

# GreaterRestonArtsCenter

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## FOCUS EXHIBITIONS

Joseph Barbaccia *Currents*  
Craig Kraft *Unintentional Drawings*  
Judy Southerland *Borderland*

January 9 – February 20, 2010  
Opening Reception, Saturday, January 9, 5:30 – 7:30 pm  
Gallery talk at 6:30 pm

Reston, VA: Greater Reston Arts Center is pleased to present three Focus Exhibitions: *Currents* featuring Joseph Barbaccia's fantastical, sequined sculptures, *Unintentional Drawings* comprised of Craig Kraft's experimental, neon sculptures, and Judy Southerland's mixed media, narrative prints in *Borderland*.

An opening reception will be held on Saturday, January 9, from 5:30 to 7:30pm. There will be an artist's talk at 6:30 pm which will be available through live-streaming video on the GRACE Facebook page.

Also, please join us for:

**Super Studio!** \* Hands-On Workshops, for ages 8 – 12\* Mondays, January 11 and February 8, 3:30 – 5 pm  
Co-sponsored by the Reston Community Center

**Appetite for Art: Contemporary Art Series for Seniors\***. Mondays, February 1 and 8 from 10:30am – Noon

\*For registration information visit [www.restonarts.org/education](http://www.restonarts.org/education)

hub theatre at GreaterRestonArtsCenter, 410 (Gone), staged reading, Thursday, January 14, 7:30 pm. Free.

***Currents*, Joseph Barbaccia's aquarium-like installation, takes the viewer on a deep sea dive into a dazzling underworld filled with magical creatures.** Six glittering, biomorphic sculptures are set in a dimly lit, dark-green gallery. Their names, *Praise, Ridicule, Happiness, Suffering, Loss, and Destruction*, refer to six of Buddhism's eight worldly concerns. While traditional teaching advises one to avoid these concerns, Barbaccia's shimmering surfaces and erotic shapes make the effort nearly impossible.

Each sculpture in *Currents* is constructed of carved polystyrene meticulously covered with thousands of colored sequins. Through a studio process that is as much contemplation as it is craft, Barbaccia relinquishes his own concerns about the sculptures' outcome. The artist's detachment may explain his success in combining incongruent ideas and wildly different life-forms into simplified, graceful figures. *Loss* is an iridescent, two-legged form reminiscent of a plump frog hunched over in sorrow. But a hint of pink on its feathery feet suggests that loss, although heartrending, makes space for something new to grow.

Barbaccia, however, deflects all efforts to de-code his work, saying, "They are created neither as a puzzle to be solved, nor a complex entity to be taken apart and analyzed. They are simply a product of the universe at play, filtered through a human being; to be enjoyed by all." And *Currents* is just that – delightfully enjoyable.

Joseph Barbaccia, a graduate of the Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia, PA has exhibited throughout the United States. His recent regional exhibitions include Gallery Neptune in Bethesda, MD, the Delaplaine Art Center in Frederick, MD, and the Delaware Center for Contemporary Arts in Wilmington, DE where he will have a solo exhibition in June of 2010. A recipient of numerous awards, Barbaccia was a finalist for the prestigious Trawick Prize in 2008. He lives in Potomac Falls, VA with his wife, who is a jeweler, and his family.

**Nationally recognized neon sculptor, Craig Kraft, departs from his iconic linear forms in a bold experimental project, *Unintentional Drawings*.** Reducing his palette to shades of blue, Kraft expands the limits of neon by transferring his seemingly random doodles into drawings made of light. *Unintentional Drawing I*, a free-standing eight-foot tall sculpture, features words like a commercial neon sign but it uses them in a haphazard way, as though the drawing was first conceived on the back of a napkin. Both *Unintentional Drawings II* and *III* continue the random, scribbling theme but as smaller, wall-mounted works.

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Kraft further pushes the boundaries of his previous neon sculpture by revealing the inner workings of his new project. Viewers can peer into the backs of the light drawings to see how they are illuminated. In a Plexiglas box on the back side of *Unintentional Drawing I* Kraft encases the wires, tubes, and transformers carrying more than 240,000 volts of electricity needed to light the work. Walking around the sculpture, comparisons between its front and back are inevitable, suggesting that the back view with its masses of tangled wires and glass tubes could be the true “unintentional drawing.”

In addition to the three neon works in the series, Kraft exhibits two of his preparatory drawings. One of these large works on paper is a scaled-up version of the original doodle and the other was used to design the neon’s complex color relationships.

Kraft’s work can be found throughout the world in both public and private collections. In the Washington, DC region he was commissioned to make sculptures for numerous sites including the Rockville Town Center in Rockville, MD, the Washington Square Building in Washington, DC, and Arlington Arts Center in Arlington, VA. He has exhibited widely in both group and solo exhibitions and is currently fabricating a twenty-one foot high, sculpture, “Vivace,” commissioned for the Watha T. Daniel Public Library in Washington, DC. While the sculpture’s aluminum base will be constructed at a commercial facility, Kraft will form the extensive neon tubing in his studio. He is one of a limited number of light artists in the world who bend their own glass.

Craig Kraft holds both a BA and MA from the University of Wisconsin in Madison, WI and attended the American School of Neon in Minneapolis, MN. He teaches neon workshops privately and for the Smithsonian Studio Arts Program. His studio is an historic fire station in Washington, DC which also serves as his home and gallery.

***Borderland*, the title of Judy Southerland’s exhibition of mixed-media prints, refers to both her intention and her process. “To make a picture, I start with the space in-between,” she reveals.** Southerland’s “in-between” is often an open field, a blue sky, or an empty wall. Into these nebulous places she combines human gestures with other images estranged by time and style. Gradually, like the artist’s laborious process of developing each screen-print, a narrative emerges. Although the individual stories behind each work are personal, to the viewer they appear like fairy tales and share the literary form’s advantage of being both universal and timeless. Fairy tales often depend on the tension created when characters must leave what they know to look for something new. In a contemporary twist on the ancient theme, Southerland’s figures in their off-balanced spaces reflect the artist’s belief that humankind is searching for a way to fit into a world that is unstable and unpredictable. “It’s like looking at the stars and down at your feet,” she remarks.

In her Focus exhibition at GRACE Southerland will show a variety of works including a large-scale installation, *Some Tales*, comprised of nine mixed-media prints. She will also exhibit new acrylic and watercolor works on canvas relating to the Roman myth of Romulus and Remus, as well as *Lacking Wings*, a two-part piece attached with a crocheted rope. Southerland’s complex narratives depend on her fine sense of craftsmanship and wide ranging abilities which include drawing, painting, screen-printing, photography, sewing, and crocheting. The artist reaches back to her childhood growing up in the rural South “...for the confidence people had in making things...” Southerland’s own sure-handedness in keeping so many balls in play makes her visually stunning work so deeply fulfilling on all levels.

Judy Southerland holds a BS from Auburn University in Auburn, AL and an MFA from American University in Washington, DC. She is on the faculty of the Corcoran College of Art and Design in Washington, DC and the Montorno Studios Summer Program in Seravezza, Italy. She has exhibited her works extensively throughout the United States for over twenty-five years. Southerland lives in Washington, DC where she maintains a studio attached to her home.

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Images available upon request.

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