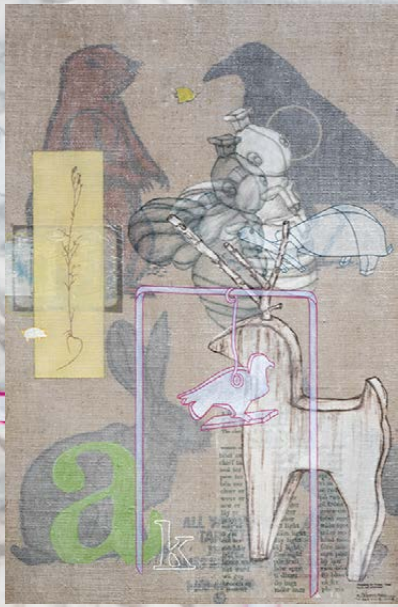




# M.A. Papanek-Miller

## Transience

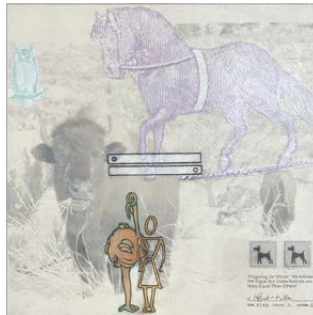
Mixed Media Drawing-Based Works In Series



# M.A. Papanek-Miller

## Transience

Mixed Media Drawing-Based Works In Series







*[detail] Preparing for Winter: "All Animals Are Equal But  
Some Animals Are More Equal Than Others", 1  
12" x 12"*

# Preparing for Winter, Mary Ann Papanek-Miller

By Valerie Hedquist

In her recent series of mixed-media drawings, Mary Ann Papanek-Miller explores loss and preservation, themes that are consistently featured in her art. Using her collection of vintage toys, instruments, and tools as a foundation, the artist integrates her concern for the natural world into a layered narrative that invites reflection and interpretation.

Close inspection of each canvas reveals still water, trees, and grasses forming a ghostly background for an arrangement of objects and animals. These drawn and scanned signs and symbols create a tumble of readings tied to fantastic stories, child's play, and rapidly changing physical and emotional environments. At first, the eye meanders gently among the linear display of recognizable objects. The subtle, muted colors reassure and confirm the peaceful measured movement through the compositions, but something isn't quite right. An unsettling tension slowly surfaces resulting from the odd juxtapositions of overlapping figures and objects. The playful act of interpreting the artist's pictorial puzzles concludes with a lament for the current state of the world and a call to action to change it.

These quiet pictures are an invitation to a quiet revolution. The old-fashioned action toys and hand tools reference external and internal revolutions: both going around in an orbit and rotating on an axis. Of course, a revolution is also a sudden, radical, or fundamental change that results when action triumphs over passivity. All these notions of revolution are at the core of Papanek-Miller's new mixed-media drawings. Produced during a period of disruption experienced at both a personal and a community level, this creative effort translates the artist's specific concerns about the present and future state of humankind into an allegory of reluctant perseverance.

Like George Orwell, whose *Animal Farm: A Fairy Tale* inspired her current creative practice during long stretches of the last several years, Papanek-Miller recognizes how dysfunctional systems influence human beliefs and attitudes and how totalitarianism and authoritarianism are threats to objective truth. Despite evidence to the contrary, humans typically look for validation of intuitive conventional views that stand in the way of necessary change. To activate this change, the artist provides open-ended pictures that require the viewer to assume agency and engage and interpret the visual evidence carefully arrayed across the two-dimensional surfaces.

Papanek-Miller's carefully drawn and appropriated objects act as allegorical symbols of these meanings through placement, scale, and juxtaposition with each other. Each of the panels is grounded by water, grass, clouds, or mountains that serve up a crazy layered world of nostalgic toys, realistic animals, equivocal tools and measuring instruments, and other drawn systems alluding to weighing and gauging, sometimes numbered or labeled. A horizon line emerges but isn't spatially respected as large objects (a plane or a bird) overlap or are overlapped by smaller objects (a crystal nightlight or a running hog). The objects do not respect consistent scale relations, but instead

dominate or recede based on their vertical placement and overlapping placement in the compositions. The result is a dictionary of signifiers piled up on the surface with the varied juxtapositions inviting possible meanings.

There are no humans in this fantastic world, although convincing animals often appear. Most notably, some faint dogs in the background of *Preparing for Winter: Once again the animals were conscious of a vague uneasiness* and cavorting goats in *Preparing for Winter: Will There Still be Sugar after the Rebellion*. The rampant goat appears three times across this composition and calls to mind Muriel, the goat in Orwell's *Animal Farm* who is one of the few smart and morally sound animals in the dystopian setting of the book.

The carefully drawn childhood playthings and odd gadgets mingle with other animals, too, such as the bison and wolves who approach or walk away so prominently in *Preparing for Winter: I Will Work Harder*. These animals, that have faced extinction and even now are under constant threat, are presented as appropriated photographs or book illustrations. These pictorial reproductions confirm their distance in contrast to the line-drawn toys that are based on first-hand observation. Although sourced from secondary materials, the bison and wolves are shown in motion, but the drawn toys can only move if activated by twisting, pushing or pulling, or blowing into a tube.

For the mechanical toys to function, the viewer needs to step into the scene because the only humans included by Papanek-Miller in her bizarre landscapes are a small number of drawn figures associated with places of enchantment. For example, a young woman and a unicorn encounter a knight below the water shore ends in *Preparing for Winter: Once Again the Animals were Conscious of a Vague Uneasiness*. Other medieval figures

like a knight or two trumpeting heralds also emerge from the overlapping display of images. The appearance of these figures points to their source in story-book illustrations from the same era as many of the vintage toys and tools.

Although they don't share any obvious pictorial or thematic connections, like Papanek-Miller, Andy Warhol was a collector of nostalgic toys. In 1983, the Pop artist was asked to make a series of silk-screened and hand-painted artworks of his collection for children. In his series of toy imagery, Warhol presented brilliantly colorful representations of the boxes in which the toys had been packaged. For Warhol, the toy is an instrument that connotes a brief period of youthful playfulness that ends with a long period of adult anxiety about the unsettled world. Here, then, is how the two artists, Warhol and Papanek-Miller, chart the same course. They both look to their own personal collections of vintage toys as material for communicating hopes and fears about the present and the future. The levity of the past as suggested by the innocent playthings is offset by the recognition that the time for play is over. This position is more fully represented in Papanek-Miller's series where the mechanical toys, the playthings with wheels, and the spaceships, airplanes, and helicopters are frozen among the animals and natural habitats.

With no real human presence in artist's scenes, all agency rests with the viewer. Given the responsibility to work one's way through the layers of signifiers and make meaning, the viewer assumes a special role alongside the artist in completing the creative process. This feeling of empowerment allows the viewer to see the past represented by the old-fashioned toys, tools, and instruments as preparation for the present and future. The experience of loss can inform a dedication to the preservation of humans and animals and the timeless forms of the natural environment.



Time is part of the artist's process, too. Preparing the paper with exposure to the outdoors, drawing and scanning images both made and found, scaling and layering the individual objects with digital technology that complements the drawn work of the artist's hand, and finally, adjusting values and selecting the subtle muted colors are all steps that slowly build the final artwork. For example, the pale Asian Carp that float in the background of *Preparing for Winter: All Animals are Equal but Some are More Equal than Others* were initially photographed in the Chicago Aquarium where they are trapped as an invasive species. The digital images of fish are then printed with an ink-jet printer on translucent paper that is layered onto the wood panels that serve as the supports for so many of Papanek-Miller's artworks. In this composition, the artist layers drawn and appropriated images, including a powerful horse, a snowshoe hare, and a figure who looks a bit like Humpty-Dumpty. Contemplation away from the developing pictorial composition contributes to its complexity when the artist returns to it. Here, too, is a model for the viewer who can gain more insights with each investigation.

Finally, titles are also helpful clues for making meaning of the artworks in Papanek-Miller's *Preparing for Winter*. In Orwell's *Animal Farm*, the animals struggle during a bitter winter to rebuild a windmill while coping with food shortages and hunger. It was during this harsh season that the hard-working horse, Boxer, inspired the other animals with his favorite saying, "I will work harder." Other titles in this exhibition, such as "Will there still be sugar after the rebellion?" and "Once again the animals were conscious of a vague uneasiness" speak to the contradictions of living on the farm imagined by Orwell where remembered conventions and commandments are undone. The four-part composition entitled "If they could not defend themselves they were bound to be conquered," refers to the debate

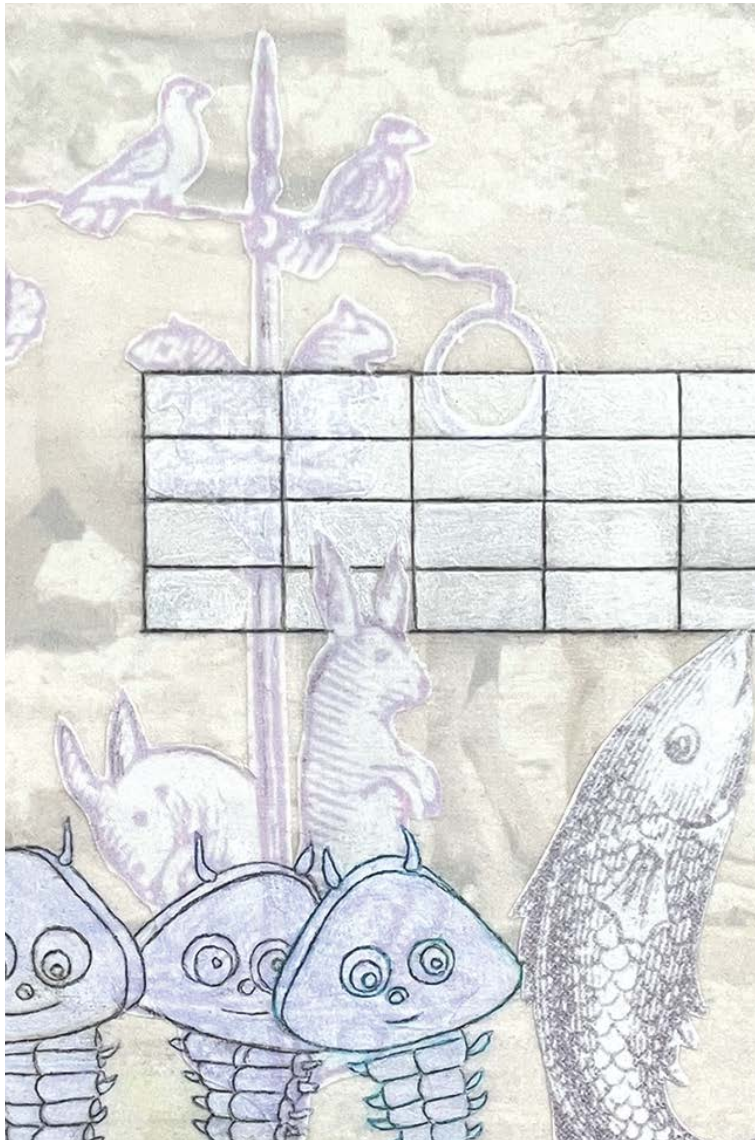
between Napoleon and Snowball about how to defend the farm. Napoleon supports arming all the animals while Snowball prefers to persuade the animals on other farms to rebel by sending out pigeons to stir up dissent. This information amplifies the meaning of the toy gun and birds in Papanek Miller's visual analog to this Orwellian quote.

At the end of *Animal Farm*, the oppressive dictatorship of the pigs triumphs, but in Papanek Miller's *Preparing for Winter*, it isn't fated that "all animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others" the title she applies to the latest series of images related to Orwell's *Animal Farm*. In these recent small-scale works, a powerful horse recurs alluding to the "strong and faithful" Boxer on whom the animals rely for leadership while laboring in Orwell's beast fable. In Papanek Miller's exhibition, these moments of optimism emerge through the interpretive action of the viewer discovering meanings suggested by the artist's pictorial narrative.



