

*Being & Feeling (Alone, Together)*

Lamont Gallery, Phillips Exeter Academy, Exeter, NH USA

Spring/Summer 2020

## Artist Interviews (Compiled)

Originally posted on Lamont Gallery Blog: <https://lamontgallery.wordpress.com/>

### Interview: Sachiko Akiyama

Posted on April 21, 2020 by Lamont Gallery

**Q:** *When did you start sculpting in wood and what came first, woodcuts, reliefs or sculpture? What is your wood of choice for sculpting and for printmaking?*

**A:** Wood is a material that I have been drawn to for nearly all of my life. When I was a child, I had my own set of simple woodworking tools. I took my first wood sculpture class in college. I was mostly carving figures and hands. In college, I also took an array of other art classes including printmaking. I started making woodcuts over the past few years. I use my woodcarving tools to make the woodcuts. The mark-making involved with creating a woodcut relates directly to the process of resolving the surfaces of my sculptures.

One of the reasons why I gravitate towards using wood in my work is because it is an organic material that exudes warmth. I frequently leave the natural wood surface on completed sculptures. For this reason, I use woods such as bass and butternut, which can read as skin tones.

**Q:** *I find a contrast between your serene sculpted figures and your dynamic woodcut prints; they almost seem unrelated. Are you contemplating different issues, or themes when you work one process or the other?*

**A:** I want my sculptures to seem silent and meditative. The figures direct attention inwardly. I think of my sculptures as internal portraits that describe our inner lives. The flying birds are metaphors for this ephemeral and intangible internal space.

Sachiko Akiyama, *Finding Home*, 2013, Wood, paint, gold leaf. *Origins*, 2014, Wood, paint, resin

**Q:** *I am very curious about the male and female figures in “Origins” and “Finding Home”, are they a couple? Do the mountains on the man’s shoulders and the forest on the woman’s shoulders signify different dreams or temperaments?*

**A:** I want the relationship between the male and female figures to be open to interpretation. Without identifying faces, they could be read as a couple or family members or a universal male and female.

Yes, their landscape “heads” can be read as their dreams or temperaments. We use heads and faces, in particular, to identify people. The mountains and forest serve as a means for understanding who these people are.

***Q:** As I view the woman holding a bear cub in “Somewhere In Between” I wonder about the motive. Is she expressing nurturing tendencies? Does she want to be closer to nature and wildlife and feel the need to protect it? Does she feel more comfortable with wildlife than other humans?*

*Do you use animals and nature as a symbol of feeling removed from or an inability to relate to humans? Or is this relationship a more honorific one, that to be human we are not above animals, we are all part of the same world and working system of being on earth and need to care about and for our natural world?*

**A:** I think of the animals and natural objects (trees, mountains) as a means for understanding the nature of who we are. Nature leaves us clues without giving explicit answers to existential questions. While that is my intention for using natural symbols, I like that other people can have different interpretations such as the one you speculated in your question.

Sachiko Akiyama: [www.sachikoakiyama.com](http://www.sachikoakiyama.com)  
Instagram: @woodchip47

Interview conducted by Dale Atkins

Dale Atkins has been a Lamont Gallery attendant since 2015. Prior to working at the Gallery, she owned and operated Dale Atkins Painting & Frame Restoration for fifteen years. Dale creates hand-built clay vessels with a focus on design and subtle asymmetry. She also has experience working in steel, wood, copper enamel, textiles, oils and acrylics, leather, silver and other materials. She is often called upon to assist with working in the collection as well as installing exhibitions in the gallery and contributing to other campus arts and cultural project.

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## **Interview: Andrew Fish**

Posted on April 16, 2020 by Lamont Gallery

Andrew Fish is one of nine artists in this exhibition. His paintings address the complexities of the human condition and our urge to provide a narrative framework to make sense of our experiences. Fish lives in Somerville, Massachusetts and teaches at Massachusetts College of Art and Design and Lesley University.

***Q:** Can you talk a bit about your painting process? Do you start your paintings with unconscious abstractions as a way to create new fresh images through the stimulation of the unconscious mind? Or are you adapting those practices of frottage and decalcomania and random image generating as a creative tool which you then work with your interpretation of the figure in contemporary spaces and digital photographs and illustrations?*

**A:** Both. I make the abstract underpaintings without knowing what the final image is going to be. This allows me to have a free-flowing experience with abstraction. Sometimes it's emotional and other times it's purely decorative. It's an opportunity to really play. I experiment with a lot of unconventional tools and try to explore oil paint in ways I wouldn't otherwise. I'm trying to surprise myself. It's the best thing an artist can do. Once I decide which image to use the abstraction becomes an obstacle I must navigate. More surprises ensue while I add, subtract, and reconfigure the composition. I'm always interested in how much or how little an image needs to be rendered in order to be read by the viewer. A few marks can go a long way in building a picture.

***Q:** In an interview published in the Boston Voyager, you mention your love of music and having been in a band; what music or other sounds do you think would complement your paintings? Do you find that teaching art is at all like the collaboration you enjoyed in being part of a band?*

**A:** I do love music. I usually listen to music when I work so I think my art can be complemented with almost any soundtrack. Teaching does feel collaborative at times, like being in a band, and there are similar conflicts, camaraderie, and communication needs. But inevitably we're all trying to make our own work so there isn't one shared vision that you might find in a band. I have to remember this in order to be more open minded about what my students bring to the studio.

