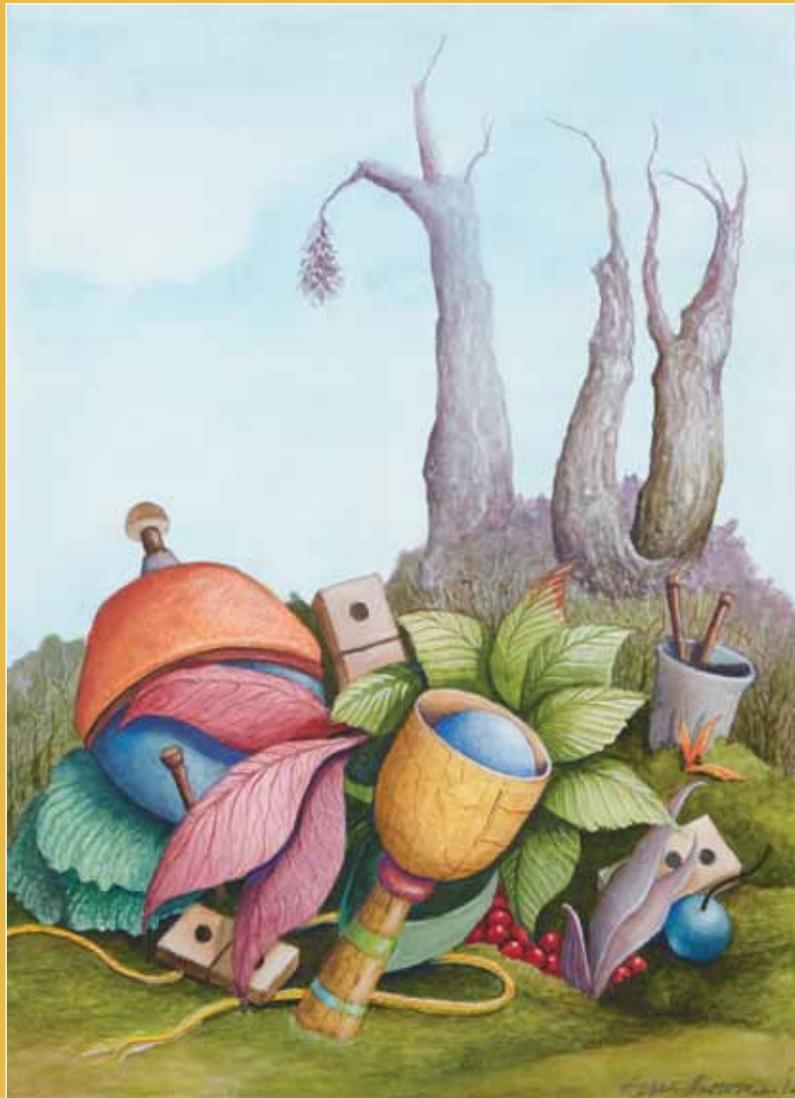


## *Artifacts of Memory*

THE ART OF ROGER BOWMAN

PUCKER GALLERY • BOSTON

*All works are watercolor and gouache on paper.*



**Dominoes**

20.25 x 15" • RB240

*on the cover:*

**Locking Glass**

20 x 16" • RB264

# Artifacts of Memory

## THE ART OF ROGER BOWMAN

“All grown-ups were once children – although few of them remember it.”

—ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPÉRY  
*THE LITTLE PRINCE*

The variations of themes within Roger Bowman’s personal and magical world are refracted through the prism of childhood experiences, in which all objects have a soul. With his masterful craftsmanship, new combinations of motifs appear in joyful color combinations, expressing themselves in synesthetic chords of visual, musical, and poetic experience. Still life and landscape have forged a unity in which nature and artifacts of memory are harmoniously interwoven.

The Dutch still life painters of the seventeenth century delighted in their secular world and celebrated the beauty of flowers and fruits, richly displayed. The texture of petals, the velvety visual caress of a carpet, the clinking shimmer of glass and copper rejoice in the beauty of the here and now. They were not actual depictions from life, as the flowers portrayed bloomed during different seasons.

Roger Bowman’s still lifes and vegetables do the same. They hail from different parts of the world and times of the year. Memories of his childhood and life experiences are captured anachronistically. And whilst the Dutch still life painters never forgot to add a hidden element of *memento mori* (“remember that you will die”), with beetles eating

away at a flower, or a moth acting as a reminder of decay, the little creatures that populate Roger Bowman’s world are life-affirming in their minute vitality and whimsical humour. Diminutive birds huddle in their nests of incongruous objects, dragonflies display their luminous wings, and midnight moths are not at all *vanitas* symbols, but very much alive in their quaint reality. They interact with the viewer with their beady little eyes, their downy wings, and their fluffy feelers. Yet a sense of time, transience, and decay, parallel to the course of nature, does pulsate through Bowman’s paintings. This acts as an affirmation of the transience of life and the perpetual renewal that follows decline. Bowman extracts from nature its harmonies and from his own memories the essence of spiritual life. His surrealistic juxtapositions convey a dream world that is not disturbing or frightening. The delicate meeting point of these surreal images with the viewer’s cognitive understanding is based on the interplay between the ability to see oneself and the world both from the inside and from the outside. Beauty can exude extrasensory energies. In Bowman’s paintings, beauty lies in objects that have been used and places that have been loved. By some mysterious chemistry the viewer is able to recognize them in a process of reciprocity.

