

JENNY BLAZING & CARIN WALSH:
TURNING POINT



Featuring *Changing Worlds Now*
a WALSH/BLAZING collaborative installation



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INTRODUCTION

Jenny Blazing and **Carin Walsh** are artists whose work addresses environmental devastation. They believe art has the power to complement data, to stir the soul, and catalyze progress. Over the past decade, humanity has witnessed a proliferation of climate-related disasters across the world. Storms have become stronger, wildfires more intense. Sea ice is melting at a higher rate as the earth grows hotter. Each of these problems alone endangers human welfare. Together, they represent an existential threat. Scientists often describe our position as nearing a "tipping point" at which we teeter at the precipice of an irreversible cascade of ecosystem collapse. *Turning Point* presents a different view of our role in this crisis. It presents the inescapable truth of where we stand, laying bare the symptoms exacerbated by the warming of our planet and the catastrophic consequences we face if we ignore them. However, it also offers an optimistic reminder that we are not passive observers of this disaster, but active agents with the ability to change course and build a safer and healthier future. Their hopeful message is that while the climate is approaching a tipping point, our society is at a turning point. We have the power to choose whether we will continue on our current path, or whether we will turn to embrace the measures necessary to reverse climate change. At this unique moment, political, economic, technological and societal forces are converging in an encouraging direction. The objective of *Turning Point* is to convince viewers that we are all collectively responsible for building a better world and that each of us can play a role in driving humanity towards solutions to this crisis—solutions that center on the lives and wellbeing of people.

Blazing and Walsh's collaborative practice, WALSH/BLAZING, employs visual art to convey that humanity's past, present, and future are at risk. This exhibition features *Changing Worlds Now*, their multimedia and video/sound installation that uses storytelling to invite viewers to reflect on what the climate crisis means to them and their families.



Entrance Wall
Jenny Blazing and Carin Walsh: Turning Point
Frankie G. Weems Art Gallery, Meredith College

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

Jenny Blazing is a full-time working painter, installation artist and found object sculpture artist living in Durham, NC. Her acrylic and collage paintings incorporate original hand-painted and monoprinted papers. In addition to ongoing representation in various exhibits, her work is regularly on view at 5 Points Gallery in downtown Durham, and she is a member of the curatorial committee of Horace Williams House in Chapel Hill. Blazing graduated from the University of California, Davis with degrees in Environmental Design & Economics and subsequently earned a Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Her visual arts work focuses on the ephemeral beauty of our world and our need to do our best to respect and preserve it. From the rain soaked days of her childhood in the Pacific Northwest through the ever evolving arc of her artistic career, Blazing has always built imaginary worlds that shape and color her experience. Plucking pieces from her surroundings, she rearranges life's building blocks to construct new, distinctive realities. These imaginary worlds, in turn, become lenses onto our lived reality: fictional forums to consider concrete environmental, economic, and social issues.

Carin Walsh is a visual artist whose painting, animation, and audio/video work has been exhibited throughout the Raleigh-Durham area. Having served as a board member of The Carrack Modern Art, she splits her time between working at the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University and evolving her creative practice. Her art often expresses concern for the environment.

WALSH/BLAZING is a collaborative art practice between Carin Walsh and Jenny Blazing that includes painting, video, installation, photography, commercial commissions, and large-scale projection. The duo uses visual art to reframe environmental issues and generate conversations about measures to solve them. They bridge art and science by employing a research-based approach to environmental messaging through visual art. They have partnered with scientists and climate communication experts to engage the public in discussions around our current environmental trajectory and the danger of politicizing and neglecting the universal climate crisis.



Exhibition View

Jenny Blazing and Carin Walsh: Turning Point
Frankie G. Weems Art Gallery, Meredith College

WILDFIRES (Blazing)

California Dreamin' is inspired by Blazing's personal experience with the impact of our climate crisis. This experience galvanizes her work on this exhibit:

"My paintings, assemblage, found object sculpture and installation piece in this exhibit are inspired by personal experience. In 2015, the Valley Fire wildfire devastated my family's community in Cobb Mountain, California. My parents watched with growing alarm as flames, which seemed distant at first, consumed their area forcing them to evacuate. After days of worry, they learned that the inferno had destroyed their house along with much of the town.

