Mesmerized

Katherine Knoeringer

Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College

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MESMERIZED

A Thesis

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Katherine Knoeringer
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Abstract

This body of work is about looking and contemplating. Intense concentration requires solitude, which is why the figures that appear in the work are either literally isolated or seem detached from others around them. Sometimes the events the figures witness are ordinary, but more often their environments have mysterious or whimsical qualities. The whimsy comes from two places; fictional literature and childhood fantasies. Reading connects me to things and ideas outside of myself and allows the work to vacillate between the reality of normal daily observation and the mental escape of daydreaming. I want to make a place where everything is better and to which people can escape. Common iconography I’ve developed includes dogs, kites, homes, trees, blimps, and people I know. This work is asking you to notice and appreciate the details of your landscape; imagined and real.
Collage Culture and Dichotomies

The media-saturated world we exist in is suffused with massive amounts of visual and auditory information that is constantly changing; being recycled and reformatted. In the words of Paul Miller, a.k.a. DJ Spooky, this is a “culture of collage,” that is based on “non-linear thought processes ... and the collision of radically different forms of thinking,” (Miller www.djspooky.com). Miller, spoke about collage culture in his lectures on his book Sound Unbound at Google’s Corporate Headquarters in August, 2008. It’s a book composed of 36 essays about digital media and sound art, including the writings of Steve Reich and Brian Eno.

While I am not using other people’s pre-existing images, I am cross-referencing observed reality, remembered reality, dreams, and photographs in a way similar to a deejay sampling. The best deejays seamlessly integrate one song into another. I make a hybrid world in which it is impossible to delineate one source of imagery from another. I am creating work that is simultaneously a fictitious and autobiographical stream of thoughts defined by places and people.

My work acknowledges the dichotomy between the visually saturated, sometimes overwhelming environment we live in and unhurried contemplation. That is why some of the works are packed to the brim and white wall space between paintings is so vital. When I make a painting I go about it one of two ways: 1. Painting how I feel- jam-packed and swimming with bits and pieces 2. Painting how I want to feel- a monochromatic sea of paint with temperature variations.
These paintings are about the state of being mesmerized: being absorbed by either the physical sensation (generally sight) of an occurrence, or the focusing of perception on a single thought or aspect of one’s mental landscape.

Example: running a long distance in the cold to feel your body at its limits- the physical exertion OR losing yourself in thought while running a long distance to escape the physicality. These are two halves of the same kind of experience.

1. Katie Knoeringer

*Good Morning*, 2010
Life is made up of fleeting moments. I have recorded some of the ordinary ones and fabricated more fantastical ones to construct an appreciation for looking at things and dreaming into them. For example, three cats on a trampoline that, after returning from the grocery store, has become one cat on a trampoline; or the transformation of a sunset into bikes floating rider-less above the land.

2. Katie Knoeringer

*Josh with Bikes*, 2010
I have captured a sense of whimsy and contemplation in the works that comes from looking and examining the environment, both mentally and physically. My work attempts to encapsulate “... shorter daydreams, the kind that are attracted by detail or by features of reality which at first, seem insignificant ...” and the feeling of being wholly absorbed by these details (Bachelard, 144). The physical part is best described by Michael Dorris’s character in *A Yellow Raft In Blue Water*. She alludes to love, saying: “I’d been high this way, too busy absorbing impressions to think, too connected to the world to make logic out of it. I was riding an arrow to the bull’s-eye of a target ... ” (Dorris, 244).

The mental part is like when Will meets the character Stella from Hoffman’s *The Probable Future*. “Will felt mesmerized ... Even Will Avery wasn’t immune to spring fever. He could feel it creeping up on him, clouding his reason. Everything looked iridescent and new in the glittery sunlight ... (he) understood that she trusted him, she believed in him, and the very idea infatuated him.” (Hoffman 45-46).

What all these ordinary moments have in common may be less distinguishable. Sometimes it is a color or a feeling of awe. The work in this exhibition is me mediated by books, dreams, photos, art, and movies. Thematic elements like dogs and kites reoccur, as I add to my library of images. The pieces are able to be re-arranged. The way that I have grouped them for this exhibition is just one relationship, based on color and theme, in an endless array of possible organizational systems.

