



Angela Fraleigh
SOUND THE DEEP WATERS



Top to bottom: *The Magic Mirror*, 1902, from *Where the Wind Blows* by Katharine Pyle (New York: R.H. Russell, 1902). Bertha Corson Day (1875–1968). | **Title page**, designed by Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882), from *Goblin Market and Other Poems* by Christina Rossetti (London: Macmillan, 1862). | *Then it was a swan that beat its wings in her face*, from *Wonder Tales Retold* by Katharine Pyle (1863–1938) (Boston: Little, Brown, 1916).



Top to bottom: *The Green Butterfly*, c. 1879–1881. Albert Joseph Moore (1841–1893). | *May Margaret*, 1865–1866. Frederick Sandys (1829–1904).



Top to bottom: *She managed to throw the third stone at him*, from *Wonder Tales Retold* by Katharine Pyle (1863–1938) (Boston: Little, Brown, 1916). | *Toilette of a Roman Lady*, 1869. Simeon Solomon (1840–1905). | **Advertising poster for *Arabella and Araminta Stories* by Gertrude Smith**, 1895. Ethel Reed (1874–1912).

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Directly inspired by the Delaware Art Museum’s collection, *Angela Fraleigh: Sound the Deep Waters* presents a contemporary look at gender and identity through the lens of historic narrative art. The artist explains that the construction of meaning—through image and word—is a critical topic in her work. Repeated stories and pervasive visuals dictate how women are perceived and how they navigate the world. Fraleigh dismantles those narratives in hopes of understanding the socio-political complexities involved in their creation. In doing so, she provides a utopian space in which agency is restored to the female protagonist.

Fraleigh mines the history of academic and avant-garde painting and the unique collections of public institutions for source imagery of women by female and male artists. Conflating historic images dating from the second half of the 19th century with portraits of contemporary women—former female students, now colleagues—she underscores links between the past and present. For this project, the artist drew from the Delaware Art Museum’s deep holdings of Pre-Raphaelite art and American illustration. Fraleigh references paintings by Albert Moore, Frederick Sandys, and Simeon Solomon and illustrations by Bertha Corson Day, Katharine Pyle, and Ethel Reed. Pre-Raphaelite figures present various notions of beauty—androgynous, in the case of Solomon’s *Toilette of a Roman Lady* (1869). Pyle’s female heroines from her *Wonder Tales Retold* (1916) are woven into graphic decoration by Reed, who died in poverty following early artistic success.

Fraleigh’s painting titles meld textual references. *Sound the deep waters* and *Where summer ripens at all hours* are both drawn from Christina Rossetti’s mysterious collection *Goblin Market and Other Poems* (1862). Two other paintings in the exhibition cite contemporary writers—*Fold in the sun* from Magdalena Zurawski’s “A Fold in the Sun” (2016) and *Our world swells like dawn, when the sun licks the water from Crystal Williams’ “The Voice of God”* (2018).

Fusing meticulous realism with gestural abstraction, Fraleigh constructs an immersive space in which reality merges with dreams and hallucinations. Her opulent paintings are populated by female figures now freed from the social constructs of their time, no longer the despised witches of popular fairy tales, shunned agitators, or desired bodies. Women gather, unrestrained, to care for one another and share intimate knowledge required to traverse the biased, contemporary landscape. It is here, in Fraleigh’s “fantastical, fictional, feminine dreamland,” that women are imbued with agency to be their own authors and artists.

Margaret Winslow
Curator of Contemporary Art

Feminist NOTES

Men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed is female. Thus she turns herself into an object of vision: a sight.

– John Berger from *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin Books, 1972)

The old wives' tale might be stuff and nonsense, but it too could yield a harvest in corn and gold, if you stroked it smooth and combed it through. Just as history belongs to the victors and words change their meanings with a change of power, stories depend on the tellers and those to whom they are told who might later tell them again. 'Never trust the artist. Trust the tale,' D. H. Lawrence's famous dictum, fails to notice how intertwined the teller and the tale always are.

