

A Few Words From Down Under

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something for his new flat. It had to be of a certain colour, specific size, particular price, and a good investment. I wasn't sure if he was buying a pair of pants or a painting! But that's just one end of the spectrum. At the other end, dealers are spruiking inane or indecipherable installations by incompetent artists to large public and private collectors as the latest, greatest new work that will define this point in time, and increase their asset value.

Dealers defend their practices saying times have changed, it's a new millennium, a different world, and they are here to serve both the artist and the client. But if the dealers are supplying art to a society hooked on instant satisfaction, retail therapy and extreme make overs then I guess nothing really has changed - except that today it's the art market, not the art work, that reflects life. Like a child raised on fast food, art has blown out and is only about the bottom line. That we accept this is indeed frightening!

Patrons who once respected the power of an artist's muse have been replaced by purchasers who respect the power of the dollar. Meanwhile artistic output has replaced creative input. No one asks why Soanso Smith gets his work in The Suchansuch Collection or why Watzter Name can get sky-high prices for her work when their talents are mediocre. No one cares that So and Wat have been on the art scene for only a couple of years. No one questions if he'll trade his murky palette in for a clean pallet out by the gold fields to make big bucks driving a Haul Pack. No one is sure she won't discover motherhood more creatively fulfilling than making videos of a gently swaying bubble in a spirit level. It doesn't matter what happens next month if they are the flavour of this month.

I know many art practitioners who have something valid to say about life, the universe and everything, articulating their ideas and emotions very well in the visual medium. Political commentary, cultural constructs, subtle changes in social norms, and references to art itself are just some of

their reasons for making art. They document life's communal journey and their personal development via their work. But somehow they don't get top dollar for their efforts or a look in by serious collectors. Fortunately for the future of fine art, these artists continue to produce good work. Unfortunately in the present, if they lack a day job or a gainfully employed spouse, in order to continue practicing their art they must sell. The dealer informs them what's popular and they are tempted to provide it, and that's the first step toward compromise. The starving artist produces half-hearted efforts that will sell when it is presented to the buyer wrapped in obscure language, where the only identifiable words are 'everybody' and 'investment' and hints of an 'exclusive club'. Some see this as a triple win situation with artist, dealer and buyer happy. But it's a short-term victory with the artist and dealer losing credibility while the buyer is stuck with something he never really liked, has gone out of style and can't be sold.

Promotion and marketing is an artform in its own right but please limit it to cars and diet drinks and the latest electronic gadget. By all means allow consumers their right to consume so they can be those whom the legendary Joneses must strive to keep up with. All I ask is the modern dealer in all things of value stay away from the visual arts. They just don't understand its worth. Very frightening indeed!

Judith McGrath lives in Kalamunda, Western Australia, 25 minutes east of Perth. She received a BA in Fine Art and History from the University of Western Australia. McGrath lectured in Art History and Visual Literacy at various colleges around the Perth area, and was an art reviewer for *The Sunday Times* and *The Western Review* both published in the Perth area. McGrath was also a freelance writer and reviewer for various art magazines in Australia. She also co-ordinated the web site *Art Seen in Western Australia* found at (<http://www.artseeninwa.com>). McGrath is currently enjoying retirement.

Coker College in Hartsville, SC, Features Works by Art Majors

Coker College in Hartsville, SC, will present spring art exhibitions in the Cecelia Coker Bell Gallery featuring three different shows in April and May: one per week from Apr. 15 through May 3, 2013, with an opening reception from 7 to 8pm each Monday evening.

Senior exhibitions, a 44-year tradition at Coker, are required of graduating art majors and are intended to represent the culmination of four years of study and offer a glimpse of the directions the artists may explore with their work following graduation.



Caitlin Johnson, *Breaking the Code*, oil on canvas, 70 x 52.5", 2013.

