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Leave Space

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Leave Space

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Graduate Thesis

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Table of Contents

I. Artist Statement
II. Introduction
III. Exploration of Media
IV. Formal Qualities
V. Conceptual Basis
VI. Summary
VII. Epilogue
VIII. Work Cited
IX. Appendix
I. Artist Statement

Leaves segue into daydreams, which start with the observation of color, light, and transparent quality. Viewing commonplace objects on a daily basis, blindness overcomes, but the shapes of leaves, their colors and how light is seen through them is a captivating stronghold.

The mind is a spatial canvas; a container that holds knowledge, as a canvas holds a subject matter. Daydreaming begins and thoughts spill out from the perimeter of the mind into other areas that hold memories. The experience may be of a past recollection revitalized or new hopes for adventures wishing to be sought.

Painted leaves extending outside the canvas borders invite the viewer to become part of the scene. The choice to stay or follow a path of a personal dream space will provide a mystical starting point.
II. Introduction

I have been creating art since early grade school. My mother encouraged me to draw and paint from a young age and enrolled me into a paint class when I was ten years old. I had art classes all through my elementary and high school years.

In high school, my art teacher told me “artists that can’t make it selling their work will become art teachers”. In spite of that lack of encouragement, I entered Joliet Junior College in 1979 and received an Associates degree under the teaching of artists Kathleen Farrell and Joe Milosovich.

As a junior, I enrolled at Northern Illinois University, to further my artistic ability and also receive a degree in Art Education. At Northern Illinois University, it became apparent to me that there was a different attitude between Art Education majors and Fine Art majors. It was as if one was better than the other. I have always had the desire to be a practicing artist and the desire to teach art. My goal through the years has been to be an “artist teacher”. Contrary to how departments at colleges could very well be separated, my role as an Art educator has been an asset to the exploration of my own artwork. My experience and work as an artist has been important to my teaching profession as well. Both could co-exist without the judgments that had been previously presented to me.

I enrolled in Governors State for the first time in 1988, as a printmaker in the graduate program. I studied with Professor Mary Bookwalter. At the time my imagery was a combination of leaf and floral forms. After a year, I put my dream of a Masters in Art on hold to continue teaching and to have my family. While raising my
family, I continued to have a desire to keep creating art. I painted murals and belonged to several art leagues that enabled me to participate in art shows at the Beverly Art Center and Vogt Visual Art Center.

Throughout my teaching career, I have worked with many different media as I explored processes and techniques with my students. I’ve learned as an artist, it has been a natural path to follow such a varied media route. A requirement for my Art Education degree included taking coursework in each medium. I enjoyed working in many kinds of media, including paint, sculpture, and textiles. As mixed media became more of a passion, I remember saying to myself, “I need to focus on one art medium and get really proficient at that”. But I’ve learned that my love of exploring a variety of media has been an asset. I also discovered I could still have a focal point and theme while using the variety of media I love.

After raising my family, it was time to get back into the studio to further my personal exploration and education as an artist. In 2013, I was accepted into the Masters program at Governor’s State University and enrolled in painting class with Javier Chavira.

III. Exploration of Media

Standing in front of my first canvas, I knew I wanted to use one of the hundreds of leaf references that I had photographed over the years. I had already been exploring leaves as a subject matter, which I attributed to my fondness for French post-impressionist, Henri Rousseau, (1844-1910). I had always included the Naïve painter in my art curriculum for my students. I found his many shades of green compelling. His paintings always seemed to include an element of surprise whether it
was a hidden image or a complementary color among his leaves. During the past two years, of the Master of Arts program at Governors State, I have been informed by researching many artists. That study has encouraged an exploration of art media, has inspired my works’ formal qualities, and has helped me to understand my conceptual foundation.