Wildfires are a natural part of many ecosystems. However, climate change is contributing to their severity. California is seeing its driest air in decades, drawing moisture from the vegetation and leaving vast swaths of sunbaked tinder ready to ignite. In 2020, California saw the worst wildfire season on record with 4.2 million acres burned, 10,488 structures damaged or destroyed and at least 31 fatalities. These fires were neither the first nor the last of the environmental tragedies that have uprooted and undercut millions of families in the chaos wrought by the climate crisis.

California Dreamin' is my response to the devastating wildfire that destroyed my parents' community on Cobb Mountain in California. As I started the painting, a forlorn version of the hit song California Dreamin' by The Mamas and The Papas streamed through my imagination. The lyrics, originally mildly wistful, had a new meaning for me as I thought of the experiences of my family and all those who live in my childhood home state. The refrain, 'All the leaves are brown and the sky is gray,' formed the vision of a post-fire scene—a smoke-scarred depiction of the dreams destroyed in the climate-change fueled blaze."



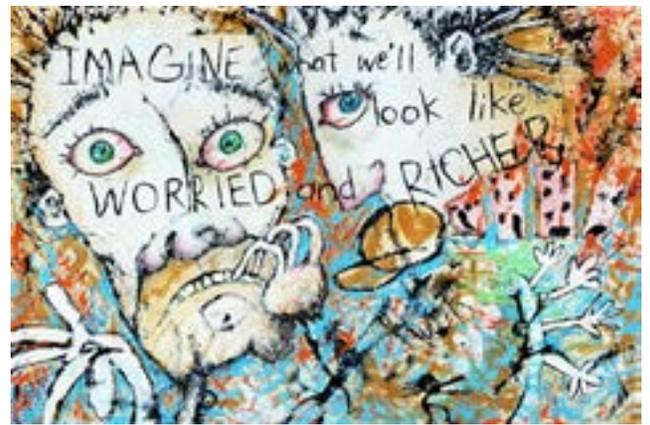
California Dreamin'
acrylic painting incorporating
hand painted and
monoprinted original paper
on canvas, 30"x40"

WILDFIRES (Walsh)



We Had No Time to Grab Anything
acrylic and colored pencil on
canvas, 30"x40"
On loan from Jacob Geller

