

# USC Upstate in Spartanburg, SC, Features Works by Jeff Schaller

University of South Carolina Upstate in Spartanburg, SC will present *POP*, recent encaustic paintings by Jeff Schaller, on view at the Upstate Gallery on Main, from Sept. 3 through Nov. 2, 2019. A reception will be held on Sept. 19, from 5-8pm, during the Spartanburg ArtWalk.

Effervescent and playful, Schaller's works celebrate both the sensuality of paint and our collective memory. Drawing upon references from popular culture and reflective of our contemporary, media-saturated, symbol-laden social environment, Schaller counterpoints our current "pop" sensibility with the use of the ancient, time-honored medium of encaustic painting.

Encaustic is a beeswax-based medium mixed with pigment and applied to panel while molten, and being worked and reheated with torches and heat guns. A highly durable process that is impervious to moisture, the word encaustic comes from the Greek meaning to "burn in," which refers to the process of fusing the paint. It was used in the 5th century B.C. for weathering boats and coloring marble. Lost for centuries, the process of encaustic painting was revisited in the 19th century, but gained notable attention after the 1960s. Jasper Johns is one of several highly recognized artists using the process, and seen in his Flag series created in the late 1950s. Modern tools and especially electric heating elements have made the encaustic painting more popular for creating luscious surfaces that allow light to pass through and reflect the translucent layers of the medium.

"This show is a continuation of an idea I had 8 years ago when I first created *Pop*," Schaller said. "I saw an ad for a Sony radio where the woman held it in her hand and appeared to be whispering to it. Her profile was captured perfectly against the red background. Her pursed lips looked as if they were blowing a bubble. So I cropped out the radio, painted her profile and put a simple pink dot an inch away from her lips and called it 'Pop.' Using lost and found images, words and language, my goals are to paint with a precision and intricacy not normally found in encaustic paintings."

Born in 1970 in Manchester, CT, Schaller earned his Bachelor of Fine Arts from the City of London Polytechnic in 1991. He studied at Arcadia University in Glenside, PA, in 1992. Schaller's work has been exhibited extensively throughout the U.S. and is frequently published in periodicals and selected for special projects, commissions



Work by Jeff Schaller

and murals. In 1998, Schaller was the recipient of the prestigious Philadelphia Museum of Art Purchase Award. His work was used as a prop for NBC's hit sitcom "Friends." He received a highly coveted fellowship from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in 2002. Schaller lives in Pennsylvania with his wife and three children. University gallery director Jane Nodine is very familiar with encaustic painting, having spent the past 12 years working almost exclusively with the process.

"I have known Jeff Schaller for almost 10 years and enjoy his technique of encaustic painting to render highly graphic images from pop culture," Nodine said. "I am pleased to have Jeff exhibit with Upstate Gallery on Main and I believe our students and the community will enjoy the images and his sense of humor in the work."

The University of South Carolina Upstate is a regional comprehensive university offering more than 40 undergraduate and graduate programs in the liberal arts and sciences, business administration, nursing, and education. Located along the I-85 corridor in Spartanburg between Greenville and Charlotte, USC Upstate is ranked by U.S. News & World Report at #2 among Top Public Schools. It serves as a major talent producer for the region, with more than 6,000 students, approximately 1,300 new graduates a year, and nearly 30,000 alumni, many of whom live and work in the state. The USC Upstate Spartans compete in 17 NCAA Division I sports as a member of the Big South Conference.

For further information check our SC Institutional Gallery listings, contact Jane Nodine, University Gallery Director, USC Upstate by calling 864/503-5838 or e-mail to (jnodine@uscupstate.edu).

pieces drawn through observation and encounters with the culture and natural beauty of Himalayan mountain life. Fedalei stated: "My inspiration for this show draws primarily from recent travels to a vastly different part of the world, and experiencing the struggle for economic independence and connection to the rest of the world, the daily life as imposed by nature and circumstances. In this region, two religions converge, two belief systems converge, and two caste systems converge along with their integration with the modern world."

Fedalei was particularly fascinated with the prevalence and usefulness of yaks, as a source of food, supply transportation and heating fuel in the higher regions. It so intrigued Fedalei that she smuggled some yak hair back home to incorporate into her work.

Fedalei's work is primarily hand-built functional pieces. For this show, she deviates to include wall art, and to explore the ancient Japanese firing technique of raku in which she decorates some of her work using the yak hair to burn designs onto her ceramics. "I hope that viewers find my work to be both fun and functional and can appreciate how clay can connect man and earth." Fedalei also teaches yoga and considers working with clay to be a part of her yoga practice. She has been a member of WMAC since 2016.

Like Fedalei, Holbein's inspiration for this exhibit came from her travels. "The inspiration for this body of work comes from a recent trip to Nepal, where I trekked for three weeks through the Khumbu Valley in the Himalaya Mountains," she said. "The pieces for this show include oil paintings and cold wax oil paintings. The subject matter is taken from scenes of everyday life of the Nepalese people."

Holbein is a guest artist in the exhibition. She has extensive professional experience, including two degrees in art, being a designer in Switzerland, teaching art on the college level, and having work displayed by Spartanburg Art Museum, Anderson Art Center, The Martha Cloud Chapman Gallery, Artists' Guild of Spartanburg, and Winthrop University. "Even though I work at my studio at home, I have a relationship with WMAC," she explained. "That connection comes through friendships with several of the WMAC artists, participation in workshops and figure drawing sessions hosted by the Co-op."

