RYDELL

VISUAL ARTS FELLOWS 2018-2019

Robert Chiarito
David Dunn
Myra Eastman
Robin Kandel
Society calls on artists to do so much. We ask them to push the boundaries of creative expression, tell our diverse stories, contemplate contemporary issues and reconnect us to our own humanity. The Rydell Fellowship is one part tribute to Roy and Frances Rydell and their abiding love of the arts, and one part art created for its own sake, to be experienced at this moment and made available for the future.

Roy and Frances understood just how much is asked of artists. They cared deeply that local artists be supported. The Rydells believed that, “Art is integral to life, at both the individual and community level.” That is why they left their entire estate to the Community Foundation to create the Rydell Visual Arts Fund. The Fund honors their vision and is an enduring benefit to the visual arts, the artists and the community of Santa Cruz County.

The Rydells also said that the visual arts should include many artistic forms and mediums, and this is expressed by the variety of the artists awarded the Fellowship over the years. In this catalogue, you will see the talents of the four 2018-2019 Fellowship recipients. These Fellows, like the 23 who came before them, were nominated by arts organizations and accomplished artists. Fellows were selected by a jury of arts professionals from across the country who review the nominees in a blind process. Finally, the Fellows were approved by a committee of three advisors who have served to guide the Fund since its inception. The nominators, the jury and the advisors ensure the integrity of the Fellowship through their diligence and expertise.

What these artists have done with their Fellowship awards are as varied as art itself, and cause me to reflect on the response of the artists to society’s call. How have the boundaries of creative expression been pushed? What are the stories being told? What do our responses to the pieces tell us about ourselves? We thank the artists for providing an experience with their work to more deeply connect us to each other and to our own humanity.

The Community Foundation is honored to be trusted by the Rydells to carry out their vision and their legacy. We are grateful for the opportunity to support the creative work of Santa Cruz County’s artists. We believe that with each fellowship or grant, a little bit of Roy and Frances lives on.

Susan True
Chief Executive Officer
Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County
Theme and Variation: views _4 / the artworks of Robert Chiarito

Paint as the tantalizing skin of the sensual puckered self. The snag of the business of Life. The intrigue of it. The carriage of hips, breasts, joints to carry one body, two. Bi-symmetry’s found purpose in the pregnant utility of creating. These are some impressions.

The paintings are at ease but also the elements of the declared forms speak of knowing and familiarity. The densities, front to back as well as side to side, up and down, conveys an equilibrium that states: Tempo, Dynamics, a kind of musical framing narrative in static time.

If one was presented with the riddle of finding a skull that said “Woman” I would present one of Chiarito’s Pelvic anchors.

Also, I see much in this work that is as Homage to Italy or Greece. Of Michelangelo, not Buonarotti, but Antonioni.

The collages smell of stockings, hair spray, teased hair on Italian or Greek girls. Olive skin, green eyes. Touched and burnished by the sun. Leather, rock, sunlight.

There is laughter in these works. And the ease of women standing stock-still on the broadband plinth. Barefoot, fecund. Hauteur, challenge. Fertile and roundly proffered.

Oh and Humour. Sunlight. Sundogs burning through ones closed eyelids on a summer afternoon.

“Ours is a country of arrangements. For things to stay the same, everything must change.” —The Leopard, Giuseppe Tomesi di Lampedusa

“Memories, they remain raw. Even longer than wounds.” —Laird Cullen, Clan Fraser. 1745

