

STUDY GUIDE

Fall 2022 Exhibitions

Thursday, October 13-Saturday, December 17, 2022

Craig Drennen: *First Acts, Scene 2*

Ruth C. Horton Gallery

Recommended for students in grades 4-8

Steve Locke:

the daily practice of painting

Miles C. Horton Jr. Gallery and

Sherwood Payne Quillen '71 Reception Gallery

Recommended for students in grades 9-12

Conor McGrady: *Mountain Series*

Exterior Turner Street wall and

Francis T. Eck Exhibition Corridor

Through summer 2023

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The Moss Arts Center would like to thank each of the artists and Alexander Gray Associates, New York, for providing these images for our educational resources. For more information about each artist, visit the links and additional resources in the guide.

ABOUT THE MOSS ARTS CENTER GALLERIES

The Moss Arts Center at Virginia Tech is dedicated to providing transformative arts experiences to children through gallery tours, artist engagements, and special school-day matinee performances from renowned touring artists for children, teachers, and families.

Explore exciting new opportunities to connect with the arts through exhibitions and study guides created especially for young audiences. Contact us to register for a gallery tour and to sign up for emails to learn more about the Moss Arts Center's K-12 programs.

PLAN YOUR VISIT

Gallery Hours

Wednesday-Friday, 10 AM-5 PM

Saturday, 10 AM-4 PM

Entrance to the galleries is always free and open to the public. The Ruth C. Horton Gallery is located downstairs in the Moss Arts Center near the Alumni Hall entrance. The Miles C. Horton Jr. Gallery and Sherwood Payne Quillen '71 Reception Gallery are located upstairs near the Turner Street entrance. Find parking information at artscenter.vt.edu/visit/parking.

WE'RE HERE TO HELP

Please reach out to Shara Appanaitis, engagement manager, at sappanaitis@vt.edu or 540-231-0806 to schedule a visit or for questions about teaching, learning, and engaging with our programs.

We Want Everyone to Enjoy the Exhibition

Please prepare your students for their visit to the Moss Arts Center by practicing museum manners before you visit. The following guidelines will ensure that everyone can enjoy the exhibition:

- Do not touch the works of art. Always stay a safe distance away from each work of art.
- Do not lean on the gallery walls or pedestals. You may sit on the benches or the floor.
- Food, gum, and beverages are not allowed inside the galleries.
- Please remove backpacks and place them in a safe place away from the art.
- Use only pencils when writing or drawing in the galleries.
- Photography is allowed, but please do not use a flash.



CRAIG DRENNEN

First Acts, Scene 2

Ruth C. Horton Gallery

Recommended for grades 4-8

About the Exhibition

Craig Drennen's first exhibition in Virginia and at Virginia Tech, *First Acts, Scene 2* features paintings, mixed-media installations, and a video from Drennen's ongoing series based on William Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*.

Since 2008 Drennen has organized his practice around *Timon of Athens*. Unproduced in Shakespeare's lifetime, it is regarded as the bard's weakest play. The play has become Drennen's more than 14-year slow walk to self-portraiture. Drennen has said this project began as an intuitive response to find a largely unknown subject, deep in the Western canon. Working from the minor to major characters, each character serves as an opportunity for satire for his artist's personae and as a survey of the history of painting.

Drennen finds inspiration by drawing from his Appalachian childhood to bring new perspectives to forgotten characters and to challenge the viewer. Drennen's artworks combine 2D and 3D elements, as well as video, to break the boundaries of the canvas and explore the self, using art historical references.

▲ Craig Drennen; *Timon of Athens 1, 2009* (detail); oil on canvas; 72 x 108 inches; courtesy of the artist

Artist Statement

Since 2008 I have occupied a discarded subject, Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*. Shakespeare's fame promises reverent proximity to culture's intellectual center, yet this play's weak status places it—and me—in an unpoliced zone at the edge of the canon. The best is adhered to the worst, and strength is inseparable from weakness.

I produce a distinct body of work for each character in the play based on intuitive associations. I trust intuition because intuition is the primary survival mechanism for children and marginalized people. Any character can be an entry point into the entire project, yet no single character can give the project's full scope. I have introduced 11 characters so far, and I have worked on the Merchant character since the pandemic began. Merchant includes circular compositions based on early illustrations of the COVID-19 virus, with depictions of vinyl records and money included. The records are songs I remember from a jukebox in my hometown laundromat that I visited with my mother in the 1970s. The memories of a single Appalachian child are allowed inside the Shakespeare property. The marginalized and forgotten are willfully overlaid onto the Western world's most remembered creator.

