

**Maryland State Archives**  
**Legacy of Slavery In Maryland**  
**Artist Q&A: The Art Behind “Down the Rabbit Hole”**

*Rachel Frazier is a member of the Maryland Federation of Art and the Annapolis Arts Alliance. Her original paintings have been featured in juried shows at the Maryland Federation of Art's Circle Gallery, the Artists' Gallery of Ellicott City, Gallery 333, the Saville Gallery, and the Maryland Hall.*



**Q: How did you come to work on this project?**

**A:** I jumped at the chance when I learned that the Director of Research, Chris Haley, was hoping an artist could make his vision a reality, but had no budget to hire an artist. I had served as a research archivist trainee under Mr. Haley for the Study of the Legacy of Slavery in Maryland early in my career, so being able to give back to this project meant everything.

At work, my identity is an outreach activist. Outside of work, my identity is an artist. Being able to merge these two parts of my life has made this one of the most meaningful projects I've undertaken.

**Q: What is your background as an artist?**

**A:** I have worked with watercolors as well as pen and ink since childhood, so this project gave me a wonderful opportunity to merge the two. As an artist, most of the pieces I create are watercolors of landscapes, cityscapes, and street scenes inspired by my own travels.



*Watercolor by Rachel Frazier, 2024*

**Q: Were these pieces created especially for Down the Rabbit Hole?**

**A:** Yes! Each piece was created just for this website. The concept of “Down the Rabbit Hole,” with rabbits personifying researchers, was entirely Chris Haley’s brainchild, and he had brilliant ideas for each rabbit’s personality, behavior, and appearance. And, if you look closely, you will

find the letters “MSA” (Maryland State Archives) and “LOSIM” (Study of the Legacy of Slavery in Maryland) subtly incorporated throughout each piece of artwork.

**Q: Which artists inspire you the most?**

**A:** I always gravitate to unique visual storytellers, including N.C. Wyeth, Jonathan Green, and Eyvind Earle. And, while I’ve worked to develop my own style, I have always taken inspiration from historic engravings, especially the style of the 16th-century genius Albrecht Dürer, who could brilliantly (sometimes terrifyingly) communicate light, shadow, and depth with great intricacy. I still create pen and ink sketches inspired by his style.

**Q: Was Dürer the main inspiration for the style for these pieces?**

For the “Down the Rabbit Hole” series, I went with a softer and more subtle style. Although studying Dürer’s style helped inform my techniques and discipline as an artist, I took inspiration from vintage 19th-century lithographs to complement the historic images and prints

already on the project’s website. In fact, one of my main inspirations for this project is a little image of a French lithograph I found online depicting wild and domesticated rabbits. The shading for the fur and the trees in the background are beautiful, and helped me brainstorm the style for the artwork. The image online had no citation, which drives me crazy as an archivist, so I still am determined to discover the artist’s name someday.



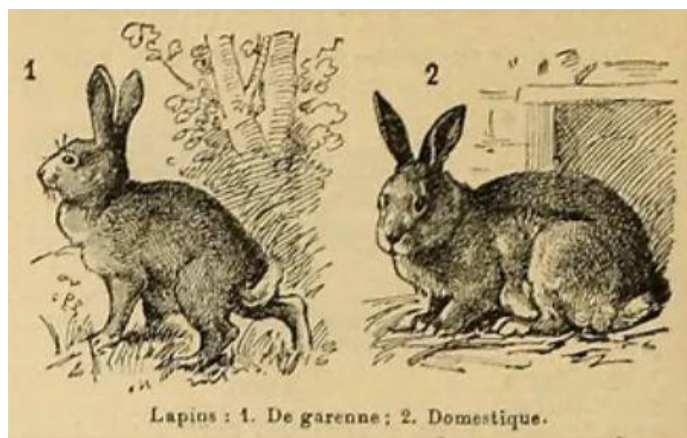
*Pen and ink drawing by Rachel Frazier, 2024*



*Engraving by Albrecht Dürer, 1508*



Watercolor and ink painting by Rachel Frazier



19th-century French lithograph by unknown artist.

