

Soledad O'Brien brings reporting experience to Weinberg talk

By RYAN MARSHALL
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Frederick Speaker Series: Soledad O'Brien

- **When:** 7:30 p.m. June 23
- **Where:** Weinberg Center for the Arts, 20 W. Patrick St., Frederick
- **Tickets:** \$40+
- **Info:** 301-600-2828, weinbergcenter.org/shows/soledad-obrien

Soledad O'Brien wasn't so sure about her new co-star.

It was 1996, and O'Brien was the host of MSNBC's "The Site," covering technology and the internet at the dawn of the cyber era.

Part of her job involved interacting with Dev Null, a virtual reality espresso barista played by tech expert Leo Laporte in a motion capture suit, to answer viewer emails.

O'Brien was hardly convinced that the segments were her path to network stardom.

She remembers asking her boss, "If this ruins my career, what is Plan B? Because this is a really bad career move for me, to be interviewing an animated character. And he said, 'No, this is cutting edge, this is amazing.' And I was very much not convinced."

Her career survived the virtual reality barista, and she worked at NBC News and CNN before founding Soledad O'Brien Productions. She hosts the political magazine program Matter of Fact With Soledad O'Brien, as well as produces other journalism products.

Moving out on her own was frightening, she said.

"I think being a new entrepreneur is just across the board stressful," she said during an interview ahead of her June 23 appearance in Frederick.

Part of the adjustment was not having the enormous support staff in place that she had when she covered the shootings at Columbine High School in 1999 for NBC or Hurricane Katrina for CNN in 2005.

"My dream was not, one day I just want to go to a network," she said. "But it was about, wow, there are amazing resources in places that, really, their entire business is around just covering news and spending money to do it."

But she also enjoys being free of the assignment desk that controls life at a network.

"There's no question that not having a giant team behind you makes everything more challenging. But it also gives you a lot of freedom, and gives you a lot of nimbleness to turn on a dime and pick the stories that you want to work on."

She likes doing documentaries because they allow a journalist to avoid having to aim for a general audience, and provide more time to examine a subject than the tight time constraints of a net-

work newscast.

"You really can't convey anything in an 8-second sound bite," she said.

Television news' time crunch and tendency to fall back on just showing both sides of an issue are countered by the ability to use old footage to hold leaders accountable for what they've said in the past.

An old soundbite can sometimes speak volumes.

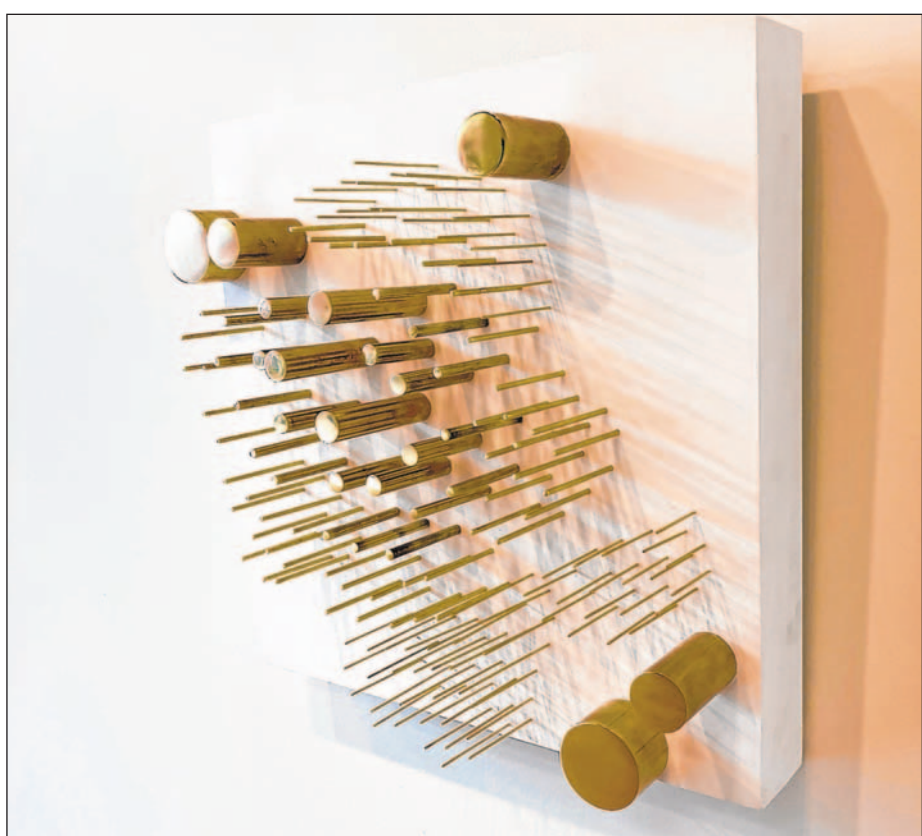
"I think it is a very effective tool in calling out hypocrisy," O'Brien said.

