

Works on Paper

Sarah McCoubrey

May 10 - August 10, 2014



THE **EDGE** OF ART

Escape from Eden

Industrial waste beds are not typically regarded as destinations for artists seeking inspiration from the natural landscape. They are places devastated by human disregard for the environment and abandoned when they no longer serve industrial needs. What remains is a landscape irreversibly altered by human detritus littering the surface and toxic pollution seeping beneath it. Often, the harm to the environment is not readily apparent because nature finds a way to adapt, repair and continue to thrive even among severely polluted waste beds. The landscape appears untouched, yet the damage has been done with no trace of those responsible left behind. It is precisely this landscape that compels Sarah McCoubrey to venture into the field like a time-traveling explorer in search of a "new" frontier where technology and nature coexist in unexpected ways.

McCoubrey's rich artistic career which began more than three decades ago, continues expanding into new media and new territories in both the natural and unnatural world. An accomplished painter well-versed in the techniques of the Dutch masters as well as the grand landscape tradition of the Hudson River School painters, McCoubrey has spent years painting en plein air mastering her own signature style. By applying thin layers of glazes, McCoubrey builds up the surface of her paintings that render realistic scenes with intense luminosity. In this exhibition, McCoubrey takes layering a step further with works on paper composed of digital images, mixed media and ink drawings that maintain a sense of realism in a fantastical world, part real and part the artist's imagination.

McCoubrey's concern for the environment has led her to hydro-fracking sites across the Northeast and back home to the industrial waste beds of Onondaga Lake in Syracuse, New York where she currently lives. A place she calls Eden, the waste beds are the dumping grounds for the polluted sludge removed from Onondaga Lake. Here, a man-made experimental garden grows, replenishing and repairing the wounded landscape, and cloned willow trees absorb toxic water that pools beneath the surface. McCoubrey tells the story of this extraordinary landscape through sculpture and mixed media because she felt "paint couldn't get it" (Conversation with the artist, 3/28/14).

She made pen and ink botanical drawings of more than forty of the varieties of plants thriving here, and "planted" her own variety of sculptures in the field, composed of organic materials, metal scraps, water tanks and other discarded industrial debris at the site. She made digital prints of the sculptures in the landscape then later added meticulously constructed imaginary elements by hand.

The hybrid scenes recall the fantastical world of Hieronymus Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights* (1490-1510), only with a contemporary twist. People made from the earth emerge from the ground and must adapt to their strange surroundings. The earth people are like a primitive society marching toward civilization as they discover uses for the discarded water tanks and other industrial waste.

After viewing her Eden from an airplane, McCoubrey was struck with the realization that the sky offered an escape for the organic life struggling for survival below. In this series of works on paper McCoubrey depicts solitary mounds of earth taking off into the blue sky, roots that once secured them to the earth loosely dangling in the wind. Colossal potatoes, reminiscent of Bosch's oversized fruits, grow delicate wings, giving the power of flight to vegetables otherwise destined for burial in the contaminated earth. Slowly, organic matter escapes what McCoubrey calls a "landscape on life-support," this place called Eden in the midst of a waste bed.

Indeed, McCoubrey's use of technology in her mixed media work underscores the complex relationship it shares with nature on many levels. Her works forces viewers to accept that technology is both necessary and dangerous. On the one hand, technology is responsible for the damage to the environment, and on the other, it holds the key to regeneration found in the experimental gardens in Eden. Like Hieronymus Bosch, McCoubrey warns of the perils brought to earth by human greed and temptation, yet she imagines technological inventions that will permit flight to a better place and escape from the doomed fate of Bosch's imagined garden.

-Debora Ryan

Education

University of Pennsylvania, M.F.A., Painting, 1981
University of Pennsylvania, B.F.A., Painting, 1979
University of Pennsylvania, B.A., English, 1979
Yale Norfolk Program, Painting, 1977

Employment

Professor, College of Visual and Performing Arts, Syracuse University
1991-present (Full Professor since 2010)

Selected Awards and Grants

New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship in Painting, 2010
American Antiquarian Society Visual Art Research Fellowship, 2007
The Bollingen Foundation Residency in Ireland Fellowship, 2006
New York State Council on the Arts Sites Re-Seen Pilot Grant in Collaboration with The Maillida Joslyn Gage Foundation, 2005
New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship in Painting, 2004
New York Foundation for the Arts, Special Opportunity Stipend, 2004
The Bollingen Foundation Residency in Ireland Fellowship, 2004
The Saltonstall Foundation Grant Award, 2002
The Saltonstall Foundation Grant Award, 1997
The Milton Avery Foundation Fellowship to the Millay Colony, 1996
Honorable Mention, Vietnam Women's Memorial Competition, 1991
MacDowell Colony Fellowship, 1990
Maryland State Arts Council Individual Artist Award, 1990
National Endowment for the Arts Individual Artist Grant Award, 1989
Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation Grant Award, 1981

