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Saturday, October 6, 2018

## Welcome to Issue 21 of ProWax Journal

With this issue it is my pleasure to note that we mark five years as a more-or-less quarterly publication. Thanks to the internet, the PWJ staff has from the beginning met online and produced ProWax Journal electronically. We are immensely proud of every issue. As the editor in chief, it is also my responsibility to let you know that this issue is our last. (Well, for now. Maybe.) But focusing first on the positive, let's look at what Number 21 holds. —Joanne Mattera

### In this issue



In her Q&A feature, always an inspirational reveal into an artist's thinking, Nancy Natale visits with Christine Shannon Aaron, whose aesthetic development, slow and steady, recently exploded into a frenzy of brilliantly conceived art and ideas.

Writes Nancy: "Our recent experience together in the small group of friends organizing Binnie Birstein's retrospective show and sale made me aware of Christine's sensitivity and depth of character. I wanted to learn more about the development of her work and the thoughts driving her explorations."

Christine Aaron in her studio

I report on a show that took place at the Met Breuer this past summer, Like Life: Color, Sculpture, and the Body, focusing on the exhibition's work in wax. I went as a viewer, but surprised at the extensive presence of wax in the show, pulled out my iPhone and began to shoot. In some ways, this is the museum version of the brilliant article, **Ephemeral Figures in Wax**, which Susanne K. Arnold produced for PWJ in Issue 19.

Kiki Smith sculpture  
at the Met Breuer's Like Life:  
Color, Sculpture, and the Body

In a round-up feature, we look at the many shows that took place around the 12<sup>th</sup> International Encaustic Conference in Provincetown and Truro. The exhibitions ranged from a curated museum show to gallery invitationals to a juried exhibition—the largest including 46 artists; the smallest, two. These various kinds of shows extended exhibition opportunities to some 80 artists from the Conference community, many included in more than one show.

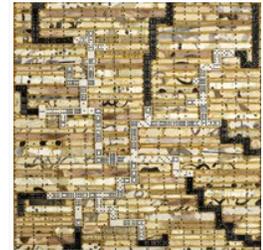


## Issue 21, Fall 2018



Installation view of "Organic to Geometric" at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum, with Susan Lasch Krevitt, foreground, and Toby Sisson. Click pic for the list of articles in this issue

### In the Header



In the header: Nancy Natale, "As Sweet As Honey" Click pic for a larger image and the artist's comments about this work

### PWJ Staff



From  
the  
East  
End  
of  
Com

mercial Street to the West End: Organic to Geometric at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum; The Blues at the Adam Peck Gallery—with a lot in between



As always the regular features offer short takes on artists and solid professional advice. With Paula Fava editing, we've got three Studio Visits this issue that couldn't be more different from one another. Jeff Schaller's cozy building is nestled in the Pennsylvania woods, a short walk from his home. Dietland Vander Schaaf's loft studio in downtown Portland, Maine, overlooks 19<sup>th</sup> century brick architecture. Jodi Reeb's urban studio is part of an artists' co-op building in Minneapolis.



A peek inside Jeff Schaller's studio in Downingtown, Pennsylvania

We have two articles that consider our professional practice. With Essential Questions, Jane Guthridge asks Who's Curating and Why? The answers range from "creating opportunities for other artists" to "engaging a conversation" to "taking control." Certainly curating allows us to expand out vision and our practice. In Somebody's Deciding Your Future, I pull back the curtain a bit to understand why we get rejected and how to turn that around. There's more, including two In Five Words features, Pat Spainhour's In Residence experience, and a plethora of Exhibition and Workshop Listings. If you choose not to scroll from article to article, the **Table of Contents** lets you prioritize how you spend your reading time.



Finally, we remember Binnie Birstein. So outgoing and energetic, Binnie got a diagnosis of pancreatic cancer last year at about this time. By May she was gone. Friends rallied round her. Lynette Haggard started a **Scholarship fund** in Binnie's name at her beloved Center for Contemporary Printmaking in Norwalk, Connecticut; Cherie Mittenthal started one at Castle Hill for a **Conference scholarship**. Numerous friends, spearheaded by Jen Greeley, Binnie's mentee, catalogued her life's work, put it on display at Firing Circuits, Binnie's gallery building, and offered it for sale to benefit her children.

