

# Spring 2018

Cultural  
Exchange  
through  
Community Art

## SCOPE

is a newsletter dedicated to keeping UT's community of art educators connected. The mission of the newsletter is to communicate the interests and accomplishments of current students, alumni, and faculty.

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News From the Art Education Program at The University of Texas at Austin

## *Alfombras in Antigua: Building community through creativity and craft*

Art Education graduate students recently traveled to Antigua, Guatemala to participate in the Easter celebration known as Semana Santa. They designed and made an alfombra, a temporary, handcrafted ground covering made of sawdust and other organic materials, intended to carpet the pathway of religious processions marking the passion, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

### *Historical and Cultural Background on Semana Santa and Alfombras:*

The practice of alfombra making is symbolic and richly tied to history and traditions which date back thousands of years. "Alfombra" translates to "rug". The tradition is based on the story of events leading up to the crucifixion of Jesus. According to accounts, a week before his crucifixion Jesus rode into Jerusalem in a triumphant entry. The people living in Jerusalem lay down palm leaves and clothing in the streets to welcome Jesus. Semana Santa, or Holy Week, is a reenactment of this event and the events leading up to the Passion of Christ.

The process of alfombra making to celebrate Semana Santa is a tradition that originates in Spain and was brought over by Spanish colonists during the early 1500s. The process is labor intensive and requires sacrifice on many levels.



UT Art Education students create the alfombra.



The rooftops of Antigua, from Casa Herrera.

# Spring Travel Abroad



UT Austin Art Education students pose with their finished work.

### ***The Process and Processions:***

Those involved in alfombra making begin planning months in advance. Complete dedication and persistence is a part of this community practice, and even inclement weather does not stop participants from starting over and carrying on.

The first step in material preparation requires the sifting of sawdust with a mesh screen. The finer sawdust must be separated from the larger rougher particles, which would not be ideal for making fine details in the image. Next, the sawdust is dyed various colors using a highly concentrated dye that is activated with hot water. The sawdust must be rubbed vigorously between the hands in order to thoroughly saturate each and every particle of sawdust. Once the sawdust is prepared, a wooden frame is constructed. The rougher sawdust is laid down first and spread out with brooms and shovels. Finer sawdust is laid on top to create a smooth foundation, and each layer of sawdust is constantly sprayed with water to keep the wind from carrying it away. Stencils are laid down and filled with colored sawdust, carefully sifted with small mesh sifters and packed down by hand, to create crisp images.

Finally, the wooden frame is removed and the alfombra is embellished with flowers, pine straw, fruit and sometimes larger items such as ceramic pieces and statues.

Each procession features a scene from the Passion of Jesus Christ. They include powerful images and evoke emotion from the crowd. The processional figures are incredibly heavy, often bearing scenes of Christ carrying his own cross. A brass band follows close behind.

As the processional passes, each alfombra is completely trampled and disassembled - months of hard work gone in moments. This destruction symbolizes the people's devotion and is understood to be an offering; the remnants of the alfombra are received as a sacred blessing.

# Spring Travel Abroad



Local children enjoy a meal in Guatemala.

## ***A Cultural Exchange Where the Sacred and the Secular Intertwine:***

One of the most rewarding parts of our adventure in Guatemala was getting to meet people from all different walks of life. It gave us the opportunity to generate conversations with locals, foreigners, and expats. While we were assembling the alfombra, strangers asked questions about our design, where we were from, and why we were participating in the Semana Santa celebrations. We shared our Guatemala experience and in turn they shared theirs. There was a friendly, open, and welcoming feeling in the air throughout all of Antigua. On one of the final days of our adventure, we took a trip to Lago Atitlan where we visited some of the towns around the lake. In Santiago, we interacted with a group of Maya students at a local school. We played a fun musical chairs style game together, where we helped the students practice the English names for colors, while they taught us the Tz'utujil version of the word. The classrooms were filled with laughter and smiles as we scrambled to remember the translation of the words in an effort to get to an empty chair before anyone else reached it! Although our time with the children

was short, we were able to form a connection and learn from each other. The feeling of getting to share experiences and engage in meaningful conversation is one that will stay with each and every one of us.



New friends wave goodbye.

Through her thesis research presented at NAEA, Emma investigated the considerations educators make when bringing students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) into an art museum setting.

