

Some of the area's long-time residents may remember Marcy Hermansader's work from its inclusion in the group exhibition Domestic Tales, presented at the University Gallery in 1984. It is with great pleasure that we now invite the artist for a return visit to the Gallery on the occasion of this one-person exhibition. Photographs Dreaming, on view from February 1 through March 14, includes 28 mixed-media works which have been selected from an on-going series that Hermansader began in 1993. At the spiritual core of these drawings, intricate in design and rich in meaning, are fragments of photographs, usually "real-photo postcards" from the early 20th century. During that time, photographs of friends and families or of favorite sites and pastimes would be made into postcard greetings much in the same way that some of us presently use family images as the basis of holiday cards. Hermansader began collecting this material in order to understand why she found some of it so moving. Eventually, intuitively, images within those images found a way into her artwork serving as a kind of kernel or, as Gaston Bachelard has described, "...the seed of a world, the seed of a universe imagined out of a poet's reverie."

Integrating images from other sources, such as books or postcards, with those inspired by her own experiences, feelings or memories is not new to Hermansader's manner of working. Very often in her past drawings, the artist would place fairly detailed representations of things, scenes or events, either imagined or copied, within settings which had the impalpable atmosphere of vaguely remembered dreams—settings with both the sensation of a dream as well as the sense (or non-sense) that propels the motion of its mutable forms and occurrences. The significant difference with this most recent body of work is that Hermansader is not copying the photographic image taken from the postcard into the self-contained world of her own creation. There is an opening, both literally and metaphorically, in the Photographs Dreaming series—literally in that Hermansader cuts away areas of the museum board she uses as a drawing surface to reveal the chosen section of the photograph which acts as her muse; metaphorically in that she allows qualitatively different notions of time to enter the work. There is the unique and specific moment of chronological time in which one knows the photograph had to be taken and there is, as well, the larger realm of memory to which that moment belongs. This reality reaches out to the viewer, includes the viewer, by virtue of the nostalgic familiarity that looking at old photographs brings; a reality which extends itself up to the present time by virtue of empathetic understanding of the significance of family roots, favorite places, fond recollections of trips and anniversaries and loved ones long gone. Hermansader, who feels "a profound affection and respect for these photographs," has these criss-crossing sensibilities ramble through the more absolute time and space of her drawn images, an effect which embraces the metaphysical notion that we are all dreaming each other.

The photographic portions of the works comprise a variety of subject matter: caves and rock formations, gardens and rural scenes, domestic interiors, people and animals in or around

water, among others. Hermansader's drawing radiates from the photographic images, some of which are immediately apparent while others are less discernible to the eye because of the artist's facile manner of integration. These drawn settings can range from the abstract, as in The Fall Within (1996) or Wading (1995), to the ambiguous, such as Sea (1996) or The Eye of the Cave (1993), to the nearly narrative quality of The Very Bottom (1994) or Leaving (1994). The artist will typically incorporate an element from the photograph—an overall shape or a specific detail—into her drawing that creates a subtle reciprocity between the graphic and photographic forms of depiction. Gently graduating shades of browns and yellows, of grays and blues are given form by Hermansader's alternating hazy and bold strokes and are enlivened by the coagulation of tightly rendered patterns, here representing grass, there a sign for the scaly covering of a seed pod, or is it a snake's skin? The drawings' surfaces are made all the more animated by the sometimes visible tiny tears or pin pricks into the paper, the addition of collage materials, and the artist's simple, but laborious method of delicately gouging certain areas of the paper giving it the simulated texture of a woodcut print. Anchoring the fluid vivacity apparent in Hermansader's mark-making are the photographs themselves, sepia or grisaille in tone, that serve as two-way mirrors between the past and present.

The combination of photographed subjects and imaginary settings and the play of echoing shapes and elements is amplified by the works' shifts in visual perspective. At times, the viewer may feel him/herself to be within an interior looking through or out of some undefined space, to have the power of flight in observing an ostensible aerial view, or to be situated in front of a scene located somewhere between the viewer and an implied horizon. Very often, a nimbus-like line of thick white, around a generally emphasized shape, offers the viewer a kind of non-intrusive visual organization for works which operate on sophisticated levels of intuition, meaning and design.

Marcy Hermansader was born in 1951 and has lived in Putney, Vermont since 1980. Her work has been given one-person exhibitions at the Williams College Museum, Williamstown (1991); the DeCordova Museum, Lincoln (1990); the University of the Arts, Philadelphia (1990); and The Morris Gallery, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia (1983) among other venues. She has participated in numerous group exhibitions including Body and Soul: Contemporary Art and Healing, an exhibition organized by the DeCordova Museum that traveled to the Samuel P. Harn Museum University of Florida, Gainesville (1994); Transformations at the Brattleboro Museum, Brattleboro (1991); Philadelphia Collects: Art Since 1940 at the Philadelphia Museum of Art (1986); and Poet-Artist Collaboration at the Robert Hull Fleming Museum, Burlington (1985). Hermansader has been the recipient of several fellowships and her work is held in both public and private collections throughout the United States. The artist has been represented by the Fleisher Ollman Gallery, Philadelphia since 1983.

The University Gallery, located on the lower level of the Fine Arts Center, is open to the public Tuesday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from 2 to 5 p.m. The Gallery is also open during evening performances held in the Concert Hall of the Fine Arts Center. For further information, please call the Gallery at (413) 545-3670. The Gallery is wheelchair accessible.