ruins of the town as well as the graves but excluded the details of the conflict from *Bartram's Travels* (1958/1998). Crossing into Georgia, the British proceeded to burn the town of Sticoe which lies on the site of the modern city of Clayton, Georgia. Bartram noted the ruins of the ancient town and what he found were large numbers of Cherokee graves along the road from War Woman Creek all the way to the North Carolina border (Cashin, 2000). The military hoped to relieve Fort Loudoun in southeastern Tennessee but after burning the town of Whatoga they were forced to return back to Charleston.

At this stage, things turned for the British in a defeat reminiscent of the infamous defeat of General Braddock in the Pennsylvania wilderness on their way to Fort Duquesne. The British were cut off after the Cherokee burned the town of Augusta and the neighboring forts. They fought their way back to Charleston, suffering heavy casualties and Fort Loudoun surrendered. All but a handful of the soldiers manning the fort were killed (Cashin, 2000). Despite the defeat

of the British, the Cherokee losses break their military power and they withdraw from the foothills into the mountains for protection and many of the towns were left in ruins. Bartram's path followed the Eastern Continental Divide, crossing Rabun Bald and ascending into the hills of North Carolina until reaching the town Whatoga and the Vale of Cowee (Kautz, 2006).

Bartram waited in Cowee for a guide or escort to lead him into the Jore Mountains. After two days when the guide never showed he began his journey westward to the Overhill Cherokee, Bartram laments "I was left again wandering alone in the dreary mountains" (Bartram, 1958/1998, p. 227). Descending down the western slopes of the mountains, Bartram has a chance meeting with Little Carpenter, the high Chief of the Cherokee (1958/1998). Little Carpenter, also known as Attakulakulla, persuaded Bartram to return to Augusta because he could not guarantee his safety as the warriors of the Overhill towns were upset over recent murders of Cherokee by white traders (1958/1998). Heeding Little Carpenter's advice, Bartram returned to Cowee where a frontier trader made arrangements for him to accompany a trading expedition heading west to the Mississippi River (Bartram, 1958/1998).

This opportunity allowed Bartram his first opportunity to explore deep into the territory of the Creek Confederacy, an area that included central Georgia, the panhandle of Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. First, Bartram met with the traders and trappers in the town of Washington near Augusta; he hurried south from the Mountains and down the Savannah River (Kautz, 2006). From here they followed the fall line that splits the state crossing the area that would become the towns of Sparta and Milledgeville. In the area of the modern city of Macon the party stopped at a site known as the "Oakmulge old fields" to Bartram (1958/1998, p. 241). Bartram described "vast artificial hills" of the Ocmulgee Mounds as "the wonderful remains of the power and grandeur of the ancients of this part of America" (1958/1998, p. 241).

Continuing westward Bartram crossed the Chattahoochee River just south of the site of modern Fort Benning sometime in early July of 1775 (Kautz, 2006). Their destination was the twin Creek towns of Great Coweta near present-day Columbus, Georgia and Uche near Phenix City, Alabama (Kautz, 2006).

Bartram continued with the trading party to the Colony of West Florida and the British outpost at Pensacola and then city of Mobile, Alabama (Bartram, 1958/1998). From Mobile the British organized a scheme to keep the Muscogee and Choctaw tribes occupied fighting each other by supplying weapons and ammunition to both sides (Calloway, 1995). This policy would soon change upon the outbreak of war with the colonies (Cashin, 2000). Avoiding Spanish New Orleans, Bartram along with the trading party ventured up the Mississippi River to the British trading post located in Baton Rouge. Bartram collected thousands of specimens and notes on his journey. When he set out, the Southeast was part of Britain's colonies in North America and upon his return to Philadelphia in 1777 they were in the midst of a war for independence. This event cut him off from his sponsor who received Bartram's last shipment of specimens and notes from Georgia in 1776 (Bartram, 1958/1998). Most of Bartram's field journals that list exact locations have been lost, but his samples are now part of the British Museum collection (Cashin, 2000). Dr. Fothergill would die before the end of the conflict between the Britain and her former colonies but this would pave the way for Bartram to publish his work. *Bartram's Travels* would continue to capture the imagination years after its publication in 1791 influencing the writing of Romantic authors William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge.



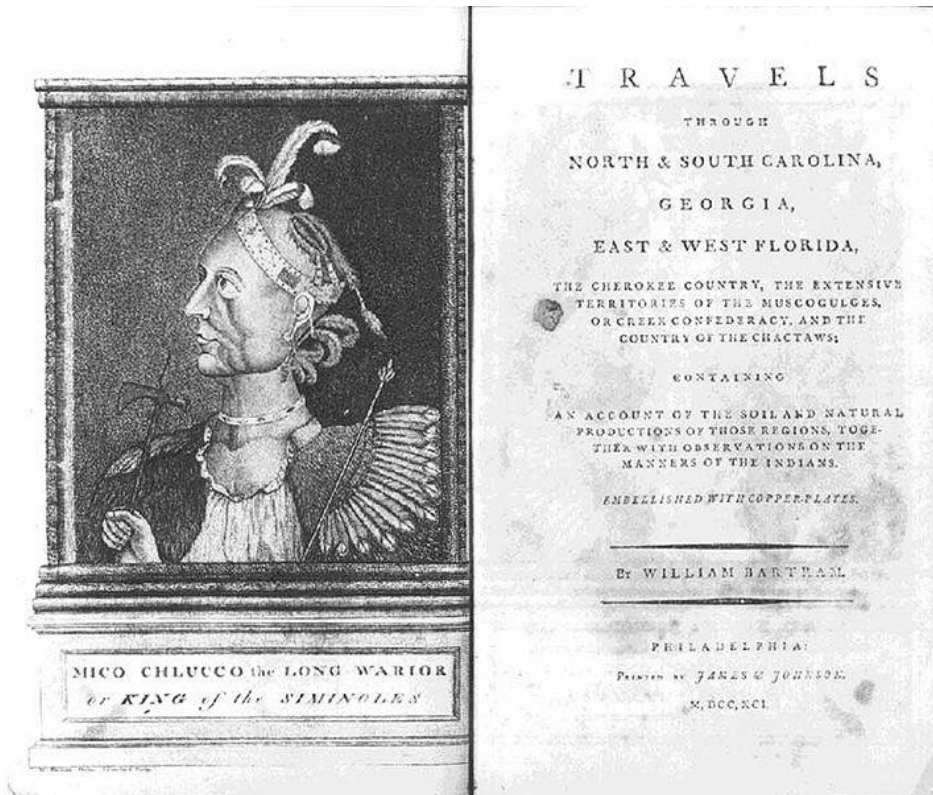


Figure 1. William Bartram, Frontispiece and title page of "Travels" 1782.



Figure 2. William Bartram, *Franklinia Alatamaha*. 1782.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I will outline my plan for my studio-based work. In addition, I will describe my process for taking notes and documenting my work.

#### 3.1 Art as Research

I have examined how research may benefit the process of art production, now I would like to review how art-making may be used a form of research. Art, like traditional research, is a form of documentation that collects information and builds upon knowledge. Eisner (1997) compares art to a diagram or map that describes a relationship without the hindrance of language. Using the example of poetry, Eisner states, “Poetry transcends the limits of language and evokes what cannot be articulated” (Eisner, 1997, p. 5). One advantage of art as a form of research is its ability to present material that is more evocative rather than denotative, unlike traditional research (Eisner, 1997). This may lead to further questions, interpretations, and explorations creating a more complex picture of the information (Eisner, 1997).

Irwin (2004) presents the figure of the artist, researcher, and teacher in a/r/tography. These three roles are occupied simultaneously and are often difficult to separate because it is so ingrained in the lifestyle of the artist (Irwin & de Cosson, 2004). First, as the Artist, one is involved in creating a work of art. Second, as the Researcher, one may explore various avenues of research. The subject matter as well as art creation may represent a form of research. Many artists, like Wendy Stephenson (2004), embark upon physical research as the subject of their work. In Stephenson's (2004) case, her research was centered on her family's history in British Columbia. Digging through the shed and workshop at her parent's home like an archaeological excavation she found artifacts from her family's past such as a saw used to build the family

home in the 1940s. She combines these with clippings of newspaper articles from the time and old family photos to create a collage representing the history of her family in British Columbia. The process of researching and creating art is a transformative act that affects both the researcher and the research (Sullivan, 2006). The goal in arts-based research, as in other forms of research, is the creation of new knowledge (Sullivan, 2006). The third component of Irwin (2004) describes the role of the Artist as Teacher. This may be in the realm of a traditional classroom where one may apply knowledge gained by arts-based research or one may share research in the form of an exhibition or publication of their work (Irwin & de Cosson, 2004). All three roles come into play in this study. Will art creation lead to greater understanding of history and cultures? How will research inform my work and will it provide subject matter for future works? How may I implement research as basis for art creation within the classroom and provide link between art and other disciplines?