– Marina Warner from *From the Beast to the Blonde* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994)

I see protest as a genuine means of encouraging someone to feel the inconsistencies, the horror, of the lives we are living. Social protest is to say that we do not have to live this way. If we feel deeply, as we encourage ourselves and others to feel deeply, we will, within that feeling, once we recognize we can feel deeply, we can love deeply, we can feel joy, then we will demand that all parts of our lives produce that kind of joy. And when they do not, we will ask, 'Why don't they?' And it is the asking that will lead us inevitably toward change.

– Audre Lorde from *I Am Your Sister, Collection and Unpublished Writing of Audre Lorde* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008)

A Feminist READING LIST

Circe by Madeline Miller (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2018)

Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion by Jack Zipes (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1983)

From the Beast to the Blonde by Marina Warner (New York: Vintage Books, 1995)

Herland by Charlotte Perkins Gilman (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979)

The Left Hand of Darkness by Ursula K. Le Guin (New York: Walker and Company, 1969)

The Pre-Raphaelite Sisterhood by Jan Marsh (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985)





Sound the deep waters, 2019. Angela Fraleigh (born 1976). © Angela Fraleigh.

Flowers

A fool to pluck my rose too soon,
A fool to snap my lily.

– Christina Rossetti from “A Daughter of Eve”

A response by Jen Werner to *Angela Fraleigh: Sound the Deep Waters*.

Winter in the desert is not what you’d expect, according to those that are doomed to live there. The rains sometimes come and then the moths crowd the blooming yucca. I go out and sow seeds. I had never planted—only watered, only trimmed the dead leaves so as to spare the living. I have dumped entire vases of stiff roses into the trash along with their musky, leftover water and bent necks. I stopped giving delicate bouquets and now prefer a heartier blossom, or really, no blossom at all—only the thick green stalk of aloe or the fat crust of a cactus. Grass is also good.

What if it is true that I cannot keep things alive? What if you are only a killer because of your neglect, or your very active social life, or because you simply forgot to look?

A few days out of the week, I work for a local newspaper. I get sent out on interviews. I make calls from my car. I type out notes on coffee shop tables. They pay me for each word that I give them and that they like enough to keep. One night a week I spend transcribing audio files of other people’s interviews and for this I can bill by the minute. Sometimes I listen with tiny buds in my ears. If the night is dark enough I play the tapes loud enough so that the

voices echo into corners and take up space. At the end of each day, or by the end of each night, I have enough to show for my time. It is honest work to spread the word, even if they aren’t all mine.

I have also started wearing square-toe boots. I am blending in. They are good for digging holes deep and wide enough for my seeds. Carmen sends them daily in nearly-weightless white envelopes that I soak in a stopped-up sink until the paper has disappeared and the seeds swell and settle at the bottom. I also save the curled stamp and staple each to a popsicle stick labeled in marker so I remember the tansy from the dandelion. Under the earth they all look the same.

I studied to be a doctor of obstetrics and worked at a Level 1 trauma center in a city on the coast for sixteen years. I’m not allowed to say where. I used to say it was a calling. I was not in the business of helping women get pregnant. Pregnant women and their partners don’t like to talk about complications or unexpected outcomes. I found ways to comfort them but you can only do so much inside of the hospital. Mostly everyone who’s there can’t wait to leave. So I started making house calls. I taught women how to comfort themselves. I brought them flowers. I made them tea. Some of the families never came back to the hospital. Some of the mother’s didn’t make it. Some left their newborns in the nursery and never came back. None of them ever filed charges.

I moved inland for the freshwater. That’s what I tell most people. I must have told Rosie, my neighbor, who insists that I take her dried avocado pits and bell pepper seeds for my garden. “What good is a garden if all you do is look at it?” she asked.

The cabin I rent sits at the end of a paved road. Everything works—doors open, close and lock. Screens on the windows keep the milkweed beetles out. There is a connection for a hose on the south side but I haven’t bought one yet. I catch the rainwater in a thick metal basin that is rusted in its creases.

