

Vale Craft Gallery

230 West Superior Street, Chicago IL 60654
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Karen McCarthy

As a collage artist I enjoy taking similar or disparate parts and melding them into something new, encountering how individual elements can be transformed when combined with others. The exploration of potential rhythms of movement, light and color within these new compositions provides further stimuli.

I frequently juxtapose ordered, compartmentalized images with those which are indistinct, amorphous and obscured. Sometimes the elements have obvious connections, sometimes more surprising ones. With a subtle use of detail, I often employ layering to create an interplay between what is revealed and what is concealed.

There are often references to the landscape and other natural forms in my work, while a range of influences includes Italian Renaissance frescoes, traditional American quilts, magnified insect wings and meandering sea life. The distinct beauty and grace of aging walls (with their implied history and potential for hidden secrets) provides particularly inspirational subject matter.

I fabricate my own collage materials, implementing painting and printing methods (paste paper, disperse dye transfer, gelatin printing, etc.) on paper and fabric, which allow for a gradual buildup of imagery. I choose techniques which can result in a wide range of textural effects and moods, with varying degrees of transparency and depth. In the final stage I machine stitch the constructions, utilizing the stitched line as a design element while celebrating my passion for textiles.

I hope to create some sense of the bombardment of images which confront us from day to day...it is an attempt to find an antidote...a breathing space...a personal respite from some of the chaos and hectic pace of life we collectively experience.