

Fairytales

by


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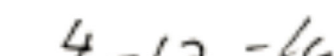


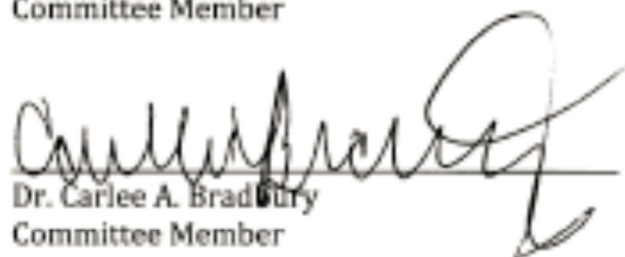
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## **Abstract**

Metal has been the most challenging medium I have ever worked with and the most gratifying. I make pieces that are inspired by the natural world such as flora and fauna. I fabricate metal foliage and flowers and cast pieces sculpted from wax for the creation of my whimsical environments. These whimsical environments host fantastical small-scale hybrid creatures that I create, inspired by bugs, birds, and plant life. The individual pieces not only stand alone as their own sculpture, but they also interact each other as a whole. Each piece has a narrative. A three dimensional scene plucked from the pages of a story. Some of the stories I portray are from fairytales I have read or seen, while others are my own creation. My overall goal is for the viewer to have a magical experience as if they are stepping into another world or time. I make my pieces so the viewer can engage with them, hold, or play with them. The viewer can feel the whimsy and playfulness of childhood fantasy when viewing my work, to take their minds off the mundane and spark excitement and curiosity.

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this thesis to my mom and grandma. Thank you for all your love and support over the years. Without these two women in my life, I would not have made it this far. I can't imagine my life without you both. You are my rocks.

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## **Macro vs. Micro**

I explore mini imaginary worlds hidden within the greater macrocosm that we overlook. These worlds consist of flora and fauna that we see in the natural world, such as plants, grass, and forest animals. In these worlds, there are creatures that have the ability to blend into their environment, so the human viewer will have to look closely to see them. The creatures are composed of different types of flowers, leaves, nuts, or berries. They also take on the form of other animals to help hide their existence. Some creatures are in their natural habitat going about their daily lives, while others have been captured and put into terrariums for observation (Figure 1). While looking around the piece, the viewer can discover minute details that they may have missed upon first glance. I want the viewer to feel the wonderment of childhood, when they experienced the world around them for the first time. Everything is magical and filled with creative discovery.



Figure 1. Kala Marshall, *Terrariums*, 2013-2016, Bronze, copper, stones, stains, 7 X 5 ½ X 5 ½ - 5 X 4 X 4



## **Imagination and Creation**

These scenes symbolically help us better comprehend our own reality. We love, care, and cherish as human beings; our fundamental instincts are to survive, prosper, and seek love and happiness. By intensifying these moments into a micro reality, we can see what it means to be human. Human nature strives to dream and explore the world around us. A depiction of one of these moments can be seen in my piece *Butterfly Habitat*, as a caretaker of the butterflies lovingly checks on one of the chrysalis that is about to hatch. As humans we have evolved to love, cherish, and appreciate the living world around us, of plants and animals. When viewing the piece you can see she is not only checking on the chrysalis, but also out walking one of the caterpillars. This imagery supports the connection we have with our four legged companions (Figure 2). In this age of technology, we know many facts about our world and new discoveries make us reevaluate the way we perceive our world. This fuels not only the quest for knowledge and facts, but lets us fantasize countless possibilities that spark the imagination and helps drive the creative process. This idea facilitated the creation of my otherworldly fantasy scenes.



Figure 2. Kala Marshall, *Butterfly Habitat*, 2016,  
Bronze, copper, stains, 13 X 14 X 13

## **Whimsy and Fantasy**

Making this body of work is a way for me to express my need for both whimsy and fantasy. I grew up reading and watching fantasy stories from The Brothers Grimm's fairytales to George Lucas's Star Wars. I was an only child, so I spent a lot of time pretending in my own little worlds that I would create. I continue to create new worlds that translate into my artwork. Creating this body of work for my MFA thesis exhibition is the best way to put my experiences as a child into a three dimensional visual language. I have learned through the years the value of sharing my own art and experiencing other artists' work. I think art is important to the world in general as it allows everyone to express themselves and give a new perspective to the world around us.

