My name is Juan Perdiguero. Please let me tell you next about the conceptual nature of these drawings and my artistic influences. My engagement with these images is visceral and psychological. A type of grey dogs whose character and energy emotionally moves me. I use greyhounds as a metaphor to speak about the human condition. Therefore, they have a compelling existential character. I feel interested in observing the humane quality of the animals, as well as the human being's animalistic wants. Each portrait tries to convey and is inspired by an emotion. A human one tainted by the animalistic value of each dog's expression. When I draw these dogs, I think about real people as much as I think about the animal. I also feel very attracted to the dynamic anatomical forms of the greyhounds' bodies as well as the touching expressivity in them. My work is inspired by the Spanish Classical School of Painting: Velasquez, Zubaran, Ribera, are names that always come to my mind, as well as Francisco de Goya's black paintings. In this ongoing revision of my own Western European artistic tradition and cultural heritage, I try to convey a contemporary way to figurative representation in drawing where my interest for experimentation in photography plays a relevant component.

Stop #2

My name is Juan Perdiguero. Please let me tell you about the nature of the images and the technical process that I use in my drawings. The inspiration for the works on paper that you see in this room are greyhounds that I photograph at various racing tracks and also images that I download from the Web and whose character inspires me to use them as visual representations in my drawings. The drawings are rendered with etching ink on black and white mural photo paper. I first chemically treat and develop the paper in the darkroom and then I draw the outlines of the dogs with a lithographic pencil. I create a solid black mass by applying the etching ink within the confines of the dog's outlines. Then I slowly remove the ink with a piece of paper towel and a knife. This is called a reductive drawing method. I create the drawings of the dogs freehand by rendering supple bodies that mimic images of photographic quality. I do not project or print photographically any image of any dog on the surface of the paper. If I were going to wipe out or erase the image of any dog with a piece of cloth and solvent, nothing would be left on the surface but the paper itself and the random chemically processed marks of it.
Susan Lakin

Stop #3
Self-Portrait

This image is the first television portrait that I captured. Because it is a self-portrait, I decided to leave the camera, tripod, and laptop in the image, instead of retouching them out as I do with all of the other photographs. This allows you to get a better idea of how the images were constructed. I am sitting on my bed with my digital camera on a tripod, which is being activated through my laptop and documenting the television in front of me, as well as the reflection of my image in the TV screen. This allows one image to show two different views of each room.

Stop #4
Donna & Bosco

At the beginning of this series I decided to direct my subjects into very traditional portrait poses and I wanted the models to be engaged with the viewer remaining conscious of the presence of the camera in order to begin to address how our lives are influenced by photography and mass media. So in this image I placed Donna’s dog Bosco on the kitchen counter, a spot that Bosco would normally never be allowed access, in order to place Bosco at Donna’s height to create this portrait.

In this portrait I had to balance both natural light coming from the windows and the artificial light I use to illuminate the interior space. This set up was very challenging because I had sunlight coming from three different directions and it was constantly moving. There was the light from the sliding glass door behind the television, light from an open window on the other side of the house being reflected in the mirror behind the set and a sky light in the room. To produce these images I arrive early in the morning to set up the lights with the intention to shoot my models in the afternoon, so in this scenario I have to anticipate how the outdoor light will move and respond later in the day, which is a real challenge. In part, I resolved these issues by closing the blinds to help filter the sun light outside the glass door and to avoid a blasted out mirror, I made a separate exposure of the light reflected in the mirror and later in post production composited in this exposure to the final image.

Stop #5
Alexander, Brian, Tracy, & Ethan

In the majority of these images the camera is reflected in the television screen, as you see in my self-portrait, but unlike my self-portrait I removed any photographic equipment in postproduction because I don’t want a visual presence of the photographer in the image. This particular photograph is very symmetrical and since it is taken straight in front of the television set, the camera is smack dab in the middle of the image. Not only do I need to retouch out the camera but also the tripod and their shadows, as well as reconstruct what is behind the camera gear. It wasn’t until I make a 30x40 enlargement of this image that I noticed I missed one of the
shadows left by the tripod. I decided to keep it in this image instead of going back to correct for it because I like the idea that it gives a little hit that something is not quite right or missing in the photograph. If you look closely at Tracy’s pant leg you will see it.

