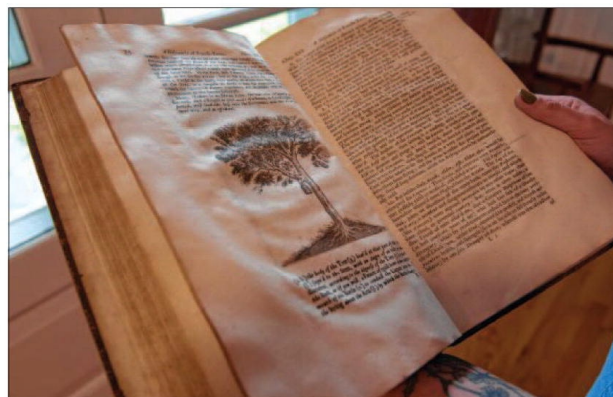
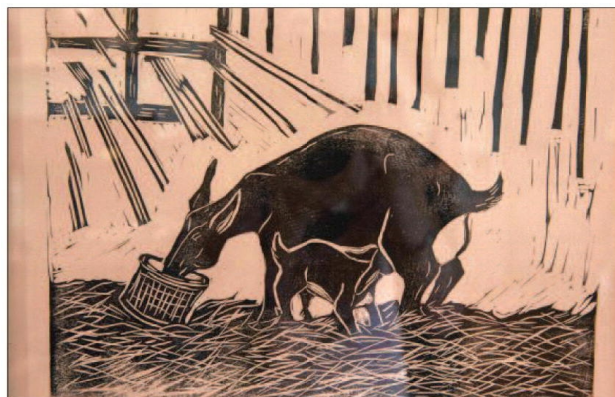


LINKS TO THE EARLY MODERN ERA



STAFF PHOTOS/CAROL LOLLIS

Artist Andrea Caluori says the print at left, based on a photograph she took at her farm of a new-born goat nursing, made her reflect on her connection to Renaissance farmers and the timelessness of some aspects of farm life. At right, Caluori holds an English agricultural manual from the 1600s, one of number of old texts she examined to create prints that reflect her work as a farmer.

New artist-in-residency program at the UMass Kinney Center examines connections to the Renaissance

By STEVE PFARRER
Staff Writer

Andrea Caluori may have grown up in the Bronx, but she built an early connection with nature and rural life, courtesy of attending many summer camps at Old Sturbridge Village, where she soaked up 1830s-era U.S. history and got some hands-on experience working with farm animals.

Caluori draws on that experience in different ways today, living on an Ashfield farm where she raises goats and drives draft horses. She's also an artist, a printmaker with a background in oil painting, and she says her experience working on a farm has helped inform her artwork — especially her most recent project.

That project, “Mapping Terroir: Memory & Myth,” in turn serves as the opening exhibit of a new program at the Kinney Center for the Interdisciplinary Renaissance Studies, at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, that aims to connect regional artists with the center's resources.

The goal? To explore ways in which the early modern world of the Renaissance and that of the early 21st century are still entwined.

“Mapping Terroir: Memory & Myth” includes eight black and white prints that Caluori created from hand-carved linoleum blocks after she spent time at the Kinney Center last fall examining agricultural and animal husbandry manuals dating from 17th and 18th-century England (six of those books are also part of the exhibit).

Her prints, which Caluori calls “photographs of my memories,” depict a range of rural scenes, from goats feeding to a maple sugaring operation to a horse wearing hames, part of the harness a horse wears when it's used for drafting. With their elemental lines and scenes, her work recalls



STAFF PHOTO/CAROL LOLLIS

Artist Andrea Caluori holds an agricultural manual dating from the 1600s, one of a number of texts that helped inspire her prints, some of which can be seen on the wall behind her at the Kinney Center for Interdisciplinary Renaissance Studies at UMass.

some of the prints that appear in the agricultural books she examined, Caluori says, and they also reflect the connections she could sense with the work of farmers from four centuries ago.

“That for me was one of the biggest appeals of this project,” said Caluori, who studied art history at Mount Holyoke College and later received a master's degree in Italian Literary and Cultural Studies at the Univer-

sity of Connecticut. “What do I share with (Renaissance) farmers? What is terror for me, and do I see elements of that in these books?”

