

## classes

**Charlottesville Organizing: Kitchen & Pantry.** Professional organizers teach you how to organize your kitchen, pantry, that infamous Tupperware drawer, and a play space for kids. Free, 3pm. The Annex at Bluebird & Co., 5792 Three Notched Rd., Crozet. bluebirdcrozet.com

**Paint & Sip: Perfect Picnic Spot.** Paint, sip, and repeat. \$40, noon. King Family Vineyard, 6550 Roseland Farm, Crozet. catelynkelseydesigns.com

## etc.

**Charlottesville Ballet's Behind the Curtain.** Hear from the choreographers, directors, musicians, and dancers of Charlottesville Ballet, with live music from Charlottesville Symphony. \$12-20, 4pm. Martin Luther King Jr. Performing Arts Center, 1400 Melbourne Rd. charlottesvilleballet.org

**IRC in Charlottesville.** A lecture from Charlottesville's International Rescue Committee director, Harriet Kuhr. Free, 3pm. Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Charlottesville, 717 Rugby Rd. una-brc.avenue.org

## Monday 4/17

### music

**Berto & Vincent.** Fiesta. Free, 7pm. South and Central Latin Grill, Dairy Market. southandcentralgrill.com

**Gin & Jazz.** The Brian Caputo Trio performs in the Château Lobby Bar. Free, 5:30pm. Oakhurst Inn, 100 Oakhurst Cir. oakhurstinn.com

### words

**Key Challenges and Future Directions in Biodiversity Conservation.** Martha Williams, director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is the Lillian K. Stone distinguished lecturer in environmental policy. Free, 5pm. Campbell Hall 153, UVA Grounds. arch.virginia.edu

**Storytime.** Storytelling, songs, movement, and bubbles as kids learn new words and practice language and gross motor skills. Free, 10:30am. Virginia Discovery Museum, 524 E. Main St. vadm.org

## Tuesday 4/18

### music

**Thunder Music Karaoke.** Show off your singing skills or just enjoy the show. Free, 9pm. Holly's Diner, 1221 E. Market St. 234-4436

**Vincent Zorn.** Olé. Free, 7pm. The Bebedero, 225 W. Main St., Downtown Mall. thebebedero.com

**Vinyl Night.** BYO record to play and get \$1 off pints. Free, 4pm. Starr Hill Brewery, Dairy Market, 946 Grady Ave. dairymarketville.com

**Wind Ensemble.** Performing energetic music by Sousa, Mackey, and other renowned composers. Free, 7pm. Hunter Smith Band Building, UVA Grounds. music.virginia.edu

### outside

**Playdates at the Playscape.** See listing for Friday, April 14. \$20, 9:30am. Wildrock, 6600 Blackwells Hollow Rd., Crozet. wildrock.org

## etc.

**Family Game Night.** Games for all ages, including corn hole, Jenga, and board games. Free, 5pm. Dairy Market, 946 Grady Ave. dairymarketville.com

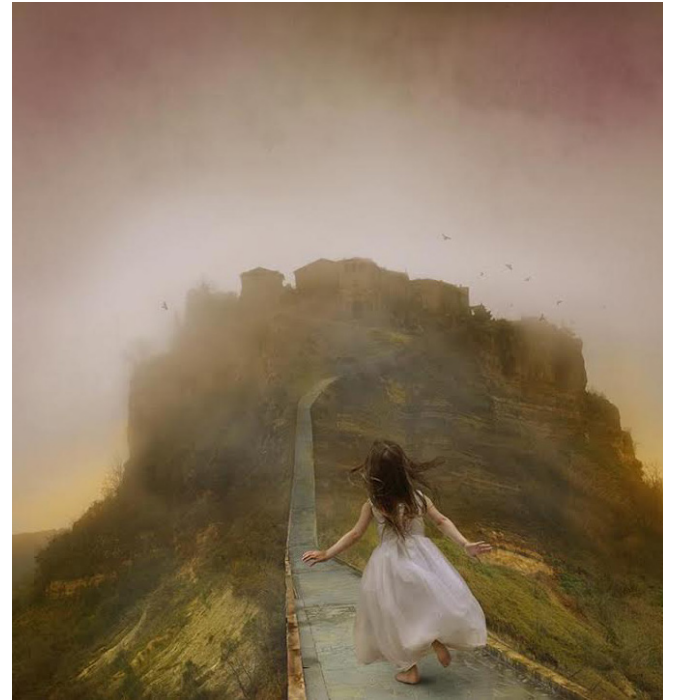
**Geeks Who Drink Trivia Night.** Teams of two to six people play for prizes and bragging rights. Free, 8pm. Firefly, 1304 E. Market St. fireflyville.com

# Shutter to think

## 'Everything is Extraordinary' in Chroma's combined show



IMAGES COURTESY OF CHROMA PROJECTS.