Stop #6
Tom, Jane, Catherine, Abraham, & May

Because I’ve been photographing in private homes, many people have asked me to include their pets in the portraits. This family has a dog, named May and cat, named Abraham who we included in the image. Group portraits are very challenging because you need to achieve a flattering image of everyone in the photograph in one frame, now add a cat and dog and it gets difficult. May was pretty comfortable on the couch so relatively cooperative but the cat, Abraham didn’t really want to sit for the photograph and kept running away from the camera. I would get everyone in their best pose and then Abraham would bolt, and then everyone would jump up to chase the cat and then we would have to begin again. Finally I asked everyone to stay in their position and I would get the cat to bring back to the set, so I definitely got my exercise that day. Fortunately with today’s technology it is much easier to alter an image. In the past when shooting film of a group I’d have to shoot many more frames to make sure that each person had a good expression and pose in the shot, today with computer technology I can composite a face from one image into another image. For this particular shot I composited in another frame of Cathy holding Abraham and I put another head on May, in the base image May’s eyes are closed so I swapped heads from one image to another.

Stop #7
Mario, Heidi, & Marshall

I was very excited when I discovered that Mario and Marshall had an old wood console television set, you don’t see many of these sets anymore. In fact theirs has now been replaced with a flat screen LCD television. I particularly like the contrast in this image between the modern DVD, DVR and TVO boxes on top of the set. So far I’ve photographed three wood console televisions and would like to shoot more old style TVs before they become completely extinct.

In any rooms that have lamps, I like to turn the lights on to give warmth to the room. Even if it’s daylight as you see in this image thru the windows behind the couch; I don’t like to have lamps in the off position because they end up looking lifeless. In most cases this requires a separate exposure for these lights because they call for a longer exposure. In post-production I composite them into the final image.
Stop #8
Joyce

Joyce has been the only subject so far that didn’t have a television when I first approached her to model for me. I would like to believe that she acquired this television to be a part of my series but the truth is that she wanted to watch the Winter Olympics. In her home the television lives in the closet until that rare occasion when she wants to watch something special and she will place it at different locations in her house. I chose to document the television in her living room because of the beautiful built-in bookcases behind her, which gives us a sense that reading is much more of a priority than watching television. I love the fact that the cable cord is dangling over the top of the set and consciously decided to show the electrical outlet, which you will notice on second glance has a grey colored cord connected instead of the black cord of the television, to further demonstrate that the television sits unconnected in the room.

Stop #9
Mark & Duffy

As I continue to work on this series I’ve begun to move away from the conventional portrait pose that you see in some of my earlier work for a more natural sitting where the subjects are less conscious of us the viewer and, in this case, allow the audience to be witness to an intimate moment. This new approach enhances the voyeuristic response that is inherent when viewing an environmental portrait and it’s the voyeur in all of us that contributes to the popularity of reality television, which is one of the influences in beginning this series.

All of the photographs in this series require at least two different exposures, one of the room containing the television and one of the screen reflecting the portrait. In part this is due to a change in focal distance from the television to the image reflected in the screen. Although this photograph of Mark and Duffy seems very flat with the television flush against the wall, when I focus on the television the screen image is like a mirror and will be out of focus. When I focus on the screen reflection then the television, and in this case, the wall will be out of focus. So this requires two different images shot at different focal distances and are then composited together in postproduction.

Stop #10
Brenda & Al

I love the distortion in the screen of this image because it begins to address how television shows, such as the reality TV programs, misrepresent reality. I also love how the lines formed in the screen imitate the drapes behind the television set. In the beginning of this series I cropped in tight to the television set but with this image, I began to pull back. I wanted to show the drapes, as well as to include the family portrait on top of the television of Brenda and Al’s children and grand children, which is another wonderful repetition in the photograph and speaks to their lives. When I finish the shoot I ask the models to write down a description of themselves or their profession, Brenda described herself as “family oriented” which is reflected by the
presence of the family portrait on the TV set. In addition to the screen reflection being one portrait and the family photograph being another, you can also see an image of the photographic set that is built up around the couple reflected in the base of the lamp. The black squares you see are flags that are manipulating the electronic flash and the bright spots are the lights being engaged.

