

February 2013

meet the artist

Art—a metaphor for the life of Carole McNamee

by Gerri Young

Carole McNamee describes herself as a mixed media artist, a term that could easily be applied to her life as well. She seems to have created a collage of herself from a scrapbook of accomplishments featuring her as mathematician, computer scientist, scholar, therapist, dancer, artist, wife and mother.

She grew up with ballet lessons and danced until she was 28. She took art in high school and college and considers it an important part of her growing up years, but there is not an art degree on her impressive list of degrees. She holds a bachelor's in mathematics, master's and doctorate in computer science, and a doctorate in marriage and family therapy. She graduated from Simmons College in Boston, Mass., where she met her husband, Mark, an MIT student, and, not long after, they both left the northeast for the sunnier climes of the Stanford University campus in California where they continued their studies.



photo: Gerri Young

Carole McNamee works on an acrylic painting for her son who is a rock-climbing enthusiast.

Along the way, she was a professor of computer science and studied psychology. They had three children—Beth, Mark and Katie. Their move from California did not come until 2001 when they relocated to Blacksburg so her husband could become the provost at Virginia Tech. McNamee quickly joined the Blacksburg Regional Art Association and completed her doctorate in marriage and family therapy at Virginia Tech, where she has occasionally taught courses in expressive arts therapy and family systems.

Upon receiving her degree, she opened the Willowbank Wellness Center in Blacksburg where she is a licensed marriage and family therapist who often

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■ Upcoming

February 14

The Marvelous Wonderettes

Pulaski Theatre

7:30 p.m.

Sponsored by the Fine Arts Center of the NRV and the Friends of the Pulaski Theatre, this off-Broadway hit features pop tunes of the '50s and '60s. Tickets are \$20 in advance or \$22 at the door. For more information, contact Judy Ison at 540-980-7363.

March 12, 14, 15

Robin Poteet Watercolor Workshop

Christiansburg Presbyterian Church

9 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Watercolorist Robin Poteet is bringing her wonderful art and teaching to Christiansburg. Anyone with basic watercolor experience or beyond will feel comfortable in this workshop, particularly if they are ready for a creative "push." The cost is \$150 and space is limited. The class is sponsored by the Montgomery Museum. To register, call Sue Farrar at 540-382-5644. See Poteet's work at www.robinpoteet.blogspot.com.

■ Mark Your Calendar

The next **BRAA luncheon** is **February 8**, 11:30 a.m., at **Famous Anthonys** at 1353 S. Main St., Blacksburg. **Board meeting** to follow at 12:30 pm. Please send agenda items to Robi Sallee at robisallee@hotmail.com.

■ Please Come Back!

There's still time to renew your membership! It's going to be an exciting BRAA year, so if you haven't already done so, download a membership form from the website or contact Tom Barnhart at tomknots@gmail.com.

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uses the expressive arts in her work with individuals and families. She also offers contemplative art opportunities — a mandala meditation group and a collage practice called SoulCollage® — for those interested in personal growth and exploration. Her art and dance background has joined with the Eastern healing practices of Hatha Yoga and qigong. “These disciplines empower my deep interest in the connection between mind, body and spirit and inform the way I work with others,” said McNamee.

In spite of owning and operating Willowbank, somehow she finds two days a week to create art at home and at The Studio School in Roanoke. All these pieces of McNamee’s life form the interesting collage she is today.

“I am interested in the relationship between art, creativity, and the development of consciousness,” said McNamee, in her sun-filled studio in Blacksburg. “I have my own personal experience with each of my creations, nourished as the work evolves over time. Sometimes it is the process of creating a work or series that becomes a metaphor for my life experience.

“Sometimes it is the evolving product that captures my attention. Regardless, each work breaks new ground and invites me to new awarenesses and understandings,” continued McNamee. “Viewers will have their own experience of my work, based upon their personal history and memories. I hope that my work will evoke responses, inviting new understandings and insights for the viewer as well as for me, the creator.”



photo: Gerri Young

Carole McNamee holds an in-progress abstract in her light-filled studio. The staircase leads to her private office. The blue design in the artwork is from a stamp designed by her daughter, Katie.

McNamee’s home is filled with her varied and interesting art. “I find art tends to change in periods of transition,” she said. “For me, it is about the relationship between art and consciousness—how you see your life, how the things that happen to you, positive or negative, impact your art and your ability to create something meaningful as well as beautiful or thought provoking. In this regard, art-making is therapeutic.”