Peter Doig, an artist I admire, utilizes collage culture. His work incorporates cinematic time and film references. Doig responds to a variety of media to construct his images. The end
product is a painting that feels different from all of the various source images he uses. For example, his painting *100 Years* is taken from an Allman Brother’s album cover.

3. Peter Doig

*100 Years*, 2001

The image is transformed from a group photo of men in a canoe to a hazy solitary figure in a surreal environment of dripping oil paint. The island in the background seems to reference Arnold Bocklin’s painting *Die Toteninsel*, but in fact Doig was basing it on an island that exists near Trinidad. There is a crossing of reality, nostalgia, romanticism and media that occurs in Doig’s work. Through his use of photographs from the present, he creates nostalgia not unlike longing for the past. Doig, like Miller, samples media, but the end result is a painting. One might not know it initially, but the longer the time spent with a painting, the more there is to be revealed.
The material contributes to the message, but Doig makes the distinction between the medium being the message and the message coming from the medium. His work follows the latter. His paintings are broken up into areas of varying textures. He demarcates spaces using different surfaces (Doig, 106-108), not unlike Miller fitting together the beat of one song with another.
Sources: Real and Imagined

There is a conflict between the visually overwhelming nature of collage culture bombarding the viewer and the experience of concentrated looking. Through installation, I can disperse the overwhelming feeling and allow the viewer to enter into a moment like the figures in the work. My paintings reconcile a multi-tasking, multi-faceted life and a contemplative, nomadic way of looking.

The imagined influences come from two places: fictional literature and dreams. Fictional literature bleeds into daydreams and fantasies. I read a lot of fiction. The imagery of the books I read sometimes comes out in the work but the overarching idea is escape. To really get into a good book is to escape reality for a few hours. Sylvia Plath’s *Bell Jar*, Alice Hoffman’s *Turtle Moon* and *White Horses*, Pat Conroy’s *Prince of Tides* and *Beach Music*, Michael Dorris’ *Yellow Raft on Blue Water*, *Like Water for Chocolate*, and *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by García Márquez are some of the novels that I escape into. I am especially fond of magic realism as a genre because of the fantastical things that happen to characters while they retain their human-ness. For example, a rivulet of a man’s blood can wind from one end of town to his mother’s door when he is killed, as happens in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

Much of my work is about the ordinary made special. *The Beautiful People* is a book written by Simon Doonan about growing into adulthood as a young gay man in the 1970s. Doonan’s admiration for his mother is made evident throughout the book. He remembers his mother’s best quality— the ability to make anything exciting. “Today is Teddy’s Birthday!” A Little Debbie’s Swiss Roll sliced up takes the place of a cake creating the grandest celebration a
6-year-old’s eyes have ever witnessed. This is the feeling I want to evoke—the fascination and joy of uncovering, side by side with sober reflection.

The imagined also comes in contact with reality throughout Alice Hoffman’s writing, specifically, imagery from the novels *The River King* and *Second Nature*. In *Second Nature*, Hoffman describes a dream through the eyes of Old Dick, a man on his deathbed. He is chasing a horse, “so white his eyes hurt just to look at it.” He’s a young man again with a “bellowing” voice he recognizes from his past. He runs with all his strength after the horse, wanting to mount it before it enters a dense forest. He hears a voice beside him asking if he’s alright. “Help me up” he shouts. As the man at his bedside takes his hand, Old Dick is being helped onto the horse and races away, never turning back. “That’s it,” Richard Aaron called as the young man lifted him onto the horse. It was the instant before they reached the endless woods, and quite suddenly the field was green, and it went forever, forever and ever ...” (Hoffman, *Second Nature*, 179-181).