I had the aspiration to paint leaves but was interested in showing them in a relief-like, textural manner. I began experimenting with a heat knife, cutting and melting sheets of polystyrene into leaf shapes, adding textural qualities to the surface. Professor Chavira always encouraged working large and the polystyrene installation foam was available in a large size, inexpensively. I created 30x40 wooden boards that would be the canvas support for the large foam leaves. The background of the wooden canvas board was painted in acrylic. The foam leaves were painted before adhering them to the board. I used acrylic medium to attach the foam, weighting each piece with heavy objects to insure they were adhered. After several critiques, the idea was proposed to me to create leaf shapes from the foam and display them singly without attaching them to a rectangular format. This idea appealed to me, as I was wanted to make the leaf forms the most significant part of the work without showing it in a typical landscape format. It was a challenge to build up the leaves into a sculptural piece rather than just a surface of textural relief. I began with a background of a flat piece of foam cut into the main leaf shape. Then I cut smaller foam shapes to build up the form in a layered manner. Each shape was cut smaller and concentrically adjusting the transition through the heat of the knife.
Once again, after inspiring critiques, I was encouraged to continue my leaf imagery but perhaps use a medium, other than the foam, a medium that would be more leaf-like in character. Referring back to Henri Rousseau, I was aware that Rousseau’s “flat, seemingly childish style gave him many critics”, (Henri Julien Rousseau Biography). The foam was very chunky and even though I attempted to form rounded edges, the foam still appeared angular and flat. I wanted my work to show depth and a sense of space.

This is where the exploration of several media came into the picture. I enrolled in Professor Mike Hart’s Sculpture class. I experimented with shaping fabric and canvas pieces using a variety of fabric stiffeners. A fabric stiffener, named Aqua Form by Zeller, was successful for shaping the canvas, yet once the surface was wetted during the painting process, it would lose the desired form. Once the forms dried, they also were sensitive to anything coming in contact that could misshape them.

I also made leaves from wood, sawing shapes, layering and laminating them to build up the surface to a three dimensional quality. This proved to very labor intensive and achieved the same chunky, heavy look of the foam leaves.

Papermaking was explored extensively. I created several plaster leaf casts from clay that I had sculpted. The plaster casts were lined with paper pulp, dried and removed from the cast. The results were inconsistent based on the layers of paper and pulp quality and once again would lose their shape when paint wetted the surface. These were also difficult to paint in detail, as they were very porous. I also created paper casts from rubber molds that I made from children’s rubber playground balls. I
used some of the paper casted leaves in my painting with the styrene. It seemed that 
the canvas was going to be the best choice for getting the leaf like thinness and 
quality that I desired. I was ready to deal with fact that it would have to be protected 
from being misshaped.

Then a new inspiration came to light! Jeff Stevenson, professor and gallery 
director, curated a show titled, *Ways of Making: Installation Art*, which featured the 
exquisite wire mesh sculptures by Dana Major. She is an artist who uses baling wire, 
aluminum wire, and paper pulp to create organic, site-specific installations. I resolved 
that if she could form the wire into any site-specific location, then why couldn’t I use 
wire mesh to create a leaf form? I would be able to have control over the shaping 
with out being frustrated by a medium that kept getting reconstituted with the 
saturation of paint and water. I also liked the quality of the paper on the wire that 
gave it a unique texture. After acquiring a roll of metal window screen, I cut some 
leaf shapes and added a thin layer of pulp. The result was a little lumpy and hard to 
control. I decide to try a Thai unyru paper that Blick sells. I had used this paper in a 
previous collage. This paper is very thin and sheer and lends itself well to the 
transparent quality of a leaf. It also has interesting fibers that create a subtle texture 
that I enjoy. I adhered the paper to a wire leaf shape using acrylic medium and let it 
dry. The paper is also available in many colors, which I saw as a benefit that could be 
used my base for painting. Finally, I achieved the results I wanted; a thin leaf-like 
quality that could be manipulated and would stay in place during and after the 
painting process. To help with time constraints, I covered sheets of wire mesh with 
whole sheets of the Thai unyru paper. When the leaf shapes are more detailed,
sometimes it’s more beneficial to cut the wire into the shape first and then cover it with the paper.

_Tumultuous Meditation_ (Figure 1), and _Pink Lady_ (Figure 2), were my first paintings exploring the wire mesh. “How much bending and folding can the wire handle?” and “Will I be able to achieve the paint quality I want to achieve on the Thai paper and mesh screen?” were just two of the questions I asked myself.