*Looking for Alice: "and a bear passed by", 1.1*  
22" x 22"





*[detail] Preparing for Winter: "All Animals Are Equal But  
Some Animals Are More Equal Than Others", 8  
12" x 12"*

# The Power and Persistence of Childhood Objects

By Jane Eva Baxter

Mary Ann Papanek-Miller invites us to engage with rich layers of meaning around topics that are important to her as an artist and fellow human. Her invitation uses childhood objects as an opportunity for the broadest possible audience to connect with her work. Why are childhood objects a particularly effective way of engaging adult audiences? The reason is simple. No matter how diverse an audience or how many disparate experiences individuals may have, every adult has had a valid experience of childhood that now exists only in the realm of memory. There are very few universals in the lives of human adults- but the status of “former child” is certainly one of them. Objects from childhood offer us all a chance to recall our own childhoods and contemplate recognizable cultural ideas of childhood, which we may embrace or reject based our personal recollections. The toys, playthings, and objects of childhood that are consistent features in Papanek Miller’s work immediately serve as an anchor that allows the viewer to explore the rich and powerful juxtaposition of childhood objects with deeply layered imagery in a search for meaning.

This use of toys invites audiences comprised of former children to imagine, connect, and wonder in ways that other objects might not provide. Toys are a specific type of inanimate object that become animated not through our utilitarian and functional relationships with them (like a car providing us with transport or a toaster making our toast), but rather through imagination, play, and fantasy. Childhood objects allow the user to transcend ideas of time and space, upend conventional understandings of social relationships, and through their often-distorted sizes and forms, enable users to experiment and explore elements of everyday life in creative, novel, and unexpected ways.<sup>1</sup> Toys particularly encourage creative, innovative, and even transgressive ways of thinking, and as such objects of childhood play serve as an invitation to playful thinking about the art itself.

People of any age can animate toys through imaginative play, but the context of that play is not the same for adults and children. Toys are integral experiential objects for children as they learn and develop cognitively, physically, and socially. Adults don't use toys in these developmental ways and instead engage with objects of childhood as vehicles of nostalgia, and as souvenirs of a period of life that was once a lived experience but now exists only in memory.<sup>2</sup> Memory affords adults significant opportunities for distortion, amelioration, and alteration in recalling a time and place no longer accessible to them. Toys persist in the lives of adults, in part, because they are a souvenir of our own childhoods.

---

<sup>1</sup> These are all themes explored by Brian Sutton-Smith- educator, scholar of child development, and a foundational researcher on toys. His 1986 book *Toys as Culture*. Gardner Press, New York is an excellent entrée into his work.

<sup>2</sup> Steward, Susan. 1993. *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. Duke University Press, Durham NC pp. 145-146.

Nostalgia and memory can exist on broader scales as well. Historian Laurel Thatcher Ulrich has explored how 19th century Americans, embroiled in the changes of an industrializing nation, began to curate, display, and even fetishize objects that represented an earlier, simpler, and pre-industrialized time in the nation's history.<sup>3</sup> This "Age of Homespun" was also a real phenomenon, where goods were handmade, homemade, and produced on a smaller, household scale. Homespun objects were distributed through gifts or exchanges in economies of barter and trade outside a cash-based marketplace. This 19th century American sensibility about a pre-industrial age is still very much alive and well- standing in stark contrast to mass-produced, mass-marketed goods and the worlds of work and consumerism that dictate much of our modern lives.

Mary Ann Papanek-Miller's choice of childhood objects taps deeply into this "homespun" sensibility that many viewers will share. The objects are not emblazoned with logos, aren't repetitive blobs of plastic churned out by industrial production and aren't sold in a major retail store near you. Even if her model objects originate in processes of larger-scale production, they do not present the expected trappings of branded consumer goods. In eschewing mass-produced, branded toys as subjects, Papanek- Miller increases the narrative power of her chosen objects as they are infused with characteristics that stand in contrast to the mass-produced goods that surround us in daily life.

---

<sup>3</sup> Ulrich, Laurel Thatcher. 2001. *The Age of Homespun: Objects and Stories in the Creation of an American Myth*. Alfred A. Knopf, New York.

Much like childhood itself, these “homespun” objects are ephemeral. The 3D versions of the objects referenced in Papanek Miller’s work are made of organic materials such as wood and cloth or easily corroded materials such as metal. Some objects would be crafted from materials as fleeting as an autumn squash or freshly fallen snow. As any archaeologist would tell you, these types of objects do not endure for any length of time and are exceptional rarities of preservation when discovered. Such transience stands in marked contrast to modern materials, such as plastic, which in human terms is essentially eternal.

It can also be argued that homespun childhood objects are far more inclusive than mass produced goods. There are global examples of homespun objects for children dating back millennia, where a small piece of clay was worked into a figurine and fired to create an object for children’s play, or a set of stone tools were produced in miniature for a child’s socialization as a future hunter.<sup>4</sup> More recent examples in American folk art include instruments whittled from wood, dolls and puppets fashioned from corn husks and sticks, and stuffed animals stitched using leftover scraps of fabric. Local, natural materials and a little technical know-how on the part of an adult in the community allowed toys to be made and repaired and therefore available to most any child. Mass produced goods can only be consumed in as much as they can be afforded by a particular household. The cost of manufacturing and shipping can render many such objects exclusionary and elite and create systems of lack and longing not just for the ability to own an object but for the social acceptance and inclusion such ownership often affords a child.

---

<sup>4</sup> Baxter, Jane Eva. 2022. *The Archaeology of Childhood*. Second Edition. Rowman and Littlefield, Landham, Maryland.



A final quality of the childhood objects in Mary Ann Papanek-Miller's work is what archaeologist Cornelius Holtorf has termed, "pastness."<sup>5</sup> "Pastness" is a quality that contemporary audiences recognize in material things, and which offers us a reprieve from the assault of mass-produced goods, the bombardment of advertising, and culturally cultivated senses of need and longing. Pastness is accomplished when the authenticity of an object is not defined in relation to its actual age, but rather to its age-value, or the quality or condition of being of the past. We can identify pastness by assessing the material clues an object offers us- things like wear and tear, imperfections, and decay or being fashioned in a "homespun" manner. While Thatcher-Ulrich's homespun objects gain value due to their actual historical origin, "pastness" can be entirely created in the present by giving us visual cues we can perceive and engage with intellectually, materially, and emotionally.

Objects are evocative, have the power to transport us to a different time and place, and to conjure a wide range of social, physical and emotional relationships when encountered. Objects from the past or which are imbued with "pastness" are particularly resonant for most people. There is a reason people love to scroll through online image galleries of objects that no longer exist in contemporary households, or stroll the aisles of flea markets and antique stores where the opportunity of encountering an object lost to memory is around every corner. Childhood objects have a particular power and persistence in the lives of adults as they temporarily reunite us with a personal past to which we cannot

---

<sup>5</sup> Holtorf, Cornelius. 2013. On Pastness: A Reconsideration of Materiality in Archaeological Object Authenticity. *Anthropological Quarterly* 86(2):427-443.

return, and prompt ways of thinking from which we are often alienated in adult life. Childhood objects that are homespun can play on a sense of nostalgia and longing not only for our own childhood, but also for a time in the past (real or imagined) when things were local, sustainable, and embedded more deeply in human and natural relationships. What a delightful way to invite former children into an artist's world and offer viewers an opportunity to dream, to imagine and to play as a means of artistic engagement.



*Looking for Alice: "and a bear passed by", 1.2  
22" x 22"*





*[detail] Preparing for Winter: If they could not defend themselves, they were bound to be Conquered  
30" x 77" in four sections*

# Toys and Time: On the Work of Mary Ann Papanek-Miller

By Michele Morano

1. Imagine a pale-skinned, naked doll with matted hair sticking straight up. In third grade I fished her out of the back of a closet for donation to the elementary school's fundraising bazaar. I hadn't played much with the doll, just used her clothes for someone else, but I felt sure another child would want her. Not so. Two hours into the bazaar, as everyone was packing up to leave, the doll lay face down on a table, bereft. Of course I bought her back.
2. Why do toys so often feel alive, as if absorbing and radiating energy? When he was a toddler, my son had a soft, spotted puppy just big enough to cling to at night. "Baby Doggie," he named it. Today, when anyone in our family—Andrew, his father, me—spots Baby Doggie among the castoff toys in our basement, we say, "Awwww," hand pressed to heart.

3. In the fall of 2018, Andrew was ten and playing soccer at Chicago's lakefront fields each weekend, wearing a uniform, cleats, shin guards, socks with sewn-in ankle pads. After one game, I hurried him to the car, no time to change his dirty clothes. Mary Ann Papanek-Miller's show at a gallery in Chicago's Loop was closing the next week, and she had agreed to meet us for a guided tour.
4. Many years before, I taught academically advanced adolescents in a summer program. The subject was writing, but we talked about all kind of topics, and the students often mocked what they didn't understand. "It's like modern art," one would say with an eye roll as others laughed.
5. In the first part of life, the only kind of art I knew was mass-produced, sold by Sears-Roebuck or Montgomery Ward (Monkey Ward, as my father called it). Our living room had a stormy ocean scene on the wall above the sofa, a birch-lined garden beside the front door. The first time I went to New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art as a teenager, lingering before Monets and Picassos and, yes, Yves Klein's "Blue Monochrome," a single square of a single color, I felt both excited and embarrassed. How does one see a painting? For whom is it made?
6. On the street outside the gallery, Andrew and I paused. His cleats and knees were both muddy, his hair slick with sweat. In the front window hung a sample of Papanek-Miller's work, with its signature palette of pale greens and blues and peaches, her collage technique layering drawings of animals and toys with photographs of natural settings. I imagined that Andrew might feel overwhelmed by the layers, that not understanding what he saw might turn him off. Instead, he was impressed. "Your friend made this?" he asked, wide-eyed. "I want to meet her."

7. Memory is a scrim, a layer of vellum, a window pane steamed by time. Sounds, smells, images evoke the past, individually and collectively. Baby Doggie is a bean-bag toy, something that didn't exist when I was a child, when winter meant sledding at least once a week for months.
8. A horse, leaping as if on a carousel, its outline the color of a mimeographed copy, or leaping as if swimming among a grayscale photo of fish, among animal cracker images of a bunny and birdlike creatures, among a more realistic rabbit and a Humpty-Dumpty-esque figure seated near a cartoonish guy whose pointed bottom half could open a letter or stick in the top of a cake. Such a wild mix! Such pleasure in the slow floating toward questions, never mind the answers, through layers of memory, through references toward an understanding you feel in the part of your brain where dreams are born.
9. When he was about six years old, Andrew and I spent an afternoon at the Art Institute of Chicago. I wanted him to feel comfortable there, to know that he belonged and that we don't have to understand everything we see. He was fascinated then with the human body, so he asked to see paintings of Christ being crucified. He wanted blood and gore, but I led him to "Christ on the Cross" by Francisco de Zurbarán, which I love for its dark background and glowing flesh. Andrew stood before the enormous painting for a few minutes, absorbing the rough-hewn beams, the thick, handmade nails piercing flesh. Then he took a seat on the floor, criss-cross-applesauce, and settled in to stare for a while.

10. Ostrich. Buffalo. Cow. Owl. Monkey. Pigeon. Cat. Pig. Coyote. Deer. Duck. Fish. Fish. Fish. Horses, always horses. Chipmunk. Butterfly. Dog. Squirrel. Swan. What else? What catches your eye? What does it make you feel?
11. Mary Ann was waiting inside the gallery. Andrew said hello and walked around, pausing longer before some works than others. “You *drew* these?” he asked. Mary Ann described just a bit of how collage works because she, too, wanted to hear his observations. When she remarked on the sophistication of his eye, my boy nearly levitated.
12. What do you see? What do you see *through*? If an image in the foreground is transparent, is it still foreground? Or is the background so palpable that time bends in on itself? William Faulkner famously wrote, “The past is never dead. It’s not even past.” But the rest of the quotation is just as apt for Papanek-Miller’s work:

All of us labor in webs spun long before we were born, webs of heredity and environment, of desire and consequence, of history and eternity. Haunted by wrong turns and roads not taken, we pursue images perceived as new but whose providence dates to the dim dramas of childhood, which are themselves but ripples of consequence echoing down the generations. The quotidian demands of life distract from this resonance of images and events, but some of us feel it always.



