

Mary Daniel Hobson's barn-red studio is as much a part of her artistic process as it is a place to work.

Driving the winding road into Muir Beach is equal parts scenic and harrowing — and not just a little like time travel. The town center, only 30 minutes from San Francisco, is identified by a colorful row of mailboxes on one side and an old English Inn on the other. Horse trailers dot the landscape; cypress trees bend as though supporting the thick fog. Just off this main drag and down an unpaved road, photographer/artist Mary Daniel Hobson and her contractor husband, Jon Rauh, have transformed a '70s beach party pad into a serene, solar-paneled artist's retreat.

Situated in the center of their acre of flat land — an almost unheard of bounty in these parts — is Hobson's studio. Painted barn red to match

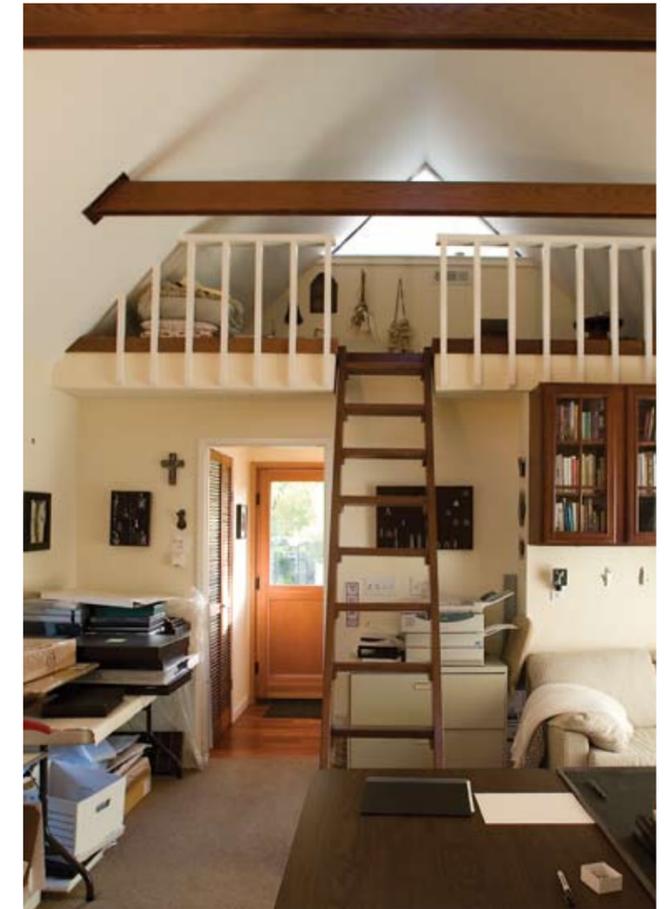


LISA MULLERAUH



PHOTOS: MARY DANIEL HOBSON

Clockwise from upper left: "It really is my creative think tank ...it is a retreat for me - a mental refuge of sorts," says Mary Daniel Hobson in her studio. | The artist's materials are strewn throughout the studio. | While creating an efficient workspace, Hobson remained attuned to her process — the attic space was reconfigured to house a meditation area. | Situated in the center of an acre of flat land — only moments from the beach — is Hobson's studio. Painted "barn-red" to match her home, the studio maintains its original structure — a simple wooden building belying the streamlined workspace within.



her home, the workspace still maintains its original structure: a simple wooden building that belies the streamlined workspace within.

During the 2002 renovation, Hobson and Rauh replaced huge sections of the floor ruined by dry rot; installed a new bathroom; exterior doors; carpet; a faux wood-burning stove and flagstone hearth; and built a portico at the front entrance. The attic space was reconfigured to house a meditation area. Hobson carefully selected furniture that would enable her to most efficiently utilize the space: a large center work table, a flat file on wheels, bookshelves, an ergo-

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nomic computer desk, bulletin boards, Elpha shelving and a couch for reflection and repose.

Hobson's studio is as much a part of her artistic process as it is a place to work. Says Hobson, "The studio is like the compost pile for my creative process, meaning that it houses all the nutrients I need to create my work — including tools as well as the wide variety of objects I have collected over time for using in collage, sculpture or still life. It is really my creative think tank ... it is a retreat for me, a mental refuge of sorts. I love being in this space."

Born in San Francisco, Hobson began taking photographs as a teenager. She studied art history at Vassar, where she became fascinated by the work of Lee Miller as a woman who was "influential on both sides of the camera." Hobson returned west for post-grad work, earning a master's degree in photography from the University of New Mexico. For her master's thesis, she traveled to Paris to immerse herself in the work of Picasso muse and surrealist photographer Dora Maar. It was during this time that Hobson's work significantly changed. "I was no longer satisfied with plain black and white photography; I wanted to express the life of emotions ... to somehow describe what was living beneath the surface."

Classes in 19th-century film processes led her to discover Kodalith, a very high contrast film that renders subjects in a pure black and pure white film positive, leaving them virtually transparent. Hobson combined her Kodalith images of the human form with found objects such as insects' wings, handwritten letters and/or pieces of music to create mixed media collages of emotionally layered complexity. Thus Hobson's deeply evocative series, *Mapping the Body*, was born. Modernbook Gallery founder Mark Pinsukanjana observes, "What first drew us to [Hobson's] work was the layering and multimedia aspect of her pieces ... [they] leave an impression of nostalgia and longing."

Hobson's current series, *Sanctuary* and *Evocations*, have brought her for the first time into the world of digital photography, the latter incorporating her deft use of assemblage into a flat print, shot on the deck of her Muir Beach studio during the morning fog.

Leissa Jackmauh is a native Clevelander, which has given her a gimlet-eyed appreciation for just about everywhere else. She lives with her husband and children in Marin County, California. ■