_Tumultuous Meditation_ was an exploration of bringing three mediums together; the handmade papers I created from paper pulp, burlap, and the wire mesh. _Pink Lady_ was an exploration the mechanics of how much folding and bending I could achieve with the wire. The leaves in this composition had a lot more detailed folding and rolling. I connected separate flat shapes together, rolled them to create a 3 dimensional, sculptural leaf. This piece was also an exploration of using a pink unyru paper. Initially, when I captured the photo of this leaf, it was the color that caught my eye. The beautiful pink colors blended so appealingly with the green compliment. I layered the backside of the wire shapes with the pink paper. As soon I painted the front, the pink in the back appeared to illuminate through the mesh shape, giving a subtle yet striking effect. I ended up toning down the pink a bit to bring about a more delicate effect to the leaves.

Once more, in critique, it came up to continue making single leaves that could be displayed on their own or in an installation piece. This is how _On the Journey_ (Figure 3), was born. It is an exploration of separate leaves I have come across in my travels. The leaves can stand on their own in small groupings or be shown together as a very large installation.
The summer of 2013, I was afforded the opportunity to be a graduate assistant to Jeff Stevenson, in the GSU gallery. Spending time in the gallery, I realized that with such an intriguing window space, I wanted to create a leaf form that could withstand the outside elements. After talking with sculpture Professor Hart, I decided on creating concrete casts of some leaves in my yard. I created an armature for the leaf from a mound of sand. On top of the sand I lay several sheets of plastic wrap. The actual leaf would be placed upside down on top of the plastic. I chose to take the impression of the backside of the leaf, as the backside has more detail of the veins. After mixing the concrete, I would spread it over the back of the leaf, being cautious to not let the concrete run past the edges of the leaf shape. Several attempts were tried. If the concrete was too runny, it spilled over the leaf’s edge, and I would lose the interesting shapes. I also explored how thin I could spread the concrete in order for it not to appear too bulky. When dried the concrete mass was turned over and the leaf was removed. The leaves are painted in acrylic and sprayed with an ultra-violet spray, which will hopefully help them withstand the outside elements.

At the time of my graduate assistantship and sculpture class, I was also taking Printmaking with Professor Gretchen Jankowski. Having recently visited a popular botanical garden in California, I was given some new sources of inspiration. At the garden we viewed several of the same leaf types I had seen at other gardens. As we were walking, I saw something glowing from a distance. It was a grouping of several banana leaves that appeared to be lit from behind under a huge canopy of tropical leaves. This scene was so inviting. As I walked and drew closer it became more enticing to see the illumination of these leaves. It was such an experience to see
something so large, delicate, transparently glowing among the gargantuan awning of dark leaves. I knew it was a concept I wanted to convey in my work.

From my previous printmaking experience, I knew that the print process would lend itself well to the vastness of my concept. I proceeded to create a linoleum cut print of a monstera leaf, ferns, and bamboo that I printed on approximately 75 pieces of 18x24 fabric. I also created a silkscreen of various fern shapes to provide some variety. The exploration of printing on various fabric textures from cotton, to burlap, to velvet proved to be an exciting beginning to communicate the enlightening experience I had in the botanical garden. The question now was how was I going to execute the assembling of the printed fabric to convey the huge canopy I was trying to express. Professor Jankowski informed me that I would need to learn how to sew! She said that in order for this to be a respected piece of art, gluing the fabric would not be an option. She proceeded to teach me the mechanics of sewing. I purchased a machine to use at home to allow me flexibility to work on the piece when I was not in the studio. The process of creating this vast piece has been a two-year endeavor of shredding fabric, piecing and layering the prints to create a multi-layered fabric installation.

When Professor Chavira saw my textile piece, he suggested looking at the work of the pioneer of feminist art, Miriam Schapiro, (1923). Schapiro is credited for bringing sewing that was typically considered woman’s work, into an art form. Schapiro coined the term to describe her work as “femmage” to be a combination of collage, use of printed materials, and applique. I found that to be an interesting
connection to what Professor Jankowski said about how sewing would help to make my piece more respected.

Miriam Schapiro’s Definition of "Femmage:"

“1. It is work by a woman. 2. The activities of saving and collecting are important ingredients. 3. Scraps are essential to the process and are recycled in the work. 4. The theme has a woman-life context. 5. The work has elements of covert imagery. 6. The theme of the work addresses itself to an audience of intimates. 7. It celebrates a private or public event. 8. A diarist's point of view is reflected in the work. 9. There is drawing and/or handwriting sewn in the work. 10. It contains silhouetted images, which are fixed on material. 11. Recognizable images appear in narrative sequence. 12. Abstract forms create a pattern. 13. The work contains photographs or other printed matter. 14. The work has a functional as well as an aesthetic life” (Feminist Art Base: Miriam Schapiro).

