



# Deborah Muirhead

## Past is Present: Works from 1994-2006

January 21–March 4, 2007

### About the Work

The paintings, drawings, prints and artist books in this exhibition are from 1994 to the present, and they represent an examination and exploration of using abstraction as content based work. Archeological findings, particularly the African Burial ground in lower Manhattan and my investigations of personal genealogy were the impetus for creating work that explored identity and historical invisibility. In this work dialog is created between what is implied and what is suggested. It is in the quiet but urgently expressed that hidden and suppressed histories of marginalized people are given a presence.

Large scale paintings create an atmosphere for the fragmented body, text based paintings and drawing use names and word fragments to engage the viewer in thoughts about language, writing, oral history and storytelling. Collage elements support the real and the fragment, they are patchwork quilts, and recognize that no story is ever completed. My artists' books attempt to personalize history through the combination of photographic image and non-linear text fragments, constructing narratives that are beautiful and subversive. Found books, function as sculptural objects and announce their meaning through materiality.

The more recent work has seen a shift from examining the terrain of identity and genealogy constructed through the lens of archival materials and social history, to that which is framed by biological references. Forms in the new work emerge as knotted tangled threads and disembodied branch-like limbs; constructions informed by DNA, skeletal armature of trees and other organic material. These knotted twisted connections often appear as tangles, from which beginnings and endings cannot be deciphered. Their connections are illusive and allusive; they come together as presence, system, chain and continuity that speak to both the past and to the future.

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Wright State University Art Galleries

For more information, call Tess Cortés 937 775-2973

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PHOTO: JANET PRITCHARD

**Deborah Muirhead** received a BFA from Illinois Wesleyan University and an MS in printmaking and an MFA in painting from Illinois State University. Her work has been exhibited and collected throughout the country and has been the recipient of numerous awards, including a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Hearst Fellowship, a New England Foundation for the Arts Grant, and a YADDO Fellowship.

Ms. Muirhead is currently represented by Sears-Peyton Gallery, NY and N’Namdi Gallery in Chicago and Detroit. She resides and works in Storrs, CT. She is a faculty member of the University of Connecticut and the Yale Norfolk Summer School of Music and Art.

The artist will be speaking in M252 Creative Arts Center at Wright State University on Sunday, January 21, at 2:30 p.m. A reception will follow in the Art Galleries.

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