### **3.2 Art Production**

My interest in landscape as a subject began during a trip to New Zealand in 2006. Since then I have become more interested in painting the landscape that surrounds me as well as its history. Some of my previous work includes pieces inspired by my travels in New Zealand. I also began to paint subjects close to home in my own area. Painting among the ruins of Sope Creek, north of Atlanta, I began to explore the combination of history and art. The area is now a state park but was once home to a large cotton mill and the ruins are still visible today.



Figure 3. Denis Byrd, Taranaki Falls, (2010) Oil on Canvas, 11 x 14.



Figure 4. Denis Byrd, Castle Rock, (2009) Oil on Canvas, 8 x 10.





Figure 5. Denis Byrd. Sope Creek Ruins, (2012) Oil on Canvas, 30 x 30.

I hope that art may lead to a better understanding of the history of Bartram and the areas he once explored. For this study I followed the path taken by William Bartram in 1774-1776 through Georgia and the Carolinas. I made a series of sketches and *plein air* studies of the landscape written about in *Bartram's Travels* (1958/1998). The sketches and studies included modern changes to the landscape as well as pockets of wilderness that still resembles the land seen by Bartram over 200 years ago. I included works representing the three geographic regions of the Southeast; coastal, piedmont, and mountains. These correspond with major sites from Bartram's travels and will include the area around Savannah and Darien, Augusta, Athens and Macon, and Toccoa, Rabun Bald, Chattahoochee National Forest, Franklin, NC, and Nantahala National Forest. I also took one extended hike of several days along the Bartram Trail during

which time I completed several studies along the trail. Working in oil, I created studies small and portable enough to allow for me to capture as many different compositions as possible. While painting on location, I gathered information about the local history and collected supplemental photographs of the area for future reference.



Figure 6. Plein air set up at the Ocmulgee Mounds.

Once sufficient resources were gathered on a particular location, my studies and other resources were compiled in the studio. Here, I designed larger compositions based on the studies, sketches and photographs to expand onto a larger canvas. The final studio pieces were oil and on canvas ranging in size between 24"x30" to 40"x60". Most of the larger canvases were 30"x40". Most paintings began with a monochromatic under painting, establishing light and dark masses. After the under painting was dry, each piece was painted in an *alla prima* style as much as

possible given the size of the work. I used a limited palette of titanium white, cadmium yellow, cadmium red, ultramarine blue, Payne's gray, yellow ochre, and burnt sienna.

The body of work consists of 12 large studio pieces along with 18 studies to illustrate the process for a gallery exhibition. The preliminary collection of studies took 10-12 weeks to complete. While collecting the necessary studies, work on the larger studio pieces began. Each painting took 1-2 weeks to complete and there were multiple paintings in process to facilitate completion in a timely manner. Below are examples of some of the *plein air* studies I have completed as part of my initial research.



Figure 7. Denis Byrd, Ocmulgee Mounds Study, Oil on Canvas, 11 x 14.



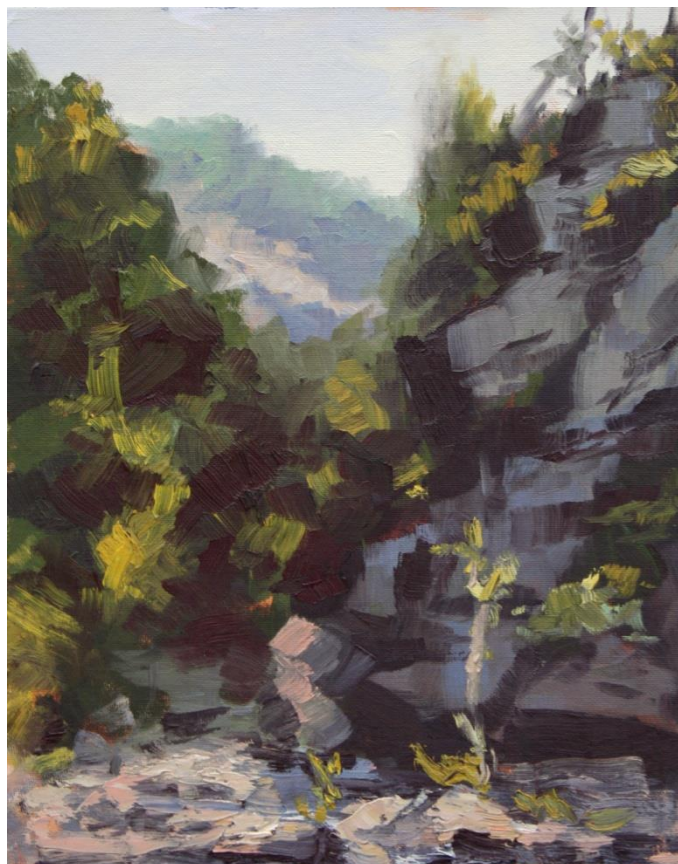


Figure 8. Denis Byrd. Tallulah Gorge Study, Oil on Panel, 11 x 14.

I continued to research Bartram and the local history associated with his travels using primary and secondary sources. This research formed the foundation of my artwork. I also documented the process of creating the studies and the finished work through photographs and written reflection. I kept a reflective journal documenting my discoveries, processes, and outcomes. I reflected on ways this research and methodology may be incorporated within the classroom and may be used to promote interdisciplinary study. In addition to documenting the art creation process, I documented any other experiences in the areas I collected my studies. My research into local history enhanced the interdisciplinary approach to art creation and served as additional background for the work created. The work compiled, along with components of the research and documentation of the process is being prepared for a gallery exhibition to be held in

November, 2014. As part of the exhibition excerpts from Bartram's travels and some historical resources will be included to aid the viewer's understanding of how work was created and its significance. The gallery show will serve as another method for teaching outside the classroom.

### **3.3 Timeline**

- January-March: Research: *Bartram's Travels*
- February 26-27: Field studies from Ocmulgee National Monument.
- April 1<sup>st</sup>: Field studies from coastal Georgia and preparation for studio work.
- April 7<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup>: Bartram Trail hike near Clayton, Ga. Collect 3-4 studies.
- April 30<sup>th</sup>: First studio piece complete.
- May: Studies from Ocmulgee and Savannah. Two studio pieces complete.
- June: Final two studio pieces completed.

### **3.4 Limitations**

Given Bartram's importance as a naturalist one might also construct a work based on environmental concerns but this is beyond the limitations of this study. With unlimited resources and time it would be possible to cover the entire distance Bartram traveled. Bartram traveled vast distances throughout the Southeast so I have limited this study to just locations he traveled within Georgia and some areas just north of the North Carolina border. I have also limited the number of paintings to only 4-5 large studio pieces over 10-12 weeks. The amount of time to complete each piece limits how many I am able to produce.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESEARCH, ART CREATION, AND REFLECTION

My preliminary research began with *Bartram's Travels* (1958/1998) in order to determine his path and significant landmarks. Some sites he mentions are easily found on the map even today but most require some research and exploration. Using secondary sources I attempted to locate sites visited by the explorer that are still accessible today. Sadly, many of the sites he explored no longer exist or have been so transformed by development that Bartram would scarcely recognize them today (Kautz, 2006). Having narrowed my search to those areas marked as part of the Bartram Trail, or otherwise preserved as a state or national park, my next step was to explore and paint these sites first hand. My focus was on three geographical regions of Georgia covered by Bartram, the first is along the coast from Savannah to Darien, the second was central Georgia near the Ocmulgee Mounds, and the third is along a preserved tract of the Bartram Trail in the Chattahoochee National Forest in the Northeast Georgia Mountains.