## Inspiration and Perspective

It is very important to me to research other artists and study their work to better my own, so I look toward others for guidance and inspiration. The artists and metalsmiths that have influenced my work are Harlan Butt, Marilyn da Silva, and David Freda.

Harlan Butt is a master enamellist and metalsmith. He makes extraordinary vessels that capture scenes from nature. Butt visits national parks from all around the country. He writes haiku poems, which he integrates into his pieces that are inspired by the different parks. The haiku poems help the viewer make connections to nature, through words. His poems are harmoniously combined with his pieces. The tops of his vessels are decorated with found or sculpted casted objects from nature. I too sculpt objects derived from nature out of wax and cast them in bronze. Butt inspired me to make connections between humanity and nature in my own work. Butt's poems tell a story, of a moment in time, where he stood, what he saw, and how he felt. I am also telling a story, of a moment in time frozen for all to see. My piece, *Feed The Birds*, shows just that kind of moment. The old lady, carving up her apples she had picked, sees a bird land near her, watching and waiting for a taste of the juicy apple. The old lady lovingly slices a piece and gently hands it to the now excited bird; a story of a kind and tender moment held between friends (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Kala Marshall, *Feed the Birds*, 2016,  
Bronze, iron, copper, ceramic, 14 ½ X 16 X 8 ½

Marilyn da Silva creates scenes with animals, specifically birds. Her works are wonderful depictions of environments that, like Butt's work, tell a story. She does this through imagery and representational elements in her work. In her book series, da Silva explores different themes through small scenes of flora and fauna, which are three-dimensional sculptures, placed atop a book. In these scenes, the flora and fauna are interacting in a clever way to represent the book's title. She brings playfulness to her work through her storytelling. I too bring whimsical storytelling to my work. In my piece *The Frog Prince Lamp*, I am telling the story of the frog prince through metal. I pierced out the shade of the lamp to create silhouetted scenes of the story. I also placed objects on the lamp to signify the story at first glance, such as the finial of the lamp that represents the golden ball that the princess loses down the well and the frog that sits upon the lily pads at the bottom of the lamp represents the prince (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Kala Marshall, *Frog Prince Lamp*, 2015, Copper, bronze, ceramic, stains, 14 ¼ X 9 X 8. Photo taken by: Rachel DeBusk

Marilyn da Silva also uses mixed media in her work, such as metal, wood, and colored pencils. I relate to her because I also use several mediums as well, such as metal, ceramics, patinas, and paints, to help achieve desired effects of beauty and meaning, like I see in da Silva's work. In my piece *Hummingbird Habitat*, I use not only metal, but also patinas and stains to create layers of color and dimension within the piece (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Kala Marshall, *Hummingbird Habitat*, 2015, Bronze, copper, stains, 28 ½ X 16 X 16.  
Photo taken by: Rachel DeBusk

David Freda is also a master enamellist and metalsmith whose works are realistic and yet also have a surreal and fantastical quality to them. I strive to reproduce realistic looking flora and fauna in my work while bringing life and whimsy to my work. For example, his piece, the *Fish Hunter* brooch, was inspired by one of Hieronymus Bosch's creatures from *The Temptation of St. Anthony*. Hieronymus Bosch was a Northern Renaissance painter. His work is known for its use of fantastic imagery to symbolize moral and religious concepts and narratives. The creature he depicted in *The Temptation of St. Anthony* is a fish wearing a mast.

I have also looked at Bosch's creatures for inspiration in my own work, depicting creatures with a fantastical quality to them. A lot of his creatures remind me of fairies and spirits from different realms. Many of his creatures are combinations of different animals put together

to create a new hybrid animal. I create a creature by combining different plants and animal parts together. This gives the creature a camouflaged effect as well as otherworldly look.