To feel the weight of flesh on the bony frame. Rethymno
Surfaces as from the porous limestone give off a pattern of molting, ghostly murmurs of a marble block. Cannot betray the seep of ocean spray on the flanks of the bones - its calcified creatures with characters floating across to impress the transition from the Platonic suggestion to the concrete example. This fusion resonates with an equivocal here-now,
here-then that tumbles time for place, place for time
Elements are reciprocal turns of leaf, letter advance implies direction, as motion implies time
That is not unicursal. But outside of narrative time.
Only in the drawings does one get the blank canvas of a buildings side, mezzo-giorno
When out of the fullest heat of day
Are the torn images of loss and context
But for the evidence of discard. An invocation says element, anew.
A sighting, fragmental.
All mirages are as quicksilver to time and sight. Only true unto themselves.
Color provides contrast but not organically, it holds still
As an abrupt element of equal strength or importance.
With a white form reading negatively as a bleached shell against a black sand barrier,
From the back comes the advance of green and blue.
Letters as scrapes become figures.
And language references double as forms do
Concrete; static perhaps yet solid
Unto themselves.
It is enough.
Also as separate systems within a corpus, overlain
To function as the levels of a glassine clockworks that spin to turn
And counter turn again, in a syncopated, rhythmic dance.
That is to time
What notes are to music.

__________
Is it the yoke of a woman’s hip, or the slingshot forward of an imp’s attention?
Vessel, carry, pass-through. Repetition has made the form stronger, with time of regeneration
And the mutable return, familiar. Then welcome to stay, to form to regulate. To speak.
Above:
Aegean, 2018
Oil on canvas
66" x 60"

Opposite:
Anchor 29, 2018
Oil on canvas
64" x 60"
Top left: Knossos, 2018
Oil on canvas
66" x 60"

Top right: Rethymno, 2018
Oil on canvas
66" x 60"

Bottom left: Sfakia, 2018
Oil on canvas
72" x 64"

Bottom right: Iraklion, 2018
Oil on canvas
66" x 60"

Sicilian Trilogy 1, 2018
Oil on canvas
72" x 64"
Opposite:
The Find, 2018
Oil on canvas
60" x 48"

Above:
Kasbah, 2017
Oil on canvas
51" x 83"
Sicilia, 2017
Oil on canvas
72” x 64”

Ortigia, 2017
Oil on canvas
72” x 64”

Opposite:
Selinunte, 2017
Oil on canvas
72” x 64”
Above: Kriti 18, 2018, mixed media collage, 11.75” x 8.25”

Above right: Anima Sarda 12, 2017, mixed media collage, 11.75” x 8.25”

Right: Kriti 10, 2018, mixed media collage, 11.75” x 8.25”
The figure has always been a dominant presence in my work. Over the course of the forty-plus years that I have been painting, this figurative presence has evolved from naturalistic to expressionistic to its current more reductive state of abstraction.

Over this period of time I have been inspired by Western classical sculpture because of its naturalistic yet idealized representation of the figure and its overriding sensuality. The time that I have spent in Italy, and now in Greece, viewing sculpture and painting as well as archaeological sites has been invaluable to me. It has contributed to my vocabulary and shaped me as an artist. Observing the mark of a hand and a brush on a 3000-year-old Minoan pot collapses time and connects me to a long, humanistic tradition.

Having pursued a lengthy period of expressionistic figurative work, in the last few years I began looking for a way to symbolize and combine both male and female attributes of the figure without relying upon direct representation. In order to accomplish this task I have done many small experimental drawings that have helped to clarify a new direction. In this recent pursuit I have been inspired by the sophisticated distillation of form as symbol found in African, Oceanic and Cycladic sculpture. In my new work I am hoping to achieve a similar sort of distillation of form in the integration and unification of both male and female characteristics in the paintings.

Robert Chiarito
Although David Dunn started out as a musician (a very talented viola player), he has been involved in interdisciplinary thinking all his life. Although, principally known as a composer, by the mid-70s he was already writing about “music’s lack of self-sufficiency as a discipline.” But being involved in interdisciplinary thinking is one thing, and having one’s work exhibited within the context of the gallery is something else. There is a basic distinction between the way time is presented in music and visual art. In the world of music (and all performed arts), time flows in one direction only. The progression of elements is a given – note follows sound follows gesture. These notes/sounds/gestures can be organized in a teleological way (Beethoven, the Beatles) or in a non-teleological way (Cage, field recordings), but they must exist in the stream of our temporal perception. In the gallery a different sense of time exists. Here one is free to assemble one’s own experience, scanning the object in any way one wishes. In contrast with viewer-directed motion, there is the visual environment of the traditional musical score. These are read from left to right, with time on the horizontal axis and frequency on the vertical. Of course, when one looks at any musical score as a visual object, as opposed to its use as a guide to performance, then one is free to direct one’s attention in any way one wishes.