Tom Chambers' (left) and Fax Ayres' (right) photographs evoke magical otherworldliness at Chroma Projects through May 26.

By Sarah Sargent

arts@c-ville.com

“Tom Chambers and Fax Ayres: Everything is Extraordinary,” currently on view at Chroma Projects at Vault Virginia, features two artists using distinctive approaches to alter and enhance photographs in order to capture a mood, an evocation of a place, objects, or some mystical imaginary region.

Fax Ayres enjoys playing with perception. This is evident in his transformation of ordinary objects into something special, and the playful shifting back and forth between reality and fiction that's a recurring theme throughout his work. Photographing each piece incrementally, Ayres works on small sections, taking as many as 200 photographs to end up with the 100 good ones that comprise a finished image.

“I like the fact that they can appear to be paintings or photographs,” says Ayres. “I have a definite affinity for some of the Dutch painters who did those hyper photorealistic paintings.”

To achieve the crystalline quality of his images, Ayres uses light painting. With the camera mounted on a tripod and tethered to a computer, Ayres holds a remote trigger in one hand and a small flashlight in the other. He opens the shutter and skims the light across the surface of the area he's photographing, throwing the object into high relief. The shutter speed depends on a variety of factors, including the surface area size, how shiny or dull it is, and even how far away it is from the camera.

“I keep the shutter open with a manual count,” he says. “Then I close the shutter and look at the image to see if the highlights look right, if the texture of the surface is revealed in the way I want, etc.”

One can see the result of the process in the remarkable reflecting, haptic, and even emotional qualities Ayres is able to wrest from the ordinary, everyday objects he uses. To preserve the clarity of the work, Ayres has his images printed on smooth, matte aluminum.

At first, “The Usual Suspects” appears to be a sober and imposing work, but then we notice a plastic monkey and parakeet amidst the oil cans, padlocks, and weights. It's a delightful touch that disrupts the unrelenting browns and grays of old metal by adding color, humor, and frivolity.

In “Portal,” Ayres takes this levity further, creating a faux landscape of fake trees and grass, a dog figurine, and a macabre novelty lamp, all set within a car gear part that's resting on an old-school style level. These functional objects, made from steel and wood, shine under Ayres' exacting eye—their humble ordinariness transformed into beauty by proximity to the garish artificial scene they're paired with.

Ayres steps outside the studio with the striking “Birch Trees” and “Pool Gates.” In these works, intense lighting and hyperrealism work together to produce a curious artificiality that adds drama and suspense.

In his allegorical photomontages, Tom Chambers captures the innate beauty of young girls in a way that exalts them while preserving their innocence. In Chambers' hands, this central theme yields powerful images.

According to Chambers, “the photographs present something that is possible but not probable,” a land where girls rule (or at least have agency) and feral beings are safe. He photographs his subjects in the studio, while placing them within landscapes that tend to be rugged, northern coastal settings—the perfect foil for the tender girlish pulchritude depicted.

“The photographs present something that is possible but not probable.” TOM CHAMBERS

In some images, the girls are either holding or interacting with natural beings—a wolf, birds, fireflies, which are in peril because of demonizing, loss of habitat, or pollution. In these mysterious tableaux, one has the sense that the girl is in control; a junior Mother Nature tending to and protecting her charges. “In each of my images, I'm going for my own expression of a feeling through telling a story,” he says. “I hope the viewer also connects in some way emotionally with his own personal interpretation.”

Chambers clothes his models in garments that sync perfectly with the timbre of the work. Their frocks, muted in color and style, have a timeless elegance about them that's unusual and piques our interest. One girl, in a plain white shift, sports an arm in a matching sling. It's unexpected and provocative, engaging the viewer's curiosity and dispelling any whiffs of cloying sentimentality such as enchanting subjects might arouse. Another girl wears a black and white checked dress that echoes the speckled hens at her feet. Still another wears pale pink, the same shade as the teapot she holds.

