Piece by Piece

An Honors Thesis Exhibition

By

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Abstract

This artistic exhibition combines the magic of watercolor with a glimpse into the ancient past. This body of work examines the interconnectedness of society and how the ancient past influences the future. This exhibition consists of seven large watercolor paintings which showcase experimental watercolor techniques. These experimental techniques are combined with images from ancient Mexican civilizations such as the Maya, and also Spanish-Colonial inspired images. These paintings were inspired by a vacation to Mexico which stirred my mind to consider how the past influences the future and how the world interacts and works together *Piece by Piece*.
Artist’s Statement

Meghan R. Folgate

A recent trip to Mexico caused many questions about culture to come up in my mind. What does the word ancient mean? Do I have any concept of this? How do other times and places affect me? What is life like out of my realm of existence? Do I ever consider the fact that I don’t live in a vacuum? How do I fit into all of this?

As these questions bounced around in my head, I came to a few conclusions. I realized I did not understand what ancient culture really means. I also started to think about how the past affects our future, not just my past personally, but the past as a whole.

I have created a series of seven paintings to reflect these ideas and questions that were aroused in my mind. They are all done using predominantly watercolor. I also used Prismacolor pencils and collage in some of the works. My paintings were created using experimental watercolor techniques including layering washes, splatter painting, laying materials or objects into wet washes, rubbing alcohol and a myriad of other random household items. I love the magic of watercolor, and this project was about discovering new ways of creating texture, pattern and surface. These paintings have images taken from my photographs from Mexico. While there, I visited the Mayan ruins at Chichen Itza, and a small town established by the Spanish in the 1400s. I visited a church there that was built by the Spanish, and is still being used today. I have used images of Mayan architecture contrasted with the Spanish architecture of the church, and figures and objects that I saw there. As a tourist, I felt like a trespasser. I tried to convey this feeling of trespassing or feeling out of place in my paintings.

My hope is that these paintings will inspire others to see their value in the world and how each person exists with a specific purpose and has an influence on those around them. I hope my paintings will invoke the importance of understanding that each of us has been created uniquely for a specific role in the world and how the world exists piece by piece. I have used ancient images in my paintings to remind us of the past and how it relates to our future. It is important for each of us to become active in learning about the world around us, past and present, so that we can be a positive force in shaping the future. I desire for others to seek out their individual purposes that God uniquely created us for.
I would like to sincerely thank Marilynn Derwenskus for her dedication and encouragement throughout my artistic journey. She introduced me to the “magic of watercolor” and I have not been the same since this discovery! Marilynn has challenged me in my artwork and has always been available for valuable advice and support. I would like to also thank the amazing faculty in the Art Department at Ball State. Each of them has influenced me and made me into the artist I am today.

This creative project was completed as a culmination of the studio skills and intellectual knowledge I have gained during my experience at Ball State University. This painting exhibition was a showcase of the talents that I have fostered and developed during my time at Ball State and through inspiration from teachers and professors.

This painting showcase consists of seven large watercolor paintings. Each of the paintings are inspired by the thoughts and ideas I had when I returned from a family vacation to Mexico. This body of work is about how the past relates to the future and the interconnectedness of our lives. I was influenced by my recent trip to Mexico and visit to the ancient Mayan ruins. This experience caused me to start considering how my past has influenced my future and how my past is connected with the past of others. Most of my paintings have images of architecture, figures, and artwork from the photographs from my trip to Mexico. Many times I combined these images and layered figures to create universal subject matter.
I used experimental watercolor techniques to create these paintings. I used layering washes, adding other elements such as salt, rubbing alcohol, laying materials in the washes such as saran wrap, tissue and material. I divided the space in my paintings using layered rectangles of different sizes and shapes. I also used a combination of silhouettes, contour line drawings and gestural drawing of figures.

The Paintings

The first painting is entitled *Ancient Hallways*. This is a painting that is about a visit to a small colonial town in Mexico, Valla Dolid. While in this town, we visited an old Spanish monastery which was built in the 1400s. The image of the hallway was taken from a photograph from this monastery. As I walked around and viewed this monastery, I felt a sense of awkwardness, like I shouldn’t be “sightseeing” in someone’s church. I started to think about the rich tradition of this building and what it meant to the people who still come to worship inside. I started to think about how their past and traditions of the Church affected their everyday life.

The second painting, *Grace*, is one that communicates the abundant grace of God and how intricately He created the world. In considering *creation*, I am overwhelmed at the thought that He created everything. This is overwhelming because this interconnectedness just proves God’s sovereignty over all. This painting shows a pair of hands accepting images, and pieces from above. This symbolized my appreciation for the grace of God, and all He has done to direct my life.

In the painting entitled *Jubilee*, I have painted two ambiguous figures. One figure is very transparent, and the other is clearer. This painting represents, to me, the introspection that this vacation to Mexico stirred in me. I have included in this painting a fabric swatch with a pattern that is repeated throughout my paintings. Also, in one corner, I have used the checkerboard pattern that was taken from my photographs of the monastery at Valla Dolid.
The painting entitled Forsaken, is one of the most meaningful for me. This painting is centered around a photograph that I took of three young Mexican girls while I was on an excursion to the Mayan ruins. Surrounded by tourists from all over the world, these three little girls fascinated me. I watched as they went from trash can to trash can and collected bottles and plastic bags. I wondered why they were doing this, and if this was a daily activity for them. These little girls touched my heart and it really stirred my heart. This painting was done using layers of washes, the fabric pattern, and also the ceiling architectural pattern from the monastery in Valla Dolid.

The painting Confessions, was based on the monastery and church that I visited in Valla Dolid. In the church, there was a small room that looked like an old confessional booth. This looked old, however the more I looked I could tell that it was in use. I entitled this painting Confessions, because again, I felt disrespectful being a tourist inside this building. I felt as if I was trespassing. This painting consists of a divided space, the ceiling structure design, and four small images on the right side. These four images were taken from my photographs from the monastery.

Face in a Crowd is painted using imagery from the ancient Mayan ruins at Chichen Itza. I have drawn a contour image of El Castillo, the largest pyramid at Chichen Itza. I have also included some Mayan hieroglyphics that were carved on the side of the ancient ball court. I entitled this Face in a Crowd because many of the Mayan buildings and structures incorporated a face image. Also, many of the Mayan hieroglyphics consist of face images.

The last painting, Three Glimpses, is one that incorporates architecture and figures. The pointed arches were inspired by the windows at the monastery. The figures represent people and emotions felt during my visit at this church. This painting is a mixed media painting consisting of watercolor, acrylic gel medium, and prismacolor pencils.
Ancient Hallways
Watercolor, collage
24” x 36”

Grace
Watercolor
24” x 36”
Jubilee
Watercolor, prismacolor pencil
24” x 36”

Forsaken
Watercolor, acrylic gel medium
24” x 36”
Confessions
Watercolor, prismacolor pencil
24” x 36”

Face in a Crowd
Watercolor, acrylic gel medium
24” x 36”
Three Glimpses
Watercolor, acrylic gel medium
24” x 36”
meghan folgate

*piece by piece*

an honors thesis exhibition

November 8-14, 2004

**opening ceremony**

tuesday, November 9

5pm-7pm

carmichael hall

*faculty advisor*

*marilynn derwenskus*