

Creating art through history

November 04, 2014 11:00 AM Sally Asher

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Norah Lovell uses historical maps, paintings and encyclopedias as inspiration for her collage paintings, preserving the integrity of the images she replicates. (Photo by Sally Asher)

Norah Lovell, senior program coordinator of the honors program at Tulane University, can't remember a time when she didn't have a pencil or paintbrush in her hand. Although she works in different media such as painting, collage and works on paper, drawing is Lovell's first love and serves as the connective thread that runs through all of her projects.

Her recent collection is a series of 10 paintings, "Reconnaissance: Battle of New Orleans." It commemorates the 1815 Battle of New Orleans and is part of the citywide Prospect.3 art event. The collection can be viewed at the [Joan Mitchell Center Studios](#) located at 1000 N. Rampart St.

The paintings incorporate imagery from old battle maps, scenes from the battle and black-and-white photographs by twins Ethel and Jenne Magafan, prolific muralists for the Works Progress Administration.

Ethel Magafan's mural of the Battle of New Orleans is "heroic," Lovell said. In an austere palette with a depiction of Spanish moss, the mural creates a "spooky aura of otherness and supernatural intimacy."

To construct her own collage paintings, Lovell culls from illustrated books, antique encyclopedias, historical paintings and maps. She then draws entirely freehand, consciously preserving the source and integrity of the images she replicates.

"I want to retain the look of that period," Lovell said. "The exactness of the process is one reason that the work is time-consuming. For me it feels like it encodes time, and this becomes part of the experience and meaning."

Lovell intricately mixes symbolism and allegory to produce pieces that articulate universal themes. Viewers will enjoy experiencing her distinctive work through their personal viewpoints. Lovell's work is on display until Jan. 25, 2015.

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