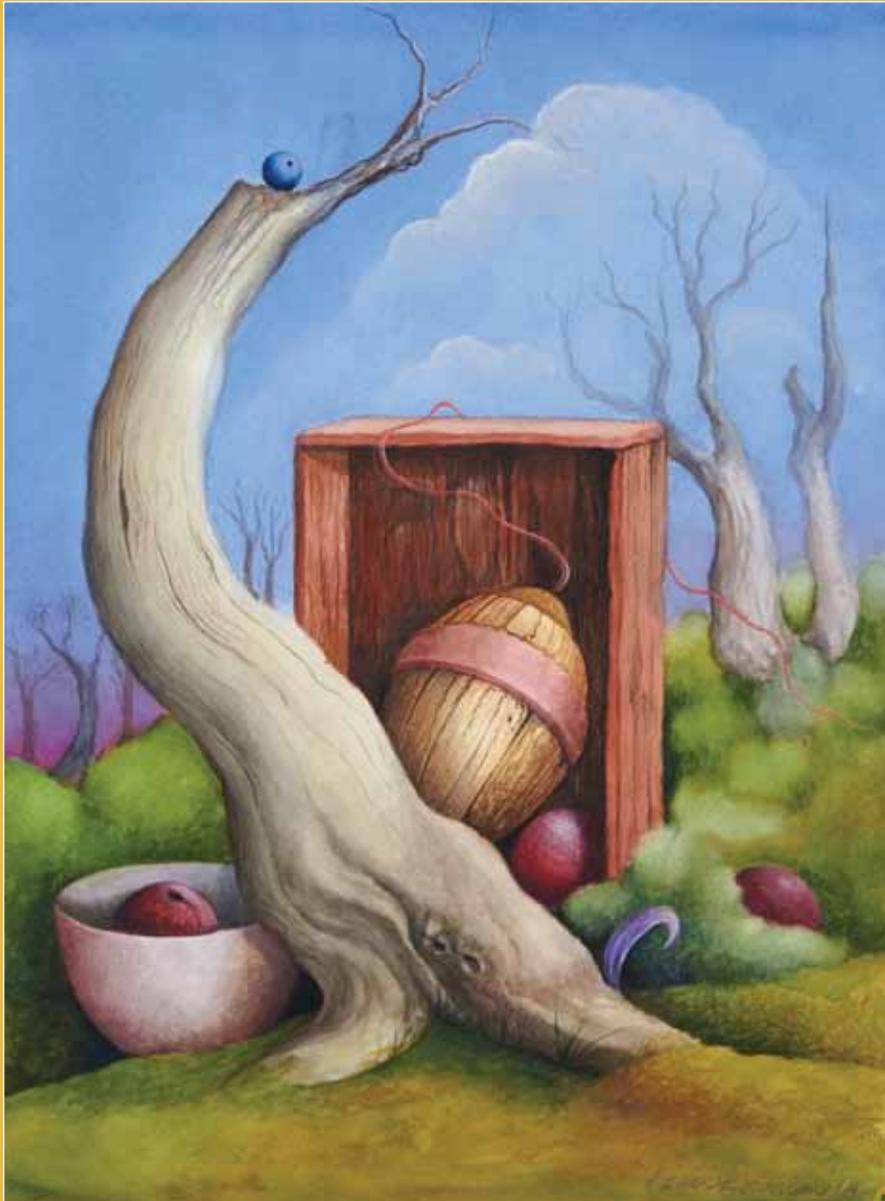
Bowman's superior craftsmanship, based on his discipline as a graphic artist, is evident. From his first drawing on tracing paper, each piece undergoes changes until the definite composition manifests itself, and he proceeds to the painting on watercolor paper. At this stage, the coloring is built up with luminescent aquarelles and opaque, earthy gouaches, using his highly specialized technique. And even here, parallel to the course of nature's arbitrariness, adjustments take place, and the image will emerge taking its own direction, along which the artist allows himself to be led interactively. At some point, the painting will be left alone for a period of gestation, as also happens in nature, until the artist is satisfied with the visual realization of his image.

In the painting *Dominos* (RB240) the metaphor of cause and effect is offered for decoding by means of the title. In a colorful assembly of artifacts comprising rusty nails, a battered spinning-top, and a brittle chalice containing an egg, the domino pieces are couched within foliage of unnatural greens and red. A blue bead will reappear as the head of a ballerina-shaped tree in *Swamp Dream* (RB241), the bare trunk signifying the death of the tree, while the marshes are a sign of decay. And yet the title points to a transition into the world of imagination. Bright red berries or beads spill into the ditch of *Looking Glass* (RB264). Here three wafting feathers are framed by the huge mirror in a green landscape, forming a barricade of light blue sky against a sombre nocturnal background. This looking glass pours forth an assembly of personal memories, with a fecund tree-trunk – here in diminutive size – the opulent pumpkin, the croquet ball and the ripe banana sinking into the earth. All this conjures