***Q:** Given the chance, who would you like to collaborate with? For example, a sculptor who could create 3d pieces in response to your work? A theatre producer who could add lighting experts to your next exhibit or dancers to perform in response to your paintings?*

**A:** Bonsai Master.

***Q:** We've heard you worked at the Jim Henson Company. Do you have any stories or lessons from your time there?*

**A:** It was an amazing experience on many levels but one thing that impressed me immediately was this notion that something so creative and fun could exist in a corporate environment. Jim was a brilliant artist but also a very good businessman. He was dead by the time I worked there but I knew Jane and the kids, who were all involved on some level. Jim's son Brian was CEO while I worked there and ran the company from LA. I was in the NY Design studio and had to work around multiple time zones including LA and London. At times Henson felt like a stiff entertainment corporation only concerned with brand licensing and market prominence, and then you'd walk into a studio and see Miss Piggy hanging out in a robe, waiting for her next photoshoot. It was surreal. I met wonderful people at Henson, including the puppeteers and builders. I also met several Muppets, as you can imagine, and have never outgrown my fondness for those characters.

**Q:** *How has the use of technology and printmaking influenced your art making? You mention using digital photographs in your works. You mainly work from your own photographs, but do you ever work from found images? How do you choose the photographs that will become part of your painting? Do you use just one element or detail, or the composition as a whole?*

**A:** Printmaking has been influential throughout my life. My parents ran a print shop that was mostly letterpress but they also produced silkscreens for commercial use. When computers disrupted the printing business my family folded the shop. Ironically, years later I would become a computer technician and survive as an IT guy. This was the Golden Age of tech and I was heavily influenced by the digital atmosphere. Inevitably it seeped into my art by way of process and aesthetics. Now it mostly exists as a conceptual element in a final painting, but I still use digital tools to generate imagery. Sometimes I will use someone else's photograph, but it's rare. The composition of a painting is usually determined by some aspect of a digital photograph but I edit and delete feely.

**Q:** *You cite the ubiquitous-ness of digital photography in the art world and how you combine it with a more painterly slower exploration of that kind of image, light and figures as a contemporary interpretation of presenting the figure of today in painting. Can you talk more about how this idea came to be?*

**A:** I'm an artist that used to make drawings in preparation for a painting. I worked from life models, landscape, and still life. Very traditional. But I liked showing my hand in the original interpretation of the subject matter. After working in technology and witnessing the rise of social media and ubiquitous picture-taking in the world I thought about how imagery is mediated through technology, and that these platforms hosting images were a new form of looking. And that was the look I wanted to start my paintings with. I removed my hand from the original interpretation and placed it in the painting that happens afterward. The visual language of photography – in online image sharing – became a new starting point for the painting. Working with the figure and creating commentary on the human experience has been in the work from the beginning, but after the dominance of digital technology in society it seemed even more poignant. Or at least relevant to the time I'm living in. For me, observing how the world changes continuously, and how people change with it (or don't) is an endless pool of

inspiration to create from. Compounding that with digital technology and online living has magnified it into a reality unavoidable for anyone making art today.

Andrew Fish website: [www.andrewfish.art](http://www.andrewfish.art)  
Instagram: @wanderingfisheye

Interview conducted by Jennifer Benn:

Jennifer Benn has been a Lamont Gallery attendant since 2015. She is also a professional painter with a studio at the Button Factory in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. She earned her MFA in painting from Syracuse University and has led programs for students to study art and culture in Ireland at the Burren College of Art. Jennifer teaches abstract painting at Maine College of art and offers private lessons at her studio.

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## Interview: Lauren Gillette

Posted on April 16, 2020 by Lamont Gallery

**Q:** *For those of us who aren't familiar with Paul Harding's, "The Tinkers", can you describe "Howard," who you identify as your inspiration for these intimate and personal expressions – you mentioned on your website that he is "simple" and "complicated."*

**A:** In *Tinkers* although it's never spelled out, Howard clearly is epileptic which in the book's era is akin to mental illness and a character and moral failing. I thought his list of 7 things he did was such a great illustration of Howard as a person as simple or complex as you or me and that's what I hoped for the projects things I did lists, simple/extraordinary things the viewer can relate to and recognize themselves in.

**Q:** *How many volunteers answered your call to share their life "in five lines" and how did you decide who to include?*

**A:** Around 400. They are listed on a [blog](#) originally created as an explanation of the project to anyone interest in participating which later grew into an opportunity for participants to see their list up and read others.

