



Jane Terry, *Remember*, video still

## artist biographies

**Lauren Schiller** was born in New York City and is currently an Associate Professor of Art at Seton Hall University where she teaches painting, drawing, and printmaking. She received her MFA from the University of Wisconsin in Madison and her BFA from East Carolina University where she studied printmaking with Donald Sexauer and Michael Ehlbeck. Currently, Schiller lives in New Jersey and exhibits nationally in solo and group exhibitions including recently at the Garrison Art Center in Garrison, NY and at the Pennsylvania College of Technology, Williamsport, Pennsylvania. Her paintings have been included in exhibitions at the Adam Baumgold Gallery and the Allan Stone Gallery, NYC. Schiller's work has been published twice in *New American Paintings* in 2002 and 2008 and in 2008 she received a fellowship award in painting from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts.

**Jane Terry** is Professor of Art at Meredith College in Raleigh, NC, where she has taught since 1993. She received her BFA degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and her MFA degree in photography from Tyler School of Art, Temple University. Terry has exhibited her work at regional and national venues, including the San Francisco Art Institute, CA; Louis K. Meisel Gallery, NY; Jacksonville Museum of Modern Art, FL; North Carolina Museum of Art; and Wake Forest University Fine Arts Gallery. She was awarded First Place, Fine Art Photography in the fourth *Merry Moor Winnett Triennial* at Green Hill Center for North Carolina Art. Recently, Terry's video work has been screened at two annual international Dallas Video Festivals. Terry has received numerous awards and honors, including a prestigious grant from the Peter and Madeleine Martin Foundation for the Creative Arts, two United Arts Council of Raleigh Regional Artist Project Grants, and an artist residency at Anderson Ranch Arts Center in Snowmass Village, CO. She is represented in prominent private collections in San Francisco, Minneapolis, and Greensboro.

**Susan Watson** is a native of Juneau, Alaska, and moved to New York City at age eighteen to pursue a BFA from Cooper Union which she received in 1999. She went on to complete an MFA from Columbia University in 2001. She has had exhibitions in Alaska, New York, and South Carolina as well as solo exhibitions in Miami and France. Her work is also included in the White Columns Curated Artist Registry. Currently, Watson lives in Clemson, SC with her husband Christopher and their Jack Russell Terrier, Emma.

## artspace

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## design

Graham McKinney

on the cover, clockwise from top left:

**Lauren Schiller**, *Renunciation*, graphite and oil on panel

**Susan Watson**, *Beloved (Entreating)*, oil on canvas

**Jane Terry**, *The Drawer*, video still



## inspiring creative energy!

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## Memory, Myth, and Meaning

Lauren Schiller, Jane Terry,  
and Susan Watson

September 16-October 29, 2011

Gallery 2

## Memory, Myth, and Meaning

*Memory, Myth, and Meaning* features the work of **Lauren Schiller, Jane Terry, and Susan Watson**. Each artist's work, though executed in different media and techniques, explores concepts of memory and ritual.

Lauren Schiller's approach, whether creating prints or paintings, has always been based in drawing. Schiller notes that she is "not a painterly painter," but rather that she "makes drawings and then adds color." Her small (five by seven inch or six by eight inch) paintings are drawn entirely in graphite or a black oil pencil before the artist applies thin layers of oil glaze. The drawing — and the graphite itself — remains evident in her final works.

Schiller enjoys drawing, but more importantly is interested in image making. Imagery for her paintings is drawn from food-related memories and associations. Schiller admits to being obsessed with food — it is a family trait — and has many memories revolving around shared meals. For the artist, food symbolizes family, togetherness, history, and culture. For example, Schiller associates her Swedish heritage with her grandmother's cinnamon buns. While she recognizes the fact that food objects make for great still life scenarios — fun to draw or paint and accessible for viewers — food is a conceptual template for works that often explore food-related rituals. Incorporating the landscape around her, Schiller creates digital collages and occasionally a mock-up diorama in order to arrive at the best composition to express her concept.

