

BACK THROUGH BLACK

Marcy Hermansader Collages

November 22, 2009–February 21, 2010



In Deep 2007

“One does not become enlightened by drawing figures of light but by making the darkness visible.” — Carl Jung

MARCY HERMANSADER'S IMAGES create a dark cosmos under close scrutiny. Hermansader has constructed a series of collages inspired by and about darkness, giving us much to ponder: darkness as protective but menacing, providing cover but full of dangers. Her obscured “landscapes” demand that we attend carefully and try to make sense of their craters, markings, highlighted pathways. What are we seeing? In her deceptively genteel way, Hermansader has laid the darkness wide open, dissecting it and commanding us to adjust our eyes and look deeply. These works also ask that we look at the shadows, passages, and hollows within ourselves.

Hermansader's work is often driven by social issues. *Back Through Black* was begun in response to the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. In a previous series, the artist used images from photographic news reportage to express the universal horrors of war visited on specific people. The abstract series in this exhibit, however, is without any representations of human form. The artist reflects:

The beauty of abstraction is that it allows multiple interpretations. The scale is ambiguous. Where one person sees microscopic reactions, another may find an aerial map. The blackness creates a kind of dream space that encourages viewers to visually wander to their own destinations.

These irregularly shaped collages are obsessively constructed with layer upon layer of paper strips, often illuminated

by surface embellishments of pastel, colored pencil, fabric, and other pasted textural elements. Craters form, surfaces dip and weave, and we can't “see” where we should be going in the dark. Tensions arise from the juxtaposition of shapes. In *In Deep*, a winged energy source seems to fly toward an amorphous blob. Whether or not the image is meant to be taken literally, we can wonder if it is the beginning or the end of the world.

Having grown up as part of the generation deeply affected by the Vietnam War, Hermansader explains that

for me the subject of war provides a seriousness, a dark urgency that keeps me focused. I am interested in expressing emotion and attempting to probe the inexplicable.

Influences on her current work include Women in Black, an international antiwar movement in which black-clad women initiate protest rallies.

An avid reader, Hermansader found, by chance, several references to blackness in literature, poetry, and the Koran that have helped to focus and sustain her efforts. In the Vietnam war story “Night Life,” Tim O'Brien writes about the terror of marching at night in the jungle in “the kind of clock-stopping blackness that God must've had in mind when he sat down to invent blackness.” In the words of Joe Bolton's poem “Little Testament,” Hermansader has found “a dark so dark that intricate things begin to shine.”

Linda Rubinstein, Curator

Brattleboro Museum & Art Center

10 Vernon Street • Brattleboro, VT 05301 • www.brattleboromuseum.org • Open 11–5 • Closed Tuesday & Wednesday except by appointment

MARCY HERMANSADER grew up in a rural part of Connecticut and received a BFA in sculpture from the Philadelphia College of Art in 1973. A practicing artist for over 30 years, she has received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Vermont Council on the Arts, and the Vermont Community Foundation. She has had solo shows at Williams College Museum of Art, the DeCordova Museum and Sculpture Park, and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Group shows in which her work has been seen include exhibitions at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, the Bronx Museum of the Arts, and the Brattleboro Museum & Art Center. Her work is represented by Fleisher/Ollman Gallery of Philadelphia. Hermansader lives in Putney, Vermont, with her partner, Jonathan Flaccus, owner of The Unique Antique.

This project has been supported in part by the Vermont Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts. The artist also wishes to thank ARS, Inc. and the Acadia Summer Arts Program.

All works are on loan courtesy of Fleisher/Ollman Gallery, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Dimensions are height by width by depth, in inches.

A Dark So Dark 2007
paper collage, pastel, and white charcoal on museum board
29¼ x 20 x ½

Force 2008
paper and fabric collage, pastel, and gouache on museum board
17½ x 29½ x ½

Out of This World* 2009
paper collage, color pencil, pastel, and black gesso on museum board
25 x 23½ x ½
*title of a tune played by John Coltrane, written by Harold Arlen

And then... 2007
paper collage with fabric, gouache, black gesso, and screen on museum board
13½ x 19 x ¼



Out of This World 2009

Aftermath 2009
paper collage with gouache, pastel, acrylic, screen, and copper wire on museum board
26¼ x 35 x 1

History 2008
paper collage, colored pencil, pastel, and acrylic on museum board
20 x 30 x ½ inches

In Deep 2007
paper and fabric collage, screen, color pencil, spray paint, and acrylic on museum board
19½ x 29 x ¾

It seemed... 2009
paper and canvas collage, black gesso, and white charcoal on museum board
20 x 14¼ x ¾



Force (detail) 2008



And then... 2007



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Back Through Black was produced by the Brattleboro Museum & Art Center, Danny Lichtenfeld, director; Linda Rubinstein, curator. The brochure was edited and designed by Judith Bellamy Editorial Services. Copyright October 2009 by the Brattleboro Museum & Art Center. Printing courtesy of C&S Wholesale Print Shop.

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Hours and Accessibility

Open 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Closed Tuesday and Wednesday except by appointment.

Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day.

The Museum is wheelchair accessible.

An ASL interpreter for the hearing impaired will be provided if requested two weeks in advance of tours or programs.

Admission and Parking

BMAC members free
Adults \$6
Seniors \$4
Students \$3
Children 5 and under free

Parking is available in front of the Museum.

Museum Shop

The Museum Gift Shop, free to the public during regular Museum hours, features an assortment of cards, games, books, prints, and educational and gift items, including work of many local artists.

Group Tours

Docent-led tours of the Museum for groups are available by appointment. Call the Museum for information.