## Emma Grimes, Second Year Grad Student, Presents Thesis Research at NAEA 2018

Emma Grimes presented her thesis findings as part of the Professional Learning through Research (PLR) Working Group's session: Research Exemplars of Collaboration Across Divisions at NAEA. In this presentation, she was especially interested in furthering collaborations between museum education, special education, and art educators. It is her hope that she can contribute to the growing interest in expanding the overlap between the fields of special education and art education.

Emma investigated the considerations educators make when bringing students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) into an art museum setting. This interpretive research study utilized reflection-in-action to understand why special education teachers aren't taking their students to art museums. She carried out the process of planning and going on a field trip to a contemporary art museum with a class of children with ASD. In this study, she collaborated with a special education teacher from a school in Austin, Texas to prepare her class of seven to nine-year olds for a trip to a new environment. She also

explored the role of museum educators, examining the methods that docents use to engage special needs audiences and the benefits of a museum field trip for visitors with ASD from the perspective of the Associate Director of Education at The Contemporary Austin.

During the field trip to Laguna Gloria, Terry Allen's *Road Angel* especially impressed these ASD students, giving rise to questions such as: "Is it a real car?", "How did it get out into the woods?" "Is someone going to come out and replace the missing wheel?"

Through conducting and presenting this research, Emma hopes to connect with other art educators who are working with children with special needs and who are advocates for the museum field trip.



Students with ASD consider Terry Allen's *Road Angel* during a field trip to Laguna Gloria.



## *Katheryn Woodard, First Year Grad Student, Reflects on NAEA 2018*

This March I was lucky enough to attend the National Art Education Association's National Convention in Seattle, WA.

This was my first year at NAEA and my first time traveling to Washington. I attended with several of the second-year graduate students and we all had an excellent time there. Each day almost has too many sessions to choose from, but I found it helpful to look over the sessions beforehand and have a rough idea of the ones I wanted to attend on each day. On average, I

attended four sessions per day.

Almost all of the sessions I attended were extremely helpful and we met some wonderful art educators from all over the country there. One of the most helpful sessions I attended discussed how best to lead critiques with high school students. Many of the sessions offered extremely helpful resources and I spent quite a bit of time once I returned home researching the various speakers and their publications. Everyone there was so nice and there was really a sense of community among art educators.

NAEA not only gives teachers an opportunity to diversify their knowledge and practices but also a chance to travel and explore new cities. I absolutely loved Seattle and I had some great experiences with fellow grad students and professors! I would suggest attending to any preservice or current art educator and I am already looking forward to next year in Boston.

NAEA not only gives teachers an opportunity to diversify their knowledge and practices but also a chance to travel and explore new cities.



Katheryn Woodard takes in Seattle's sights.

### **Dr. Paul Bolin retires after seventeen years at UT**

Dr. Paul E. Bolin, Professor and Graduate Advisor in Art Education, has been invaluable in shaping the Art Education program at The University of Texas at Austin. At the end of the 2018 spring semester, Dr. Bolin will be retiring after forty-two years as an art educator. He will be dearly missed by his students and colleagues. His wisdom, patience, passion, and aptitude for finding the perfect metaphor have inspired generations of art educators.

Dr. Bolin has a B.A. in Art Education from Seattle Pacific University and his M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in Art Education from the University of Oregon. He taught middle and high school art in Oregon and began his university teaching career at the University of Oregon in 1986. He taught at The Pennsylvania State University from 1992 to 2001, after which he moved to The University of Texas at Austin.

Dr. Bolin's research has contributed significantly to the understanding of historical issues in the field of art education, especially in regard to art and public schooling in the late nineteenth century United States. He has also written extensively about material culture studies in relation to art education. He has published and co-



Dr. Bolin contemplates a bright future in his book-filled office.

edited numerous volumes and articles and presented his research at countless North American conferences over the years. He has received multiple awards and accolades for his research and teaching, including being elected a member of the Distinguished Fellows of the National Art Education Association in 2009. His latest co-edited volume with Dr. Doug Blandy at University of Oregon, titled *Learning Things: Material Culture in Art Education*, will be published on June 8, 2018.

Dr. Bolin is looking forward to focusing on personal writing projects and spending quality time with his grandchildren during retirement. During his last class, he reminded students to be “art sponges” so that they may soak up as many art-related experiences, skills and knowledge as possible during their careers in anticipation of “one day wringing that art information out for the benefit of others.” He reminded students to never lose sight of that fact that art educators are, above all, teaching not only ideas and skills, but people.

