

NANCY MCINTYRE: WRITINGS ABOUT MY SILKSCREENS, 1971-2013

NAYATT POINT (FEB. 1971)

hard to sign up for silkscreen class

Considering that it's the art medium I have pretty much devoted my life to, it is comical to me just how difficult it was to sign up for a silkscreen class when I was at the Rhode Island School of Design.

My first peek at the medium was when my roommate, who was in a different section of Freshman Foundation, came home with a batch of one-stencil silkscreens, with beautiful creamy yellow and blue sweeps of blended colors. It was because I didn't like brush strokes, and wanted to draw realistically, that I planned to go into Illustration. I was anxious to try this very smooth-looking, no-brushstroke medium, but my Freshman section never offered it.

That winter, RISD instituted a new concept, Wintersession. Our winter break was cut a little short, and we each signed up for one class to take all day every day for a month. I was excited to see that silkscreen was an option, so on the appointed day and time, I went to the silkscreen room to sign up for it. When I got there, I found myself at the end of a long line, and I did not get into the class.

The following winter, as a sophomore, I showed up very early, to be third in line. My cheer evaporated when I was told that, as an Illustration major, I was going to be having a silkscreen class the next fall, so could not take it now. Once again, my choices for Wintersession at that late hour were few.

In the spring came the 1970 student strike against the Viet Nam war. I was jealous of the silkscreen students cranking out protest posters for all the Rhode Island colleges, but contented myself with being RISD's representative at a council of Rhode Island schools participating in the strike.

Sadly, over the summer, some curriculum changes were made, and Illustration students did NOT get a silkscreen class, the fall of my junior year. However, my third attempt at taking it for Wintersession that year was a success.

I loved the class. Art Wood was a great teacher, and an inspiration both for my silkscreens and, much later, for my teaching of silkscreen at the Art League in Alex-

andria. Art taught us to use transparent colors. He also introduced us early on to color blends made by laying different inks on the screen side by side, stirring them together a bit with the squeegee and then printing.

This is such a basic and exciting part of silkscreening to me that I have my students try it on the first night of class. Sessions at the Art League are only 9 classes long, so there isn't time to spend the first class like I did at RISD, nailing together a frame and stapling on silk.

One of the most gratifying things about teaching silkscreen is how many different directions people find to take it, confirming my long-held belief in the great versatility of this medium.

—Nancy McIntyre, 2011

MORNING TRUCK (MAY 1971)

cross-country & color change

When I was 20, I taught my 17-year-old cousin how to drive, and we took a trip across the country to Wyoming, in a bad old station wagon I had bought for \$300. (My father bought me the transmission job it immediately needed, which would otherwise have taken more than everything I had saved up for the trip.)

It was a wonderful experience. We met a lot of nice people and camped out in gorgeous national parks, and had adventures of various kinds. Driving through Illinois on a two-lane road one misty morning, we spent quite awhile behind a big tanker truck.

Seeing that much of the country, the forests, farmland, prairie, badlands and mountains, somehow changed my whole sense of color. Sophomore year, I had been painting, with psychedelic colors, landscapes derived from abstracted figures, inspired by Georgia O'Keefe.

For the first painting critique of Junior year, I brought an only slightly abstracted gazelle's face, in my new favorite color scheme, muted shades of tan and light blue. The teacher didn't seem sure how to respond. Finally, he said, "Maybe people just shouldn't paint deer anymore." In my defense, another student said, "It's not a deer."

—Nancy McIntyre, 2011

GRISTMILL PORCH (NOV. 1971)

finger-painting vs. silkscreen

We happened upon the gristmill while driving around rural western Rhode Island on Halloween afternoon. In exchange for caring for the place, the old man was allowed to live there for free with his 50 or so cats. (See *A Cat in the Front Yard*, 1972). He had just taken his last bath of the year, since the river was getting too cold to bathe in again till spring, so we probably caught him at a good time.

I was quite excited by the resulting silkscreen, *Gristmill Porch*, despite thinking I was getting a little fussy to use a new record of six layers of ink on it. But when I brought it to my (Illustration Dept.) faculty advisor, he told me he'd seen works like this before, and was much more taken by some other pieces I had brought, which were finger-paintings, using a little silkscreen ink with a lot of Transparent Base, later drawn into in a fanciful way with pen and ink.

I was disappointed. I felt like the silkscreening was my real work, the finger-painting kind of trivial.

Finger-painting was certainly enjoyable; I loved the feel of the consistency of the Transparent Base; it was like soft gelatin, or whipped butter. It reminded me of the kind of squishy drying-out dirt road mud puddle that makes good toe-prints.

Unfortunately, after a long fingerpainting session one day, my left index finger developed a rough patch that has never quite gone away. It was my first clue that this material might not be a friend to my body.

—Nancy McIntyre, 2011

CAROLINE ON A FENCE (MAY 1972)

prints omitted

This catalogue raisonné includes every silkscreen I have ever done, with the exception of a few very early prints (primarily student work) that I don't like and never sold more than three of (if any). Also omitted are all 40 of my annual Christmas cards and several notecards, even though I do occasionally sell one of those.

It is also the case that with my earliest editions (1971-73), I included within the edition some poor impressions, so most of those editions are actually smaller than the numbering indicates.

—Nancy McIntyre, 2011

EXETER FARM (AUG. 1972)

relief plate discovery

While still printing in Art Wood's classroom at RISD, I mentioned to him one day that I was noticing the pattern of the plywood of my portable work station transferring onto some of my silkscreens.

He said, "Come with me. I want to show you a student who is using that effect to her great advantage." This young woman was placing various flattish things (I forget what — leaves? feathers? thread?) under her paper and then printing over them, with very interesting results. The ink was printing heavier in the low spots and very thinly, and therefore lighter colored, where it was partly scraped off the high spots.

It is pretty amazing how slight a relief will transfer; in fact a piece of scotch tape can show up, something to look out for when it's not intentional.

For *Exeter Farm*, I cut bushes out of textured paper, different fabrics, sandpaper, and a sheet of thin copper embossed with ballpoint pen. Then I glued them all down onto a paper backing, and tried the effects of printing on various papers. The thinner the paper the better, it turned out.

—Nancy McIntyre, 2011

living in Philadelphia

My senior year at RISD, I quit Illustration and took the school's excellent one-year crash course in teaching art. After graduation, I taught in near-by Massachusetts for a year while Bob finished up his two-year stint for the Selective Service as a conscientious objector. Then we moved to Philadelphia so he could resume law school after the enforced two-year break. In that short time there had been a sea change, and people like Bob who went to law school as a way to "work within the system" to try to make the country a more progressive, peaceful place, were now a distinct minority.

I landed in Philly with no job but a lot of teaching applications out, and a little after the start of school, one in West Chester came through. It was a good elementary school; everybody got art class once a week. That was way ahead of the Taunton, Mass. system where kids only had art once every six weeks, and I hardly learned the names of all the teachers in whose rooms I worked, never mind getting to know the students.

The West Chester school wasn't quite big enough for a full-time art teacher, so I always had one or two days a week free to work in the studio I'd set up in our apartment. Philadelphia scenes briefly dominated my work.

Meanwhile, I slogged from gallery to gallery with my portfolio, and found a home at Gross-McCleaf. I still remember exactly what it sounded like to be officially accepted as an artist: "Burton, come here and take a look at these!"

Apparently I had lucked into a new trend, a few artists foregoing abstraction, which I'd never caught up to, in favor of realism.

—Nancy McIntyre, 2011

best friends

We introduced Bob's law school buddy Jamie Cook to our long-time best friend Caroline Willis in 1974, and they hit it off and eventually married. Beginning in 1977, we all worked together to renovate a huge old house in DC, meanwhile living in it, until Caroline and Jamie moved to California in 1981. The house was on a drug-infested block of O Street NW, and it was in such bad shape that we were able to get it for \$29,000. My father jokingly characterized that as "\$59,000 for the land, with a \$30,000 allowance to tear down the building." He and my mother came quite a few times to help with the project, as did most of our friends.

Caroline is an architect; Jamie had taken a year off law school to build houses in Alaska; and Bob already knew electricity and soon learned plumbing. I had no such special skills, but could tolerate the tedium of scraping paint and refinishing wood, and learned some carpentry and masonry. I built an arched alcove around the claw-footed bathtub we salvaged when all the Ralph Nader groups, including Bob's Tax Reform Research Group, were in a building that had previously been a convent. I covered the alcove with a tile mosaic beach scene.

The first year we knew Jamie, he was living in the upstairs of a nice old two-story tenement house in West Philadelphia. He had the attic, too, which he'd made into a wood-working shop. He helped me make picture frames out of weathered wood we scavenged from the streets of Philadelphia.

We used to go out on his roof a lot, where the view reminded me of *Mary Poppins*. I sat there and drew it. *Jamie's Roof* was, I thought, my best silkscreen yet. It was also the last printed in Philadelphia.

—Nancy McIntyre, 2011

MILK LADY—DOLORES HIDALGO,
 ARCHES—DOLORES HIDALGO, &
 LITTLE GIRL IN RED—DOLORES HIDALGO (1975)

Mexico & Capitol Hill

We drove with Caroline and Jamie and three other friends (in a two-car caravan) to Mexico, the summer of 1975, right after Bob took his Law Boards. I'd had no idea the eastern side of Mexico would be so gorgeous and verdant, or the Mayan ruins so spectacular. It was a great trip.

One sparkling morning, I walked out of our nice, inexpensive hotel, right on a town square, where a worker was busy sweeping the grass. I had my camera and shot a whole roll of film, of people, their colorfully painted homes, and other buildings, as I wandered the historic town of Dolores Hidalgo. The steps you can see at the bottom of *Arches* — *Dolores Hidalgo* are where, in 1810, the Catholic priest Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla read his revolutionary tract "Grito de Dolores," which touched off Mexico's war for independence.

Immediately upon our return to the U.S., we moved to an apartment on Capitol Hill. Bob had a one-year fellowship at Georgetown University Law Center's Institute for Public Interest Representation. No longer the sole breadwinner, I decided to not even look for a teaching job right away, but try silkscreen printing full-time. The next two years were my most prolific period as a screenprinter.

From that day to this, I have been lucky enough to work on my own schedule, pursuing whatever artistic goals I can come up with, as well as spending a good part of each day with our children when they were young. Bob is now director of the tax-reform group Citizens for Tax Justice, where he, too, gets to spend his days doing what he most believes in.

—Nancy McIntyre 2011

BARBERSHOP MIRROR (APRIL 1976)

artist statement, 1977 NCFA biennial

(see *Barber Chairs*)

BICENTENNIAL SNOW CONES (JULY 1976)

red, white & blue

As the nation's Bicentennial approached, galleries in DC and Philadelphia both pushed the idea of a Nancy McIntyre take on a monument of my choosing. My brother-in-law, at least half in jest, suggested place mats. My protest print was *Bicentennial Snow Cones*. The guy manning the cart is not impressed by the spectacle.

—Nancy McIntyre, 2011

Review by Jo Ann Lewis of the NCFA biennial

The closest thing there is to a free-for-all, nationwide talent hunt for new printmakers is the National Exhibition of Prints staged every other year since the early '40s by the Library of Congress. In recent years, the National Collection of Fine Arts [renamed Smithsonian American Art Museum in 2000] has become joint sponsor and host, and it is at the NCFA that the 25th National Exhibition of prints opened last week.

Dealers, curators and collectors flock to these shows to see what's going on in the contemporary print world, and to find talent as yet undiscovered and underpriced. There is, as always, much new talent here . . . including several noteworthy examples by Washingtonians. . . . Nancy P. McIntyre dazzles, Estes-style, with an intricate serigraph of a barber shop.

—Jo Ann Lewis, *The Washington Post*, June 4, 1977; review accompanied by photo of *Barber Chairs*

Barber Chairs was purchased by the National Collection of Fine Arts.

artist statement, 1977 NCFA biennial

Barber Chairs is the second of two serigraphs based on slides I took of Eddie's Barber Shop, 317 3rd St. NW, Washington, D.C. in March 1976. I simply happened to be walking down 3rd Street with a camera when I came upon the barbershop.

