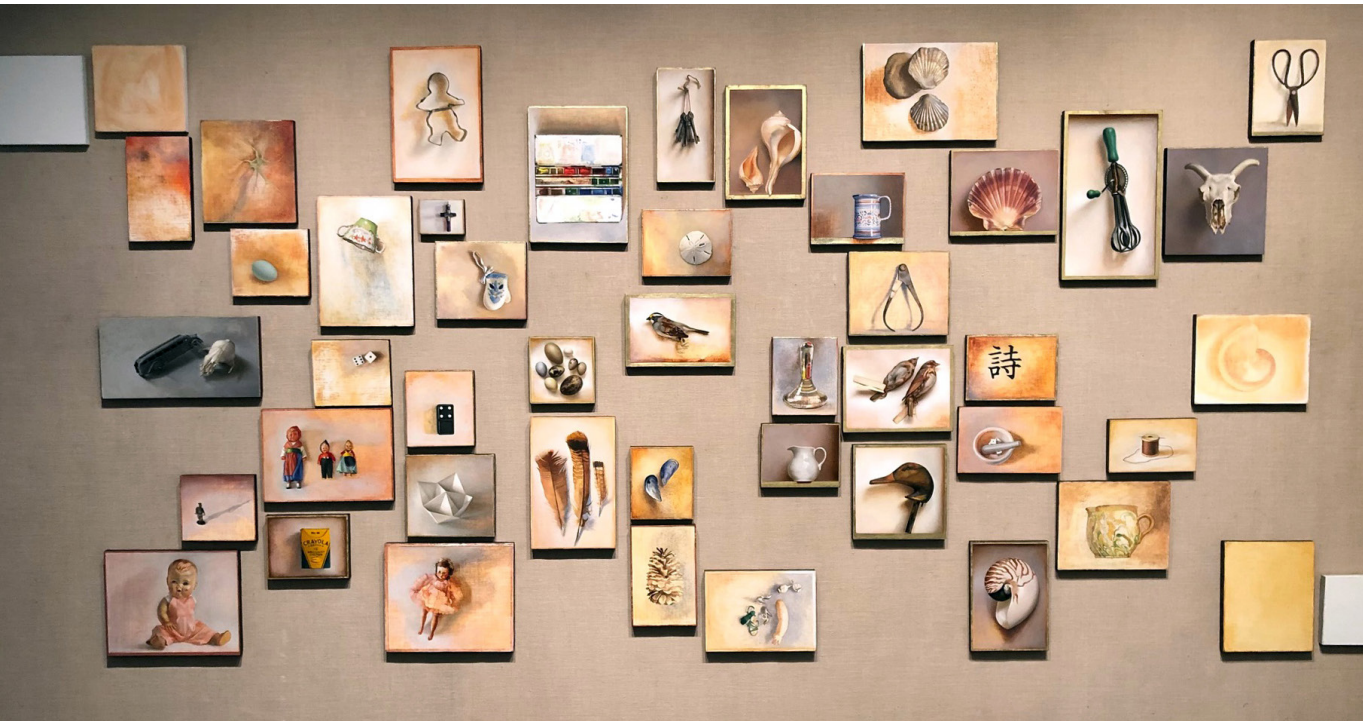


ART AS THERAPY

LAMONT EXHIBITION STIMULATES SENSES AND MEMORIES



REVIEW

INFORMING MEMORY: PROCESS, PLACE, AND NOTION

LAMONT GALLERY
PHILLIPS EXETER
ACADEMY
EXETER, NEW
HAMPSHIRE

THROUGH APRIL 16

Kate Gridley, *Witness Marks:*
Anatomy of a Memory, oil on panel.

Ok. I know. I know I'm supposed to be sedate. Subdued. Understated. But... I can't express enough adulation about this show to begin to fall into the "erudite, subtle art critic" label. Because it's incredible! Excellent. Superb. In the true awe-inspiring definition of these artists' works. I exude extreme fandom!

The 13 female artists comprising this exhibition, "Informing Memory: Process, Place, and Notion," at Lamont Gallery are all Phillips Exeter Academy alumnae. Many of their works touch upon themes of memory, place and self. In the show, they integrate their artmaking process with statements, images, videos and sketchbooks, which greatly enhances the experience of the viewer.