There's an unmistakably elegiac quality to the work. The fragility depicted, whether of nature or young girls, is under constant threat. In these brave doe-like visages—serene, fearless, immutable—we see beauty certainly, but we also see strength. And yet, this strength is tempered by our understanding of the girl's unequivocal vulnerability. It is this last quality together with the subjects' patent goodness that makes them the ideal incarnation for humanity in these beguiling examples of memento naturae. ©



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 39

## Sunday 5/14

**Mother's Day Brunch & More.** Yoga, brunch, and a Pharsalia flower pop-up. Price TBA, 10:30am. Potter's Craft Cider, 1350 Arrowhead Valley Rd. [potterscraftcider.com](http://potterscraftcider.com)

**The Cat Returns.** A girl saves a cat's life and finds herself whisked into a feline fantasy world in the English-dubbed version of this Studio Ghibli favorite. \$10, 7:15pm. Alamo Drafthouse Cinema, 5th Street Station. [drafhouse.com](http://drafhouse.com)

## Monday 5/15

### music

**Berto & Vincent.** Fiesta. Free, 7pm. South and Central Latin Grill, Dairy Market. [southandcentralgrill.com](http://southandcentralgrill.com)

**Gin & Jazz.** The Brian Caputo Trio performs in the Château Lobby Bar. Free, 5:30pm. Oakhurst Inn, 100 Oakhurst Cir. [oakhurstinn.com](http://oakhurstinn.com)

### words

**Storytime.** Words, songs, movement, and bubbles. Free, 10:30am. Virginia Discovery Museum, 524 E. Main St. [vadm.org](http://vadm.org)

### etc.

**Subspecies V: Blood Rise.** An exclusive premiere of the prequel to the popular vampire series. \$10, 9:15pm. Alamo Drafthouse Cinema, 5th Street Station. [drafhouse.com](http://drafhouse.com)

**The Spy Who Loved Me.** A Soviet spy teams with 007 to deep-six a villain who operates out of an underwater city in this 1977 blockbuster. \$10, 7:15pm. Alamo Drafthouse Cinema, 5th Street Station. [drafhouse.com](http://drafhouse.com)

## Tuesday 5/16

### music

**Thunder Music Karaoke.** Show off your singing skills or just enjoy the show. Free, 9pm. Holly's Diner, 1221 E. Market St. 234-4436

**Vincent Zorn.** Olé. Free, 7pm. The Bebebero, 225 W. Main St., Downtown Mall. [thebebebero.com](http://thebebebero.com)

**Vinyl Night.** BYO record to play and get \$1 off pints. Free, 4pm. Starr Hill Brewery, Dairy Market, 946 Grady Ave. [dairymarketcville.com](http://dairymarketcville.com)

### words

**Profs & Pints: Reflecting on Narcissists.** A look at the myth, reality, and treatment of clinical narcissism. \$13-17, 5:30pm. Graduate, 1309 W. Main St. [profsandpints.com](http://profsandpints.com)

### outside

**Playdates at the Playscape.** See listing for Friday, May 12. \$20, 9:30am. Wildrock, 6600 Blackwells Hollow Rd., Crozet. [wildrock.org](http://wildrock.org)

**Three Notch'd Run Club.** Log some miles and enjoy a \$5 post-run beer. Free, 6pm. Three Notch'd Craft Kitchen & Brewery, 520 Second St. SE. [threenotchdbrewing.com](http://threenotchdbrewing.com)

### etc.

**Family Game Night.** Games for all ages, including corn hole, Jenga, and board games. Free, 5pm. Dairy Market, 946 Grady Ave. [dairymarketcville.com](http://dairymarketcville.com)

**Geeks Who Drink Trivia Night.** Teams of two to six people play for prizes and bragging rights. Free, 8pm. Firefly, 1304 E. Market St. [fireflycville.com](http://fireflycville.com)

**WarGames.** Matthew Broderick and Ally Sheedy play a potentially disastrous game when they stumble into a top-secret program. \$10, 7:15pm. Alamo Drafthouse Cinema, 5th Street Station. [drafhouse.com](http://drafhouse.com)

# Pure wonder

## Three artists engage the natural world at Second Street Gallery



COURTESY OF THE ARTISTS



Lara Call Gastinger, Giselle Gautreau, and Elizabeth Perdue are featured in "Mirabilia naturae (Wonders of Nature)" at Second Street Gallery through May 19.

