

## ONES TO WATCH

Spotlighting the works of painters Olivia Pendergast and Sandra Pratt, mixed-media artist Kristine Allphin, metalworker Bryan Petersen and architect Jim Dayton

WRITTEN BY Michele Corriel

### Painter **Olivia Pendergast**

travels the globe in search of one intimate moment. Encompassing insights with portraits from Kenya, Malawi, Ethiopia, Haiti and Bangladesh, Pendergast reaches beyond language. Although it might seem as if the portraits would feel separated by culture and geography, in reality they pull us closer to our own humanity.

“When I get to Africa I feel an openness,” Pendergast says. “There’s something about having a language barrier, where we are forced to connect on another level, that makes the whole experience really sweet.”

When she’s in Africa, Pendergast has a friend who translates Swahili for her. That friend arranges for home visits



*Blanc*

Oil and Graphite on Prepared Paper | 36 x 48 inches | 2011



*Fall*

Oil and Graphite on Prepared Paper | 36 x 48 inches | 2014

where Pendergast can step into another world, sometimes by sharing in an embarrassing moment.

“It’s not super heady. I know when I have a connection to somebody and feel I would be incredibly moved to paint this person,” she says, noting that she pays her models for their time. “I’m interested in capturing that moment of intimacy ... a look away or a hand gesture, something that indicates the connection. I just can’t do that in a studio setting.”

Her portraits are not painstakingly exact; they’re not photographs transferred to paint. Instead they are a highly stylized, emotionally packed imprint of her journey, her experience and the sitter’s experience related to the viewer through bold color and vibrant composition. The backgrounds, while not exactly neutral, are part of the impact of her portraits, a kind of running commentary.

“When I see these people, I’m so moved I sometimes start crying,” she says of her experiences in the homes of strangers in foreign lands. “But when people see the finished figurative pieces, they’re really moved by them. It’s always getting back to the feeling of openness, love. When I’m in the studio, the thing I saw in them to begin with is re-expressed while painting. The end product is never the goal. As soon as I’m done with one portrait, I’m ready to do the next one.”

Pendergast went to Haiti five months after the big earthquake, hoping to help out with her photography and maybe with her paintings, but she found herself too overwhelmed by the tragedy and her own grief.

“It took me a year just to deal with the photographs,” she says. “It was the one year anniversary and I realized that people had forgotten about Haiti.” That revelation affected her deeply, so she did a show called *Forgetting Haiti*, putting up posters all over Seattle. The idea was that the posters themselves would be pasted over in a day or so, highlighting how easy it is for people to forget. The gallery show



***Self with Daughter***

Oil and Graphite on Prepared Paper | 24 x 36 inches | 2015

that followed included a series of the Haiti portraits.

“Once I would start to push Haiti away, I forced myself to stay plugged into what happened there,” she says. “I don’t usually have a political intent in my work. It’s more of an awareness within myself. Sometimes the humanity of it all is overwhelming and that’s when I start painting landscapes to take a break.”

In her landscapes she’s interested in quiet places and the negative spaces. “Landscapes are more challenging,” she says. “I try to catch the light that I feel, but I never really seem to get it. Each painting is practice for the next one. They’re never perfect.”

Pendergast’s work is in the permanent collections of Art Access Gallery in Salt Lake City, Utah; Park City Mountain Resort in Park City, Utah; and the Juniper Sky Fine Art Gallery in Ivins, Utah. She is represented by the J GO Gallery in Park City, Utah; Showcase Fine Art in Dubai; and One Off Contemporary Art Gallery in Nairobi, Kenya.