The next line of the book is “They buried Dick ... ” In the midst of the dreamy imagery, Hoffman brings us back to the fact that Dicks has died. The magical or far-fetched situations that present themselves remain believable in the sight of realistic humanity. The longing for youth, the romanticism, the nostalgia are all unmistakably human. The chances that Old Dick’s bedside companion was raised by wolves, is less so. There’s a balance between banality and the fantastic. As I continue to paint, I find myself wandering deeper into the latter, craving unresolved spatial depth and a looser definition of recognizable objects. Maybe animals can take the place of people in the narrative and forests can dissolve into turquoise paint.
4. Katie Knoeriger

_Ode to Dan Deacon_, 2011

In _The River King_, a young girl experiences odd occurrences after her friend dies unexpectedly. The coat that she wears was found on the drowned boy’s body. It remains perpetually wet. She keeps finding stones in her pockets. At one point in the story the girl even sees glittering minnows swimming in the water of an indoor pool late at night. Hoffman pushes the limits of believability. The situations she describes, for the most part, are normal with a subtle tinge of fantasy.

From book to book I find myself relating characters to each other and to people that I know. I daydream about situations I might find myself in or locales different from my one bedroom apartment in Baton Rouge. I relate memories and imagined events from years past to the things I read. Right now I imagine the protagonist from _Like Water for Chocolate_ meeting
Theresa, the girl from *White Horses*. They could help each other, I think. I daydream about owning my own bakery and having men fall in love with me because of my culinary expertise, like the protagonist in *Like Water for Chocolate*. I escape to New Mexico or Montana or some forested, rural town because of the uncertainty of my own future. I’m looking for something and I don’t know what it is yet. The figures in my works are looking for it too. Sometimes it materializes as a glimmer through the trees. Sometimes there’s nothing there at all, at least visible to the naked eye.
I want to make a place where everything is better and to which people can escape. There is always an anticipation built into my paintings, because whatever the figures are waiting for or looking at is undefined. The figures are kept in a state of not-knowing. There is no disappointment. There is nothing turning out differently from what it seemed because the thing was never really clear. It is a state of suspense. The figures and animals can remain hopeful forever. The viewer can walk right up behind the figures in the painting and look for their own glimmering prospect on the horizon. I think this is what people respond to.

6. Katie Knoeringer

*Horizon*, 2010
I would rather focus on the feeling and the act of self-reflection than define for the viewer what it is they’re looking for. It’s different for everyone.

The other imagined point of reference is dreams. Dreams represent intuitive reactions. Dr. Eagleman, who came to speak at LSU about his book of short stories Sum, explained dreams in this way: In sleep, we explore different scenarios. Without the actual feedback we get from our senses in waking life, however, our dreams can twist and turn down convoluted, nonsensical paths. We can fly. We can talk to our dead grandmothers. Our senses and our common sense don’t bother to interrupt. I incorporate whimsical, dream-like situations into my paintings like floating bikes or animals following each other to something in the distance to represent the longing I feel as a dreamer.

These paintings blend the mental landscape and the tangible environment. A person staring at bikes rising into the sky may not be set in reality as we know it, but colorful balloons
floating above the trees could be the after effect of a parade or a real event. *Good Morning* is about an actual experience. It was very early morning on a Saturday. Unable to sleep, I went outside. As I stood alone on the quiet street, I heard the intermittent shushing sound of fire blazing. I looked up and stared at the low-flying balloon drifting by just above the buildings. As I watched, I heard someone call down, “Good morning!”

I once had a dream that all the pet cats from throughout my life came to me one by one. I was sitting in my childhood yard. The grass was covered in snow. The cats came to me and gathered in my lap to warm their paws from the cold ground. After telling my friend about it, she remarked that it sounded just like one of my paintings.

**Concentrated Looking: Visual Acuity:** Insight, Perception; Acute, Keen Observation. The real is referenced through my work in the plants and people and colors I depict. I gather visual information from the LSU lakes, the path I bike back and forth from school, my apartment, building motifs, things I look at on the internet and TV. As a visual person, it is hard to detach oneself from looking all the time: the color of a restaurant menu, the shape of a chimney against the sky, a little girl’s dress sleeves, some details stand out more than others for some reason and I record them and try to make sense of them. The relation of individual units to each other will be explained further in the *Installation* portion of this paper. The people I paint and draw are people from my life. They are important to me, and in a way I am using them as self-portraits. That makes the work meaningful to me, but I think the state of contemplation the figures are engaged in is more important than the viewer’s recognition of someone specific.