#### **4.1 Art Creation**

During this process there are two types of research that feed the artistic creation process. The first is the research about Bartram and the trail itself. It serves as the background information that informs the art and helps to explain why I am creating these works. The second type of research is the collection of *plein air* studies that may be used for larger works or may be considered finished works themselves. I consider these studies a form of research because they are a process of information gathering and study. Due to the challenges of painting outdoors, such as weather, changing light, an overwhelming amount of information, and even the local wildlife, one's painting time may be limited. It becomes essential to capture the information that is really vital. This begins the editing process one must necessarily do when creating a work of

art. Every time I begin a new painting in the field I feel I can better overcome the challenges that *plein air* painting presents.

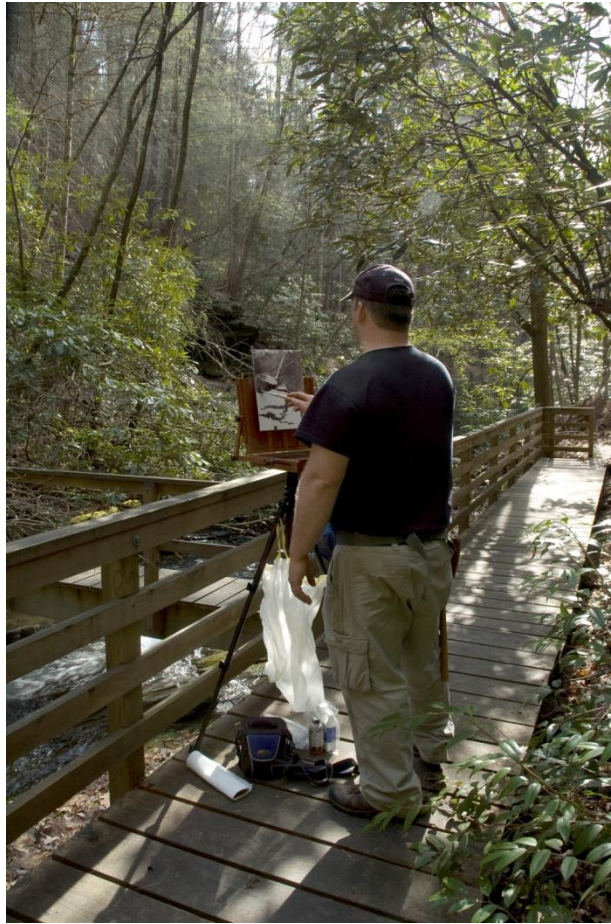


Figure 9. Painting at the Rock Shelter.

I began collecting studies through a series of day trips to several Bartram sites around Georgia and parts of North Carolina. After several day trips I realized I needed more time in one location. Since the Bartram trail in Northeast Georgia is a marked hiking trail within the Chattahoochee National Forest, it seemed like the obvious choice for a longer painting experience. My original intent was to hike to the top of Rabun Bald from Warwoman Dell but due to limited water and the amount of gear required to both paint and hike the trail, I limited the trip to the few miles between Warwoman Dell and Martin's Creek Falls. During my day trips I

used a small day pack and my Sienna Pochade box that attaches to a tripod. This was a lighter load and I would only carry the bare necessities of water, first aid kit, and a few snacks. For an extended hike and camping, more gear would be necessary: food, a tent, rain gear, and most importantly, water, would all need to be packed in with art supplies. Using an older style metal frame pack I was able to fit everything inside and pack my paints and pochade box in the top of the pack wrapped in cloth to protect. The tripod was strapped on top along with my tent and my canvas panels were carried in a corrugated plastic slot box that was attached to the outside of the pack using the daisy chains.



Figure 10. Daypack.





Figure 11. Full-frame backpack.

The first full day was spent at Warwoman Dell, an area that was once a gathering point for meetings between various Cherokee leaders. The Dell contains Warwoman Creek, several small waterfalls, and the remnants of the old railroad and Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) work that was embarked upon before World War II. Several attempts to build a railroad through Warwoman Dell since the 1850's but none have been successful. The (CCC) project was the last attempt made during the Great Depression. Left behind are old ruins, like the waste burning station and the stone steps leading to the grade for the railroad.



Figure 12. Civilian Conservation Corps ruins.





Figure 13. CCC steps leading to rail bed.

The first few hours of the morning were spent scouting locations along Warwoman Creek. The area is densely covered by a canopy of foliage and allowed very little light to penetrate. I explored the area near the CCC ruins and along the creek, while interesting there was not yet enough light and most of the area was in shadow. Crossing Warwoman Road, I picked up the Bartram Trail at Becky's Branch Falls just across the road from the main parking area at



Warwoman Dell. The Falls were impressive and fell several feet, but for *plein air* painting it was difficult terrain. The wooden bridge was too close to the falls to be able to view it well from that vantage point and the narrow trail hugged the hill on one and dropped off 20-30 feet on the other. Therefore, there was not a safe and suitable site where one might view the falls entirely while executing a painting. Returning back to Warwoman Dell, I followed along the creek and the gorge formed by the ancient fault line to a smaller waterfall. Despite being fairly humble compared to other falls on the trail, this spot offered several excellent areas to paint and because of its location it was one of the few places light entered the dell. The falling light created interesting patterns along the rock wall that changed by the hour and what at first looked like a brown rock wall was full of color once sunlight broke through the canopy. The next morning I planned to follow the trail north toward Rabun Bald.



Figure 14. Painting at Warwoman Dell.

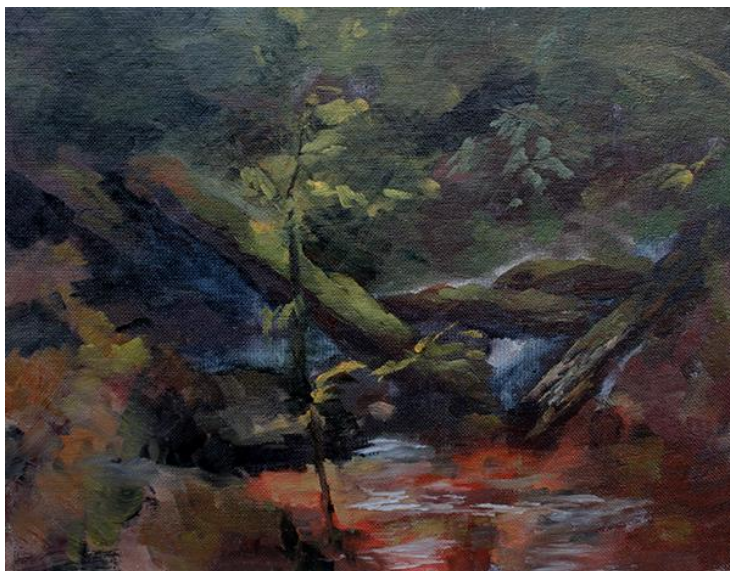


Figure 15. Denis Byrd. Warwoman Creek, Oil on Canvas, 11 x 14.

From Warwoman Dell I hiked the Bartram Trail to Martin's Creek Falls. This was the first day using the full metal-framed pack. My goal was to paint in areas that are not easily accessible with a *plein air* kit and to spend more than a few hours in that location. One of the disadvantages to painting *plein air* in oil is the weight of the materials. Even when pared down to the minimum, the supplies are still considerably heavier than watercolor or photography. This is not normally an issue until planning for longer hikes when it is necessary to pack in food, water, and other supplies. Now the normal pack load of around 75 lbs. is in excess of 100 lbs. This, combined with the steep rise in elevation, limited how much ground I was able to cover while hiking. My original plan was to hike to Rabun Bald 12 miles away or at least to a campsite between Martin Creek Falls. The previous day I was reconsidering that in order to spend more time painting in the area of the falls.



Figure 16. The Bartram Trail along Martin's Creek.

Heading up the trail at 8 am, I did not make the location of the campsite at Martin's Creek falls, two miles up the trail, until 10:30am. The heavier pack that included all of my food, water, tent, and painting gear slow me down more than I had expected. After a brief rest and scouting out a camp site I hiked up the 100 yards to the falls and began painting at the base of the falls. I painted in this particular location for roughly two hours. I spent much of the time laying in the main areas and waited for the light to hit the falls. This required that I anticipate what the light might do and establish the structure of the painting that would remain consistent despite changing light. Once the light broke through the trees, striking the falls, I only had a few minutes to capture the effect. The second painting was further down the trail and I focused on a fallen log below the falls. I attempted to make an under painting using a mixture of all the colors left on my palette from the previous painting. The mixture usually forms a gray that can be thinned with mineral spirits. This mixture was definitely a warm gray but I believe it contained too much

white because after an hour I was fighting it as I painted. It created a very opaque shadow and under painting, making it almost impossible to apply any other color.