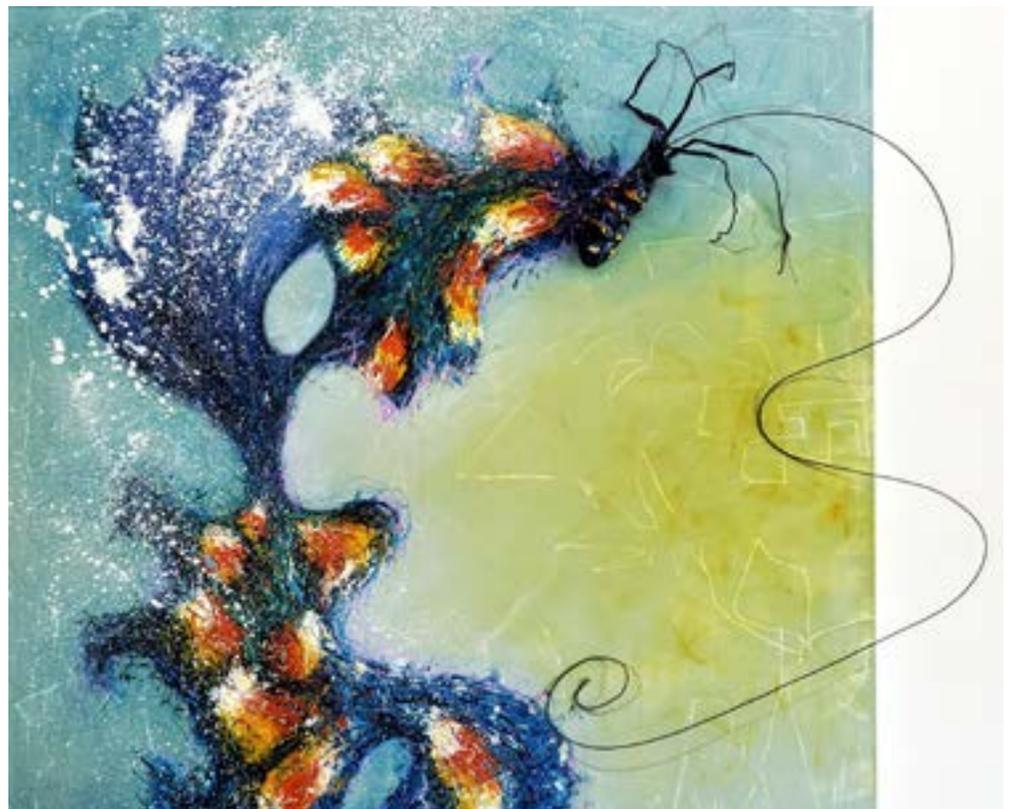
OVERVIEW OF WORKS



[Top left]
Walsh
The Dousing of Deepwater Horizon
acrylic on paper, 22"x30"

[Top right]
Walsh
Worried and Richer
gouache, colored pencil,
on paper, 11"x15"

[Bottom right]
Walsh
Disruption
acrylic, decoupage, wire,
on canvas, 36"x41"x7"



FEATURED INSTALLATION

Changing Worlds Now (WALSH/BLAZING)—This multimedia installation by WALSH/BLAZING features Carin Walsh's audio/video collage projected onto and interacting with Jenny Blazing's acrylic and collage mural. It highlights the personal impacts of climate change by weaving a past-present-future narrative, while incorporating imagery from local city landmarks and recorded interviews with residents.

Driving the first section's imagery is the Judeo-Christian order of creation as described in The Book of Genesis. The section ends with the arrival of man as dominator and self-professed heir to Earth's lush bounty.

The next section highlights the industrial revolution's rapid impact on society, as ever-expanding economies, unchecked development, and fossil fuel dependence become ways of life. We've entered the Anthropocene, a time when human activities have impacted the environment enough to constitute a distinct geological change. The climate crisis becomes not only a threat to health and safety but is deemed the greatest threat to US national security.

The final section lays bare the turning point at which we now find ourselves, as effects of climate change are upon us. We see moments from public domain home movies running in reverse—our collective way of life at risk of disappearing. We hear local residents recount memories of familiar childhoods—a reminder of what is truly at risk if we do not embrace long-term strategies for sustainability.

We end at a yet-to-be-determined outcome. Will we allow ourselves to be distracted by ideological debates and short-term material pursuits? Or will we ban together and prioritize securing our collective future and that of our planet?



Changing Worlds Now
multimedia installation (acrylic & collage 8'x6'
mural, video imagery, audio montage), Length
6:36 min/4:3 aspect/30 fps/Stereo/English



LOCAL CAUTIONARY TALES

DURMatitis (WALSH/BLAZING)—When the threat of Covid-19 is finally behind us, how will a return to Durham's pre-pandemic growth trajectory impact long-term quality of life? How will explosive development in the downtown sector impact communities of color that face further marginalization through gentrification? Could climate factors deepen racial injustices by disproportionately impacting communities of color? How can Durham center Black and Brown residents while sustainably growing? Will Durham position itself for a sustainable future or just ride the wave of short-term profits? And what role does each of us play toward these outcomes—*Am I the problem or Am I the solution?* You are one or the other, or both, but you cannot extract yourself from the equation.

Changing Worlds: Durham (WALSH/BLAZING)—Smart television featuring a one-minute time lapse video of a WALSH/BLAZING work projected onto the exterior of 21C Museum Hotel, Durham, NC. This video depicts the imagined evolution of local landmarks and challenges residents to confront what is at stake if our battle to save the environment is lost.



DURMatitis
audio/video collage
embedded in retro
space heater.
Total run time
1:14 minutes.



