

# RACHEL MELIS

## FRUITFUL AND FRETFUL: FORTY WEEKS IN WATERCOLOR



AUG. 25 - SEPT. 26

GORECKI GALLERY, BENEDICTA ARTS CENTER, CSB

**Virtual Artist Talk/Q&A:** September 10, 7 p.m.

Rachel Melis is an Associate Professor of Art at the College of Saint Benedict & Saint John's University with an MFA from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Several years ago, as a pregnant printmaker, Melis found herself beginning a series of paintings inspired by the seed pods (common fruits and vegetables) used as metaphors for human embryos. Eagerly and anxiously wanting ways to visualize the changes happening inside her, Melis used gouache watercolors and metallic inks to emphasize this tension between surface and interior. Just as pregnancy, though treated as public and definite, is personal and unpredictable, each piece shimmers with illusory transparency. The changing scale of frames circling the gallery makes the metaphor especially literal--highlighting the difficulty of trying to see the invisible and feel the future.

### CONNECT

TOPICS AND THEMES THIS EXHIBITION ENGAGES WITH:

- Biological Illustration
- Poetry
- Sociology
- Health Studies
- Environmental Studies
- Human Anatomy and Physiology

### ARTIST WEBSITE

[Rachel Melis](#)

### QUESTIONS

The use of fruits and vegetables as the subject matter creates an element of humor in this exhibit as a metaphor for life, growth, and our connection to nature as humans.

The process of growth starts with planting a seed and relying on nature and nurture to control the process.

- Why do we use metaphors for visualization?
- Is there an element of control you gain through this type of visualization?
- How do you implement "controls" through visualization or metaphors in your life? In your studies? What is the impact of having control?
- What is successful growth?

This work was created with dry brush watercolors, requiring close attention to detail and skillful hand-eye coordination.

- What is the significance of seeing this level of detail in this subject matter?
- How does this creative process relate back to the themes of the exhibition?

Melis is a book artist, among many other things, using books to carry stories forward.

- How does book arts relate to pregnancy?
- What do you carry forward when you create life?
- How does this relate to planting a seed?
- What do we carry forward through our environment?

We all have some context to birth and life.

- Do you know the personal history of your birth story?
- What emotions or challenges arise when discussing this?
- What do you understand about the positive and negative emotions someone may experience in this exhibition?