

Amanda Quinby



My visit to the studio of Amanda Quinby was my first foray into the labyrinthian Cottage Street Studios building. With clear directions from Amanda, I didn't get lost, but I clearly saw the possibility of wandering for hours through the old factory buildings which are owned by Riverside Industries, an association working with the developmentally disabled, who bought the building for one dollar in 1976. Riverside uses the second floor of the building, while 85 local artists rent affordable studios in the five floor building. On those three floors, the elevator opens up to reveal an informal directory on the opposite wall composed of art cards from the tenants. And this is only one of several studio complexes in Hampshire county—does Franklin county boast even one such similar beehive? *sigh*

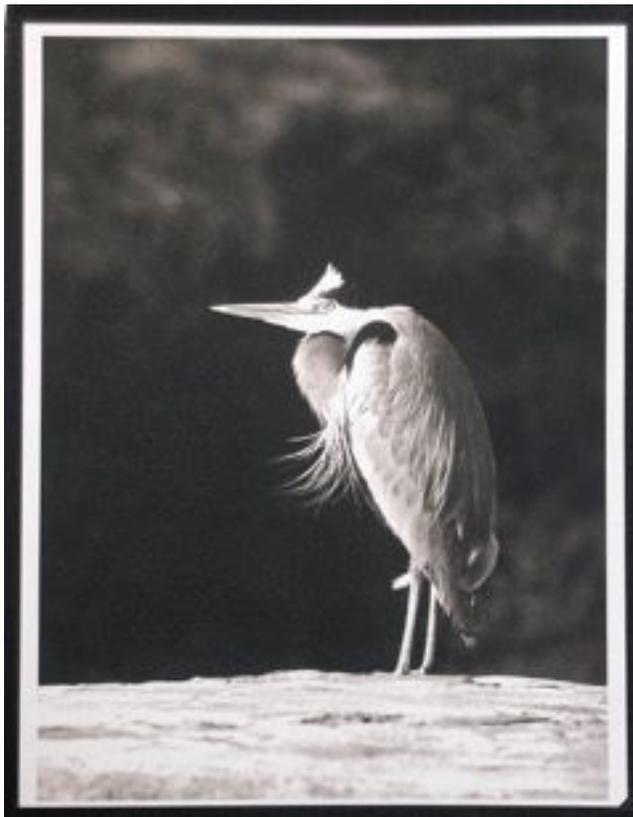
Amanda's studio is on the fifth floor, with one long wall of windows looking over a slice of Easthampton. The furnishings and set therein held a natural hue and sheen: wood, metal, paper, glass: it was evident how her aesthetic coalesced in the burnished surfaces of her gilded panels,

several of which hung on the wall across from the windows.



On a workbench lay the warped antique oval frame that Amanda is currently restoring for a client—this is what she does for her “day job,” and is a contributing factor leading up to her interest in creating the gilded panels.

Alas, restoration does not satisfy Amanda’s craving to create something fresh and new, something that did not exist before. It is a return to the past, to what was, to stasis. And it needs to please the client, and becomes something to stress about before a deadline. When she began creating her abstract gilt panels, some of which hold landscape or nature elements as well, she found new freedom. Finding the right market for these admittedly “pricey” works has been challenging. Amanda has taken out these expensive gilded pieces from the Coop to try them at the Salmon Falls showroom, and has brought them to several high-end craft fairs in the past several years, such as the CraftBoston and CraftChicago events.



She also gilds small items like acorns: “The acorns will sell, but it is really tedious for me to make them. It is not very satisfying...it was fun for a

while and it's like, If I make 3000 of these, I can pay my rent! But, you know, I don't want to spend my time that way!"

In June at the Coop, Amanda will exhibit her photography in a solo show of platinum and gum arabic prints tentatively entitled "Portals and Passageways." With studies in history, film studies, theater, architecture and technical training in photography, Amanda is fusing many interests together in the show. Although none of the pieces were ready to show during my April visit, she described the images. They were taken during a months-long visit to Europe with her anthropology professor partner. Together they bicycled from Lisbon to Dublin.

"I just got totally infatuated with the windows in the cathedrals, and the doors, and the stairs and the passageways," explained Amanda. "I kept taking pictures of stairs: these incredible stairs— long windy ones, or long sweeping stairs going up to convents; and these old cathedral doors: ornate, carved, split, weathered..."

What is a platinum print? I asked, photography being in the realm of precision where I tread very seldom myself. Amanda was kind enough to break it down for me. "It's like a black and white silver print, but using platinum and palladium as the source. The negative is the same size as the print, so it is a contact print process," meaning the negative is applied directly to the paper being exposed. "I will have an image on my digital camera, and I will create a negative of that in Photoshop, and print that out in whatever size I want my print to be on a transparency. The solution of ferric oxylate is mixed with the platinum. I pour it on the paper, brush it out to cover the image size, let it dry, and smooth the negative together with it, and put it in the light box, which is a UV box. After exposure in the light box, it is developed in a bath, and then cleared of chemicals in another bath." The result is a lovely, painterly print with velvety tones. The brushwork is visible extending outside of the image area, an effect sometimes revealed after framing but more commonly covered up.



Using a gum arabic process allows Amanda to work color into her prints in an unusual manner. "This is really fun, it's color, and there are multiple options. You can take an image and use any watercolor pigment with gum arabic and dichromates," she said, showing me a gum print of clouds that blended subtle shades of lavender, peach, dove grey and pale lemon. Multiple exposures are used for different colors (gum arabic, watercolor pigment, and something called dichromates) and whatever is exposed to the light hardens into a layer on the paper, and the rest is removed in a water bath. The artist can use the same negative over and over again, or separate the image by color values for red, green, and blue negatives. The creative possibilities are endless!

Amanda grew up in Vermont, and went to two years of college in Connecticut and then two more years in California, followed by 17 years in North Carolina. "After a certain point, I knew I was not a southerner, and I wanted to be back in New England." Her partner secured a position teaching in

Hartford and they decided to live in Massachusetts, closer to their friend and former SAC member, Michelle Parrish of Amherst. It was through Michelle that Amanda became part of the Coop.