Whimsy is one way I hint at childhood, although this element is variable. As William Kentridge said in an interview “... there is a sense of trusting childhood more than adulthood,
that provides a reason for a lot of the objects that I draw ... There is a sense of the clarity of impulse we get as a child, seeing something new; for example the first time one sees extraordinary adult violence ... The strength of the response is something that gets dulled and lessened as the experience gets repeated and as the thing being seen gets more and more familiar.” (Kentridge, 71). My work focuses on the extreme wonder that children encounter with a new experience. There’s a sense of playful inventiveness as the fantastic and ordinary blend together in one world. That’s where my paintings live.

I use images of dogs and houses the way Kentridge uses the image of a rotary phone. They are symbols for things larger than themselves. I relate to them in a very personal way, but the viewer can make a more general or personally specific association. A small red house represents the home I grew up in, but to the viewer a house in itself is a potent symbol.
Kentridge uses the phone because it is his relationship with communication, but in the broader sense, it represents all of technology and connectivity.

A broader influence is achieved from understanding the universality of human nature. It’s like reading fiction. It doesn’t matter to me that I don’t know the people personally. I
imagine interactions with the character or similarities to people I know. Viewers can connect to my paintings through the postures of the people I paint and the situations. It is human nature to be searching. Inquisitive wonderment relates to childhood which in itself is universal. Everyone was at one point a child. It has contributed in various ways to make people the adults they are.

Gaston Bachelard wrote in *The Poetics of Space* that we are alone when we daydream. “Through dreams,” according to Bachelard, “the various dwelling-places in our lives co-penetrate and retain the treasures of former days. And after...when memories of other places we have lived in come back to us, we travel to the land of Motionless Childhood, motionless the way all Immemorial things are” (Bachelard, 6-7). Dreams and memories exist in suspended animation, much like an image frozen in paint. My individual paintings represent moments in time-- the time I was recalling or alluding to within the image and the moment of creation for the painting.

With few exceptions, the figures are generally alone. There is a kind of mental solitude that occurs while a person is daydreaming. Even in *Concentrated*, that contains two people, the figures seem unattached to each other, although they are gazing at the same thing. Bachelard is constantly referring to solitude as a condition of daydreaming. He writes “every corner in a house, every angle in a room, every inch of secluded space in which we like to hide, or withdraw into ourselves, is a symbol of solitude for the imagination...” (Bachelard, 137).
I am alone when I read which allows for imagining. Reading connects me to things and ideas outside of myself, like my paintings. My work is like a map of interconnected images that continues to grow as I gather more information and filter through my experiences. No matter how specific the experiences are to me, as the system of paintings expands, the viewer can recognize connections within the work and relate it to their own experiences.
Glue and Painted Paper

It is fascinating that an image can speak of how it was made and allude to a story at the same time. I combine cut paper and paint and drawing in a single piece. The cut-outs remind the viewer of scissors and glue, of how things are made, but when they are positioned next to illusionistic drawing or a descriptive space, the viewer can enter back into the narrative. The way that I make work is about experimentation and examination. I am playing with ideas and arriving at solutions in single works the same way that I decide which works to pair together and what to emphasize through interplay with the wall. After they are made, I try to see how the works relate to one another. Cutting paper and overlapping the edges of the rectangular support are two processes I have adopted that Devin Troy Strother and Jockum Nordström use.

11. Devin Troy Strother

*It’s Just Me, You and the DJ*, 2010
There is a crude quality but also an immediate quality about cut paper that is honest and unselfconscious. At the same time, Strother and Nordström show a visual complexity that is not at all child-like.
By not creating wholly illusionistic work, I can afford to redefine some elements in a number of ways. My work is a shifting, living thing. The language changes as visual elements cross over the edges and boundaries. For example, kites are cut paper in one unit, painted in another and three-dimensional objects independent of a painting support in a third embodiment. The slight shifts in space, which may be a matter of inches, are huge in terms of the language of the work. And, not one of them is actually a kite or flies in the air. The paper suspended on wire comes closest, but casts a shadow onto a white gallery wall reminding the viewer that it is not flying.

