HELEN B LANDGARTEN

In 1964 Helen B. Landgarten began to develop a therapeutic and psychologically oriented approach to teaching art. Now, more than 50 years later, Helen’s work has evolved into one of the premier art therapy programs in the country. Loyola Marymount University’s Marital and Family Therapy Department, in honor of Helen’s legacy and our commitment to the centrality of the art, is excited to re-imagine the department suite as a dynamic gallery space to showcase our graduates, as well as honor the founders and shapers of our program. This year we would like to specifically acknowledge the creator of clinical art therapy, Helen B. Landgarten, and former department chair, Maxine Boroswky Junge.
GUEST JURY

JACKIE CARLSON
ANA RUTH YELA CASTILLO
MARTHA COWLEY
DANIELA MONTAÑEZ
I hate the kind of art that is non-intrusive, adding to the all-too-current-today impersonal form of interior decoration. It should “look like a hotel” is the motto. I hate art that remains silently on the wall to add to the milieu but doesn’t demand attention of the viewer. Since high school when I discovered Goya, Daumier and Ben Shahn, artists of social change, I have recognized that the mandate and power of art is to be disturbing, upsetting of the status quo and transformative. I consider art too important to be ignored.

My own painting and drawing is intended to be evocative, expressive and intrusive. I have no interest in painting “pretty pictures” nor in technique per se. In Ben Shahn’s words, I consider form is the shape of content. When I practiced clinical art psychotherapy, my personal artwork was often landscapes which enabled me to escape from the detritus of the lives I encountered. These days, my work is about people and their troubles—often mass murderers. It may be ambiguous at times and multi-interpretable but I want it to have an intense visual meaning.

Woman on a String represents the changing, but ever-present, difficulties and discrimination of women in our world. Although many pride themselves on positive changes over the years, the fact remains that women’s oppression remains a persistent dynamic in every part of life, including after all these years, pay inequity. I am reminded of the time some years ago as I went about applying to graduate school. The faculty member I talked to about entering the program said “We don’t take any white, middle aged, middle-class Jewish women.
Over many decades, I have been fascinated with the confluence and mysteries of mental disturbance, violence and human personality. I am interested in evil in the world and often, the banality of evil. When I worked as an art psychotherapist, I struggled to help my patients and clients discover and overcome their violent proclivities. For the last 13 years, living on Whidbey Island, WA, I have primarily made paintings and drawings of mass murderers as guns have proliferated, violence and death increased, the damaged mental health system crumble into nothing, and the world become increasingly unsafe. The horrible example is that Mass murderers often had well documented and extensive mental health histories which were ignored, denied, or unhelped by the system, until they erupted.
In the continuing practice of deepening and transcending this carnal experience, meditation has been a great tool to get there. With the practice of meditation I get to calm the mind and tame the thoughts that are constantly chattering away. And what it has also shown me, among other things, is we are all connected all the time. Science has proven this through the Higgs Boson Particle (or God particle). Let that sink in - everything is touching everything else all the time and everything has existed forever.

In my experience, meditation pulls back the veil on the material world and lets you see what is really happening behind the scenes (sort of like the Matrix movie but not as dystopian).

This meditation series helps me explore more of who I am, connecting to the basic elements of me. How that translates into understanding, I don’t know, but it gives me a chance to connect with you, who is looking.

Mediations Heroes: Air, Fire, Earth, Water
Digital, 19”x27”
My current art making practice is centered in the exploration of contemplative landscapes which evoke a sense of the ethereal. Capturing images during moonlight walks with time-lapse photography allows me to explore the idea of moments in time and the meaning behind these images. Making art while on retreat at a Monastery in Valyermo has been a part of my art practice for the last four years. My current identity as a contemplative artist creating a community art space is grounded in the practice of my art making as a spiritual journey. A garden where I go to contemplate life and my calling as an artist has been significant in my journey. The beauty of nature has a mysterious quality at night, much as life is a mysterious wonder. Similarly pulling landscapes out of the natural wood grain using watercolor in experimental ways has given rise to art that speaks with the wonder of the soul. As an artist I am most interested in giving form to an internal sense of the joy and mystery of nature and capturing this in ways that hopefully inspire the viewer to dream, hope, and see the wonder around them.

Top: Moonlight Series: Being, 2012
Bottom: Moonlight Series: Path, 2013
Unaltered digital photography, 8" x 12"
TARA JOSEPH

The creative freedom available, from meditative presence to wild spontaneity, provides an infinite wellspring of possibilities in my art process. Visual arts have been the most liberating channel by which I have been able to explore my personal identity. I prefer to make decisions as I create, rather than planning for a specific outcome. My artwork combines abstraction, realism, and heart to tell a story. I hope to communicate my emotional journey and/or catharsis to the viewer.