I also draw inspiration from books I have read and from shows and movies I have watched, such as Tim Burton's creations, *Nightmare Before Christmas*, *Edward Scissorhands*, and *Alice in Wonderland*. Much like Bosch, Burton depicts fantastical creatures that somehow seem otherworldly. Since I was very small, his distinctive style has been an inspiration to me. *Edward Scissorhands* was one of my favorite movies when I was little. I was drawn to the organic nature and surreal quality of his work. I have always liked the idea of telling a story through sculpture. Like with Tim Burton's puppet work, I hope to capture the essence of a moment in time.

*The Spiderwick Chronicles* is also inspiring. Since the books and movie are based on another universe within our own that is revealed using a seeing stone, creatures that are normally hidden are seen through this stone. Through my art, I also guide the viewer to see other fantasy worlds. In *The Spiderwick Chronicles*, there are amazing creatures that have greatly inspired me. The creatures in the movie are pieced together using different animal parts and flowers, much like many of my creatures. *The Lung Leaf Maiden* has leaves for lungs, which you can see clearly through her open chest; she is comprised of twigs, leaves, and flowers. Another example is the *Praying Mantis Fairy*. She has the face of a human, body of a mantis, and wings of a fairy (Figures 6 and 7).





Figure 7. Kala Marshall, *Lung Leaf Maiden*, 2016, Bronze, cubic zirconium's, stains, 6 ¼ X 3 ½ X 3 ½. Photo taken by: Rachel DeBusk



Figure 6. Kala Marshall, *Praying Mantis Fairy*, 2014, Bronze, bone, stains, 4 ¾ X 5 X 4

My favorite Brothers Grimm's fairytales include *Red Riding Hood*, *Snow White* and *Cinderella*, which have inspired many of my pieces. I love the dark and beautiful way the stories are portrayed in the books and movies. The piece *Poisoned* was inspired from Snow White. The piece is my take on Snow White when she bites into the poisoned apple. I have incorporated magic creatures that ooze out of the bitten apple to visually represent the poison that she ingested. Her eyes turn red from the poison and her skin, a ghostly white, plays off her name, Snow White (Figure 8).

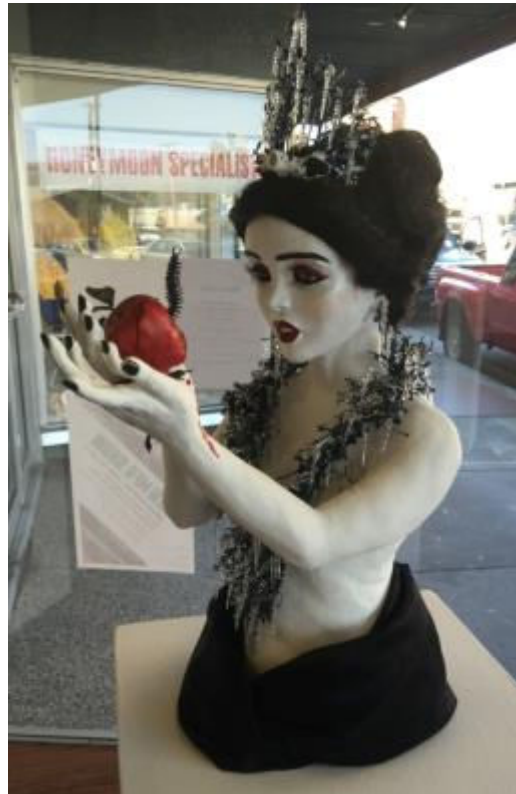


Figure 8. Kala Marshall, *Poisoned*, 2016,  
Ceramic, bronze, 13 ¼ X 18 ¼ X 28

The creators of Studio Ghibli have made wonderful fantastical worlds and creatures, which I greatly enjoy. Studio Ghibli is a Japanese animation film studio based in Koganei, Tokyo, Japan. The studio is best known for its anime feature films, and has also produced several short films, television commercials, and one television film. Japanese traditions and

