

UGA Performing Arts Center Opens New Gallery With Solo Show By UGA Professor

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Even after a quarter century of serving artists and audiences, the UGA Performing Arts Center finds new ways to engage the community. Monday, January 29 at 6 p.m., just before a Hodgson Concert Hall performance by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the PAC opens its Lobby Gallery with a reception celebrating the inaugural show by UGA Professor Margaret Morrison.

Four large-scale paintings from Morrison's *Paradigm Shift* series now occupy walls on the mezzanine. This free exhibit runs through July 26 and can be viewed Monday-Friday, 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m, and during all public events and performances.

"I'm delighted to be the first artist to show in the space," says Morrison, who is the Lamar Dodd School of Art Area Chair of Drawing and Painting. "The lighting — holy

smoke! It's a similar light to the light I used in the studio to create them. It makes the colors pop the way they were on my easel."

Morrison's paintings were created after she began to question historical aspects of her closely held Mormon faith. "This body of work is the most personal I have done," she says, though she stresses that the questioning impulse is not limited to her faith tradition.

The figures in Morrison's paintings are UGA theatre students acting out scenarios devised by Morrison; the landscapes and locations, she says, "are out of my head." She has prepared the following notes on the paintings.

Four *Paradigm Shift* paintings by Margaret Morrison

As a fifth generation Mormon, 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. My religious paradigm was neat and tidy, literally a part of my DNA.

In the early 2000s an enormous treasure trove of historical documents, letters, and journals from Mormon history flooded the internet. I realized that the tidy "Faithful Narrative" that I had been raised to believe did not exist. The actual history was raw and messy.

My Paradigm Shift paintings spring from the devastating sense of loss that I experienced when my naïve perspective fell apart. How I then sifted through the ruins to build a new faith paradigm, finding a deeper spirituality and inner peace. Each painting in the series traces the steps of my journey from trusting follower to a questioning believer, through a terrible sadness and eventually, transcendence.

This body of work was funded by the Willson Center for Humanities and Arts in collaboration with UGA Theater Professor Anthony Marotta and his theater students.

Followers

No one must know that I am drowning. I go through the motions, empty inside, like a sleepwalker, plodding along behind the others, yet hanging back. At times I am furious, frantic, resigned, devastated, seemingly trapped in the flow of the current, and desperately afraid of being discovered. *Courtesy of Woodward Gallery*

Lost Saints

In Italy, I drift through churches and museums full of Catholic icons and reliquaries, pieces of saints embellished with golden filagree, tucked inside ornate caskets. So many parallels. We worship, we adore, we need our saints to be perfect. Why was it so hard to finally let go, and realize that they are just like us? *Courtesy of Woodward Gallery*

Free Fall

A trap door opened beneath me, and I plunged down, down, down, not knowing how far I would fall. Mortality, eternity, death, resurrection, agency, hope, despair.... a blur rushing past me as I fell. But then my feet found solid ground in an unexpected place. Like the crusader back from the Holy Land with a shipload of precious earth from Golgotha, I rebuilt my house on Sacred Ground. (The fresco behind the figures is from Buonamico Buffalmacco's Triumph of Death in the Campo Santo in Pisa.) *Courtesy of Woodward Gallery*

Constructing the Myth

I see what they did. They polished and burnished until all the blemishes were hidden. Then they locked away the damaging parts, hoping that they would never be discovered. They crafted a Golden Legend and warned us not to look deeper. Truth is not always uplifting, they said. But they forgot one of the simplest truths of all, "For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known." *Courtesy of Woodward Gallery*

About Margaret Morrison

Margaret Morrison is a Professor of Art and Area Chair of Drawing and Painting in the Lamar Dodd School of Art at the University of Georgia. She has been represented by

the Woodward Gallery in New York since 1995. Her solo exhibition, Paradigm Shift, was featured at the Lyndon House Art Center in 2023. She was awarded Best in Show at ArtFields 2023 Fine Art Exhibition and Competition. Her paintings are currently in Picture This, traveling to art museums throughout Georgia. She is concurrently featured in a Solo Exhibition in NYC with Woodward Gallery at 60 Pine Street.