This presents one of the basic conundrums of Dunn’s work in the exhibition. The video work presents a series of images not only presented in a given sequence (at a tempo of one image per minute), but the sounds that one hears are translations of the graphics into sound, following the paradigm of the most traditional kind of score reading. The graphics are scanned from left to right, with pitch going from high to low, top to bottom. And there’s more. The graphics are visualizations of mathematically chaotic, voltage patterns produced by circuitry that Dunn made. Each graphic is a snapshot of a voltage pattern with a very short duration, realized here in tracings of red and green and blue on a black background. There are all sorts of levels of translation happening here, far more than the phenomenon of sound accompanying a graphic might suggest.

A related, but different conundrum is presented by score pages realized as large prints. As prints they are a visual delight. But all these scores are meant to be performed by being read in a left-to-right, top-to-bottom way, and as
visual objects they are something else. Especially the larger “scatter” style scores, reveal symmetrical shapes which are much easier to perceive with the eye than with the ear. Can these visual shapes be heard? The debate continues.

Finally, there is the video which describes a number of the homemade transducers Dunn has made in his exploration of previously unheard areas of sound. As a video this is a simple narrative. It has two aspects – first, the supposedly lo-fi and definitely low-cost materials that Dunn used, and second, the actual objects of his researching, the pictures and sounds of the various insects and mammals that we are unable to hear normally but, with various techno-prostheses, are able to appreciate sonically.

Transduction is the metaphor here, it’s used in all these works. The graphics are transcriptions of voltages, the sounds are transcriptions of the graphics. The scores come from various kinds of transcription processes — environmental recording as a source, a poem analyzed into phonemes, instructions given to a listener to listen in a particular way. The recordings of natural sounds out of our normal hearing range is another form of transcription, making the unheard audible.

In all this work, David Dunn is working between disciplines normally thought of as separate. The visual, the sonic, the literary, are all separate modes of consciousness. Dunn has speculated about music and sound as being alternative modes of thought, “I wonder if music might be our way of mapping reality through metaphors of sound as if it were a parallel way of thinking to the visually dominant metaphors of our speech and written symbols” (Dunn, 2001). This visually dazzling work serves as a gateway to thoughts about different modes of consciousness and perception, and the many kinds of connections that can exist between them.

Warren Burt
Co-ordinator of Post-Graduate Studies in Music, Box Hill Institute, Melbourne

Bibliography:
Warren Burt, Co-ordinator of Post-Graduate Studies in Music, Box Hill Institute, Melbourne

Computer generated graphic images that are converted into computer-generated audio signals (Fast Fourier Transform). Each graphic is one minute in duration with time represented by the horizontal axis and frequency by the vertical axis. Colors represent relative levels of amplitude and intensity. (Images on pages 23 and 26 – 35 unless noted otherwise.)
Unique DIY devices made to discover otherwise hidden sound worlds. These sound art inventions are notable for their inexpensive materials and for facilitating art/science research dedicated to real-world environmental problem-solving. Some of the sounds and techniques are new to science.

1) An ultrasonic microphone made from an electrical plate cover, a hearing-aid capsule, a wood dowel, and an audio cable. Used for recording bats.

2) A hydrophone (underwater microphone) made from a tuna can, hobby resin, two piezo bend- ers (from greeting cards), and an audio cable. Used for recording underwater sounds.

3) An insertion transducer made from a hearing-aid capsule, a ballpoint pen shaft, and an audio cable. Used for recording terrestrial ants underground.

4) A vibration transducer made from a gutted meat thermometer, a plastic washer, a piezo bender (from a greeting card), and an audio cable. Used for recording insects inside of trees.