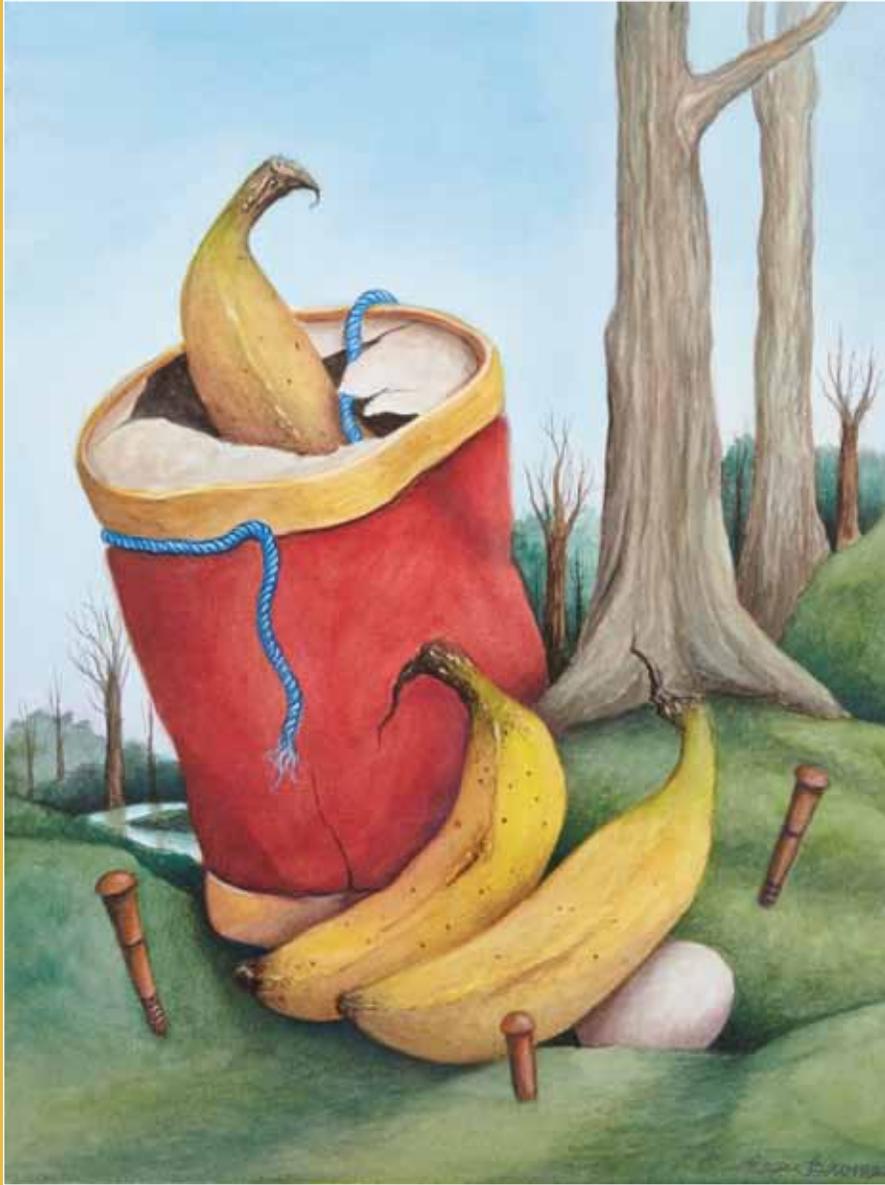
up the words of the poet T.S. Eliot, "These fragments I have shored against my ruins."

Past musical sounds and rhythms reverberate through time from the dilapidated musical instrument in *Tin Drum* (RB239). Its torn drum head is pierced by one of three bananas in different states of ripeness. The banana, perhaps a symbol of sensuality, recurs in many of Bowman's paintings. This tin drum's former dynamism throbs in the heartbeat of its intense red color. An egg, a symbol of renewal, is couched in a landscape with two barren, white trees pushing back lush foliage, all under a clear sky. The earth is freckled with three rusty nails representing the corrosion in time of man-made objects. In the background, the river meanders between birth and transience in nature.

The discrepant correlations of objects and colors in Bowman's work exude a sense of magic. Specifically, the number three holds a spell and is repeated in various images – a trio of eggs in *Still Life with Nine Berries* (RB258), unlit matches in *Rocket* (RB242) or burnt matches in *Blue Chair* (RB230) seem imbued with mysterious power. Three large dragonflies enter and exit the tombstone-shaped window revealing life-giving water that meanders again through barren trees in *Still Life, Cache River* (RB233). The three moths in both *Deep Woods* (RB234) and *Red Beads* (RB259) affirm their enchanted existence in this world of living things. Three downy feathers in the painting *Decoy* (RB244) seem to pretend to belong to the wooden bird of ensnarement, or is it the other way around with the bird pretending that they were shed by its wooden wings? Three is also the number of little birds cosily huddling in the foliage of the dead *Stump* (RB263) and in the hollow tree trunk of *Stump II* (RB250). Three bananas precariously



Swamp Dream  
20 x 15" • RB241



**Tin Drum**  
20 x 15" • RB239

hold up the egg of renewal in their ballet pose in *Red Egg Balance* (RB249). The enchanted existence of the fairy tale bugs in *Magic Garden* (RB231) and *Deep Woods II* (RB257) is heightened by this enigmatic number, which has been significant in religion, folklore, and mysticism for centuries.

Sometimes Bowman's titles offer clues to unlock the enigma of a painting, for example in *Lamp and Shade* (RB243). A diagonally positioned humanoid light with its naked bulb is standing in a swampy river landscape with an upright spinning top, marbles, and a bird in flight. Yet the lamp does not have a shade. However, the backdrop with the tiny crack posing as the firmament could be a blind, thus the "shade." Or does the title point to the shadowy landscape with its unknown light source, marked by the deep ocean beyond?

In *Red Beads* (RB259), a transitory state of memory is evident. Tiny blue birds sink into the sands of time, joined by three croquet balls with sticks and a hoop. Beads of a broken necklace spill out of a piece of wood, all at the foot of an elephantine trunk enhanced by incompatibly colored foliage — as if in a dream. Three moths with fuzzy feelers peer at the viewer inquisitively. A nail corrodes in the sand, another is stuck into the trunk.

