



Examples of Brent Adrian's medical drawings: *Sun Bear Lateral Forearm*, *Red Panda Lateral Body* and *Common Hippo Lateral Thigh*.

Artist Statement

For the last five years, my work has involved a focused, up-close examination of flesh. My subject matter ranges from creatures that can be found at a supermarket, such as grouper or roasted duck, to less palatable animals, like a vulture or bear. The reason I choose particular subjects has more to do with their visual richness and sensual qualities than with their particular identity, and I am most interested in the seductive character and inherent commonality of their flesh.

As a starting point, it is vital that I have the sensory experience of physically handling the subjects before I paint them, as this contact informs the way I approach the paintings. By using close-cropped compositions, I seek to retain a sense of immediacy and mystery regarding the identity of the subject. The lighting and space also remain ambiguous to enhance the sensuous qualities of the flesh. I develop the body of the paint and the richness of the surface to emphasize the tactile qualities of the subject and the material of its representation. Through the process of developing groups of paintings simultaneously, the final pieces are composed organically of multiple panels in order to imply a sense of movement, the passing of time, or a transformation.

My most recent paintings explore containers of flesh as metaphors for bodies. The series is titled *Sarge*, a term referring to soft tissue that is removed during dissections. This material is collected in plastic bags, frozen and eventually incinerated, and the paintings capture specific fleeting moments along the way. The appearance of the bags changes as the dissection progresses- first they are filled with skin, fur, and fat, and later with muscle, tendon, and ligament. The paintings reference close-up photographs of the bags, exploring the relationship between interior and exterior and blurring the boundaries between microcosm and macrocosm. Droplets of water and the plastic itself reflect light from the outside, and bubbles, beautiful reminders of transience, float within.

My interest in this subject is rooted in the realization that all living things are made of transitory material, bound in the same inevitable cycle. This developed as a result of an acute awareness of my own mortality and my struggles with an upbringing that valued spirituality at the expense of corporal experience. I do not believe in a necessary opposition between flesh and spirit, but rather that flesh itself can transcend the merely physical through beauty. With this consistently in mind, I create my work in homage to beautiful corporeality.



Artist with a common hippo hindlimb in his studio.

About the Artist

Brent Adrian received his BFA from The University of Central Florida in 2000, and his MFA from Arizona State University in 2006. He currently teaches drawing at Arizona State University and exhibits his paintings throughout the US. He recently received a Second Place Award in the 72nd National Midyear Exhibition at the Butler Institute of American Art, Second Place Award in Expressions West 2008 at the Coos Art Museum, and his work will appear in the Winter 2009 issue of *Studio Visit* magazine. Adrian is also a medical illustrator for The University of Arizona College of Medicine- Phoenix in partnership with ASU, where he studies the functional anatomy of mammals. He is a co-author of publications on the anatomy of the red panda, common hippo, and sun bear.