**Q:** *The body of work revealed in your works, [Things I Did](#), [Dymo](#), and [Wish/Regret](#) seems to require a level of transparency that evolves over time and within the safety of trusted relationships. Why do you think your volunteers, some rounded up on Craigslist and Facebook, are so willing to share such intimate details about their lives?*

**A:** Such a great question. I'm sure the answer is more complicated than not but here goes: Through all these community-based projects I continue to be grateful and amazed that strangers show up to share some part of themselves. In the case of *Things I Did*, the process was a bit less intrusive than say *Wish/Regret*. The participants in things I did are not being photographed and only labeled with their first name and age. Still they are being asked for a level of introspection to be shared with others and reflected back on them. My hope is that process is a gift to themselves but introspection is hard and it's really not for me to say. A project like *Wish/Regret* is a much harder ask. With the regrets in particular there really isn't anywhere to hide and I can't be casual in asking anyone for that level of trust. yet strangers showed up at the studio with their wishes and regrets ready and in the half hour it took to load up the mug shot boards and take a few photos, they were gone. A lot of intimacy for a half hour. It helps that I'm a woman, therefore less threatening, empathetic and interested in what they have to say.

**Q:** *What do you hope viewers experience and take away as they come before their reflected image, reading and wandering through these honest and in some cases, painful expressions people have shared? Did you experiment with any other medium before choosing mirrors for *Things I Did*?*

**A:** My hope that list makers and viewers can recognize themselves in their own lists and others. One of my great joys of these big community-based projects is whatever idea I started with was taken by the participants and made into something so much bigger and better. That we are more than a sum of our parts. That a list from a stranger is a connective thread to their own memories.

There are always a lot of tries before the idea. Before the mirrors, I was asking for 7 things and embroidering the lists on white linen (white on white, a lot of work and unreadable.) So that was 86'd in favor of the mirrored panels, hoping at some point I'd figure out how to display the panels at angles so the viewer could see themselves and the lists in fragments. As many times before, I showed up to show the project at the George Marshall Store Gallery with no working solution and curator Mary Harding came up with the cleat and sets of shims scenario to make it work.

**Q:** *I read an article that stated that you work intuitively and seem completely comfortable with the unknown. Do you agree, and if so, why?*

**A:** The lovely and talented Sarah Bouchard: Nicest thing anyone has ever said about my convoluted (willing to fail multiple times) work process.

**Q:** *Do you consider your work to be an activator of community?*

**A:** I had to look it up! I think of threads of connection, both to ourselves and to others if that is the same thing.

**Q:** *Is there a defining word that encapsulates your motivation to create?*

**A:** Sounds so cliché but, storytelling.

**Q:** *Who are the artists, writers, and storytellers that inspire you?*

**A:** Mary Ellen Mark  
Eugene Smith  
Eve Arnold  
Maira Kalman  
George Lois (art director at Esquire in the 60s)  
Calder's jewelry and mobiles  
John Singer Sargent

**Q:** *What are you reading these days?*

**A:** Eric Larson, *Splendid and the Vile* (doing My best to imagine Churchill in charge)  
Nick Tosches, *The Devil and Sonny Liston* (research)

Henry James, *Wings of the Dove* (reading my grandmother's copy for comfort)  
Ken Fowlett, *Eye of the Needle* (relaxing easy ready)

Lauren Gillette website: [www.laurengillette.com](http://www.laurengillette.com)  
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Interview by Aimee Towey-Landry

Aimee Towey-Landry joined the Lamont Gallery in the winter of 2018 as the interim Gallery Manager and in 2019 she became a gallery attendant. She has over six years of experience in arts administration from her positions as Registrar and Exhibitions Coordinator at the Gulf Coast Museum of Art in Largo, Florida and Special Projects Coordinator at the Tampa Museum of Art in Tampa, Florida. She is currently working with a team of professionals to build a non-profit that serves the homeless and the housing vulnerable populations of greater Concord. She also volunteers at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston.

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## Interview: Katya Grokhovsky

Posted on April 16, 2020 by Lamont Gallery

Katya Grokhovsky is a multi-disciplinary artist based in New York City who works in performance, sculpture, drawing, painting, and curation. Her works in *Being & Feeling* explore "...ideas of gender and identity construction, alienation, labor, history and the self."

**Q:** *In your 2018 interview with PERFORMANCE IS ALIVE, you discussed the concept of "Bad Woman" and her resulting child, "Bad Bad Woman" who continues to encapsulate the seemingly never-ending battle women endure for their rights and humanity throughout the centuries and generations to come. With this thought in mind, do you find yourself exploring themes of feminism and immigration simultaneously? Does feminism and immigration emerge side-by-side, one informing the other, in your work?*

**A:** All themes in my work originate from my own life experience, so there is a continuous thread between them throughout my practice. I am woman and an immigrant living in the world, and feminism ensures my survival in it, so both are intrinsically linked and make up my existence and identity, as an artist and a human being. I inevitably explore them simultaneously, sometimes focusing on one aspect of one or the other more through various ideas and projects, which act as amorphous containers for the work and my thoughts.

**Q:** *In your painting "Sunset", on view at Lamont Gallery, you included "Bad Woman" and "Ugly Face" in scrawled text on the canvas. Newspaper clippings and family portraits are collaged into the composition along with many abstract markings and a drawing of a gun. Can you discuss these characteristics/elements – why you included them – how did they come to be in relationship with each other?*

**A:** This particular painting was made on site at a gallery in L.A, called Last Projects, where I had a solo exhibition in 2018. The painting was inspired by the city itself and was made a week before the exhibition there and completed during a live performance at the opening. So, some of the markings and words, such as Bad Woman and Ugly Face were added directly onto the canvas during the performance. The drawings and collaged elements of the painting came before the performance, so there were both premeditated and intuitive aspects in the work, inspired by the light and colors of L.A sunsets I was enjoying, whilst being street-harassed and objectified during my evening walks. So that's what the painting expresses, my ongoing concerns regarding the ever-present male gaze, the absurdity of American obsession with guns and relentless objectification and oppression of women, casting shadows across the beautiful skies.