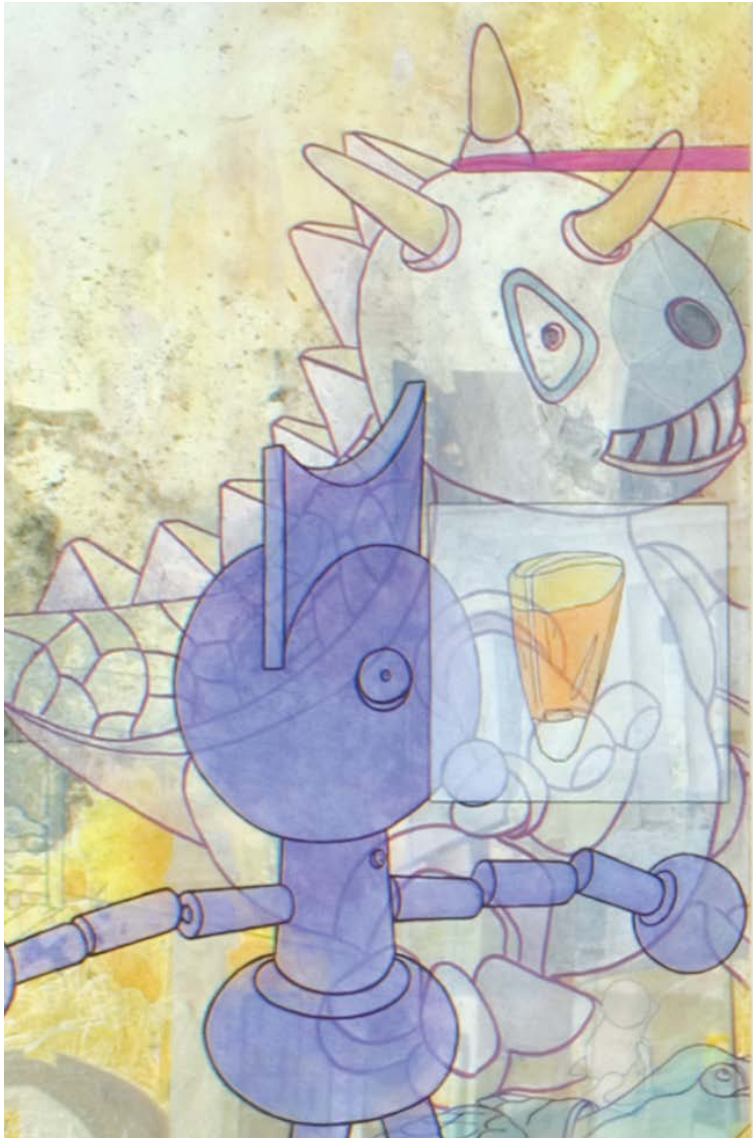
13. A ten-year-old today may never have seen a skate key or understand that some toys are historic, carved of wood in the centuries before plastic. But anyone can recognize a pigeon, even through a drinking glass, or a horse standing on hind legs and serving a tray of wine. The images are strange but hospitable. Invitations to muse.
14. We all complain about the pace of life, no? Time flies, as if it weren't anchored to the past, dragging history along. Once I heard a professor decry "the monotony of constant change" a phrase that immediately made sense. This was before smart phones, so she was talking about TV shows, commercials, the desire by ad execs to keep us watching what's new, new, new. "It's boring," she declared.
15. Andrew and I spent forty-five minutes in the gallery, talking with Mary Ann about her colors, comparing an illustrated collage on wood with one on "weathered" paper (which she creates by leaving it outside for a few days with objects on top). I could feel the tension between toys and time, between fabrics and buildings and prairie, rocky ridge, animals eating from the ground, vulnerable. Worthy of protecting.
16. Play is instinctual, universal. Animals do it. Humans do it. Papanek-Miller does it, playing with imagery and accumulation and the palette of a midwestern landscape. That doesn't mean her subject isn't serious: human impact on the natural world; the climate crisis; decreasing amounts of time in which we can act. But there is pleasure here, too. Understanding. Fun.

17. "Preparing for Winter: All Animals Are Equal But Some Are More Equal Than Others." Notice the stamp in the lower right, with a signature, date, volume and number of the series. Where else have you seen a stamp like that? On a work order, a receipt, something from the world of commerce? The stamp suggests motion, pressing into an ink pad, pressing onto paper. Time captured and absorbed. There's no rush. Allow the careful whimsy to guide you where you haven't been before.



*Looking for Alice: "and a bear passed by", 1.3  
22" x 22"*





*[detail] Free Water Project: just add water  
72" x 126" in six sections*

# The alternative reality of childhood memories

By Jason Shepherd

Childhood memories seem to be the most indelible, lasting up to a lifetime. As Mary Ann Papanek-Miller depicts in her drawings, these memories can often resurface when cued by childhood toys or experiences. But how reliable are these childhood memories? We believe that these salient experiences become locked in and infallible. However, psychologists and neuroscientists have found the opposite – the nature of the memory recalled is susceptible to the specific cues or even the wording of a question. In fact, every time you recall a memory, it changes. Your memories are a far cry from a “home video” of your subjective experience. Eye-witness testimony is so bad, even lawyers put little faith in it.

Still, why do childhood objects often induce a profound emotion? Surely something about that experience is maintained in the brain. My lab at the University of Utah is investigating the molecular mechanisms of memory formation and consolidation. Every time you learn, a set of genes get turned on. Genes are the blueprints for proteins, which do all the work in your cells. One protein, called Arc, is essential for memory consolidation and is expressed when you learn. It turns out Arc has a fascinating origins

story – it evolved from an ancient virus-like genetic element called a retrotransposon.

Childhood memories. Toys and objects give us a glimpse into the windows of memory. None of us remember much before the age of 5. One reason for this is that in humans, the brain is still wiring itself up. Connections between neurons in the brain are still making the circuits that can process sensory information. Then something dramatic happens, the brain becomes exceptionally plastic. Languages are picked up at will, walking becomes habit, and social interactions begin. We know that genes like Arc are expressed at their highest during this period, but episodic memories only become strong well into puberty. These are the common forms of memory that we think of – what you had for breakfast this morning for example. Still, trauma experienced as a child can cause irrevocable damage as an adult and this is because the emotional content of experience seems to be stored independently of the actual sensory content. This might be a self-preservation mechanism – life or death situations need instant action, not thoughtful recollection.

Viruses. Infections happen because viruses produce protein shells called capsids that allow viruses to enter cells and, in the case of retroviruses, install copies of their genetic material into cells so that they can hijack the cell to make more virus. We discovered that Arc can also form virus-like capsids capable of transferring genetic material. Our brains are literally making little virus-like protein shells when we learn! How and why this is important for memory remains to be determined, but the message here is that even our most human of capabilities, cognition, has been facilitated by the smallest of life's entities. This gene is found in all land animals, including those on farms. So why can't animals actually talk to each other? Animals can form memories just like humans, but it is the language meme that humans seem to uniquely transmit.

Central to memory is the ability to evoke both the sensory and emotional content of an experience. The power of Art is to mimic this transient subjective experience – as if the brain is tricked into an alternative reality created by the artist. Yet, memories themselves can trick us into realities that never existed. We yearn nostalgically for childhood experiences and landscapes that may never have been experienced in real life. Perhaps these scenes were witnessed in a movie, or an art gallery. From a scientist's perspective, we are still coming to terms with how much information the brain can actually store, recall, and reinvent. It's a tug-of-war between plasticity and stability. Even into old age, as stability wins over plasticity, we are still capable of learning. Perhaps another power of Art is to stimulate the brain, to "wake up" those genes important for learning and in doing so, we capture an ephemeral moment of a childhood where Animal Farm is a reality.



*Preparing for Winter: "They could not remember", 1-3  
36"x 24"*









*Free Water Project: just add water  
72" x 126" in six sections*





*Free Water Project: Jack and Jill*  
48" x 40"





*Looking for Alice: the rabbit hole, I*  
56" x 40" each section

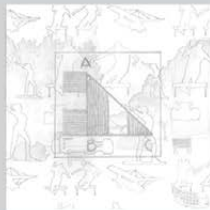




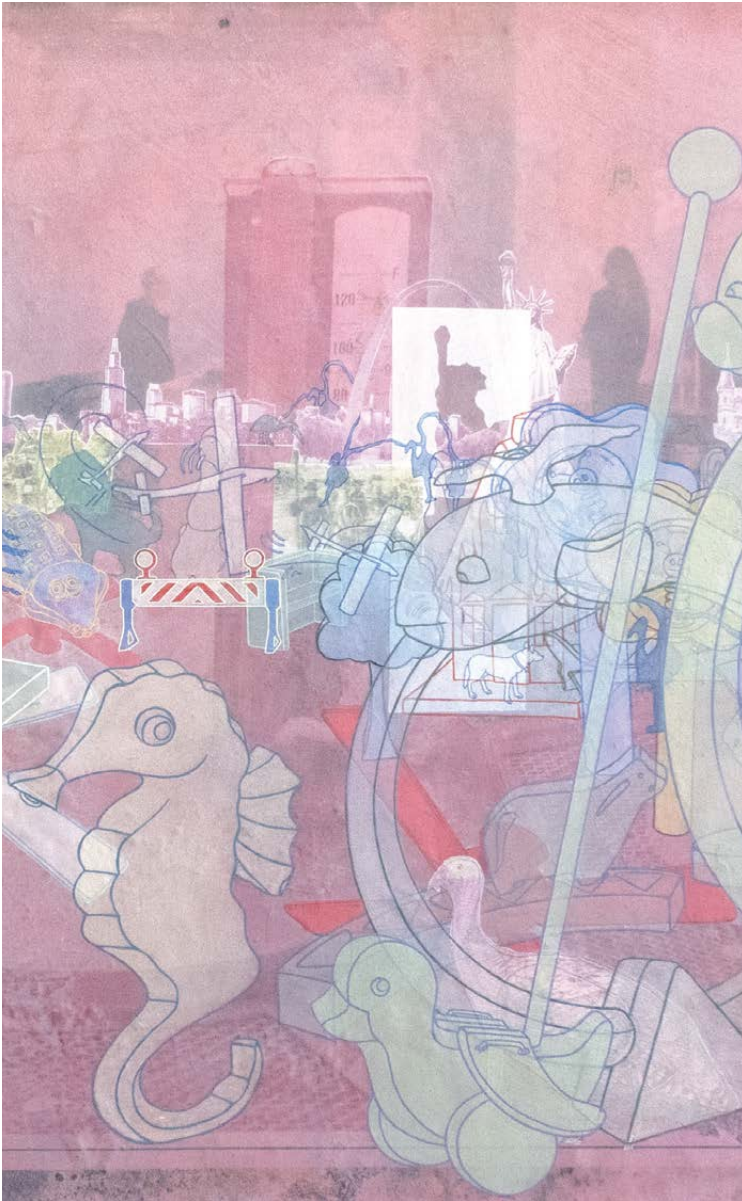
*Looking for Alice: the rabbit hole, II*  
56" x 40" each section







*Looking for Alice: the rabbit hole, III*  
56" x 40" each section



[detail]



*Free Water Project: "DO NOT FEED PIGEONS  
(CHICAGO MUNICIPAL CODE 728-710)"  
34" x 142" in five sections*





*Back to the Forest*  
20" x 34" diptych

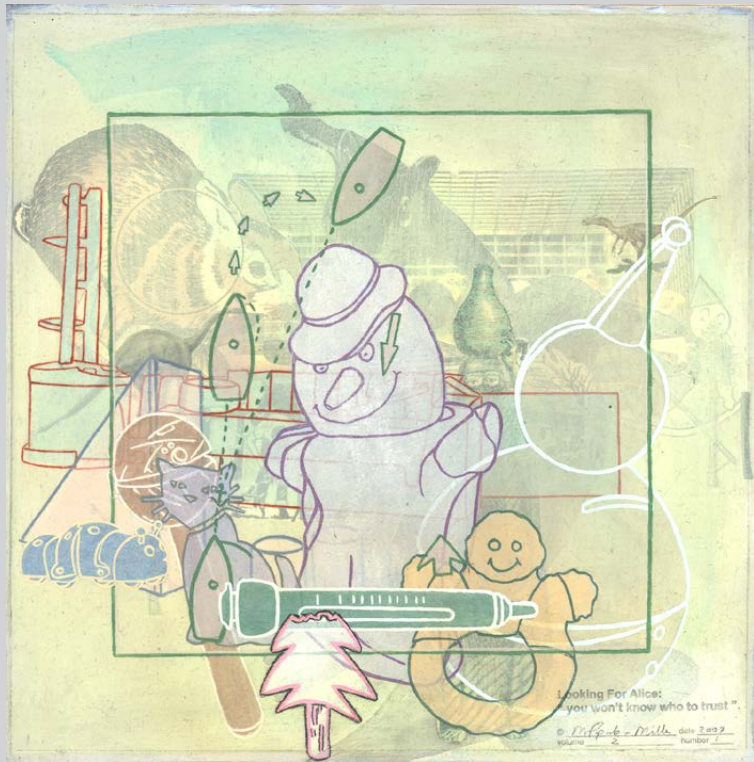




*Looking for Alice: you won't know who to trust, 1.1*  
40" x 30"

