

Allen Craven

Sabbatical Report

My sabbatical, which was completed during the fall semester of 2006, focused on research using various two-dimensional media which resulted in a cohesive body of drawings and paintings which share a common theme. While my initial research plan involved only the research and implementation of media related to silverpoint drawing, I extended that research to include the completion of large-scale acrylic paintings. Both the silverpoint drawings and paintings share a common thread. They were inspired by T. S. Eliot's poem "The Hollow Men," and all of the works include, to varying degrees, literal and figurative imagery from that literary work.

Prior to beginning a series of preliminary sketches, I researched the history of silverpoint, ranging from its practical role as a precursor to the modern-day sketch pad, to the various media and techniques used to create silverpoint drawings. After conducting initial research, I next completed a three-week residency program at the Hambidge Arts Center located in northern Georgia. I felt very fortunate to be accepted by the arts center as a resident artist. Here, I was afforded a private two-story apartment complete with large adjoining artist's studio, situated in a secluded wooded area. In this quiet atmosphere which had no interruptions such as nearby roadways, telephones, or television, I was able to work undisturbed nearly round-the-clock.

During my residency, I generated initial sketches as well as my first paintings based on the theme of Eliot's poem. I was also able to meet once daily with other resident visual artists and writers. Shortly before leaving the residency program, I

exhibited my artwork. This exhibition coincided with the arts center's annual Hambidge Arts Festival which was attended by several hundred supporters of the fine arts from the greater Atlanta area.

Upon completion of the residency program and subsequent return to Hays, I began working with a variety of media on grounds (surfaces) to determine, by trial and error, which combination of materials and processes which would result in the most satisfactory surface for my silverpoint drawings. This information was documented for future reference. I also began using a variety of metals to render the drawings. Initially working with silver, I subsequently utilized gold, copper, and combinations thereof. It is important to note silverpoint drawings are much more work-intensive than conte drawings because the artist must repeatedly work the surface in order to create a sufficient build-up of metal.

By the end of my sabbatical, I completed a body of ten silverpoint drawings and fifteen large-scale acrylic paintings. One of my pre-sabbatical objectives was to gain expertise in working with the silverpoint medium with which I previously had limited experience, and, in turn, share my knowledge with students. Already only three weeks into the spring 2007 semester, I have an Art 615 Problems Drawing student who will be working extensively with silverpoint this semester. I intend to introduce silverpoint as an alternative medium in future design classes as well. Drawings and paintings created during my sabbatical will be exhibited in the Moss/Thorns Gallery of Art for approximately one month during the 2007-08 academic year.