The first striking thing was the play of reflections: a large round mirror on the sunny side wall was showing parts of the barbershop and of buildings next door. Superimposed over this, in a very beautiful combination, was the reflection on the window I was looking through, which became so strong as it got up to the sky that the barbershop seemed to be gradually turning into the outside as one looked upward. This is the image shown in the first of the two prints I made, *Barbershop Mirror*.

The other distinct experience occurred when I looked closer into the window until I could see what was in shadow, and then I felt as if I was looking into some whole other world, left over by time. It was cluttered with old things but not disorderly, in fact well-polished, very comfortable looking, pleasant and inviting, and closed. The air itself seemed old and dense. This is what I tried to show in the second print, *Barber Chairs*: what the shop felt like inside; the nice old-fashioned busyness and complication; the thick warm brown air.

—Nancy McIntyre 1977

printing the 2nd color: What more could go wrong?

October 14, 1976

Oh, did printing go bad today. Here's what went right: the ink stayed a good consistency. On second thought, actually, maybe it was a little slurpy; maybe that was why I had it squishing out the edges, wrecking a few prints that way. Here are the problems I made myself: the picture is too wide to comfortably fit in the frame, and I have colors butting up against each other, instead of cleverly overlapping, all over the place. So registration counts.

Yesterday, it looked like registration would be no problem at all. I printed the first color, and afterward, the master drawing, printed stock and screen itself all still fit perfectly. I washed off the stencil and painted on the next one, tracing from the master drawing. Overnight, the paper shrank on the racks. Either it didn't shrink all the same, or they weren't all precisely registered yesterday, or more probably both, so that once I compromised on a position and fixed every hairline of white paper that I could find, it still only worked right for some of them.

I ran proofs and came up with a color that didn't seem quite the same when I started the real printing (though it's not bad at all) and of which I did not make up enough. One of its components is a grey I mixed earlier using Prussian Blue oil paint, tiny globs of which today instituted the habit of getting lodged in the screen and staining things blue until I wash it out with mineral spirits and print once on newsprint to get rid of the wiping marks. Printing on scrap newsprint was something I wanted to avoid, since I was running out of ink and since also their drying could only add to the fumes, already huge since it's early in the edition — second color — and this second color goes onto a very large proportion of this very large print.

A further flaw in the printing was caused by a small nick which had somehow gotten in the squeegee and was leaving a line of heavier color all across each print.

Things were getting messier and messier, oxygen becoming ever more scarce. I was about 2/3 of the way through the edition, trying to conserve ink. Not adding more ink to the reservoir in time, I ran out, leaving one last little patch on the print white. Not wishing to use more ink than necessary or darken the transparent color for most of the print, I backed up just to a place that was blocked by the stencil more or less all the way across, to leave me space to set down the squeegee, and gave it another pull. Well, there was too much ink on the squeegee, and it left some in the middle there.

Where I could see it was going to show, I wiped it with a paper towel. Where I neglected to realize it was going to show, I left it, and pulled up the screen, whereupon it slurped around the edges of where it was supposed to be, and left quite a pile on the print. Another one wrecked.

At the same time, I was realizing it was crazy to print the whole edition with the nick in the squeegee. I could scarcely sand it down in the middle of printing, but perhaps I could get a nail in the opposite side, and pull it from the opposite direction. To give myself time without the screen drying out, (a hint I heard at “Art on the Mall”) I ran the squeegee back over the raised screen, only then remembering that today this is what was doing an especially bad job of making the globs of Prussian Blue stick on the screen. I also knew I had to somehow mix up some new ink.

Here is why I didn’t want to stop, clean up, and do the rest later:

It’s always such a bother.

Registration was being so impossible that once I’d finally hit the best exact spot for the screen, I hated to unclamp it.

Furthermore, paper or screen shrinkage or expansion could be a problem in the meantime so that I’d end up with less registration consistency than ever.

Also, the hazy lines I’d worked so hard to get for the distant shadows are the kind of glue screen that gets destroyed especially easily, and they might not survive another washing.

I did consider stopping. But I decided instead to put a new nail in the squeegee and mix new ink and keep going. Well, I couldn’t find the hammer. I think Bob has it in the car, in the toolbox. I hammered it in with the big screwdriver. Couldn’t find any pliers either. Just left the other nail in. Tried mixing up duplicate ink. Did not manage to do so.

Finally, I was overwhelmed by the need to breathe, and gave up. Cleaned up, wondered if I should start over the whole edition, and left.

Oh, before I left, while I was cleaning up, thinking I had already wrecked as many prints as I could today, the dark grey ink gave a mighty splat, flying through the air to wreck three more.

—Nancy McIntyre, 1976

SHERRILL’S BAKERY (AUG. 1977)

portraits of places

Somewhere I read the question: Does a piece of art belong to its artist or to its purchaser? Halfway through the sentence, I thought the question was going to be whether it belongs to its artist or its subject; I sometimes think the subject has a certain claim.

The things I put in a print become precious; it is important to do them justice. Sometimes I think I make portraits of places.

—Nancy McIntyre, 1978

PORCH ROCKER (MARCH 1978)

shadows & light

Back when I first started printing, I used to like cloudy days, so that I could most straightforwardly draw the things I saw, without light being too complicated and in the way. But I started wanting to draw the sunlight, too, and increasingly, light itself and its reflections and shadows are what my pictures are most about.

Shadows and reflections take on such a reality that I get surprised at quite how ephemeral they are. After I had been working for a few weeks on *Porch Rocker*, I decided to go back to the porch and redraw the tree shadow on one of the chairs. I finally got there at the right time of an appropriately sunny day, only to realize that *that* shadow won’t be back on that chair until next winter. It seems funny that the chair, which anyone could move or break, stays right where it is, while the sun, a billion-year constant, won’t stay put, changes all day long and then differently every day.

Since even inanimate subjects won’t sit still, I usually take slides to draw from instead of sketching on the scene, or else do both.

—Nancy McIntyre, 1978

LUNCH COUNTER (JUNE 1978)

details

There are times when the way something *looks* seems to ring particularly true; when the way it is aligned with the way it looks.

I get asked why I put a certain detail in a picture and I say well that's the way it looked, and it sounds so lame and like a photorealist celebration of randomness and meaninglessness, when I mean it to be just the opposite. The places and moments that I photograph & then the particular photographs I decide to work from are chosen for being, for me, occasions of illumination and harmony.

Often particular details are truly omittable or changeable, to advantage, and sometimes I do miss finding the ones that are; other times I think something should be left out and do so and then am nagged by it continually until I let it back in.

—Nancy McIntyre, 1988

JOE'S KITCHEN (DEC. 1978)

kitchen & Joe

Caroline, then a house-mate as well as best friend, complained that this print was looking too depressing. So I used every trick in the book to highlight the cheerful, glowing light coming in the window, and how it lit Joe Condon's sparse collection of possessions. Still, the print never sold particularly well. As I explained to someone, "Between the gun and the Madonna, I suppose maybe everybody can find something to be offended by." The response: "Actually, for me, it's the kitty litter."

Joe (a first cousin of my father-in-law, Pappy) was born in that old farm house, and lived in it most all his life. But by sometime in Joe's 90s, the house had fallen into a state of serious disrepair. The floor joists didn't hold, and the kitchen had sunk into the dark basement. Everything was filthy. Joe had no children, so it was his nephew who secretly called the fire department to have the house torn down, while Joe stayed for a spell in the Veteran's Hospital. When Joe got out of the hospital and saw his house gone, he was outraged. The nephew defended the action: "Well they condemned it because there were so many rats." Joe was even more outraged. "You don't tear down a house for RATS! You use POISON!"

Joe was sent to a nearby rest home to live, but he kept walking away from it. They took his shoes and he walked away anyway, showing up at friends or family with his accordion for an evening of music and conviviality.

—Nancy McIntyre, 2011

TAILOR (MAY 1979)

sundown sky

Tailor remains one of my all-time favorite prints. It is grounded by a gritty sidewalk below, moving up to the middle level where the work's going on, and dissolving above into an evening sky. Where half the sign is missing, I like the way the tree seems to finish the word. The color in the low part of the sky is the best I have done to evoke (at least for me) that ache when the sun goes down and you know you're about to miss the light.

— Nancy McIntyre, 2011

THE TUNE INN (OCT. 1979)

too many layers

The Tune Inn is the last silkscreen I completed before I became pregnant with my daughter Molly. I did not want to risk exposure to the fumes while pregnant or nursing, so I quit printing for a year and a half.

Although I don't consider *The Tune Inn* to be part of an actual series, I do make quite a few prints of reflections in store windows. I find them very well suited to the silkscreen medium as I use it, with varyingly transparent colors laid on top of one another. I also enjoy them as puzzles. I try to be very accurate, so that if a viewer goes to the bother of staring at one long enough to figure it out, it won't turn out to be an impossibility.

The other theme I keep coming back to is porches, in paintings and silkscreens, including the print I am working on right now. I'd been feeling somewhat schizophrenic with my city glass pictures and my country porch pictures, but then I realized that window glass and porches do have one big thing in common: they both are boundaries between indoor and outdoor air. A key thing, I find, in getting one of my prints to come out right, is to get the feel of what the air in a place is like. Trying to put more than one kind of air in one picture intrigues me.

The longer I've been printing, the pickier I seem to get about particular colors, and the less efficient I feel I've become at making use of the combinations allowed by transparent colors. I keep trying to remind myself that with 20 pulls, not even counting blends, I can theoretically make over a million color combinations. With my recent average of 40 pulls per print, I scarcely seem to be taking advantage of the possibilities. (Of course, only a couple of colors per pull can be chosen with much precision, and there are only so many combinations I can keep in my head at once.)

The Tune Inn took 57 pulls, a record I hope never to match. It took so many partly because it was my first nighttime picture, and I kept misjudging how dark I was going to have to make things. It took a long time to balance the colors and make the neon look lit. I don't think I ever did quite succeed, but finally, having wrecked two-thirds of the copies with which I began the edition, I put a layer of overprint varnish on top, an unusual step for me, which somehow held things together and added more depth, and also made me stop, since no more ink would stick to that shiny surface.

—Nancy McIntyre, 1981

The Tune Inn was purchased by the Library of Congress and included in its 1982-83 exhibition "Recent Acquisitions of Fine Prints."

SCREENED PORCH (JUNE 1981)

printing a multi-layer oil-base silkscreen

To start, I usually just go out with a camera on a day when I feel like I'm seeing strongly. I look for the right place at the right moment, whatever that will turn out to be.

What I find most appealing seem to be ordinary places, straightforward and much-used, with a beauty that is generally overlooked, especially by their owners. When whoever's taking care of a place *knows* it's picturesque, it usually takes on a sort of a self-conscious air that doesn't hit home for me. Anyway I figure it already has enough appreciation and doesn't need mine. If passersby don't think much of a place either, so much the better; then I get to try to make people look twice at what they might otherwise have neglected to notice at all.

The people that made or use the place are usually not in the picture. I have some trouble using silkscreen for figure drawing, and also am shy with a camera, and sometimes also want the person looking at the picture to be the person in the picture. I would love for the viewer to want to be there, to maybe go a little bit further in than where I was standing. I want you to want to go step on that mat, in the *Screened Porch* (for example). I don't know if this is how anybody reacts to my pictures, but thinking that way helps me when I print them.

Once I get a slide (or slides) that I like, I use it in place of or in addition to on-scene sketches, and make a full-size master drawing that looks like a paint-by-number; a line drawing marked off with the color or color combination that will go in each spot. Although I don't use photo screens or trace from the slide, I do often stick closely enough to the perspective of my reference slides that the finished print has a somewhat photographic look.

I also make a color sketch, but try to keep it unrefined, so that I can make some use of the color combinations that will result from the transparent inks I favor.

I'll talk about color blends later, but even without them, 20 transparent colors, combined in every possible way, can yield over 1,000,000 distinct colors. Since each added layer doubles the possibilities, plus one, that 20th layer can potentially add 542,287 new colors to the print. However, only about 2 of those colors can be precisely *chosen*; any others can only be guessed at. Since it seems a shame to waste all those 542,285 other colors, I do make some guesses, or just see what happens in certain areas, rather than try to make precise choices for every spot of color before I begin to print.

Actually, 15 colors and a few of their combinations are at least as many as I can hold in my head at once, so I usually figure out a way to complete my print in about 15 colors. Sometimes I like the plan so much that I think it could really be enough to finish the picture, though past experience tells me plainly that it will be half-finished at best. (This wasn't always the case. My earliest prints seemed to go much more according to plan.)