Rosie comes by most mornings. “I just have so much love to give,” she says when she hands over a thin green sack of vegetable ends and innards. One time she left the little hairy ends of several spring onions soaking in a small glass cup in my mailbox. About a week ago she left a copy of *Camino Real* with two pressed violets under the cover. She used to be the CEO of a small casino. I think we get along because she once told me that she wished she’d been a farmer instead.

“The stars tell all their secrets to the flowers, and, if we only knew how to look around us, we should not need to look above.” In 1841, the American journalist and transcendentalist Margaret Fuller published a story about a single magnolia tree. In the story, an unnamed narrator, presumably female, rides through the countryside and is allured by the odor of the magnolia.

Academics agree that the overall meaning of the story is unclear but what they all explain is the nuanced way in which Fuller uses the commonly accepted and widely understood cultural meanings of flowers to be representative of a “natural” and “female” state of being in order to offer new options for women. Rather than aspiring to cultivation or beauty only, a woman might also aspire to be singular and substantive. The love implied in the giving of flowers to another might be just as relevant if one were to give flowers to oneself. A new conversation for women was on the horizon. All it would take was a subtle change in perspective, a different understanding of the flower and its parts. You have to see the forest and the trees.



It hasn't snowed yet, but the local meteorologists like to hint at it. “Cover your cacti,” one said.



This summer, the President's administration changed the federal funding rules under Title X, the government's program that funds family planning services for low-income women. In order for healthcare providers to continue to receive funding from the government, they will no longer be able to provide referrals for abortion services. The effects of this change will also affect women's access to other forms of reproductive healthcare previously covered by clinics that have decided not to continue their participation in Title X. Many of my former colleagues are overcome with anger, or they've become sad and withdrawn. But we have always bent the rules.



When the yucca bloom you can eat all of its parts, save for the stem. The first time I saw the tuber was with my editor, Benjamin. The valley floor was filled with filamentosa. Men in hats shook free the roots. The next day we ate thin strips of it, fried and tossed with chile pepper. We ate it doused in garlic and lime juice with slivers of transparent and silky red onion.

In the night, when I go out into the garden to spread some water around, to feed them, the yucca leaves are still upright. Their fence-like shadows at the edge of the yard surround only two sides and no matter how bright the light is that I shine toward the third, it remains a void, empties itself of the sun and all it stood for.

Wouldn't you like to go out there one evening and see what it's like to disappear?



There are many things to wonder about when you disappear from your life. If you take care of cats you wonder if having opened the door was enough of a suggestion that they will now go out to catch their food. Dogs will stay bunched up on the couch waiting for you but birds will fly right out. If you leave the hospital in the middle of your shift, you're legally considered negligent, even if you tell them that you're leaving.



Our world swells like dawn, when the sun licks the water, 2019. Angela Fraleigh (born 1976). © Angela Fraleigh.

Every day I watched the women give birth. Often we have to cut through the layers of flesh and fat, the thick meat of the middle and pull the babies out. Sometimes we'd sweat, having paced between rooms counting cervical centimeters and inexact contractions. We'd note their ripening, as if women swell like fruit and then let gravity take over. It is not an exact science.



One of the first stories I wrote for the newspaper was about the blue streak of myosotis growing across the top of Mount Rose. I interviewed a curator at the Arboretum & Botanical Garden who suspected someone had hiked up there and spread the seed. “It will never go away,” she said, “unless someone goes and pulls it out at the beginning of each spring and the end of each summer.” The roots grow so fast and so far. “But we almost never see them this far West and this far South,” she added.

After the interview, I forgot her name. I hadn't written it down.



The Irish poet and playwright Oscar Wilde wore a green malmaison carnation; a winter flower; a big, stinking thing. If you're not careful with them the calyx can split and their faces fall apart. The flower itself was a performance – a white-petaled blossom whose stem was stuck in dye.



When Rosie asks, I say that I'm getting used to it here but it still doesn't feel like home. Some nights I hear that old song creeping out from her open windows – how does it go? “Where have all the graveyards gone? Covered with flowers every one. When will we ever learn?”