5) A vibration transducer made from a piezo bender, a wood dowel, an old gramophone needle and an audio cable. Used for recording sound vibrations on the surface of plants.

6) Sound enclosure made from a plastic Dixie Cup with an air microphone made from a hearing- aid capsule and a ballpoint pen shaft. There is also a vibration platform made with piezo benders attached to a plastic yoghurt container lid, and audio cables. Used for recording small insects.

7) A unique 8-channel ultrasonic microphone array (2nd order ambisonic) made from small wood spheres, hearing air capsules, wood sticks, and audio cables.
From the Artist:

Much of my work attempts to convince others of the diversity of auditory worlds that surround us, and the surprising nature of the physical mediums through which they pass. I am also interested in inventing affordable tools for that exploration. Underlying all of this is a polemic that argues for the necessity of an art form that is positioned within a discourse between art and science, and where the non-human world consequently takes center stage.

Given the avalanche of messages that we are receiving from the Earth in the form of disrupted natural cycles, increasing natural disasters, unprecedented loss of biological diversity and global warming, it is apparent that we are truly beginning to pass through the eye of the environmental needle. One of the best uses of my time, as an artist, is to simply discover some of nature’s changing messages and pass them along to others.

David Dunn
Toward the end of a quiet Live Oak street, steps away from abundant green space that provides country-calm in the midst of the city, a white picket fence borders a front yard. But that’s where a sense of predictable conventionality ends—the house behind the fence is painted turquoise, green and purple. In a converted backyard garage is painter Myra Eastman’s light and airy studio. And inside that studio, though Myra is not a loud person, it’s anything but quiet—visually speaking—that is. And then there’s the street dog who Myra and her husband rescued as a pup and brought home. Black-and-white Max is the embodiment of energized movement as an expression of curiosity and love. Myra’s paintings are expressions of the same.

Though the world’s complexities and troubles may be at a physical distance from her studio, they’re front and center in Myra’s mind and heart and, thusly, in her work. The large, boisterous paintings are lush with life’s cacophony, vibrant color and tumultuous action.

Some art offers viewers a respite from current events. Not Myra’s. This artist is not one to turn away; rather she engages. Her paintings say, “Sure, life is complicated, but look and see, and respond!” Standing before her canvases, I’m captivated and don’t want to look anywhere else.

Myra says, “I am bombarded with an overload of human misery. I can only make sense of it if I tear off a tiny piece and create works of art that speak to humanity and dignity.” She tells me, “I’ll hear something on the radio while I’m working, so I can’t not paint it.”

For many years, while working as a public-school teacher, and for some of those years as a single mom, Myra painted late into the night, long after her children were asleep, because that was the time she had. Such was her artistic drive. This painter is after “the intersectionality of experience,” which, truly, if how life comes at us, doesn’t it—unremitting, all at once, from every direction, one event colliding with another? Myra embraces life, even when it brings her to her knees, as today’s concerns do, from the #MeToo movement to the immigration injustice facing our country.

Though not an immigrant herself, like most Americans, coming from elsewhere is part of Myra’s origin story. Her paternal grandparents fled the pogroms in Russia. Myra’s ferocity and empathy hit the canvas running. Her series The Great Migration: El Salvador to Santa Cruz and Migration North explore the hell of having to flee home—as poet Warsan Shire clarifies, “no one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a
These paintings address experiences of being mistreated at the border, of migrants living in Santa Cruz terrorized by ICE raids, of what it means to be a refugee, to be told you don’t belong. Myra says, “These are dire times for our southern neighbors who seek to escape gangs, violence or extreme poverty.”

Each time I went to talk with Myra and to be with her paintings, though I stood firm on the hardwood floor, I felt anything but still. James Baldwin said, “For nothing is fixed, forever... the earth is always shifting, the light is always changing. Generations do not cease to be born, and we are responsible to them because we are the only witnesses they have.” That thinking is evident in Myra’s work—the sense of creative responsibility to witness, document and respond.

