

HYPERALLERGIC

Margaret Morrison's *Paradigm Shift* Is on View at the Lyndon House Arts Center

Drawing inspiration from Caravaggio and her personal history with Mormonism, the artist explores enlightenment in this exhibition in Athens, Georgia.



Woodward Gallery | June 15, 2023



Margaret Morrison, "Processional" (2023), oil on canvas, 60 x 72 inches, signed lower right

Woodward Gallery is proud to announce Margaret Morrison's new solo exhibition, *Paradigm Shift*, on view at the Lyndon House Arts Center in Athens, Georgia, through September 1. In this narrative series of 10 large oil paintings, the artist aims to investigate Caravaggio's use of theatrical light by depicting stages of faith-based, spiritual enlightenment, from awakening to transcendence. She has been represented by Woodward Gallery since 1995.

In 2017, Professor Margaret Morrison proposed a Faculty Research Grant to the University of Georgia's (UGA) Willson Center for the project "Contemporary Examination of Caravaggio's Dramatic Staging and Lighting – A Collaboration between Painting and Theatre." She worked with Professor Anthony Marotta of the UGA Department of Theatre and Film Studies to explore various methods of stage choreography for the purpose of photographing and collecting reference images. She created a script for UGA theater students that resulted in a stage performance directed by Marotta and documented by photographer Gabrielle Rosenthal. The collaboration provided Morrison with reference material for *Paradigm Shift*, through which she reflects on enlightenment and her personal experiences with faith and spirituality.

"As a fifth-generation Mormon," Morrison recalls, "I grew up on faith-promoting stories of my ancestors who left everything behind to build a new Zion in the wilderness of the American West. This faithful narrative of Mormonism's founding was unblemished, spiritually uplifting, and literally a part of my DNA. If any aspect of our history or practice gave me consternation, I placed it on my metaphorical shelf to be dealt with later."



Margaret Morrison, "Constructing the Myth" (2022), oil on canvas, 60 x 72 inches, signed lower right

“In the early 2000s,” says Morrison, “An enormous treasure trove of historical documents, letters, and journals from Mormon history flooded the internet. The Church could no longer be the gatekeeper, withholding the unsavory and salacious moments in its history. As I voraciously read everything that I could get my hands on, it became apparent that the tidy ‘faithful narrative’ that I had been raised to believe in did not exist... I was plunged into the most painful experience of my life and it was exhausting physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

“Slowly, very slowly, I began to pull away from my anger and disillusionment to make room for a new paradigm... I turned inward and rekindled a deeper, more personal spirituality. I sifted through the ruins of my faith tradition and found the pieces that resonated with me. As I rebuilt, I began to experience deeper spiritual connections, a true sense of transcendence in my search for the Divine.

“My *Paradigm Shift* series springs from the devastating sense of loss I felt when my belief in the ‘faith-promoting’ history of Mormonism imploded, forcing me to build a new, and infinitely deeper spiritual foundation. The narrative in each painting traces the arc of my journey from naïve believer, passing through cataclysmic destruction and terrible sadness, finally arriving at the reclamation of my inner peace and a closer connection to God.”

Margaret Morrison’s *Paradigm Shift* at the Lyndon House Arts Center in Athens, Georgia, is free and open to the public through September 1. A special Artist Event will be held on August 24, at 6pm.

For more information, visit woodwardgallery.net.



Margaret Morrison, “East of Eden” (2023), oil on canvas, 48 x 60 inches, signed lower left



Margaret Morrison, “Limbo” (2022), oil on canvas, 48 x 60 inches, signed lower left



Margaret Morrison, "Followers" (2022), oil on canvas, 60 x 72 inches, signed lower right