My fabric installation, “The” Awakening (Figure 4), actually fits most of these stipulations. Initially, the fabric used for the piece was purchased. As I was going through closets for Goodwill one day, I realized that some of the fabric colors I wanted in the piece were showing up in the bag. After that revelation, I began only using recycled material and scraps. The work has “covert imagery” as well as abstracted, patterned images. The only one that it specifically doesn’t align with is that it was not created to be functional.

All the while, as this was being worked on, I began experimenting with paper, screen and canvas leaves to determine what could be used for the transparent leaf. I struggled with the use of the paper and canvas as I wasn’t sure what could be the base
for them coming from the ground. I had an epiphany one day as Jeff Stevenson viewed the work, suggesting the sheer leaves could actually hang from the ceiling in another layer of the installation, instead of coming from the ground. That also helped me to decide the transparent leaves could be made from sheer fabric. I tested dyeing a sheer rayon fabric with water-downed acrylic. The fabric accepted the paint well. I brushed on an acrylic sealer to help combat the fraying of the edges. I also used the sealer to see if I could get rolls and folds in the fabric where I wanted to show the leaf was bending. After applying the sealer, I molded the sealed fabric area around a can to see if it would retain its shape. The completed installation will hang from cables in three layers; using fish line to support the sheer leaves among the canopy of fabric.

My experience exploring different media has proved to be beneficial. It has not only been part of my technical instruction but also has fueled my drive during my graduate experience to keep exploring until I found materials that I could feel comfortable with to represent my leaves.

IV. Formal Qualities

The media I used led the way to express the formal qualities shown in my work. The formal qualities that seemed important to me as I was composing my art were all qualities that I also think of as I view a leaf. The texture, color, and light are all very significant. The proportion and mood that is conveyed to me by the arrangement of space was also influential in my work.

Texture is a very important quality that is evident in this body of work. When I initially worked with the polystyrene, it was the textural qualities that appealed to
The German painter/printmaker Albrecht Durer, (1471-1528), introduced botanical art as a worthy subject matter during the High Renaissance. “Durer’s curiosity about the world was boundless”. His drawings “speak to the artists keen interest in nature and reveal how closely he observed even its minutest detail” (Doyle). His keen eye for detail led to intricate textural work whether he was working with watercolor or printmaking. I wanted the evidence of texture to be prominent in my pieces. The linoleum cut, *Monterous, Bamboo, and Fern* (Figure 5), exhibits the use of texture that also is an important element that is repeated in “*The* Awakening.

The use of the three different mediums (handmade paper, burlap, and wire) in *Tumultuous Meditation* gives a textural variety but is unified by the pattern of each. The screen and the burlap are a similar texture with a small difference in scale to provide unity between the two.

The texture of a magnolia leaf during the transformation from a new leaf to a falling leaf can be so varied. *The Significance of the Threes* (Figure 6), was an exploration of simplifying the materials to show texture and to allow more transparency in the forms. After I cut the leaf shapes, I then cut away at the positive space of the wire mesh to achieve a stem, vein-like texture. I then adhered the paper to the wire mesh. Upon drying I was able to increase the textural quality by folding the leaf veins to give it more texture and a three dimensional quality.

In general, as time has gone on, I’ve tried to let more of the texture of the paper show through either by simplifying the painting or only adhering the paper to one side of the mesh.
Frequently, when we discussed depth in my work, Professor Chavira would remind me of the concept of cool colors receding, and the warm colors coming forward. When Professor Stevenson saw my concrete forms unpainted, he thought it would be interesting to add a different aspect of color to the predictable green. The leaves will be displayed inside and outside the gallery window. After much consideration, I decided to add cool turquoise blues and greens to the outside leaves to separate them from the yellow, oranges and reds inside the gallery space. Also, I feel the use of the orange in the inside gallery area, unifies the fabric installation that has an accent of orange hues in it.