In Roger Bowman's most recent works the landscape is more sparsely populated with artifacts. And these have increased in size and become more integrated with nature. In the far distance of *Rocket* (RB242), a solitary farm building stands under a red sky with its tower reaching into the sky. A dandelion's puffy seeds will soon be blown away like the firework with matches ready to be lit. In *Top and Wren* (RB254), the feathery bird is perched upon a sinking hoop, the

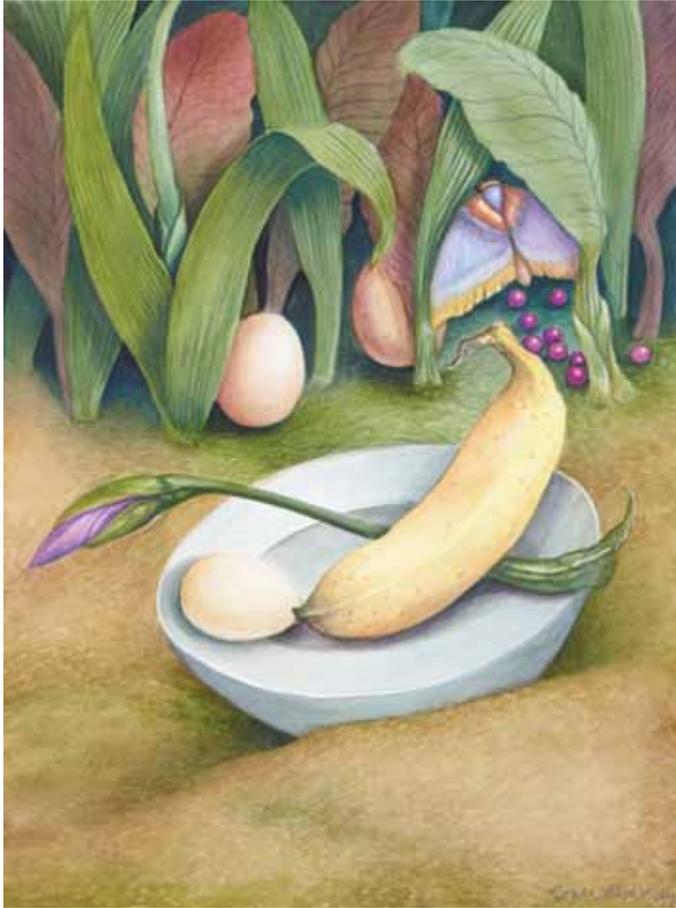
bottom half of a spinning top is cracked, and five little colored balls shimmer by its side. Is it such childhood games that have harboured man's destructive urge?

Roger Bowman's motifs are recollections of his childhood memories in his home state of Arkansas. In his childhood world close to nature, animals, trees, forests, rivers, stones, mountains, swamps, and man-made objects were all imbued with a soul. The painting *Voyage* (RB262) stands apart from the other images. Perhaps it signifies a new vision of the artist. A broken, one-legged jumping jack decorated with leaves attempts to cross a pond which reflects the sky. He rides in a basin towards the edge, leaving behind the landscape of barren and dead trees, an intermediary between childhood and the world beyond.

This collection serves as affirmation of life on earth, of time and of timelessness. They are visual fairy tales and dreams that mediate between known and unknown realities. Their fusion of the personal and the fantastical contains a magic that releases the powers of psyche and nature as aspects of each other. Rendered in colors of the rainbow, the paintings of Roger Bowman speak of hope, promise, beauty and peace. And is not the ideal of peace an archetypal yearning of mankind?

— UTE BEN YOSEF

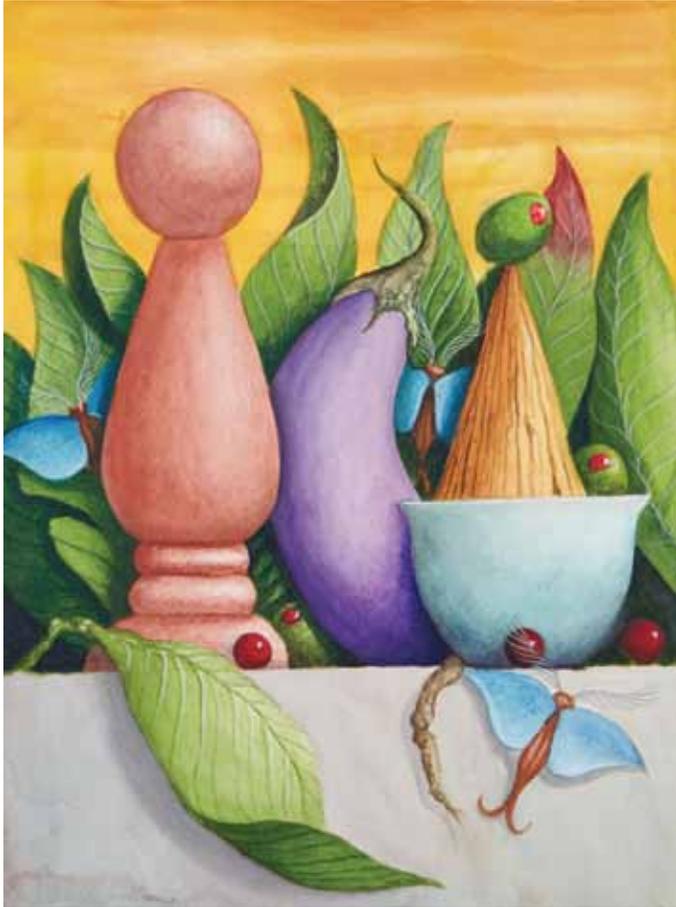
*Ute Ben Yosef received a B.A. in Librarianship, and a Ph.D in History of Art, for which she studied at the Department of History of Art and Fine Arts, University of Pretoria, South Africa and at the Art Historical Institute of the Free University of Berlin, Germany. She was a Senior Lecturer in History of Art at the University of Pretoria, before moving to Switzerland where she worked as art critic for various Swiss newspapers. After returning to Cape Town she served as Head Librarian of the Jacob Gitlin Library, whilst lecturing and publishing art historical research papers and monographs on contemporary artists.*