**Dr. Bolin will be retiring after forty-two years as an art educator. He will be dearly missed by his students and colleagues.**



Second year graduate students pose with Dr. Bolin.

## First Year Student Summer Plans

### Art Ed Students Head Out on Summer Adventures

**Caitlyn McKey:**

This summer I'm planning on practicing a lot of creative mindfulness techniques as a part of my thesis research, in addition to getting a head start on readings. I'm looking forward to teaching 3-D studio classes at the Dougherty Arts Center and Laguna Gloria, and further exploring Austin!



**Elainy Lopez:**

This summer I will be an intern for the SMU Summer Youth Program in Dallas. I hope to be able to watch some good movies, read for fun, and work on some printmaking.



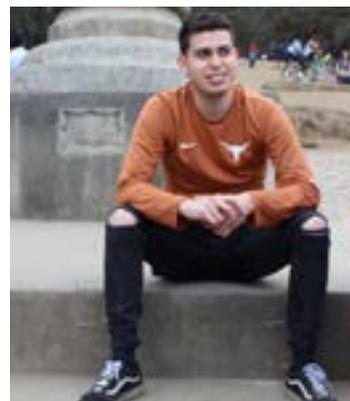
**Katheryn Woodard:**

This summer I hope to teach and start a jewelry program at the Contemporary. I will also be spending time outside, reading for pleasure, and going to Florida to hang on the beach with friends!



**Cole Godvin:**

I will be interning in the marketing department at the Art Association of Jackson Hole from June through August. I'm excited to further the Art Association's reach while enjoying the beautiful Wyoming wilderness with family and friends.



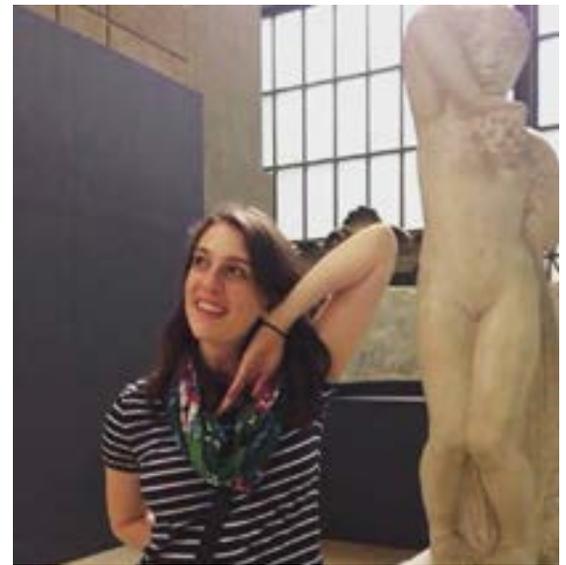
**Adrian Hinojosa:** I am planning on taking an internship in either Austin or somewhere else in Texas this summer. I'm not planning on going anywhere special, but I might make it back to California soon.

## First Year Student Summer Plans

### *Art Ed Students Head Out (continued)*

**Kristin Garrison:**

I will spend my summer working and volunteering in Austin, while continuing to work on my thesis that centers around museum access programs. I am also looking forward to traveling around Texas and visiting my family and friends in California.



**Sarah Chestnut:**

I will be spending the summer interning at the Art Institute of Chicago's education department. I plan to begin research for my thesis during the summer as well. I look forward to squeezing in some relaxation time with friends and family before classes begin in the fall.

**Sakura Stephens:**

I will be starting off my summer backpacking and visiting relatives in Asia. When I return, I will be interning for Art + Academy teaching studio art classes to a variety of levels and ages. I will also be researching and reading on my thesis topic: visual culture and social media.



**Serena Naidu:**

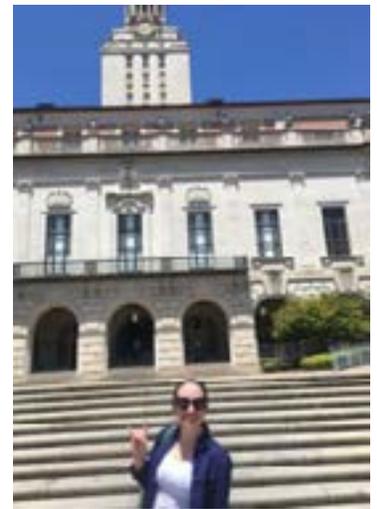
I will be interning at Artpace San Antonio. I will also be working on my thesis, which examines professional development in museum environments. At the end of summer, I will be visiting Chicago for a friend's wedding, and will hopefully see Sarah while I am there.