Caitlin Johnson leads off the senior exhibits with an opening on Apr. 15. Originally from Sacramento, CA, Johnson grew up in Spartanburg, SC, where she moved with her parents as a young child. She came to Coker in 2009 as a Fine Art Major and has chosen painting as her area of concentration. After graduation, she plans to find a job that will allow her to continue painting.

"Gender, identity and separation of biological and social dogmas are the meat of my work," said Johnson. "Through paint, I explore and create my own vision of androgyny: my own construction of gender that the outside world doesn't allow. I use the symbolism and body language of

Catholic imagery as a voice and catalyst for my painting."



Megan Harris, *Blow*, 20 x 19", silver gelatin print, 2013.

Megan Harris opens her show on Apr. 22. Harris was born and raised in Florence, SC. She came to Coker in 2009 as a psychology major but soon switched to photography because "it felt so right to take photos." Harris also serves as a department mentor, assisting students in navigating the challenges of the major to ensure that they succeed in the program. She was recently awarded Departmental Honors in Art for her leadership role. After graduation, Harris plans to build her own darkroom and continue working as a fine art photographer.

"Cause and effect are huge factors in my work," said Harris. "The figures in my photos reflect upon my life experiences, dreams and academic studies." Commenting on her choice of film over digital photography, she said, "I fell in love with film photography because it allows me to participate in every aspect of creating a photograph."

Katelyn Hill's show will finish the exhibition season with an opening on Apr. 29. Hill is a native of Hartsville, her mother

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FRANCIS MARION UNIVERSITY

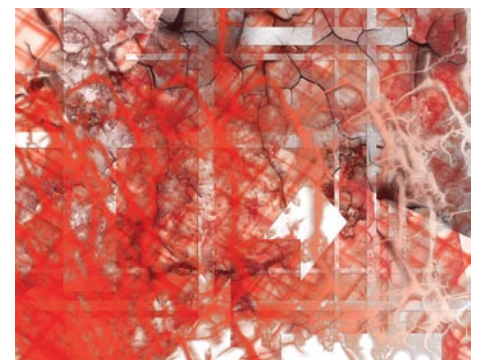
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went to Coker, and she said she "knew at a young age she wanted to attend Coker College." For her, the question was not where but what? "After two years of exploration, and a one year hiatus, I knew art with a concentration in graphic design was the answer to that question."

Coker's art program is rigorous and that aspect of the program is apparent when Hill says, "I have stepped out of my zone of comfort. Through the exploration of difficult issues, I have grown as a person and an artist. My eyes have been opened and my knowledge increased."

The receptions for each show are free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served.

Coker College upholds and defends the intellectual and artistic freedom of its faculty and students as they study and create art through which they explore the full spectrum of human experience. The college



Katelyn Hill, *Red 5*, 23 x 31", digital design, 2013.

considers such pursuits central to the spirit of inquiry and thoughtful discussion, which are at the heart of a liberal arts education.

For further information check our SC Institutional Gallery listings, call Larry Merriman at 843/383-8156 or visit (www.ceceliacokerbellgallery.com).

Black Creek Arts Council in Hartsville, SC, Features Works by Fran Gardner and Carolyn Moore Atkinson

The Black Creek Arts Council in Hartsville, SC, will present *Serendipity*, featuring works by Fran Gardner and Carolyn Moore Atkinson, on view from Apr. 4 through May 24, 2013. A reception will be held on Apr. 4, from 5:30-7pm. This opening is sponsored by Stifel Nicolaus.

Atkinson says after the two mixed media artists were introduced to each other and shared their views on art; they were pleasantly surprised to observe that their artwork complimented each other's. These women who have totally different styles, when put together, join to create a unified form, texture, and color, hence *Serendipity*.

Gardner explains "Each part of itself, must be its own composition, yet when combined with other elements they create this community, interacting each with the other, inviting us to join the conversation."



Work by Fran Gardner

Her quote encompasses the entirety of Gardner and Atkinson's pieces. Together, they create a beautiful composition.

Atkinson, a lover of all things art,

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