**Q:** *Are these paintings a visual representation of personalities morphing, birthed out of immigration and feminist oppression? Would you say they represent an "un-leashed beast" angry and advocating for those who may not be strong enough to speak out? Or are they an avatar of sorts in the process of becoming their strongest selves?*

**A:** My paintings are expressions of my state of being at a particular time and space, I tend to not calculate too much of what I am going to make and try to listen to my gut instinct as much as possible, which is usually to convey the wildly oppressed woman-beast within. We all have one, and all of them are brutally subjugated and withheld. Immigrants have also been considered as “savages” historically, so I am always interested in the unleashed, the masked, the unseen, especially through the visceral medium of paint. I do hear and feel the voices and souls of many, when I work, who might be speaking through me and my art, I can’t explain it, but it’s there. It’s important to me to keep an open door and to not over design and force my own opinion on everything I make. It’s a collaboration with the past, the future and the invisible. The unknown is the treasured marrow I am seeking.

**Q:** *As a mentor and educator, which profound experiences around your own migration journey and years of navigating what it means to be female in this male-centric community, do you frequently share in order to uplift and lead the immigrant artists who you mentor?*

**A:** In terms of the art world, which is where I reside, I suggest to find an accomplished older female artist mentor, if you want practical advice on how to navigate, survive and thrive in this male-dominated industry. I personally have been lucky enough to work with incredible women mentors, so as I am becoming one myself, I share their advice, mixed with my own. Be brave, take those major leaps of faith. Dream big and take up space, raise your voice. Don’t make yourself small and pleasant, like the world wants you too. Don’t listen to those, who have not fought it out in the arena. Be scared and do it anyway. Be relentless, and never be afraid of failure. There is no prescribed way to live, no matter how much society wants us to believe that there is, especially for women. I lived in many countries and eventually moved to the U.S to pursue my Masters degree, on my own, without any family here, partner or connections. I had intense belief in myself and for that, I give credit to my parents, who encouraged my talent for the arts since I was very young. There are many false starts and dead ends and obstacles. Never settle. Fight for yourself, you don’t owe the world your beauty or perfect command of the English language, or creation of new humans, but you do owe it to yourself to shoot for the moon. We live once!

**Q:** *Who are the artists, writers, film makers, politicians, etc. you frequently share with your mentees for inspiration?*

**A:** Some of my favorite artists are: Louise Bourgeois, Ana Mendieta, Georgia O’Keeffe, Eva Hesse, Phyllida Barlow, Pipilotti Rist, David Hammons, Jessica Stockholder, Tania Bruguera, William Pope. L and many more. In terms of writers, I am mostly reading women, such as Rebecca Solnit, Roxane Gay, Virginia Woolf, Margaret Atwood, bell hooks. One of my all time favorite filmmakers, to whom I come back yearly for inspiration, is Chantal Akerman, and someone I grew up with, Andrei Tarkovsky.

**Q:** *Can you share with us some of the thoughts and questions that emerged during The Immigrant Artist Biennial panel discussion via Zoom on March 25th? What were some of the panelists’ reflections on these challenging “Coved” days? How might these current*

*circumstances impact the continued dialog around immigration and the resulting work of these artists to come?*

**A:** One of the first things that emerged are the emotions and tension we all feel right now and the need to mourn the loss of our world and society in our own way. There is a pressing need for humanity and compassion, for connection and community, to keep each other sane, to reject the hyper capitalist pressure to produce. We must acknowledge the fact, that we are experiencing a collective trauma. There is a lot of anxiety about immigration status, about border closures, about government assistance, all of which the pandemic highlights even further. Nobody truly knows how this will impact our future as artists and cultural workers. We are overworked, underpaid, under-appreciated and devalued, so there are no answers yet, only the necessity for reflection and survival right now.

Katya Grokhovsky's website: [www.katyagrokhovsky.net](http://www.katyagrokhovsky.net)  
Instagram account: @katyagrokhovsky

Interview Conducted by Aimee Towey-Landry

Aimee Towey-Landry joined the Lamont Gallery in the winter of 2018 as the interim Gallery Manager and in 2019 she became a gallery attendant. She has over six years of experience in arts administration from her positions as Registrar and Exhibitions Coordinator at the Gulf Coast Museum of Art in Largo, Florida and Special Projects Coordinator at the Tampa Museum of Art in Tampa, Florida. She is currently working with a team of professionals to build a non-profit that serves the homeless and the housing vulnerable populations of greater Concord. She also volunteers at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston.