## M.A. in Art Education Graduates Plan for Take Off

### *Here's What Comes Next for UT Art Education Graduates*

**Claire Williamson:**

After completing my master's degree this May, I plan to relocate to the Houston area and pursue my passion for working in nonprofit arts programming. I also will be serving as the copy-editor for the 2018 edition of Trends, the scholarly journal for the Texas Art Education Association.



**Callie Anderson:**

I've accepted a position as a full-time Programs Coordinator position with Preservation Texas. This role would entail coordinating advocacy, education, and membership/development programs. Historic preservation and architecture have been long-time interests of mine. In fact, I was involved in many of Historic Fort Worth, Inc.'s programs and events growing up. I find that historic preservation here in Austin — a town that is experiencing rapid growth and commercial development — is an issue that needs much attention. I am hopeful that my skills and experience coordinating educational and membership programming and developing partnerships and relationships with individuals, communities and organizations along with my knowledge and interest in historical preservation and architecture, will help me further the goals of Preservation Texas.

**Emma Grimes:**

After graduation, I will, thankfully, be staying with the places where I am already employed. Over the summer, I will be teaching a few classes at the Art School at Laguna Gloria, and I will be running summer programming at William's Community School in northwest Austin. In the fall, I will begin working full time at WCS as a lead teacher of a therapy class for teenagers on the autism spectrum. I hope to continue teaching children's classes on the weekends at Laguna Gloria as well. What I am looking forward to most of all is having the time to read books for leisure, now that I'm not reading books in order to write a thesis!



**Danielle Grenier Cossey:**

My graduation plans are to relax and spend some quality time with my daughter and husband during the summer, and then look for a job in Austin. We will be staying here for a while. I plan to continue working at the Blanton as a docent, and on being involved in museum education as much as possible.

## Alumni Spotlight

I remember standing in the sun, surrounded by some of my favorite people, making art, locals joining in, music playing, smelling incense from nearby processions, and thinking: "This whole experience is an artwork."

### *Becca Borrelli Walks the Working Artist Path*

#### **How did you come to join the Art Education Graduate Program?**

I was teaching elementary art in Ohio, and scoping grad programs before my teaching license expired. An Austin friend said: "Why don't you check out UT? I did on a whim and was surprised how much I loved the program's focuses. I was unsure about my future in public education, so I was excited to study under the community track. The rest is history.

#### **What is your fondest memory of the program?**

Traveling to Guatemala during Semana Santa for alfombra making. I remember standing in the sun, surrounded by some of my favorite people, making art, locals joining in, music playing, smelling incense from nearby processions, and thinking: "This whole experience is an artwork."

#### **Did your thesis play into your current career trajectory?**

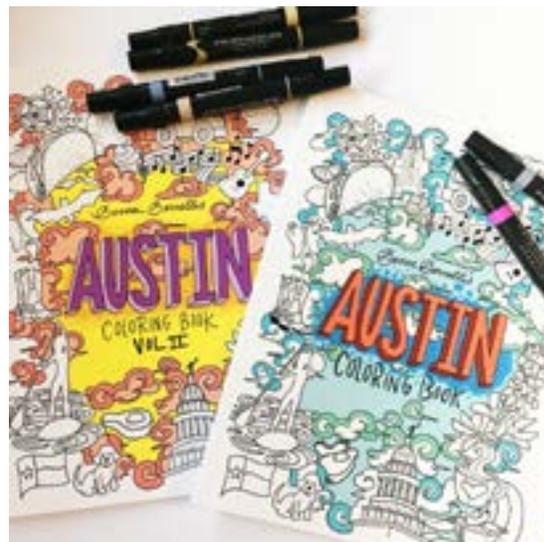
It really did, but not in the way I would have imagined. I guess they tell you that in the beginning of the program, but it's one of those things you can't wrap your head around until later.

