

Maysey Craddock: Deep the Wall Art Review

“Where did those stories and memories go?”

A question artist, Maysey Craddock asks herself as she travels along the coasts of Mississippi and Alabama in search of her next masterpiece.

Her process starts off as a deliberate field trip on the backroads of the south. Mostly the place we have forgotten about or do not really care to see. Craddock on the other hand finds her inspiration in these mysterious places that are seen on those long car rides to see your grandparents in the country for Thanksgiving. She sees the beauty in houses that have fallen in from storms or from old age. Within those broken and jagged edges of that home she finds a way to revive that dead with her wild imagination and the strokes of her paint brush.

At the University of Mississippi Museum is where her paintings can be found. Craddock had the honor of having an exhibit called “Ruin is a Secret Oasis” at the University of Mississippi Museum that will be on display from March 13-July 7, 2018 for Oxford residents and students at the university to see. The place where Craddock dwells and creates her art is in an old medicine factory in downtown Memphis where it overlooks the Mississippi River. As a foundation for her paintings, this artist uses brown paper bags from the grocery store as her canvas and gouache, which is a method of painting using opaque pigments grounded in water and thickened with a glue like substance. She recalls asking friends for their bags after a trip to the grocery store. Some may see this as peculiar, but the way she sews the bags together to create her art, no one would ever know. She says her inspiration comes from Medieval work where they would use vellum to paint on.

While viewing this exhibit, a lot of artwork were paintings of abandoned homes that had been forgotten. Craddock says, “I am drawn to the forgotten, to the mysterious traces of memory...” when she described the art exhibit.

As I looked around at all the paintings, only one stood out amongst the rest. The very last painting in which she titled, “Deep the Wall” made in 2012.

This painting in particular stood out because of the black background and the vines that hung around the house. Craddock said she was on the coast of Alabama and the house was next to an old fishery. She described the home as possibly collapsing from a hurricane. She was intrigued by the way the house looked as if something were reaching down into the depths and pulling it out. Even though the painting looks as if it were painted from a view at night time, it was not. This is where her mindset of “reality meets and imagined narrative” comes into play.

The vines are what draws one in. At first the vines looked like power lines that had fallen due to a storm and were intertwined to make the painting look like a rural, jungle. The picture of the house was taken in the day, but she wanted to give a night mood and she did it perfectly.

Craddock describes her work as “places where water meets land, where fallen trees are swallowed by their reflection, where the horizon dissolves into sky...” It is definitely clear she is a guru of nature. When passing these jilted homes, I often think of who lived there, the memories, and what happened to the family who lived there; but Craddock sets that imagination on fire with her work. Never has anyone made a pile a plywood look so beautiful.

— Italiana Anderson