Vibrant color is also essential. Saturated green, yellow, and blue—comes from Baton Rouge. Naturalistic colors and color relationships become exaggerated and intensified, further
blurring the line between real and imagined. I like to imagine living in a painting. I want the colors to be so inviting and rich that the viewer can’t help but think about being inside that color, like one character describes in *A Yellow Raft In Blue Water*, “It was early afternoon and the sky was a pale yellow, a shade lighter than the dry grasses that shifted around us, stiff as the pages of a book. Even the air seemed to have the same tone, or maybe it was colored by blowing grains of pollen. It was so quiet that every sound we made was edged in black, stood out sharp as a rifle crack.”(Dorris, 250).
Installation: Moments and Systems

Like Bachelard describes in *The Poetics of Space*, “We cover the universe with drawings we have lived, they need not be exact, they need only be tonalized on the mode of our inner space.” I want the viewer to be immersed in the moments that I’ve selected and I want to make a system that makes the images the most readable. Systems: organize by color, theme, size variation, smallest to largest, location on the wall, narrative.

The thinking, feeling nature of what I do is not rectangular. Meeting with post-pop Italian painter Walter Bartolossi made me realize this. He told me if I really want to extend beyond the limits of the canvas, to really do it—large and emphatically. I toyed with paper cut-outs, built kites on balsa wood frames, left branches and bikes overhanging edges slightly. Now, I have expanded my language of cut paper. Paper is fragile. It is bold in color and edge, but without the wall, it curls and sways. The wall can be the canvas. There is an objectness to the cut paper that is different from painting on the wall. The process of putting together and rearranging pre-existing scraps of colored paper I then alter is a more comfortable, appropriate way to work. The white wall and cut paper elements move the viewer through the work. Nicola Lopez, a contemporary printmaker, uses this effect in her work. She engages the wall. It is her canvas. Her prints and cut paper undulate across the white, sweeping from the bottom edge to eye level and higher.

The white of the wall allows for pacing. In my installation, the viewer can travel around inside a pocket of paintings and wander across an open area to another. The negative wall space
acts as a latent place but also connects the viewer to the rest of the paintings. The paintings grow out of one another and sometimes onto the surface of the wall.

Denise Burge is another artist who incorporates the white gallery wall into her work. In her installations, she uses cut paper and wood or paints directly onto the walls. Her work is quilt-like, often incorporating fabric. Burge creates sensitive investigations of texture and pattern (www.myoriginaldirt.com). She considers the overall size and shape of the support and playfully responds to it using paper and paint. "Denise Burge is a quilter in a strict sense of the word. Her quilts, literally, don’t fit inside of the box. They’re messy affairs, spilling out of boundaries and constructed of a variety of fabrics and stitches, grabbing the viewer by the scruff

I want to immerse the viewer the way Trenton Doyle Hancock does. In his work, the room turns into an environment. I want to invite the viewer in. Sometimes the figures in my paintings are purposely left as drawings. The subtle texture of the mulberry paper is an open spot, an entry into the work. The layered, eclectic nature of the imagery is packed with color and details, so I build in small openings and resting spots. The white gaps of the wall function similarly. In Hancock’s installation work, tree branches and text intermingle and meander across the walls all the way to the floor. I relate to his use of materials—the felt, drawing, paint, etc.

Henry Darger’s work has a similar effect achieved through concept. Darger’s lengthy writings, daily journals, and scrolling illustrations engender an entire world with cultures and countries. The narrative aspect of my work is open-ended. I am walking a fine line between narrative (which tends to be illusionistic), however, and abstract, rough materiality.
The drawings of Silvia Bächli rely on placement on the wall for their meaning. Eric de Chassey describes Bächli’s work as follows: “Moreover, Bächli’s wall configurations never transform the sheets they include into something else, as if elements in a purported narrative. The individual sheets do not become parts of a visual riddle or visual script but retain their autonomy, only they are now the conditional parts of a larger drawing whose lines and colors are found as much in the different sheets of paper that compose it as in the blank wall intervals between these parts. Bächli’s wall compositions, as well as the single-sheet drawings, all created from everyday perceptions and feelings, extend themselves, as if by centrifugal force, into the dimensions and spaces of the day-to-day world.” (Vitamin D, 24).
The paintings can stand alone as individual units. That is how I constructed them, looking at one piece alongside others, but foremost carefully considering it on its own. My original idea was for them to be interchangeable, and I think they still are, but I am being more specific about this particular installation, with regard to the shape and size of the walls and at what height the pieces hang.