My thesis question was about as hippy as they come, but I'm pretty hippy. I researched the ways art teachers reflect on the intersection of identity and professional practice through art making. I lucked out to partner with the Blanton and we did a summer workshop for Austin ISD teachers. I definitely went into it thinking I would be helping teachers discover all these amazing deep things, but the finding that came out strongest in the data was almost boring: "Art teachers struggle to make personal art sustainably, because they lack time and energy from the demanding nature of their professional life."

We really do have this education



Becca Borrelli bursts forth from the page.



Becca Borrelli's Austin coloring books are available in two editions.



Becca Borrelli paints at HOPE Outdoor Gallery.

# Alumni Spotlight

People suggested I turn the drawings into a coloring book. Eventually it felt like the universe was trying to tell me something. That inkling turned out to be true. Things snowballed and pretty soon I was illustrating for Dell Children's, ADL Austin, HEB and the Downtown Alliance.



*Zilker Park* by Becca Borrelli.

system that mines teachers for resources rather than investing in them. Most of the teachers in the study were exhausted all the time. I didn't realize it then, but my thesis validated my hesitation in returning to the public education system. That was probably the very beginning of my contemplation on solo-entrepreneurship.

### **What is the most exciting thing that has happened to you post-graduation?**

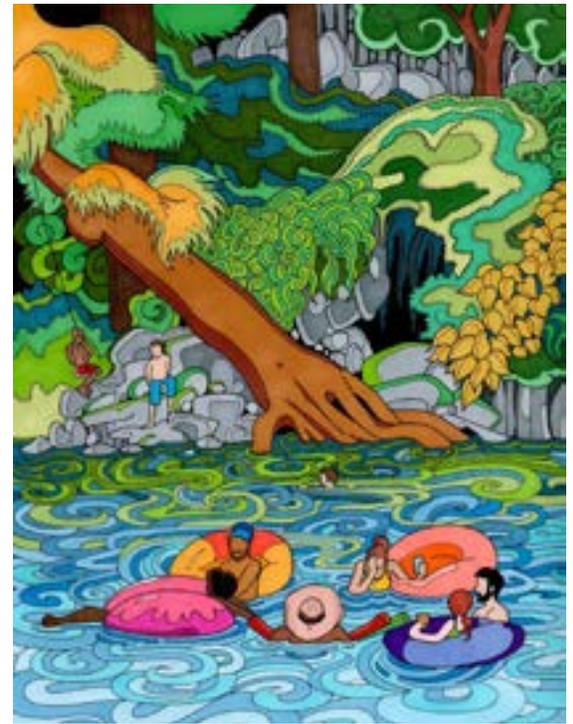
In 2016 my small business began supporting me full time. Most of my life I regarded myself as a scattered, sensitive, hippy artist, so running a business makes me really proud. I think teaching prepared me. I tell all of my teacher friends, if you can run a classroom, you're ready to run a business.

### **And the most surprising thing?**

Being a coloring book artist. Who does that? I certainly couldn't have planned a career like this. It still surprises me.

### **What particular advantages does Austin offer to artists?**

Networking. Austin is bursting at the



*Krause Springs* by Becca Borrelli.

seams with people trying to monetize a passion, and that puts people at this grassroots level with one another. When you're in that place, you need the community. Every gig I've done has been word of mouth. I don't market myself at all, which is great because I stink at marketing.

### **How did you come up with the idea for an Austin coloring book? What challenges and triumphs have you encountered along the way with this project?**

The Austin Coloring Book and its subsequent success was completely on accident. I was drawing a series of black and white pieces of Austin for fun in 2014 while I was a sign painter at Trader Joe's. More and more people suggested I turn the drawings into a coloring book. Eventually it felt like the universe was trying to tell me something. That inkling turned out to be true. Things snowballed and pretty soon I was illustrating for Dell Children's, ADL Austin, HEB and the Downtown Alliance.

My biggest challenge is lack of boundaries. It seems like I have this massive magnet, and if I'm not careful, I'll drown under all the things I pull

# Alumni Spotlight

into orbit with me. I get asked for a lot and I say yes to it all, even to my own detriment. I'm getting better, but it's a slow learning curve. It's hard to talk about this with others. People are sympathetic when you're struggling to get things you want, but when you're getting too much, the response is kind of: "Must be rough." Insert eye roll.

