

**Photographic Influences on my Work**  
Prilla Smith Brackett ©2014

At this time I use simple manipulations in Photoshop to create small "thumbnail" studies for the work I make. In the early 1990's, when I wanted to fracture images or juxtapose parts of one image with or within another image, I used the xerox machine as a tool.

My process began with many small drawings, 8 x 10" or smaller, done either on site or from snapshots I had taken. My drawing practice has always relied heavily on using a small cardboard view finder. Looking at the subject through the view finder let me crop what I saw within the format of the view finder. And I made sure the format of the view finder was the same as that of the drawing. I am aware that this practice resembles looking through a camera lens. It must have influenced my desire to make the shapes abutting the edges important.

I made xerox copies of the drawings in a variety of sizes. Then I could superimpose a smaller version of the image over a larger one. Also, using tracing paper I made fractured shapes. These I laid over one of the xerox copies to see what fracturing an image would look like. I could make several versions of any given approach, and choose the one I thought worked the best. I could also try different color combinations of the same composition to discover what combination came closest to my idea. Or I could superimpose a neutral colored portion of the image so that only part of the image was in color. Finally I squared off both the chosen small study and the larger canvas or paper in order to block in the drawing and complete the final painting.

Here are two examples of this approach:

1992



Right: Rift, ©1992, 40" h x 32" w, oil on linen

1997



Right: Remnants: Communion #11, ©1997, 30" h x 60" w, collaged paper, graphite, charcoal, acrylic, oil, on canvas.

By 2007 I was using a digital camera and learning what I needed to know about Photoshop. I had switched to making many photographic thumbnail studies, about 4 x 6 inches, to discover my image. On my monitor I could alter my snapshots in many ways, add layers of other things, vary their scale and position, experiment with translucency. Then I could print out the ones I liked to compare manually. Finally, I could use an opaque projector to lay out the basic drawing onto the canvas or paper.

Here is an example of this approach. One small photo shows only the forest and tree added in lower left. One shows opaque furniture added, and one show translucent furniture with forest showing underneath.

2011



Right: Family Patterns #13, ©2011, 96" h x 108"w, drawing materials, acrylic, oil on 6 panels

The 2012 monoprints in this exhibit use the same digital techniques for image generation I describe above.

The work generating the image is only the beginning of my process. All the decisions about color, layering and transparency, amount of depth or flatness, paint application, and more are made as I work with materials. Of course my concerns and goals for the body of work influence those choices. For example, in the earliest work I was interested in exploring whether different ways of breaking up an image of the jungle would encourage people to question why I was doing that. I wanted that breaking up to be a metaphor for the seen and unseen sources of environmental degradation of jungle environments (1997), and later of both pristine old-growth forests and city trees (1997). But in the more recent work of bringing two different worlds together, putting the domestic into forest settings, I wanted to encourage thoughts of memory, refuge, and imagined narratives. This called for different decisions (2007–12).