Figure 17. Painting at Martin's Creek Falls.





Figure 18. Denis Byrd. Martin's Creek Falls, Oil on Panel, 12 x 9.

After several hours of working on this particular study I decided to quit and make preparations for camp. It was nearly 5:00 pm and because the camp site was shielded by several mountains I was afraid I would lose light there before other areas of the trail. I wanted to make sure my tent was set up, firewood collected, fire burning, and dinner cooked before dark. The area is not heavily traveled by people, in fact, I did not see anyone on this portion of the trail for the entire day. It is, however, traveled by black bears and other animals. During my previous day hike on the trail earlier in the year I discovered fresh bear droppings on the trail. While black bears are not normally a threat to humans, food left in camp could draw them, creating a

potentially dangerous situation. Therefore, there was more reason to set up and cook before it was too dark so that all food items could be slung over a limb in a bear bag protecting both the food and me from any wandering bears. I was unsure if linseed oil from the painting kit might attract animals but I did not wish to include it with the bear bag. I opted to move the paintings and painting supplies to a location away from my tent covered by a tarp. Nothing was disturbed during the night. The location of the campsite allowed me to paint most of the first day, completing two paintings which would have been impossible for a day hike due to the distances.



Figure 19. Campsite on the Bartram Trail.

The next morning I was able to begin painting again in the same area. For the morning painting, I decided against painting the falls which seemed the obvious choice as the most striking feature of the landscape. Instead, I painted the rock shelter that had a tree growing from in at an interesting angle. This shelter likely existed when Bartram visited the area though it



seems to be seldom used. I examined it for carbon on the ceiling, evidence fires had been built underneath it, but I found very little to indicate that. Likely, it has been used as an emergency shelter but it is too small for more than a couple people. It is listed as an emergency shelter for hikers in the Bartram Trail guides (Ray & Skove, 2011). With the painting of the rock shelter, I had to anticipate what the light would do once it struck the top of the rock and tree. I spent much of the time painting the areas in shadow and middle tones, saving the highlights for the areas I expected to be sunlit. In addition, to this I was consciously working on using my negative space to cut into my positive shapes to define the edges and create more interesting abstract patterns between positive and negative space.



Figure 20. Painting the Rock Shelter.

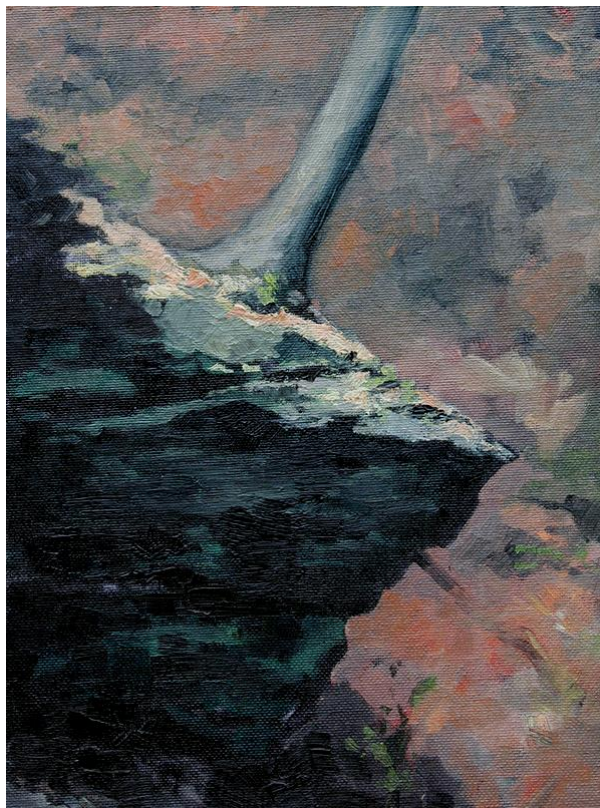


Figure 21. Denis Byrd. Rock Shelter, Oil on Canvas, 12 x 9.

Continuing the process, I brought these studies into the studio where they are the starting point for larger paintings. In the studio, without the distractions found in nature, it is easier to determine the main ideas, the focal points, and how to lead the viewer's eye through the work. These are all conscious decisions based on the field studies. Building my paintings, I attempt to capture the feeling of the *plein air* works, but in a larger format. On occasion I may combine several studies to create the desired feeling or effect. My color scheme and composition are usually based on the study but I do include some use of photography to supplement the studies. Often the simplicity of a small *plein air* study lacks the detail needed for a larger work. The photographs I collect while painting are useful tools to include additional information for larger paintings.





Figure 22. Denis Byrd. *A Little Bit of Color*, Oil on Panel, 5 x 3.

One of the first studies I completed as I scouted out painting locations along the Bartram trail is *A Little Bit of Color*. It is a small 3 x 5 canvas panel painted from a hillside near Clayton Georgia. This piece is a great example of using the original study as a departure point. The color and feeling of the study were desirable but for a larger work it needed more detail. In the spring, I began the larger painting as a 30 x 30. I decided not only to enlarge it significantly but to also change the dimensions and work in a square format. For this piece I was forced to add some

detail from memory and imagination. The *plein air* study was used to determine my palette and help me remember the original scene.



Figure 23. Denis Byrd. A Little Bit of Color, Oil on Canvas, 30 x 30.

Through a series of day trips as well as the extended hike on the Bartram trail I was able to compile a series of studies of North Georgia. Several of these have been expanded into larger works. Below are the studies and studio works based on my research in North Georgia.



## 4.2 North Georgia and North Carolina



Figure 24. Denis Byrd. View of Rabun Bald Study, Oil on Canvas, 8 x 10.

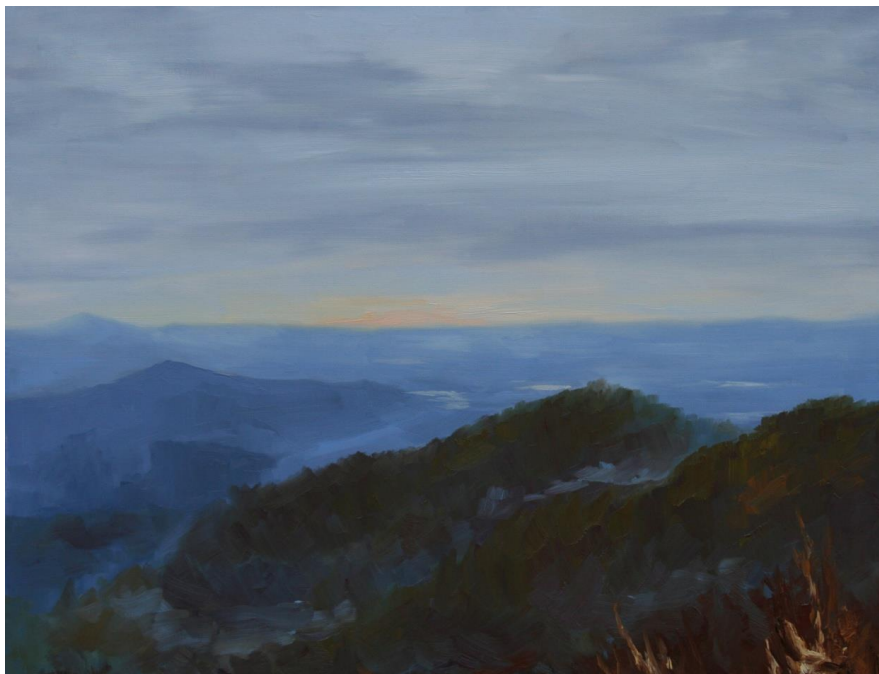


Figure 25. Denis Byrd. View of Rabun Bald, Oil on Canvas, 20 x 24.



Figure 26. Denis Byrd. *Breaking Storm*, Oil on Canvas, 14 x 11.



Figure 27. Denis Byrd. Summer Shower, Oil on Linen, 11 x 14.



Figure 28. Denis Byrd. Ascent, Oil on Canvas, 30 x 40.