Shinto religion are steeped in spirits and the spirit world. The Japanese's perspective on such matters offers a new contrasting view point to Western thought. The creatures from the spirit worlds are complex and compelling, creating wonderful layers to their stories they portray visually. I love anything that offers a new look and perspective on our world. One of my favorite Studio Ghibli films is *Howl's Moving Castle*. In the movie and book, Howl is a wizard that has a door to different realms that he can walk into. The other realms are very much like my mini universes that I have sculpted. Another movie is called *My Neighbor Totoro*; this movie delves more into the spirit world. The story centers around two young sisters, whom the spirits help through a rough patch. The spirits can appear as things in the known world. In the beginning of the movie, the soot sprites appear, which are little dust soot balls that cause mischief. The girls have a lot of fun with the sprites, but if they do not wish to be seen they just appear as soot or dust. The creatures that I make remind me very much of the spirits from these movies. They can blend into their environments much like my creatures' camouflaging abilities. Young children are common in the Studio Ghibli movies, which I also portray in my work. A piece I made called *Faun* depicts a young faun girl lying with her pet baby deer. In this world, the spirits and creatures are showing themselves to her. In the Studio Ghibli movies, the spirits reveal themselves to children (Figure 9).



Figure 9. Kala Marshall, *Fairy Tale Installation*, 2016, Bronze, ceramic, copper, stains, 5' 6" X 4' X 4'

Art movements have also inspired me; one that has always been my particular favorite is the Art Nouveau period. The organic curvature of lines, beauty of the female form, and the fluidity and movement of the pieces are amazing. The use of natural elements such as bugs, flowers and animals provide unique forms. This movement is expressed in many different mediums from around 1890 to 1910. My lamps, the *Hummingbird Habitat* (Figure 5) and *Frog Prince Lamp* (Figure 4), were inspired by the Art Nouveau period along with some of my jewelry pieces, such as my *Walnut Hollow Necklace and Ring* (Figure 10). In my piece, the *Walnut Hollow Necklace*, I have fabricated small delicate flowers and curving connections for my chain that look like the vine and leaves of the flowers. This piece was inspired by the flowing and curving lines of the period. I formed walnuts for the ring and necklace that house

small flora growing out of the nutshells. Incorporating flora in my pieces reflects a big part of the Art Nouveau period. The artisans of the time wanted to create something new, hence the meaning of Art Nouveau which literally means new art in French. Breaking away from the historic revival period, artisans were inspired by natural forms and structures, not only in flowers and plants, but also in curved lines. Architects tried to harmonize with the natural environment.



Figure 10. Kala Marshall, *Walnut Hallow Necklace and Ring*, 2014, Copper, pink fire opals, stains, pendant 3 ½ X 1 ½ X ½ chain length 22, ring 3 ¼ X 1 ½ X 1 ½

## **Casting and Fabrication**

When I was little, my mom would take me on picnics and small trips, whether it was just to the backyard or to the park, but I thought I was going on an adventure. We would walk up to the Cascades, a waterfall in the New River Valley; we would pick up leaves and rocks. I would take them home and make art out of them. My mom bought me a Little Tykes potter's wheel when I was little, and I would make cups, paint them and give them to my relatives. Even at an early age, this gave me a sense of fulfillment to see the happiness art brought to people.

When I began other artistic endeavors, people would make me feel I had talent and it gave me a sense of accomplishment. I knew at an early age that being an artist was the path for me. It wasn't until I came to Radford University that I was really introduced to other mediums in art besides drawing, painting, and ceramics. I was introduced to metalworking and it became my passion to work with the different aspects of metalworking. Working with metal is very challenging and gratifying in many ways. Taking a sheet of copper and turning it into a flower or sculpting a creature and casting them into metal is very rewarding.