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## Interview: Stephanie Misa

Posted on April 23, 2020 by Lamont Gallery

*Q: Why did you choose Mira Lobe's story "Komme Sagte die Katze"? What do you think the author's original intent was/is in writing this work?*

**A:** Mira Lobe wrote "Komm, Sagte die Katze" in Vienna in 1974 and is considered an Austrian icon, larger than Dr. Suess. Lobe emigrated from Görlitz, Germany with her mother and sister to Palestine (in 1936), and then to Austria with her husband and children (in 1950). Her first children books were written in Hebrew in 1948 and published in Tel Aviv. Lobe is no stranger to the plight of the immigrant, nor does she shy away from topics of identity and difference. I can only really guess at Lobe's intention when she wrote "Komm, Sagte die Katze" but in her entire oeuvre of children's writing this story is the most explicit in its inclusivity and working together to build brighter futures.

*Q: What do you hope listeners will absorb and possibly latch onto as they hear the story read in three languages?*

**A:** The story in the video piece "A bedtime story for someone else's child" is read in German by three readers with different levels of fluency in the language. The words of Mira Lobe are used as the medium where differences play out — the reader's relationship to the German language and the viewer's/ listener's impression of the readers (and who they are) based on how they read.

*Q: The menagerie of animals in this story ultimately find their safety together, and in the end, a new home to inhabit - a new beginning - a new family - can you expand on the notion of immigration and belonging that seem to be at the heart of this story?*

**A:** While Lobe's animals do find safety and security in the end, as they manage to work out their initial fear of each other (the utopia)— in "A bedtime story for someone else's child," I push at a different tension, using voice and language to emphasize how immigrants are often marked (as other, as different) from the moment they open their mouths and try to speak. More often than not, these markers of difference make it hard to belong. The title "A bedtime story for someone else's child" also refers to a very specific immigration (one in which the Philippines excels) that exports labor for *care work* — nurses, caregivers in nursing and private homes, nannies, physical and occupational therapists, maids— a huge number of which are female, who work for other families to send money to their own back 'home.' It is especially poignant to note that these immigrant workers are currently in the frontline of the worldwide pandemic, serving a country where they are employed but not necessarily welcomed.

*Q: Do you believe, the sharing of a universal struggle can be a grand "cultural" equalizer of sorts where we come together regardless of our differences because we're truly in need of one another?*

**A:** This certainly is the ideal picture, where struggles (such as this pandemic) unite us, and push us towards solidarity and kinship — but as we see, this is currently not the case. I think what the pandemic highlights is the fractured state of things: how healthcare is *not* (though it should be) a universal and accessible right, how those with casual work contracts cannot afford to stay in home quarantine, how those living in densely poor areas do not necessarily have running water to wash their hands or the space to social distance — the pandemic is exacerbating what neoliberal capitalism has left us with— a collapsing and rigged system. What should come next, what would truly equalize us all?

**Q:** *In contrast, your piece Transplant (a series of stories) explores individuals' experiences of "being other", "being alien" - once "transplanted" to another country, do you think we are tirelessly trying to find pathways of connection between the individual self and the collective experience in order to identify and create new beginnings?*

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** *As you explore the usage of marginalized languages in your performance piece, you identify the idea of "containment" giving "mother tongue" its power. What parts of your migration journey (or the stories of others') brought you to this realization of containment giving way to power?*

**A:** The idea of "containment" that I'm working with in the performance lecture "Filipinos, Cannibalism, and Mothers Dancing on Tongues" is specific to *embodiment*, where language is tied to a body, a mouth, a voice — it has a point of origin, a texture, a history. When you speak, you speak from a specific place. In the performance, I talk about languages that are only spoken, meaning not used for reading or writing or formal education. But these are also languages linked to specific bodies, with specific histories, ones that have mostly been relegated to the side and considered unimportant. There are so many names for it: creole, pidgin, dialect, bastard tongues...

My own 'mother tongue' is exactly this, an orality that has resisted colonialization and nationalist whims, what does it mean that I can still speak it, that it hasn't dissolved entirely? I see its resilience as a sign that there is a need, a use, and a sentiment that it fulfils. Is that power? I still don't know.

Interview conducted by Aimee Towey-Landry

Aimee Towey-Landry joined the Lamont Gallery in the winter of 2018 as the interim gallery manager and in 2019 she became a gallery attendant. She has over six years of experience in arts administration from her positions as Registrar and Exhibitions Coordinator at the Gulf Coast Museum of Art in Largo, Florida and Special Projects Coordinator at the Tampa Museum of Art in Tampa, Florida. She is currently working with a team of professionals to build a non-profit that serves the homeless and the housing vulnerable populations of greater Concord. She also volunteers at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston.

## Interview: Tobias Rud

Posted on April 16, 2020 by Lamont Gallery

***Q:** Please tell us a little more about your process for creating animations. I see that “Sweetie O’s” was hand drawn. Can you explain this process? Do you use any unusual materials when creating your work? What tools and/or programs would you suggest for students interested in trying animation?*

**A:** The animation of *Sweetie O’s* is all pencil and paper, so very lo-fi in that sense. Coloring was done digitally. I really like working analogue, but since it’s so time-consuming I rarely do it. For students I would recommend trying it, since it’s a great way to learn and get to really understand how animation works. Much like analogue photography vs. digital; it forces you to be patient in getting it right and it’s less forgiving. It’s a great process to line-test drawings and seeing the animation you have just worked on played back to you. And if things need fixing then actually get out the eraser and change stuff the hard way. Otherwise Adobe animate or Photoshop are usually the programs I use, and both are pretty accessible.