Stop #11  
Shirley & Kenneth

When I photograph my subjects I ask them to write down their favorite television shows, I loved the response of Shirley and Ken because their choices tell us a lot about their personalities and interests. Shirley wrote that Turner Classic Movies were her favorite and her husband Ken wrote that the Sci-Fi Channel was one of his favorite channels. This is the smallest television set that I’ve photographed so far and I love the fact that it sits high on a shelf in their kitchen. All the prints in today’s exhibition are hung to the height that the televisions are placed in real life.

Stop #12  
David

After shooting many television portraits I began to notice that I don’t have very many traditional families in my images and would like to do more research to determine if my small sampling of portraits is a true representation of today’s home. For me this image of David characterizes the divorced father in today’s society. You see David, a single man, alone in this large television screen with a lot of space surrounding him indicating that he lives alone, yet he has photographs of his son sitting on top of the set which leads one to believe that he is a single father.

David’s photograph is one of the largest in this exhibition because the images are enlarged to life-size. My intention for this installation of prints is to show the ubiquitous television and its placement in our homes.

Stop #13  
Lisa

The prints in this exhibition are scaled to the size of the television in real life. Today so many homes have replaced their old TVs for new and much larger flat screen televisions that I’ve begun to seek out older and smaller sets to document. I love the little televisions like you see in this image, which still have the antennae and the old channel dials. In all the photo shots, I have a conversation with the subject about how they interact in the room when the television is both on and off. At the time that I was photographing Lisa, I was beginning to explore a more voyeuristic approach to posing my subjects instead of a more traditional portrait setting; therefore, I decided to recreate her reading the morning paper at the table in front of her television. Although if you really look closely you can slightly make out that the clock on the wall behind her tells us that it is actually about 3:15 pm, remember that this is a mirror image so
it is flipped horizontally and the hands of the clock seem to be pointed at 9 instead of 3. Also the morning light that appears to be shining through the windows in front of her is actually a strobe light placed outside.

Stop #14
Elizabeth & Don

In all of these photographs I use strobe lights to produce an image that imitates the natural light. I set up my lights in the morning and shoot in the afternoon. One of the challenges in photographing the televisions is to avoid the reflections of all the lighting gear in the shot. This image of Elizabeth and Don was one of the hardest to light because I not only had to avoid the reflection in the television screen but also the windows behind the television set and the windows behind the couple that are being reflected in the screen. The windows also create a situation in which I need to balance the natural light outdoors with the artificial inside, on this day I was very lucky that it was an overcast day and this allowed me to capture the lushness of their garden through both windows.

Stop #15
Richard & Jennifer

Richard and Jennifer’s photograph was one of the first television portraits that I shot; they are two of my RIT photo students who modeled for me after their graduation. When I first began this project I framed the image tightly around the television. If there were any objects on or near the television I’d remove them. My thought, at the time, was that I wanted all the detail to be in the screen and if there were objects placed alongside the television they would have more importance because they are in the foreground and sharper than anything reflected in the screen.

After shooting a number of photos in this manner I felt that the television became repetitive and the set was more of a frame than an object so I was losing the concept of its function and placement in the room, therefore I’ve began to pull back my camera and show more of the environment, as you will see by other images in this show.
Sue Leopard

Stop #16

When I look back over the course my work has taken I was making things that resembled books long before they looked like actual books. I like to think of my work as bookish things as they aren’t always something to be read, but to be looked at on an intimate level. To engage with the viewer in a different perhaps closer way than other (particularly larger) things do. I've always loved paper and the multitude of forms it takes. I always preferred working on paper to other surfaces. I studied printmaking because I was able to print multiple images on paper. Early work took the triptych form; one image referring back to the others. My work was most frequently narrative. I always wanted to tell a story or as is sometimes the case, have a story appear to me through the process. I’m kind of crafty. I love to cut and glue and make boxes and things, so I eventually discovered bookbinding and the world of artists’ books and printing and that’s where I am at the moment.

I would have to say that it is rare for me to give up on a project (as opposed to an idea) as making art whether it be books, paintings sculpture, film etc. may stem from an idea but in giving that idea form, there are all kinds of changes and adjustments so that the final product may be unrecognizable from the original concept except that it holds the seed of the idea. Work can take on a life of its own and in my experience I just go with it until it feels right and am often surprised. Were this not the case, it wouldn’t be much fun.