Figure 29. Denis Byrd. Tallulah Gorge Study, Oil on Panel, 11 x 14.



Figure 30. Denis Byrd. Above the Gorge, Oil on Canvas, 30 x 40.

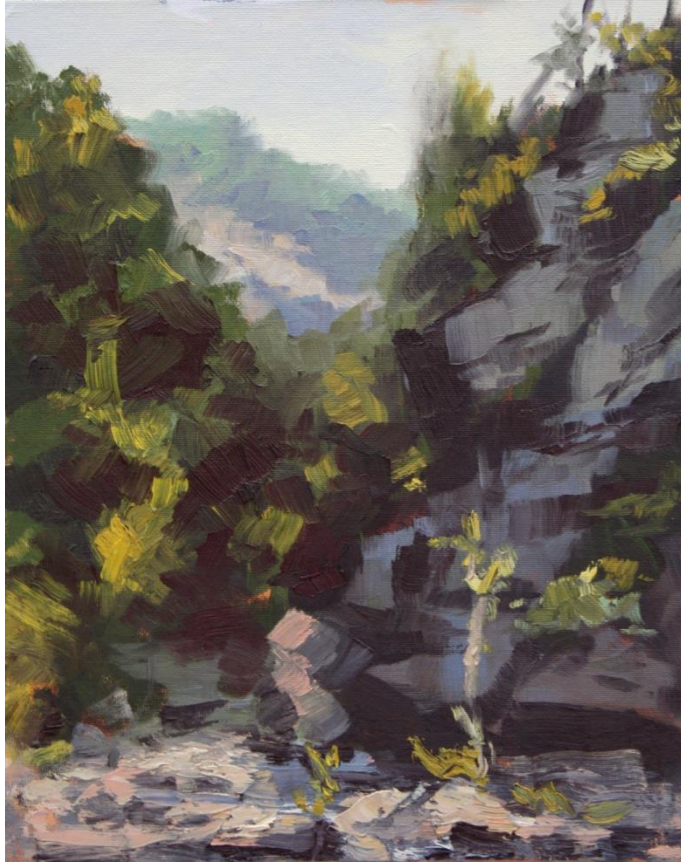


Figure 31. Denis Byrd. Tallulah Gorge Study, No. 2, Oil on Panel, 14 x 11.

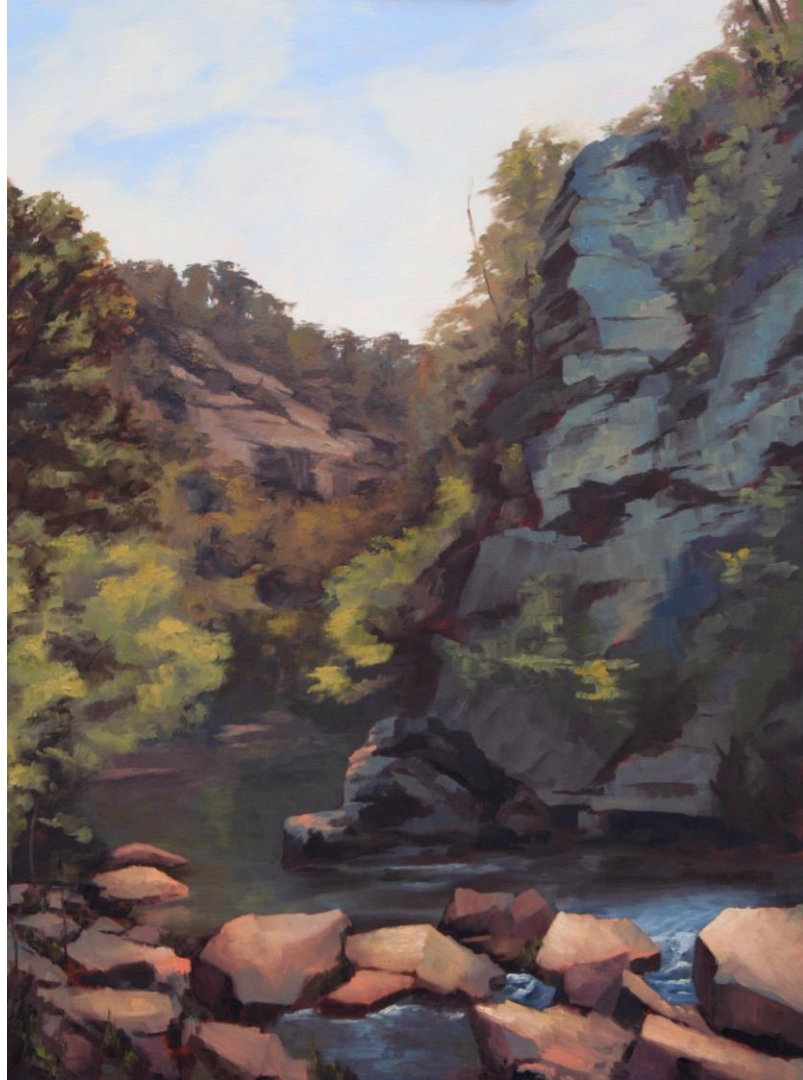


Figure 32. Denis Byrd. Tallulah Gorge, Oil on Canvas, 40 x 30

### 4.3 Middle Georgia

The studio pieces based on the area near the Ocmulgee mounds are sometimes composites of several studies. It is the nearest Bartram site, and therefore the most accessible I had the opportunity to visit the park for several single day *plein air* trips over the course of my research. I also included areas nearby, north of Macon. It is impossible to know exactly where Bartram explored and collected his specimens in many cases. Therefore, I also included some areas within several miles of the path he is known to have taken.



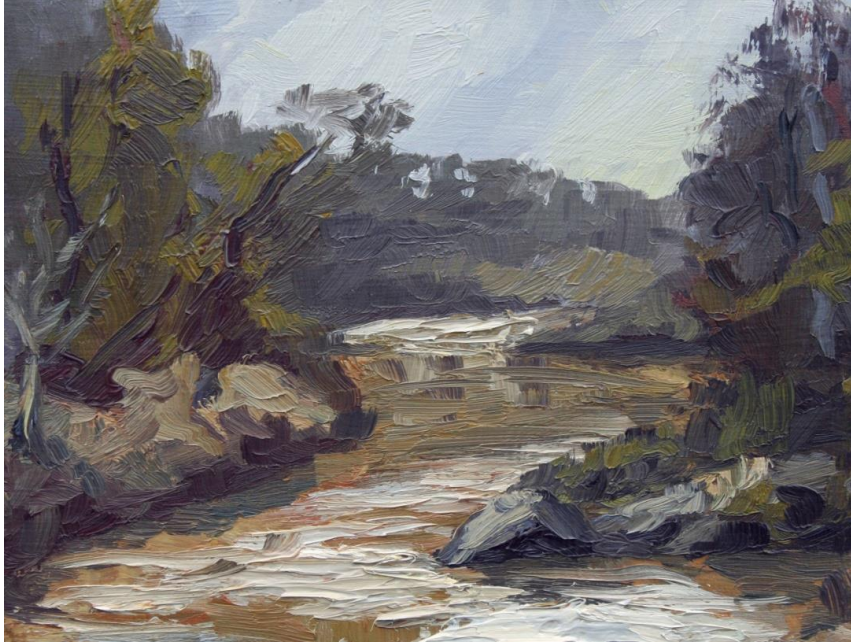


Figure 33. Denis Byrd. Untitled, Oil on Panel, 8 x 10.



Figure 34. Denis Byrd. Winter Field, Oil on Panel, 8 x 10.



Figure 35. Denis Byrd. Rolling in Study, Oil on Panel, 11 x 14.



Figure 36. Denis Byrd. Rolling in, Oil on Canvas, 24 x 30.





Figure 37. Denis Byrd. Ocmulgee Mounds, Oil on Panel, 11 x 14.



Figure 38. Denis Byrd. Above the falls, Oil on Canvas, 40 x 60.



Figure 39. Denis Byrd. Ocmulgee Marsh, Oil on Canvas, 40 x 40.



#### 4.4 Coastal Georgia



Figure 40. Denis Byrd. Salt marsh study, Oil on Panel, 11 x 14.



Figure 41. Denis Byrd. Salt marsh, Oil on Canvas, 30 x 30.