Binnie with David A. Clark, who shared some recollections

### A goodbye and some acknowledgments

ProWax Journal started with Maritza Ruiz Kim's question, "What if we had a publication that spoke to the issues of professional artists working with wax and encaustic?" That query resulted in the first issue of PWJ in September 2013, with Maritza as editor in chief and a number of artists from our ProWax group as editors and writers. Finally, a publication that dealt with issues in our community! Issue 13 was Maritza's last issue, after which she stepped down to consulting editor and I took the job. I have loved expanding this online magazine with more articles and broader ideas. But I have come to the end of my tenure. It's a ton of work to produce a magazine like this, an unpaid job that has had to be shoehorned into my "spare time."

With no takers for the editorial job—Hours of work for no pay? Yeah, watch the line form here—ProWax Journal has ceased publication on any kind of regular basis. We've talked about an annual volume. We'll see. It has been an honor to produce ProWax Journal for the encaustic community. Many others deserve heaps of credit for their contributions: Nancy Natale, who has served as Executive Editor and produced her Q&A features as well as Back of the Panel; Debra Claffey who has served as Senior Editor and produced two In Five Words features each issue; and our small-but-mighty clutch of editor/writers who have produced their regular features, columns, and listings: Corina Alvarezdelugo, Dawna Bemis, Hylla Evans, Paula Fava, Milisa Galazzi, Jane Guthridge, Cheryl D. McClure, and Deborah Winiarski.

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Consulting Editor  
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Debra Claffey

Feature Editor  
Deborah Winiarski

Essential Questions  
Jane Guthridge

Art/Community/Education  
Milisa Galazzi

Studio Visit  
Paula Fava

Exhibition Listings  
Cheryl D. McClure

Workshop Listings  
Dawna Bemis

Sidebar Listings  
Corina Alvarezdelugo

Staff Bios  
Hylla Evans

### Search This Blog

### Want to Read Previous Issues of PWJ?



The BLOG ARCHIVE below contains links to every article in every issue since #16. The current issue is listed fully. For previous issues, click onto the tiny arrow to the left of the date, a full list of linked articles will drop down. For Issues 1-15 click onto the picture above; it will take you to a live-linked list of issues on WordPress.

### Blog Archive

- ▼ 2018 (31)
  - ▼ October (16)
    - Welcome to Issue 21 of ProWax Journal
    - Q&A
    - In Five Words: Ellen Koment
    - The Body in Wax: Visual Excerpts from "Like Life" ...
    - Essential Questions: Who's Curating and

There have been many contributors over the past few years as well: Susanne K. Arnold, Heidi Beal, Pamela Blum, Elena De La Ville, Shelley Gilchrist, Susan Lasch Krevitt, Winston Lee Mascarenhas, Raé Miller, Joan Stuart Ross, Leslie Sobel, Krista Svalbonas, Anna Wagner-Ott, and Pamela W. Wallace. And, of course, Maritza, without whose hard work ProWax Journal would have remained just a good idea. (Read a bit about everyone [here](#).)

### We'll still be here in cyberspace

While there won't be any forthcoming issues of PWJ, at least for the time being, all the issues issues, including this one, will remain right here online. A list with links to every issue is [here](#). As a group, **ProWax**—which consists now of 168 members from throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe—has in every way worked to raise the bar in our encaustic community: advocating for professional presentation; for non-restrictive language (we are artists, not "encaustic artists"); for responsible teaching, and equally, for responsible learning; and for maintaining archival standards while remaining inquisitive and creative. All of those ideas are in our 21 issues. I hope you'll refer to them often and share them with your colleagues and students.

Posted by ProWax Journal at [12:28 AM](#)



## Q&A



With Christine Shannon Aaron

By Nancy Natale



Christine pulling a print at the Center for Contemporary Printmaking, Norwalk, Connecticut

When I first saw Christine Shannon Aaron's work several years ago at the Encaustic Conference, she was making lithographs and encaustic monotypes on paper and on patinated sheets of copper. They were executed with a high level of accomplishment, and the delicate images of trees and landscapes, sometimes with handwritten text, were poetic and evocative. The use of copper appealed to me for its color and the reflective sheen that underlay the printed images. Later Christine began working with materials such as found slabs and chunks of wood with mirror shards. Her exploration of various processes also intrigued me as I saw the effects of her drilling and burning wood and paper, plus sewing, dyeing, rusting, and exploring all sorts of creative methods to make her work.

Why?

Studio Visit: Jeff Schaller, Downingtown, Pennsylv...

Studio Visit: Dietland Vander Schaaf, Portland, Ma...

Studio Visit: Jodi Reeb, Minneapolis

Somebody's Deciding Your Art Future, And It May No...

Show Time!