## **What tools do you feel artists need to pursue entrepreneurial enterprises? And how do you suggest they acquire those tools?**

I use a hash-tag on my Instagram #energyoverimage, and I also talk about it on my podcast. I've found when you pay attention to your energy; the tools and techniques will figure themselves out. I learned this as a school-teacher. You can have rock-star technique, but if your energy isn't right, the kids will sniff you out as a fake a mile away. I feel like the same applies as an adult. Your energy is like a lighthouse for the kind of business that will sail into your shores. Work on your insides, stay curious, and the tools and techniques will find you.

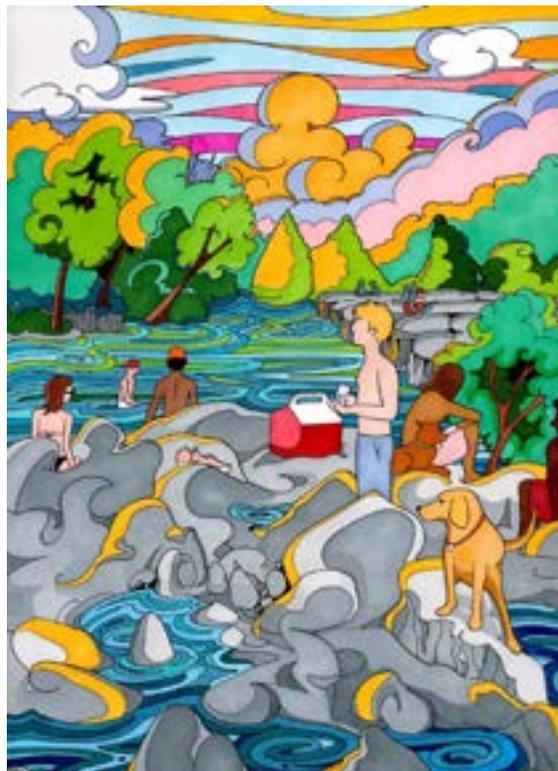
Laguna Gloria keeps me connected to the community, and it keeps me connected to what matters.

## **How does teaching at Laguna Gloria play into your own artistic practice?**

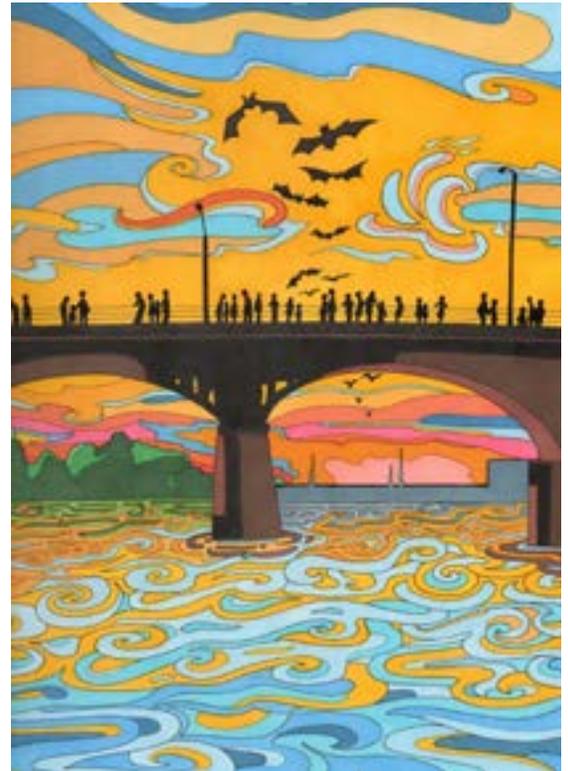
Laguna Gloria keeps me connected to the community and it keeps me connected to what matters. It's easy to get wrapped up in frivolities about design or business. Then I go in to teach and in comes a 70-year-old woman who hasn't taken an art class since she was 9 because her teacher shamed her. That's real stuff right there, and I take that role seriously. It's not about teaching style or technique, it's about going back to basics, and creating a safe space for people to simply play with paint or clay. Things I've taken for granted for decades are life changing for some of these students. It's very humbling. I plan on teaching at Laguna Gloria for as long as they'll have me. It's a magical place.

## **What advice would you like to share with the current cohort of graduate students?**

God laughs at your plans!



*Barton Springs* by Becca Borrelli.



*Congress Bridge* by Becca Borrelli.

*All images reprinted courtesy of the artist.*