

March 2013

meet the artist

Squires Center art installation all taped up

by Gerri Young

Martha Olson is still waiting for the promised “paperless society” which never came. For those of us lucky enough to know her art, we are somewhat consoled, for paper is the currency with which she earns our respect.

In Olson’s capable hands, paper is a joy and a wonder. From little finished artworks only inches big to pieces too big to fit in her car, to her current work built on the spot, the viewer marvels over the unique look of her works.

This month, faithful watchers of this local artist’s style get a definite “outside the shredder” treat in a hanging installation on the second and third floors of Virginia Tech’s Squires Student Center in downtown Blacksburg.

Called “Restoration of the Paper Trail at VT,” this enormous and unusual piece will hang through March in the atrium facing under-construction College Avenue. It can be seen by anyone strolling the sidewalk, but it deserves to be seen up close from inside.

All it took to create this interesting hanging sculpture, something Olson calls pop up art, were 10,500 sheets of shredded, used office paper from Virginia Tech, and lots of catalog and magazine pages. Add 1,760 yards of 3-inch cellophane tape, a power lift, and a large floor space upon which to make it.

“This is the second installation of this nature I have done,” said Olson. “I first created a similar hanging, 18’ x 12’, in the Turchin Center for the Visual Arts at Appalachia State University in Boone, N.C. This one is bigger.

“Robin Boucher, art director of the Perspective Gallery in the Squires Center, saw a photo of the installation at Boone and said she would like to have



photo: Terri Hoover

Martha Olson dwarfed by her own installation artwork in Squires Student Center on the Virginia Tech campus.

Upcoming

March 23–24

Pastel Landscapes with Addren Doss
Chestnut Creek School of the Arts, Galax
Sat. 9 a.m. – 4 p.m., Sun. 11 a.m. – 3 p.m.

This studio pastel workshop is for beginning and intermediate students. Students will be painting the landscape from photo references. The fee is \$125 and a materials list will be provided. For more information, call 276-236-3500, visit www.chestnutcreekarts.org, or email info@chestnutcreekarts.org.

March 25–30

Roanoke Marginal Arts Festival
Various venues in downtown Roanoke

This festival, now in its sixth year, will feature performance art, film screenings, curated exhibitions in ephemeral spaces, absurdist carnival, a parade full of artist-built floats, giant paper mache heads and art on wheels—everything the festival organizers claim is normally excluded from Roanoke’s art scene. This year’s festival also includes workshops, demonstrations, and lectures. For locations and more information, visit marginalartsfestival.com.

July 19

Delight Exhibit Opening Reception
VTLS, Inc., Corporate Research Center
5–7 p.m.

Don’t miss the reception for this joyful, BRAA-sponsored exhibit of 50 paintings representing artists’ interpretations of delight. (See more information at Exhibit Opportunities on page 3.)

July 20-21

Capturing The Mood and Light Effects in Landscape

This workshop will be taught by Marjorie Perrin from the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. Participants may work in watercolor or oils. Cost is approximately \$40. Contact Nancy Norton (nancypnorton@comcast.net) to reserve a space.

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one like it in Squires," she continued. "She obtained all the permissions for me to do it and we started the months of planning to make it happen."

Her husband, Thomas, assistant dean in Virginia Tech's College of Natural Resources and Environment, provided much of the shredded paper. Olson, a confirmed paper addict, provided colorful catalogs and magazines with an emphasis on Restoration Hardware catalogs (hence, the use of Restoration in the artwork's title).

Once the installation art was scheduled, she hauled bags and bags of shredded paper (the kind that ends up about one-inch long and no wider than a piece of

linguine) into Perspective Gallery, along with many rolls of tape. First, long, narrow rows of the shredded paper were laid on the smooth floor of the gallery. Next, with the help of some handy assistants, they stretched random lengths of the tape, sticky side down, over the laid out paper and pressed it into place.

"We stepped on the tape to make sure the paper adhered," said Olson, "and carried the strips from the second floor gallery to the second floor front windows where we used a power lift (driven by an expert) to raise the tape to the third floor beam for attaching.

This was repeated over and over until there was a whole new kind of "paper trail" through the halls and the beams were draped in dozens of various lengths of paper-covered tape. So thick is the paper the tape seems to disappear in the light of the window. Gray to black to white (likely rather dull scholastic documents), the strips are

intermixed with long lines of color from what used to be beautiful fashion models, luxurious bed linens and tempting reproductions of antique hardware and furniture.

Viewers can't help but think of Spanish moss dripping from trees in the humid, far south of the east coast, prickly cactus branches or cookies with coconut on top. Olson's fashionable, spiked hair goes very well with her sculpture.

This fun and fascinating display is the exact opposite of the works of art for which Olson is most known. Walk just a few feet away, near the elevator on the second floor and you will see a very large, 49" x 97", predominantly green piece on the wall over a couch full of Mac-mashing students seemingly oblivious to the art behind them. Entitled "Voices," this piece features hundreds of tiny pieces of paper taken from glossy, full color magazines, crumpled, treated with a releasing agent and applied to a wooden base carved with countless ripples. It was purchased by the Squires Student Center for its permanent art collection.

"Doing my crumpled paper pieces takes a long time," said Olson. "About an inch a day is the normal pace because of how it is applied and allowing each segment to dry. I work on art every day, generally three pieces at a time, in my home studio and am totally absorbed in the process. I have no children at home now so I can do this. I've



photo: Teri Hoover

Detail of "Restoration of the Paper Trail at VT" by Martha Olson.