**Still Life with Nine Berries**  
20 x 15" • RB258



**Still Life, Cache River**  
15 x 11" • RB233



*Yellow Sky*  
15 x 11" • RB236



*Deep Woods*  
15 x 11" • RB234



**Red Beads**  
20 x 15" • RB259



**Decoy**  
20 x 14.75" • RB244



**Stump**  
20 x 15" • RB263



**Stump 11**  
20 x 15" • RB250



*Red Egg Balance*  
20 x 14.75" • RB249



*Magic Garden*  
15 x 11" • RB231



**Deep Woods II**  
20 x 15" • RB257



**Lamp and Shade**  
20 x 15" • RB243



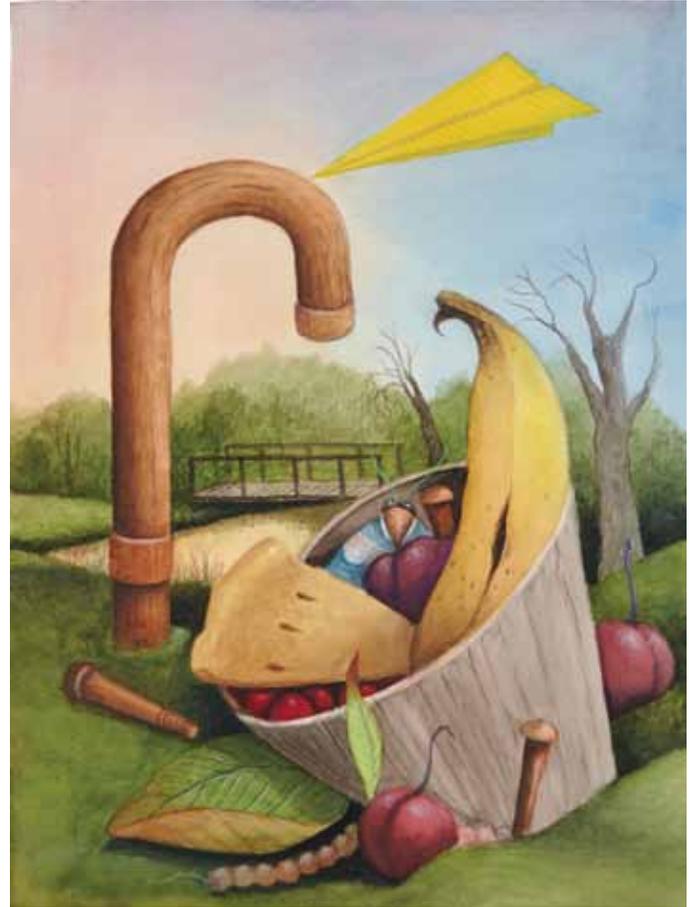
**Captured**  
20.25 x 14.75" • RB261



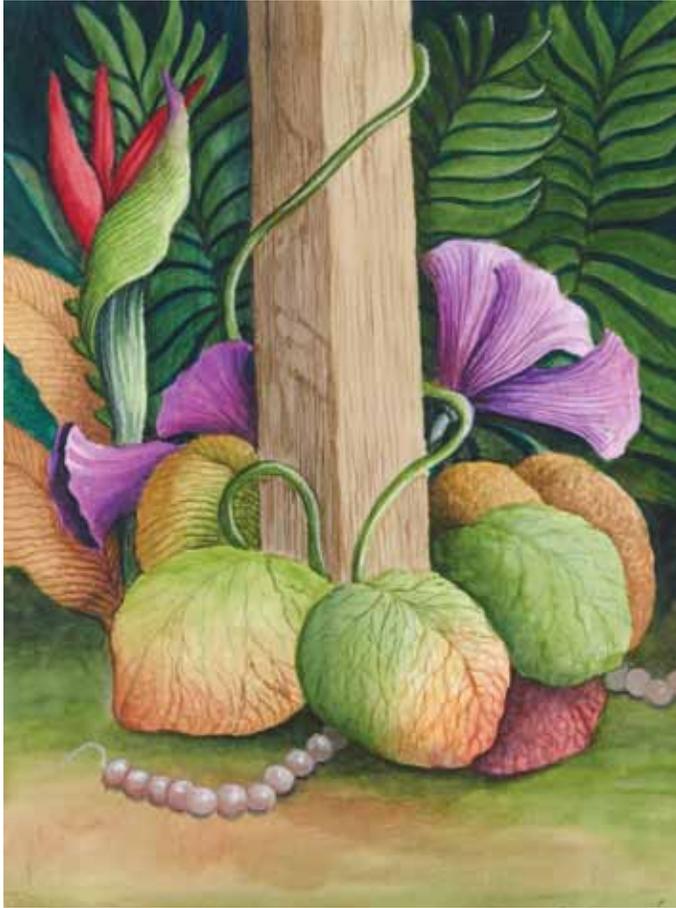
**Top and Wren**  
20 x 15" • RB254



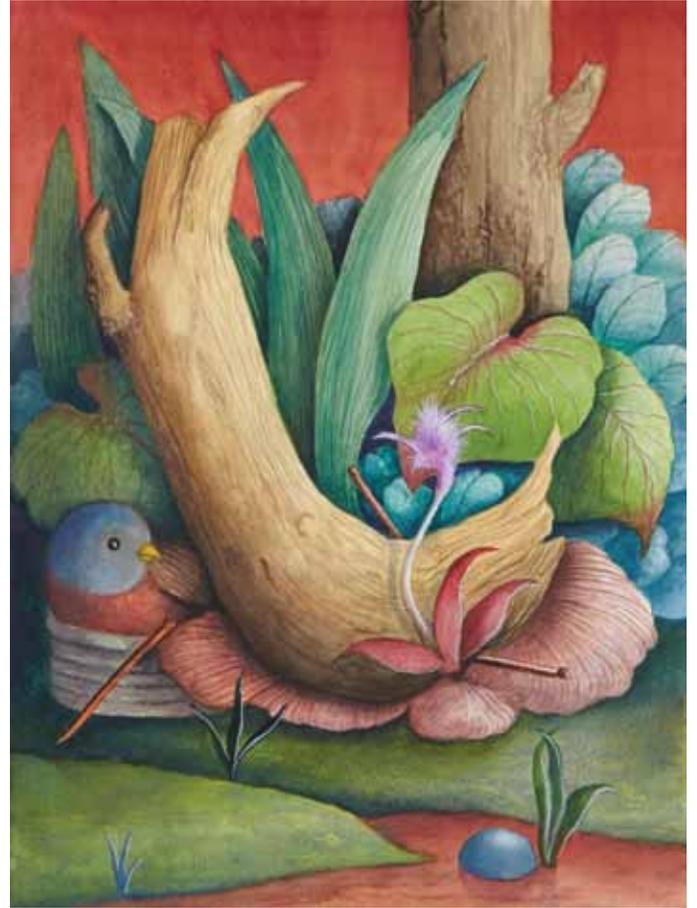
**Croquet**  
20 x 15" • RB255



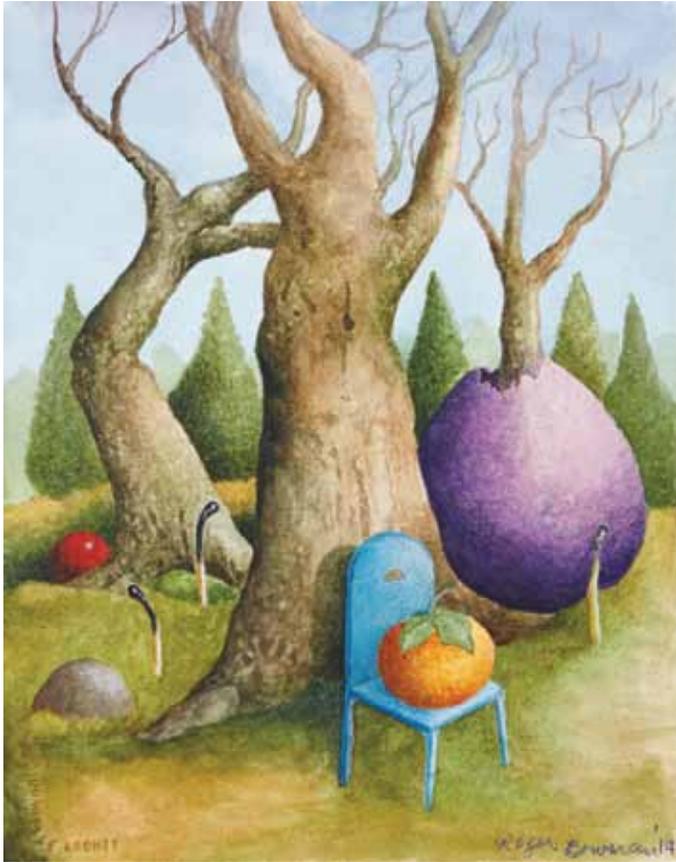
**Tap**  
20.25 x 14.75" • RB260



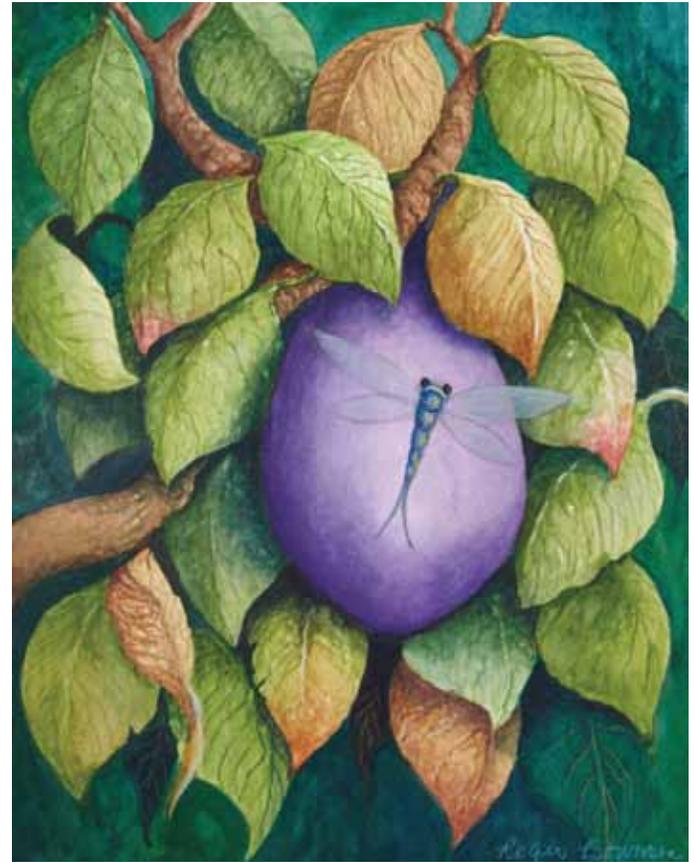
Pearls  
15 x 11" • RB232



Orange Sky  
15 x 11" • RB235



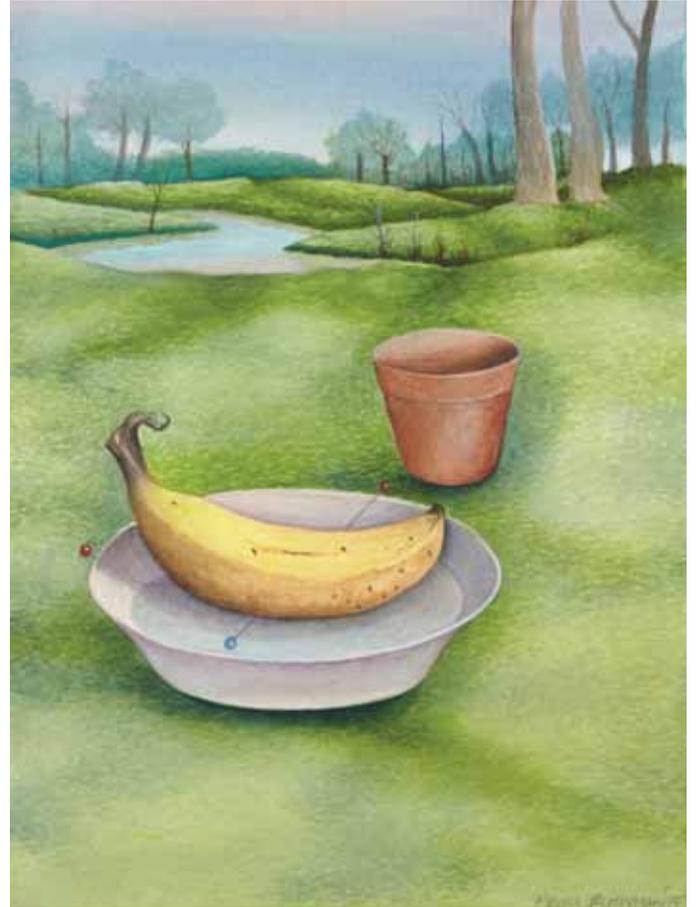
Blue Chair  
14 x 11" • RB230



Dragonfly  
14 x 11" • RB238



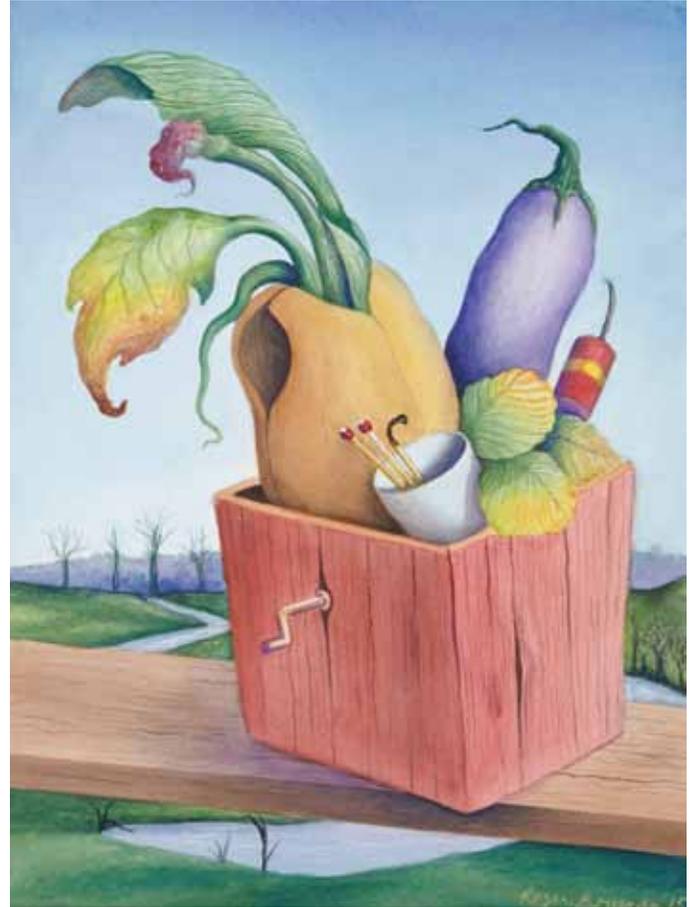
*Voyage*  
20 x 15" • RB262



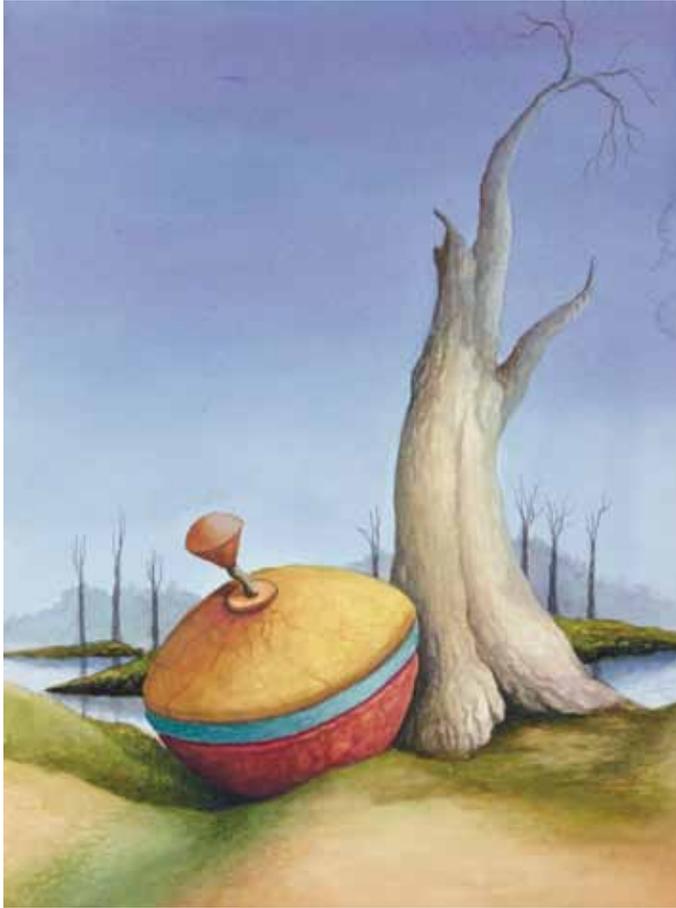
*Park*  
20 x 15" • RB245



**Hoop**  
20 x 15" • RB246



**Music Box Still Life**  
20 x 15" • RB247



**Giant Top**  
20 x 15" • RB248



**Tucker Creek**  
20 x 15" • RB251



**Golden Carousel**  
20 x 15" • RB252



**Gourd**  
20 x 15" • RB253