By Sarah Sargent

[arts@c-ville.com](mailto:arts@c-ville.com)

The moment you enter Second Street Gallery, you appreciate the variety of techniques featured in "Mirabilia naturae (Wonders of Nature)"—the precise, elegant line of Lara Call Gastinger's works of paper; the poetic, emotive quality of Giselle Gautreau's paintings; and the velvety tones and photographic verisimilitude of Elizabeth Perdue's palladium prints. Each medium and style has its own formal and evocative allure, while also being ideally suited to capture and convey nature, a subject with which these artists are deeply engaged.

The differing approaches work very well in concert throughout the show, and specifically in the grid arrangement of 30 6"x 6" squares that form a joint, site-specific piece. "We wanted a way to represent a cohesiveness in the show and came up with this idea of one gridded part of the wall that would embody all three of our styles together," says Gastinger. "We love it. It shows everything from the detailed work of mine to the dreamy photographs of Elizabeth, and then the moody landscapes of Giselle."

The individual works that make up Gastinger's "Seeing Plants: A Year in Virginia (January-December)," feature flora as they appear during a given month. Her graphically symmetric arrangement of specimens is derived from the illustrated botanical plates of German scientist Ernst Haeckel. Gastinger uses the dry brush watercolor technique (a small amount of paint—without water—is used with a brush) to produce the extraordinary precision. Just look at her wispy paradise flower in "Seeing Plants," or the thin hair-like filaments on the fiddlehead

fern stems in "Emerging Ferns." In this and the aforementioned series, Gastinger limits her palette to sepia, which produces varying tones of gray. In other works, she introduces color. Throughout, you marvel at Gastinger's ability to artfully join scientific veracity with a finely tuned sensitivity to the myriad aesthetic qualities of her subjects.

In her contemplative encaustic paintings, Gautreau uses tonal values to create mood. She downplays detail in these softly edged, atmospheric works, keeping her palette muted and focusing on dusk or twilight when shadows grow and light is diffused. The multiple layers of oil and encaustic that Gautreau employs expand the visual depth while augmenting qualities of luminosity.

In "Virginia Nocturne with Fireflies," the insects of the title appear as pinpricks of brilliant bluish light against a backdrop of inky conifers. Hazy silvery light from the moon illuminates the sky and shines on a small glade in the foreground, creating the effect of a spotlight stage. Here, a patch of springy clumps of grass with worn areas of dirt is conjured out of lush brushstrokes in vivid green and yellow. A simple composition, the piece evokes childhood memories of the ineffable magic of lightening bugs and moonlight in a summer garden.

"With landscapes, there's a point where the viewer might connect with them and feel some familiarity with something," says Gautreau. "But if I get too specific, unless it's something they have a personal connection to, they lose interest. So, I walk that line between making work that's rooted in something specific, while also leaving it open to interpretation."

Palladium printing is an old process, prized for its beautiful effects and archival

resilience. Traditionally, large-format cameras are used because the technique requires the negative to be the same size as the image. Perdue uses a Calumet camera with either 8" x 10" or 4" x 5" negatives. When she's ready to print, after first processing her film, Perdue paints an emulsion containing palladium salts and a light sensitizer onto watercolor paper. After it dries, she lays the negative on top to make a contact print. She then places this in a light box for exposure, with the addition of a developer. How long it stays in there depends on the desired effect, but it can range anywhere from a few minutes to an hour, or even more.

"I love the tones, the gradations and the grays, and also the texture of the paper. None of it is digital," says Perdue. "It's all very tactile—very hands-on. It's old school. I love that about it." While palladium printing may be complicated, it's also simple in the sense that the artist can be involved and in control of the entire process.

Perdue gathers her subject matter on walks, looking for things that "shine in their simplicity." She selects just one stem or branch to photograph at a time, producing a form of portraiture. "I love celebrating the ephemeral quality of a single bloom, or shoot, and capturing it in a medium that is believed to last for up to a thousand years," she says.

