

## SPACE TO DISCOVER

MASSART/FAWC LOW-RESIDENCY MFA

The low-residency Master of Fine Arts program developed by the Massachusetts College of Art and Design and the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown has graduated 30 artists since the partnership began in 2005. Each year, a group of 10 to 12 artists have entered the intensive two-year program comprised of online classes, individual mentorships and intensive 24-day residencies in May and September, which benefit from the natural beauty of the Outer Cape and its century-old arts community.

Liza Bingham and Alice Denison were both members of that first class, which met in May of 2005 at the FAWC campus. Both had been looking at full-residency programs, but when they heard about the program in Provincetown, it was a natural fit. "I've always gone to Truro and been connected to the art world of the Outer Cape," Bingham noted.

Bingham's relationships with her

mentors brought much growth to her work. During the program, artists can study with up to four different mentors. "My work is about the landscape, but I wasn't sure where I fit in," she said. "When I was with my final mentor who is an abstract artist, it was like 'Ahhh, this is it.' It was me figuring out what kind of painter I was." Bingham also benefited from the hard work the program requires. "Unlike regular programs, we were

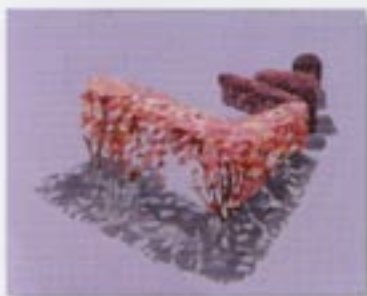


working two years solid, no time off, no break. Helen Miranda Wilson said if you don't put in the hours, you simply will not get results. That is one thing that stays with me."

Bingham credits the program with both the development of her style and her newfound connections.

Her paintings of isolated suburban shrubbery, floating on high-keyed backgrounds, can be found both at the Alden Gallery in Provincetown, a big supporter of the program's artists, as well as the Fireplace Project in East Hampton.

Denison's decision was also made as



soon as she heard of the program. "Nothing ever looked right until I heard about the program at the FAWC with MassArt. That's probably the real answer — I love the FAWC."

She found the residencies the most critical part of her growth. "It was a process where you get asked questions from every angle," Denison said. "The answers, when you dig them out, they surprise you." Throughout the residency, students are visited in their studios by a number of faculty artists. "What helped me was the combination of all these very different people coming and looking at my work, people who are sophisticated, established artists. It was like the ultimate testing." Denison's swirling floral portraits are beautiful, delicate and dynamic. As a result of exposure from the program, she has also shown at the Alden Gallery and has a solo show from January 8 through 30 at Gallery NAGA in Boston.

Colin McNamee had been looking at full-residency programs, but dreaded the upheaval of leaving his home in Providence, a source of his artistic inspiration. "I am still neck deep in a whole other career as a theater technician, so the MFA program was a way to finally be able to devote some time to painting," he explained. McNamee felt his skill develop through the residencies and through his work with mentors. He also found support in the student community that developed through the residencies. "For me the residencies were less about getting work done than having a family, an artistic family to rely on, to support you, because it's not an easy thing, trying to be an artist."

McNamee's beautifully colored and detailed landscapes of urban decline are arresting. His pieces are skillfully architected and turn the blight of urban landscapes into something sublime.

Bill Gusky, another promising artist, will graduate next September. Like many students, he has a family and career to think about. The location and structure of the MassArt/FAWC program appealed to him. "The idea that you're going off, separating yourself from the rest of your life for three-and-a-half weeks at a time, focusing largely on your work — that right there was really good."

Gusky had gone to the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, but over time felt disconnected from his work. The program in Provincetown has reenergized him. After working with urethane structures upon which he drew cartoon figures, Gusky returned to two-dimensions. He layers familiar cartoon faces, but uses saturated colors that impart a sense of violence and suspense. He has found the program "a fantastic space to discover. We have this community when we are together."

"I really think these programs are little gems," he concludes, "and this program in particular is kind of a hidden little gem. It's just now starting to come out and I'm looking forward to seeing where it goes."

For more information on the MassArt at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown low-residency MFA program call (617) 879-7166; the next application deadline is March 15.

Taylor E. Polites

LEFT PAGE: Bill Gusky, *Headlock: Daphne-Parly-Slaughter Lamb*, 2009, acrylic on canvas.  
THIS PAGE FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Liza Bingham, *Cool, Sweet Suburban Midnight*, 2008, oil on panel.  
Colin McNamee, *Conant Hill*, 2008, oil on wood panel.  
Alice Denison, *In Pink*, 2009, oil on linen.