About THE ARTIST

Angela Fraleigh is an Associate Professor of Art and Department Chair of the Moravian College Art Department in Bethlehem, PA. She earned her MFA from Yale University School of Art and her BFA from Boston University. She has exhibited throughout the United States and participated in artist-in-residence programs in Houston, Kansas City, New York, Omaha, and internationally in Belgium and Spain. Fraleigh has created site-specific projects for the Edward Hopper House Museum and Study Center (*Shadows Searching for Light*, 2018) and the Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site (*Lost in the Light*, 2015), and her work was the subject of solo exhibitions at the Sordani Art Gallery at Wilkes University (*The Bones of Us Hunger for Nothing*, 2018) and the Everson Museum of Art (*Between Tongue and Teeth*, 2016).



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Front and back covers *Where summer ripens at all hours* (detail), 2019, Angela Fraleigh (born 1976), oil and acrylic on canvas, 96 x 144 inches, © Angela Fraleigh, photograph by Kenek Photography; pg. 2 *The Magic Mirror*, 1902, from *Where the Wind Blows* by Katharine Pyle (1863–1938) (New York: R.H. Russell, 1902), Bertha Corson Day (1875–1968), ink and watercolor on illustration board, 18 1/4 x 13 1/2 inches, Delaware Art Museum, Gift of Mrs. J. Marshall Cole, 1988; *Title page*, designed by Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882), from *Goblin Market and Other Poems* by Christina Rossetti (1830–1894) (London: Macmillan, 1862), Bancroft Library Collection, Helen Farr Sloan Library & Archives, Delaware Art Museum; *Then it was a swan that beat its wings in her face*, from *Wonder Tales Retold* by Katharine Pyle (1863–1938) (Boston: Little, Brown, 1916), Katharine Pyle Library Collection, Helen Farr Sloan Library & Archives, Delaware Art Museum; *The Green Butterfly*, c. 1879–1881, Albert Joseph Moore (1841–1893), oil on wood panel, 14 7/8 x 4 7/8 inches, Delaware Art Museum, Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Memorial, 1935; *May Margaret*, 1865–1866, Frederick Sandys (1829–1904), oil on canvas, 17 1/4 x 11 1/4 inches, Delaware Art Museum, Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Memorial, 1935; *She managed to throw the third stone at him*, from *Wonder Tales Retold* by Katharine Pyle (1863–1938) (Boston: Little, Brown, 1916), Katharine Pyle Library Collection, Helen Farr Sloan Library & Archives, Delaware Art Museum; *Toilette of a Roman Lady*, 1869, Simeon Solomon (1840–1905), oil on canvas, 44 x 38 1/4 inches, Delaware Art Museum, F. V. du Pont Acquisition Fund, 1989; *Advertising poster for Arabella and Araminta Stories* by Gertrude Smith, 1895, Ethel Reed (1874–1912), three-color commercial lithograph, 25 7/8 x 14 7/16 inches, Delaware Art Museum, Gift of Helen Farr Sloan, 1977; pg. 5 *Our world swells like dawn, when the sun licks the water* (detail), 2019, Angela Fraleigh (born 1976), oil and acrylic on canvas, 90 x 198 inches, © Angela Fraleigh, photograph by Kenek Photography; pg. 6 *Sound the deep waters*, 2019, Angela Fraleigh (born 1976), oil and acrylic on canvas, 90 x 198 inches, photograph by Kenek Photography; pg. 9 *Our world swells like dawn, when the sun licks the water*, 2019, Angela Fraleigh (born 1976), oil and acrylic on canvas, 90 x 198 inches, © Angela Fraleigh, photograph by Kenek Photography. pg. 10 *Fold in the sun*, 2019, Angela Fraleigh (born 1976), oil and acrylic on canvas, 90 x 66 inches, © Angela Fraleigh, photograph by Kenek Photography; pg. 11 Photograph of Angela Fraleigh painting *Sound the deep waters*, 2019, courtesy of the artist, photograph by Wes Heiss.