To print the first color: I make a stencil by placing the screen directly on top of the master drawing, and, with clear glue on a paintbrush, outlining the areas not to be printed with the first color. Then I block those areas out by filling in with glue, with the screen raised to prevent the glue from sticking to the drawing. Now the oil-based ink (usually Naz-Dar flat poster inks, with a lot of Transparent Base) won't be able to pass through those blocked parts when I print.

This is a negative sort of drawing, since I draw *around* the parts I want to print. For a positive drawing or soft edges, I used oil-based liquid tusche or its solid form, lithographic pencil, to draw what I *do* want to print. Then I raise the screen and flood it with a thin, even coat of the water-soluble glue. When that dries, I can wash out the tusche with mineral spirits to make a glue stencil.

To aim for an edition of 50, I start with roughly 100 sheets of paper, figuring I'll lose about half to printing mistakes and trouble finding the exact right colors. I print the first color onto all 100 sheets of paper. Then I clean both the ink and stencil off the screen, and go on to the second color. Each succeeding stencil is made in the same way and printed onto all copies of the edition. To print accurately, I use three-point registration: three little pieces of tape that let me set down the paper in the same place each time.

What I count as a "color" or "pull" is each time I put the edition under the screen and do something to it. On the average, I guess I mix up about three colors of ink per pull, either because I am putting separate colors on 2 or 3 isolated areas, or more usually because the color I'm putting on is a blend: I think "mixed-fount" is the official term if it's a blend; "split-fount" if the colors are separated. By a color blend, I mean the placement of

several colors of ink on the screen at once, where they blend together on the squeegee as the ink is pulled across the paper. At all stages of my printing, I use blended colors more often than not, and they can easily be blends of 6 or 7 colors — and the transparency, and even the sheen, can change as well as the hue within any given blend.

After printing all the 15 planned colors, with great initial enthusiasm, and making changes here and there, I try to evaluate the print and figure out what it still needs. Usually, I decide it looks flat and gray and lifeless, and try to remember why it was I wanted to make a silkscreen rather than just have Kodak make a big print of the slide I was working from. So I have to somehow get some air and light and life in the picture, and add more contrast and make it hold together better.

With pastels, I draw right onto one of the prints, carrying every idea too far in order to tell how far is far enough. Once it looks interesting, I try to reduce the major elements of the changes to a manageable number of pulls. Typical changes are to add small patches of intensely-colored ink, dissolve some lines and emphasize others, and weave the picture together with transparent color blends running vertically, horizontally, and every which way.

Sometimes, my first pastel-drawn idea, carried out, isn't really much of an improvement, but brings me to my next idea, which leads to the next. Often it gets to the point where the piece looks overworked and *still* not done, but I've never been able to give up on a silkscreen print. Eventually it gets to looking a little less overworked, and better, and finally finished. Some of what I have printed on the edition has been covered over entirely, so that by the time I am done with a picture I could tell you how to replicate it with fewer pulls that it took me, but I console myself that if I were more efficient in figuring things out beforehand, so as to eliminate many excess pulls, the picture would probably lose some of its depth and density. My regret is the loss of that light and airy look of those first few colors. I try to figure out if there's a way to someday get both.

—Nancy McIntyre, 1983

SHOE REPAIR (NOV. 1981)

treasure the local

What do I want to say:

Celebrate the human, the mark that a man has made on his world. Treasure the local, the small-scale, the eccentric, the ordinary: whatever is made the way that it is out of caring. Treasure what people have built for themselves.

Suspect that which is built for no one; suspect the homogenized, the nationally franchised. Reject that which is built out of cynicism, or for tax purposes, buildings that look like life-size models of themselves.

...

Here's why I like the old over the new: When things look too perfect, they don't tell enough stories. On top of that, sometimes places seem designed too perfectly, expressly to not *have* too many stories: windows made to not open, facades and signs and colors anonymously imposed, everything market-tested and then seen nation-wide or around the globe, intentionally unfriendly, so as not to attract loitering.

There is a resonance and a harmony, a worldwide chord, when there are many, congruent answers to questions like What should a house be like? What should we wear? What should downtown look like? When downtown is emptied out and its place taken by a mall everyone has to drive to, with all the same *exact* stores as other malls, that chord is reduced to a tired note.

I wrote down all those slogans, and then the next week saw the front-page photo of the rubble of *never* lived-in Texas condos, already torn down, built only to make money for the S&L executives, while eventually killing the S&Ls, not to mention the trees. What a waste.

—Nancy McIntyre, 1989

RETIRED MENS CLUB (AUG. 1982)

back-handed invitation

The predominating mood in my images is peaceful and still; sometimes intensely still as I try to recreate that initial sense of a moment frozen in time which prompted me to choose a particular subject. I try to make the world in the picture not only convincing but inviting — or part-way inviting.

My prints with the most energy seem to be those with a tension between a strong invitation to go stand or sit in a certain place, and something else holding you back. Entry may be barred by a screen or door or the reflections on glass, showing the window you look through to be a barrier at the same time as you enjoy the way the exterior plays with the interior scene it overlays.

In *Retired Mens Club*, there is no physical barrier, but the old man on the other side of the bench to make you a little edgy about going over and sitting in the spot that I've tried visually to make just as bright and inviting as I possibly can.

—Nancy McIntyre, 1989

B & B QUALITY CLEANERS (NOV. 1982)

fighting silkscreen's reputation

What a reputation silkscreening has. (Or should I call it screenprinting, or serigraphy?) A few years ago, a print gallery in Georgetown told me that its customers really weren't ready to accept silkscreen prints; when they came looking for prints, they meant etchings or lithographs. Much longer ago, back when I was just starting out, I met a man at a party who said to me, "It seems strange to meet a silkscreen printer. It's such an outdated technique. It's like meeting someone who works in the lost wax process. Don't you feel you're being replaced by color Xerox?"

There is a narrow idea, widely held, of what a silkscreen looks like (flat, simple, and brightly-hued) that is in pronounced contrast to the actual capabilities of the medium. Getting to challenge that notion is a very enjoyable part of being a silkscreen printer.

In 12 years of serigraphy, I have only used it in a few of the ways it lends itself to. What is most particularly wonderful about it for me is how easily and directly I can work with planes of color to represent space and air. I can print an all-at-once wash comprised of as

many shades of ink as I should choose to mix, each ink having whatever degree of transparency I desire, blended together on the screen with the squeegee before I pull it across the paper.

Because of the ease and quickness with which one layer of ink can be applied to one copy of the edition — a matter of seconds, once a color is set up — silkscreen lends itself to experimentation; it is wholly practical for an image to evolve during the printmaking process, rather than be altogether decided upon before the first color can be applied.

Sometimes, to get a better idea where the print is heading, I will make the stencils for two or three successive colors and run proofs of them before printing the first one on the whole edition. I own three screens, which usually seems sufficient. I have occasionally read or heard that editions should be proofed in their entirety before they are printed, but have never understood what for. It seems to me that if I were to proof 15 colors, and then judge the first color, I would find that it either needs changing or it doesn't. If it doesn't, the proofing of that color was unnecessary. If it does, the proofs are all wrong; I can't judge what the second color would do with an altered first color. Perhaps one is meant to make series of proofs. I don't know. But I suppose there is something to be said for a process whereby mistakes never make it to the edition, the way mine do.

People, possibly the same who would think I should get somebody else to do the mundane actual "running of presses," sometimes ask to see the "original" from which I work. But of course there is no original; the creation of the picture is what happens during the whole process of making the print. That is a good thing because if I felt I were merely making reproductions of an "original," I doubt I could garner the interest and patience to go through the process of printing, much as I enjoy it as a physical activity.

—Nancy McIntyre, 1983

BARBERSHOP WINDOW (JULY 1983)

Review by Paul Richard

City Reflections

Nancy McIntyre is a Washington artist worthy of support. Her silk-screen prints on view at Jane Haslem Gallery, 406 Seventh St. NW, deserve their popularity. Printed with great skill, they are complex but not busy. They are multiples, of course, but their textures are so many and their colors are so subtle that they have the sort of decorative weight one associates more often with paintings than with prints. And they are very inexpensive. "Jets," a small colored skyscape with contrails and rooftops, sells for only \$35.

McIntyre's imagery is not particularly original. The French photographer Atget was using shop window reflections to activate his quiet scenes of quiet Paris streets in the 1890s; photographer Robert Frank was lovingly examining barber chairs through windows in the 1950s; and the painter Richard Estes has, for many years, carefully combined streetscapes and reflections in his many-colored screen prints.

But McIntyre portrays Washington, not Paris. And her mirrorings and glintings have a spirit that is softer, sweeter, less cerebral, than that which lends such toughness to the gem-hard prints of Estes. It is easy to forgive what seem to be her borrowings, for the viewer never doubts her patience, her affection.

She likes Capitol Hill bars, Victorian red brick doorways, unprepossessing streets. She does not picture monuments. "A place attracts me most, she has said, "when it looks straightforward and much-used. I want to find a place that people might pass by without noticing and try to show that it is beautiful. I would love for the viewer to want to be there." The nicest prints on view — "The Tune Inn," for example, a view from a front table in that quiet bar, or the newer "Barbershop Window," a large print that combines aspects of two older prints — evoke a sort of reverie. There are 91 colors in "Barbershop Window." McIntyre, though she uses stencils, knows how to drift and blend her hues, and how to soften their hard edges. And her prints are full of air.

Washington has been lucky with its silk-screen artists. Lou Stovall and Jonathan Meader are two of the best-known. Both men print at home. They do not shock their viewers; their pictures are much loved, one sees them everywhere. McIntyre's silk-screens extend that tradition.

— Paul Richard, *The Washington Post*, Feb. 9, 1984;
review of solo exhibit at Jane Haslem, accompanied
by photo reproduction of *Barbershop Window*

about Richard Estes & photorealism

Ed Hill Gallery
El Paso, Texas

Dear Ed,

Here are copies of the two reviews in the Washington Post [1977 and 1984]. Looking at them again calls to mind a chronology that I will relate to you because it's sort of funny, though I am embarrassed to confess such ignorance.

The few art appreciation classes I took at RISD were not too informing, and after graduation my efforts to learn more about other artists didn't amount to much either. I was encouraged in this neglect by a good friend and mentor at the Gross-McCleaf Gallery in Philadelphia, who actually asked me to please *not* look up the work of a painter whose images he thought mine resembled. We may have both feared I'd either be too easily and overly influenced, or else be discouraged to find that what I was trying to do had "already been done."

Still, when the 1977 review in the Post described *Barber Chairs* as "Estes-like," I was curious to find out what that meant; I might've heard of Estes, but I didn't know his work. At the library, he turned up in the photorealist section of a book about contemporary art. The one (black-and-white) Estes reproduction, an image of three phone booths, was nice-looking, and related to *Barber Chairs* in subject, composition and style. But the philosophy of photorealism, as described in that book, seemed pretty alien. The pictures were said to include every detail because every detail was equally meaningful and thus [where they really lost me] equally meaningless. Evidently the paintings were *meant* to look cold; they were *supposed* to have no soul. I was glad, then, when gallery people told me that my work didn't really feel like Estes' at all.

About this same time ('77 or '78) the Corcoran Gallery mounted a show of Washington realists. Abstraction was still the mainstream, and I was tremendously excited to see what other local artists who

worked realistically were up to. I discovered at least two excellent artists there, yet mostly was disappointed, if not appalled by that show. The overall mood was of photo-realistic coldness: the images looked like the artists felt, if anything, dislike or contempt for their subjects. In all their detail, the paintings obviously took a lot of work, and I couldn't understand what made the artists want to paint them.

Furthermore, I didn't like the colors photorealists seemed to choose: somehow, everything looked either too dull or too garish.

The black-and-white reproduction couldn't show which of those two color extremes Richard Estes tended toward; I just assumed it was necessarily one or the other, and was quite unprepared for my reaction when I finally saw his work, at the Hirshhorn Museum's exhibit in early '79: I *loved* his colors. The paintings were gorgeous, so beautiful as to cast doubt, for me, on his written statement that "the main difference between my paintings and those of abstract expressionists is *not* that theirs are abstract and mine representational, but that they paint from their hearts and I paint from my head." His work looked like some heart had snuck in somehow, though I still don't know why he didn't want it to.