Several of my studies along the coast were based around Savannah and north toward Hilton Head, SC. Both *Salt Marsh* and *Fallen Cyprus* were painted along the salt marsh that runs behind Wormsloe Plantation on the Isle of Hope. *Base Camp* was painted along the Altamaha River as it flows into the Atlantic near Darien. I combined these different studies to create one painting, *Low Country Sunset*. This allowed me the control to edit and create as needed to fit the composition and the feeling I was after. While this particular painting is not an exact representation of a time and place, it does capture the feeling of being on the coastal rivers and salt marshes of Georgia. Attempting to paint this exact scene would prove very difficult because of the changing light near dusk and other factors. All of the previous studies allowed me to consciously make the decisions necessary for this painting. Utilizing multiple studies for a studio painting is a common practice among artists, historically. It puts the artists in control of their work, they are making conscious decisions about what elements work or do not in order to create a better work of art. I enjoyed this process and will continue to use it when it is appropriate because it gives me more freedom to create.



Figure 42. Denis Byrd. Fallen Cyprus, Oil on Panel, 11 x 14.

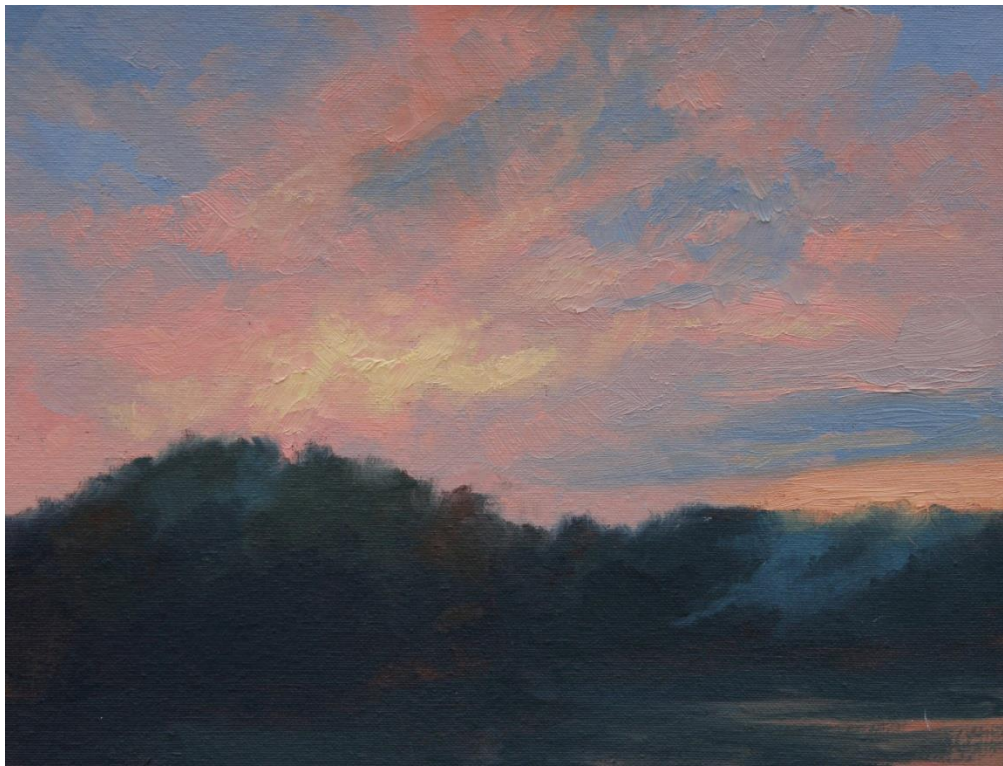


Figure 43. Denis Byrd. Base camp, Oil on Panel, 11 x 14.





Figure 44. Denis Byrd. Low country sunset, Oil on Canvas, 20 x 24.

#### 4.5 Reflection

One of the outcomes of my extensive research about the locations travelled by Bartram is a deeper understanding of local history. This history is often forgotten in textbooks which focus on the grand narrative and very likely only upon events that take place outside of the region. Visiting these locations also allows for a tangible link to the past. It creates a deeper impression or a personal connection when one is able to walk the very ground or point out a significant ridgeline or rock shelter written about 200 years earlier. The research and *plein air* painting trips also yielded a wealth of information for future paintings. This sort of in-depth research about a particular topic helped me to prevent artist's block and meant I always had inspiration for my

work. Painting and observing for longer periods in these historic places allows for greater observation and reflection. One's concept of a place or object changes more after hours of careful observation than it would with a short glance or snapshot. Not unlike viewing a work of art, the more one intensely observes, the more information is gathered and the more we can gain a deeper sense of a thing.

**4.5.1 Forgotten history.** As I researched the history surrounding the time of Bartram's journey, the colonial period in Georgia, I discovered aspects of that history that were not even discussed by Bartram himself. Specifically looking at the Bartram Trail that runs from South Carolina and back into Georgia before terminating deep in the mountains of North Carolina, I discovered that Bartram followed the old British military road (Cashin, 2000). The circumstances behind the building of this road nearly fifteen years prior to Bartram's exploration dramatically changed the landscape and would have a significant impact on both the people and the politics of Georgia and South Carolina during the American Revolution years later. The events of the Cherokee war of 1761 are overshadowed by the battles and events in the Ohio River Valley and Great lakes but this conflict would set the stage for further conflict in the southeast, not only between Native Americans and British Colonials but it even divided the colonials into two camps, those who wanted nothing but the extermination of all Native tribes in the Southeast and those who desired peaceful relations with their Cherokee neighbors.

The 1761 expedition into Cherokee country cut a wagon road from Augusta, GA to Franklin, NC. This is the path Bartram followed north and the preserved northern portion is roughly the site of the modern Bartram Trail. The expedition burned villages and towns all along the up-country including the important town of Keowee near modern Clemson and Sticoe located at the site of the modern town of Clayton, GA (Cashin, 2000). One of the major creeks

running through the town still bears the name of the old Cherokee town, Stekoa Creek runs through Clayton on its way to the Chattooga River. The campaign was forced to turn back which was a huge set back, though it did have the intended effect of forcing the Cherokee to stay neutral so they no longer presented a significant military threat to the low-country. This area around Clayton was a significant war zone in 1761 and Cherokee graves litter the Bartram trail from Clayton to North Carolina. This incident also included the major players of the American Revolution. Many of the leaders of the American cause in the South fought in that campaign and were dissatisfied by the way the British operated and were critical of the large number of casualties they felt were unnecessary (Cashin, 2000). This seemed to set up the rivalries that still existed in Charleston on the eve of the Revolution when Bartram set off for Cherokee country.

This story also highlights the class struggle between the aristocratic landowners and traders and the poor frontier settlers, who were openly hostile to all Native Americans and in many cases, murdered them on site without cause. Merchants and low-country planters may have harbored their own prejudices toward Native Americans, but they also openly looked down upon many of the settlers with disgust and viewed them as unnecessarily quarrelsome and trouble on the frontier (Cashin, 2000). Bartram was well acquainted with many of these merchants as they were his only point of entry into these lands. He also shared their dislike of the frontier settlers who viewed the Native Americans as less than human.

This entire incident was never something that I studied in school and yet it is an extremely fascinating part of the local history of Georgia. It also paints a more complex picture of the relationships between whites and Native Americans and even the social classes within white society. The history of this time period sets the stage for events during the American Revolution and later, when Congress approved the Indian Removal act forcing the Southeastern

tribes west of the Mississippi. This sort of detailed research has the ability to lead to a lifetime of learning and artistic inspiration.