McNamee never knows where her art will take her next and her artworks clearly indicate many turns and winding paths. A pile of presentation books contains 100 hand-drawn mandalas she created in as many days. Her easels, two in the sunroom, hold partly finished acrylics of vastly different subjects. A large art bin holds large and small pieces, mostly abstracts, some finished, some not. The counter in her studio holds a collection of Ampersand panels coated in thick mediums, carved and colored on their way to being a collection of related pieces.

Book arts fill a shelf. Real books with intricately folded pages. Totally self-created small books with Japanese stab bindings and well-designed covers and pages. A very thin, black book with one origami-style, fan-shaped page of graph paper still

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■ Now Showing

January 15 – April, 2013
(except where indicated otherwise)

Denisse Bento (thru May 15), ICTAS, Virginia Tech Campus

Jeanette Bowker, Zeppoli’s, 810 University City Blvd., Blacksburg

Marie Collier, StellarOne, Arbor Drive, Christiansburg

Frances Frederick (thru May 15), ICTAS, Virginia Tech Campus

Danie Janov (through April), Holtzman Alumni Center, Virginia Tech

Fred Jones, Real Life Dental Care, 202 South Main Street, Blacksburg

Larry Mitchell, (February–March) Community Arts Information Office, 149 College Avenue, Blacksburg

Nancy Norton, VTLS, Inc., 1701 Kraft Drive, Blacksburg

David Pearce, Mill Mountain Coffee and Tea, 700 N. Main Street, Blacksburg

Joy Rosenthal, Brown Insurance, 100 Hubbard Street, Blacksburg

Robi Sallee, Pita Vera, 235 N. Main Street, Blacksburg

Lois Stephens, See Mark Optical, 2401 S. Main Street, Blacksburg

“If art is a result of the encounter between Muse and the artist, then time is the medium of the relationship.”

~Jan Phillips



A new mural for the Free Clinic was designed by Den Bento and will be painted on Feb. 22–23.

BRAA to paint mural at Free Clinic

On Feb. 23, a group of volunteers from BRAA will spend the day at the Free Clinic of the New River Valley in Christiansburg, paint brushes in hand.

The executive director of the clinic, Michele Brauns, was very pleased when, in Dec. 2012, dental services were expanded to Medicaid-covered and low-income children with no insurance for the first time in the clinic's 30-year history.

One operatory room was set aside for these young patients and Brauns felt a need to make the room a cheerful place where children would not be so anxious about the experience. She approached Ruth Waalkes, executive director, Center for the Arts at Virginia Tech, who turned to BRAA to ask if they would design and paint something cheerful for the walls of the room. Waalkes generously offered funding from the Center for the Arts to purchase the supplies needed to complete the project.

Fast forward to February 2012 and the mural is about to be born. A wonderfully colorful and whimsical dental themed artwork, designed by BRAA member Den Bento, will be painted on two walls of the room Feb. 22 and 23. Appropriately, the artwork is both musical and visual, fitting the performing and visual arts mission of the Center for the Arts due to open this year.

Bento, her husband Herb Schneider, and BRAA member Gerri Young will spend the first day preparing the design on the wall and arranging all the supplies for its completion the next day by a group of volunteers from the association.

In March, a reception will be held at the clinic to officially launch the new service and its brightly decorated children's dental service space.



Den Bento

Exhibit Opportunities

5th Annual Blacksburg Fork and Cork

April 27

First and Main, Blacksburg

The festival also features live music, culinary delights from local restaurants, cooking demonstrations, and wine tastings from Virginia's vineyards. 10 x 10' spaces for artists are \$100. For more information, visit www.blacksburgforkandcork.com.

Steppin' Out 2013

August 2 – 3

Downtown Blacksburg

This street festival fills the downtown historic district with artists and craftspeople and three stages of music and entertainment. 16' x 10' spaces are \$150. For more information, visit www.BlacksburgSteppinOut.com.

2013 New River Art

October 2 – November 9

Perspective Gallery, Squires Student Center, Virginia Tech

The juror for this biennial show will be Michael W. Haga, associate dean of the School of Arts at the College of Charleston, South Carolina. The reception is tentatively scheduled for October 4, 2013. For more information, visit www.newriverart.org/.

Highlights from January's Board Meeting

Twenty BRAA members attended the Jan. 11 board meeting following the monthly lunch at Famous Anthony's restaurant.

Marketing

Gerri Young reported the marketing team has finished the new logo and the brochure is 99% complete. Their primary focus will now be the new, user-friendly web page that will not go public until it is at least ¾ done. The team will be eager for feedback once it debuts.