The only thing in the show that seemed less than top-notch was a silkscreen print of one of the paintings. To begin with, he chose a very small and relatively unambitious painting, evidently so he could reproduce it down to the finest detail. The registration was marvelous, but a reproduction could only approach and never *be* the painting, and the problem was that the print in no way *exceeded* the painting. Of course he didn't actually run the edition himself; if he had, maybe there'd have been more spark in it. Still, after seeing that silkscreen, it was ten years before I was ever willing to make a print from an "original".

But the real revelation in the Estes show was definitely the color. There was one painting, *Central Savings*, that so exactly resembled my print *Lunch*

Counter that it was downright spooky — except for one thing: he'd gotten the colors right! *Lunch Counter* was like *Jessie's Ice Cream Place* in that it was so full of reflections that I never succeeded in finding a way to keep it from being too gray. Then too, very few of my prints, up to that time, showed much intensity of color.

So what I guess it comes down to is that although I *wasn't* influenced by Estes, to speak of, before 1979, I should have been! Except . . . I wonder if I could have printed *Lunch Counter* at all, after seeing *Central Savings*.

If not by the inspiration of Richard Estes, how *did* I get started on reflections? Well, it was our first year in DC, and I had taken some slides of my Capitol Hill neighborhood, fishing for ideas for silkscreens. Walking to the camera store to get the film developed, with three blank shots on the roll, I was on the lookout for something to fill up those last frames. About a block away from the camera store without finding anything of interest, all of a sudden I happened to glance into the barber shop, and it just took my breath away. I shot the three pictures and then rushed to the film store and got another roll of film and shot that too. It is still the most interesting set of slides I've ever taken — and of a place that I must have passed any number of times before without even noticing.

I tried to some way recreate that experience, in the first barber pictures and in other work since. Even before that, I had liked the idea of trying to get people to notice the beauty in everyday things around them, but that startling moment highlighted for me just how much I miss.

Nor have I noticeably reformed in the matter of studying other artists' work as I should. After reading the other *Post* review, in 1984, I had to go look up Robert Frank.

—Nancy McIntyre, April 22, 1991

ATTIC BEDROOM (JUNE 1986)

new studio

By 1982, we had finished the renovation of our house on O Street, and it was lovely inside, but the neighborhood was still pretty ugly. People still kept getting shot. We wanted to be some place Molly could run around, so we looked long and hard in DC and close-in Maryland, especially Takoma Park. We couldn't find much of any overlap between what we could afford and what we thought we needed. I had become concerned enough about the silkscreen fumes that I wanted a studio with a different air supply from the house.

We'd rejected Virginia for the monotony of its blocks of identical red brick houses, and because we weren't quite ready for the idea of moving to the actual south. But Bob's brother, who had recently moved to Virginia himself and was dabbling in real estate, said there was a neighborhood he drove through a lot that we'd really like. And he was right; it turned out to be a great place to live and raise our kids.

The houses, built around 1948, had all started out as small, sturdy, cookie-cutter Cape Cods. But most people had put on some kind of addition. Our house had gables added to the front, a raised roof, and a one-story addition extending across the whole back of the house: a big rustic room with rough-hewn boards on the wall, an arched brick fireplace, and a country look that suited us nicely. There is also a big yard, and nice, interesting neighbors.

Best of all, the previous owner was a car nut who had built himself a huge four-car garage that would make a great studio. When we bought the house, we didn't even know about the upstairs part of the studio, because the building was locked until the owner could remove his cars and car parts.

Over the next year and a half, while I was pregnant with and nursing Jake, we finished off the studio. Construction friends from O Street did the rough carpentry, hung the sheetrock, and added a skylight and windows upstairs. We had a heavy-duty exhaust system installed along with heating and cooling. I did the trim work, while Bob put in electricity, water and sewer, built a bathroom, and also installed a shower base at counter height to be my wash-out sink. About the time we moved to Virginia in the winter of 1984, a big exhibit of my work at Haslem sold so well we could pay for it all.

Attic Bedroom was the first silkscreen I printed in the new studio.

—Nancy McIntyre, 2011

EVERETT'S FRONT WINDOW (NOV. 1986)

2-d and 3-d

I try to get my pictures to work in different ways at the same time: both from a distance and close up; both as 2-dimensional designs and as representations of 3-dimensional space; both convincing of the things depicted and yet clearly marks on paper. I write to myself, "make the brushstroke BE the thing" and "don't be afraid to leave out."

I want to push *both* your awareness that it is a drawn (painted, printed) thing *and* a convincing real world; make you feel as "there" as possible and at the same time remind you as hard as I can that this is a piece of paper here. Dare both those things as hard as I can.

I realize this is not a new idea. It's just a balance I have not consciously played with very much in the past.

—Nancy McIntyre, 1988

JESSIE'S ICE CREAM PLACE (SEPT. 1987)

words on the wall

The fine line to walk is one where I find an image that can touch other people, that they can relate to, *and* one I can create with my heart in it. I don't feel like a sell-out for trying to make pictures that people who aren't artists or art connoisseurs respond positively to, and sometimes want to live with, because that communication is for me one of the big things art is *for*.

But sometimes during that process of creation, I sure do get bogged down. When I'm really stuck, I may proof some simple little change to a silkscreen, then not like it, redraw the stencil, remix the color, proof again, and still not like it. After a few rounds of that, it is tempting to go ahead and print the latest version onto the whole edition, just to feel I'm making some progress.

I actually had to write on my studio wall:

"It's not progress if it doesn't make it better"

Two other notes on the wall:

"Colors can't harmonize until they sing"
and

"to finish (or perform) an art work: 'nail it' or 'release it?'"

—Nancy McIntyre, 2011

P.S. Jessie is my daughter's friend who went to the Frozen Dairy Bar a lot, not an owner of it.

SWING (NOV. 1987)

why water-based screenprinting

Water-based screenprinting is still new to me. I printed with oil-based inks for most of sixteen years, all the while becoming gradually more aware of the health hazards involved. The fumes emitted by the silkscreen process are quite pronounced, not only because of the solvents used during clean-up but also because it is a very fast printing process, which results in great quantities of ink drying all at the same time. Knowing nothing about ventilation at first, I eventually learned how to put in a good system of exhaust fans, but I think it was too late; the fumes still kept bothering me more and more, even wearing a carbon-filter mask. The last straw was when Naz-Dar changed their warning labels, which once upon a time had read simply, "Use with adequate ventilation" (it's so easy to assume that whatever ventilation one has is "adequate"), so as now to caution that long-term use can cause central nervous system and brain damage. I figured that sixteen years might be verging on "long-term," and that I ought to look into the alternatives.

The alternative of water-based ink turned out to have improved since the last time I'd checked. I was looking for high-quality permanent inks, a transparent base that could be mixed in infinite proportion to the colored ink, and a stencil material that I could use for both direct-drawing and resist techniques, and that would wash out without toxic solvents. These things are all now available, and I think it could turn screenprinting into what I always used to mistakenly think it already was: an ideal medium for use in a simple home printing studio.

A good source of information is *Water-based Inks: A Manual for the Studio and Classroom*, published in 1987 by Lois Johnson and Hester Stinnet at the Philadelphia College of Art. Their advice was of much help to me, when I first tried the water-based method (and nearly quit in frustration). I am still having difficulties with the medium, chiefly stemming from the tendency of the paper to buckle. But there may be no sense in trying to figure everything out myself before advising people to use the water-based method, when the surest way for the best techniques to be discovered is for lots of us to be exploring the medium at the same time.

—Nancy McIntyre, 1989

Speedball inks & photo stencils

The inks I now use, both at home and in the classes I teach, are Speedball's Permanent Acrylic silkscreen inks, in addition to their Transparent Base and Extender Base (which is also transparent once it's dry.)

Occasionally I add acrylic paint from tubes or Concentrated Acrylic from little bottles, mixed with the silkscreen inks and bases, especially if I want a deep but transparent color. When I want a sheen over the print, I have lately been using Speedball's Permanent Acrylic Overprint Varnish, but I am finding it too sticky, and consider returning to what I used in the late 80s and 90s: a mixture of silkscreen extender base and acrylic gloss medium.

Speedball also makes three stencil materials that I use: Screen Filler for a painted block-out, Screen Drawing Fluid for resist, and Diazo Photo Emulsion for photographic screens. If I want a drawn rather than painted resist, I can still use lithographic pencil, just like with oil-based inks, because litho will oddly enough dissolve in *either* water or mineral spirits. It is also possible to block water-based inks with regular old wax crayon. This is a real advantage of water-based inks over oil-based: I was never able to find a drawing material that would directly block oil-based inks.

As for photo stencils, I had to finally learn to use them when I started teaching silkscreen in 1997. By now, I have found at least two good uses for them in my own work.

The first: If I have a good ink drawing or painting, it can be translated directly into a silkscreen stencil without having to trace it on the screen. I can just get it copied onto transparency film. Then I coat a screen with photo emulsion, place the transparent positive on top, and expose it under bright lights that harden the emulsion only where it's not blocked by the black areas of the transparency. Finally, I rinse out the parts of the emulsion that are still soft, to make the photo stencil.

The second use: To make a duplicate. Sometimes I have a painted block-out stencil that I plan to print once in a lighter color, then block out in more areas, and print again in a darker color. If I silkscreen the original stencil, in black, onto acetate or other transparent film, I can use that as a transparent positive to make a photostencil that is a duplicate of the block-out stencil. Then I block out the desired areas of the duplicate with Screen Filler, to print the darker color.

Now I can print both versions onto proofing paper to learn how the two stencils look together without having to destroy the first one. It is also possible to clean out the Screen Filler without harm to the photo emulsion, so that later I can easily go back and make different changes to the duplicate.

I'm still not very expert at the photo technique, but I can certainly understand why so many silkscreen printers favor it.

—Nancy McIntyre, 2011

BLUE CHAIRS (1998 & 1999)

early frustration with water-based technique

On the heels of the success I had printing my first, small-scale water-based print, *Swing* (1987), I was eager to try the new technique with a full size silkscreen, and began *Blue Chairs* in January of 1988.

Immediately, I ran into trouble. As is often the case, I started with a coat of very faint-colored ink, mostly transparent base, over the whole print. This makes the paper a little less absorbent, so that I can usually print subsequent colors with just one pass of the squeegee. But with the water-base inks, that over-all coating left big rumples in my standard-weight, 240g BFK paper.

When paper won't sit flat, "lift marks" are pronounced and ugly. Lift marks are unwelcome irregularities in the coating of ink, caused by the paper separating in an uneven way from the screen immediately after printing.

As taught back in art school, I use a hinged backboard clamped to the screen, rather than the hinge clamps sold especially for screenprinting. Hinge clamps intentionally hold the screen 1/8 inch or so off of the paper, on the theory that the best way to avoid lift marks is to allow the screen to touch the paper only as the squeegee is immediately passing over (the off-contact technique.) But here is the truth: it only works if you are printing on a vacuum table, which I have never tried. Otherwise, lift marks are much worse with an off-contact screen, particularly when using water-based inks.

Even with my screen down flat, the buckled paper made awful lift marks as I attempted to print layers of colors. I tried strategically placing jars of ink on the screen, as I printed, to weight it down and squash the rumples. It was an awkward procedure and not very effective. I called the two printers who were kindly helping me adapt to the new medium, Lois Johnson at University of the Arts in Philadelphia and local master printer and Corcoran instructor Dennis O'Neil. One suggestion was to increase humidity in the room, so I ran a humidifier full blast and waved each print over it before I put it under the screen, all to no noticeable effect.

Finally I set aside *Blue Chairs* in despair, and turned to a series of paintings on paper of our favorite people, houses, and boatyards on Prince Edward Island.

After finishing the Island series, I decided to make silkscreens of a couple of those paintings. To keep the paper flatter, I tried printing over an undercoat of oil-based transparent base. It definitely helped.

Then, Speedball improved their transparent base. I had learned it was best to use a heavier paper, Arches 88 Silkscreen paper, made expressly for the process. But *Blue Chairs* had at least flattened out some during its spell in the drawer, and in December 1989 I was able to complete it.