I've written about artists for a couple of decades, and have found that understanding processes, and perhaps more importantly, the artist and his or her life events, adds a rich layer that is substantially more meaningful than simply absorbing the piece.

I've found over the years that an artist's work – no matter their medium – and this includes performing arts, written arts, musical arts, etc. – are often an outcropping of their life experiences.

Performing artists often channel people in their lives that remind them of the character they're portraying as an actor. A friend who's writing an epic historic novel has discovered, over time, that his young protagonist is a younger version of himself. An artist that I covered recently executes expansive canvases with variations of dripping paint and abstract representations of her subjects – all as an expression of living through the painful loss of a brother she was remarkably close to. It's a healing process for many. And that's ok. And that skirts into the domain of memory also.



Barbara Rita Jenny, *Unglued*,
2021, laser-cut felt.

Art can be therapy for the artist as well as the viewer, whatever the expression.

The variety of mediums in this show is impressive. Kate Gridley and Barbara Rita Jenny both create work centered around memory and the brain. But they execute their creativity in totally different expressions – their mediums as diverse as you could imagine. Both are processing loved ones who are living with neurological disorders. Gridley approaches her subject by using portraits of objects to map memories, and Jenny is inspired by the visual stimulation of brain scans.

The two women's works and installations are nearby each other in the gallery so you can see the interplay of different expressions of the same baseline subject. "Unglued" by Jenny is a site-specific installation of laser-cut felt shapes (some are given a bit of anthropomorphic features—like red eyes sewn on), where she searches to understand "the misfiring, inflammation, and deterioration of the brains of loved ones." The shapes she's created derive from brain scan images.

Gridley's "Witness Mark: The Anatomy of a Memory" is composed of 47 pieces on her installation wall, inspired by her father's battle with Alzheimer's. She wondered if there might be a way to create a visual experience about how memory might work – and so she has "touchstones" for memory – small oil renderings on canvas potentially tease the mind into associating. Maybe the China teacup tweaks thoughts of sipping tea and lemon on Grandma's wrap-around porch in early spring. Or the dice asymmetrically placed on the canvas may bring back thoughts of family laughter on game night. The seashells recall a sunrise on the ocean with the Isles of Shoals in the distance, with the sand washing away under your feet as the tide recedes.



Dustan Knight's massive abstract renderings use uninhibited layers of paint that straddle the line of memory and place. She explained that her work, "draws on my personal experience in a particular landscape. This place is not only literally a location, but the memories of the place as I have lived there since childhood. Consequently, the place appears in my paintings as a culmination of my experiences rather than photographic representation of a location."

Co-curator and Gallery Manager, Stacey Durand, was struck by how openly the artists shared their process. She said that for many artists, the process of making is just as important – and sometimes more important – than the finished product, as it is often where the learning occurs.

Co-curator Dustin Schuetz, who is Exhibitions and Collections Manager, said what floors him is the variety of materials used to convey those inspirations. He said that in the nearly six years that he's worked at the Lamont Gallery, "this is the first time we've had between 15 to 20 different types of media in one exhibition. Everything from the classics like paint and photography to the nonconventional like laser-cut felt and plaster-soaked burlap. The entire gallery almost vibrates when you enter. A true sensory observation."

Exactly my reaction! I'm mesmerized by the creativity expressed in the myriad of mediums.

In the case of Tiffanie Turner, an architect-turned-botanical sculptor, she creates immense paper renditions of flowers paying attention to scale, texture and color. One gigantic creation can take as long as two to four months to complete.



LEFT: Elizabeth Gardner, *Woke*, December 9, 2021 7:38 a.m., photograph.

RIGHT: Brittany Otto, *By the Brook*.

FAR RIGHT: Millicent Dunstan, repurposed and recycled materials.

Breathtaking – and a medium difficult to explain simply – are Brittany Otto’s pieces. She named them “oneiroframes.” They are art from light and shadow, cut paper and shadow boxes. Displayed in a dimly lit alcove room, the ambiance perfectly displays their beauty. An intricately laser-cut dragon, “By the Brook,” is layered from watercolor paper, vellum, and enhanced by LED lighting. You can’t help but catch your breath.