Changing Worlds: Durham
video installation projected onto
21C Museum Hotel

BUILDING WORLDS SERIES

Strata (Blazing) as well as *Overlook*, *Overflow*, *Ebb & Flood*, and *Building a Better World* are paintings from my *Building Worlds* series. In this series, I create paintings that fuse past, present, and future eras into imaginary worlds to emphasize our inevitable and potentially irreversible effect on the planet. At first glance my paintings resemble captivating cityscapes perhaps gone a bit awry. Viewers find themselves struggling to place these scenes in memories from travels and other experiences. Their contemplation often leads them to linger, observe, and process the imagery more deeply beyond the initial aesthetic. But these are not your typical vistas. They contain a message that begins to reveal itself upon closer examination. Something is happening to these worlds. There is an aspect of urgency to the scenes that people often begin to sense. Debris and crumbling elements resembling ruins from antiquity are interspersed with gleaming, modern imagery all condensed into a single work as if they are "time-lapse paintings." The skies are infused with dripping and texture that suggest that weather no longer exists in its predictable form. What does all of this mean? Can it be good? Can we continue to accelerate our consumption of our planet's resources while ignoring the costs?



Strata
acrylic painting incorporating
hand painted original paper on
canvas, 30"x40"

POLITICS & RACIAL JUSTICE

Blue Skies Smiling, Trickle Down and **Overlook (Blazing)**—Each of these three paintings represents a similar scene looking up over a hill. There is a sense of mystery about what might present itself on the other side. These paintings reflect the social, economic, psychological and political complexity of coming to grips with our climate crisis.

Blue Skies Smiling signifies the ease with which many of us have been able to ignore our climate crisis. Some of us may not feel directly impacted, but we all need to act. While climate scientists have been warning for decades of the harm of greenhouse gases that result from human activities, in the United States it has been convenient for individuals, the media, and policy-makers to dismiss these warnings as perhaps anomalies or inflated projections. However, within recent years, the predicted impact of climate change has become difficult to ignore as wildfires, storms, floods and other natural disasters have increased dramatically, exacerbated by our warming planet. Over that same span, political tides have led to a dismantling of many governmental efforts to combat climate change. In the face of these disasters and political setbacks, we are now seeing a positive swing toward a heightened societal and political concern for our climate crisis accompanied by a marked increase in media coverage and political focus. It has become impossible to ignore the pressing need to address our climate crisis.



Blue Skies Smiling
acrylic painting on canvas incorporating
hand painted and monoprinted
original paper, 30" x 40"

Trickle Down—Fossil fuel industries are among the greatest emitters of carbon, and they also wield outsized economic and political power. They often locate their industrial plants in communities where people have limited resources to oppose them. *Trickle Down* speaks to the environmental hazards that disproportionately threaten Black and Brown communities. In April 2020, the predominantly Black community of St. John the Baptist Parish, Louisiana endured the highest Covid-19 death rate in America. These cataclysmic health disparities stem from pollutive industrialization in the community that has left residents with staggering rates of severe illness including heart disease, respiratory illnesses and diabetes—all high-risk conditions for Covid-19. Health injustices like these due to structural racism exist across the US. They leave people of color more vulnerable to climate change induced extreme heat, wildfire smoke, and other consequences of climate change.

Structural racism has augmented the harmful impacts of the climate crisis for people of color. To pursue climate justice, we must dismantle racist environmental policies and learn from the many Black voices informing our path forward. In the words of Mustafa Santiago Ali, Vice President of Environmental Justice, Climate, and Community Revitalization at the National Wildlife Federation, "When we say, 'I can't breathe,' we literally can't breathe... At every turn the deck is stacked against us." There can be no climate justice without racial justice, nor racial justice without climate justice.

Overlook—Inaction is not an option. This painting is a cautionary tale of our future if we fail to address our climate crisis.



Trickle Down
acrylic, charcoal, and collage
(hand painted, stamped and monoprinted
original papers) on canvas, 30"x40"

Overlook
acrylic painting incorporating hand painted
original paper on canvas, 30"x40"



MIGRATION

No Harvesters (Blazing) is inspired by Pieter Bruegel's commissioned series of landscape paintings. This painting depicts the role our climate crisis plays in migration. In a vicious cycle, global northern countries, whose high emissions drive the climate crisis, rebuke global-southern refugees fleeing the resulting devastation. For example, in some areas of Central America, climate change induced drought destroys the agricultural livelihoods of people who are then forced to relocate to overcrowded cities. This places a strain on resources and fosters violence, compelling some to flee to the U.S. in desperation. But at the U.S. border, migrants find not a welcome but a wall. The barricade is a physical manifestation of a nation's cognitive dissonance—a refusal to acknowledge and atone for the harms that U.S. policies and practices have imposed on those who are turned away. Our lack of effective climate solutions perpetuates inequalities and erodes social and political welfare, carving its deepest wounds into marginalized communities, countries, and people.



