Lyons painted before ‘memory’

By Stephanie Mostaccio

Her journey as a painter was the focus of noted artist Mari Lyons’ speech Wednesday night.

Mari Lyons shared her paintings and her artistic experiences with the community in her speech titled “On my Work and Sources.”

“Lyons has taken many years to get this far,” Lyons said. “I have been painting before memory. I cannot remember a time that I did not have a pencil or crayon in my hand.”

At the age of 14, Lyons studied at Mills College with Max Beckmann, an artist who she said greatly influenced her. She often watched him work in his campus studio.

“I perched myself on a window sill, unseen, and watched, riveted,” she said. “He used all of himself in every stroke and I tried to do the same.”

Edgar Degas, Henri Matisse and Paul Cezanne also had an impact on her paintings.

“Their work lives in me. I can’t think about the figure,” she said.

Lyons finds the world of “things” and “places” irresistible and has created what she calls “painterly expressionist representation.” Her work consists of still lifes, figure drawings, landscapes and cityscapes.

She was inspired to paint cityscapes shortly after moving to New York City.

“It has taken me years to try to do the same.” Lyons said.

Her campus studio.

At the age of 14, Lyons tried to do the same.”

“I was after the energy and the texture of city life, but did not want to do what a photo does,” she said.

Lyons’ work has appeared in several publications such as The New York Times, The New Yorker, the New York Sun, Modern Painters and the New Republic. Her work is also represented in more than 120 private and corporate collections worldwide as well as in the permanent collection of the Museum of the City of New York. Her one-person show of still life paintings was recently featured at the First Street Gallery in New York City as well.

Lyons holds a bachelor’s degree from Bard College and master’s degree from the Cranbrook Academy. She has also studied at Atelier 17, the Grande Chaumière and the Yale-Norfolk Art School.

Audience members enjoyed Lyons’ presentation.

“It’s really good to see a contemporary artist,” sophomore Baris Yakin said. “It’s always good to see an artist working.”

Lyons’ speech marked the culmination of her visit to the University. On Thursday, Nov. 3, she conducted workshops on still life paintings in Fine Arts professor Deborah Rosenthal’s studio classes. Lyons assigned projects to the students and returned to the classes the following week to critique their work.

Rosenthal said she was thrilled with Lyons’ visit.

“It’s very unusual for us to have a guest artist who engages in what the students are working on,” she said. “It’s a marvelous opportunity for the students.”

Lyons was also pleased with the visit.

“I enjoy the students,” she said. “They are wonderful.”

Sophomore

Andrew J. Rider

Scholars

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Administration
Davendra Brijijal
Jessica Efrain
Matthew P. Nissen

School of Education
Jennifer A. Kamm
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Tiffany Day-Neutill
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Alison Reinsch
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The ‘traditional’ tree symbol remains in front of the Moore Library steps through the logo changes currently taking place.