Calming and soothingly relaxing, is a video-orchestration installation, “UN/FOLD” by Lindsay Packer (sound by David Goerk), which is eight minutes long and challenges spatial and color interactions, and leaves you bedazzled by its luminous colors, ephemeral forms and dream-like soundscape.

Rather unexpectedly, Millicent Dustan’s work pops up – straight from the creative environment of street fashion. Her fashion statements are created from repurposed and upcycled materials. Hyper-conscious of environmental and cultural issues within the industry and the world, she introduces one-of-a-kind wearing apparel – hoodies, pants, shorts and tops. They’re colorful, bright and edgy. And overwhelmingly fun.

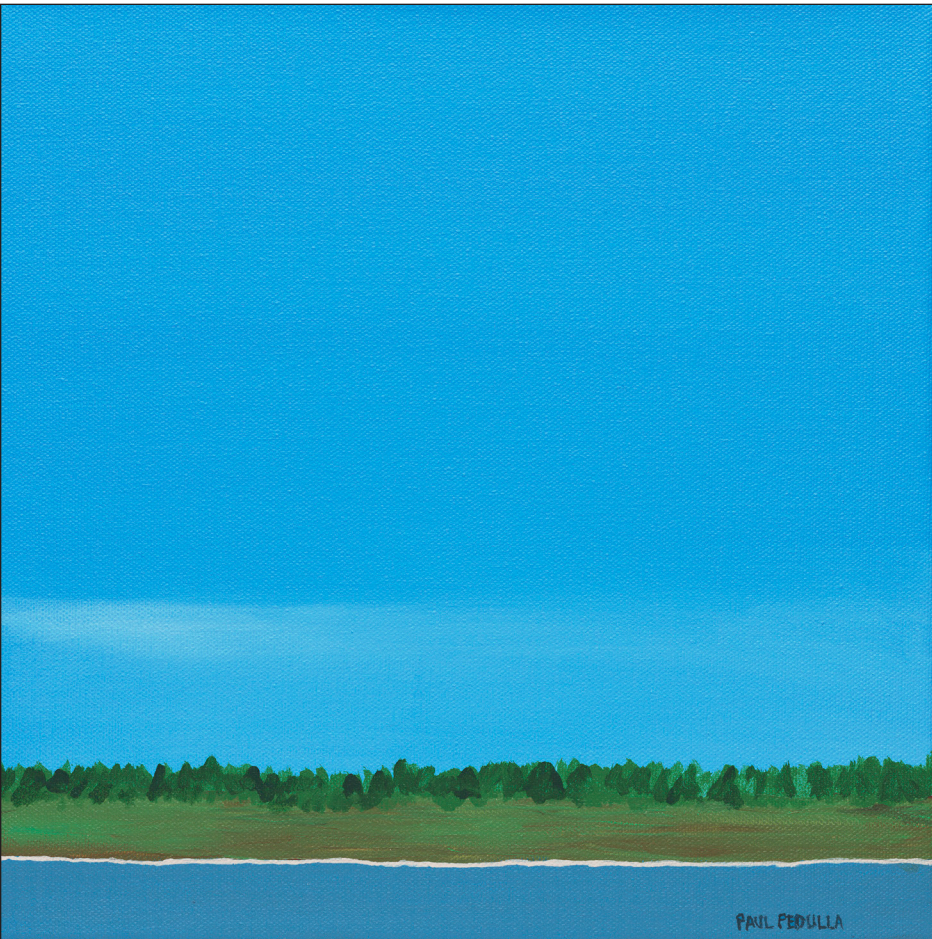
Maud Bryt creates in plaster. She loves the medium because it allows her to construct, collage, model, cast and carve – all in the same material. Her sculptures dot the gallery on pedestals throughout that causes one to stop and absorb their abstract intent.

Other artists showing in this exhibition – Alexandra Carter, Elizabeth Gardner, Rose Klabin, Evie Lovett and Wendi Yan – are also noteworthy and magnificent. But I’ve no room left to elaborate.

Do consider taking in this show to stimulate your creative senses – and maybe, just maybe, touch upon memories you’ve long since forgotten.



Linda Chestney



Nature's Shore, acrylic on canvas, 12"x12"

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