After working on similar sized supports repetitively, relationships become apparent. The way the rectangle is divided starts to share similarities with the other paintings. A curve of a branch miraculously, or not so miraculously, matches up with the curve of a blimp. The size relationships are intuitive. The recognition of relationships and organization to maximize the similarities is planned.

The breaks, gaps in between the paintings function as a resting point. The open spaces on the white wall operate as holes. The depth of the panels also varies from three or four inches to cut paper directly on the wall. My cut paper “extend(s) (itself) ... into the dimensions and spaces of the day-to-day world.” That is what I am doing when I extend a shape upward out of a painting onto the wall, or stack panels up in a way that seems continuous despite color and material changes. For example: a tree ‘growing’ up the wall and across panels. The branches don’t literally connect like a true diptych or triptych, but rather the images are thrust together and the imagery and hand are similar enough to connect ideas.
Installation: Role of the Viewer

A certain amount of control is left up to the viewer: where to begin looking, how long to spend in each part. This is true of any visual art. Even with a video piece, the viewer can stay or leave. But like Garth Johnson said of Denise Burge’s work, I want to grab people “by the scruff of the neck.” I’ve carefully crafted my work, yet it is potent and direct.

I fill the gallery space and surround the viewer in a way that is different from a traditional gallery experience. I want the viewer to be absorbed into the scenarios I’ve painted, like the figures depicted. The role of the viewer in this installation is to animate the images. By moving from artwork to artwork, the viewer causes the images to span time. I control the order, but the viewer ultimately chooses to follow the order or not, chooses where to start looking, how long to spend with each component and imagery within. In this way there is a temporal element different from the way time is experienced within film or video. A story builds, not linearly but through common elements reoccurring and blending together across shifting, painterly landscapes, like simultaneous narrative; getting a glimpse of multiple story lines happening at the same time.

I am making a site specific, architecturally responsive installation. When installing, I respond to the size and shape of the paintings in relation to the gallery space and its unique structure. I consider the height and length of the wall and any interruptions like corner molding or electrical outlets.
The newer works reference the older ones. It is like a game of telephone. The most recent paintings may be very different from the first paintings, but they have grown out of a chain of what prefaced them. The flexibility comes from rearranging the units, sometimes putting them beside much earlier works, where new relationships can form. I make paintings about the people I meet and places I experience as well as the mental landscape that develops from being in a place. The paintings begin to relate to each other in different ways the longer I spend in a place. An entirely fresh, changeable body of work grows out of the way I experience a place like a chapter in a book or like a living organism, a record of actual and fabricated moments. As more paintings are added to the body, I re-organize it and the way the viewer experiences it changes.

Henry Darger is one of my favorite artists because of his passion for telling a story. He overcame technical inhibitions by tracing coloring book characters and other printed materials.
His illustrations are unself-conscious and refreshing. He creates an illusionistic world in which his narrative can take place, but the viewer is made aware of some of his process by the hand-made quality of it. The simultaneous admission and denial (story-suspension of disbelief) of his process fascinates me. This effect reminds me of the suspension of disbelief that takes place within a viewer’s mind when watching a film. To fully enjoy a film a viewer must be willing to accept what they are seeing as reality. Granted, this is easier to do when a film has a particularly well-developed plot and characters; however, to be fully absorbed in Darger’s work, one has to accept the imagery as it is. The difference between painting and film, I believe, is that it is pleasurable to vacillate between the materiality of the object and its meaning, as is possible with Darger’s illustrations. The viewer can become involved in the tale of the Vivian Girls action for action, their battles with mythical people called Glandolinians or an incoming storm, while taking time to appreciate how the scroll-like drawing was put together.