It can also show the real emotion that people are feeling, including in the wake of incidents such as mass shootings.

Speaking in the days after the mass shooting at an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas, left 21 people dead, including 19 children, O'Brien reflected on her experience covering one of the first high-profile school shootings. Did she think then that those types of incidents would become commonplace in America?

"I think by the end of covering Columbine, definitely," she said, comparing it to the paradigm shift in ideas about terrorism after 9/11. "It seemed like a window or a door was opened, that someone suddenly discovered that this was a way to terrorize people that I think hadn't really been thought of before."

Follow Ryan Marshall on Twitter: @RMarshallFNP



Courtesy photos

Gregg Silvis exhibits work at the Delaplaine Arts Center

BY LAUREN LARocca
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With decades of work as an academic librarian, it's no wonder that Gregg Silvis launched his visual art career by making art books and pieces constructed of pages of discarded books.

Though let's steer clear of calling this his niche.

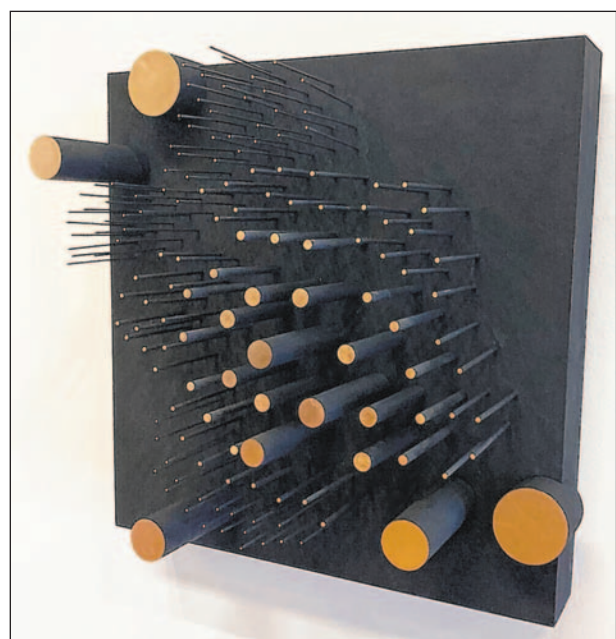
The artist, who is based in Newark, Delaware, and currently exhibiting work at the Delaplaine Arts Center, cringes at labels, and any box he's inadvertently put into, he promptly finds a way out of.

Since his beginning dabbles in visual art circa 2014, he's gone on to work in stained glass, gold leaf, wooden pegs and brass rods, knitting, mobiles, sculptural pieces, the list goes on.

His current exhibit in Frederick, "Organic Precision," includes sculptural work in a variety of media. The show runs through June 26, with viewing hours from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thursday, Friday and Saturday and 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday.

For years, his artistic outlet was channeled through music. He performed as a French horn player and gigged across the country and in Mexico. Fast forward to the mid-2010s, when he was working as a librarian — a very left-brained career, as he put it — and he found himself utterly unfulfilled.

"I was depressed, I was seeing a counselor, I wasn't sleeping ... I would get up and watch TV at 4 in the morning," he recalled by phone from his home in Delaware. "I was watching TV one night and this commercial came on for tequila. It was the one



If You Go

■ **'ORGANIC PRECISION'** solo show by Gregg Silvis

■ **When:** Through June 26

■ **Where:** Delaplaine Arts Center, 40 S. Carroll St., Frederick

■ **Tickets:** Free admission

■ **Info:** 301-698-0656, info@delaplaine.org

was a philodendron," he recalled. "I sketched it out, and it was pretty good, but ... I was there for six hours. I was like, 'Why didn't you tell me what time it was?' The lesson was only supposed to be an hour. She said, 'You were so into it, I didn't want to take you out of it.' I swear to God, it was like being in a trance. I had no idea that that much time had gone by."

His first art exhibition in 2017 felt just as natural.

"Great Expectations: de/reconstructed" was a solo show at a gallery at the University of Delaware Newark, where he was serving as a librarian at the time — but would retire to focus solely on his visual art the following year. An art professor had suggested he exhibit work at the school.

"It felt perfectly natural," he said. "Like, oh yeah: This is what you should be doing."

Learn more about the artist at sylvanart.net.

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Infinite Growth



May-September 2022

Infinite Growth brings together the work of regional LGBTQ+ artists to explore and dissect the limitless space for individuals to encounter and experience love, friendship, bliss, heartbreak, loss, and emptiness. Curated by Jillian Abir MacMaster, the exhibition features the work of Asher Burrows, Mentwab Easwaran, Ruby Bassford, Jamie Gerhold, Ashley Hoffman, Marz Jackson, Molly Marie Nuzzo, Brooklyn Rando, Charlotte Richardson-Deppe, and Rebecca Schwartz to consider how growth is cultivated, nurtured, and experienced.

FAC Art Center
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