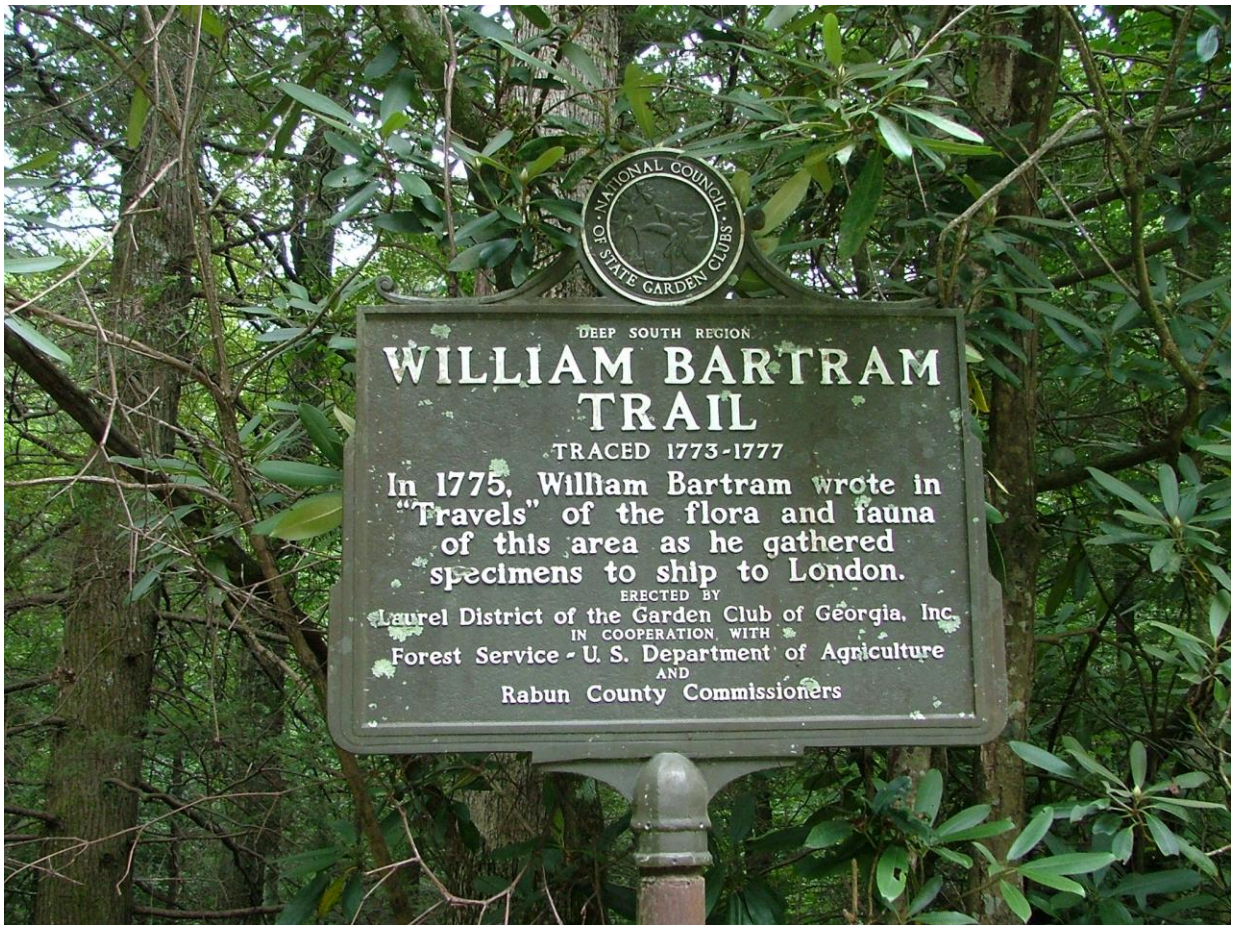


Figure 45. William Bartram Trail Marker, Clayton, Ga.

**4.5.2 Observation.** Many of the sites I visited I would begin with a scouting trip and take a series of photographs that I might use for future paintings. I would later return to paint plein air on site. I noticed a distinct difference between the shorter scouting trips and the longer plein air sessions. During my shorter visits I noticed some of the important features that might make for an interesting painting but during this time I was more of a casual observer. Painting or sketching en plein air offered an entirely different level of observation. I was more aware of the nuanced colors, interesting light falling through the trees. Art creation in general offers the opportunity for more in-depth observation and study of an object. This became very apparent while painting on site. Often when I was not even painting I would notice a color or the atmosphere and this would later find its way into my work. During the hike on the Bartram Trail to Martin's Creek Falls I painted for three days. I felt that I was able to observe more and my paintings from those three days contain more information than seemed to be captured by a photograph in the same location. Camping along the Bartram trail pulled me away from the constraint of time. For that time I was on the trail, the only concern was painting, and this allowed me to focus and observe even more. I was able to have an experience that is translated through the paintings I completed during that trip.

The research and experience that inspire works of art is an important component to understanding the context of the work. My research into William Bartram expanded not only my knowledge of the local history but provided me with endless material for my art work. Experiencing nature first-hand as a component of my process also vital to my art creation. In some ways it is not as much about the finished product but about the experience, and that experience is what I am attempting to capture on canvas. Each painting is a window into how I experienced and interpreted these sites. Focusing on a specific subject matter such as the

landscapes of the Bartram trail helped to give my work direction and the process of working from numerous plein air studies encouraged growth in my ability to translate my experiences into paint on canvas.

**4.5.3 Inspiration.** Like many artists and students, I have at times been confronted with the problem of artist's block. There are many strategies to overcome this issue and during this research I discovered that exploring a research topic for my art worked well for me. I no longer struggled to find subject for my painting and instead turned to my research for further inspiration. I also discovered my desire to paint outside, from life, often cured my frustration in the studio. During this process I would often work for alternating spells in the studio and then back out in the field. While in the studio for long durations I would sometimes become frustrated or need something else that I could not define. I began planning painting trips to break up the studio routine, and even a one day painting excursion to a Bartram site would refresh me for further work. There was an important interplay between the work done in the studio and that which was painted en plein air. One fed the other and even on days when the plein air studies seemed unsuccessful I was able to return to the studio within a short period of time and use what I learned painting in the field. Likewise, my studio work supported my plein air work because it forced me to consider more technical aspects of oil painting when I was not overwhelmed by the stimuli found in nature. Returning to the field I would incorporate these technical aspects and try to capture the main idea in paint, rather than everything I observed.

**4.5.4 Personal connections.** Living within an hour's drive of Macon I had the opportunity to visit the Ocmulgee Mounds numerous times at different times of year. Ocmulgee is a National Monument and has a full staff and a respectable museum of artifacts found on site. The site was a significant religious center for the Muscogee and before that a large Mississippian



town and temple complex. Bartram refers the Ocmulgee mounds as “the wonderful remains of the power and grandeur of the ancients of this part of America” (1998, p 241). Bartram only spent a day exploring along the Ocmulgee River near the mounds before departing west, but the large artificial mounds made a deep impression on him. Painting around the complex one sees the remnants of the old grain pits and even the post holes from a later British trading post.



Figure 46. Ocmulgee Mounds.





Figure 47. The Great Temple Mound.

Along the South Carolina and Georgia Coast I had more difficulty finding the exact path Bartram took. Interstate highway I-95 and Route 17 roughly conform to the likely road Bartram followed but the exact details are difficult to determine (Kautz, 2006). Bartram visited Savannah several times, including a visit with his father in the 1760's. Much of the area is now developed with homes and apartments covering Richmond Hill, except for protected wetlands and historic sites such as Fort Frederica, Fort King George, and Wormsloe Plantation. Wormsloe Plantation was first visited by Bartram and his father in the 1760s when they called upon the family of Noble Jones an early Georgia colonist (Davis, 1976). The house was built on the road leading to Skidaway Island on the Isle of Hope. Today, the 500 acre plantation is a state park and it contains the ruins of the plantation house that was burned by the British in 1778 (Kautz, 2006).

One of the first observations I made upon seeing that tabby ruins is that it is laid out more like a fortress than a plantation house. Despite the long avenue of live oaks leading to the front

step the house was constructed with four bastions, one on each corner, and the river and salt marsh behind it. This sparked further research and I found that Noble Jones had in fact built the home so that it might withstand a Spanish invasion from Florida (Davis, 1976). This in turn sparked further research into the coastal colonial history of Georgia.



Figure 48. Live Oak Entrance, Wormsloe Plantation.





Figure 49. Ruins of Wormsloe Plantation.

On the modern trail, I hiked from Warwoman Dell to Martin's Creek Falls, known as Falling Waters to Bartram. The trail follows along Martin's Creek rising almost 1,000 feet in elevation as we make our way to the falls (Ray & Skove, 2011). Along the way specific landmarks mentioned by Bartram, or that likely would have existed in his time, are apparent. Camping just below the falls we set up in a sheltered valley. The only flat area for several miles and shielded by mountains on all four sides, it would have provided an ideal campsite for Cherokee hunters travelling through the area. Bartram mentions discovering an abandoned Cherokee hunting cabin near the falls in just such an area (Bartram, 1958/1998). The experience of hiking and camping onsite provided more than just an opportunity to paint but connect with the area in a way that would not be possible in any other way.