I have worked on this project for 14 years, and I will continue it until I address the entire cast of the play. I have come to recognize that I've initiated a slow-moving intervention directly into the Western canon. In the end, the asymmetry between Shakespeare's reputation and my own will likely remain intact. Yet there will come a time when *Timon of Athens* will be known as mine instead of his.

Biography

Craig Drennen (b. 1966) was born in Elyria, Ohio, and raised in central West Virginia. Drennen lives and works in Atlanta, Georgia. A painter and a 2018 Guggenheim Fellow, Drennen has exhibited in Nashville, Birmingham, and Atlanta, as well as in New York City, Boston, and Los Angeles. He has been an artist in residence at Yaddo, MacDowell, the Triangle Arts Foundation, and Skowhegan. His work has been reviewed in *Art in America*, *Artforum*, the *New York Times*, and the *Boston Globe*. Drennen served as dean at Skowhegan, teaches at Georgia State University, and manages THE END Project Space.

CRAIG DRENNEN, continued

ACTIVITIES IN THE GALLERIES



Elaboration Game

- Divide into groups of four. One person in the group identifies a specific section of the artwork and describes what they see. A second group member elaborates on the first person's observations by adding more details about the section. The third and fourth group members add more details and observations.
- The next group of four identifies a different section of the painting and the process starts over.
- After the artwork is fully described, discuss the entire work as a group. Use open-ended questions such as: What do you think is going on in this image? Why do you think the artist chose to use these colors? What kinds of feelings does this artwork evoke for you?

Social Emotional Learning: Questions for Discussion

Craig Drennen has spent the past 14 years working on this body of work, which is based on a play.

- Describe a time you read a book or watched a movie that had a story, character, or setting that was meaningful to you. How did it make you feel and why?
- Drennen uses symbols, colors, and other abstract elements to represent the characters from the play. If you were to create an abstract work of art about yourself, what are some of the symbols or meaningful colors you would include? Why would you choose those?

Virginia SEL Standards: SeA1: 3-4a, SeA2: 3-4d, DeM2: 3-4a, SeA1: 5-6a, DeM2: 5-6a, SeA1: 7-8a, DeM2: 7-8a

English: Ekphrastic Poetry

An ekphrastic poem is a type of writing that brings a work of art to life through vivid description, narration, or speculation. Ekphrasis allows learners to use one art form (creative writing) to reflect on another (visual art, music, dance). After looking at the works of art in this exhibition, write a poem that responds to the work, challenges the work or the artist, or responds to the themes of this work of art in a broader way.

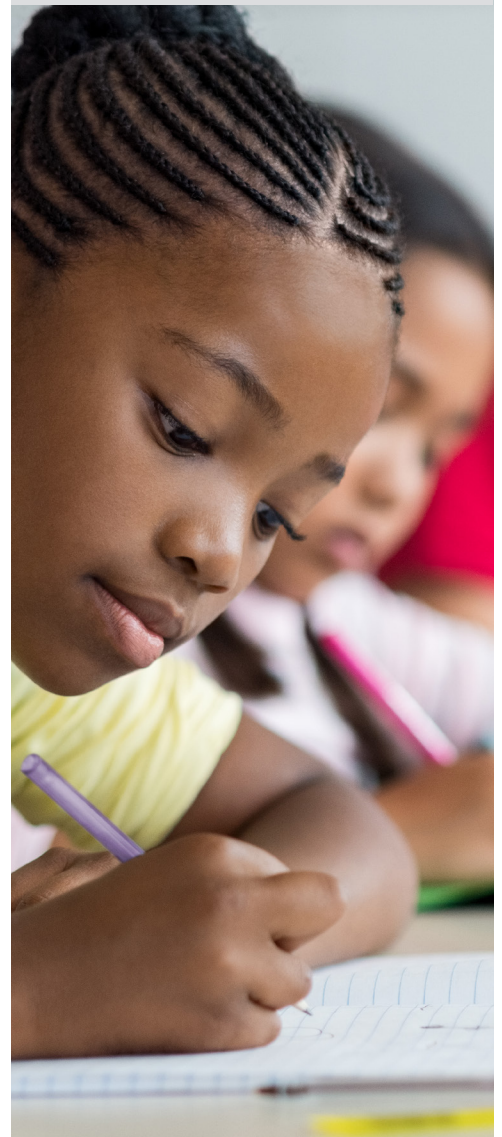
Virginia English Standards of Learning: 4.7, 5.7, 6.7, 7.7, 8.7

Visual Arts: Mixed-Media Journaling

Help students to choose a theme or topic to inspire their first mixed-media journal pages. The topic can be a story, character, word, song, feeling, or person. Provide a variety of wet and dry media, recycled paper, fabric, and string. Starting with a black page, cover a large section of that page with a watercolor wash or collage. Continue adding collaged, drawn, and painted elements to the page, making sure to balance the composition, stick to a color scheme, and repeat elements for unity. If a composition gets too busy, use white paint or gesso to obscure some areas. When the page feels complete, give it a title.