There's an unmistakable elegiac quality to "Mirabilia naturae." We see it in the desiccated magnolia leaf, the fragile fireflies facing collapse, and the somber grandeur of a lone magnolia bloom. It's easy to revel in each approach, and also in the wonders they present, and it's very hard to leave the gallery without being more mindful, observant, and appreciative of the ever-fascinating natural world. ☺

A simple composition, the piece evokes childhood memories of the ineffable magic of lightening bugs and moonlight in a summer garden.

May 10 - 16, 2023 [c-ville.com](http://c-ville.com) @cville\_culture [facebook.com/cvilleweekly](https://www.facebook.com/cvilleweekly)



**Gin & Jazz.** The Brian Caputo Trio performs in the Château Lobby Bar. Free, 5:30pm. Oakhurst Inn, 100 Oakhurst Cir. oakhurstinn.com

## words

**Storytime.** Songs, movement, and bubbles. Free, 10:30am. Ting Pavilion, 700 E. Main St., Downtown Mall. vadm.org

## classes

**Club Create.** Students explore a variety of arts and crafts, including painting, drawing, clay, and sewing, while meeting other creative kids. \$200, 4pm. The Scrappy Elephant, 1745 Allied St., Ste. C. scrappyelephant.com

**Poster Workshop: Like the Waters We Rise.** Make your own graphic artwork inspired by posters from the front lines of the climate justice movement. Free, 5pm. Elmaleh Gallery, Campbell Hall, UVA Grounds. arch.virginia.edu

## etc.

**A Nightmare on Elm Street.** Teens find all their bad dreams come true when Freddy Krueger comes calling. \$10, 7pm. Alamo Drafthouse Cinema, 5th Street Station. drafthouse.com

**Crossroads.** Britney Spears' road movie returns, with extra features. \$12, 8pm. Alamo Drafthouse Cinema, 5th Street Station. drafthouse.com

## Tuesday 10/24

### music

**Josh Mayo & The House Sauce.** A jam session with local favorites. Free, 9pm. Rapture, 303 E. Main St., Downtown Mall. rapturerestaurant.com

**Karaoke Night with DJ Azazil.** Cold drinks, hot pizza, water pong, and karaoke. Free, 9pm. Crozet Pizza at Buddhist Biker Bar, 20 Elliewood Ave. crozetzpizzacville.com

**The Happy Fits: Under The Shade of Green.** With Windser and Small Crush. \$25–28, 7pm. The Jefferson Theater, 110 E. Main St., Downtown Mall. jeffersontheater.com

**Thunder Music Karaoke.** Show off your singing skills or just enjoy the show. Free, 9pm. Holly's Diner, 1221 E. Market St. 234-4436

**Vincent Zorn.** Olé. Free, 7pm. The Bebedero, 225 W. Main St., Downtown Mall. thebebedero.com

**Vinyl Night.** BYO record to play and get \$1 off pints. Free, 4pm. Starr Hill Brewery, Dairy Market. dairymarketcville.com

### outside

**Autumn Glory.** A sunrise and leaf-peeping trip on Skyline Drive, private winery and vineyard tour with wine tasting, and mind and body restorative experience at an idyllic farm. \$390, all day. Cedarmere, 2440 Simmons Gap Rd., Earlysville. thenaturebus.com

**Three Notch'd Run Club.** Log some miles and enjoy a \$5 post-run beer. Free, 6pm. Three Notch'd Craft Kitchen & Brewery, 520 Second St. SE. threenotchdbrewing.com

## etc.

**Crimson Peak.** Guillermo del Toro invites you to visit a house full of secrets, passions and a few ghosts. \$10, 7pm. Alamo Drafthouse Cinema, 5th Street Station. drafthouse.com

**Family Game Night.** Games for all ages, including corn hole, Jenga, and board games. Free, 5pm. Dairy Market, 946 Grady Ave. dairymarketcville.com

**GeeksWho Drink Trivia Night.** Teams of two to six people play for prizes and bragging rights. Free, 8pm. Firefly, 1304 E. Market St. fireflycville.com

**Go for Beginners.** Learn about and play the ancient strategic Chinese board game Go. Free, 2pm. The Center at Belvedere, 540 Belvedere Blvd. thecentercville.org

# Elements together

## The bold grace of Susan McAlister's 'Canopy'

By Sarah Sargent

arts@c-ville.com

**S**usan McAlister uses a number of approaches to landscape, from direct physical representations to more nebulous suggestions of place, to riffs on the basic forms and patterns that are the building blocks of the natural world. “My process is essentially the same whether I’m working representationally or abstractly,” says McAlister, whose work is the subject of “Canopy,” now on view at Les Yeux du Monde. “I’m finding form, I’m pushing color, I’m layering materials, I’m thinking about the relation of all of these elements together.”