Most of her paintings give viewers more than a single story; they offer multiple narratives and vignettes. Look closely at the work that is both quilt- and collage-like and you’ll discover stories within and behind others and images used iconically, such as coyotes, hidden cameras, secret doors. “In order to avoid regurgitated tropes and clichés,” Myra says, “I use metaphors. They may be ambiguous to viewers, and that’s okay with me.”

“The path gets crooked,” Myra tells me, “I have pieces but they have to come together as a whole. That’s the challenge for me; how do I bring it together?” It may be a challenge—but you’d never know it looking at her finished pictures. She gives us life’s rough and tender beauty, bold and brilliant truth-telling. Myra’s paintings invite us in, and once we enter, what may have seemed afar is now near, and our empathy enlarges.

Patrice Vecchione
Author, poet and teacher, co-editor of Ink Knows No Borders: Poems of the Immigrant and Refugee Experience
Opposite page:
Three Baby Carriages,
Mulholland Drive Series, 2016
Acrylic on canvas
60” x 48”

Right:
Man With Magnify Glass,
Voting Series, 2009
Gouache on wood panel
21” x 18”
Standing In Line, Voting Series, 2009
Gouache on wood panel
22" x 32"

The Bus Station, The Great Migration: El Salvador to Santa Cruz Series, 2017
Acrylic on canvas
24" x 30"
Above:
Kevin Todo, The Great Migration: El Salvador to Santa Cruz Series, 2017
Acrylic on canvas
24" x 30"

Opposite:
Riding The Rails, Migration North Series, 2018
Acrylic on canvas
16" x 16" (5), 20" x 16" (5)
Opposite:
Telephones, Migration North Series, 2019
Acrylic on canvas
60” x 48”

Above:
Water Jugs, Migration North Series, 2018
Acrylic on canvas
36” x 46”
The Diner, Mulholland Drive Series, 2016
Acrylic on canvas
48” x 60”

Sheep Take Over, 2019
Acrylic on canvas
48” x 60”
From the Artist

These are perilous times and I cannot look away or despair. I must paint what I can’t stop thinking about and what keeps me up at night. Everyday I’m bombarded with an overload of human misery and unspeakable horror. I can only make sense of it all if I tear off a tiny piece and create works of art that speak to our common humanity and dignity. My paintings are driven both by my past and a desire to make sense of the chaos surrounding our world. As grounded as my work is in political and social narratives, it is equally critical that my paintings are aesthetically compelling. My paintings must hold all the often-disparate vignettes together, each part connected to the whole. I strive to contain the often-chaotic action, creating areas of calm and reflection on the picture plane. I purposely imbue the work with an ironically cheerful color palette, challenging the viewer to move beyond the carnival-like colors to discover the underlying conceptual underpinnings of the work.

Myra Eastman
Discreetly, Robin Kandel invites us to share moments of the artist’s experience that generate acts of retrieval and reimagining “in which time comes back into phase with itself.” A classic example of such moments would be Proust’s famous passage about savoring the tea-dipped madeleine that brought back the world of his childhood. In Kandel’s music box (the persistence of love and war), such interweavings of past and present reveal themselves through enigmatic encounters among objects—photographs, picture frames, poetic texts, surveyor’s tools, music stands and stand-ins for her aide-mémoire, the music box of the title.

Entering the space of the work’s imagination, we are called to reflect on “the interferences between past and present” that may come to us unbidden. Just as traces of family history informed Kandel’s paintings and installations in recent years, music box explores seams of personal memory. We might approach this layering of her parents’ stories by pondering the ten large vertical photographs of her mother, arranged in a sequence of overlapping sections on two of the installation’s walls. Seated at her dressing table on her wedding day, marked with the actual date (4-4-54), she wears a short white veil, pearls and a lace gown tucked up to reveal her garter belt, a coquettish nod to her prim glasses.

But this woman is far from prim. Her half smile is eager, her body turned as if anticipating the ceremony to come. Kandel’s digital decoupage and recomposition of this image allows her mother to look back at her reflection in the dressing table mirror, as if contemplating both past and future in this charged moment—which precedes the artist’s own appearance in the world.