—Nancy McIntyre, 2011

EVERETT'S BARN, FISHING SHACKS AT THE
CREEK, CONNIE'S OLD ROOM & FISHING BOAT
(1989-1991)

The Island

Everett's Barn, Fishing Shacks at the Creek, Connie's Old Room and Fishing Boat are directly based on four paintings from my series (and unpublished book) *The Island*, exhibited at Jane Haslem in 1989. There are 30 paintings in the series, but these four are the ones I thought I could most improve by translating into silkscreen. My silkscreens have a surface quality which I find hard to match in my paintings: a richness and depth that come from overlaying so many transparent blends. So it's possible for a silkscreen to actually be a better piece of art than the "original" painting, and I think that's true of these four.

It is very rare that I use a finished painting as a basis for a screenprint. But it was hardly the first time I had made silkscreen prints of the island.

Artist Statement for *The Island* exhibit:

Before I ever first saw Prince Edward Island, my husband warned me that it is the most beautiful place in the world, with fields so green and earth so red that when we left it, everything else would look grey by comparison. In the twenty years since, the eastern shore of the Island has been the most frequent subject of my work as an artist. We used to drive Down East every summer, while my husband's cousin Everett was living, and we still come back some years and visit others in the family.

Down East, or the Island, or PEI, we call it. But the people we know who live on it have their own way of talking and a different name for the place: they call it "home", as if it were *everybody's* home. When they ask us "Will you be home next summer?" they mean, will you be *here*.

Over the years, I have begun to understand. Inside the old farmhouses, there is a resonance of familiarity, beyond what I'd expect even for the number of times I've been in them. Some of the details and materials do make me think of homes from my childhood: the chenille, the linoleum, the sheer soft plastic curtains (gradually replaced by cloth). But it's not that I am reminded of my own particular old house, so much as that I start to agree that this place is what they say it is — home, in that all-encompassing way they use the word here. The place you can always go back to; the place you want never to change.

—Nancy McIntyre, 1989

SEVENTEENTH STREET (OCT. 1991)

endangered spaces

"Endangered spaces": that's how I think of those homey, human-scale downtown places, humming their individual tunes, akin to other places but not interchangeable, not like their predators: the chain-store malls, sanitized for-profit cities without citizens or locality.

—Nancy McIntyre, 1994

middle of the street

The feeling of this corner:

city in its best light,
crisp, dazzling, colorful, so many *things*,
more than the eye can take in, all hitting at once,
so that everyone sees something different.

An almost entirely manmade environment,
but past controlling — yet much of it pleasingly
designed.

Lively and sprightly, busy in every way.

Alertness required.

Crossing and recrossing the border between cacophony
and symphony.

Morning, the most wholesomely purposeful time of day
here.

Signs of restriction, construction, persuasion fight
to catch the eye.

Mix of freshness and decay.

Whereas in my quieter caught moments the subject
and viewer both are still, the invitation trying to be like
slow magnetism, this one should jitter and dance, with
the viewer in the middle of the *street*, not likely
standing long to muse.

—Nancy McIntyre, 1991

discouraged note to self

March 5, 1992

OK so you've learned how to get the screen clean pretty well, but what are you putting on it?

Why is the pattern so eternal — first to be in love with what you're starting, the way you see it will be, and then as it takes form, the flaws come into focus, and such a sameness of flaws: ALWAYS too flat, ALWAYS too gray, ALWAYS too dead. ALWAYS too tight . . .

There is at least the hopeful knowledge that it always does get better, some better. Sometimes even near to the original wish; usually not . . . maybe never, since the switch to water-base.

I miss having a way to heighten the transparent sheen, and 2 days ago tried squeegeeing on a layer of the new stuff that does that to paintings, the liquitex Acrylic Transparentizer. The results were pronounced: it peeled layers of ink right off the picture onto the screen.

So anyway here I am in my usual halfway-done spot: with an inanimate something on my hands, desperately hoping I can breathe some life into it, wondering if I should back off a bit and go paint, and trying to remember what if any new or worthwhile thing I have to say in this set of work anyway, about reflections or DC or city spaces. . . .

Human-scale, going concerns are all there is to fight against monolith construction with mandated first floor retail, 25% empty in the section Bob's office is in, the emptiness blamed on the mandate, the new occupied places half of them so intimidatingly upscale I don't dare to enter — what does this say to the frequenters of old downtown, when there was an old downtown, before they tore it down for the tax breaks that funded the empty stuff. Granted the 80s boxes were a little prettier than the 70s boxes. The polarization of society is well exemplified by the numbers of homeless shuffling by those snooty shops, where 15 and 20 years ago here there seemed to be so many more people in between, managing to get by, as they browsed or worked in that homier style of establishment so soon to be homed in on by the bulldozer.

Maybe a lot of the places that truly survived the onslaught will be able to make it now, even in (or because of?) hard times. Just outside the city's centrifuged core, there are plenty of neighborhoods that still feel like home, and a lot of those kind of places I

had thought unnoticed (because when new to Washington I hadn't noticed them) turn out to be pretty well beloved after all. If the people who fight against razing these places are the ones that buy my prints, maybe I'm not saying much of anything to anybody, *except* to confirm they are not alone when they do see something worth holding onto.

Maybe what I look for in manmade places is not only the unselfconscious highly personal caring for a place by the person who runs it (whose face and hands are implied by their work) but also a hum of community. The signs of people *doing* something, and an invitation of some sort to join in.

So in this new print, where is the invitation? Neither the cakes nor the doorway seem to seduce, though the awning does start to make a space to stand under.

When I started the print, I liked the center-weighting, with the tree, the big cake, the pizza window & figure, the lamp, window divider, crepe paper, indoor bakery case and myself all so close to lined up, yet the denseness and depth of that is not coming through. What if any light hits the window itself is not resolved. This print should be sparkly and playful, and I'd best get down to work, or play, to head it there.

—Nancy McIntyre

encouraging words

Dear Collectors,

For the last 21 years, it has been my pleasure to see tens of thousands of prints. Now, two original screenprints by Virginia artist Nancy McIntyre have taken my full attention, both technically and aesthetically. I find her work profoundly moving.

Ms. McIntyre created HELLER'S BAKERY and EVERETT'S FRONT WINDOW [1986] in a matrix of abundant and sincere respect. No cloying sentimentality here. No prettifying or overstating in trying too hard to 'make art.' Just straightforward, simple, and captivatingly honest.

These two images, and indeed all her work (including her paintings) define relationships we all have with places and things we see repeatedly, but overlook for their menial usefulness or repeated, anticipated sight. McIntyre's ability to use color, and her understanding of light compel a perspective where the commonplace moves once again into our consciousness.

—Ed Hill, art dealer, El Paso TX, Sept.4 1992

On the phone:

Sept. 8, 1992

Ed: Maybe the struggle is part of what's so good about the final print.

Nancy: I do think the mistaken layers add a density to the print that wouldn't be there if I got it right from the start, and that density does add to the print . . . I'm just not sure there needed to be that *many* mistaken layers.

Ed: I just see it as all those layers were necessary to get Nancy McIntyre to the point of finding the right way for the print to be . . . Sometimes I find in life that the lessons that are hardest to learn are the most important ones.

Nancy: It just seems like I ought to be able to carry the lessons through from print to print a little better than I do.

Ed: Well maybe you carry them through; it just takes time to put them in a different application.

Nancy: I should tape this conversation for the next point where I get really bogged down in my next print.

Ed: Listen just call me, any time.

Sept. 9, 1992

Nancy: What made you decide to pair together *Heller's Bakery* and *Everett's Front Window*?

Ed: It's the spiritual quality of the light.

Nancy: 'Trying to get some air in the picture' is how I usually phrase it. 'Spiritual quality of the light' would be hard to say out loud about my own work, but indeed may put a finger on what I'm aiming at . . . thank you.

MOON GATE (OCT. 1992)

come closer, look harder

There are places I already seem to remember, the first time I lay eyes on them. Is it the memory of someplace like it, or my guess that I *will* remember it? A friend's old beach house on Shelter Island was like that; it seemed not only beautiful but *familiar*. We were invited for the weekend, and the first thing I did was run back to the car for my camera.

I photograph and also try to remember, as close as I can, how a place looks and feels at the moment that it stops me in my tracks. I feel drawn in and at the same time don't want to move, since moving would change what I see. Later, when I try to translate that experience into a silkscreen, I want to relay to the viewer the sense of invitation that I feel as I stand there. "Come closer. Look harder." "Go on up to the door." "Sit down right there and make yourself at home."

—Nancy McIntyre, 2001

REFLECTION OF FRIENDSHIP HEIGHTS

(AUG. 1993)

top view

There used to be an Italian restaurant, Cugini's, sticking out onto the sidewalk along Connecticut Avenue. Looking through its two sets of windows to the stores farther down the street, with reflections of Clover Market and Uptown Cathay superimposed on the first set of windows, the viewer can also see inside the restaurant. *Reflection of Friendship Heights* is the only reflection piece I've done that's so complex I need a visual aid to explain it.

My apologies to the Washingtonians who know this is in Chevy Chase, not Friendship Heights: I accidentally mistitled it when I thought ADC Map's vaguely placed designation of a subway stop was supposed to be a neighborhood.

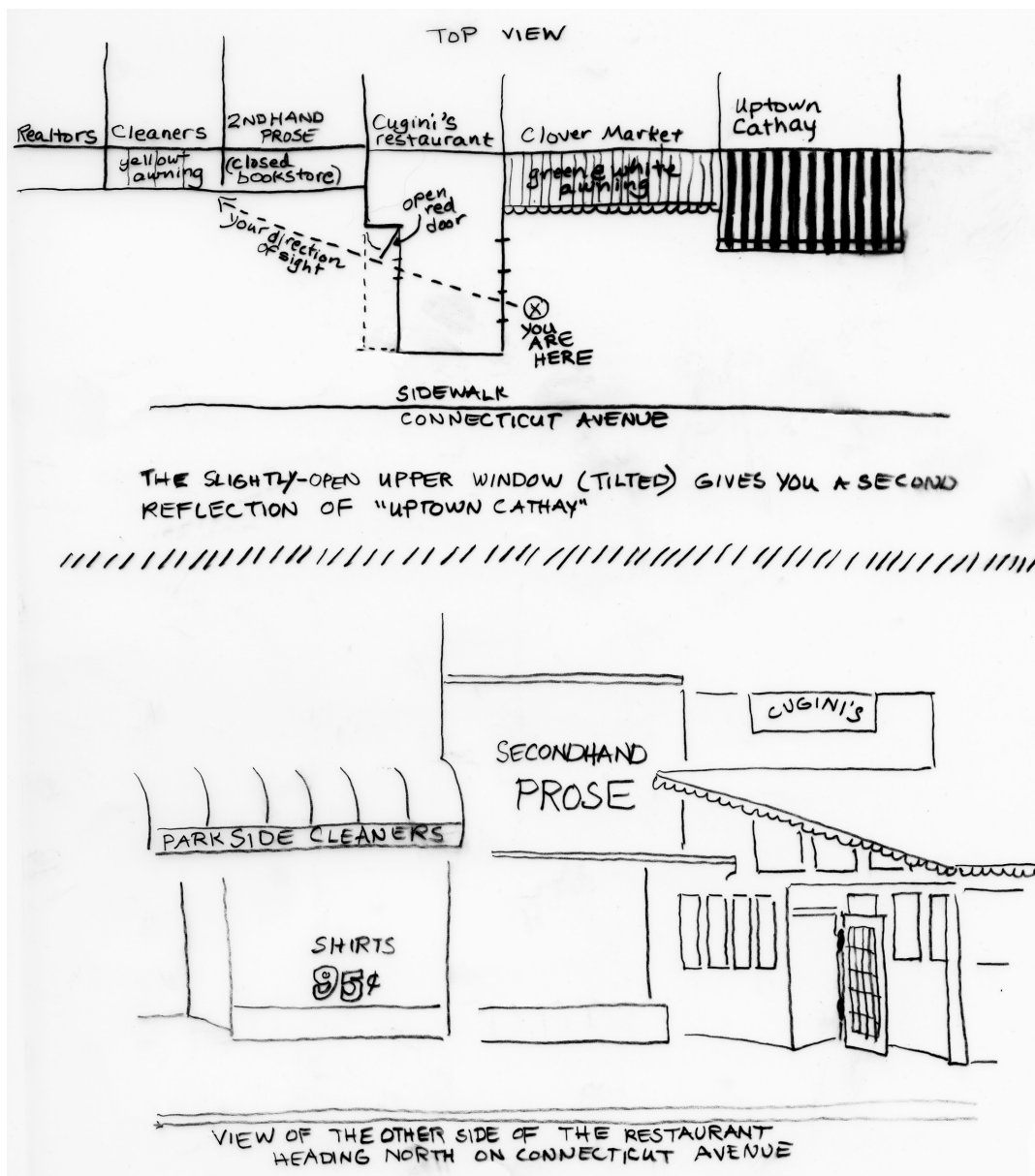
DC photo session

Photo session last Thursday, October 8, 1992

I headed into town for three reasons: to bring a copy of *Heller's Bakery* to the bakery, to visit a friend, and to take another photo or two of Second Hand Prose, looking for a way to resolve my dislike of the name . . . and maybe other photos if I was lucky.