My hope is that my work will live and breathe and grow, as Darger’s did and does. He kept his journals and added chapters of action for the Vivian Girls to take part in. My moldable narrative will be reconstituted with additions and subtractions as I continue to paint and work directly on the wall with cut paper. I am leaving myself open to chance possibilities for the organism of my work. Unlike Charlotte Salomon’s autobiographical paintings or Darger’s epic illustrations, the specifics of my story are open-ended, like a simultaneous narrative that never concludes. The unpredictability and changeability of my body of work keep me motivated to make new paintings and piece things together. There is always another image/painting to be made because there is always a different perspective. Like painting a figure in the same pose again and again because it will always be a little different.
On Imagery

I capture in painting the same things that fascinate me about reading fiction or magic realism. Reading is an escape; a dark, velvet-lined hole to slip into and hide for a while. One can be out of sight, unaccounted for. That’s what the moments are that I paint about, losing yourself completely for an instant. I freeze the instant, though, so the viewer can spend as little or as much time with it as he or she desires.

The paintings are like little windows or holes, like Margaret Mahy’s story “The House of Coloured Windows,” about tinted windows or Neo’s Rauch’s idea about holes. Mahy wrote a story about a girl entering a house and gazing out the windows which were all different sizes and colors. Each one looks out over a totally different world, or so it seems. She eventually settles on the clear one and goes back out to the life she knows.

Neo Rauch writes about holes and being able to see things. Sometimes in his work, the viewer gets a glimpse into an interior, as if he or she has X-Ray vision or the wall is melting away. These overlapping layers complement his compound, confusing sense of space. The transition from one work to another in my installation is where the holes become apparent rather than fluidly within one work like Rauch.

I want the environment to always be in a state of flux, however minute. That is how life is and how dreams are. Nothing is static. “The telling of a dream itself is an abstraction. A dream cannot be told to anyone” (Rauch, 130).
Iconography

As I make work, I add to the “previous inventory,” of my imagery, a “further link on the fabric of my personal iconography.” (Rauch, 120). The sub-categories listed below are some of the themes I have found myself returning to repeatedly. I have tried to define the significance they hold in my autobiographical fiction.

Animals-- Animals have always been important to me. Whether it’s pets or wildlife, animals have been a fascination of mine since my earliest memory. Having grown up with a dog and cats in the backdrop of my life, animals represent home. They also represent innocence. Dogs comprehend people in a very direct manner. They are perceptive creatures, sensitive to feelings. Words impart meaning, not for what the words themselves are, but how they are said. Dogs are like children: innocent onlookers, absorbing what is around them. Animals can be animated models. They can be imbued with the same traits as people. They look inquisitively at the sky; sit contemplatively; or as in Animal Canopy, a bear stands on its hind legs taking the literal pose of a human.
Kites-- Diamond shapes and “S” curves cut from paper represent thoughts and dreams. They are wisps of things that don’t obey gravity, mysterious bits of floating matter that trail into the distance. Sometimes kites have hex symbols on them. This comes from the time I spent in Pennsylvania Dutch country as an undergraduate. Barn stars are prevalent in the Lehigh Valley area, where I studied during my undergraduate years. Often they have six-pointed designs for good luck or protection. I imagine that I could send up a kite with a barn star on it and it would be like sending out a good omen for other people to pick up on, almost like a smoke signal.

Magic is related to the kite shapes. It is anything that is indefinable, some sparkle on the horizon, something the people are longing for. “The poetical substance inherent in perceptions from the corner of one’s eyes is actually very close to images from dreams. Everyone knows
the feeling. You perceive something from this perspective, then you go after it, and then it is gone,” (Rauch, 112).

**Solitary Figure**-- I draw people I know, but rather than portraits, their pictures serve as iconic watchers and seekers. They search for and observe things in their painted environments. The lone figure can be thought of as a self-portrait. Sometimes it is a male figure, sometimes a female, but it is always a daydreamer. To make art is a solitary process. It requires a lot of time alone, usually, in a room with materials and thoughts. No other person can be in my head during the daydreaming or thinking processes. Imagination can be shared, but initially the action is always solitary.