My desire to have letterpress text in my work required that I learn how to set type & operate a press. Learning these new skills has opened all kinds of doors for me, much more so than had I just hired someone to print the stuff for me.

Stop #17

American Dreamer/Grammy Huggins

I can’t remember a time in my life when I didn’t know about Emily Dickinson. My mother is a great reader and our house was full of books. We were started on nursery rhymes and progressed to fairy tales, poetry and her favorite, Shakespeare. She was a total Anglophile, but the relatives on my Father’s side came from American pioneer stock and it’s this American voice that spoke most to me. Not that the Huggins family particularly Grammy Huggins had had the benefit of a fine formal education. But as a result, her voice (and writing, of which she did quite a lot) had an absolutely unique sound and perspective. She spoke totally from her own Middle American experience and was a wonder to my sisters and me although we lived nowhere near her and spoke only on the phone occasionally with her. It was my Dad who mythologized her. Probably because she did live far away. In any case, he did a good job because Grammy Huggins has been an inspiration to us all.

You might be wondering what this has to do with Emily Dickinson, but for me there’s this sort of 19th century connection. They weren’t the same age, (Grammy was born after the Civil War), but of the same century and the past. I was always drawn to this time and the Transcendentalists
and to New England. My parents took us as children each year to Cape Cod for summer
vacations. My son attended college in Northampton, Mass. about 14 years ago and it was at this
time that I was reawakened to the existence of Emily Dickinson during numerous trips to
Amherst. She became mythologized in my mind like Grammy Huggins and I began to read the
poems again. The unmistakableness of her voice is what reminds me of Grammy. The super-
strong individuality. The honesty. The grit. The life circumstances have nothing in common, but
the strong drive for expression, they share. The rightness of what they say, they share.

Stop #18

The form of the book gives me depth and breadth (literally & figuratively): permission if not the
necessity for storytelling; challenges to my ability to fabricate and solve problems as well as the
option to work with any number of varied materials in an attempt to create an intimate
connection with the viewer, up close and personal. The book form carries with it historic weight
and associations that run deep. It can be opened or closed. Looked at, read, transported, put
away, and viewed by one or many. I particularly like and use the accordion fold format for this
reason. It can be displayed all at once or folded up and engaged with one page at a time.

As for things that serve as starting points for my work, that is a big question because I am one of
those people who likes to follow all kinds of paths and be free to explore all avenues. Eclectic, I
guess you might say. But as I look back at how my concerns have evidenced themselves, I see a
common thread through all the years and that is a Romantic one if I may use a sort of maligned
concept in today’s world. It’s not that I yearn for a more ideal time or place (although frankly
who wouldn’t), but that my leanings tend towards the beauty of the natural world and a desire to
produce something that reflects my amazement at the fact that we exist. It may be a question of
viewpoint. Amidst the pain and difficulty that we endure, in the simplest of things there is the
miraculous. I think all art is about this. As to changing styles with different works, it all looks
like mine to me, but I’m anything BUT tied to a stylistic approach. Life is short. Do what moves
you and leave for others, if they’re interested, interpretations. Like I said, I’m a Romantic and I
like to follow many paths. Each book for me is like a journey. Hopefully, an adventure.

Stop #19

The august form of the book is by its nature traditional. When I look at the Gutenberg Bible it is
a wonder of art and through the ages printers and writers and artists and bookbinders have played
with the form and infused it with newness and their own spirits. The history of the book is the
history of man and culture, so for me I take inspiration every bit as much from ancient Chinese
scrolls and antique personal diaries and early vellum bindings and all manner of what has come
before as I do from William Blake, William Morris, Vollard and the Livres D’artistes to modern
eamples of artist’s books, to contemporary work being done today. I am speaking of course
about the book visually, the book as an object.

That is a separate aspect from its history as conveyance of human knowledge, language and
thought (well, not separate of course). Books are so rich and so important because they are
physical things that carry messages and information, stories, human thought. If language and art are living and changing all the time then we have a great deal to look forward to in what people do with and about books. The digital age notwithstanding there seems to be a greater interest in books now more than ever. There is self publishing on the computer. A vast array of children’s books, and on and on and on it goes.