Figure 50. Bartram Trail Campsite.

These examples demonstrate how visiting and spending time in these locations mentioned by Bartram contribute to further learning and understanding and create a personal connection with the places and people. It moves these places from the realm of the abstract as words in a book to something more tangible. This act helps the mind to see connections and make further inquiry. Exploring the topography, one is able to grasp the limitations, advantages, trials and hardship those who once inhabited that place once endured. It also helps to create a broader context and deeper meaning when one is able to touch the walls of a house built 250 years earlier or still find the Cherokee trail marker in the form of a 200 year old bent tree. The best part of all these discoveries is that they are here within my own state and some nearly in my own backyard.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

During this journey of exploration I have divided my time between historical research of Bartram and artistic research of the landscape he once traveled. Both forms of research formed a dialog between one another as questions were raised. My first goal was to determine if and how creating art could be used as a way to explore history. Second, I wanted to explore how a specific research topic might push me artistically and allow for creative exploration. This process of research and art creation may be used for various subjects to highlight specific topics as well as help students understand the processes artists use to develop the ideas that inspire their work.

As I began this series, my research on Bartram provided a foundation for my work. Using his writings about the natural history of the southeast I was able to define a geographic area for my *plein air* paintings. Many of the sites I visited were marked historical sites and the information gathered added to my understanding of the local history beyond the explorations of William Bartram. I also discovered that as I delved deeper into the subject I wanted to know more about the areas where I painted and this necessitated additional research into the location and people who once inhabited these places. Consequently, my research for the Bartram trail in North Georgia included some history of the Cherokee who once lived there, colonial soldiers and settlers who ventured into the mountains, and how the settlement and development of the area leave us with what we see today. This same approach applied to my research around Macon and along the coast as well.

Delving deeper into the history surrounding colonial Georgia at the time of Bartram's journey I learned a great deal that was unknown to me before this experience. This was especially insightful considering that southern colonial history is an area of interest for me. I



considered myself vaguely familiar with much of the history of the Colonial South but upon more extensive research I discovered major events and people with whom I had never come across before. Some of these events and people had a major impact on the history of Georgia and yet, I had never come across them in either a classroom or a general history of the state. Often the local histories are glossed over in favor of the larger narrative. However, this history helps us to capture a glimpse of how ordinary people are affected by the actions that make up the larger narrative. This local history also serves as a personal connection as many of these local historical figures walked the same roads and maybe even saw similar sites as we ourselves.

Painting on these important sites also brings one in touch with the history and it serves as more intense way of seeing. One can walk these historic paths and visits the sites and gain some sense of the history, but painting or drawing requires a different level of observation. Almost like viewing through a microscope, I would see more as I spent more time in a location painting. This intense observation would often lead to further questions. Noticing an area of new growth forest along the Bartram trail one might wonder if this was once the prairie he described as he ascended the mountain above Warwoman Dell or was it the result of later logging in the area. Questions like these would lead to further research and more detailed study. I constantly found myself asking questions like these as worked in an area. My curiosity spurred more in-depth research. This approach is just one of many examples of how art can help explore and understand other subjects like history.

Most artists use research as a basis for their artistic endeavors though they may not always call it such. The nature of an artist is to explore the world, society, or even themselves, and translate this into an artistic medium. An artist takes his or her inspiration from research,



though this may not always be formal research. Through this project I wanted to explore how formal research could act as a catalyst for art creation.

Conducting formal historical research of Bartram and the colonial period provided me with a wealth of material for my art. I became fascinated with the areas he explored and what still existed. This process also imposed limitations on my work as I confined my work to the areas visited by Bartram. My research forced me to look for subject matter within my own backyard, areas I might have overlooked otherwise. The Bartram Trail itself is not a heavily traveled trail and easily overlooked in favor of the more popular Appalachian Trail. It was searching for historically significant, but often little known, sites that often yielded the most interesting paintings or the most memorable painting experiences. There are grand views and locations in the area covered by Bartram, but after several trips to an area I found the need for something else. Seeking a different area to paint might reveal a more subtle subject or an unusual angle that might make for a better painting. The grand view is often the easy subject but the more subtle are may make for something more interesting and meaningful. Without the focus of my Bartram research limiting me I might have been tempted to paint the easy, dramatic vista only and not seek out additional ways to view the same area.

Many artists and students alike experience the phenomena known as artist's block. As with writer's block, the artist is unable to create because they have a mental obstacle preventing them from putting anything on canvas. Research may provide an answer to this problem. Often the artist or student is bombarded with too many directions and ideas and does not know which way to proceed. Too many ideas can be as bad as no ideas when trying to create art. Research forced me to narrow my work to only areas explored by Bartram. Once my research was complete, I knew where I wished to paint and, rather than many locations I could narrow them

down to three or four main areas. As with a limited palette, I find that limiting my ideas to a specific research topic freed me from having to make too many decisions that would distract me from creating art. This self-imposed limitation allowed me to focus on an idea and explore it thoroughly before moving on. Conversely, when I felt that I explored an idea completely and needed direction, I only needed to turn to my research for more material. Sometimes this meant a new location but other times it meant looking at a familiar site in a new way. I felt I had exhausted the possibilities between Warwoman Dell and Martin's Creek Falls until researching the area further. As a consequence of this additional research I decided to hike and camp in this area gaining a new perspective which I feel is evident in my work from the trip.

### **5.1 Implications**

The process I used for this series of work provides an example of how I will conduct my art creation in the future. I found that it was interesting and fulfilling for me and allowed me to combine all of my interests with my art. Continuing with my interest in southern history, I hope to explore other important sites painting *en plein air*. Based on my experience combining hiking and *plein air* painting I hope to continue and extend this to longer hikes. It allows me to access areas that are not visited by many other painters and creates a unique outdoor/painting experience. As a teacher this provides an example of how to link other subjects with art to allow for interdisciplinary learning. This process also demonstrates how artists come up with the inspiration behind their work and helps students focus more deeply on a specific topic.

I hope to highlight the history and contribution made by William Bartram and to publish and present my work at the Bartram Trail Conference. The work created during this project will be included in an exhibition in November and will include information on Bartram as well. While I focused my research on the colonial history surrounding Bartram, the same process

could be used with students to highlight the history of Native Americans in the south, the natural history, ecology, and the importance of conservation. Creating art from life in nature would produce the same effect of encouraging students to be more observant, to ask questions, and further research the area they are painting or drawing. Bartram was a means for me to explore more deeply the colonial past of Georgia. In a classroom it might be difficult to use Bartram specifically, unless they are near one of the Bartram sites throughout the state. However, it is possible to delve into the rich local history for subject matter explore. For example, in my immediate vicinity there are no sites associated with Bartram, but we do have the Flint River which served as a major highway and boundary for the native Creeks and settlers alike. Using research-based art strategies, based on local history might begin with in-depth investigation of the Creek who once lived along this river on the same lands we now occupy.

National Parks, State Parks, and some County Parks provide an excellent resource for this type of research. They can serve as a tangible link to the past, a repository of knowledge about the site, and focus on history specific to the area. Every location where I painted was managed by the National Park Service or Georgia State Parks. These sites offer the opportunity for traditional research as well as arts-based research. Working on location, an art teacher might bring his or her class to one of these sites for sketching trips in any number of media. The art teacher might also join with a history teacher or a park volunteer to discuss the local history of the area as part of their preliminary research before conducting a sketching trip. Even in large urban areas such as Atlanta, there are important sites preserved. One example is the Swann House, which is operated by the Atlanta History Center. Just outside the city are several important historical landmarks, Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield acts as an important green space in Kennesaw, and preserves the site of a major offensive during the Atlanta

Campaign in 1864. Even smaller sites are important to preserving the local history. Reynolds Nature Preserve, operated by Clayton County, protects over 100 acres of wetlands and also many of the old farm buildings from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, serving as an important link to the local history of the area.

This research has provided an example for me to follow with all of my future work. The enjoyment I have combining my varied interests with my art has presented new possibilities for me as I create my work. This process has allowed me to continue learning and exploring and I hope to present this as an example for my future students.

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