In creating *Pink Lady*, it was the color of the leaves that inspired me. The color pink provides an element of surprise, as I had not used pink in my work up until this time. Pink is a complement to the many greens I use so it provides a naturally interesting, varied element to the body of work.

The attempt at showing light in my work, without literally showing the sun has been an exciting journey. At first I was very literal in where I put the sun in my picture by adding tints and shades of yellow in a corner space of the composition. During one of my critiques, I heard Professor Chavira say that the “sun” does not need to be presented in this way order to show the presence of light. I found this ironic, as I often tell my own elementary art students that they need not show the sun (complete with circle and lines for rays) in the corner of their work to let it be known that it’s a sunny day.

I looked at Johannes Vermeer’s, (1632-1675), use of light in his work for inspiration. Critics and historians believed that the Dutch Baroque artist used a
camera obscura to help to see an enhancement of light and shadow. In, *Let Them Fall Away* (Figure 7), I began to use a more exaggerated use of highlight and shadow. I also looked at Caravaggio’s work as he used the technique of Chiaroscuro that is the use of strong lights and darks within the work. To achieve this I laid in the darks and the highlights with acrylic. Professor Chavira suggested I use an oil glaze of chromium oxide green and cobalt blue deep. Adding this to the top of the acrylic brought more depth to the color, and strength to the darks to increase the highlight.

American painter, Martin Johnson Heade, (1819-1904), is another inspiring artist who not only painted nature, but he showed an intriguing use of light in his work to contribute to his realist style. The interaction between his subject matter and his backgrounds were important to his art style, labeled Luminism. “While an Impressionist landscape may be said to surround and engulf the viewer with its depiction of sunlight, a luminist landscape typically contains a much deeper perspective, along with objects captured in detail in crystal clear light - like a frozen moment when time stops”, (Collins). Through the use of light, I am attempting to capture a moment in time. *Graced with a Spark* (Figure 8), conveys a precise moment as the sunlight would be different a second later. I wasn’t sure how to execute the look of the glow you see from the sun’s rays. At the suggestion of professor Chavira, I brought all the leaves to their full values of light and dark and used a glaze of Liquin and zinc white oil paint. I also brought in a bit of blue to the glaze.

The proportion of the size of the leaves In *They Keeping Showing Up* (Figure 9), plays an important role. I intended to show the painting, which displays 3 large...
leaves on the canvas, along with three of same size leaves occupying the wall and the floor space. After showing that I had planned to show the same sized leaves displayed off the canvas, I was reminded that a change in the proportion of the original leaves could be a very effective tool in the success of this piece. The principle of proportion enhanced the conceptual aspect of this piece. I decided to recreate the 3-dimensional leaves much larger than the leaves on the canvas. I will discuss the importance of the exaggerated proportion concept more in the conceptual part of this thesis.

It has been a frequent a suggestion to leave more space within my work to let the piece “breathe” a bit. Leave Space to Breathe (Figure 10), was created in response to purposely trying to not fill the whole canvas and yet the vine in it has a different idea.

The whole concept of space is relevant to my work. Since I began my graduate work, I have been searching for ways to create 3-dimensional leaf shapes that could enter in to the space surrounding a 2-dimensional painting. I’ve tried to achieve this combination of 2 and 3 dimensional spaces to enhance the viewer’s experience. I have extended my work outside of the traditional border of the two dimensional surface. Frank Stella, (1936), the American Minimalist painter, was known for “moving painting into the third dimension through the incorporation of other, non-painterly elements onto the canvas” (Gershman). Stella continues to be an inspiration to me, creating artwork that breaks the typical rectangular boundary of the traditional canvas.
It has been my intention to not only fill the walls of a gallery with my work but also bring an intimacy to the ceiling and floor space as well by extending the art forms from the canvas. *The Shelter* (Figure 11), is also one of the ways I have attempted to utilize a corner space to display a 3-dimensional tree sculpture. "The" *Awakening* will create a floor to ceiling spatial environment. Additionally, some of the pieces have canvas leaf shapes that will create a transition between the wall and the floor space. The concrete leaves will also utilize floor space.