In Residence: Pat Spainhour at Evans Encaustics

In Five Words: Niamh O'Connor

Remembering Binnie

In the Header: Nancy Natale

Back of the Panel

► March (15)

► 2017 (54)

## Our Members in the News

Tracey Adams



[Click pic for article](#)

Lisa Barthelson



[Click pic for article](#)

Debra Claffey



[Click pic for article](#)

Helen De Ramus



Forest Muse, 2012, lithograph with encaustic on patinated copper, 24 x 24 inches



[Click pic](#)

Lynette Haggard



[Click pic](#)

Kay Hartung



[Click pic](#)

Joanne Mattera



[Click pic](#)

Jane Michalski



[Click pic](#)

Nancy Natale



A WildBeauty, 2017, lithograph on patinated copper, 24 x 24 inches



[Click pic](#)

Lynda Ray

**Nancy Natale: You have used images of trees and pieces of wood in much of your work. Do they have a particular meaning for you?**

**Christine Shannon Aaron:** I've always responded to trees and particularly enjoy them in autumn when they are resplendent and in winter when they are calligraphic. They mark each year of their life in their rings, physical marks of their lived experience that remain hidden from view. After severe storms, where huge branches and whole trees fell, I would notice innards that had been rotted out or eaten away or damaged past the point where the limb or tree could survive. The day before, these limbs and trees looked healthy and complete. At other times I would notice thriving trees that had healed, grown over or through obstacles, and shown resiliency. The bare winter trees also call up life cycles, the periods of dormancy, of waiting, of transformation and annual renewal. To me it is analogous to human experience.



Buried, 2013, monotype, 18 x 18 inches, printed on 30 x 22 inch paper

Beyond all that I find them beautiful in and of themselves. The beautiful in art is in some circles and for some people a dirty word. It is not trusted. I do want to create beautiful art—but perhaps a beauty more complicated by being simultaneously bittersweet, unsettling, mysterious or evocative.

**NN: The transition from printmaking to sculpture seems like a big move. Was this a gradual transition for you or a leap?**

**CSA:** A little of both I think. I started printing on more unusual substrates, such as mirror, copper, and steel and then aging those substrates as part of the evolution of the finished piece. I found I was becoming more physical with my materials and more interested in exploring what materials themselves could bring to the table. As I investigated and manipulated actual wood, I found the form shifted. In one particular critique group with Patricia Miranda, she pointed out that I was still handling the wood “on the surface” as if it were a painting. That was an aha moment to begin thinking about how the work intervened in and conversed with the surrounding space. Increasingly I am considering space and environment in my work to create a more immersive experience for the viewer.



[Click pic](#)

Beverly Rippel



[Click pic](#)

Charyl  
Weissbach



[Click pic](#)

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Workshops



ProWax members teach regionally, nationally, and internationally. Here, Hylla Evans teaching a color workshop. [Click pic for Workshop Listings by ProWax members](#)

Do You Know  
About ProWax  
Forum?



Above: What Remains II, 2017, drilled and burned plywood 84 x 4 x 7.5 inches; Granary, 2016, drilled and burned tree slice with gampi and ink, 80 x 15 x 2 inches

Below: Detail of Granary



**NN: Was there one material or process that provoked the transition?**

**CSA:** I think it was a combination of the two. I went from using trees symbolically, to using actual wood, to a shift in other materials referencing the concepts I was exploring, such as time passage, loss, memory, and the marks of human experience and connection. The processes I was using— from aging the materials to drilling, burning, and carving—started to carry some of the content of my work and also created new areas to explore. The drilling and burning and stitching evoked other things (trauma, wounds, healing, repair) and created cast shadows that spoke to absence and presence, memory and loss. Each exploration opened up other avenues to investigate.



"ProWax Forum is a discussion group for all things art-related with a focus on wax and encaustic material, technique and vision. Members of ProWax Forum include ProWax Group members, professional artists working in the medium of encaustic and those interested in learning from us," says ProWax member Deborah Winiarski, who founded ProWax Forum. Click pic to visit the Facebook site

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The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the individual staff members, who write, edit, and produce this publication as a service to the encaustic community. Staffers are not paid, and readers are not charged, although donations to maintain the site are welcome.

**Counter**





Fragment Series, 2017, drilled and burned plywood; from left: 60 x 22 inches, 22 x 22 inches, 82 x 22 inches

**NN: How did Patricia Miranda's critique groups encourage the development of your work?**

**CSA:** For me the critique group was essential in providing a professional and critical dialogue around the work. Not having an undergraduate or graduate degree in art, I often feel as if I am playing catch up. Critique group offers a historical framework for what is being created now, a language and process for looking at and speaking about art, and truly important feedback as to what is and what is not working within the work I present. It is important for me to understand what others are experiencing and seeing when they look at my art. Often others see themes or evocations that I am working through but am not fully aware of myself. This causes me to dig more deeply into what motivates me, the reasons I'm choosing certain materials and what it is I wish to be expressing. At times I have been conveying the opposite of what I had hoped for. It is the opportunity to take in others' experience of my work, see what resonates, and what is sparked as to possible ways forward.