I probably have similar instincts to all of those people looking to tell a story or paint a picture. It is great when someone shares your interests but certainly not everyone will. There’s books enough for everyone, I should think.

Stop #20
Mountains & Valleys

I think that the book form itself, because it is sculptural and intended to be interactive embodies time and the quality of time unfolding somewhat differently than a painting or a drawing or a print which I see as being the track or product of the artist’s thought process and unconscious being worked out in a two-dimensional surface.

The book has a function to perform that I’m not sure a painting does. Like a sculpture it has to be fabricated. It has to (or should) work as an object. There are considerations about how to integrate various features like text and imagery, how the pages might unfold. How it is held together, etc. There are more pieces to consider. Putting the pieces together is more fun for me at the moment than doing a painting where it sometimes feel like you’re wrestling with the gods in an attempt to achieve “rightness.” The putting pieces together aspect of both bookmaking and doing collages always gives me great pleasure although there are certainly many ways you MIGHT put something together. My favorite line as analogy for the creative process is NO NO NO NO NO, YES. When I strongly or even unequivocally feel the YES I know I’m done (or at least almost). I can rest with it. I feel pleased that I’ve achieved, if not what I set out to do, at least something I am glad that I created; that says something that I want to say in a way that’s right. I really can’t rest with it and let it go until I DO feel this. When I do, then it’s complete.

Ultimately making a book or a series of books which I think of as projects, gives me something to sink my teeth into and explore. Very gratifying.

Stop #21
Past Surmise

Several years ago I discovered the Dickinson biography, My Wars are Laid Away in Books, by Alfred Habegger, which was so illuminating and insightful that I was swept up into Emily’s world. At the time, I was working on the American Dreamer series which was inspired by Grammy Huggins’ image and writings. I was also doing my first letterpress books and I decided to use one of the Dickinson poems as text for the book that had spun out of the American Dreamer etchings. Next evolved the broadsides. There are 12 of them on display here produced over the last two years. In doing this work I read her poems over and over and found that they
grew ever richer and more complete for me. I have been so immersed and fulfilled doing this work (now titled, *Past Surmise*...a quote from one of her poems) that I am almost sad to see it coming to completion. But it’s been a great ride. They no longer seem or sound like 19th century poems or this or that or the other but so surprisingly contemporary that it’s almost shocking to me.
Ron Gonzalez

Stop #22

Growing up in Binghamton, New York in the 50s, I collected street garbage and natural materials from the woods and fields to make toys. I was always the most interested in things that were broken, worn and disintegrated. Anything I could use that would appeal to my eye for decay. I loved everything small and miniature, tiny replicas of larger things that existed in reality. The small things seemed to be involved in the passing of time by way of their diminished size, and I love their connection to some imaginary world that paralleled the one I was in. It was through found and collected things that I could explore the unknown and ambiguous layers of my feelings of fear and wonder, intimacy and survival. It was through the transformation of inanimate things and dead materials into human form that I felt alive and in touch with the world around me.

Stop #23

From embryos to shadows, there are endless categories of bodies. We speak of the face of a clock and the back of a chair. One imagines a foot in an empty shoe, a comb turning into hair. The man in the moon is us. The hand of death is our hand. Everything made is an extension of our bodies, relying on embodiment to transform the world into ourselves. Some say the body is just a shell. This is also part of the human condition.

Stop #24

The idea of the body and soul is one of the oldest questions and dualisms in the world. In sculptural terms, my conception of the figure and attitudes about sculpture come out of this question. And out of my childhood and early experiences connected to my own body as a secret, private form, within which we all have this search for the self and the desire to have presence. Or at times the opposite, to dissolve and blur into the background. And also out of my relationship with time and space, the two things that we all have that there is never enough of and the two things that I have been haunted by throughout my life, and have never assimilated, yet have been fascinated by all of their links to creation and loss. This whole theme of temporality and how time impacts with identity and being while simultaneously obliterating it, has been one of my main concerns. And how these changes can be seen and bracketed on the anatomical stage of the body as a sculptural idea, has been at the heart of my work as a sculptor.
Melissa Sarat

Stop #25
Mid-Summer

I worked on this painting all one summer and then I think I finished it sometime later that winter. I work on these paintings for a long, long time. As you look around yourself in the gallery, some of the paintings have taken three, four years to complete. Some a year, some a couple of years. I work very slowly and very meticulously. No, let's say obsessively. Meticulous might connote that I'm extremely careful in my thought. Maybe I'm not so careful in my thoughts, but I am obsessive if I take on a project, I just throw myself into it. The dishes don't get done. The dust builds up in the house. My family starts to wonder if I've gone mad. But what I am doing, I feel like that I do dedicate my body, mind and soul to.