No Harvesters
acrylic painting
incorporating hand
painted original paper
on canvas, 36"x36"

STORMS & FLOODING

Overflow, *Ebb & Flood* and *A River Runs Through It (Blazing)* represent the role climate change plays in intensifying storms and flooding. Warmer air can hold more evaporated water. So, as our climate heats up, clouds hold more moisture and release more water in a single storm. A recent study in the journal *Water Resources Research* shows that highly populated cities across the United States could experience extreme precipitation events that are up to 20% more intense and twice as frequent in the years to come.



Overflow
acrylic painting incorporating hand painted
original paper on canvas, 30"x48"



Ebb & Flood
acrylic painting incorporating hand painted
original paper on canvas, 30"x40"

A River Runs Through It is a present day version of the phenomenon we are experiencing. An imaginary city filled with delightful sights is inundated by a lavender sea. Are we simply frogs in a pot of boiling water oblivious to our impending demise?



A River Runs Through It
acrylic painting incorporating hand painted and
monoprinted original paper on canvas, 15"x30"

FUTURE CONSEQUENCES

What's Left Behind (Blazing) represents the aftermath of climate change if we fail to act.



What's Left Behind

found object sculptural installation incorporating worn painted discarded bedding, detritus, branches, burnt wood, hand painted collage scraps, retro high chair, weathered and burnt radio flyer tricycle, and repurposed landfill bound objects including miscellaneous toys, Styrofoam and objects of industry, 72"x105"x70"

Pioneer 2050: Epilogue (WALSH/BLAZING)—In the early 1970s, the Pioneer 10 and 11 space probes carried graphic plaques with the hope of encountering extraterrestrials outside our solar system and introducing them to humankind. In *Pioneer 2050: Epilogue*, WALSH/BLAZING imagine the update carried by a final probe that might be tasked with concluding our story if we fail to take action to adequately stem our climate crisis. Can you decipher the message?

For this work, WALSH/BLAZING employed an iterative process, by which each artist took a turn painting the canvas in their own studio before passing it to the other to continue. The canvas was exchanged between the artists a total of six times over the course of several weeks, during which they never discussed how it was developing, or what direction it should take.



Pioneer 2050: Epilogue
acrylic, charcoal, colored pencil,
and hand painted original paper on canvas, 30"x40"

VISITOR CONTRIBUTION

World Wishes (Blazing)—Let's not tar over the future. As the symptoms of climate change mount, what does the future hold? What do we wish for children as they face this future? This participatory assemblage encourages visitors to share their written *World Wishes* for future generations by writing them on provided paper and slipping them into a slot at the top of a children's globe adjacent to this piece. These wishes will inspire a future work of art.



World Wishes
participatory assemblage, acrylic, once
cherished childhood objects, graffitied
wishes on EPS insulation foam board,
globe 37"x60"



Exhibition View

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VISITOR ACTION

Solution Station (WALSH/BLAZING)—*The Solution Station* is an unassuming desk where visitors can fill out a letter supporting climate change measures to their United States Senators that the artists will mail to them [78 letters were completed and mailed]. The most effective measure individuals can take to help solve our climate crisis is to support collective policies aimed at addressing climate change. Your votes, your letters to policy makers, your conversations with others about issues will make a significant difference. Consider your areas of interest and how you might use them to impact others. Our work on this exhibition is an example of such an approach. The following are some additional examples from Sara Peach, climate advice columnist and senior editor of Yale Climate Connections:

"Your work might look like organizing a solar installation at your church, talking with your neighbors about a disaster safety plan, providing legal support for people practicing civil disobedience, writing letters to the editor, lobbying your member of Congress, speaking at a utility board meeting, participating in a digital protest, or ... holding a sign at an in-person rally. Or something else that your community needs and you are able to provide. Whatever it is, it will be more tangible and easier to grab onto than an overwhelming problem such as "fundamentally alter U.S. politics." But it will also feel more meaningful than composting alone."