## biography ROGER BOWMAN

<b>BORN:</b>	April 22, 1948, Jonesboro, AR	<b>2005</b>	Oval Gallery, Little Rock, AR
<b>EDUCATION:</b>	University of Iowa, M.F.A. in Printmaking Arkansas State University, B.F.A. in Painting and Drawing	<b>2004</b>	Taylor Contemporanea Fine Arts, Hot Springs, AR Delta Exhibit, Arkansas Arts Center, Little Rock, AR Sara Howell Gallery, Jonesboro, AR Henderson State University, Arkadelphia, AR
<b>TEACHING:</b>	1988–2014 University of Central Arkansas, Conway, AR 1981–87 William Woods College, Fulton, MO 1978–80 Henderson State University, Arkadelphia, AR 1977–78 Wesleyan College, Macon, GA	<b>2003</b>	<i>Mid-America Print Council Exhibit</i> , DeKalb Gallery, DeKalb, IL Louisiana College, Alexandria, LA Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN <i>Up with Art Exhibit</i> , Little Rock, AR Thirteen Moons Gallery, Santa Fe, NM
<b>EXHIBITIONS:</b>		<b>2002</b>	<i>Creators/Collectors</i> , Baum Gallery, University of Central Arkansas, Conway, AR <i>Paper in Particular</i> , University of Missouri, Columbia, MO <i>River Oaks Art Center</i> , Alexandria, LA
<b>2015</b>	<i>Artifacts of Memory: The Art of Roger Bowman</i> , Pucker Gallery, Boston, MA	<b>2001</b>	<i>Tom Peyton Memorial Art Exhibit</i> , Alexandria, LA 2001
<b>2013</b>	<i>A World Within: New Works by Roger Bowman</i> , Pucker Gallery, Boston, MA Taylor's Contemporanea, Hot Springs, AR	<b>2000</b>	<i>Realism Today</i> , John Pence Gallery, San Francisco, CA