***Q:** Do you use a storyboard to plan out your animations or do you have a different process when to starting an animation?*

**A:** For short films I do make storyboards and edit them together in an animatic with sounds, music and everything included for reference. That way I can see if something only makes sense in my head and doesn’t actually work out in real life. Usually that’s how it starts. Followed by a minor crisis of it not being as good as I thought it would. But then sleeping on it, rewatching it and doing several changes to it, might make it work after a while. So without an animatic I’m afraid the film will never be elevated from that first unsuccessful draft. For small comics or animations I might do for social media and such, I usually don’t have the patience for an animatic, so I just go straight ahead and let it be whatever it turns out to be.

***Q:** Your work has a hand-drawn uniqueness; and simultaneously many of the stories are universally understood. Do you think leaving the artists hand in the work is important, or would the stories be as well served created completely digitally?*

**A:** Good question, I think it really depends on the type of story and what it needs in terms of medium to be told the best way possible. I do love hand-drawn things with lots of personality, and I tend to gravitate towards that in my own art consumption. I didn’t have an art background myself but started out in live-action filmmaking, and I do see my “artistic hand” as one of my weaknesses as an animator. So when it comes down to it, I am all about the storytelling. If I have an idea that could be told and acted out with socks on my hands while videotaping it, then that would be great too – As long as there’s personality in there. I always feel that the work that speaks to me the most, is the work where you can feel that a human made it. Pixar animations can be great in their own ways, but they all look the same and I’m never quite sure whether a human was ever involved. So yes, the artists “hand” is important to

me, but it doesn't necessarily have to be hand-drawn to be human. I think personality can shine through in many different forms and mediums.

**Q:** *What other artists do you admire and cite as influences? Do you have any favorite cartoons?*

**A:** Don Hertzfeldt is a big hero of mine. If you don't know his work I will highly recommend checking it out! I remember watching "It's such a beautiful day" before I was even into animation and it rocked my world that a film could look like that. It inspired and motivated me a lot, that if this dude can make something so beautiful, funny and profound all by himself, just drawing matchstick men with pencil and paper, then I can too! (obviously I can't do what he does, but even the principle that it can be done is very motivating).

**Q:** *Given the choice, who would you like to collaborate with? Would it be a writer, a director, sound effects wizard, another animator?*

**A:** All would be great! Not sure if you are looking for names, that might be a tough one, but generally sound wizards are extremely helpful. Especially since animation is such a blank canvas when it comes to sound. No on-location recordings or real-life visuals to match with. There's so much potential and no limitations on what animation can sound like.

**Q:** *If time and money were no issue, what classic story would you like to adapt? How would you change it? For example, would you adapt it to tell the story from a less well-known characters point of view?*

**A:** I haven't thought of that before! I would probably go for a classical children's story. *Where the Wild Things Are* is one of my favorites, so maybe I'd create an animated version of that, if it doesn't already exist. It could even be from the perspective of a wild thing getting to know this new weird unhairy creature called Max.

**Q:** *Do you have any pets that might be inspirational to your work?*

**A:** Unfortunately, not! I used to have a dog many years ago, but however lovely she was I don't think I can credit her in much of my work.

Tobias Rud: [www.vimeo.com/user20075864](https://www.vimeo.com/user20075864)  
Instagram: @tobiasrud

Interviewed conducted by Jennifer Benn

Jennifer Benn has been a Lamont Gallery attendant since 2015. She is also a professional painter with a studio at the Button Factory in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. She earned her MFA in painting from Syracuse University and has led programs for students to study art and culture in Ireland at the Burren College of Art. Jennifer teaches abstract painting at Maine College of art and offers private lessons at her studio.

## Interview: Jon Sakata

Posted on April 16, 2020 by Lamont Gallery

**Q:** *Some of your work suggests inspiration by nature: use of crystals, rippling fabric, music, sounds. Are there any aspects of nature that especially inform your work? Are there any common themes you seek to present in your works?*

**A:** The French philosopher, Gilles Deleuze, speaking about Spinoza, states that “Nature is precisely the infinite set of all compositions of relations.” No matter the medium/media I’m working in, there is this common thread with *compositions of relations*: the interweaving of relations – be they between people, sounds, sensations, materialities, temporalities, perspectives, concepts – and the problematizing of what might engender the emergence of yet new forms, and natures, of relation.

Themes? Hmm. It’s funny – understood differently than you are asking about – some people complain that my musical compositions lack ‘themes’; and, well, they are correct, I consciously eschew writing (particularly, melodious) themes in my pieces. [Though, as a quick aside, I’m currently composing a work for chorus that takes the notion of ‘theme’ in a new way (for me): the 10+ minute work will be a single ‘theme’ that lasts its entire duration...(laughter)...imagine a 10+ minute ‘theme’ that is the whole piece!] So, going back to your question about “common themes”...rather, my creative work involves working out ‘problems.’ The Swiss painter, Paul Klee, has been a touchstone: “not to render the visible, but to render visible forces that are not themselves visible.” What might it be, say, to make audible or to give a sense of touch to phenomena that are not themselves audible or touchable?

