



## UM Museum Opens 'Ruin is a Secret Oasis' Exhibit: Artist Maysey Craddock draws inspiration from structures throughout the South

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A new exhibit featuring artist-transformed images of ruined structures throughout the South is open at the University of Mississippi Museum.

"Ruin is a Secret Oasis," by artist Maysey Craddock, references images of objects and places throughout the region. Craddock said she is drawn to mysterious traces of memories, and her pieces seek the sense of place inspired by these sites and work to reflect a story of change.

"I believe ruin, in the sense that it is a place and moment where the traces of human action are falling into the inevitable, is a constant progress that is nature," Craddock said. "There is a lineage of this in art history and the idea that ruin presents a space for contemplation and collapses time.

"It is, to me, stillness, haunted, history, memory, nature, reclamation, collapse, re-forming, ghost, possibility. In ruin, I find an oasis, a world within our world that is a hush of layers of time and experience."

Craddock's work uses opaque pigments in water that are thickened with a binding substance, known as gouache. These intricate works, based on her own photographs of ruined structures near Memphis, Oxford and the Gulf Coast, allow her to explore the fleeting and transitory nature of each landscape.

"In the studio, the photographs are a way for me to continue to be intimate with the landscape, to dive into the wild spaces, find the magic of small moments or openings in the vegetation," she said. "When I translate the images into drawing, I am re-forming the image to my own hand, distancing it from the photograph and therefore from any kind of literal recording of the original scene."

The photograph is just a starting point for Craddock, as she also takes time to think about the hues and atmosphere during her physical experience at the site. A line drawing is made from each

photograph and then transferred via carbon paper onto a handmade substrate of sewn-together paper bags.

“The use of found paper provides a terrain for the image, retains an object-ness that underscores the image itself,” she said. “In a way, this constructing of the material from found or discarded fragments mirrors the content of the work.

“I paint ruins, on materials that are pieced together from other tiny ruins.

Craddock said one of the most satisfying experiences she has as an artist is when someone sees something out in his or her daily experience in a different way, which in turn affects the way he or she encounters the natural world.

“They would not have noticed it in such a thoughtful way before, but something about seeing my work went with them out into the world, and they slowed down and paid attention to something that was invisible before,” she said. “My work does the same thing for me. It teaches me to be observant, to be awake and aware when I am moving through the world.

“I think the best art continues on with the viewer afterwards. It re-contextualizes how we experience what we see, literally broadening our horizons.”

Craddock earned degrees from Tulane University and the Maine College of Art, and most of her time is divided between two studios – one in Memphis, Tennessee and one on the Alabama Gulf Coast. Her work has been exhibited across the United States and in Germany and is featured in permanent collections at the Brooks Museum of Art in Memphis and the Arkansas Arts Center in Little Rock.

Besides artwork, Craddock has worked with other artists and the regional nonprofit grant organization ArtsMemphis to create its inaugural program of grants for individual artists.

“The University of Mississippi Museum is exceptionally honored to be exhibiting the work of Memphis artist Maysey Craddock, a painter we have long admired and whose works in the show ‘Ruin is a Secret Oasis’ have a particularly compelling and evocative power,” said Robert Saarnio, museum director.

“Ms. Craddock has assembled for this show a group of paintings dealing with the idea of architectural ruins and their reclamation in the landscape. She is an artist of great skill, unique creative process and extraordinary conceptual depth – bringing works here to Oxford that we are certain our audiences will find fascinating to view and reflect upon.”