<b>2011</b>	<i>Through the Looking Glass: The Art of Roger Bowman</i> , Pucker Gallery, Boston, MA		Territorial Restoration Contemporary Invitational, Little Rock, AR
<b>2009</b>	<i>Imagined Reality: New Work by Roger Bowman</i> , Pucker Gallery, Boston, MA		Taylor Contemporanea Fine Art, Hot Springs, AR The Print and Process, Kemper Museum of Art, St. Joseph, MO
<b>2007</b>	<i>The Lay of the Land: The Imaginative Terrain of Roger Bowman</i> , Pucker Gallery, Boston, MA		
<b>2005</b>	<i>The Exquisite World of Roger Bowman</i> , Pucker Gallery, Boston, MA		

## artist statement ROGER BOWMAN

I am inspired by nature, but rarely work from life. I want to be able to create objects without being obligated to stay true to what is before me. I want things to be believable, but only in the universe within the rectangle.

Many of the forms in my work show the effects of time. Toys are cracked and broken, unnamed fruit and vegetables are slightly damaged or overly ripe. The relationship between objects and landscape is important. Vines curl and

caress the forms, and many times objects sink into their landscape. I also like the idea of contents spilling out of their containers.

I have always been interested in still life. Simply said, I love the way things look. Textures, light, the arrangement of objects, and how they relate to one another can be magic. Also, finding the fantastic and the surreal in the commonplace is always interesting.