Virginia Visual Arts Standards of Learning: 4.1, 4.2, 4.12, 4.16, 4.17, 5.1, 5.2, 5.12, 5.15, 5.16, 5.17, 6.1, 6.2, 6.12, 6.15, 6.17, 7.1, 7.2, 7.12, 7.15, 7.17, 8.8.1, 8.12, 8.15, 8.17

ACTIVITIES IN THE CLASSROOM



CRAIG DRENNEN, continued

LINKS AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Artist website](#)

Artist Talk:

Friday, October 14, 2 PM

Cube

Free and open to the public

Recent Artist Talk:

June 19, 2021

[Craig Drennen at Laney Contemporary](#), Savannah, Georgia

Artist Interview:

December 9, 2021

[Access Atlanta podcast](#)

Felicia Feaster interviews Craig Drennen

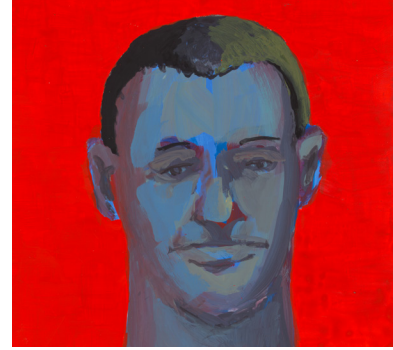
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First Acts, 48-page exhibition catalog published by Atlanta Contemporary, Atlanta, Georgia

Old Athenian, 16-page exhibition catalog published by Stove Works, Chattanooga, Tennessee



▲ Craig Drennen; *Chorus T*, 2022 (detail); clocks and latex paint on wall; 14 x 10 feet; courtesy the artist



STEVE LOCKE

the daily practice of painting

Miles C. Horton Jr. Gallery and
 Sherwood Payne Quillen '71 Reception Gallery
 Recommended for grades 9-12

About the Exhibition

Steve Locke's series, *the daily practice of painting*, invites the viewer to consider the artist's dedication to his craft. Consisting of a daily record of Locke's painting practice, this exhibition features a series of small male portraits. In this series, Locke also considers themes of identity and self-expression. The 6 x 6-inch portraits appear similar, yet a closer inspection reveals individual personalities and moods of the subjects depicted. Using a broad palette of colors and expressive brushstrokes, Locke imbues his figures with a variety of emotions, asking the viewer to consider each individual portrait in contrast to the repetition of scale in the series.

the daily practice of painting is a daily affirmation to Locke's belief in everyday work. Labor is his and not dependent on outside approval.

▲ Steve Locke; *the daily practice of painting*, 2020; egg tempera and oil emulsion on Claybord; 114 6 x 6 inch panels; courtesy Alexander Gray Associates, New York; © 2022 Steve Locke / Artists Rights Society

Artist Statement

I believe in work. It has been my most reliable solution.

I have never believed in inspiration or safety as a condition for work or for anything else. The former is unreliable and the latter is a stranger to me. If a sense of safety were a necessity to being an artist, I never would have become one. I did not want to have to depend on something or someone outside of me to make my work. I did not want to have to look for validation or support or welcome or encouragement because I knew from bitter experience that those things are subject to whims and fashion.

I could not build a practice on anything on which I could not depend. That meant that I had to develop a sense of things I thought were worth investigating and a sense of what is at stake in being an artist alive at this moment. The things that interest me as an artist today are the same things that have interested me my entire life. Even though the materials of the work may shift, the concerns are the same across all of the bodies of work. What some people think of as ventures into other media are for me an extension of my practice as a painter.

So I work everyday in some way. These paintings are an example of my daily practice. They are 6 x 6 inches square on Claybord. Most are gouache, a couple are casein, and a few are high flow acrylic, and they are uploaded in close to chronological order with a few exceptions (the last paintings are the latest). No one asked me to make them and no one needs them. They are the work I do every day.