**Houses/Structures/Yurts**-- Houses contain thoughts, like a head or a body or a place to go to. The body is home to the soul. Yurts, another form of homes, are impermanent structures. They are a stopping place along the way. Gaston Bachelard writes about the house, the room, and the corner being places to protect the daydreamer. The house shields us from the storm, a “space that is supposed to condense and defend intimacy” (Bachelard, 48). “The House of Coloured Windows,” a short story by Margaret Mahy, a house that looks out on many places simultaneously. “The real wonders ... were its windows. They were all the colours of the world—red, blue, green, gold, purple and pink, violet and yellow, as well as the reddish-brown of autumn leaves ... No one had told us but we all knew that if you looked through the red window you saw a red world. If you looked through the blue window a blue one.”

“Through a candyfloss-pink window, sure enough, she looked into a world of circuses. A pink circus tent opened like a spring tree in blossom. Clowns turned cartwheels around it, and
a girl in a pink dress and pink slippers rode on a dappled horse, jumping through a hoop hung with pink ribbons.” (Mahy 75).

**Outdoors**-- Being in nature offers space for contemplation. There is the opportunity for natural sound. Somehow I find I can slow down and notice details. I can experience something greater and take myself out of everyday life. The great outdoors is calming and fantastic at the same time without being out of the ordinary. Nature is accessible in Baton Rouge. It offers me solace and thinking time.

**Landscape**-- Sometimes elements of the Baton Rouge landscape appear, not with enough information to be specifically identified, but plants, trees, and water as well as certain colors conjure the local atmosphere in some instances. This is the real or experienced entering into the work. I keep sketchbooks of drawings from life. I draw the telephone poles on my street, Empress trees around the LSU Lake, branches, my fellow grad students, dogs I pet-sit for, among other things. I supplement these drawings with reference photographs of people in specific poses or angles of trees.

**Forest**-- The forest is a place of mystery and magic. Fairy tales are often set in the woods. In her short story, “The Door In the Air,” Margaret Mahy writes about a “beautiful but dangerous wood called Riddle Chase,” where people lose themselves on paths and emerge days later changed from how they went in. The main character of the story, a prince, was one of the people affected. He wandered into Riddle Chase as a child and ever afterward more stars grew on his skin every year until his body became a map of the solar system (Mahy 3-5). The forest also plays a role in Alice Hoffman’s novels. In *Second Nature*, she writes “The trees were so thick and so tall Connor actually felt dizzy; it seemed a sin to speak in a place as deep and green
as this.” (Hoffman, 253 Second Nature). The Grimm Brothers’ famous fairy tales are often set in the woods. Stories from Little Red Riding Hood to Hansel and Gretel involve mysterious and dangerous forests. Unexplainable events happen there. Like in a dream when someplace feels familiar although you can’t actually recall where it is, or dreams that take place in combinations of various times and towns lived in by the dreamer. The landscape, like the forest holding secrets, is capricious, whether it’s the concrete world or the setting of a dream.
The following is a poem by an LSU English student Jordan Courtney, inspired by a visit to my studio last year. The work I have made since then looks a little different, but the poem remains applicable.

**Stranger dome for dreamscapes**

balloons are eternally leaving the world  
houses with no walls, only roofs  
world-small, dream-big  
blurs of animal, hedgehog-hedges  
and no boundaries but  
you, pencil-scratched by passing from world to dream  
scraped of color, alone  
with the celebration  
lost-wonder, looking away  
for what brought you here  
and how to wake.

But I don’t want to wake. I want to keep wandering and looking.
Bibliography


Vita

Katie Knoeringer is from Long Valley, New Jersey. She was born on March 6, 1985. She spent her whole life before college living at 37 Maple Lane in a small red house with her parents, older brother, and an assortment of pets. Katie attended Kutztown University from August 2003 to May 2008 and graduated with dual degrees in fine art and art education. After graduating from Kutztown, Katie moved to Baton Rouge to begin Louisiana State University’s Master of Fine Arts program. She will graduate in May, 2011.