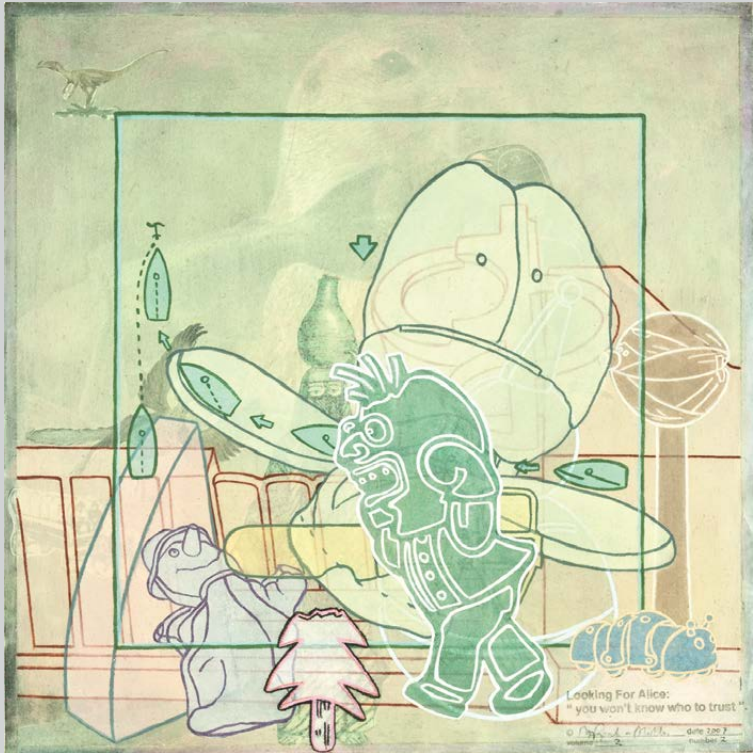






Looking for Alice: you won't know who to trust, 2.1  
12" x 12"





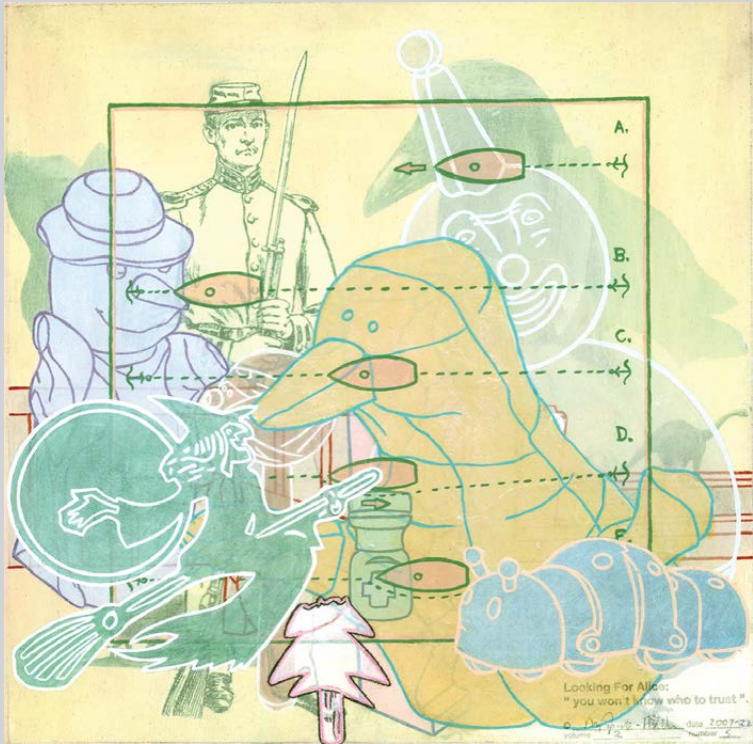
Looking for Alice: you won't know who to trust, 2.2  
12" x 12"





Looking for Alice: you won't know who to trust, 2.4  
12" x 12"





Looking for Alice: you won't know who to trust, 2.5  
12" x 12"







*Looking for Alice: you won't know who to trust, 2.6  
12" x 12"*





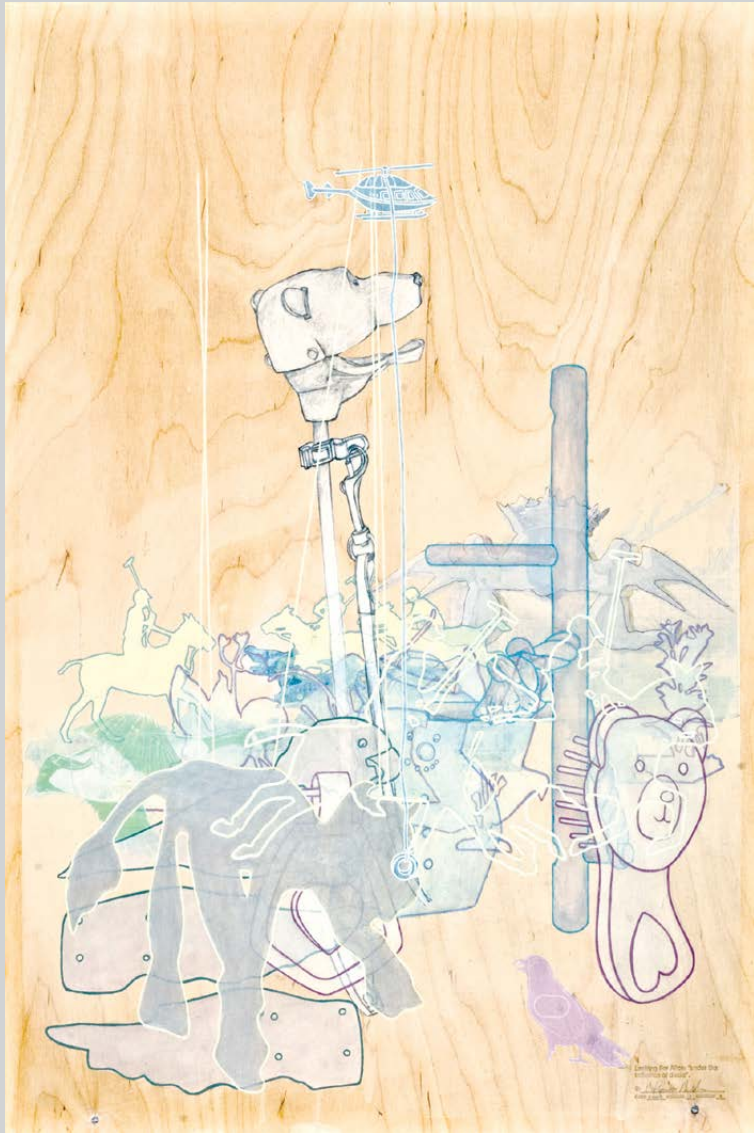
*The Flush Toilet: This Planet is All Ours, 1*  
40" x 30"





*The Flush Toilet: This Planet is All Ours, 3*  
40" x 30"

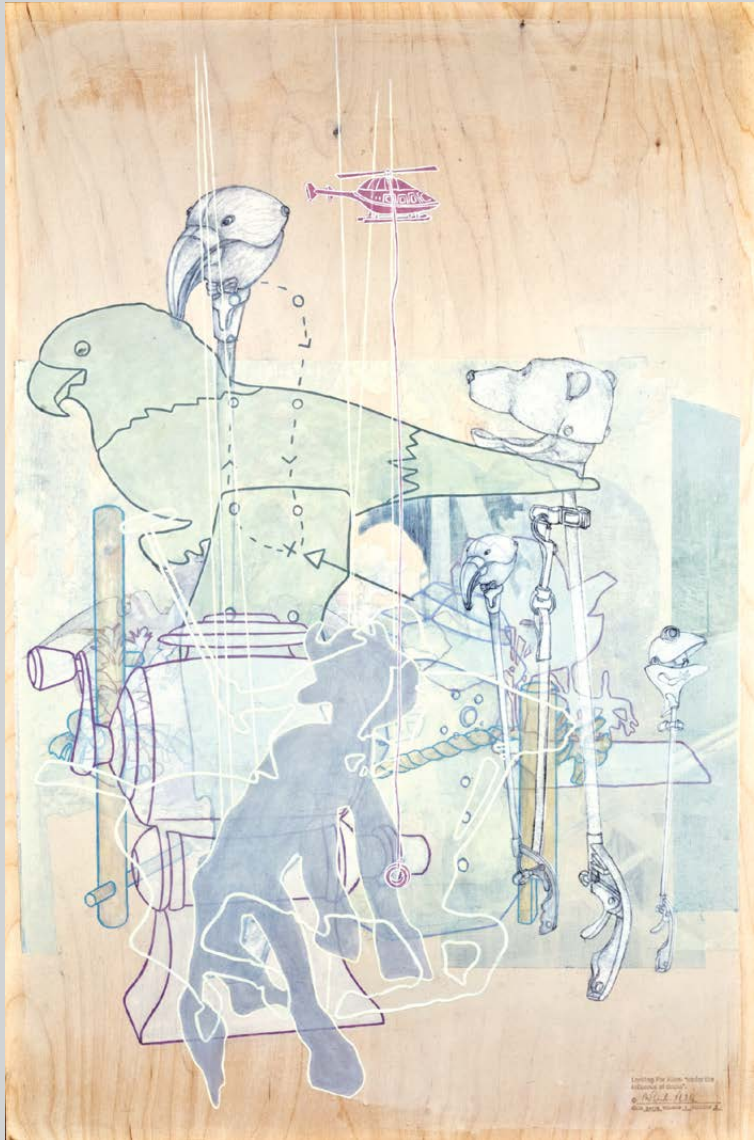




*Looking for Alice: under the influence of ducks, 1.1*  
30" x 20"







Looking for Alice: under the influence of ducks, 1.2  
30" x 20"





*Looking for Alice: under the influence of ducks, 1.3*  
30" x 20"





*Looking for Alice: under the influence of ducks, 1.4*  
30" x 20"





*Looking for Alice: "and a bear passed by", 1.1  
22" x 22"*







Looking for Alice: "and a bear passed by", 1.2  
22" x 22"





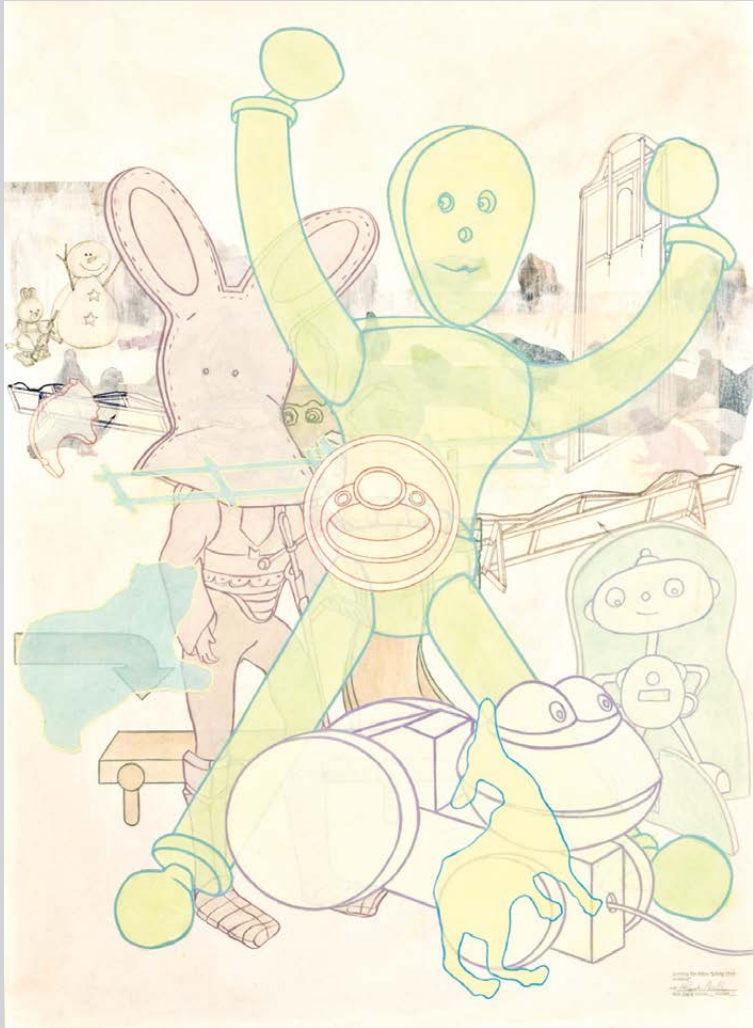
*Looking for Alice: "and a bear passed by", 1.3*  
22" x 22"