Drawing from various readings about food rituals, two of Schiller's recent works revolve around equinoxes and the solstices. *Solstice Portrait* is a self-portrait of the artist as Saint Lucia, eyes lowered, adorned with a crown of candles. The setting is winter (perhaps December 13, the Saint's feast day), evident by a white ground and what appears to be a small Christmas tree farm in the background. Various food items encircle the artist, including a waffle with a pat of butter, half a grapefruit, a glass of juice, and an egg. Floating in space, these ordinary objects are imbued with magic and mystery. Schiller selected these

particular food items in part due to their color, reflecting a solstice ritual in which people consume yellow or orange foods.

Representative of the sun, Schiller notes that eating such items on the solstice is supposed to "cheer things up."

Some of these items are shown in halves, suggesting another important aspect of the solstice ritual, perhaps representing the change from days of more or less equal (half) light and darkness. In the counterpart painting, *Equinox*, we are presented with a dreamy, yet eerily desolate scene of a park. Schiller utilized images from her memory, such as the glider, along with objects from a nearby park, such as the seesaws and a squirrel rocker. A vase of calla lilies sits on a table in the lower right corner of the picture plane. The five eggs standing up on their ends represent perhaps the best-known equinox ritual; the single leaf floating in a bowl of water is another ritual associated with the event.

Recently, Schiller found inspiration in Caroline Walker Bynum's *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*. After learning about women mystics who used food to demonstrate the spiritual, Schiller created *Renunciation*, a painting featuring a veiled woman presenting a dish of food. The imagery was based on a story about a woman whose daily ritual often included fasting. She would serve food with a cloth in front of her face to prevent smelling the food. This painting, as with many of Schiller's works, elucidates the connection between food and restriction or denial.

Relying on both research and her personal experiences, Schiller's paintings explore our connections with food, both culturally and historically. While food is always prominently featured, Schiller's paintings are mysterious and often appear dream-like due to their ambiguous narratives, allowing for personal interpretation.

Similarly, Jane Terry's process, whether in creating still photographs or videos, often begins with a memory, dream, or intuitive response to a place or personal artifact. In *Memory, Myth, and Meaning*, Terry presents *Chamber*, a compilation of several single-channel video works created over the last three years. While she often creates a storyboard in advance, she describes her process as "a fluid exploration" in which scenes are re-sequenced and spliced intuitively in post-production. Lighting, timing, and audio are manipulated both during filming and in the editing stage and are critical aspects in visualizing Terry's concept.

Terry's use of fragmented images and words from her memory impart a dream-like feel to her works. The layering or repetition of both imagery and audio adds an element of mystery, reinforcing the otherworldly quality. While it is obvious that a personal story is unfolding in each of Terry's works, a linear, detailed narrative is never presented to the viewer. In their ambiguity, the videos are instead open to a broader interpretation, simply as explorations of identity, loss, and longing.

Many of Terry's works are related to memories she shares with her sister of their childhood, family, and home. Terry notes that she and her sister are very much alike and have been mistaken for twins in the past. The artist is interested in the concept of doubling as it relates to their shared history and identity. Terry and/or her sister are often featured in the works, recalling memories that have profoundly impacted their lives. *Remember* includes sped up footage of hands in the act of making a bed along with exaggerated sounds associated with the task. Images of the bed are interspersed with video of Terry's sister sitting in three-quarter view, head down, reminiscing about their mother performing domestic chores at a furious pace. She remembers mama "working so hard on that floor... I remember how she used to do circle motions." The intensity of the efforts and emotions invested in housecleaning made a lasting impression.