Biography

Steve Locke (b. 1963) was born in Cleveland, Ohio and raised in Detroit, Michigan. Locke lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. In 2022 he was awarded the Rappaport Prize by deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum. In 2020 he was awarded the Guggenheim Fellowship from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation. Solo exhibitions include the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum; Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; and Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, among others. He has done projects with ForFreedoms, Kickstarter, the Boston Public Library, and P.S. Satellites/Prospect IV in New Orleans and has had gallery exhibitions with yours mine & ours, Samsøñ, LaMontagne Gallery, Gallery Kayafas, and Mendes Wood. He attended residencies with the City of Boston (2018), the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum (2016), the MacDowell Colony (2015), and Skowhegan (2002). Locke is a recipient of grants from Pollock-Krasner Foundation, Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation, and Art Matters Foundation. His work has been reviewed in *Artforum*, *Art in America*, *The Boston Globe*, and *The New Yorker*, and his writing has been published in *Artforum* as well as in museum catalogues. Locke is a professor of fine arts at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York.

STEVE LOCKE, continued

ACTIVITIES IN THE GALLERIES



Inner Monologue

After looking closely at the entire exhibition, ask students to choose one portrait in the gallery and write two to three sentences about what that individual is thinking and feeling in the moment. Students then take turns sharing their reflections in small groups, pointing out the subtle details that gave them clues about the mood of the painting.

Social Emotional Learning: Questions for Discussion

Steve Locke said of his work, “the privilege of looking and the wish to be seen are positions I explore.” For many of us, social media platforms are frequently used to see and be seen by others. A recent survey found that 70% of teens in the United States use social media multiple times per day.

- How has social media affected you? How has it affected your friendships?
- Have you experienced any social pressures when using social media?
- There are many benefits to connecting with friends online, but social pressures can make our experiences with social media negative at times, leaving you feeling anxious, depressed, worried, or fearful that you’re missing out on something. What strategies can you use to help you have a positive experience when using social media? How do these strategies include your friends or the people that you connect with online?

Virginia SEL Standards: ReS2: 9-10b, DeM1: 9-10a, DeM2: 9-10a, ReS2: 11-12b, DeM1: 11-12a

English: Six-Word Story

Novelist Ernest Hemingway is attributed as the author of a famously evocative six-word story, submitted in response to a friendly competition.

“For sale: Baby shoes. Never worn.” —Ernest Hemingway

Even though the authorship is unproven, the story stands on its own merits. It combines poetry and drama into a short form that is difficult to achieve. Six-word stories can be dark, light, funny, or tragic. For a six-word story to really stand out there are a few elements that must be in place: the story should make sense to the reader, take the reader on a journey, and evoke an emotion.

Share the six-word story above with students and discuss why it is effective. Have students choose one work of art in the gallery and use it as inspiration for their own six-word story. Share the finished story in small groups when they are complete.

Virginia English Standards of Learning: 9.1, 9.4, 9.6, 10.1, 10.2, 10.4, 10.6, 11.4, 11.6, 12.6

ACTIVITIES IN THE CLASSROOM



STEVE LOCKE, continued

Visual Arts: Self-Portraits

Ask students to think about and record which colors they associate with different emotions and why. Using any colored media, have students draw 6 x 6 inch self-portraits and create a classroom collage of portraits. Ask students to consider which colors they choose for their backgrounds, clothing, etc., as well as the facial expressions of their self-portraits. Why did they choose these colors? What expression does their portrait have? What do these factors say about the mood of their artwork overall? Does it convey the student's personality, likes/dislikes, etc.?

Virginia Visual Arts Standards of Learning: AI.1, AI. 2, AI.12, AI.14, AI.15, AI.16, AI.17, AII.1, AII.2, AII.12, AII.14, AII.15, AII.17, AIII.2, AIII.3, AIII.4, AIII.14, AIII.17, AIV.14, AIV.16

LINKS AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Artist website](#)

Interview with the artist:

June 15, 2020

[Steve Locke: *Three Deliberate Grays for Freddie*](#)

Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum

July 11, 2022

[Steve Locke: *Homage to the Auction Block*](#)

June 3, 2014

[Steve Locke: *there is no one left to blame*](#)