*Free Water Project: mown grass, I*  
62" x 79" in eight sections





Looking for Alice: "taking (the) water (s)", 1.1  
40" x 30"







Looking for Alice: "taking (the) water (s)", 1.2  
40" x 30"





Looking for Alice: "taking (the) water (s)", 1.3  
40" x 30"





*Preparing for Winter: "I will work harder", I*  
24" x 11"





*Preparing for Winter: "I will work harder", II*  
24" x 11"







*Preparing for Winter: "I will work harder", III  
24" x 11"*





*Preparing for Winter: "I will work harder", IV  
24" x 11"*





*Preparing for Winter: "I will work harder", V*  
24" x 11"





*Preparing for Winter: will there still be sugar after the rebellion*  
36" x 50"







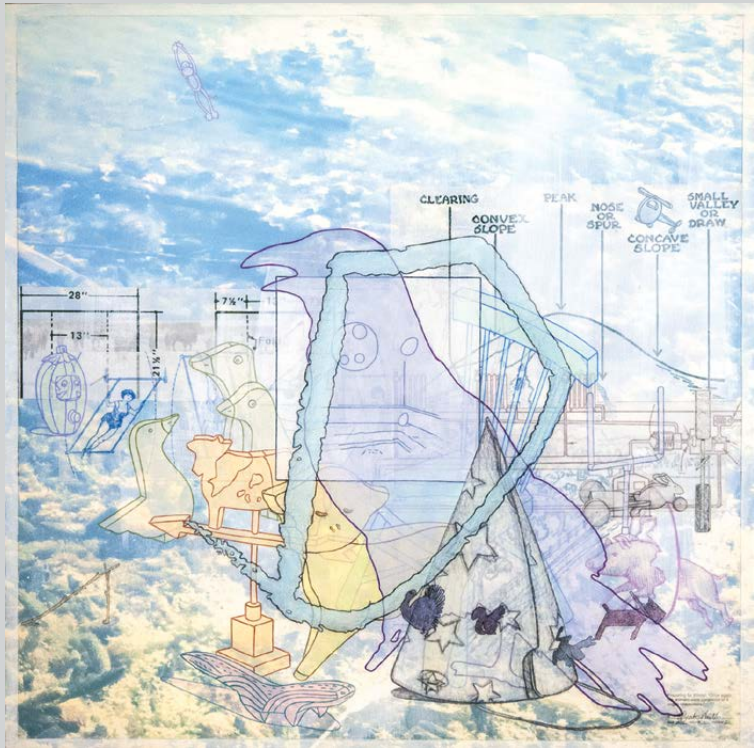
*Preparing for Winter: Once again the animals were  
conscious of a vague uneasiness, 1  
30" x 30"*





*Preparing for Winter: Once again the animals were  
conscious of a vague uneasiness, 2  
30" x 30"*





*Preparing for Winter: Once again the animals were  
conscious of a vague uneasiness, 3  
30" x 30"*





[detail]



*Preparing for Winter: If they could not defend themselves,  
they were bound to be Conquered  
30" x 77" in four sections*







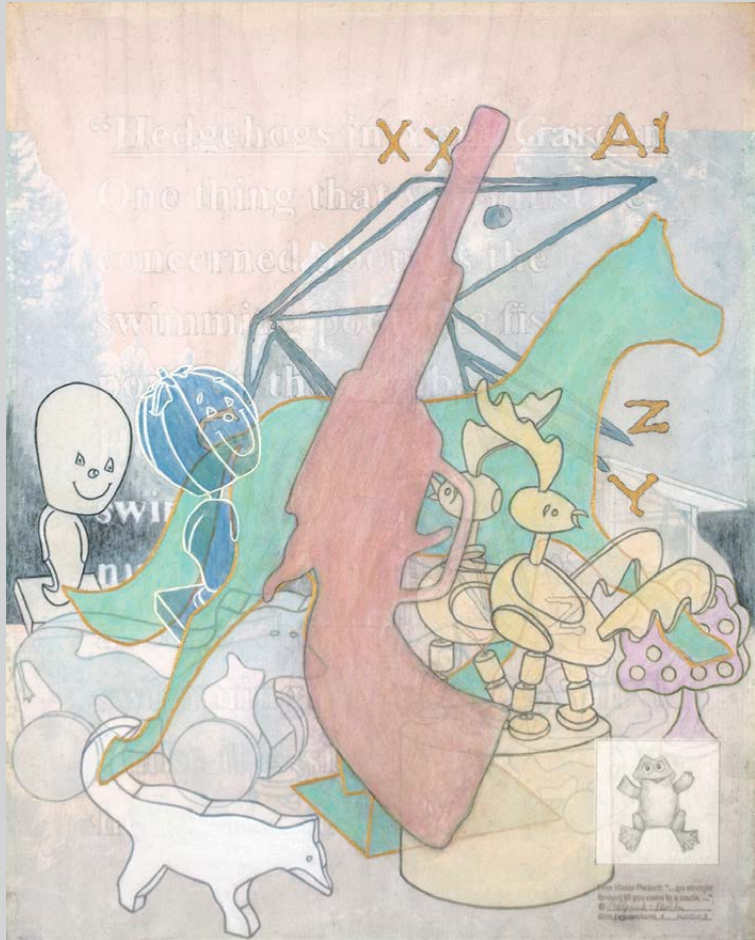
*Free Water Project: Go Forward 'til You Come To A Castle, 1  
20" x 16"*





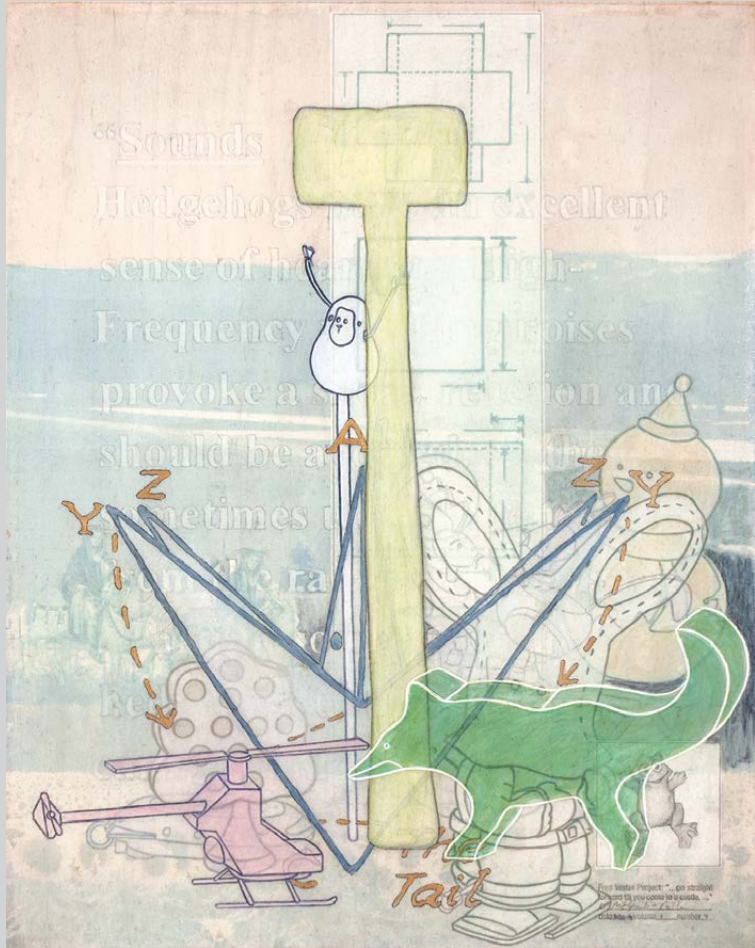
Free Water Project: Go Forward 'til You Come To A Castle, 20" x 16"





Free Water Project: Go Forward 'til You Come To A Castle, 3  
20" x 16"

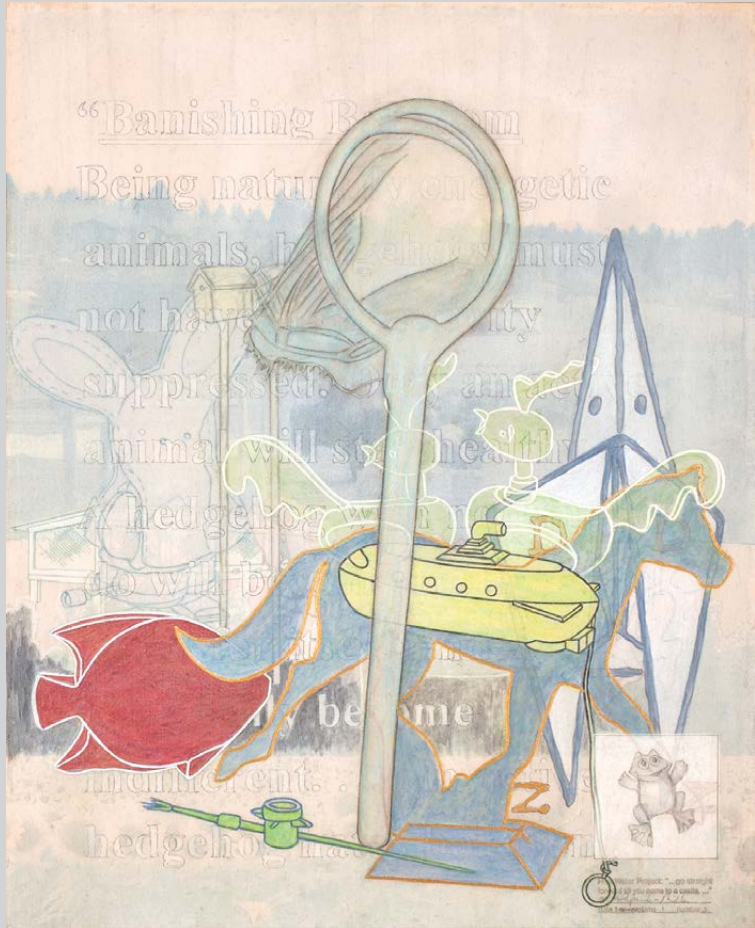




Free Water Project: Go Forward 'til You Come To A Castle, 4  
20" x 16"