Stop #26
Ritrina

I began the painting Ritrina about two years after the hurricane. There were two hurricanes that came through Louisiana right back to back. Katrina devastated New Orleans. My family, my mother and father, were both born in Lake Charles and grew up there; that was sort of our family home, in a sense. I was born in Baton Rouge, and grew up on the grounds of a state mental hospital in Jackson, Louisiana. So when you're looking at my paintings, think about New Orleans. If you're not from Louisiana specifically or the South, and you're looking at the painting and saying, "Where did all this mythology and images and ideas come from?", you have to think of the deep, rich, hot, swampy South with fabulous food, Cajun people, the Creole people. Big gumbo mixture of all sorts of religions.

Stop #27
St. Francis

I began the painting St. Francis some years after my mother's death. I had the great fortune of being with her and holding her while she died, along with my older brother Colin. In order to process my grief, my memories of my life with my mother and to find ways to move forward through that grief and mourning I was going through, which went on for some years, of course. I still miss her sorely. I realize that the Internet is such a magnificent tool, but when I realized that I could not find my mother on the Internet and I couldn't contact God on the Internet, it put into context the Internet is a tool. Through my experience or some other, we formed a very strong spiritual bond and we even had our own special form of ESP with one another. I feel that is very much the case even though she has passed through the veil and gone to the other side. We still speak often and interact. I took a picture of my mother about an hour before she died. In the upper left side of the painting, you will be able to see her pictured there with the oxygen in her nose and the oxygen tube around. She has a cake right next to her face. She would often say, "Oh sista" (in her wonderful Southern way), "heaven is just a big chocolate cake with lots of
decorations." So I put gummy worms, and gummy bears, and perfume bottles, and candles, and you name it, on this cake. I wanted to send her off in great fashion.

Stop #28
Pentecost

I worked on this painting, *Pentecost*, for some three or four years, I can't quite remember. Every figure in this painting, including parts of the large fish, are myself. I work well with my alter ego model self, and I'll do whatever the painter ego wants and I am awake and available at two in the morning when the painter alter ego wants to paint.

My daughters and I have long collected costumes from that long tradition of costuming in Louisiana. My daughters were involved in plays at schools. We would happily go to all the junk stores and buy for almost nothing, different pieces of costumes so we'd have a great store in order to put things together they way we want.

I also save all the birthday paper, the Christmas and holiday wrappings. If you look at the figure on the far left-hand side, that's me as an older woman. If you see the headdress, there's a mask on the top of her head, plus another piece on top that has diamond shapes in it. That's a piece of birthday paper. I've used that in many paintings.

If you look from right to left, it starts with the persona of myself as springtime. There is a big bottle of wine in her pocket. It's actually one of the Finger Lakes wines from one of the first vintners who came over and started his winery. I think it's Dr. Konstantin Frank.

She's holding an apple, of course. She has to have her flaming cake with flaming candles on her head. She has grapes in her mouth and seed packets stuck into her bodice.

I often put fish into the paintings. I often make animals into people, that kind of thing. The fish has a stole around its neck. Someone gave me this stole. It was like the same sorts of stoles the women would wear in the church in the little town where I grew up, and I was always afraid of them, I thought they were alive. So I made this one alive. It has shown up in different paintings. I was always afraid of them. I always thought they were alive. You may see him appearing in different paintings. You'll see it in the *St. Francis* painting, and look throughout - you may see him appearing in other paintings.

The woman who is sitting down is kind of a serious Mother Goose, she is a seeress, she knows, she can see into the future. She knows how precious childhood is and rearing our children and being community to one another.

