

Cummings Bears Witness at Sea Islands Center Gallery

Written by Editor

Tuesday, 04 February 2020 13:53 - Last Updated Wednesday, 05 February 2020 07:21



The Department of Visual Art & Design at USCB presents *Bearing Witness*, artwork by Yvette Cummings, at the Sea Islands Center Gallery. The show opened in late January, and a reception will take place Friday, February 7, from 5 to 7:30 p.m., with a brief gallery talk at 6 p.m. The exhibit will remain on view through February 22. The Sea Islands Center Gallery is located at 1106 Carteret Street.

Cummings will be exhibiting figurative paintings, hand-cut paper collages, and mixed media work. The artist and her children are her usual subjects, depicted in a painterly and representational style, but contrasted with colorful, abstracted patterns reminiscent of wallpaper and decorative textile patterns.

It is easy to associate some of the images with the 19th century Impressionist painter Mary Cassatt, both in style and on the topic of motherhood. However, Cummings is dealing with far more serious content.

“This work presents a moment of transition between experiences of recalled child abuse and the dynamics of motherhood... as I have watched my daughters in their youth, I reflect on the trouble that was brought to me as a survivor of child sexual abuse,” Cummings says. Now, in her artwork, she focuses on the relationships her daughters have with each other, with her, and

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with the adult gaze.

Larger works on canvas focus on images of the young girls playing, sometimes staring out at the viewer. Other works are paintings that depict the body of, what might be, the artist. We see the body depicted naturally, the body harmed, and the body morphed into a multi-armed figure of motherhood.



Eighteen square canvases, part of the forty canvas Voyeur series, are also displayed in the gallery. In these smaller works, Cummings depicts mostly children in an illustrative style reminiscent of children's books published in the 1950's, if not earlier. The outlined figures of children are painted over collaged, mixed media backgrounds. Solitary children sleeping or playing are contrasted with children in uncomfortable poses or depicted against the pants of a male figure. The gaze that we are confronted with is not only the adult gaze, but the male gaze.

Cummings is an Assistant Professor at Coastal Carolina University, where she teaches courses in painting and drawing. She earned a Masters of Fine Arts degree at the University of Cincinnati's School of Design, Art, Architecture, and Planning. While working on her master's degree, Cummings served as Director of the 840 Gallery, interned at the Contemporary art Center of Cincinnati, and received a Wolfstien Travel Fellowship to Spain. Following her graduate work, Cummings became an instructor in the Department of Art at the University of South Carolina. She was named the Stephen J. Dalton Teacher of the Year at USC in 2011.

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Cummings's work has been selected for multiple group and solo exhibitions throughout the South and Midwest. In 2013, she collaborated with James Arendt to participate in the *Free City Public Arts Festival*

, Flint Public Arts Project: Chevy in the Hole. Their socially engaging installation was titled "Righting Itself." Her work can be found in public and private collections. It has been featured in the 701 Center for Contemporary Art, 2015 South Carolina Biennial in Columbia, S.C., as well as Contemporary South at Visual Art Exchange in Raleigh, N.C. She was honored recently with the 701 CCA Prize 2016 for South Carolina artists under 40. She lives in Conway and devotes time to her studio work, teaching and family.

About the Sea Islands Center Gallery

The Sea Islands Center Gallery is the art gallery of the Department of Visual Art & Design of the University of South Carolina Beaufort. It is located on the Beaufort Campus in the Sea Islands Center building at 1106 Carteret Street. Since 2012, the gallery has hosted visiting artists, traveling exhibitions, group exhibitions, and shows of student work. The mission of the gallery is to promote the academic and creative programming goals of the Department of Visual Art & Design and to serve as a catalyst for creative inquiry and exploration within the Beaufort community. The directors of the Sea Islands Center Gallery are Ann Holderfield and Chad Penner.

Contact the gallery at seaislandscentergallery@uscb.edu or 843-521-3147 for current hours. For information about the USCB Department of Visual Art & Design, contact Department Chair Chris Robinson at robinsct@mailbox.sc.edu.