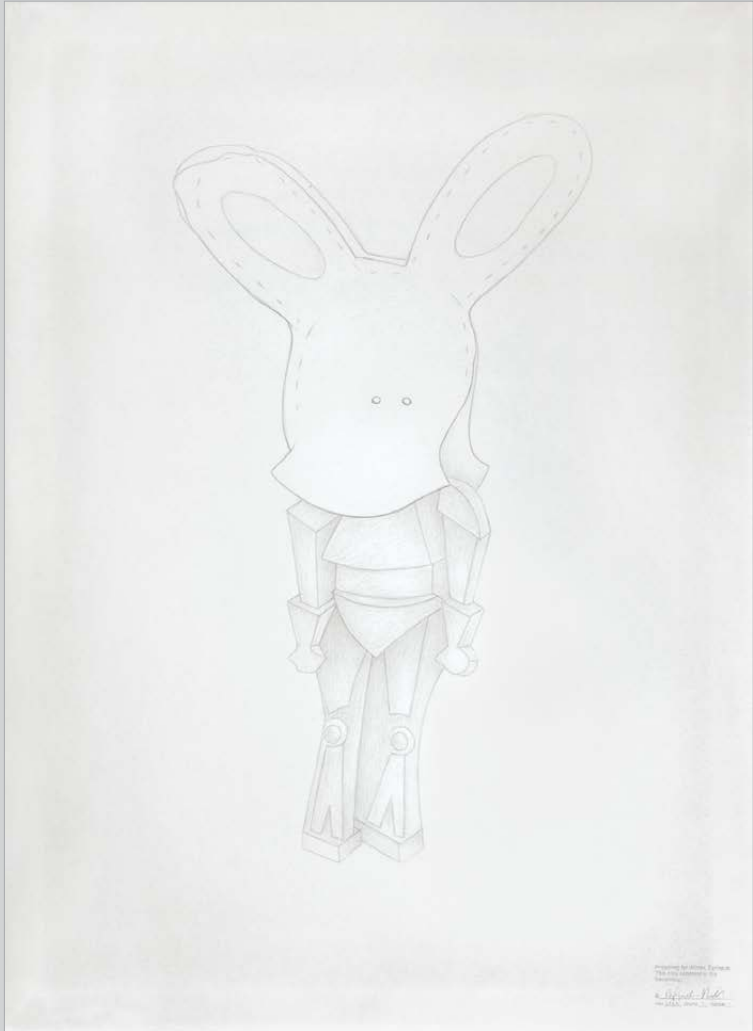






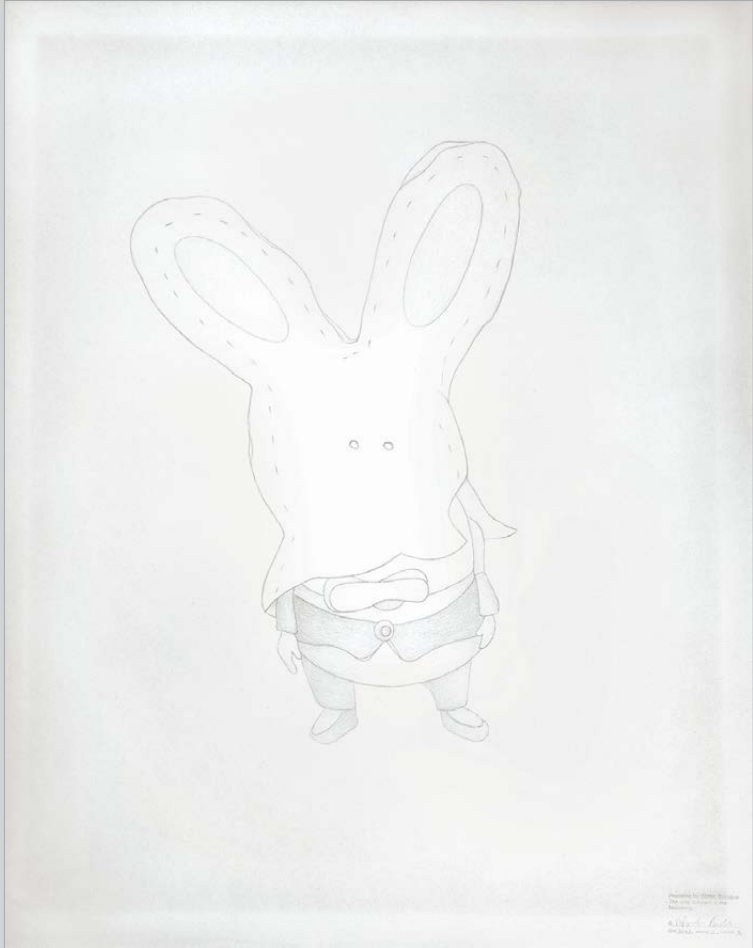
*Free Water Project: Go Forward 'til You Come To A Castle, 5  
20" x 16"*





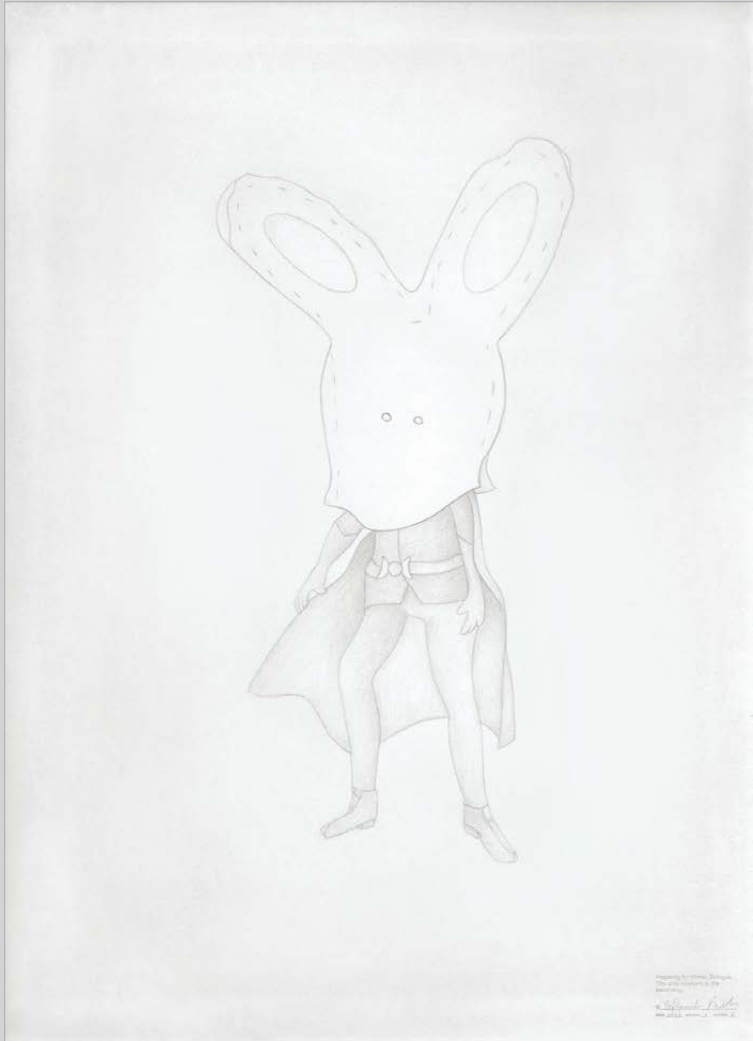
*Preparing for Winter: Epilogue, the only constant  
is the becoming, 1  
30" x 22"*





*Preparing for Winter: Epilogue, the only constant  
is the becoming, 2  
30" x 24"*





*Preparing for Winter: Epilogue, the only constant  
is the becoming, 3  
30" x 22"*







Preparing for Winter: "All Animals Are Equal But Some Animals are More Equal Than Others", 1  
12" x 12"





Preparing for Winter: "All Animals Are Equal But Some Animals Are More Equal Than Others", 2  
12" x 12"





Preparing for Winter: "All Animals Are Equal But Some Animals are More Equal Than Others", 3  
12" x 12"

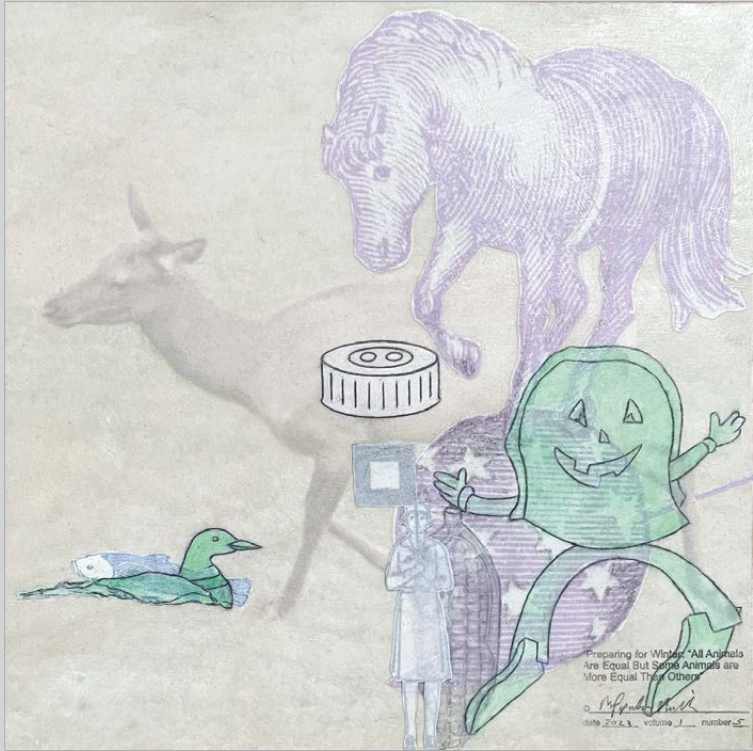




Preparing for Winter: "All Animals Are Equal But Some Animals are More Equal Than Others", 4  
12" x 12"







Preparing for Winter: "All Animals Are Equal But Some Animals are More Equal Than Others", 5  
12" x 12"





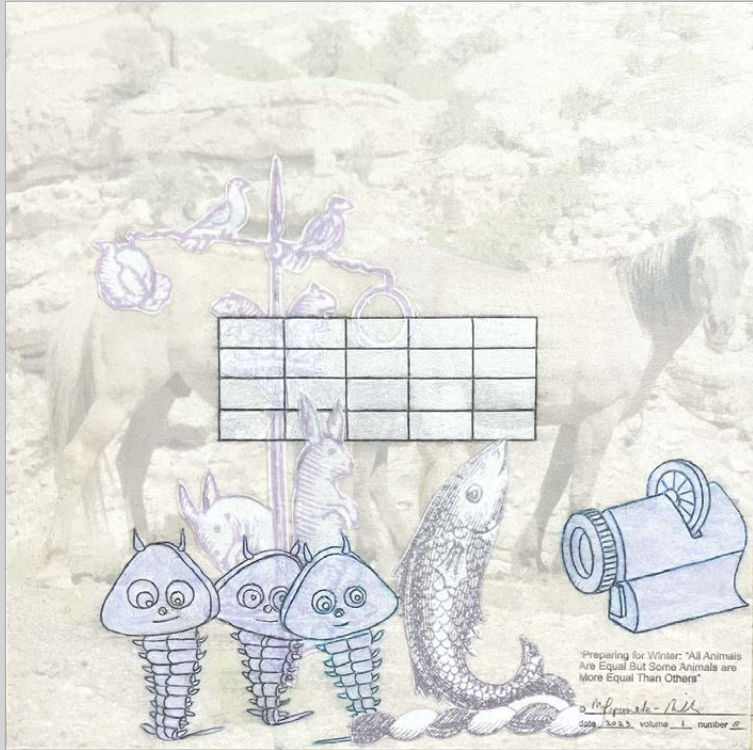
Preparing for Winter: "All Animals Are Equal But Some Animals Are More Equal Than Others", 6  
12" x 12"





Preparing for Winter: "All Animals Are Equal But Some Animals Are More Equal Than Others", 7  
12" x 12"

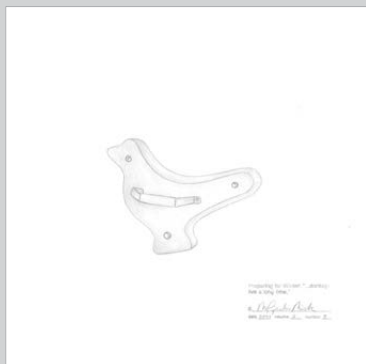
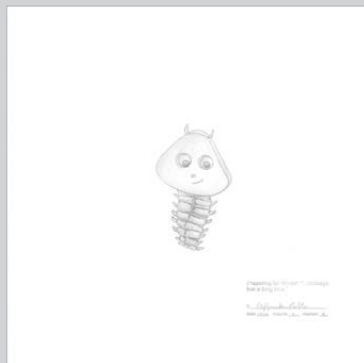




Preparing for Winter: "All Animals Are Equal But Some Animals Are More Equal Than Others", 8  
12" x 12"