V. Conceptual Basis

The element of space overlaps into the conceptual basis of my work. I read the book, *The Poetics of Space*, by French philosopher, Gaston Bachelard, (1884-1962). Up until this time, I was giving each of my works a significant space to exist, but this book helped me to solidify some of my ideas about space and memory. In the book, Bachelard explores how our memories can be linked to space, specifically the space we grew up in as children. He uses parts of the house as a metaphor for our minds that store and create our memories. The various parts of the house spaces hold key ideas as to how we daydreamed and formed our memories. He looks at a variety of poets who reflect on the house as a visual to help us daydream or conjures up a memory. This book had an enormous impact on me, as I feel my artwork was first conceived as a daydream in my house as a child. As I read the book, I began to connect my work with the space of my childhood home.

I initially thought my imagery originated in my second childhood home, looking out the window of my room on the second floor. I would look out the window at the tree branches and see shapes of objects in the leaves and daydream
about everything from hopes, far off places I had never seen, and future desires. The window of the house served as the container or space in which the real images (the leaves) were framed. As my daydreaming lingered past the boundary of the window, the daydream expanded and the leaves became imaginary objects or points of no return until an outside force (Mom calling up to me, my sister entering room) brought me back to reality. This is why the idea of breaking the perimeter of the canvas has been of importance to me. By extending the leaves beyond the traditional canvas border, I am inviting the viewer to go beyond the rectangular-bordered surface. Even when I have displayed individual leaves not attached to a rectangular frame, I still see the wall and floor borders as a containment of space. Initially the viewer sees a boundary but then as the leaf breaks the border it invites them to go past the framing.

In trying to express this concept, I looked to assemblage artist Robert Rauschenberg, (1925-2008). He used everyday objects to create his artwork, labeled “Combines”; using random objects picked up on the streets in New York City, to visually express the world around him. He often used items that we see or use in everyday in life but often tend to overlook. Like Rauschenberg, I am using a subject matter, a common leaf form, which, is often overlooked once initially visually admired. I think as busy people we can tend to ignore and become immune to the common beauty that surrounds us. My purpose of creating has not been to simulate nature, but to recreate a feeling or idea that nature has given me.

As my work progressed over the last year and a half, I began asking myself why I had been so drawn to tropical leaves. I started to remember the house I was born in. I began to recall my dreams as a child where I would have a nightmare and
float into my parents’ room. Upon entering the room, I remember seeing many tropical leaves on the bed covering and the walls. After having a few of these recollections, I began to ask family members, including my mom, if she remembered this particular motif on the fabric. I recall the fabric being everywhere including the bedroom, living room area, etc. One day while looking through some old photos, I came across a picture of four little girls sitting on a couch that was flocked with these tropical patterns. I was one of the little girls, the third of four sisters. I searched online for weeks to find a remnant of this vintage fabric. *I Told You So* (Figure 12), a found remnant of this fabric will serve as a reference to show my original inspiration.

Many of my photo references were inspirations showing transparent, glowing leaves among the darkness. Bachelard also discusses light sources waiting our arrival home as a welcoming metaphor. The author writes, “by means of the light…the house sees, keeps vigil,” (Bachelard). *The First Awakening* (Figure 13), and “The” *Awakening* symbolize hope and seeing the light among the darkness. That light conquers all and all will be good. A light source is an important feature in my artwork and as my childhood bedroom window faced east; most of my paintings have a light source from the right.

I have used leaves as a metaphor for many concepts as I have been on this artistic journey. *The Shelter* offers a corner of safety and protection. It gives significance to the space, as sheltering branch of leaves furnishes a private retreat. The hovering branches provide a refuge, a place where one can dream of solitude. This piece is representational of the tree outside the room of my childhood home.
The painting, *Let Them Fall Away*, displayed next to the tree branch carries out the idea of the natural process of the seasons as a metaphor for life. As I have been on this life path, I’ve had traits come up that have been less than desirable. Busyness and perfectionism are all attempts for me to control situations when I get overwhelmed. In this piece I tell myself just to let these things “fall away”, and let life take its course.

Similarly, the metamorphic symbolism, referring to the size of the leaves in *They Keep Showing Up* (Figure 14), deals with not only one’s shortcomings, but also with issues that keep repeating themselves until lessons are learned. The leaves sizes have been enlarged to symbolize how sometimes defects have to get bigger to get our attention.