■ 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 people knew how hard I worked to get my mastery, it wouldn't seem so wonderful at all."

~Michelangelo

Monthly lunch now includes art talks

Let's actually talk about art at our monthly luncheons! Each month we will have a 15-minute presentation by one of our own members about some aspect of their art. The presentation will be from 12:15 to 12:30, following lunch and preceding the board meeting.

At our next meeting on **April 12**, Charlotte Chan will talk about using batik methods in watercolor. In May, Gerri Young will talk about how to make your own stamps. Come enjoy hearing our own artists and pick up some wonderful tips.

The **April 12** luncheon will begin at 11:30 a.m., at **Famous Anthonys** at 1353 S. Main St., Blacksburg. Art talks begin at 12:15 and the board meeting will follow at 12:30 pm. Please send agenda items to Robi Sallee at robisallee@hotmail.com.

Kudos

Donald and **Joanna Sunshine** each had work accepted in a juried show at the Center for the Arts, Marco Island, FL, March 4 – 27. Joanna's work is "Connections" a three dimensional fiber construction. Donald's are "Yin & Yang," a welded steel sculpture; "First Light" and "Day End," watercolors. Also, Donald's work, "Marco Walk 2," was selected for the April 11 – July 7 exhibit at the Virginia Center for Architecture in Richmond, Va.

Nancy Norton, Vikki King, Gerri Young, Darcy Meeker and **Larry Mitchell** had their art accepted into the New Works exhibit at the end of March at the Jacksonville Center for the Arts' Hayloft Gallery.

Sally Mook, Betty Moore and **Vera Dickerson** had their work accepted to the Virginia Watercolor Society 2013 Exhibition.

Susan Hensley had four of her photos accepted in an exhibit at the Virginia Tech Carilion medical school in Roanoke. The show runs from Feb. 20 through May 15.



"Marco Walk 2" (watercolor)



Ten BRAA members participated in the Feb. 9 workshop on setting up Web pages using Wix's free website builder. Thanks to Den Bento and Tom Barnhart for teaching the class, Nancy Norton and Gerri Young for organizing it, and to Creekmore Law Firm for providing excellent space at the Artful Place for the work session.

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.

Delight Art Exhibition

July 19 – October 14

VTLs, Inc. at the Corporate Research Center

This BRAA-sponsored exhibit invites works with an artistic theme of delight in any wall-hung or 3-D medium. Entry fee is \$5 per piece, with a limit of two entries. Cash prize will be awarded for Best of Theme based on voting at the opening reception. Entry deadline is June 15, but work will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis (50 piece maximum). Visit the BRAA website for more information: <http://www.blacksburgart.org/>

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/.

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been messing around with art all my life, but really started to concentrate on it full time in the last 10 years.

"I recently started playing with what I call 'big girl crayons'—oil pastels—I generally work with paper and pens (for outlining) and really enjoy taking something no longer useful and making it useful again. I re-imagine them. I keep my imagination energized by doing art every day."

Olson now lives in Blacksburg and is a member of the Blacksburg Regional Art Association. Born in Morgantown, W.Va., she earned a bachelor's degree in early childhood development and a master's in public administration from West Virginia University and worked for many years in Houston in health care administration.

She lived in New Zealand as a child and in her junior year of college went on a backpacking trip to Europe where she met her Swedish husband.

Olson is a member of the well-known ArtJam2, a group of artist friends with different mediums who show in Virginia and North Carolina.

Currently, 18 pieces of Olson's work may be seen through end of April at the Hahn Garden Pavilion at Virginia Tech. Her work is carried at Miller Off Main Gallery in Blacksburg, Green Goat Gallery in Spencer, N.C., and the Little Art Gallery in Raleigh, N.C.

More about Olson can found be at:
www.marthaolsonart.blogspot.com or www.artjam2.com ■

Highlights from February board meeting

- New BRAA intern, Maggie McVicar, recorded the meeting minutes. McVicar is a junior majoring in public relations with a minor in arts management at Virginia Tech. She is interested in providing promotional planning and administrative assistance to BRAA. Welcome, Maggie!
- Tom Barnhart and Gerri Young demonstrated features of the new BRAA website. The new site is up and running at www.blacksburg.org and can be accessed through a link on the current website's homepage.
- Thanks to the Virginia Tech Center for the Arts for covering the cost of materials for the Dental Clinic Project.
- A mural by Den Bento for the City Mural Project is a part of the "Love Where You Live" Virginia campaign. Upon approval, the mural may be installed on the side of She-Sha Café on Draper Road.
- There will be a BRAA exhibit at the Jacksonville Center in Floyd in October. More details to follow.

■ Call for Art

The City of Galax Public Art Committee invites artisans to submit proposals for creative painting/decoration of nine six-foot, fiberglass casted bass fiddles. Deadline for proposals is May 15 and winning artists will be awarded \$1000 for time and materials.

For more information, contact chris@chestnutcreekarts.org.



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 @BlacksburgArt1

Please send BRAA news, photos, comments, or suggestions to Lois Stephens (stephens1@pemt.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!

The art featured in this month's nameplate is "Glacial Drift" (left, acrylic, 20" x 13") by Jeanette Bowker. This and more of her work can be viewed at Zeppoli's in Blacksburg through April.