The plein air tradition of sketching and painting out of doors is central to McAlister’s practice. “When I take my walks in nature,” she says, “I think about the shapes that are happening and the way the light moves through those shapes and how a vine travels up a tree and continues over your head. I’m considering all of this and what it’s like being engulfed by nature and how that makes my heart feel.”

While outside, McAlister also forages for natural found objects, which she uses as inspiration, sometimes incorporating them into her assemblages, thus rooting them in a specific time and place. “Faunus I,” for example, features a feather, petal, and bee. Originally inspired by a visit to the Matisse room at the National Gallery in Washington, D.C., McAlister took the concept of cut-outs and ran with it, adding three-dimensional-ity into the mix to produce her gorgeous explosions of layered cut paper.

Luminous vistas of the Blue Ridge cloaked in fuzzy haze are conjured up from a combination of McAlister’s observation and memory. “These wooded landscapes are about my childhood. I grew up where my playground was the uncut forest outside my door. That kind of tangled landscape, that’s orderly but also disorderly, is endlessly appealing to me.”

In “Near and Far,” the haze has been replaced with rain-washed crispness. McAlister uses extraordinary brushwork here, with bold expressive slashes, smears, and clumps of paint that describe the varied mountain terrain of woods, meadows, and streams.

“Meeting in the Woods” depicts the sort of tangled woodland that appeals to McAlister. In this rollicking work, the scene has shifted from the gently sloping hills of memory seen in “Wooded Way,” “The Engagement,” and “Evening,” to more rugged Montana. McAlister has amped up her brush work accordingly, with slashing strokes that describe the wind tossing the trees, and add points of visual interest to the work.



SUPPLIED PHOTO

“Come to the Woods” calls for repeat viewing of Susan McAlister’s show “Canopy,” at Les Yeux du Monde through October 29.

“Spring Shadows & the Forest Floor” seems to exist on the knife edge between abstraction and representation. McAlister has visually nailed the sense of wind, using large brushes to produce blurry contrails of paint along with quick daubs of green that suggest fluttering leaves.

The artist’s muted palette perfectly embodies the temporal and atmospheric conditions she wishes to convey. Light greens pinpoint the season as early spring. Dove gray represents the recesses of the forest interior. Elegant inky blotches describe roots, branches, and tree trunks, tiny flecks of cerulean blue and stark white brighten the sky with intense, pure pigment. In the upper left quadrant, the absence of green implies that we are at the edge of a clearing or body of water where the land opens up and the view of the sky is more expansive.

McAlister’s palette of sunny pastels is derived from Bonnard. It’s a challenging color scheme to make serious, particularly for an artist who states, “I don’t want to be cute, I don’t want to be sweet. I’m most pleased when my paintings read as bold and expressive.” So, she tempers her palette’s prettiness with the introduction of duller shades, gesture, and layering. You can see this in the rectilinear zones of “Edge of the Forest.”

“Come to the Woods” has a curious power that seems to build with each repeated viewing. The initial impression is of a work that is delicate and fragile, thanks to its pale colors and softly undulating shapes. But, the complex arrangement of pink, blue, green, and yellow and the interplay between painted surface and line, create interesting visual relationships. With its tessellated forms and passages that cascade down the picture plane, the work is really a deconstructed landscape.

Four paintings—“Vert,” “From the Open Window,” “Lost in the Forest,” and “Lush”—are hung together on the wall. McAlister did this to create a bigger expanse of painted surface. But the quartet’s juxtaposition, with two representational works and two abstract ones, hits at the crux of McAlister’s oeuvre, which is really about painting in and of itself, not one specific style. You see in these works, the ease with which the artist switches gears and her incredible facility, no matter how she’s painting. The “what” she’s painting remains a constant, however.

“Landscape is where my heart is,” she says. “It’s what I want to talk about.” As the works in the show reveal, McAlister uses various inventive means to “talk” about it, but one thing is clear, she is using a decidedly contemporary language to do so. ☺

**“I don’t want to be cute, I don’t want to be sweet. I’m most pleased when my paintings read as bold and expressive.”** SUSAN MCALISTER