Two of my pieces of work are a type of historical record. *The Non-Ephemeral Arrangement* (Figure 15), was partially inspired by the environmental works of Andy Goldsworthy, (1956). He creates amazing sculptural arrangements using elements of nature, recording his ephemeral sculptures photographically as he knows they will slip away with the water, wind, or erosion. My concrete sculptures are casts of the leaves that have long since wilted away when summer passed. I was originally motivated by a medium that could withstand the outdoor elements. Goldsworthy’s documentary *Rivers and Tides* inspired me to arrange the leaves around the existing structures inside and outside the gallery. Using the concrete as a medium helps represent the things that do withstand time. *Graced With a Spark* exhibits the magnolia tree that has long replaced the original tree outside my window. This
painting records the life of a new tree, a specific moment in time, and displays the last few leaves before they fall to winter’s dark harshness.

The magnolia leaf was explored again in *The Significance of the Threes*. My influence for this piece occurred as I gathered magnolia leaves on a walking path when visiting a family member. The leaves symbolize physical, spiritual, and emotional growth.

Lastly, the wall installation, *The Journey*, displays the many leaves that I have recorded during places traveled. The installation represents the familiar, as the sea grape leaves from the beach we sojourn to each year. The installation also represents the new, the pink asymmetrical leaf I discovered in Monet’s garden at Giverny.

VI. Summary

As I reflect on the artworks created for *Leave Space*, I realize it truly has been a fulfilled life’s dream to be able to nurture the ideas and concepts that have been with me throughout my whole life. To be given the opportunities to express myself, have that sustained and realized, is truly beyond the dream that began by looking outside a window.

VII. Epilogue

I have been considering the question, “what direction do you see yourself going in with the completion of your masters?” First and foremost, I do not look at attaining the degree an end all, but actually a beginning. Because the concepts of space, breath and minimizing emerged frequently in my work, I would like to explore those themes further.
I would like to investigate another concept that came up during my first year as a returning student. This positive experience was very gratifying and impressive upon me. Being someone who likes her comfort zone and thrives on repetition, it was also a little overwhelming. During my graduate assistantship, which also entailed taking six credit hours, I found myself stretched and challenged. Everything was new. At this point my experimenting had really taken off and I was unsure of where the path was going to lead. In fact, it was my literal path that began to inspire me. I noticed that even among the newness of my experiences, the repetition of path was significant to me. It started with realizing that the roads I traveled from my workplace to Governors State University was a path I had taken on my school bus as a child. I began to notice that along my walks into the building each day the parking lot had interesting shaped metal scraps on the ground. During my morning or evening walks, I would see objects along the walk path. I decided to start collecting the found objects. In order to “qualify” picking it up, I purposely did not pick up the object the first time it was seen. If I saw it a subsequently I could pick it up. At that point, I felt the found object was truly part of my path. Inspired by working with so many new professors at once, I felt I was getting a new word or phrase to contemplate each day. Whether, in the gallery hearing, “cluster not clutter” or in the print studio hearing “remember the goals you have for yourself”, it seemed I was receiving phrases that had a larger outside meaning. I think it would be challenging to include the found objects into my leaf imagery. The phrases I also gathered along the way would also be a challenge to include within the imagery. The text could
become part of a subtle mixed media layer or become an allegory or title for the art being represented by the phrase.

In any case, I look at the completion of this program to be an exciting new beginning.


"Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art: Feminist Art Base: Miriam Schapiro."

*Brooklynmuseum*. Creative Commons License. Web. 15 Feb. 2015.


Appendix

Figure 1.
Figure 2.

Pink_Lady.jpg
Figure 3.

On_the_Journey.jpg
Figure 4.

“The”_Awakening.jpg
Figure 5.

Monsterous_Bamboo_and_Fern.jpg
Figure 6.
Figure 7.

Let_Them_Fall_Away.jpg
Figure 8.

Graced_With_a_Spark.jpg
Figure 9.

They_Keep_Showing_Up.jpg
Figure 10.

Leave_Space_To_Breathe.jpg
Figure 11.

The_Shelter.jpg
Figure 12.

![I_Told_You _So.jpg](attachment://I_Told_You _So.jpg)
Figure 13.

The_First_Awakening.jpg
Figure 14.
Figure 15.

The_Non_Ephemeral_Arrangement.jpg