"New in these paintings is the use of palette knives and scraping tools as the primary instrument for applying the paint," said Holbein. "I have also become bolder with the use of impasto and surface texture. The work covers a range of abstract to figurative images and employs a saturated palette."

The works exhibited in *Convergence* by Susan B. Eleazer represent a shift from encaustic as her main art medium to cold wax oil painting. Eleazer said, "Cold wax medium when added to oil paint changes its characteristics in such a way that I felt drawn to the medium instantly upon being introduced to it. Consisting of beeswax and a solvent, the medium, when mixed with oil



Work by Nancy Williamson

paint, gives the paint a creamy texture that can be applied to a rigid surface like spreading butter. It also decreases the drying time of the paint."

Eleazer's works feature vigorous mark-making and the layering of colors and textures. She utilizes a wide variety of tools such as Xacto knives and tweezers in subtractive methods to excavate layers and expose colors. Eleazer continued, "I work intuitively and allow the materials to dictate my direction - the cold wax method is a natural fit for me. The subject matter of these abstract pieces relies heavily on events and landscapes from my early childhood - I attempt to distill these in an impressionistic manner."

The painting, *Firewall*, depicts what remains in memory of the day when, as a five year old child, I set the yard on fire!" Within this work and others can be seen a noted departure from her usual palette in the extensive use of more intense colors. Eleazer hopes that the viewer will respond to the formalistic qualities of her work that can often verge on decorative.

After retiring from a career as a visual arts teacher, Eleazer has had the privilege of traveling extensively and making art in her home studio. She has been a member of the Co-op since 2016 and maintains a studio there that she uses as a personal art gallery. "Our 'convergence' as artists with unique perspectives has been a wonderful experience," Eleazer said.

"We have shared ourselves with each other toward a common goal, and this exhibition represents not just four very different artistic perspectives, but how artists share a desire to communicate through creativity. In some cases, it is obvious. In others, you have to look deeper. Anyone who sees this exhibit, will leave with a better understanding of what it means to combine talents while maintaining individuality," said Eleazer.

West Main Artists Co-op is one of Spartanburg's leading nonprofit arts agencies. It is membership-based with about 30 of the more than 50 members having individual studio space in what was once a three-story Baptist church. Today, the venue has three galleries, two performance stages, a printery, a ceramics studio, and the largest collection of for-sale art in the city and county. All of the members are juried with most being visual artists; some are performance artists.

For further information check our SC Institutional Gallery listings or visit ([www.WestMainArtists.org](http://www.WestMainArtists.org)).

# West Main Artists Co-op in Spartanburg, SC, Offers Group Exhibit

West Main Artists Co-op in Spartanburg, SC, will present *Convergence*, featuring works by four Upstate South Carolina artists, Susan B. Eleazer, Marcy Fedalei, Amy Holbein, and Nancy Williamson, on view from Sept. 3 - 28, 2019. Receptions will be held on Sept. 7, from 5-8pm and Sept. 19, from 5-9pm, during the city's monthly ArtWalk.

Life experiences, travels, reflections, and experimentations have led the artists down different artistic pathways and inspired them to create the variety of art that is brought together in this exhibition. The extensive exhibit includes both 2-D and 3-D works of art. Prices range from \$25 to \$800.

"Throughout the planning of this project, it has been a real joy to put this show together with the other artists," Williamson said. "We met once a month, sharing lunch, art, and personal perspectives. What we hope is that people will see that art can be a great unifier of people, ideas and creativity." Williamson is a founding member of West Main Artists Co-op and currently serves as vice-chair of the management board. She is an established potter and ceramicist known for her functional pottery. "My work for this show is more decorative and the forms are more sculptural than my usual work," she said.

"Inspiration has come from my desire to explore new surface design techniques,



Work by Amy Holbein

particularly the layering and carving of colored slips," says Williamson. "Much of this work is process driven - it started with careful experimentation to develop a palate of custom-colored slips and then loosened to explore color combinations and mark-making techniques. Everything is one-of-a-kind and includes both functional vessels and decorative stacked ceramic totems."

"I hope patrons will get a sense of the joy I feel, in my constant search for 'what if,' as I explore different three-dimensional forms, decorative techniques, and the technical side of the work in developing slips and glazes," Williamson said.

Both Marcy Fedalei's and Amy Holbein's works were largely inspired by recent journeys to the Nepalese Himalaya mountains.

Fedalei, also a ceramicist, has created

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# Greenville Technical College in Taylors, SC, Features Works by Deighton Abrams & Kathleen Thum

Greenville Technical College in Taylors, SC, is presenting *Carbon Footprints*, featuring Deighton Abrams' sculpture and Kathleen Thum's drawings, on view in the Benson Campus Galleries, through Oct. 4, 2019.

Through their respective medias, they examine our dependence on fossil fuels as the driver of our everyday lives and also the destroyer of our natural environment. Each artist has approached fossil fuels individually, without collaboration. This duality of explorations and processes deepens our awareness and knowledge of fossil fuels' "...existential threat" to "...contemporary existence".

Through the use of disparate materials, Abrams' ceramic sculptures, like Thum's drawings discuss the duality of contemporary life's relationship with fossil fuels. He builds organic ceramic sculptures in homage to that ancient art then creates dismal,



Work by Deighton Abrams

lifeless landscape tableaus constructed from contemporary building materials to stage his works.

Abrams' sculptures are figurative natural forms, possibly humans or landforms or glaciers or possibly all of the above. Thum's detailed charcoal drawings picture every crag and reflective surface of bits of coal. Her precision and scale elevate these

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