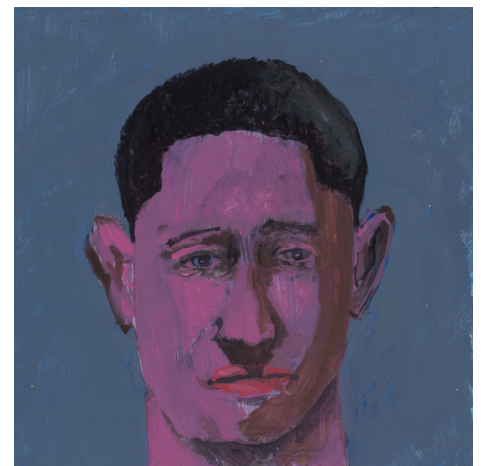
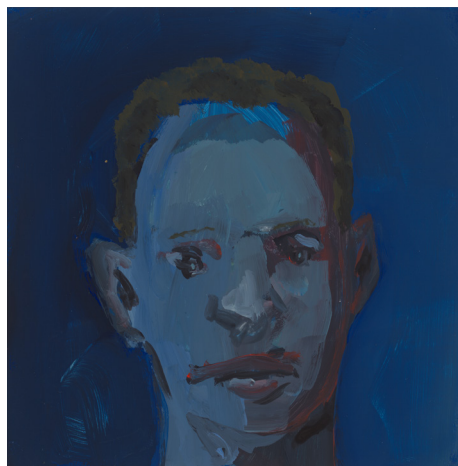
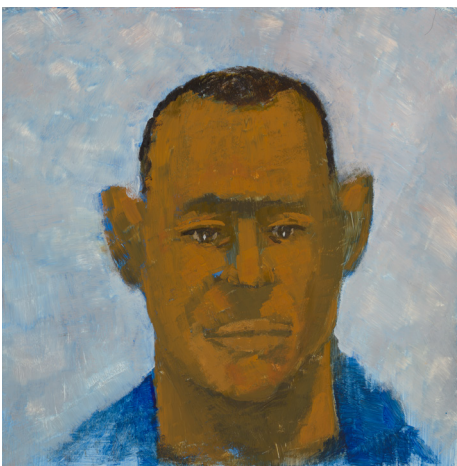
Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit

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Ambrose, Graham. *Installation at the Gardner Honors the 'Unfinished Business' of Freddie Gray*. *The Boston Globe*, June 28, 2018.

Armstrong, Annie. *Steve Locke Withdraws Proposal for Slave Auction Block Memorial in Boston*. *Artnews*, July 17, 2021.

Best of 2018: Our Top 20 Exhibitions Across the United States. *Hyperallergic*, December 20, 2018.



▲ Steve Locke; *the daily practice of painting*, 2020; egg tempera and oil emulsion on Claybord; 114 6 x 6 inch panels; courtesy Alexander Gray Associates, New York; © 2022 Steve Locke / Artists Rights Society



CONOR MCGRADY

Mountains Series

Exterior Turner Street wall and
Francis T. Eck Exhibition Corridor

Artist Statement

These images are from a recent series of works exploring landscape as a multi-layered signifier, representing national territory, boundaries, control, and a sense of unease or threat. The works have been produced in the context of the ongoing tension between the desire for openness and fluidity on the one hand, and the ringfencing of nation states and territories as ideological enclosures, with an increase in barriers to mobility and migration on the other.

As images they draw upon the picturesque construction of landscape as an indicator of national identity, informed by the ideas of the romantic and the sublime, yet are underpinned by a sense of disquiet or alienation. As such they represent an investigation into the role that images of landscape play in relation to ideology.

▲ Conor McGrady; *Mountains Series*, 2018-2022; original images; gouache on paper; 22 x 32 inches; courtesy of the artist

Biography

Conor McGrady (b. 1970, Downpatrick, Northern Ireland) is an Irish artist, primarily working in painting and drawing. McGrady's work examines the role of authority in contemporary society, mainly in how power is manifested and represented in architecture, urban space, and in individual and collective actions. The work arises from situations of civil unrest and social instability, often drawing on the artist's experience growing up in Northern Ireland.

McGrady has exhibited internationally, with one-person exhibitions in New York, Miami, Atlanta, Chicago, and Zagreb. Group exhibitions include the 2002 Whitney Biennial in New York, *The Jerusalem Show VII: Fractures* (Qalandiya International Biennial), D-0 Ark Underground Biennale of Contemporary Art, Sarajevo-Konjic, and IK-00 Spaces of Confinement in Venice. Editor of Radical History Review's *Curated Spaces*, his writing has appeared in the *Brooklyn Rail*, *Ruminations on Violence* (Waveland Press, 2007), *State of Emergence* (Plottner Verlag, 2011), and *State in Time* (Drustvo NSK Informativni Center, Ljubljana, 2012). McGrady lives and works in the Burren, Ireland, where he is the dean of academic affairs at the Burren College of Art.

MOSS ARTS CENTER
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190 Alumni Mall, Blacksburg, VA 24061
artscenter.vt.edu | 540-231-5300