

Experimental, Experiential, and Vibrant

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Coffee Shop Notes

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A girl in a black negligee and shadowed eyes, sprawled in a bathtub, blowing a wad of gum, with a hundred goldfish swimming around. A jack russell terrier wrestling with a bra. A gleefully patterned repetition of cropped parts exploding with yellow and green clothes, and the pinkish shoes and face of a grinning girl. A darkening silhouette of horses meandering across the sand. A curtain-like wall with a window bouncing along on a bunch of wheels. A dizzying buzz of faces that won't stop.

Those little worlds can be found in the visual media work of Michelle McAuliffe. Muck, as which she is also known, creates those vibrant images through a variety of media: digital illustration, acrylics, oils, collage, assemblage, interactive multimedia, and photography—especially the last.

Accomplished in both 35mm film and digital photography, Muck has won awards for her work and exhibited photographs with the Deaf Way II Arts Festival in 2002. Experience went a long way in honing her aesthetics. When she was 17, she spent a summer with the California State Summer School for the Arts. During college, she worked at the Washington Post on a web media team as Photo Production Assistant (the team won several awards). The work of editing images for internet use strengthened her skills in Photoshop, a powerful image-editing program that plays an essential role in Muck's creative work.

What's important to her is that the image looks alive, or as she says, "You gotta make the picture look like it's dancing." Sometimes she crops, removing dead space in the image, improving the impact of details. Other times, she manipulates the image into a fantastical and whimsical story. Whether on a realism or postmodernist bent, Muck is inexplicably drawn to capturing facial expressions. When asked if this dominance in her work had anything to do with being deaf, she answered, "Yeah, I can't lie that it's got nothing to do with my being deaf because we do use our eyes more than ever so I take that as a great advantage." She also feels that body language is "very important—it is like a personality of its own without people realizing it."

Michelle McAuliffe graduated from Gallaudet University in May 2002, with a BA in Graphic Design. She originally hails from the Bay Area in California, and continues to hone her cosmopolitan tastes by living in or near big cities whenever possible. Her work can be viewed at muck.wabqueens.com

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