

THE 
GRIFFIS ART CENTER

INTERNATIONAL ARTIST-in-RESIDENCE PROGRAM – MAISON des ARTISTES
NEW LONDON, CONNECTICUT USA

Kat O'BRIEN

2011 International Artist-in-Residence
Montreal, Quebec, Canada



" Beeches, Magnolias and Walking Sticks"

Date Acquired: 06/05/2011, Date Created: 2011

Framed Dimensions: N/A, Picture Dimensions: "

Medium: Porcelain

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2011 International Artist-in-Residence
from Montreal, Quebec, Canada



“Love always, John”

When Kat O'Brien submitted her application to be one of our International Artists-in-Residence, her works of art had us intrigued...
but it was her project statement that convinced us that she should be here.

“My project for 2011 relates to the upcoming 100th birthday of my father, John Moore (1911-1948). He taught English at Connecticut College (1940-1948), organized its first Summer Arts Programs in 1945-7, and was the first administrative chair of the American Dance Festival in 1948 (working with Martha Hill) before his sudden death in October of that year. - I had just been born.

“As I grew up, most of what I knew about him came from letters he wrote to my mother; hence, I knew him mostly as ‘Love always, John.’

“In the late 1980’s I visited Connecticut College to see if some form of John was resting there “in the shadows” at the library. Indeed, his personnel files were just arriving in the archives! Though hardly the stuff of the love letters I knew, it was in some ways more intimate and informative. John took new form as a vulnerable young man through his employment applications, reference letters, and hand-written housing and promotion requests. In response I created “The Matter of John,” two multimedia installations showcased in New York and Texas.

“I planned other trips to the archives in New London, but life takes its own path and I did not return.



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“Coincidentally, in 2011, Connecticut College will also celebrate its 100th birthday. My project is to return to the college archives but with a more meditative perspective than before. I propose to alternate time in the archives with studio work constructing eight-sided porcelain sculptures, each with incised/applied text or images based on what emerges from the archived material. The ceramic material itself being a meditation on fragility. “

True to her proposal, O’Brien remained on track – balancing archival research and studio time. But as I watched her work I saw a profound change come over her ... she fell in love with the father she never knew through letters written in 1948.

“My appreciation of your understanding, your faith and work for the school is so deep that I guess it’s hit the non-verbal level; I take it for granted that you know what I and everyone in the project feel toward you without our saying it. We’ll have to dance it for you some time.”
Martha Hill

or

“It seems there are so very few people who have vision and appetite for wonder and the willingness to pay dearly for it. You are one of them ... There is so much to do and the world needs it more than ever and it is only the truly strong ones who will be able to weather, strong, I mean in terms of spirit. The very few who listen to the inner voice...” Martha Graham

The passion and dedication John Moore showed in the launching of the American Dance Festival at Connecticut College was clear; and it has been passed down to his daughter and immortalized in her art work 63 years later. Porcelain sculptures reflecting places, feelings, hopes and dreams ... a timely project of extraordinary personal, local and historic dimensions.

Although all the pieces will not be completed by her open Studio on May 22nd, O’Brien will return to Montreal and complete the remaining pieces by October in hopes that they can be exhibited for Connecticut College’s 100th Year Celebration.

Sharon Tripp Griffis
May 2011