She also sees all the pitfalls and the dangers, and the worries and concerns that we'll face as we move through time. But she is very brave and very strong. She wears her pepper around her neck. And of course you have to have a watermelon on your shoulder. I make things balance in places where they just could never balance, of course.
This painting is still when I was working and I've moved kind of quickly to working in an academic manner, with proper picture playing, proper perspective, as proper as I could ever get. And then moving to where things were coming unglued, in a sense, moving around as I became freer, as I was letting go of certain ways that I learned in art school, moving past my own worries and own taboos, things that I placed upon myself, about "well, I have to make this make sense, so people can understand it."

Because I thought that I was so crazy, the way I saw the world. I was always trying to fit into normal world. I didn't know as a child that I was seeing the world the way an artist sees it. I thought that I had to be really quiet because if anyone knew what was going on in my head, I would be in trouble.

There is a figure in the center. She's in the back. She's kind of my persona as a mother when my children were growing up. You can look at all of the things that she is holding. The community coffee is on my shoulder. My one big addiction is coffee.

The figure on the left, third over from the end on the left - I call her Evangeline. There is a town in Louisiana called Evangeline. And of course the Longfellow poem, "Evangeline," and the whole story of that. She has her dried tomatoes around her neck, we always need those. Her flaming finger. I was jogging back then. I was jogging a lot. I kept thinking, how can I make the Pentecost flames appear in a different way? How can I do that in a little bit of a different fashion? Flames on the fingers! All my neighbors think that I am crazy because I think I yelled that out. I started putting flames on fingers and flames in eyes from that point forward. She has her plate balanced on her head with eggs. Eggs that are nourishment, eggs that are the beginning of life, that kind of thing. Ever present perfume bottles in my paintings. This painting is a bit more light-hearted. I actually put figures that were smiling in this one.

I was trying to deal with my march through time as a woman, as a mother, as a daughter, as a sister, as a wife, all those things, and dealing with the times that we were going through in our world at the same moment. There is a drawer in the lower left-hand corner of the painting. I have trouble with my right and my left. I have trouble with lots of things. Numbers really scare me. I just put objects in there that are really beautiful and also whimsical.

In my work, I have often had to stop and ponder, especially after a trip to New York City, where am I? What am I doing? Why am I doing this? Why has my work gone in this direction? It's not very mainstream, of course. It doesn't follow some of the same prescribed guidelines of a lot of things we've seen from the last 35 years or so. It seems it moved in some areas to too much irony, too much satire, too much negativity. How do we balance all of these things? It's not all one or the other. There are many, many shades of gray.

This painting also depicted some of my own pain it it, my seriousness. My daughter was working in Alaska doing bird research on an island called Kigigak. If you see the tree near the fish's head, right back there there's a nest, I dropped a page out of my Audubon bird book which of course I had to tape back in later of the Spectacled Eider. It was a bird that they were studying then and researching. It was my way of thinking of her and keeping her in my thoughts and prayers.
There’s a quintessential gingerbread house in this because we do one every year. And a thread through the whole thing is a sense that community is important, family is important. In my own mythology and belief system, family can come about in many different forms. As long as its love and affection and kindness, then that's a family. We can have our lesbian sisters and our gay brothers rearing children. We can have our grandmas and grandpas raising children. Adoptive families who have adopted children.

There's many, many ways - everyone needs love. Children need to grow up with love and compassion and a sense of order of course.

These are the thoughts that were on my mind as I was working on this painting. I hope that you enjoy this show and that you can see the goose egg in there. I have a golden goose egg and that golden goose egg is in a number of the paintings in this room.

Enjoy the rest of the galleries as well. Thank you so much for coming. Good bye.
Todd McGrain

Stop #29

Thank you very much for your interest in my work. The following is a recording of the Dusky Seaside Sparrow [birdcall].

This bird native to Florida was declared extinct in 1990, and I think it’s quite important that we make note of the loss of an animal species, or in this case, a subspecies. If we don’t, we run the risk of becoming comfortable with a kind of callous forgetfulness.

This is my primary motivation for the work I’ve been doing the past five years. We have no recordings of the calls of the five birds that were the inspiration for the work you are now viewing. But I do believe with a little effort we can keep them present, if only in memory.