

Wendy J. Costa

Memory, Perception, and Reality

I have been taking photographs since I inherited my dad's 1950s vintage Argus C3 Rangefinder 35mm camera. Though photographic technology has gone through some remarkable changes since then, my fascination with the photographic image has remained constant.

In graduate school (with a more updated 35mm SLR camera), I found myself splitting my time almost equally between the darkroom and the painting studio. My work was about how we frame and present reality. In my current work, I am merging the drawing, painting, and photography into individual works.

These images originate with either Polaroid transfers or Polaroid emulsion transfers made on 100 % rag watercolor from my slides, negatives, or digital prints. Once the images are printed on paper, many of them invite further investigation, interpretation, and experimentation.

Each visit to the image, adding new layers of material or process (including even digital variations) and new layers of experience, becomes analogous to the accumulating and changing layers of memories that one collects over time.

The viewer, of course, adds his own layers of interpretation when looking at the work.

Some of the images have the capacity to look more "real" than the original photograph because of the way that the media and memories are revisited on the images after the initial photographic processing.

The camera does sometimes lie. Do those photographs always look the way you envisioned them when you click the shutter?

What is real? Picasso said, "Art is a lie that makes us realize truth." Somewhere in the middle, perhaps in our imagination, will we find reality? This is a journey that I find myself taking as I am creating these images. Somewhere in playing with color, texture, value, a sense of space, all of those little nuances, I hope to recreate a sense of what that moment really felt like.

On memory:

"William Carlos Williams: 'Memory is a kind of accomplishment.' Maybe. And maybe, too, in the end, it's the only thing one can truly call his own."

-William Least Heat-Moon, in *Blue Highways*