As I approached DC I was struck by the light, which seemed strong and clear above, but very smoggy-looking toward ground. The Potomac was beautifully mirror-like as I drove toward Rock Creek Parkway, and I might've taken a picture of that if there'd been a place to stop.

I thought I'd pass Second Hand Prose on Wisconsin on the way to the bakery, but it turned out to be on Connecticut. The window didn't say "Second Hand Prose" anymore. It said "For Lease." Displaced again, I parked anyway to take a few shots, especially of across



the street, in case reflections could replace the lettering. Well, across the street was “Politics and Prose” with the Second Hand Prose clock in the window. I crossed the street and found the new store completely unphotogenic.

Then I started to notice, or remember, that as I’d approached ex-Second Hand Prose from the Italian restaurant side, there’d been a pretty good reflection in the windows on the other side of the Italian restaurant (Cugini’s). Indeed as I went back there it started looking like *great* reflections, basically of Clover Market next door, superimposed on my view of Second Hand Prose and the adjacent cleaners *through* the windows of Cugini’s sidewalk projection, complicated by an echo reflection in an upper ajar storm window.

Looking at the photos now, it should be the liveliest reflection picture I’ve ever done; the most surreal, the hardest puzzle (especially with Cugini’s door open), and the first time the reflection has actually outbalanced the forward stuff. *This* picture could be truly worth my return to reflections. Not second hand and not prosaic.

It will take a long time. And I’ll have to be careful to keep the color as strong as I can and the center sash of the window from being *too* awkward and pronounced, so that the top part looks worth doing (be *sure* it is ...).

Looking at the color sketch next to *Heller’s*, I think this print could make *Heller’s* look as stiff and stilted as it still aggravatingly strikes me anyway. I will try to let the new one be informed by the grace of *Moon Gate*, not just the tight construction I find necessary to make reflections be solvable as puzzles. If I can make those qualities co-exist.

I do believe I’m ready to jump in with both feet.

—Nancy McIntyre Oct. 14, 1992

troubles & wishes

It’s a beautiful gorgeous spring morning, all bright and chirpy, flowery and green. And I was walking back towards the house carrying a good-looking copy of the Friendship Heights print with a white I’d just proofed, to see if it looked as nice in the incandescent light in the house, and walking there I looked and thought it

just couldn’t *be* prettier outside. But the picture, well in the house light and in the outdoor light and in the shaded light of the new porch it just looked all wrong: too pinkly orangely grey; too foolishly, chalkily colorful AND too greily dull. What am I going to do with this thing?

How to get some more blue in. How to unflatten the lamp, liven up the texture of wall and paneling. Do something about that yellow awning. Refind the freshness in it.

—May 6, 1993

Here’s what I want:

I want this picture to make you dream of flight, of following the Clover awning up to the mid-air door, to the flags, to the cloud, airborne. No wonder I’m disappointed.

Every once in awhile, in a pastel sketch-over or in a mirror or upside down, I catch a mere glimpse of the singing way I want the pieces of this picture to flow together. Then I check closer and it’s gone; everything’s awkward again; no part is beautiful enough.

—July 15, 1993

OPEN WINDOW (APRIL 1994)

old vs. new

I like working with images of places that have been around long enough that there is some sort of tension between the way a place was *designed* to look and the way it looks now, as well as a tension between the way it looks to whoever is caring for it and the way it looks to me.

This may be why I shy away from newly built places, that still look just like they were meant to look — sometimes to the point of striking me as giant blow-ups of architectural models — and also why I avoid images of things that are mine. Worst would be a newly-built thing of mine. Otherwise I would surely want to make a picture of my new front porch.

—Nancy McIntyre, 1993

CLOVER MARKET (JAN. 1995)

review on WETA TV

Review on WETA TV of *Windows of DC* exhibit at Haslem, Dec. 1994 – Jan. 1995

“I love both [Nancy McIntyre’s] realist technique and that sort of hint of mystery, with all the reflections she brings in. . . . This is real talent. . . . It’s a wonderful exhibit.

Robert Aubrey Davis, from the WETA (PBS) program *Aroundtown*, December 1994 review of “*Windows of DC*,” solo exhibit at the Jane Haslem Gallery

“Being native Washingtonians, we know, just looking at this stuff, this is the soul of the real Washington, not the Washington of museums or the Washington of big government, but really the town and the people living here. That’s really what it says.

Joe Barber, *Aroundtown*, Dec. 1994

“She’s mastered this technique. Different photographers have used this kind of reflective imagery, never to the extent that she does. One of the things she does . . . [is] the idea of using time. . . . You have a sense that the past and the future are passing in front of our eyes here, and you’re never sure which is which.”

Peter Fay, *Aroundtown*, Dec. 1994

FRONT PORCHES (JAN. 1996)

more significant than a cornstalk?

Thoughts I had today as I just finished a contour drawing of cosmos flowers and was looking at some graceful shapes of dead cornstalks in the garden.

Beautiful shapes, to inspire lines, are everywhere. Do more of this! In the way that I work, I don’t give my hand-eye connection enough to do during most of the printing process.

At the same time: There’s just not enough depth of meaning, for me, in plants as a subject. Cornstalks may signify a lot, but an individual cornstalk has not the significance, the suggestiveness, for me, of an individual porch. There’s a reason, besides habit, that I make porch pictures instead of cornstalk pictures.

Articulating the reason may not be what matters.

But boy this individual porch still strikes a flat note. I’m not even so sure anymore that the laying on color that I’ve been doing is helping. Maybe I need to very playfully draw with pastel or paint with acrylic onto a proof to set me straight.

—Nancy McIntyre, 9/29/95

ROW OF TREES (APRIL 1996)

what I want

I seem to want conflicting things: I want these trees to loom more, be more intense, but brighter. More individual, yet a wall. More textural, less flat. A wall but poofing out with each tree. Dramatically receding but brightly sunlit. Some overall color progression. More everything.

Looking at pastel: see if you can recover that three-fingered look, bending together at the top. And try to find a way to add more creamy sunny parts without looking too chalky.

Guess I didn’t finish it by Jake and Molly’s spring break, ’cause it won’t be done in half an hour.

—Nancy McIntyre, 3/29/96

RAY'S CAFÉ (OCT. 1996)

change

After the chain of green-roofed Little Tavern hamburger joints folded, one in Arlington was reborn as Ray's Café. I found its Farsi lettering beautiful, and photographed the place, but then let two years pass before starting this screenprint. By the time I returned for a closer look, Ray had remodeled anew. The Farsi is gone, the roof and stripes are green again, and now it's called "Ray's Famous Hamburger Palace."

—Nancy McIntyre, 1997

Later, it closed. Last I saw, the building still stands on Wilson Boulevard, under layers of drab beige paint.

REHOBOTH BEACH HOUSE (APRIL 1997)

explanation of relief plate

Sometimes, for soft textural effects, I screenprint over a relief plate that I construct from cut-out Mylar, paper, fabric, sandpaper or other material which has a texture or on which I can create a texture: I can paint on it with thick acrylic paint, emboss a soft surface with forceful lines of ballpoint pen, shave down a thick paper to make it thinner in places (see *Merry-go-Round*, 1976), etc. It is important that the relief is fairly flat and even, since the squeegee has to make good enough contact with the paper everywhere that there will not be skips in the ink. It also helps to use a dull squeegee.

If I'm printing onto lightweight paper, I just place the relief plate underneath the printing paper while it is screenprinted from above; the ink settles into the hollows and is partly rubbed off the high spots. With opaque colors, this might not have any particular effect, but with transparent inks, there is quite a difference between a thick layer of ink and a thin layer of ink.

To use relief with the heavy-weight paper necessary for water-based inks, the process is more complicated. It requires two colors of ink. The first color is squeegeed onto wax paper or freezer wrap, which is then discarded, leaving a residue on the screen corresponding to the low parts of the relief. Any excess ink around the edges must be scraped off of the screen, which is then lowered onto the printing paper. A second squeegee, with a second color, is drawn across the screen in a direction either opposite or perpendicular to the first. The residue from the first color will print onto the paper along with the second color.

For *Rehoboth Beach House*, to make a relief plate for the floor, I placed frosted Mylar over the master drawing. On a sheet of heavy paper, I brushed a little acrylic paint with gel medium added, using an old flat brush to make long strokes resembling wood grain. I cut out the now-textured paper in the shapes of boards to fit between the edges drawn on the master drawing, and glued them onto the Mylar backing. I then taped this relief plate onto my worktable, in the proper position to print over. When printed, using the two-step process described above, the darkest areas corresponded with the cracks between the floorboards, and the lightest were the raised parts painted onto the Mylar "boards". The relief plate for the shingles was built in a similar way.

Both areas were worked into further with subsequent colors. I find the relief plates to also be of use in the making of texture rubbings directly on the screen with either crayon (to block the high areas) or litho pencil resist (to allow the high areas to be printed.) In this way I can highlight or emphasize the textures further, though I have to be careful not to lose all the subtlety and softness of the original relief-plate texture.

—Nancy McIntyre, 2011

photo road trip

Sept. 3, 1997

Trying to reconstruct the mood of the first day of picture-taking (Aug. 19) because that's the one I want to recreate in my fruit-stand pictures.

I'd headed for the shore with no idea, really, of what I wanted for the subject of my next print, only that I wanted sky in it and so another porch chair wouldn't do. Driving out Rte. 50 in the morning, heading toward Ocean City for a change instead of to Lewes or Rehoboth, I started noticing a whole bunch of fruit stands — by later count, at least 16 in the 14 miles west of Salisbury.

I was wishing the sun would hurry and come out, because most of these fruit stands were on open ground, so sky could be in the same picture. Bright and sunny seemed like the right light, but I took a picture even in the shade when I got to "Parents & Kids" because it reminded me of Molly, who had gotten practically entranced by Bob's sour half-idea to go open a family bagel store, because the tax-reform scene had gotten so hopeless.

I had lunch in the cute little town of Berlin, near Ocean City, where I ate at a small-town fountain. Then I drove on to Ocean City, by which time it was pretty sunny.

The other thing besides sky that the porches had left me hungry for was bright colors. I had a bit of a thought of something tacky and boardwalky, remembering my one shot of the back of the Dolle's sign in Rehoboth, before Bob found and interrupted me on a previous snapshot in July. So I checked out the boardwalk at the south end of Ocean City, taking mostly pictures of a bright new in-your-face amusement park — especially in my face because I didn't realize I still had the telephoto lens on, and thought I just couldn't step back far enough because of the crammed-together design. Actually the cotton candy stand I took so many shots of could be just fine if it wasn't so very brand new. But it did make me think about how pleasingly wholesome all those fruit stands were. I decided to try to detour around to go by them again on the way home, after I'd made it up the coast and taken some more pictures of Dolle's and Grotto Pizza.

In Rehoboth, I also took a lot of pictures of the beach and people's chairs and stuff, thinking I *could* get sky and chair in the same picture if I thought I should continue with chairs for a chairs show at Jane Haslem.

Everything, Ocean City and Rehoboth (scant opportunities found in between — and Ocean City was high-rise and useless after the south end) is very bright and colorful and may be of future use.

