

**Reflections by Warren Obluck of the
Center for Spiritual Care on Deb's 2015 exhibit "Of Two Minds"**

There are many ways to look at the less abstract paintings of Deborah Gooch. On one level they are irrepressibly charming. Her children are a hundred years from Mary Cassatt's, all scraped knees and torn jeans, exploding with the energy of their age. Her grown-ups can be cantankerous, but their eyes are even more likely to twinkle. Her animals seem closely rendered: Her whippets have the character of classical Greek casts. And don't even think about messing with her crows.

At this level - and it is perfectly reasonable to enjoy these works exclusively at this level- they are the epitome of what is often called figurative painting. But that's not what Gooch calls them, She quite carefully refers to them as "figural". It's more than a semantic difference.

The ideas for her subjects may be sparked by old photographs (which she loves) or by deeply rooted memories (which she nurtures). But as she paints, the images and the memories morph into something beyond themselves. She is no longer producing disarming representations of living creatures. She is producing emblems. Her figures come to embody abstract concepts of moments in time, moments in nature, and most intensely, moments in Gooch's own personal history. In that sense, they can be read as a diary of her odyssey, a journal of the way she has tacked through her life.

And because her creatures are so intensely a part of her psyche, they crop up even in her abstractions. There are times, she says, that "no matter how happy I am with an abstraction, it will not seem complete, not seem grounded, until one of them appears".