Also, some projects – the Academy Library’s 40th Anniversary installation-concert, [CLEW](#), as well the current installation, *ex(i/ha)le*, in this exhibition, having been local examples – explore(d) the ‘field conditions’ of the interstitial gap where conjunctions/disjunctions, syntheses/ruptures, take place. What are the dynamical tensions, dispersions, dialogics that arise from in-between things? Can gaps, intervals, hiatuses, fissures themselves be seen as a kind of materiality? How might the sensorial give expression and contour to...?

**Q:** *Many of your work seek to envelop the viewer in multi-sensory experience: sight, sound, language (CLEW, the 45th Anniversary installation at the Academy Library). In these exhibits, the viewers are surrounded by rippling fabric, light, architecture, projected video, musical performance, the spoken word, and other objects. What do you hope that the viewer will see/understand/appreciate/learn from/perceive from these experiences?*

**A:** Installations as *enterable condition(alities)*: what if audiences are situated in, invited to navigate within, the interstitial condition firsthand, rather than remaining outside observers to it? How might they become a part of, active agents within, this very conditionality? Might the installation, not to say, people themselves, thereby undergo *gradients of alteration*?



**Q:** *You collaborate with other artists, writers, musicians, architects. Which do you find more satisfying, working on collaborative or solo works? Have you ever encountered conflict with other artists/musicians while collaborating? If so, did this affect the intended outcome of your work?*

**A:** I hold each self to be *many*, so whether it's 'solo' or 'collaborative' there's a 'crowd' at play and work, so to speak. What is satisfying is how such interplay between multitudes creates unimaginable and unplanned-for alterity, mutation, destabilizing and complexifying every(thing/one) into unknown longitudes and latitudes of affect, imaginings, questionings, problematizing.

*As satisfying* has been collaborations where there is a shared ethos and anticipation of mutation: not only a resistance to the staking out and protecting/defending of known or pre-defined or pre-held territories, stances, dogmas, solutions; but rather, *there is an open-dialogic furthering, caring and carrying elsewhere* that happens with and through one another...multiplicities entering into new relations with other multiplicities. Rather than encountering conflict, we have found a certain zeal in endangering fixity, monumentality, preciousness, predictability, an engineered effectiveness, perfection

**Q:** *Do you have any particular formula or method for preparing to create a work?*

**A:** I used to say to myself: "complicate through simplification; simplify through complexification" ...but these days I tend to try charting an impossibility (echoing Klee from earlier) that – while perhaps not clear at the outset – comes about through the creative/problematising process, eventually serving as a kind of horizon or North Star. The process, which always varies in path and velocity from project to project, then becomes one of producing *thrived\* 'failing'*...

\*: thrive + lived

**Q:** *Does this creative process change when working on a collaborative piece?*

**A:** Ah, the beauty and thrill of *failing better together*! There is a special glee and trajectory to falling short of the impossible...collectively!

**Q:** *How has your work as a composer evolved over time? As an artist? As a collaborator?*

**A:** This remains opaque to me. Am I evolving? I don't know. Truth be told: I don't want to know and I don't spend any time thinking about this. Each project has its own unique problems to engage with. I'm in a place not to be able to reflect on the larger sweep of things.

**Q:** *Did you have any formal training in visual art as a young person?*

**A:** None. Not even as an *older* person!

For over a quarter of a century teaching here at the Academy, thanks to both Gail [Scanlon] and Jackie Thomas before her, their respective staffs, I've enjoyed having access to roam around fairly unfettered, scaling, studying the Academy Library (even occasionally giving tours for visiting architects). Rather than 'formal training' over these years, Kahn's design has afforded me a *training-in-Form*, helped along by architect friends of mine to be sure, to learn to see and feel the building in such transformative kinds of ways.

Think of the layers upon layers of 'framings' that Kahn uses in his design. Some of the most startling are to be found up on the outdoor roof terrace: the way local church steeples, the ship weathervane that caps the bell tower of the Academy Building, or even the tips of surrounding trees, are exactly framed by the glass-less open brick 'windows' — *timeless floating icons* that take on such sublime immediacy, proximity, aura.

But there are also the layers upon layers of 'obstructions' he uses as well. Sometimes, often times, the very members or elements that are blocking one's view from a certain perspective form — from another vantage point or station — part of another structural aperture that allow one to see the most 'common' of objects in completely new light and wonderment. What does this lesson concerning the value of being able to change one's perspective about (any/some/every)thing? The obstructions, as well, confront one to *imagine* what's on the other side, which Kahn has intentionally blocked from sight. How integral might obstructions be then (not to say, imagination) to the process of learning to learn. Kahn's Library is the first work of architecture that provided for me the experience to understand how a building can achieve a *profound didacticism*: teaching one through its very design how to see and feel the world *otherwise*, and yet, *clearly*, and even, *clearly anew*. For him, 'library' was by definition a place to evoke *wonderment*. Has anyone so beautifully conceived a brick façade as woven textile?

**Q:** *Is your favored role composer or performer?*

**A:** My folly: it used to be that — in say, Bach's time, then in Mozart's and Beethoven's, and on to Liszt and Brahms — one is both; there was not a changing of role but a creative life of making and sharing that were of single stream. My problem is that composing, performing, fabricating, designing, filming have become so many worlds to be lost in orbit amidst. So much more, I suppose, to fail at!