Solution Station
retro desk, chair,
pens, letters

OWNERSHIP OF ACTION

I Acted (Hull and WALSH/BLAZING)—Once visitors have completed their letters, they may take an *I ACTED* sticker to acknowledge their ownership of having expressed their support of impactful measures to help solve the climate crisis. As they go about their day wearing the sticker, they may end up engaging with others about the exhibit and the letter they wrote, helping to reinforce their commitment and ownership of having attended and acted. This will spread the impact of the exhibit as visitors share their experience with others.



I Acted
Digital graphics by Molly Hull, still
image of WALSH/BLAZING installation,
2" round sticker



Reference: still image of
WALSH/BLAZING installation

PARTING MESSAGE OF HOPE

Hope Springs Eternal (Blazing)—This is a hopeful painting that our battle against climate change can be won. It is not too late to prevent the dire predictions of climate scientists. Although our individual choices to live sustainably through efforts like taking public transportation or consuming less make a small contribution to this massive issue, it will take collective action to help us avoid the worst-case scenarios. Our response to the global pandemic has shown us that humanity is capable of such collective action well beyond what we could have imagined. Many around the globe have taken action by listening to science-based recommendations and have supported measures to restructure major logistics in the work world, educational systems and countless other vital activities. The science of climate change has warned us that we need to act, and now we are seeing the undeniable symptoms.

Fortunately, at this turning point technological, economic and political forces are shifting in favor of sustainability. Solar power, wind power and other sustainable resources are becoming cost effective sources of energy, and the corporate world is responding. Cities like Los Angeles are investing in efficient public transit to cut carbon emissions and build a more equitable infrastructure. Lawmakers around the world are aligning to fight for policies to reduce resource use in the global north and work toward a sustainable recovery. Even major U.S. auto manufacturers are coming on board with commitments to affordable electric vehicles and nationwide charging networks.

To move the needle toward progress, everyone must help to support these shifts toward sustainability by advocating for initiatives to shore up and develop equitable green technologies. The good news is that we already have the means to create a clean economy that will add millions of jobs and help stabilize our world. We simply need to act by marshaling our unique skills and connections in our own communities to magnify the impact of our actions. For me, this means focusing my visual arts efforts on exhibits like *Turning Point* that I hope will inspire others to act as we collectively work to move our climate away from the tipping point.



Hope Springs Eternal
acrylic painting incorporating hand painted and
monoprinted original paper on canvas, 15" x 30"



Blazing
Building a Better World (diptych), acrylic
painting incorporating hand painted
original paper on canvas, 30"x48"

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank Frankie G. Weems Gallery Director Molly Hull for the many ways she so generously supported our vision for *Jenny Blazing and Carin Walsh: Turning Point*. Molly elevated the project at every phase of the exhibition's design: from her skillful installation and design of publicity materials—as well as the “I acted” sticker, to her mentoring of intern contributions and her work to assure site accessibility. We are grateful that Molly shares our passion for addressing the climate crisis, and we celebrate her tireless outreach to campus communities, North Carolina environmental groups, and the regional press to broaden the impact of this project.

A big thank you to graphic design interns Werdah Al-Dajih and Bridget Gable for applying their expertise to the design of this catalogue. Thank you also to photographer Candice Lillard who artfully captured images of the works for use on social media and in the catalogue. We also appreciate the contributions of interns Evan Apple and Kristin Obman. It takes a village to bring together an exhibition like ours, and we appreciate the work of the countless Meredith staff and community members who contributed to its success.

This endeavor would have been impossible without the support of our family members Kevin Walsh and Mike, Lauren, and Robin Blazing. Crucial guidance was also provided by our friends and fellow artists Luna Lee Ray, Anne Gregory, and Yuko Nogami Taylor. In addition, we appreciate the wisdom and insights of the 5 Points Gallery artists.

Finally, we thank our sponsor, Ryan Pound of Rad Graphics, who also helped make this exhibition possible. He went above and beyond to carefully consult with us in designing and installing the exceptional wall text. We thank you for your support.

MEREDITH COLLEGE | ART GALLERIES

RAD
GRAPHICS