

fleeting moments:

AN INTERVIEW WITH

SARA GARDEN ARMSTRONG

CB: Your work spans many forms and media - works on paper, artist books, sculpture and installation - what themes and narratives are prevalent throughout your work?

SA: The work focuses on the systems that do not remain fixed in time, but are continually changing - and exploring our changing relationship to our physical selves and our environment. Inspired by the human body's sensuality and its capacity to regenerate, the work addresses human and man-made systems such as life support systems (respiratory, nervous and circulatory systems); the familiar and the alien; the intersection of opposites; and the dynamics of duality. These organic systems, always in flux, are the life around us - from the micro to the macro.

CB: In your artist's books you often use translucent and luminous materials that create layered interplay between pages. How does this transparency and stacking of imagery affect your narrative?

Shadown Presences, 2010, Archival pigment prints on Asuka and Aya Japanese papers and Chartham Translucent Vellum; Cover image with pastel and layered gel medium, 8 x 10 inches



SA: We view life through layers – it is always multi-dimensional and multi-directional. These views change in time – what we see in the morning may be very different from what we experience in the afternoon. The materials used and the layering of these materials reflect my desire to capture this continual change. By layering in my artist books, I am creating changes that can occur naturally with the turning of the pages.

CB: Do your layering techniques advocate for your books as objects as well as traditionally bound narratives? Does working in sculpture and installation influence your artist's books?

SA: I think of my books as artworks - objects that involve layers. The turning of the page is important whether from the front to back, or from any entrance point in the book, in an exploration of the layered narrative images. The visual and tactile experience is my focus, to stimulate memory, recollections, and reactions for the viewer, as the layered images transform in the hands.

In my sculpture and installation work I am very involved with the interplay of natural change that occurs during the work process. I document the process, taking photographs that become source material for artist's books, other artwork and for exploring the work. In my sculptures I am also investigating new materials and new methods with older used materials. These material processes influence my work with artist's books. An example of this is the artwork I am presently working on for my current atrium commission. It has grown out of spraying sculptural abaca forms that cover the light movement and I am building landscape sheets by layering multiple translucent sheets of abaca fibers onto a form.

CB: What is your interest in impermanence, fleeting and ephemeral moments, and how does working with shadows address associated impulses?



Untitled Abaca, 2013, Layered Abaca paper with inkjet prints, 23.5 x 44 inches



Untitled, 2013, Abaca paper with pigment, 17 x 23 inches

SA: Ephemeral moments reflect life to me – always changing and never repeating. Shadows are constantly changing and are nature’s fleeting moments. Layering and contrasting shadows references these life qualities. Layered shadows also express a quality of memories - filtered over time, spare reminders of history recalled.

In the Airplayer series, I was playing with cast shadows and painted shadows – the play between what is real and what is not. At other times I was working with shadows as they arrive, transition and dissolve.

In the Littorial series, I was concerned with the marks left by the water on the sand – the shadows of the water’s edge. The marks were photographed and projected onto the paper suggesting the landscape as an always changing sequence of moments. The erasures in the drawings became the movement, and the taking away of the marks - the flux of the water.

CB: When photographing shadows, you are once again working in layers, exposing the interplay between soft shadow and the texture of its grounding surface. How does this speak to the duality of body and space evident in your work?

SA: When photographing shadows the edges - the ephemeral moments - contrast a desire to hold onto the moment, which must become something else in

order to keep it. These shadows are what we see from the absence of light. There is a play between capturing this impermanence of the cast shadow and the object referencing our lives of layered contradictions.

I use photography to create an archive of my work which often functions as source material for future work – layering history, experiences, and moments in time.

CB: What are you currently working on?

SA: My artist’s project (on the following pages) involves layers of images from the atrium commission. The layered images are from the working process on my commission for the Multiple Sclerosis Society, Alabama-Mississippi Chapter for the atrium space in the Neurology building on the University of Alabama in Birmingham Medical campus.

The sculpture focuses on the nerve impulse movement through the neuron and at times the blockage of this impulse. The sculpture becomes an abstraction of these activities. I have taken images of the process and layered the forms for the artist page project, referring to the complex connections of our interiors to our exteriors. An additional layer of shadow forms is embedded in layers of abaca paper - again referencing the exterior space.

Overleaf: Sara Armstrong, *micro vision .4*, 2013