Interview Conducted by Ann McGrath

Ann McGrath has worked at the Lamont Gallery since 2010. She is a retired fourth grade teacher from the Marston School in Hampton, New Hampshire and brings a great degree of organization and love of education to the Lamont Gallery. Ann helps us research information for exhibitions and selects resources from the Academy Library that enhance our exhibitions. Ann also works at the Academy's Class of 1945 Library. When she is not on campus you can find her exploring the many hiking trails in New Hampshire and abroad.

## Interview: Riikka Talvitie

Posted on April 16, 2020 by Lamont Gallery

***Q:** Are there any common themes you seek to explore in your works or are there any particular techniques you employ to draw the listener into your work?*

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**A:** For years, I have been jealous of my friends who are working in other branches of art or science. While they have been dealing with different topical themes, I have been composing absolute music through old-fashioned means. When I began my doctorate studies in 2016, I decided to make a change. Consequently, I have questioned almost everything in Western art music tradition: the dominance of Western culture, the role of a composer, the canon, the institutions etc. This self-examination of an art-field happens definitely 50 years late if we compare f.ex. to visual arts. But better later than never. So, what is left? The most meaningful thing that resonates me is the audience and more precisely sharing these questions with others.

***Q:** Do you prefer to collaborate with others or to work alone? Is there another musician or artist you'd like to collaborate with, living or dead?*

**A:** I definitely want to collaborate with other artists, researchers, professionals and amateurs. My aim is to collaborate with another composer. This sounds a really simple task, but it isn't. The tradition of Western art music is really protecting composers as individuals and as authors. I am currently planning a project with a young composer Lauri Supponen and a musicologist Juha Torvinen. The main idea is that we compose together within an ecomusicological context. The project is dealing with the problem of microplastic in Baltic sea.

[Here is a recent article](#) about collaborative composing in Finnish Music Quarterly:

***Q:** What inspired/motivated you to begin composing?*

**A:** I am inspired of many things all the time! Of sounds, texts, relationships, political situations, ecological knowledge etc. At this moment of total isolation, I have been thinking about artistic processes that could be more sustainable and long-lasting than in recent years. This might be a common thought among many people around the world. Should we actually produce less? Why do we hurry?

I am looking for a method for composing more than just a separate musical piece. How could I compose a performance instead of a composition? I am excited by an idea of writing a 'script' for a concert. I have used this method already once in a concert called *If all the world were paper...* It was a collaboration with a baroque ensemble Cornucopia and we created a mixture of contemporary pieces and English 17th-century music. My instrument in the performance was an overhead projector.

You can find a short video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wj2iOg0jc6k>

*Q: Can you explain your creative process in composing? Do you often revise your compositions? Do ideas come to you fully-formed?*

**A:** I have somehow given up completely abstract way of composing. I have challenge myself to use some dialogical elements in all my future works. Sometimes this means a lot of collaboration and negotiation. And sometimes it means just opening the process to the musicians and performers a little bit earlier than we have used to do – in a stage that the work is still in progress.

This kind of dialogical compositional agency affect naturally to the end result. The completed composition is not any more a perfect artwork. However, the institution of concert music is based on perfect works that have been published. I am struggling with this conflict.

*Q: Is there any particular period of music history you find most informs what you do?*

**A:** My intention is to increase interdisciplinarity in composer's practice which reminds of Renaissance artists' way of thinking.

*Q: Is there a particular living composer who has influenced your work?*

**A:** Western art music is based on the idea that there are some great composers, mostly dead, who we should respect highly. I refused to mention anyone even though there are composers that have influenced me a lot. Personally, I love to hear something unexpected.

Instead of dead men, I give you some interesting links to works by composers who are living in Finland:

[Låt mig vara](#) (2016)

Minna Leinonen, composer

Female Voice Choir Lyran, Jutta Seppinen, cond.

[Sergio Castrillón](#)

[Traeumerei](#) (2016) for cello and electronics

Ville Raasakka, composer

Markus Hohti, cello

[Flute concerto Soie](#) (20)

Lotta Wennäkoski, composer

Kersten McCall, flute, RSO

[Tytti Arola](#)

[Codecs/Codecs](#) (2018-2019), online version 2020

Perttu Haapanen, composer

Female Voice Choir Lyran, Jutta Seppinen, cond.

*Q: Do you play any instruments other than piano and oboe?*

**A:** I used to play piano and oboe but actually I don't have that much time nowadays. Last summer I bought a new instrument, viola da gamba, out of curiosity. I don't really have time to practice it either, but I have used the instrument otherwise. [Here is a clip](#) where I experiment with the instrument and some microphones.

Riikka Talvitie: [www.riikkatalvitie.com](http://www.riikkatalvitie.com)

Interview Conducted by Ann McGrath

Ann McGrath has worked at the Lamont Gallery since 2010. She is a retired fourth grade teacher from the Marston School in Hampton, New Hampshire and brings a great degree of organization and love of education to the Lamont Gallery. Ann helps us research information for exhibitions and selects resources from the Academy Library that enhance our exhibitions. Ann also works at the Academy's Class of 1945 Library. When she is not on campus you can find her exploring the many hiking trails in New Hampshire and abroad.