

Masthead

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Alice reimagined

DURHAM -- Artist Tama Hochbaum's fanciful composite photography exhibit at Golden Belt, "Down the Rabbit Hole," stars her 13-year-old daughter, Claire. In 2002, her exhibit "Claire, Through My Eyes" in Chapel Hill also featured the girl. In 2007, she incorporated her daughter; her son, Ellis; her husband, Allen Anderson (a composer who teaches at UNC), and herself into a show. Hochbaum, who has exhibited around the country and is represented by a San Francisco gallery, explains this new exhibition.

The idea

I have felt an affinity to Lewis Carroll from the time of my graduate studies in painting at Queens College in New York in 1980. I was drawn to Carroll's photographs of Alice Liddell. Studying photographs within a larger, more encompassing program of painting would turn out to be a foreshadowing, of sorts, of what would in fact happen to me 15 years down the road, moving to photography after being a painter for 20 years.

In 2008, I was asked to participate in a group exhibit in Raleigh titled "Why Is a Raven Like a Writing Desk?" that consisted of various artists' takes on the Lewis Carroll work. In this show the main exhibition room follows the narrative of the story with images that have Alice in them, while the side room contains a haphazard hanging of the other characters with a video of all the pieces set to Stravinsky's "A Soldier's Tale."

Why the rabbit hole?

I loved the idea of Alice floating/falling for a very long period of time, grabbing things off the shelves she finds around her. She wonders how long she'll keep falling and what will happen next. That seemed so rich, so perfect for a composite photograph, a format I've been using for a long time. In addition, that particular image was the true beginning of the journey to Wonderland.

Did the text impose boundaries?

Yes, I think the text does impose literal boundaries, but I really loved working within the constraints of those boundaries. I have always worked well with assignments. As a graphic designer, my "other" profession, I think one is always working towards a solution within imposed boundaries. I also am somewhat consumed with doing the New York Times crossword puzzle, an endeavor I find not totally unrelated to this following of a text.

What do we take away from it?

I would hope one might take away the joy I had in doing these pieces. Every single image was an adventure in spacial construction. My paintings were mostly imagined landscapes. These fantasy portraits were a way to bring that invention into a photographic realm. The large prints in the main room of the gallery are also unframed. I love the viewer being able to

see the image directly, without the glass between it and them. In a way I would also want the viewer to take away a feeling of having been inside a very large book.