

Virginia Parker

BY TAYLOR ARNOLD



Virginia Parker
Photo by Robert Kempf

Virginia Parker was not born a painter. In fact, she didn't know this was her calling until fairly recently. "It came as a shock," she says. "It quickly graduated to an obsession."

An Atlanta native, Parker lived in northern California in the 1960s, then worked as a model in Europe in the 1970s. "I had 10 years of this, but it was unfulfilling," she says. "The carpool lane was better than any of this."

In fact, Parker did some of her best work for *Atlanta Magazine* while doing carpool duty. "I had three kids under age five, and I would be writing novels when they were asleep," she says. "You can be a wife and a mother and still have a few cells firing."

It was in the middle of working on her third novel that she read a book called *The Artist's Way*. "I looked at the book, but all I could look at were the pictures," she says. "I decided to take a drawing class, and it was like BAM! It was like my first cookie, and I couldn't stop."

After that, she threw herself into painting full time. "I'm fascinated by the skin of the world, the bounce and skitter of light on textures, and the push and pull of shadows on form," she says. "It turns out that after all of those years of modeling, I was paying attention. Now I understand light."

These days Parker works in a studio in a house that is exactly 1.4 miles away from the house that she grew up in. "I use traditional representational still life painting to explore contemporary issues," she says. "Once the initial concept is chosen, my process involves researching appropriate elements, gathering materials and doing principal source photography. After the initial drawing is completed using a grid transfer, each oil on canvas or linen painting takes anywhere from two weeks to six months, depending upon size and complexity."

She also uses literary conventions like symbolism and metaphor. "I see a lot of similarity between my writing process and painting process," she says. "I am not a great writer, but I am a genius *rewriter*. I am not a great drawer, but I am a brilliant re-drawer."

In September of 2009, Parker debuted her current series at the Huff Harrington Fine Art Gallery in Buckhead. "Metamorphosis involves the porous border between extinction

and evolution," she says of this series. "Journalism is endangered, a casualty of the demise of scores of newspapers and magazines and a shift in information delivery from actual to virtual, paper to Internet. As the medium and the method for communication changes, the shape of publishing's future is still undefined. These still lifes layer both what is extinct and what is endangered in the natural world with the obsolete and abandoned tools and products of writers."

Parker says that she has found a great community of artists here in Atlanta. "I have found lots of understanding and helpful artists, especially other women," she says. "Curators have been generous with guidance and encouragement as well. My daughter Emily is part of the young alternative artists world, and she is thriving. It depends on where you fit in the art community."

When asked if she has any advice to other aspiring artists, she says it is all about balance. "Make art! Make art!" she says. "Then, and I quote Julia Fenton here, 'Get a business plan and follow it. A solid day job is probably not a bad idea either.'"

And her goals for the next decade? "As long as I am imagining my future, in a perfect world I will have patrons and collectors that patiently wait for what I am moved to create," she says. "I'll be in private collections and museums. I'll do my part by suiting up and showing up at the easel, and by seeking representation in other areas of the U.S. and abroad. The most essential thing is keep painting. It's a modest goal."

To see Virginia Parker's current work, visit Huff Harrington Fine Art Gallery, located at 4240 Rickenbacker Lane in Buckhead. For more information visit www.vaparker.blogspot.com.