The prelude to Kandel’s creative process, we learn from a text on one of music stands, was her rediscovery of an object that still sits on her mother’s dressing table, the shell-encrusted music box she played with as a child. (Though not included in the installation its music echoes visually in a color blowup clipped to one of the large vertical strips and the image of another shell collection.)

The music box’s provenance—on military service during the Korean war, Kandel’s father bought it for his fiancée in Berchtesgaden, near Hitler’s mountain refuge—stirs thoughts of the irony implicit in such a love token, since he had spent his own childhood escaping from the Nazis. A second text recalls the artist’s sense as a child that the box possessed a “dangerous hist-
tory”—the ongoing presence of war in their lives (World War II, Korea, Vietnam). By stages (as we absorb this information) music box layers its dominant theme, the persistence of war, into the artist’s reimagining of her parents’ love story.

A vintage instrument perched nearby, appropriately a surveyor’s transit, entices us to gaze across the room at a tiny photograph, the original wedding day image. In two companion photos the father appears in Germany on his way to purchase the music box for his bride-to-be, and implicitly in his ominous photograph of a bombed German town. Wall texts provide context for these images, the lyrics for the music box’s absent tune, and a poem, “this sky will cover you when you fall down,” that seems to speak to the dark clouds in the father’s photograph.

A look through the second surveyor’s transit, focused on this poem, hints that it also comments on Kandel’s larger themes: “and the old and the new/ and here and far away/ familiar and unknown.” Gazing through these instruments of vision while traversing the installation’s overlaps and layering, we seem to follow the motions of the artist’s mind opening to heightened interferences of past and present.

In previous installations, The 45th Parallel, distance and measure, Kandel considered ideas of space, acts of measurement, landmarks and “long stretches that take us somewhere, and elsewhere.” In music box she explores dimensions of time with the same artfulness of these earlier works. By making material its metaphoric and philosophical concerns, music box becomes aware of its own attempts to measure personal history. And as we ponder the work’s implications, we may feel that its process of exploration has become, by extension, our own.

Perhaps it is not by chance that a number of empty picture frames are stacked beside the large wedding day images. Might they imply that not everything has been uncovered, that there is more to come? Admirers of Kandel’s subtle reflections undoubtedly hope so.

Note: Kandel gives the source of two quotations, “in which time comes back into phase with itself” and “the interferences between past and present,” as Shattuck, The Banquet Years. I borrowed “long stretches that take us somewhere, and elsewhere” from The 45th Parallel.

Carolyn Burke  
Burke has written biographies of Mina Loy, Lee Miller, Edith Piaf, and most recently, Foursome: Alfred Stieglitz, Georgia O’Keeffe, Paul Strand, Rebecca Salsbury.

54 55
on the way to Berchtesgaden, 2019
Pigment print in archival sleeve
Image 4.19” x 3”

wedding day (Mom), 2019
Pigment print in archival sleeve
Image 3.25” x 4.5”
music box (the persistence of love and war), partial installation view, 2019
Multiple pigment prints hung, collaged, rolled and framed; two music stands and texts; two surveyor transits on tripods
Opposite:

music box (the persistence of love and war), partial installation view, 2019

Three pigment prints in archival sleeves with accompanying framed wall texts, framed pigment print collage, framed letter and travel advertising

music box (the persistence of love and war), 2019
Installation details, pages 61-65
From the Artist

When I was a child I played with a music box that sat on my mother’s dresser. It was a token of love sent to her from afar. Back then my imagination reeled with a war on TV, a Teletype 33RO churning in our basement and misperceptions of my father’s war-torn childhood in my head. Running a finger across its mechanical steel drum as tines plinked out a tune, I was certain the music box belonged to a dangerous history. Three inherited photographs uncover intertwining pasts and conflated histories in music box (the persistence of love and war).

Robin Kandel

The shell collection, 2019
Pigment print and frame
14 3/5” x 10”