**Rocket**  
20 x 15" • RB242



**Pecan and Silo**  
20 x 15" • RB256

CREDITS:

Design: Leslie Anne Feagley • Editors: Destiny M. Barletta and Tess Mattern • Photography: Simon Simard  
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# PUCKER GALLERY

ESTABLISHED 1967 BOSTON

## Pucker Gallery

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## Change Service Requested

Please visit [www.puckergallery.com](http://www.puckergallery.com) to view current and past exhibition catalogues, read artist biographies, and subscribe to the *Artwork of the Week* and *Pottery of the Week* e-mail lists.

### Gallery Hours:

Monday through Saturday 10:00 AM to 5:30 PM

Sunday 10:30 AM to 5:00 PM

We offer one free hour of validated parking at the 200 Newbury Street Garage. The garage driving entrance is located on Exeter Street between Newbury and Boylston Streets. The nearest MBTA stops are Hynes Convention Center and Copley Station on the Green Line.

Pucker Gallery is a member of the Boston Art Dealers Association and the New England Appraisers Association.

## Artifacts of Memory

### THE ART OF ROGER BOWMAN

### Dates:

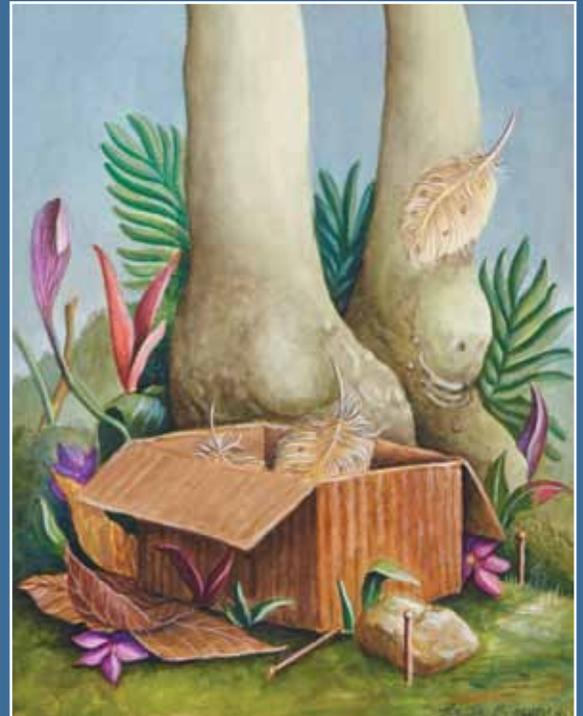
31 OCTOBER THROUGH 29 NOVEMBER 2015

### Opening Reception:

31 OCTOBER 2015, 3:00 PM TO 6:00 PM

THE PUBLIC IS INVITED TO ATTEND.

THE ARTIST WILL BE PRESENT.



Feather Box

14 x 11" • RB237