What We Keep IV, 2017, burnt drawing on hand-dyed indigo paper, 10 x 8 inches



Confluence II, 2018, burnt drawing on hand-dyed indigo paper with hand stitching, 14 x 12 inches

One example is when looking at some of my monotypes, descriptors used were mysterious, hidden; one member said she could almost hear a whispering, sense of murmurings just beyond comprehension. In my mind's eye I suddenly started picturing an audio that could accompany the work, of peoples' voices, like when you're at the beach and just as you are tuning into a snippet of conversation, the wind shifts and you can no longer hear the rest of it. I created a multilayered audio, with voice-recorded memories where the recitations' sound levels were raised and lowered so the listener could never hear the full memory, interspersed with sounds of wind and rain through trees. The full memories were all recorded and part of it, but not at a level where they could be accessed, much the way human memory is experienced.

**NN: The processes of burning and drilling that you use often create negative spaces, or the absence of materials. Do the negative and positive spaces bear equal weight for you?**

**CSA:** Yes! Absence and presence, the ever-present mark of experience that remains invisible but indelible. The cast shadows become part of the work. What remains, what is kept, how the whole is marked, repaired, remains intact despite the losses. Much of what I create is an attempt to make visible or tangible what is hidden and intangible.

I am also drawn to materials and processes that have an immediacy and unpredictability. I am a chronic over-thinker. Working with materials and processes that are inexact, that are variable in their results, forces me to react to what is actually happening in front of me and act as an antidote. Frequently the "mistakes" (burning that gets out of control, drilling that fractures the wood), speak better to my concepts than my preconceived ideas. Dyeing, printing, drilling, and burning are all inexact and often I "lose" much of what I began with, which naturally starts the process of reclamation and repair. In effect the things lost become as much a part of the piece as what's retained; history haunts and infects the work that remains.



*Overwritten X Days of the Presidency*, 2017-present, daily burnt pages of *Grey's Anatomy* textbook, 10 x 6 x 6 inches

**NN: In your statement you say that your work "investigates memory, time, and the fragility of human existence." Do you think that the amount of time you invest in process assists in replicating the natural evolution of aging and decay?**

**CSA:** What an interesting observation. I hadn't thought of it that way, but I think yes. I think it also represents (especially as a woman) that repetitive experience of doing, redoing, making, remaking, and propping up, repairing, connecting, the forging of strengths and networks despite losses, fragility and inevitable decline. A determined resilience and piecing together of a meaningful life, through relationships and connections despite disappointments and loss. Loss shapes us more significantly than joy. I want to speak to the stubborn persistence of healing, repair and moving forward, forging ahead and finding beauty in the imperfect, the fragile, and the nature of being human.

More and more I work to have the materials I use carry some of the content in order that the work embodies rather than illustrates. The burned, rusted and stitched cloth and paper, the drilled and burned tree slices are whole and beautiful despite of or because of their fragility and fractured or pieced together nature. Wax, which has its own rich history of use for preservation, medicinal needs, and ancient art, has the capability to layer, be opaque or translucent, to obscure and reveal. It retains its own history of mark making within. Additionally, I think the hand-wrought and manipulated nature of these materials validates the imperfect, the intimate, the individual mark, in contrast to the pervasive and impersonal electronic media and mass-produced items dominating daily life. That my work is open to various interpretations beyond my intent thrills me.



Vestige V, 2015, wood, ink, mirror shards, encaustic, 15 inches in diameter

My first sculptural pieces were three-inch deep, 15-inch-wide wood slices with a rotted away center that I filled with shattered mirror. I was representing the fractured nature of memory and how each thing we learn or each angle which we look at or remember, causes the memory to shift and change. Several people at the exhibit eagerly spoke with me about the work and their perceptions of it. One insisted that it spoke to man's destruction of the environment. Another saw it representative of cancer, the "alien" organism taking over the healthy, but that the cancer threat was "contained." Another just enjoyed the contrasting surfaces of the organic wood and the shimmering of the multifaceted mirror shards. It is exactly what I hope for, that each viewer relates to the work and finds meaning that resonates from his/her own experience.