Terroir is a French term used to describe all the environmental factors — soil content, rainfall, climate, farming practices — that affect the taste and development of a crop or

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agricultural product; the word is most commonly associated with wine. But Caluori says the term can also embrace more “ineffable” factors, including relationships that help define a place, such as the connections between farmers and their animals.

That’s an important consideration for Caluori, who feels a tight bond with her goats as well as a small horse she uses to till fields. She notes that John Worlidge, author of a 1681 farming manual she reviewed at the Kinney Center, called goat milk “one of the most nourishing liquids,” which touched a chord about her impression of those frisky animals. As she writes in exhibit notes, the personality of goats “is so gregarious and light-hearted that you can’t help but feel nourished by their joyful character.”

“Much of what I read [in the Kinney Center manuals] was very practical,” she said. “There was a lot on techniques and equipment and the value of particular animals. But there were moments that hinted at something more, and that’s what was so interesting to think about ... how [farmers] might have felt in quiet moments in a milking parlor, or harnessing a horse for plowing.”

A ‘Renaissance of the Earth’

Marjorie Rubright, the director of the Kinney Center, says the center plans to enlist three artists per year for its new program, for both the fall and spring semesters and for the summer. In addition to creating original artwork based on examination of the center’s resources — those include over 1,000 rare books, manuscripts, period maps, and other materials — artists will do additional research, work with students, and hold at least one “master class,” Rubright said.

The center is also looking for artists of all types, she said — “musicians, poets, fiber artists, sculptors, whoever is interested. We think there are a lot of opportunities here to think creatively and to engage with a diverse community.”

Indeed, Rubright notes that the artist-in-residency program is an addition to a broader initiative at the center called “Renaissance of the Earth,” which includes interdisciplinary classes, seminars, collaborative research projects, and other events. There’s a workshop series called “Grounded Knowledge,” for instance, that brings together local artists, farmers, herbalists, and chefs with students and scholars to look at historical culinary issues.

The overall goal with the “Earth” programs, Rubright says, is to bring together scholars, students and community members to examine the connections between the Renaissance world and the modern one — as one example, to see if food cultivation practices from the Renaissance might help us imagine new ways of growing food today in the face of the threats posed by climate change.

“The idea is to put different people in the room together where no one is the expert,” said Rubright, who notes that the Kinney Center has long maintained a kitchen garden that grows crops and herbs using “a practice of cultivation that dates to the Renaissance.”

She credits Liz Fox, the Kinney Center’s arts and academic programs coordinator, with suggesting creating the artist residency program, as Fox has a background in arts management. Fox says she was led to Caluori after working last year with students from a UMass natural science class led by Lena Fletcher, who came to the center to investigate the plants, trees and wildlife on the 28-acre property.

“When I mentioned the [artist residency] program idea



At left, Marjorie Rubright, the director of the Kinney Center for Interdisciplinary Renaissance Studies at UMass, talks about the center’s new artist-in-residency program. At right, Liz Fox, arts and academic programs coordinator at the Kinney Center, says the new artist-in-residency program aims to plumb connections between the world of the Renaissance and our current one.



STAFF PHOTOS/CAROL LOLLIS

to [Lena], she said ‘You have to get in touch with Andrea,’” Fox said with a laugh. “She was pretty emphatic about that.”

It turns out Fletcher knew Caluori quite well from past trips she’d made with students to the William Cullen Bryant Homestead in Cummington, where Caluori had previously organized public programming (Caluori also once taught elementary Italian, Italian-American cinema, and Italian cinema at the undergraduate level).

Caluori has definitely started off the Kinney Center’s artist residency program on a strong note, Rubright said with a laugh: “I think she may have broken the mold for the kind of artists we’re looking for.”

For her part, Caluori says her favorite print from her show may be the one she made after one of her goats gave birth last year. She went into the barn the next morning to

feed the mother, and one of the goat kids was already nursing. As sun streamed through a nearby window, Caluori was struck by the timeless beauty of the scene and took a photograph, which became the basis for her print.

“I couldn’t help but think how this same scene might have played out in a barn in England 300 or 400 years ago, and wonder how a farmer there might have felt at the moment,” she said.

For more information on the artist residency program, visit umass.edu/renaissance and click on the link labeled “arts” at the top of the page. The deadline for applying for the fall residency is July 1. “Mapping Memoir” is on display at the Kinney Center through Sept. 30.

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