

A Book Review

STILL TIME ON PYE POND

by Danielle Fontaine
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58 full-color illustration
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STILL TIME ON PYE POND stands at the intersection of literature and visual arts. It is the story of a young white woman, the author's daughter, rejected by her paternal grandfather for marrying a Black man. The memoir is told principally in encaustic paintings, from the point of view of the mother who remains painfully silent to avoid further unraveling tenuous family bonds. Encaustic is an ancient method of painting with hot wax and resin that dates to the ancient Greek. Jasper Johns revived the medium in the 1950s, notably in his flag and target paintings.



Equal Opportunity, 24" x 16" encaustic on board

The story follows the author's technical progress as she reclaims her voice in a newfound medium. Her paintings become the means through which a remnant of harmony is preserved, a hopeful bridge towards eventual reconciliation. The art becomes the words she cannot speak.

Danielle Fontaine received an MFA in Creative Writing, from Queens University of Charlotte, NC, and a MA in Economics and Politics, from Oxford University (on a Rhodes Scholarship). She also earned a degree in Architecture, from McGill University, in Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

Fontaine is a visual artist, with a studio at the Greenville Center for Creative Arts, Greenville, SC.



The Heart of Simpler Things, 30" x 30" encaustic on board

Fontaine offered the following biographical statement: Aside from her studio practice and writing, she has long been active in various aspects of Greenville's



Social Mobility, 24" x 16" encaustic on board art scene. She initiated the pilot program for The Warehouse Theatre's This Wooden O educational outreach and mentored the first Greenville County High Schools Art Exhibit during the inaugural year of Artisphere. She co-founded the SeasonArt Series, a happy marriage of visual arts and literature at The Warehouse Theatre. With her husband, she founded the Brandon Fellowship at the Greenville Center for Creative Arts, with the specific aim of promoting diversity in Greenville's art scene. She currently serves on the Urban Panel of the City of Greenville's Design Review Board.

Testimonials

Jim Grimsley, author of *How I Shed My Skin: Unlearning the Racist Lessons of a Southern Childhood* said, "In coming home to the rural south for over fifty years - having departed to live in a city away from my roots - I have been struck most of all by the places I remember that have fallen into decay, the relics and ruin, a house tumbled into itself covered with vines and shrubs. We let our houses crumble to wreckage and die, haul in a trailer next to them, and move on. It is akin to the stubborn, inflexible way of our lives, our beliefs. Danielle Fontaine's study of Pye Pond, a piece of land on which her husband's parents live, brings all this back to me in startling images, the beauty of the land and the tenuousness of what we build on it. Paired with the story of her daughter's marriage to a man of a different race and that same father-in-law's judgement of her, the work becomes a testament to the scars that are carved in us, in the landscape, in the faces of our children, in service to a past that grips us still. There is something vital in this conversation between image and story of the past - which is not the past at all, which is lived out any time Fontaine walks on Pye Pond. What is there about a belief that is more important than a granddaughter? Where words fail us, maybe these images can tell the story."

Jim Grimsley is professor emeritus of practice in the English Department at Emory University. He is the author of multiple plays and novels and a memoir, and the recipient of many literary awards including the Sue Kaufman Prize for First Fiction from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and a PEN/Hemingway Award citation.



Distortion, 30" x 30" encaustic on board

Artist Tom Stanley said, "*Still Time on Pye Pond* by artist Danielle Fontaine, is much more than a collection of published

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images by the Canadian born artist. It is a narrative related to Grandpa, Grandma, Marie, Ryan, and the artist's own relationship to place and memory. The memoir chronicles Fontaine's realization of family in the deep south and social change confronting outdated and dying tradition. This family story wanders far beyond the gallery. Fontaine's images capture a sense of loss on levels that are more than representational, and in fact timely."

Tom Stanley is a 2018 Elizabeth O'Neill Verner Award (SC Governor's Award) recipient, professor emeritus and former chair of Winthrop University's department of fine art.

Jon Pineda, author of *Let's No One Get Hurt* said, "Danielle Fontaine's *Still Time on Pye Pond* joins together vividly rendered images with a plaintive narrative. Through its thoughtful sequence of encaustic work, this collection fuses the artist's numerous gifts within the brilliant medium of remembrance and longing."

Jon Pineda has won Library of Virginia Literary Awards for fiction and poetry and is a recipient of the Milkweed National Fiction Prize.

Artist Leo Twiggs said, "Pye Pond is haunting and memorable. I want to look again at the images and let them wallow in my mind. I am impressed and gratified to wander among these Pye Pond memories."

Leo Twiggs is an Elizabeth O'Neill Verner Award (SC Governor's Award) recipient and professor emeritus and founder of the Fine Art Department at South Carolina State University. In 1970, Twiggs became the first African American student to receive a Doctor of Arts degree from the University of Georgia.

Editor's Note: My life before becoming a full time publisher of an arts publication was spent in the world of photography, first in hopes of one day being a fine art photographer and later running a custom black & white film processing and printing lab. Several elements of this book remind me of those days.

There was a time, after the death of my Grandparents on my Mother's side who ran a dairy farm business in central Michigan, when I returned to that farm, abandoned and now owned by the neighboring farm to relive memories of time spent on that farm and take photographs. My first impression was of how small the farm seemed when it was once a sprawling land of adventure. I explored rooms that



The Importance of Granddaughters, 10" x 8" color print and encaustic on board

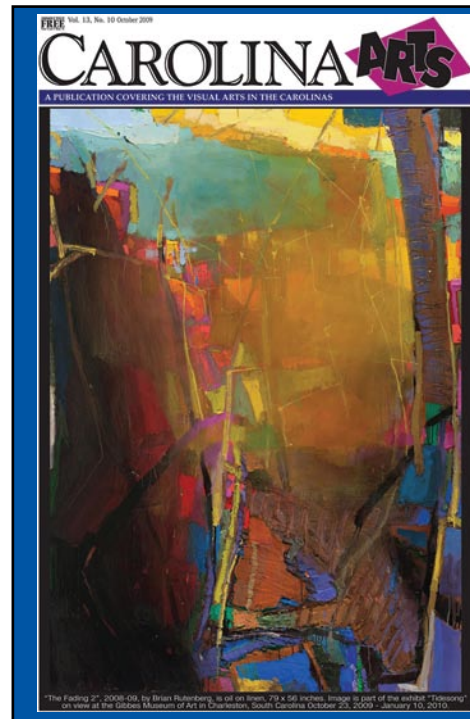
were once scary to me as a child, but now told stories of the past even when I was a child, as they had lost their use long ago. And then, with camera in hand, they were rooms of just old dusty stuff covered with cobwebs - a photographer's dream. But that farm held the memory of many an adventure, hidden secrets, and tall tails of days spent with my older brother and cousins.

They say you can never go back, but I think you can, but it will never be the same - or you'll never see it the same way. The next time I return to that farm, it will all probably be reclaimed farm land.

Some of the images in this book also remind me of my photography days of early black and white photographs that had been handcolored by skilled artists - giving images a new reality, as the artist coloring them may have never seen the original site. At least in this book the encaustic process doesn't change the colors, just the look - from photograph to painting. Of course when it's an encaustic painting the artists can take liberties.

They say a photograph or image can say a thousand words, but I think the real story can only be told by the person who took that photo or made that image. And, now that I'm older, I know a photograph can also lie and sometimes our memories lie to us.

Danielle Fontaine tells her story with this book and her paintings from her past. We all have a story to tell, it's just some who follow though on that. Looking at her story helped me remember parts of mine.



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