But as I got back toward Salisbury, the sun was gone. To wait for it, I stopped around 6 p.m. for a fairly long supper at another local place, but no sun, pretty stormy-looking in fact. So I gave up. Stopped at a couple of fruit stands for fruit. Made a point to stop at the one with the windmill, which would have had *lots* of sky. But their corn was all buggy. So I still needed corn, most places were closed, and then I saw that one of the last, one of the few on the other side of the road, was open.

It was a big place, nice inside with new bare-wood tables. When I went to pay for my corn, the guy at the counter struck up a conversation. After finding out I was a silkscreen printer, he wanted me to come to the back so he could show me the silkscreen design his grandfather had made for their signs. He was making me a little bit nervous so I just stayed where I was and let him bring the sign to the front, and we talked some more.

I didn't tell him I'd been hoping to take fruit stand pictures. But we talked just long enough that when I came outside, the very low-in-the-sky sun had just come out from under its big purple cloud and struck the watermelon cart and its vegetable-picture sign with the most wonderful golden light. (The vegetable picture was painted by the grandfather, as I found out 4 days later.)

I ran for my camera and shot six pictures. Then drove back the 8 miles to "Parents & Kids", but it was all in shadow; the light was so flat, shadows were huge. Then I headed west again toward the couple places I'd seen were still in the sun, and took 2 more pictures before the camera said "No it's too dark I won't do this anymore" even though the light was still lovely to the eye.

The pictures came back on Thursday and the shots of the first place (Royers) were magical; indeed my only problem with them is they're perfect: What's left to do? I said this to Bob and he said "Listen, give me one, and I'll blow it up on the computer, and you'll see how bad it looks and how much better you can make it!"

It turned out he was thinking of the second place, Harcum, a horizontal one, that fit my original concept better because of all the space behind it, fields and distant trees, and the bigger I saw it the better I liked it. But also could imagine making a few changes here and there.

And maybe I could do a pair of fruit stands, *Open Window*-sized.

I had to go to Rehoboth Art League over the weekend anyway to pick up a painting from the summer indoor show. So I took some more fruit stand photos, in the sun, but they're pretty ordinary-looking, all the shady parts too dark.

It was maybe 6:30 p.m. when I photographed a woman at Mills with the light hitting her hair as it got low in the sky and made its way under the roofs. She didn't like it that I didn't ask first, and we talked awhile, and I decided I should ask the guy at Royers, especially because his sign is so much a part of the picture. He was happy enough about it, and I took more photos, at just the same slant of light as it turned out, though with completely changed, colder colors.

Now to start on one or another of these.

—Nancy McIntyre, 9/3/97

FRUIT STAND (NOV. 1998)

photo road trip (see Watermelon \$2.00)

amazing light

I'm looking at a proof of the watermelon cart ("Church of the Fruit," my friend calls it) that pushes it just enough closer to what I want that it gives me a flash of understanding of what I do want, and it's wanting a lot:

I want this fruit stand to be so completely frozen in space by the amazing light that's hitting it that when you look at this picture it feels more like a 3-dimensional model of the cart than a picture of it.

—Nancy McIntyre, 1998

TAKOMA PARK (DEC. 1999)

2-part & 4-part images

(see Felix / Adams Morgan)

—Nancy McIntyre, 2008

BED, SINK, & BREAKFAST ROOM (2000)

interiors & favorite artists

Bed, Sink, & Breakfast Room. You make your bed in the quiet of the attic, you brush your teeth and wash your face in private, then you go downstairs and it's flooded with light and cheer and flowers, with a crowd of chairs at the breakfast table. Group beach house decor: bouquets of plastic silverware and hydrangeas. Busy noises from the kitchen, or are you alone down here, too?

You are right on the Delaware Bay in Lewes, just a short walk down the path through the dunes to the water, at 210 Bay Avenue, the setting for two earlier silkscreens, *Blue Chairs* (1989) and *Attic Bedroom* (1986). We were part of a beach house group that stayed there for the summer of 1979, and then for many years in the house next door. 210 Bay was a roomy, sturdy, beautiful old place that's now been torn down so they could squeeze in two fancy big new houses.

Bed is dreamy and loosely rendered, while *Sink* has its sharp toothbrush focus. There I want to draw in the senses — the feel of the hot & cold water, smooth porcelain and bristly plastic toothbrush; the creaky sound of the faucets; the taste of Crest.

In all three silkscreens: pared-down possessions; only the basic comforts of life. The bed and sink are icons; *Breakfast Room* is less centrally focused, and mostly about light. The Walker Evans show was the right thing to see while starting this sink; memories of *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*.

Walker Evans is one of my four long-time favorite artists:

Evans for his compositions, and the respect he shows his subjects, and the subjects themselves.

Monet for the air in his pictures and the way he makes you *feel* what it's like to be right there.

Hopper for his use of light and approach to buildings; his success in showing how light on a wall looks.

Rembrandt for the soul in his people.

—Nancy McIntyre, 2000

LATTICE (FOR MOM) (JULY 2001)

Why Chairs?

Why all these chairs? And how come there aren't any people in them?

Maybe I like chairs so much because I see them as the kind of furniture that's most like people, and most suggestive of the presence of people. And I guess if they're not all full of somebody else, I can hope the viewers will have room to think about being the people in them.

The sense of invitation that I try to convey in these silkscreens is the same feeling the chairs give me, when I first see them sitting there. It's usually kind of a mixed feeling; I feel drawn to them but don't, most times, dare actually sit in them. I never shift their position, rarely touch them, usually just photograph them if they fascinate me, and go back to my studio and try to recreate their moment of appeal.

— Nancy McIntyre, September 2001
(Artist statement for *Chair Series*, 1971–2001 exhibit at Haslem Gallery)

SIGNS (MAY 2002)

signs of the past

Signs is based on photographs I took over four years, of the "Signs of the Past" antique store on Rte. 9 between Georgetown and Lewes in Delaware, on the way to the beach. I took the liberty of including my favorite signs from a few different parts of the building.

Two years later I met (or re-met) George Passwater, who had run that store back when we were buying the 1937 gas stove for our DC house renovation, and the oak dining room set when we moved to Virginia. In 2004 he was 84, running a store across the street, "Passwater Antiques," with a big rocket out front. An interesting guy. He started the sign collection back when nobody wanted them.

On my next visit, I gave him a copy of the silkscreen. He said the new owners of "Signs of the Past" were having a lot of trouble; vandalism and burglary and such, not surprising since it had been closed with a board across the entrance for at least a year. (A couple of years later, it was knocked down.)

Besides running that store for 45 years, Passwater's other ventures included a 24,000-bird chicken business, raising rabbit-hunting dogs, and taking part in the Normandy Invasion.

—Nancy McIntyre, 2011

GEORGETOWN BEN & JERRY'S (MAY 2003)

surrounded by windows

How many other enterprises have made their home in this storefront, before Ben & Jerry's? I imagine the tin ceiling and wooden framework of windows to be original, or at least very old. The floor tiles show their age too, where they have come up to reveal a different pattern underneath, which is also missing some tiles. In Georgetown, exploding manholes are frequent reminders of how much lies below the surface, beyond the notice of the casual walker down the street.

The entryway is really quite narrow, so that when you step onto those tiles and look around, you are surrounded by windows, above you, in front of you, and to the left and right, and through the windows are all manner of bright colors and playful images.

In order to recreate that expansive, slightly dizzying sensation of windows in every direction, I merged views of the left and the right sides, to result in an image that is basically a stuck-together diptych, looking kind of like a panorama. The fun-house feel of the split floor and veering angles, the accordion-pleated shape of the wooden framework and the look of the light are what I tried to bring to the image to add to the bright fun posters, neon and wall painting that Ben & Jerry's presents for the visual pleasure of all who pass by, every day, hoping of course to entice us inside.

It was fun to photograph, fun to render as a big sketchy painting and as a full-scale detailed line drawing. Translating all that into a silkscreen took eight more months of building layer upon layer — 158 layers of color, more than any print I've ever done — as I struggled to meld the two sides into one convincing place, with each side still having just a little different flavor.

—Nancy McIntyre, 2003

BLOWY DAY, BEACH CHAIR I & BEACH CHAIR II
(AUG. 1999, JULY & SEPT. 2003)

the beach & monoprinting

Blowy Day, *Beach Chair I* and *Beach Chair II* all relate. *Beach Chair I* (2003) was conceived as part of a pair with *Blowy Day* (1999.) For *Beach Chair II*, I made the whole image much larger, with a few slight changes in color and composition; mainly I wanted to experiment with “monoprinting” on a larger scale than *Beach Chair I*. These three silkscreens are my only variable editions, due to the element of monoprint: The clouds and surf (and water, in the case of *Blowy Day*), are produced by painting silkscreen ink onto the screen with a brush, for each impression, just prior to squeegeeing with a different color blend.

—Nancy McIntyre, 2009

FELIX / ADAMS MORGAN (OCT. 2004)

2-part & 4-part images

Felix / Adams Morgan is the third in a progression of three images.

The first, *Takoma Park* (1999), depicts side-by-side businesses on a charming Art Deco block of Laurel Avenue, their doors open to an unseasonably warm January day. It almost reads as two separate pictures, or even four, because the dry cleaner and the antique shop each have a bay front, with the angled glass showing different aspects of reflection and light than the front windows. I enjoy how many kinds of lights there are in *Takoma Park* and sometimes try to count them all but then lose track.

With *Georgetown Ben & Jerry's* (2003) I wanted to show both sides of the entryway to that ice cream store, and almost made a pair of prints, intended to be hung together. But I realized they might not be. So I decided to meld them into one image, looking almost like a panorama except the angles aren't right, and there are some repeats, with the tiles on the left side of the entryway being the same tiles as on the right.

When it came to *Felix / Adams Morgan*, I ended up deciding on a composition that was an overt combination of four photographs, with the same chair and table shown three times. I had first intended to make a silkscreen of just the middle view of the chair and table, superimposed on the graffiti, but I felt like everything beautiful in the image was somebody else's doing. It's really quite a remarkable chair design. With the quad-tych, or whatever I should call it, if there's a name for such a thing, at least I was designing how to put it all together.

I finished *Felix / Adams Morgan* in the fall of 1994, but it wasn't till the following summer that I got around to going to the Felix restaurant with a matted copy of the silkscreen to give to the owners, as a thank you for its being such a inspiring place. By good chance the two partners that owned it were both there. They were pleased and excited to see the image, especially because all the interior had been lost to fire the past spring, except for the metal radiating sculpture that I had taken for a large jukebox.

It was tinier inside than I had thought, but also had a next-door part, the Spy Lounge, that had escaped the fire. The burned side was set to reopen in September.

Later, the whole place closed.

—Nancy McIntyre, 2011

slave to the photographs?

Asking myself in the shower, “In the art I make, what do I want to say?” there was no immediate answer, but later in the day came “maybe it’s more what I want to *evoke*.”

Sitting looking at close-up parts of photos, bright Adams Morgan stuff, thinking hmmm, ok, something appealing to that composition, but do I really want to draw it, little bit of drawing as it is, and is there anything I want different about it than I could do playing with it in Photoshop.

Even if I ignore the “what’s important enough about art right now to do it, instead of working for the International Rescue Committee or the Democrats or somebody”

What do I *want* to do?

Flashes of it:

- the exquisitely painted line or shape.
- a beautiful blend of color appearing on the paper as I pass my squeegee.
- wanting to make a visual thing come into being, and then find its way to some purpose, a thing for someone to settle their eyes on and feel touched or pleased.

Art doesn’t *have* to be that; Molly had lots of suggestions after Christmas and one was to try to make art out of all my worries and unease. Jake too talked about trying to make something that’s *not* a product with a use for someone else.

I talked with an artist friend about doing a joint project, maybe portraits or a quilt, and she suggested

bringing not our strengths but our weaknesses to it; for her, it was technology (learning to use a sewing machine). I said that what I keep needing to learn from her is a more instinctive approach. She said her perception was that I need to think about that intermediary step of the photograph, and whether it might be getting in my way.

There are so many reasons that photos seem the right source, or step between source and silkscreen, to my mind, that I got immediately defensive — probably a sign I really should give it some thought, or as Bob said when I relayed this on Saturday, at least not be such a slave to the photographs. He says it’s amusing sometimes how much I don’t want to change things. Maybe my perception of what I owe the subject, to be true to it, needs adjusting.