Town of Blacksburg efforts to promote art (Love where you live)

Den Bento spoke regarding the town's Jan. 10 Arts Collaboration meeting.

The focus of the meeting was promoting tourism and the arts. Hart Fowler, editor of *16Blocks* magazine, and a member of Untagging the Town, spoke of the mural project that has to be finished by end of March 2013. The Untagging the Town project is behind a variety of public murals already completed or on the drawing boards for

completion before the new Virginia Tech Center for the Arts opens in the fall.

The town of Blacksburg has made a greater commitment to supporting the arts and the driving factor is the opening of the Center for the Arts. Den reported the following topics were being discussed and BRAA is encouraged to be a part of this energetic trend as much as possible:

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intrigues her as she tries to make a connection between her art and mathematics with which to further decorate the piece.

"I use all sorts of things in my artwork," said McNamee. "Acrylic, watercolor, pastel, collage, book arts." A recycled piece of Tyvek from a postal envelope might end up being center stage in an abstract and a black paper silhouette of a man in a hat has been known to show up in several pieces.

McNamee's main goal for her art is the doing of it, the exploration of it, the use of art in general in her therapy work. She doesn't work hard to exhibit her personal pieces or sell them, though she occasionally does both. In May of this year, she will share a large number of her works in an exhibit at the Virginia Tech Alumni Center.

Put that show on your calendar. It might be a therapeutic experience for you.

More of Carole McNamee's artwork may be found at www.carolemcnamee.com ■

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- A Community Foundation Arts Giving Circle is offering grants for non-profit groups for art related projects
- A large art database of artists in the area is being considered. Den also explained a kiosk idea for downtown Blacksburg that is already in the planning stages (through the Downtown Partnership) that could provide web links to artists through this database.
- Workshops on topics such as websites, bios, and photographing art will need to be held. BRAA is planning a February class on how to use the free wix.com web builder.
- Den mentioned that Virginia Tech is interested in technology in art and that BRAA artists should consider including science and technology in artistic pursuits.

Den reported that the 'new' tourism slogan is Virginia is for Lovers/Love Where You Live. She has been asked to create a large mural on the side wall of the SheSha Hookah Parlor, facing the old Armory on Draper Road, and wants to get the BRAA involved. She stated that although there is some grant money for the mural, more funds need to be raised.

Artsburg project and Artful Place

Diana Francis, representing Creekmore Law Firm, spoke about the new 'Artsburg' collaboration to get kids more involved in art. Diana also reminded everyone that there were still a few spaces left at 'The Artful Place' as well as rooms for workshops or demonstrations. Workshop rooms are \$20/hour or \$75/day.

Miscellaneous town-related discussion

Committee for murals and websites—Nancy Norton suggested that the marketing and the programs committees of BRAA work together to decide what is needed and when to have workshops or just how much further involvement BRAA can provide to the town.

BRAA tent rental

Vikki King spoke up about managing tent rentals. It was decided that the tent with walls would rent for \$50/ first day and \$35 for subsequent days. Charge for tent without walls would be \$35 for the first day and \$25 for subsequent days. Available to BRAA members only.

NRV Free Dental Clinic mural project

Gerri Young is coordinating the NRV dental clinic mural project. Den Bento will design the mural and have it ready for approval by the clinic by end of January. The painting will take place Feb. 18-22 by a small group of volunteer painters. When complete, Gerri will do article and photo so that BRAA and the clinic get some recognition for the project.

Legal issues presentation

James Creekmore of the Creekmore Law Firm spoke briefly about copyright laws regarding art. The Creekmore will be holding a workshop soon regarding artistic rights.

The art featured in this month's nameplate is "Age is Beautiful" (right, mixed media collage, 18" x 12") by Nancy Norton. This and more of her work can be viewed at VTLs at the Corporate Research Center through April.



BRAA Officers

Robi Sallee, president
Nancy Norton, co-vice president
Danie Janov, co-vice president
Tom Barnhart, membership
Vikki King, treasurer

<http://www.blacksburgart.org/>



www.facebook.com/BlacksburgArt

Send Facebook news postings to:

Gerri Young at
younggerri@googlemail.com
 or **Nancy Norton**
 at nancypnorton@comcast.net

Twitter @BlackburgArt1

Please send BRAA news, photos, comments, or suggestions to Lois Stephens (stephens1@pemtel.net) by the last day of the month for inclusion in the next month's issue.

Thanks to Mish Mish for providing printed versions of this newsletter.

Please support your local art supply store!