*Long Distance Calling* was inspired by a dream Terry had shortly after her mother passed away. In the dream, Terry's mother telephoned to let her know that she was all right. Sometime after she had the dream, Terry discovered phone messages from her mother on an answering machine cassette tape. The only recordings she has of her mother's voice, Terry found comfort in the tape, as though her mother was sending her a message from beyond. Terry incorporated her mother's call into the final video, along with imagery of an isolated house pulsing with red light on a winter night. Terry explains, "There is no answer as the moon passes by snow-covered trees and the sound of footsteps fades into the distance."

In Terry's most recent work, *The Drawer*, the passing of time is visualized through relics including a large clock face and a dresser drawer, dirty, blackened hands, and the act of cutting hair. For Terry, this video represents her fused identity with her sister, "inseparably bound by time," conveyed through doubling — mirrored images and repeated audio. She notes, "The film is based on truth and fiction, taking a life of its own in a shadowy in-between world. Collected remnants of loss are shut in the designated drawer, but are never contained as they move about freely in the space of memory." This statement seems relevant to *Chamber* overall; though each video features a unique, distinct memory, they are connected as critical aspects of Terry's personal history.

Painter Susan Watson, drawing on Buddhist practices views the process of creating art as an extension of the question, "What is the true nature of reality?" She views the process of creating art as a way of seeing life more clearly. Watson is inspired by Jung's idea that there is ordinary consciousness; underneath that

there is personal unconscious. Deeper still, there is collective unconsciousness. She notes that through her work she is trying to go past the personal to access a deeper aspect of the psyche, ultimately presenting more universal concepts.

Whether inspired by a quote or a personal dream, Watson is most interested in communicating a feeling rather than a specific narrative. Dream-like imagery, the interplay of light and dark elements, and the use of subtle or hidden imagery reinforce this concept as she strives to visualize the unknown in oil paint on canvas.

Watson's most recent paintings, *The Burning*, were inspired by a lucid dream.

Watson painted two different versions, as she often does, hoping to capture something unique in each adaptation. Presented in the center of the canvas is a Joan of Arc-like woman, in one version hands crossed in front of her, her head and body leaned slightly to the left (right side of the canvas). In the second version, she arches straight back; her hands appear to be bound behind her. In both paintings the figure appears to float atop fierce flames, which engulf the lower portion of her dress. While a narrative is suggested, perhaps about faith, purification, and enduring pain, much is left unknown for the viewer. The paintings are a still or a glimpse of a much larger mystery that Watson notes are an exploration of "the stripping away of beliefs."

Watson's paintings almost always feature women, but she often disguises the identity so that the figure reads as an archetype rather than a portrait. The head is bent backward to obscure the identity in *The Burning* paintings, while veils are effective in *Apparition*, *Night Bride*, and *The Beloved* paintings. Watson has painted some portraits, however, in which the identity is important to the concept. The doubled, blurred *Self-Portrait* illustrates the artist's attempt to look deep within and examine her underlying beliefs. Watson notes that "the more you look, the more the self disappears." The doubled image represents the disarray this can inflict, as one looks beyond the personal in an effort to reveal the universal. These paintings, as self-portraits, perhaps best reveal Watson's motivation in general. Inspired by Buddhist teachings, Watson meditates each day, hoping to calm her mind and gain a deeper understanding. For Watson, both meditation and art similarly help renew a sense of wonder. It seems that the closer you look, the more mysterious things become. Through her work she is "trying to see life not as I believe it or think it to be, but as it truly is." She points to Jung for clarification: "Enlightenment is not imagining figures of light but making the darkness conscious."

Whether drawing from history, religion, or personal stories, Lauren Schiller, Jane Terry, and Susan Watson each create works that depict rituals, myths, and memories. Though a narrative is often implied in each artist's works, much is left ambiguous, creating a mysterious, dream-like composition or sequence, allowing the viewer to rely on his or her own experiences or understanding to complete the story.

**Lia Newman**  
Director of Programs & Exhibitions



**Lauren Schiller**, *Confession: Pleasure*, graphite and oil on panel



**Susan Watson**, *The Burning #2*, oil on canvas