### How did you create this artwork?

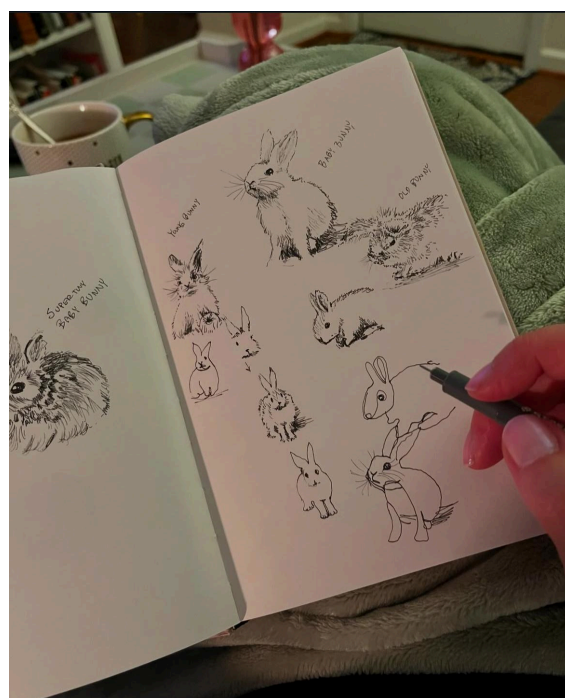
I used a fine pen as a subtle nod to historic engravings, and mixed custom shades of watercolors to match the subtle colors of 19th-century maps and illustrations. These muted reds, greens, golds, and blues also are found on the *Flee!* exhibition currently on display in the Maryland State Archives' Search Room.

Based on his vision, I designed individual rabbits that not only humorously personified the idea of “down the rabbit hole,” but that also fondly represented our tireless archivists and researchers of all ages. For references, I wanted to avoid accidentally stealing from other artists and photographers, so most of my references were stills I took from wildlife videos and from live streams of rabbit sanctuaries. The rabbits are inspired by a wide variety of species, ranging from the Eastern Cottontails native to Maryland to Bunyoro rabbits and European rabbits. I learned so much about rabbits throughout this project.

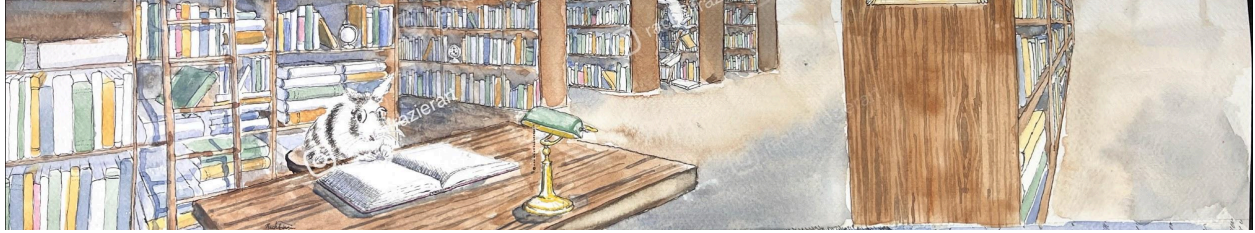
### Q: What are some of the favorite things you learned?

A: Two things. First, baby rabbits have tiny little ears. Second, you cannot stay in a bad mood while drawing baby rabbits' tiny little ears.

### Q: Is the research room you depict based on a real place?







A: It is a unique, slightly fanciful space that is not specific to a single place, but instead pays homage to our Search Room in Annapolis, the Baltimore City Archives, our off-site warehouse, and any place where history and knowledge are made accessible.

**Q: The forests have an almost magical quality. Are these created from your imagination as well?**



Only partially. The panel portraying a Maryland forest in the daytime is inspired by the trees, ferns, and foliage of Maryland's many verdant forests. The little tree where the rabbit is nestled pays homage to the iconic Wye Oak's beautifully gnarled roots. In contrast, the nighttime forest



scene is more allegorical. So much of the mission of the Study of the Legacy of Slavery in Maryland is about reclaiming and honoring untold, forgotten, or silenced stories through archival records. The dark forest represents the unknown and untold, while the moonlight shines light onto the open archival record that is, itself, shining the light of knowledge in the darkness.