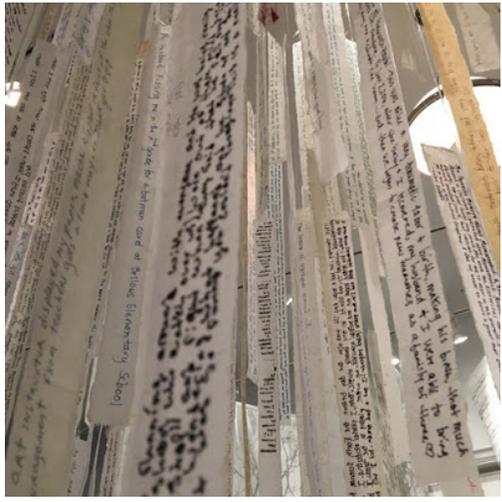
**NN: Does your background in social work add depth to your work as an artist?**

**CSA:** I've been thinking about that a lot. I hope so, yes. I don't think it's a coincidence that having experienced my mother's chronic illness (she was ill from when I was 14 until her death when I was 23), I became a social worker and my younger sister became a nurse (as compared to my older brother and sister who were already out of the house and became a businessman and event planner respectively). Having lost her at such a young age, and experienced significant losses since then, it always intrigued me how others had very different experiences and thoughts or beliefs about the very things I remembered so differently. Therefore, loss, the prismatic slippery concept of memory, what marks us and how that becomes part of who we are, have all figured into my artwork.



The Memory Project, funded by a grant from Arts Westchester, installed at Mamaroneck Artists Guild, Larchmont, New York, 2017; lithographs on gampi with ink, wax, thread; dimensions variable

Below: Detail of scrolls in The Memory Project



I think the training I received as a therapist, the focus on others, body language, evaluation of mood and behavior, the sorting through the layers of an experience presented, helped me hone my skills at being present, paying attention to details visually, spoken and unspoken. In addition, being part of the critique group fosters skills in really looking at work, evaluating what one is seeing, formally, conceptually, and even emotionally. I'm conscious about what I feel when I'm in front of art, what I'm looking at and what it evokes for me. I try to ask the same questions as I create my own work in terms of digging more deeply to get at what it is I want to express and put into the world.

**NN: Recently you have begun writing on social media about exhibitions that you have seen and describing the work of other artists in depth. In addition to publicizing shows and artists, is this practice a personal mission to improve your awareness and critical language?**

**CSA:** Before I decided to pursue social work, I wanted to be a writer. I did some writing in college and actually graduated with a B.S. in Education before going on to get a Master's in Social Work. I am an avid reader and can get totally lost in the worlds created by other peoples' words. Much the same way I can get lost in a piece of art—transported to a different place. Critique group has helped me develop a language with which to speak about art.

I think I have always had a love/hate relationship with social media. It is essential these days and yet I find it uncomfortable and self involved to be always putting myself or my work forward. So periodically I share others' work. I tend to be drawn to material-based, intimate, or emotionally evocative work. And I usually include brief descriptions as to how I experience the work, letting followers see the work through my eyes and decide how they see and experience the work themselves.



No Safety Ne(s)t, 2018, shattered safety glass with found bird's nest, 10 x 6 x 6 inches

One thing I have enjoyed about Instagram is finding artists and work that I wish to follow. I have struck up "conversations" with some, messaged others to ask questions, and sought out work in person that happened to be in my geographic area. In that way, it has really expanded my art world. So although I think it does improve my awareness and critical language, my aim is really to share others' art that I find inspirational, intriguing, and unique. On occasion I have thought about doing a blog showcasing art that is intimate and more material and installation based. There are many blogs I enjoy and respect that focus on geometric abstraction, color, contemporary painting and so forth, but I considered showcasing the kind of work that I thought related more to my own. I enjoyed doing the fantasy curation for **Vasari 21**, but the idea of doing a regular blog is intimidating, and so posting art on Instagram with brief descriptions scratches that itch for now.



Christine in her studio

[www.christineaaron.com](http://www.christineaaron.com)  
[www.TheMemoryProject.space](http://www.TheMemoryProject.space)  
[www.instagram.com/christineaaronart](http://www.instagram.com/christineaaronart)

Posted by ProWax Journal at 12:27 AM No comments:



## In Five Words: Ellen Koment

Curated by Debra Claffey

In Five Words is a regular feature of ProWax Journal in which we go literal, lyrical, and poetic. Visual art does not exist in a vacuum; it sings along with poetry and prose, music and rhythm. Each issue we ask our feature artists to comment on one of their works with five single words, chosen to add meaning and highlight intent.