Preparing for Winter: "... donkey's live a long time", 2.1-2.4  
10" x 10" each





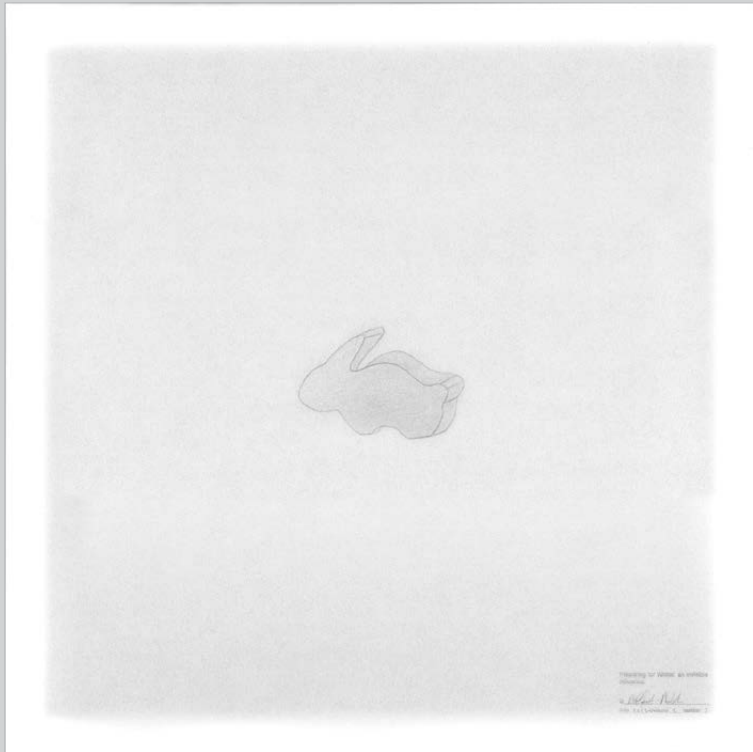
*Preparing for Winter: an invisible influence, 1*  
18" x 18"





*Preparing for Winter: an invisible influence, 2*  
18" x 18"





*Preparing for Winter: an invisible influence, 3*  
18" x 18"







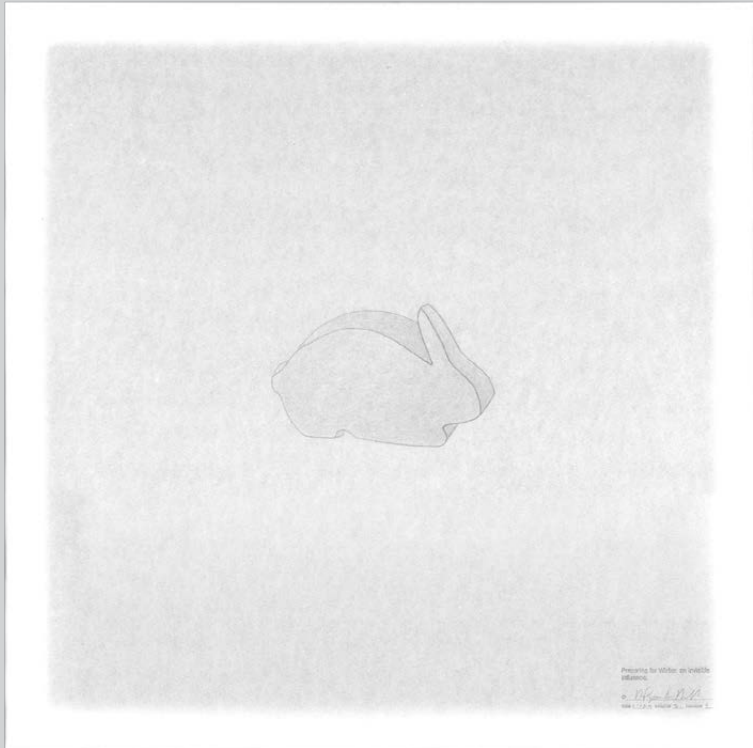
*Preparing for Winter: an invisible influence, 4*  
18" x 18"





*Preparing for Winter: an invisible influence, 5*  
18" x 18"





*Preparing for Winter: an invisible influence, 6*  
18" x 18"

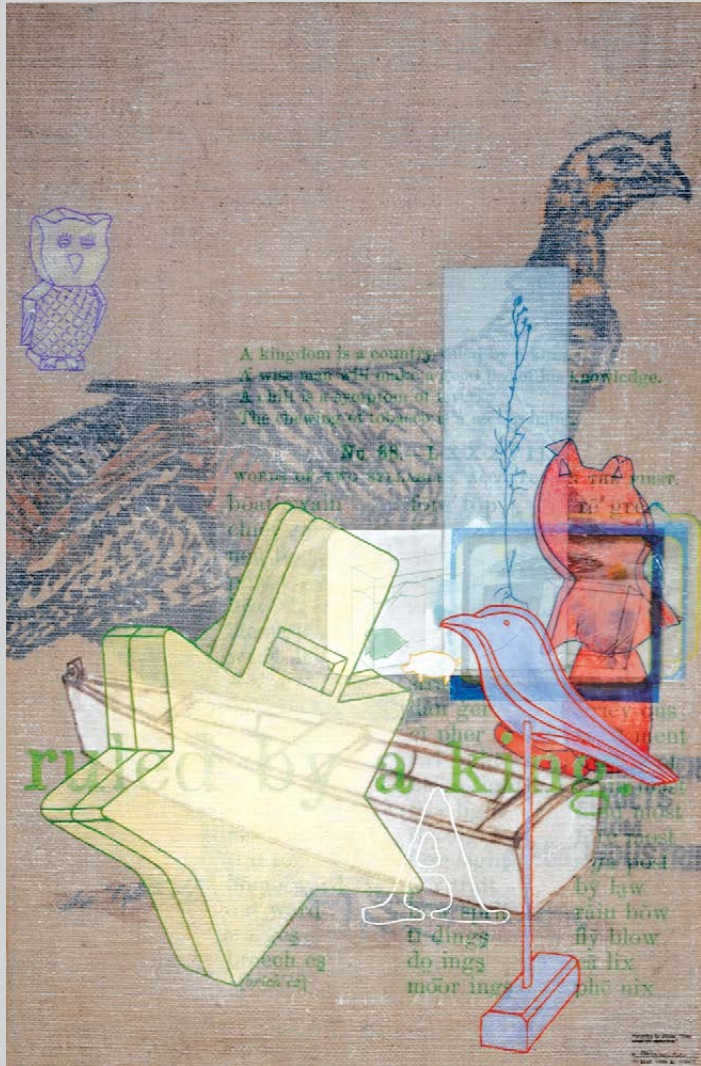




*Preparing for Winter: an invisible influence, 7*  
18" x 18"







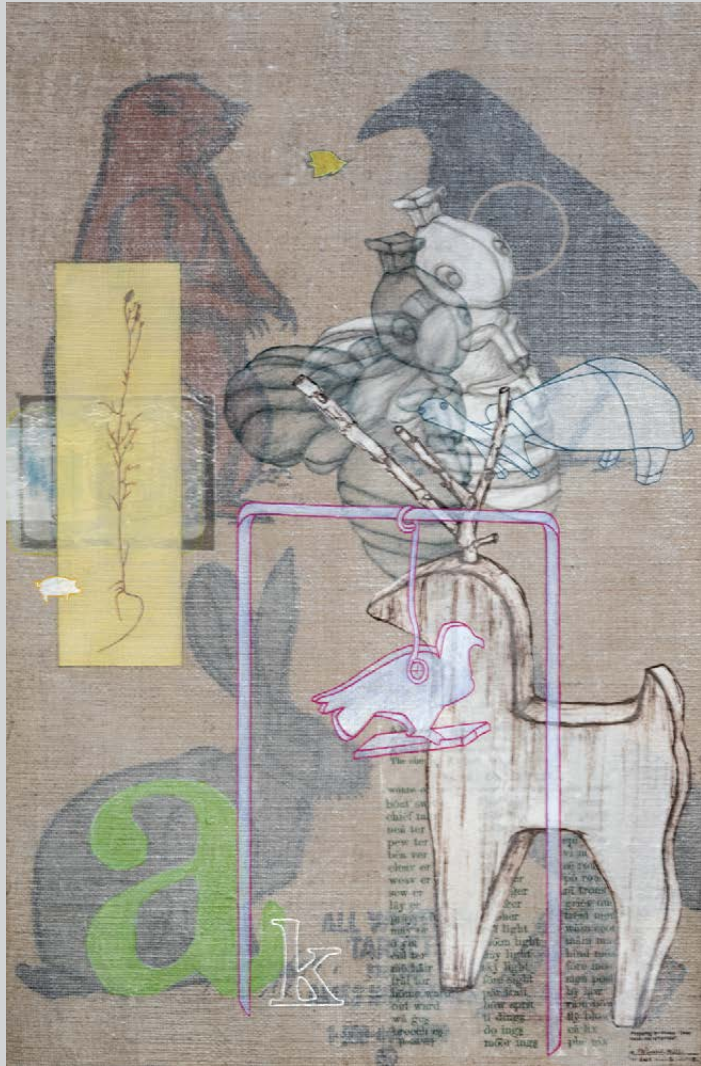
Preparing for Winter: "They could not remember", 1  
 36" x 24"





Preparing for Winter: "They could not remember", 2  
36" x 24"





*Preparing for Winter: "They could not remember", 3  
36" x 24"*

## List of Works

### *Free Water Project: just add water*

One work in 6 sections. Acrylic and oil paints, graphite, and collage on weathered paper mounted on canvas, and graphite on vellum paper. 72"h x 126"w, 2010-2005. Funded by a grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board with support from the National Endowment for the Arts. Page 33; detail page 27.

### *Free Water Project: Jack and Jill*

One work-diptych. Acrylic paint, gouache, oils, graphite and collage on weathered paper, mounted on canvas, 48"h x 40"w, 2005  
Page 35.

### *Looking for Alice: the rabbit hole, I, II, III*

Series, acrylic paint and graphite on plastic and graphite on vellum, in 4 sections each 56"h x 40"w.  
Total 56"h x 128"w, 2016-06  
Page 37, 39, 41.

*Free Water Project: "DO NOT FEED PIGEONS  
(CHICAGO MUNICIPAL CODE 728-710)"*

One work in 5 sections. Acrylic paint, collage, graphite on paper, with layered nylon cloth mounted on wood, and graphite drawing on vellum,  
34"h x 142"w in 5 sections, 2023-14  
Page 43; detail page 42.

*Back to the Forest*

One work-diptych. Acrylic paint, gouache, oils, graphite and collage on weathered paper, mounted on canvas,  
20"h x 34"w each, 2000  
Page 45.

*Looking for Alice: you won't know who to trust, 1.1*

Acrylic paint, gouache, graphite and collage on weathered paper, mounted on canvas,  
40"h x 30"w each, 2009  
Page 47.

*Looking for Alice: you won't know who to trust, 2.1*

Series, acrylic paint, gouache, graphite and collage on metal, mounted on canvas, 12"h x 12"w each, 2007  
Page 49.

*Looking for Alice: you won't know who to trust, 2.2*

Series, acrylic paint, gouache, graphite and collage on paper, mounted on canvas, 12"h x 12"w each, 2007  
Page 51.

*Looking for Alice: you won't know who to trust, 2.4*

Series, acrylic paint, gouache, graphite and collage on paper, mounted on canvas, 12"h x 12"w each, 2007  
Page 53.



*Looking for Alice: you won't know who to trust, 2.5*  
Series, acrylic paint, gouache, graphite and collage on paper, mounted on wood mounted on canvas, 12"h x 12"w each, 2007  
Page 55.

*Looking for Alice: you won't know who to trust, 2.6*  
Series, acrylic paint, gouache, graphite and collage on wood, mounted on canvas, 12"h x 12"w each, 2007  
Page 57.

*The Flush Toilet: This Planet is All Ours, 1 and 3*  
Series, acrylic paint, collage, graphite on paper, mounted on canvas, 40"h x 30"w each, 2006  
Page 59, 61.

*Looking for Alice: under the influence of ducks, 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4*  
Series, acrylics, collage, and graphite on wood panels, 30"h x 20"w each, 2023-09  
Page 63, 65, 67, 69.

*Looking for Alice: "and a bear passed by", 1.1, 1.2, 1.3*  
Series, acrylic paint, oils, and collage on weathered paper mounted on canvas, 22"h x 22"w each, 2017-08  
Page 71, 73, 75.

*Free Water Project: mown grass, I*  
One work in 8 sections. Acrylic, graphite and collage on paper mounted on canvas, and graphite on vellum, 62h" x 79w" in 8 sections, 2007  
Page 77.

*Looking for Alice: "taking (the) water(s)", 1.1, 1.2, 1.3*  
Series, acrylic paint, gouache, graphite and collage on paper mounted on wood, 40"h x 39"w, 2009  
Page 79, 81, 83.

