M.F.A.

EXHIBITION

Spring 2017

Featured Artists  Kevin Kwon  |  Thomas Bowman
Do you dream of continuing to make art after you graduate from college?

Of working as a graphic designer or becoming a college art professor? If your answer is yes, then Radford University has the program for you. The booklet you hold in your hands right now celebrates the final work of our most recent Master of Fine Arts students to receive their degree and graduate. As you can see, this year’s graduates specialized in painting and drawing; last year’s students were expert in jewelry making and ceramics. Next year, photography and graphic design will probably be the center of our attention.

Catering to artistic ambition, our concentrations feature a combination of rigorous and traditional technique along with the opportunity to explore new uses of media in the pursuit of your personal and individual vision. Our small graduate program, generally between 10 and 15 students, allows for close working relationships with faculty mentors. Our program will accommodate your individual needs as a student and your personal goals as an artist.

With a museum, a large downtown gallery and a smaller campus gallery
dedicated to student projects, we have the space to bring in exhibitions of professional artists’ work and special collections; exhibition spaces for the graduation shows of our students; and displays of work done in studio classes by students in their first or second years of the program. Although we don’t have it yet, we are thinking about developing a low-residency program and exploring the use of competency-based education in order to recognize the achievements of students who have been out of school and professionally engaged before deciding to seek the M.F.A. degree.

Our painting faculty members have international reputations, and graduate students come from around the globe to study with these faculty members. In addition to strong exhibition records, they also explore and encourage experiential learning. Halide Salam, Ph.D., of the painting faculty leads a summer Study Abroad in Ireland. This collaborative study-abroad program includes faculty and students from the departments of Art and Criminal Justice. Professor Zheng Liang Feng, internationally acclaimed for his watercolor paintings, also teaches courses in pastel techniques. Check our website to find out more about our faculty.

We also have a graduate teaching assistantship/fellowship program, which we think is one of our strongest features. Because we can divide assistantships among students, more than half the second- and third-year students receive a stipend of some amount. Outstanding first-year students may also receive an assistantship or graduate scholarship.

If you think we might be the program for you, we would love to show you around and discuss your interests. Feel free to contact me or any of the faculty and arrange a personalized tour.

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Korean folk art and traditions have been accented with bright vibrant colors that have created a mold for Korean culture. My work has been influenced aesthetically by both Korean folk art and my exposure to Western oil painting technique.

The passage of a metaphorical journey from darkness to light is shown through the use of my colors. Each brush stroke created is coated with a vivid color. It is an external projection of how internally I am trying to find a piece of childhood memories from South Korea. Each line and form is the action of revisiting what I think are my childhood memories recreated into a visual form. There is a conflict, yet it does not feel vengeful, but more playful and euphoric. Each painting is an expression of my ever-changing identity of being a Korean in America. If I could profess one attraction that is deeply engrained in me, it is my love of color.
Landing in the Fog
2017, oil on canvas, 24” x 30”
Untitled
oil on canvas, 2016-17

Spring in Korea
2016, oil on canvas, 16” x 20”

East and West
2016, oil on canvas, 20” x 30”
Unexpected Morning
2016, oil on canvas, 16” x 20”

Untitled
oil on canvas, 2016-17

Rhythmic Play
2016, oil on canvas 30” x 40”
Humans actively seek to understand everything. When we come upon something we do not comprehend it frustrates us, makes us uncomfortable and afraid. To fear is to have an unpleasant emotion towards a subject perceived as a threat. For humans, that is the unknown. When we try to make sense of it, the unknown generates chaos to fuel our thoughts. That chaos creates monsters.

My art is a stream of consciousness. It begins with my obsession: monsters. From there I take a pen and pull the constantly evolving image from my head to the surface of the paper. Very little of the final product references real life objects. If the creature is real, then the drawing will carry its general shape. Otherwise, my only reference is a written description of what it looks like.

I start with the barest of outlines, a net formed to hold content. From there I work all over the piece,
drawing out symbols, shapes and lines. The symbols, like everything else, have no specific meaning. They are the product of my obsession with detail. A line symbol to bring attention to the scale it sits on as well as to add to the complexity of the skin; a thick, tapering line to separate a lock of hair from the rest and bring it forward, also containing swirling lines flowing together to give that hair substance; crosshatching and straight lines to imply shade and to further separate shapes from other parts of the whole.

My state of mind as I draw the creature is similar to how one deals with the unknown. I nervously exert control over my line work to best convey the image in my mind to paper. I leave the background void to force the monster forward, to confront and reveal all the complex details that construct it. The monster enters the drawing from the side working in tandem with the white void, revealing itself, illuminating the fleeting nature of images conjured by the mind.

To fear the unknown is to be curious. The monsters we conjure when thinking of that space, whether it be clouds, mist or the dark, flit in and out of consciousness, creating a chaotic feeling of unease. We make monsters to help bring definition to the unknown. I do the same through my work, trying to make sense of the dark through my obsession with line that is nearly equal to my obsession for monsters.

The urge to fill the paper entirely, to detail every corner is immense, but I do not want to lose that tension by revealing everything. Rather I want to give form through my careful, obsessive effort to control the subject. I work to rein in the monsters I see and capture that brief moment of consciousness where the mind and reality are most at odds. It is in that moment that monsters feel the most real.
Obsession series, 2
2017, pen, ink and pencil
Obsession series, 3
2017, pen, ink and pencil