Maybe this Cape Henlopen yucca is worth working on, because the distance is such a dreamscape, and in a landscape I might not feel so bound to make things fit together right like they just have to (in my mind) for a building or reflection.

Energy seems low; anything that seems like much work is discouraging. Most of my October beach landscapes just strike me as too trite, everybody’s seen it all a million times. What would be a fresh plan? More sketching from life can only be good; I’ve neglected it shamefully.

You know what? I think I should see this not as a floundering time, but as a time when my mind is open and receptive to a lot of different ideas. Don’t be in such a hurry to get on a track.

—Nancy McIntyre, 1/10/05

Mother & Daughter

Jane Haslem has nurtured my art and furthered my career in countless ways over 32 years.

When I first came to DC in 1975, she was the dealer most highly recommended by my Philadelphia gallery, but at that time Jane was not looking for new work. I showed my silkscreens with the Potomac Gallery, the Aaron Gallery, and eventually the Wolfe Street Gallery. When Wolfe Street closed, I decided to try my luck again with Jane.

When I walked into the Jane Haslem Gallery with a portfolio, the circumstances were less than fortuitous. It was 1979 and I had just discovered I was pregnant. This meant that, because of the fumes of the oil-based inks and the clean-up solvents, I would not be able to print anything new for the next year and a half.

But Jane did not seem bothered by that inconvenient fact, and wanted to take my work anyway. This was during a decade-long print boom, and the Haslem gallery on P Street was very successful with my silkscreens. I visited the gallery often, usually with Molly, who Jane always greeted with delight.

Molly took up drawing very early. To my mortification, one of her first scribbles, at 18 months, was with a felt-tip marker she found in my purse onto an early 20th century John Sloan etching that had been left out on a hassock in the gallery. I expect Jane was equally horrified, but she didn't show it, reassuring me "Don't worry about it; that's what insurance is for."

I didn't bring Molly to the gallery much, after that, but her drawing developed so fast and beautifully that I began to wonder if I was an artist mainly to pass on the genes. Growing up, she focused on figures and faces, with a fluidity of line I could only envy. Molly went to the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, a decision I encouraged, knowing there would be at least one really fine teacher. Lois Johnson, head of the printmaking

department at UArts, had not only been immensely helpful to me when I was first switching to water-based inks, but also wrote the best book on silkscreening I've ever read. (Most all the other ones tell me to follow a bunch of rules that I don't like.) *Water-based Inks: A Manual for the Studio and Classroom* was published in 1987 and unfortunately seems to be out of print.

A few years after Molly got out of art school, Jane floated the idea of a *Mother & Daughter* show displaying both of our works. That exhibit, in 2007, really meant a lot to me, and I am grateful. You can see much of the work of Molly's that was on exhibit — wonderful cut-outs, reduction prints, and drawn and painted portraits — in "Archives" on janehaslemgallery.com.

Also included in the exhibit was a portfolio of my son Jake's graphic design work at James Madison University. Yes, he has grown up to be an artist, too. He has always shown an impressive sense of design and layout, and is now a graphic designer living in Harrisonburg, Virginia with his new wife, Karen, and their two dogs and four cats.

DC Fish Market is the last major piece I completed for the *Mother & Daughter* show, and it took an awfully long time, well over a year. Also known as the D.C. Wharf, that lively dock is said to be possibly the oldest ongoing fish market in the country, dating back to 1794. The fish are all displayed on floating barges. My print is based on many digital photos, showing two of the barges and various groups of people I saw enjoying a balmy evening in November 2005. It is the first time that I have ever done any significant figurative work in the silkscreen medium. I wonder if Molly was an influence.

Not long after completing the fish market print, I injured my wrist, and soon learned that I had arthritis in both thumbs. I've taken hand therapy and it's much better. But I doubt I'll ever be able to tackle such a large-scale and complex silkscreen in the future, so I'm really glad I took on the challenge of this one.

—Nancy McIntyre, 2011

NEW ELECTROLUX (MOM & DAD) (APRIL 2007)

Mom & Dad

This is the only silkscreen I've done that involved almost no drawing or painting; it's basically a 30-layer colorization of an old family photograph, translated directly to photoscreens.

In search of reference for my silkscreen *Old Electrolux*, beyond a 1971 line drawing I'd made of the long-dead vacuum cleaner, I unearthed this photo of my parents in college after their service in the army. They had been apart for a year and a half without so much as a visit, my Mom a physical therapist at Fort Benning, my Dad teaching math in Japan at the end of the war.

Now Dad was in engineering school at Rensselaer, on the G.I. bill. Mom was a Home Ec major at nearby Russell Sage, where the photo was staged for the Russell Sage newsletter in 1948. She had overworked her elbow and couldn't make physical therapy a career, so she and Dad decided Home Economics might be the most useful major to prepare her for their next venture, building a home and family together.

After graduation, Dad and three of his best friends at Rensselaer got hired by the Torrington Company, a ball-bearing manufacturer in Torrington, Connecticut, where I was born in 1950 and my sister Ginger came along in 1952. Dad was a quality-control engineer, and moved us to Attleboro, Massachusetts when I was eight. Our house there, like the ones in Torrington, had meadows and woods behind it; we could walk for a mile or two before coming out onto some road in North Attleboro. When I started living in cities and close-in suburbs, it gave me a whole different sense of space, for our back yard to butt right up against somebody else's.

Bob's sister was in my girl scout troop, and in my senior year of high school I started dating Bob, a sophomore at Providence College. We married 4 years later.

The atmosphere my parents created in our house growing up was one of responsibility, hard work, fun times, and great affection. My mother was just a bit daffy and the kindest soul I've ever met. My father, God forbid he should leave work a little early on a Friday, just because we planned to drive 8 hours that night for a weekend visit with our cousins. Mom and Dad were a good team; they loved to sail, ski and socialize, and take care of their house together. A great planner, Dad prepared for retirement by getting his pilot's license — as he often said, "You only go around once in life." It

was his habit to record everything, especially his careful budget, down to the last detail. He was born a Clark (British for clerk), as, of course, was I.

—Nancy McIntyre, 2011

OLD CROW I, II, III, & IV (MAY 2008)

crow story

In June 2006, my friend Henrik and I drove to Philadelphia, met up with my daughter Molly, and went to see the Andrew Wyeth exhibit at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. In the museum there was a different artist's wonderful big rendering of a crow or raven, and Wyeth had a good one too. Henrik said, "I want to do a crow someday. Every artist at some point in their life should do a crow." I said, "I have a friend who *has* two crows. Maybe she'd let us come draw them."

So I called my friend Nancy S, who has a lot of unusual pets. She said, "Well, the original crow, Backfire, is getting pretty old; he has a bunch of white feathers, and cataracts, and can't fly, and the younger crow, Blackjack, had a broken wing when I got him, so he can't fly either, much, but neither one really stands still enough to draw. But you can come photograph them. Except that right now they're molting, and they're embarrassed, so it's not a good time."

Between Henrik's Art Outlet projects and house fire (which resulted in his now sharing silkscreen space at my studio) and then his new 9 to 5 job, it was a year before we got around to asking again, so, naturally, they were molting again, besides which Nancy was preoccupied with persuading the county to let her keep her Vietnamese pot-bellied pigs.

Finally, another six months later, we went and photographed the crows. I wasn't really planning to do anything with mine. But then I got excited about some of my shots of the older crow, and made a batch of good ink paintings from them. I had Staples transfer the paintings onto transparent film, which I used to create photoscreens. Those photographic stencils, printed in shades of black, were the main parts of the crow silkscreens, augmented by hand-painted stencils for details and background. It is the first time photoscreens have been the dominant technique in any of my work (except for *New Electrolux*, 2007.)

Henrik is working on a large drawing of the old crow with Nancy. And wants to go back sometime to photograph the pigs.

—Nancy McIntyre, 2008

SKY AND TRUCK (2013); SKY AND TREES (2014);
SKY AND FARM (2015); SKY AND ROAD (2016)

January skies

Some years back, my daughter Molly's friends at a Philadelphia art collective, Artclash, started up an annual January art project called "Fun-a-Day," as a good way to ward off winter doldrums. It has since spread to other cities as well. Anybody interested just picks some particular art-related thing to do daily for the month of January (culminating in a chance to exhibit the results in February.) In 2012 I decided to take one photograph of the sky every day. Sometimes I took more. Then, on a day I drove to the beach to visit my gallery in Lewes, Delaware, the sky kept looking so interesting, especially late in the afternoon, that I took a whole bunch of photos.

My favorites were a scene of dramatic clouds over gaunt winter trees, and, 20 minutes later when I stopped for gas, a big red truck at Royal Farms, reflecting the soon-to-be-setting sun.

When the following winter approached, I thought some more about those skies. I decided to try making the sky a primary focus of a silkscreen or two, something I hadn't done before. So, my Fun-a-Day project for January 2013 was to record the day-by-day progress as I began to plan, draw, and print Sky and Truck.

Our neighbor Al knows a lot about trucks, and he explained how to tell that it's a Peterbilt truck with a refrigerated trailer. He told me what most of the parts are, though I might not remember them all. I remember that the bright disc under the side of the trailer turned out to be the end of the cylindrical gas tank for the refrigeration unit.

As I worked on the silkscreen, I liked the counterpoint: The wildness of windblown clouds, loosely painted and drawn, contrasted to the careful drawing and manmade precision of the truck, shining in that late-day sun.

Swirly clouds turned out to be a lot harder for me to silkscreen than more layered clouds, but it was a fun challenge. I'll see what I can do next with my other favorite scene, the stark, gnarled winter trees, slightly echoing the shapes of the big tall clouds above.

—Nancy McIntyre, 2013

TRI-COLORED HERON (2017); EGRET IN FLIGHT
(2018); SPOONBILL DIVAS (2018)

Florida Birds

My husband Bob and three of his brothers had been taking a golf trip every March to the gulf side of Florida. In 2008, the least avid golfer, Michael, suggested bringing along their wives. So that year, Michael's wife May Ping and I agreed to accompany them. We didn't have much notion of what we would do while they golfed; May Ping doesn't swim at all, and neither of us has the slightest interest in golf.

By good chance, one evening at the Art League not long before the trip, I was glancing through a pile of magazines brought in for a collage class. In one nature magazine, I found an article about the J. N. "Ding" Darling Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island, home of many gorgeous birds and an easy drive from our rental house in Ft. Myers. Something to see!

We even got the guys to take one morning off golf to go see the birds with us. The best time to see them, we were later told, was near dawn or dusk. Knowing nothing of that, we showed up at about 11:00, but it proved to be a very lucky day.

We were astounded by the array of majestic birds all around us, but we weren't the only ones surprised. Regular visitors, and the nature guides with their telescopic lenses set up on tripods, assured us, "It is NEVER like this!" There were great flocks of pelicans, egrets, herons, ibis and other shore birds, including the remarkable roseate spoonbill. Michael and Bob had the best telephoto lenses on their digital cameras, and they got some great close-ups.

Later, I printed out several of my favorites photos, with some thought of using them for silkscreens or acrylic paintings. I'm never completely comfortable working from reference photos that I haven't taken myself, so they sat in a folder for awhile. But once 7 or 8 years had passed, the memory of having been there, seeing these birds while the pictures were taken, began to feel pretty similar to having been the one to actually snap the photos.

And the Florida locals were right: we've gone back to Sanibel many times, but have never seen more than a small fraction of the birds we saw that day in 2008.

So far, I have made three silkscreens of those Florida birds:

The first is a tri-colored heron wading in the water, slowly stalking its prey.

The second is a great white egret, magnificently graceful and strong in flight. The way the feet are down, I think it's coming in for a landing.

The third silkscreen is of five roseate spoonbills. Bob took two good photos of a flock of them. They are so beautiful, and so funny! The prettiest looked like ballerinas to me. By zooming in a lot, I got a composition I liked. . . except you couldn't actually tell any of those five birds were spoonbills. And two of them were so tucked into themselves that you could hardly tell they were even birds. So, I used both of Bob's photos, drawing the birds I liked best, and eventually arranging them into a composition I was satisfied with. Then I had to fuss around with their reflections till I could believe they were all standing in the same water, since one of the photos had more ripples. I never did get quite content with the water, but the birds are dear to me. I named them: Longbill, Spooner, Fluffy, Mariposa and Daffy.

—Nancy McIntyre 2019