*Preparing for Winter: "I will work harder", I, II, III, IV, V*  
Series, acrylic paint, collage, and graphite on fabric,  
24"h x 11"w each, 2018-14  
Page 85, 87, 89, 91, 93.

*Preparing for Winter: will there still be sugar after the rebellion*  
One work-diptych. Mixed media on wood panels,  
36"h x 50"w, 2018  
Page 95; detail page 173.

*Preparing for Winter: Once again the animals were  
conscious of a vague uneasiness, 1, 2, 3*  
Series, mixed media on photographic printed paper  
mounted on wood, 30"h x 30"w each, 2018  
Page 97, 99, 101.

*Preparing for Winter: If they could not defend  
themselves, they were bound to be Conquered*  
One work in 4 sections. Mixed media acrylic paint and  
collage on transparent plexiglass,  
30"h x 77"w, in 4 sections, 2018  
Page 103; detail page 102, 19.

*Free Water Project: Go Forward 'til You Come To A  
Castle, 1-5*  
Series, acrylics, collage, and graphite on wood panels,  
20"h x 16"w each, 2020-14  
Page 105, 107, 109, 111, 113.

*Preparing for Winter: Epilogue, the only constant is the  
becoming, 1, 2, 3*  
Series, graphite drawing on stretched translucent paper,  
30"h x 22"w (and 24"w), 2022  
Page 115, 117, 119.

*Preparing for Winter: "All Animals Are Equal But Some Animals Are More Equal Than Others", 1-8*

Series, mixed media acrylic paint and collage on wood panels, 12h" x 12w" each, 2023-24

Page 121, 123, 125, 127, 129, 131, 133, 135; detail page 3, 11.

*Preparing for Winter: "... donkey's live a long time", 1-4*

Series, graphite drawing on translucent paper, 10"h x 10"w each, 2024

Page 137.

*Preparing for Winter: an invisible influence, 1-7*

Series, graphite drawing on stretched translucent paper, 18"h x 18"w each, 2024

Page 139, 141, 143, 145, 147, 149, 151.

*Preparing for Winter: "They could not remember", 1-3*

Series, mixed media acrylic paint and collage on printed burlap cloth and on photographic printed paper, mounted on wood panels, 36"h x 24"w each, 2024

Page 153, 155, 157, front cover, back cover.



## Biographies

### *Artist*

**M.A. (Mary Ann) Papanek-Miller** creates layered mixed-media drawing based artworks that are in conversation with the natural world, reflect on various components of the human condition and are seasoned with aspects of humor and worry. Quiet color is developed on a variety of different surfaces, sizes, and formats. Her images are visually engaged in a narrative that evolves from drawings of collected objects of use and childhood, from her photographs, and from historical open source pictures. Mary Ann has exhibited her work across the country, was awarded grants from the Minnesota State Arts Board and the Seattle Arts Commission and she exhibits with Jean Albano Gallery in Chicago. She earned an MFA in Art from the University of Houston, TX, and she is a Professor (art/drawing) and the Director of The Art School at DePaul University. She lives and works between Chicago and the northwoods lake country of Minnesota.

*<https://new.jeanalbanogallery.com/artists/mary-ann-papanek-miller/>*

Current series of Mary Ann's works include *Preparing for Winter* which is in dialogue with the animals in George Orwell's book *Animal Farm* (subtitles of these works are direct quotes from Orwell's writing, which are in acknowledgment of *Animal Farm's* cautionary story regarding the dangers of political innocence) and *Free Water Project* which questions water access, use, and ownership. Her *Looking For Alice* series is completed and it was informed by the book *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll. This series confronted loss and trust.

#### Selected Solo Exhibitions

*M.A. Papanek-Miller: Paintings and Drawings*, Jean Albano Gallery, Chicago, IL

*Mary Ann Papanek-Miller*, Nemeth Art Center, Park Rapids, MN

*Preparing for Winter*, Jean Albano Gallery, Chicago, IL

*Under the Influence of Ducks: The Art of M.A. Papanek-Miller*, Mitchell Museum, The Cedarhurst Center of the Arts, Mt. Vernon, IL

*A Snowman Cares for Our Memory of Water*, The Missoula Art Museum, MT

*Looking for Alice: You Won't Know Who To Trust*, Jack Olson Gallery, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL

*Duck Painting in America*, Baas Gallery, Seattle, WA

*Ecological Concerns*, Humanities Fine Arts Center Gallery, The University of Minnesota, Morris, MN

*Recent Work*, Inman Gallery, Houston, TX

*A Subtle Movement*, Talley Gallery, Bemidji State University,

### *Essayist*

**Valerie Hedquist** is a professor of art history at the University of Montana. In 1979, she earned her B.A. from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities before heading to the University of Kansas where she earned her Ph.D. with honors in 1990. She has been teaching and writing for more than 30 years with a long stretch at the University of Montana in Missoula where she has called home since 1999. Her research focuses on the arts of the 17th and 18th centuries and includes articles on the religious paintings of Rembrandt and Vermeer. Of special interest is the influence of Italian cultural attitudes on the visual output of these Dutch artists and others. Her book on the changing reception and meaning of Thomas Gainsborough's *Blue Boy* was published in summer 2019. [Blue-Boy/Hedquist/p/book/9781032401317](https://www.barnesandnoble.com/p/book/9781032401317)

### *Essayist*

**Jane Eva Baxter** is an Associate Professor in Anthropology at DePaul University. She received her archaeological training at the University of Michigan (PhD 2000) where she wrote a dissertation on the archaeology of childhood in 19th century America. She has gone on to write three books and over 25 articles and book chapters on the archaeology of childhood and has edited two volumes on interdisciplinary scholarship in childhood studies-  
<https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/archaeology-of-childhood-jane-eva-baxter/1100894831>

Her other research interests include the archaeology of enslaved and emancipated peoples in the Bahamas, the archaeology of labor and laborers in Chicago's Pullman community, pedagogies and teaching, and historic cemeteries. She is also an award-winning teacher and an active member of several scholarly organizations.

### *Essayist*

**Michele Morano** is the author of the travel memoir *Grammar Lessons: Translating a Life in Spain* and the essay collection, *Like Love*, which was long-listed for the 2021 PEN Diamondstein-Spielvogel Award for the Art of the Essay. Her short fiction and nonfiction appear in a wide range of literary journals and anthologies, including *Best American Essays* and *WaveForm: Twenty-First-Century Essays By Women*. She teaches creative writing and chairs the English Department at DePaul University. <https://www.michelemorano.com/writing>

### *Essayist*

**Jason Shepherd** is an Associate Professor in the Department of Neurobiology and holds the Jon M. Huntsman Presidential Chair at the University of Utah. He obtained his BSc (Hons) at the University of Otago in New Zealand, his Ph.D. at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and postdoctoral training at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He is the recipient of the Peter and Patricia Gruber International Research Award in Neuroscience, the International Society for Neurochemistry Young Investigator Award, the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative Ben Barres Early Career Acceleration Award, the Research to Prevent Blindness Stein Innovation Award, the NIH Director's Transformative Research Award, the Brain Research Foundation Scientific Innovations Award, and is a National Academy of Sciences Kavli Fellow. Born in South Africa and raised in New Zealand, Dr. Shepherd enjoys the outdoors and Utah's natural beauty.



*Artist, Publication Layout Designer*

**Jessica Larva** is a contemporary artist whose work explores phenomena of visual perception. She earned a BFA and MFA in new media art at the Ohio State University, and now lives in Chicago, Illinois where she is an Associate Professor in the Art School at DePaul University. Larva's artwork has been exhibited in notable exhibitions including solo shows *From Where I Stand* in Riley Hall Gallery at the University of Notre Dame, *Leeward* at the College of Southern Nevada in Las Vegas, and *Fluid Horizons* at Ohio Dominican University. Other recent exhibitions include *Flourish* at the d'Art Center in Virginia, *Insight* at the Cape Cod Museum of Art in Massachusetts, and *Inhabit* at the Manifest Gallery in Ohio. Larva was formerly the studio assistant for artist Ann Hamilton and a founding member of Fuse Factory, an art and technology non-profit. Visit her artist website at <http://www.jessicalarva.com/>



## **Contributors include**

Jane Eva Baxter (essayist), Michele Morano (essayist), Valerie Hedquist (essayist), Jason Shepherd (essayist), Jessica Larva (publication design), Jean Albano – Jean Albano Gallery, DePaul University, Mark Weiler (Nemeth Art Center Executive Director), David Welle (NAC Board Chair), Aaron Spangler (NAC Board Vice-Chair), Josie Perhus (NAC Board Treasurer), Barry Simonson (NAC Board Member), Jeremy Simonson (NAC Board Member), Chris Mueller (NAC Board Member), Michele Thieman (NAC Board Member), Amy Thielen (NAC Board Member), Minnesota State Arts Board, Region 2 Arts Council of Minnesota, Lake Region Arts Council, and Fergus Fall Minnesota Career Development Grant.

All Rights reserved.

This activity is made possible, in part, by DePaul University, a DePaul University Research Council Leave, and a DePaul College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Summer Research Grant.

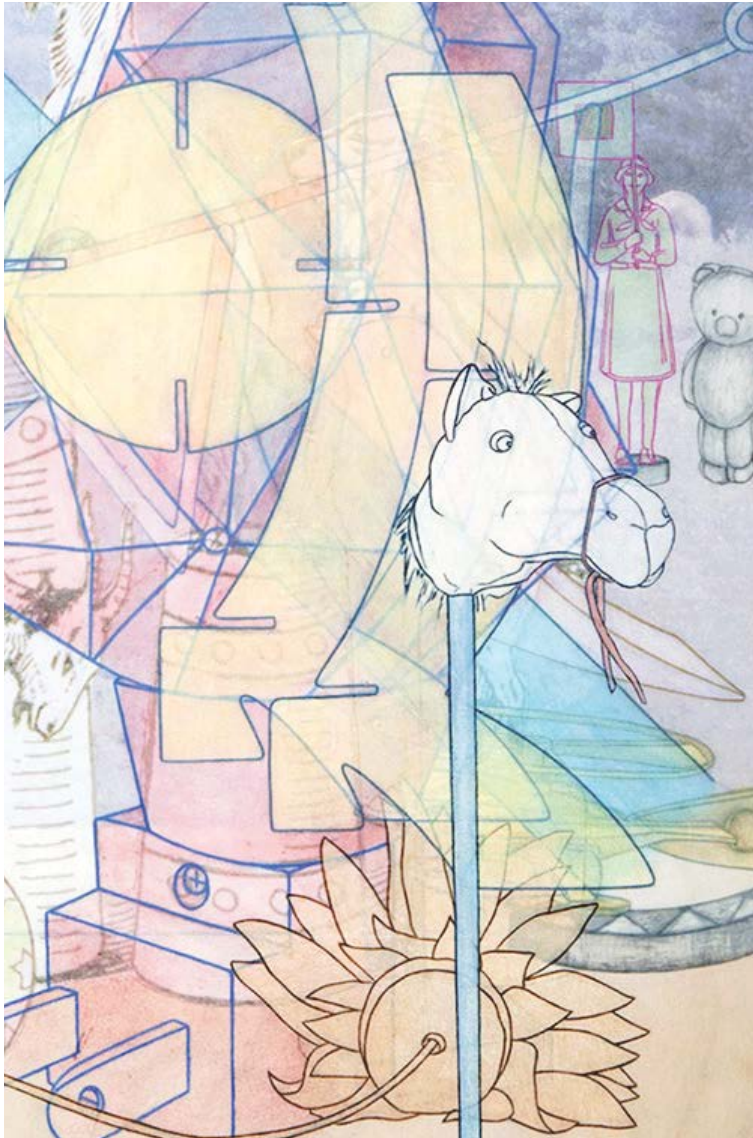
First printing funded, in part, through a grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board and a grant from the Region 2 Arts Council of Minnesota.

Second printing concurrent with the solo exhibition, *M.A. Papanek-Miller: Paintings and Drawings*, Jean Albano Gallery, Chicago, IL.

Printing by Aloha Print Group, Chicago, IL.

All artwork and photographs ©2024 M.A. Papanek-Miller.  
All rights reserved.





*[detail] Preparing for Winter: will there still  
be sugar after the rebellion  
36" x 50"*

