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Artist Interview: Frances Bagley

By [Laura Seewoester](#)



Dallas artist Frances Bagley has a boastful Resume, including a laundry list of exhibitions, Bagley's work is included in several museum and corporate collections and she is the only American to [win an award in Tokyo's Kajima Sculpture Exhibition](#). We asked Bagley a few questions about her work and her [upcoming show](#) at [Marty Walker Gallery](#). The show opened Saturday and runs through April 25.

Pegasus News: Were you an artist as an adolescent or did you discover your talent in college?

Frances Bagley: I was the class artist, so to speak since grade school. However, I didn't decide that I wanted to really be an artist until college. I went to the University of Tennessee on a journalism scholarship but once I took one college art course I was hooked.

PN: Were you immediately drawn to sculpture or did sculpture "find you," so to speak, during your studies?

FB: My first degree is in painting, but somewhere along the line I realized that as I was painting, I was imagining how to build what I was painting. I came to realize that my perceptions existed in physical space rather than inside the picture plane.

Frances Bagley's *Absence/Presence* won an award in the 10th Kajima Sculpture Exhibition held in Tokyo.

PN: Are there any artists who have particularly influenced or had an impact on your work?

FB: There are lots and lots of artists who have inspired and influenced me. [Louise Bourgeois](#) and [Francis Bacon](#) are two of my favorites.

PN: What was the initial inspiration behind your draped figures?

FB: These works incorporate my interests in form and fabric. I have always been fascinated by the image of a room full of furniture covered with dust cloths for the off season. This work extends that memory to the use of animal and human forms instead of furniture. In draping these forms you know what is under the cloth, but its identity is obscured. The draped fabric abstracts and alters the form making the obvious become mysterious, humorous or frightening.



Image provided by Marty Walker Gallery

Frances Bagley *Happy Daze*, 2008-2009,
mixed media, 97 x 105 x 55 inches

FB: There is also an interesting challenge in working specifically with cloth because fabric conveys such social attitude. We are all familiar with cloth. We wear it, we live with it, we sleep on it and we are never without it. It reflects our society and our prejudices. A piece of cloth can trigger a wide range of responses because of the subjectivity built into the color, texture, weight and feel of the fabric. The same cloth can seem sleazy to one person while it can seem elegant to another.

PN: What prompted you to start working with and incorporating video into your work?

FB: With the video work, I continue to address aspects of the human condition but have taken a turn toward the surreal by incorporating realistic video imagery with sculpture and installation. I am asking questions of both the subject and the viewer concerning issues of reality, identity and privacy.

PN: What are some of the challenges you have found in working with video as opposed to a more tactile medium?

FB: What interests me about video is how it has life. I am interested in it as an element and not as an end in itself.

PN: Tell me a little bit about your show at Marty Walker Gallery. What are you trying to say to your viewers?

FB: I am talking about Mixed Messages.... conflicting information....there is photography in the show but no video.

PN: Your husband is also an artist. While you work in different media, have you ever collaborated?

FB: Yes we have collaborated a lot. The most note worthy collaboration was designing the sets and costumes for the Dallas Opera's opening production for their 50th Anniversary in 2006.

PN: You have worked with human hair before. Tell me a little bit about his process. Where do you get the hair and do you die it or use different colors of hair? What kind of response have you received from using hair as a medium?

FB: I have always been interested in hair. As a young girl I studied how the hairdresser cut my hair and thought about how all those strands of hair went together to form a shape on someone's head. Additionally, I was captivated by my great grandmother's Victorian era jewelry, which was intricately made from strands of hair taken from her brush each day.

FB: Hair is an amazing material for consideration. Grown on the human body, it rivals bone in its durability. It is actually a very permanent material that does not degrade. The hair is usually still intact when mummies are discovered and bodies are exhumed. Hair is a common denominator amongst human beings in that we all have some amount of hair no matter what race or culture we represent. Held in regard, hair serves as a status symbol or fashion statement in most societies.