My pieces are larger and sculptural and I use several metalsmithing techniques to create the pieces. The techniques I use most in my work are casting, fabricating, saw piercing, soldering, and chasing. I fabricate the leaves in my work from a sheet of copper; I saw pierce them out and then use a chasing technique to make the veining in the leaves. I also fabricate flower petals by saw piercing them out and forming them with hammers. I sculpt my creatures out of wax and then use the lost wax process to cast them in bronze. I finish my pieces by layering patinas, stains, and acrylic paints. All these techniques combined make the piece look more lifelike. It gives the piece motion and depth. These techniques help to convey the story that is being told in the piece. Some of my pieces are not only decorative, but also functional. I

have incorporated light and water into my pieces through the use of LEDs and fountain pumps. The ideas of light and water convey feelings of peace and tranquility or eeriness depending on the lighting used. It can also add an unexpected and beautiful dimension to the piece. My piece *Hummingbird Habitat* (Figure 5) is an example of this. The piece is not only sculptural, but also functional. The flowers' pistils are LED lights that can change colors, flash and fade. My piece *Lily Lagoon* (Figure 11) is a functional fountain. I wanted to create a piece that is tranquil and beautiful. The water pumps through four flowers and sprays out of the top of each flower trickling down to lower levels of the piece.





Figure 11. Kala Marshall, *Lily Lagoon*, 2016, Bronze, copper, ceramic, stains, 42 X 33 ½ X 33 ½

### **Limitations and Explorations**

My hope is that my art will inspire and awe the viewer, or excite the hidden child within them. I want the viewer to contemplate and visually explore the pieces. I worked long and hard to create this body of work. Many setbacks and limitations have occurred while making my body of work. There has been a lack of access to equipment that is not provided by Radford University, such as a bronze foundry, and also a lack of space for which to make work; but I have worked around such limitations. I have engineered and problem solved in the construction of my work, and the end result is well worth it. I plan to build a studio to continue making, selling, and exhibiting pieces. My goal is to have my work published and exhibited both nationally and internationally; creating one of a kind pieces complemented by a production line. My production line will contain smaller scale sculptures such as lamps and terrariums as well as a jewelry line. I hope to continue in this vein of exploration not only of our world, but also of other fantasy worlds, making pieces that are from other planets, places, and times.

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## **Appendix: List of Terms**

**Casting-** A technique used to turn an object into metal. The lost wax process is used to cast. In this process, the artist takes an object that is plastic, wood, or wax and puts the object in a flask after it is weighed. Investment, which is a plaster like material, gets mixed and poured over the object in a flask. A flask is a steel tube that holds the investment. The investment hardens and is ready to put in the kiln. Once the kiln has reached 1200 degrees the object has fully burnt out of the flask leaving a mold of the object. Then a machine is used called a centrifuge to cast the piece. The machine uses centrifugal force to push molten metal into the mold that was created. The metal is melted down in a crucible that holds the metal and through a hole at the bottom of the flask the molten metal is forced up into the mold. This process is known as the lost wax casting process because the object you make is literally melted away to make way for the metal. If something should go wrong during this process your piece or pieces you created are lost and would need to be recreated.

**Chasing-** sheet metal is placed in pitch, which is a wax like substance that hardens when cooled and becomes softened with heat. Using chasing tools the metal is pressed from the front of the piece to indent the metal.

**Enamel-** is a material made by fusing powdered glass to a substrate by firing, usually between 750 and 850 °C (1,380 and 1,560 °F). The powder melts, flows, and then hardens to a smooth, durable vitreous coating on metal, glass, or ceramics.

**Enamellist-** A person that works with enamel.

**Fabricating-** is the building of metal structures by cutting, bending, and assembling metal. Fabrication encompasses piercing and forming techniques.

**Forming-** Moving metal by means of:

**Compression forming-**

- ☐ Rolling, where the material is passed through a pair of rollers
- ☐ Extrusion, where the material is pushed through an orifice
- ☐ Die forming, where a press machine is used to stamp the material around or onto a die
- ☐ Forging, where the material is shaped by localized compressive forces
- ☐ Indenting, where a tool is pressed into the work piece

**Tensile Forming-**

- ☐ Stretching, where a tensile load is applied along the longitudinal axis of the work piece
- ☐ Expanding, where the circumference of a hollow body is increased by tangential loading
- ☐ Recessing, where depressions and holes are formed through tensile loading

**Saw Piercing-** using a jeweler's saw and blade the metal is cut to form shapes or designs in the metal.

**Soldering-** using solder, which is a low melting alloy and a torch, pieces of metal are fused together creating a permanent bond.