Recently, I (a first generation Indian American) attended a meditation group that recommended that I look at a picture of their guru (a Caucasian male) while I meditate. Although this is common practice, I found the idea of looking outside to a guru to enhance my personal path in meditation rather bizarre. I thought of all of the religious and media images that bombarded me as I was growing up in catholic school and in America. The images were the visual opposite of me. I pondered about how often I have looked outside for love that ultimately needed to come from within.

In rebellion, I shamelessly decided to idealize myself in a painting of the Tara Goddess. Tara is a Hindu mythological goddess and Buddhist meditational deity. She represents compassion and action, which speaks to my vocation as an art therapist. I have represented my own vision of the Tara Goddess with both traditional and original symbols. The purpose of this painting is both narcissistic retaliation and spiritual empowerment, as a woman and as a citizen of the world.

Tara Goddess, 2015
Media: Oil Paint
30” x 40”
Creating art allows me to teach, to heal and to process my own experiences. *Three of Me* is an exploration and clarification of my identity as a professional. This piece of art is a reminder to myself that my life works best when I balance the artist, teacher and therapist. It also serves as a validation to myself and others that we don’t have to pick one focus to be successful. *Three of Me* was created at the request of a former art therapy student as she gathered information for her masters thesis focusing on what the life of an art therapist/artist may look like after graduation.
ELIZA PFISTER

Making art throughout my workday, even if it's just a scribble, helps me to manage the challenges of my art therapy job that is full of stress, anxiety, and constant demands. It helps me to slow down, to reconnect and to focus. The structure of this web is created by pieces that I made during my work day, to help me process a particularly difficult session, or situation or to capture a feeling, or to take a moment to feel more grounded and to make visible where I was in the moment. I accumulated a pile of pieces over the months at my job, which I then wanted to process. This web is made from the backgrounds of these different sketches and images. The paper that literally held the parts of my process were cut up and used to create a new larger structure. The web is something strong and delicate that can hold and has space to let things go. The web honors the structure within myself that I am slowly building, a structure that enables me to hold as well as to let go.

The process of creating the web was meaningful, because it turned out that what was important for me to develop was the parts that provided structure for all the little pieces. The actual pieces became like a residue that I could then let go of. My identity as an art therapist is tied to my art and is illuminated by my art. This piece is part of a series that honors the importance of processing, using what I need and letting go of what no longer serves.

Digestion: A Web, 2015
Mixed Media: paper, masking tape
44” diameter circle
This piece is a representation of how I “digest” my work as an art therapist, with all of its challenges and stresses. Each morning at work I make a mark on a card and add the date and a word to describe how I am feeling that day. Each week is represent by a new card that holds the marks from that week. These cards have helped me hold the difficulty of this work, the feelings of darkness and shadow. I wanted to find a way to process these pieces, to see what was there in the details, to learn from it, and to nurture where I felt potential to grow as well as to let go of what no longer serves me. I created a snake as the image to hold all my weekly drawings. I am interested in the snake’s digestion process, how it slowly digests its food whole as it moves through its body. Making this snake to hold these pieces and to hold the difficulty helps me to feel less overwhelmed by my work.

In this process I am able to contain what’s there and to let go of what I don’t need. Just like the snake cannot keep ingesting infinitely, it needs time to digest, I too need to balance what I am taking in with providing time to process all that’s there. My art helps me visualize this process and helps me continue to develop my identity as an art therapist.

Details from: Digestion: A Snake, 2015
Mixed Media: paper, colored pencil, markers, tape and clay
8 1/2” x 180 1/2”
When emotionally upset I turn to my standard stress reducer – art work. My husband, Don, had a sudden cardiac arrest on June 10, 2013. I found him and gave him CPR. Subsequently he spent three weeks in the hospital having a quadruple heart bypass, rehab for balance and gait, antibiotics for pneumonia, and blood clots in his legs and lungs. My robust husband who was never sick in the 18 years I'd known him (at that time) went from perfect health, exercising everyday, to enduring several life threatening medical procedures. I was cast in the role of care-giver for many months. My PTSD symptoms reached a point where I sought treatment with an Art Therapist, MFT, Julie Cast. We met from January until April in 2014. The artwork in my book was made during and after Don’s hospitalizations and in therapy with Julie. The last pages are in anticipation of a trip to China in March, 2014. The end page celebrates life, a scene of healing, plenty, and thankfulness.
MELLY TROCHEZ

This work was inspired by the desire of understanding one's own constructs on color and/or culture and how that was shaped by our early experiences and now the challenge of breaking it down to resolve any unhealthy presumptions. It is also about being able to liberate us from the prison of our mind. In this image a woman is engaging in therapy participating in the process of deconstructing thoughts and feelings in hope to reach a goal of not responding to superficiality of color.

Decolonizing the Mind, 2015
Mixed media on canvas
36” x 48”