Solo Exhibitions

2014 *Works on Paper*, Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, NY
2013 *Fate and Transport*, Clifford Gallery, Colgate University, Hamilton, NY
2012 *Fate and Transport*, Locks Gallery, Philadelphia, PA
2010 *Earthbound*, Bonister Gallery, Rhode Island College, Providence, RI
2009 *Sarah McCauley*, Luther W. Brady Art Gallery, George Washington University, Washington, D.C.
2008 *Mitigation*, Locks Gallery, Philadelphia, PA
2005 *Signs of Life*, Locks Gallery, Philadelphia, PA
A Painting Lesson: Hannah Morser: Landscape Painter, Maillida Joslyn Gage House, Fayetteville, NY
2003 *Hannah Morser: Landscape Painter*, CVPA Dean's Gallery, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY
2002 *Signs Taken For Wonders*, Locks Gallery, Philadelphia, PA
Hannah Morser: Landscape Painter, Earlville Opera House, Earlville, NY
1999 *Recent Paintings*, Locks Gallery, Philadelphia, PA

1998 *Ideas for Landscaping*, Stone Quarry Art Park, Cazenovia, NY
1997 Tyler Art Gallery, SUNY Oswego, Oswego, NY
1996 Morris Gallery, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA
Recent Paintings, Robert Brown Gallery, Washington, D.C.
1993 *Recent Paintings*, Robert Brown Gallery, Washington, D.C.
1990 *Recent Paintings*, Robert Brown Gallery, Washington, D.C.
Recent Paintings, Compton Gallery, Haverford, PA
1989 Leslie Cecil Gallery, New York, NY
1985 The More Gallery, Philadelphia, PA

Selected Group Exhibitions from past 10 years

2013 *It's the End of the World As We Know It (And I Feel Fine)*, Ramapo College, Ramapo, NY
2012 *The Female Gaze: Women Artists Making Their World*, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA
Beyond Horizon II, Focartspace, New York, NY
2011 *Beyond Horizon I*, Deutsche Bank, New York, NY, curated by Amy Lipson
Painter Picks Painters, 3 Person Exhibit, Earlville Opera House, Earlville, NY
Beyond the Horizon, Deutsche Bank, New York, NY
Hudson River Contemporary Works On Paper, Boscobel House, Garrison, NY
2010 *Sense of Place*, Gondee Gallery, Fabius, NY
2009 *Decadent Eclipse*, KK Projects/Life as Art Foundation, New Orleans, LA
Images from North Mayo, The Courthouse Gallery, Ballycastle, County Mayo, Ireland
2008 *Global Suburbia*, Abington Art Center, Jenkintown, PA
61st Annual Exhibition of Artists of Central New York, Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute, Utica, NY
The Object and Beyond, Biennial Exhibition, Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, NY
Specificities of Place, Cazenovia College Art Gallery, Cazenovia, NY
2007 *Drawing On Purpose*, Schweinitz Memorial Art Gallery, Auburn, NY
2006 *Saltonstall: The First 10 Years*, Johnson Museum, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY
From the Studio: Three Artists, Gallery at the Ann Felton Multicultural Center, Onondaga Community College, Syracuse, NY
2005 *Drawing Lives*, Lowe Art Gallery, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY
2004 *In the Studio: 30 Years of the Millay Colony for the Arts*, Albany International Airport, Albany, NY



1



2



3

Sarah McCoubrey: Works on Paper

Map of the Wastebed, 2014
Mixed media on digital print
96 x 86 in.

Eden, 2014
Mixed media on digital print
44 x 38.5 in.

Boats on the Water, 2014
Ink and gouache on paper
41.5 x 34 in.

Woman with a Bucket on her Head, 2008
Gouache and ink
10 x 13.5 in., 10.375 x 13.5 in.,
11.5 x 13.5 in., 11.75 x 13.5 in.

Escape Vehicle: Flying, 2012*
Ink, graphite and gouache on digital print
33 x 30 in.

Escape Vehicle: Waxy Potato Takes Off,
2012*
Ink, graphite and gouache on digital print
33 x 30 inches

Escape Vehicle: Potato with Propeller,
2012*
Ink, graphite and gouache on digital print
33 x 30 in.

Escape Vehicle: Delicate Walking Potato,
2012*
Ink, graphite and gouache on digital print
33 x 30 in.

Escape Vehicle: Fat Potato, 2012
Ink, graphite and gouache on digital print
33 x 30 in.

Escape Vehicle: Fat Walking Potato, 2012
Ink, graphite and gouache on digital print
33 x 30 in.

Escape Vehicle: Flying Left, 2012
Ink, graphite and gouache on digital print
33 x 30 in.

Escape Vehicle: Floating, 2012
Ink, graphite and gouache on digital print
33 x 30 in.

Water Buffalo, 2012*
Ink and gouache on paper
14 x 16 in.

Moving the Buffalo, 2012*
Ink and gouache on paper
16 x 21.5 in.

Large Fate and Transport, 2012*
Ink and gouache on paper
48 x 62 in.

Fate and Transport I,
(Potato with Stepladder), 2012*
Ink, watercolor and gouache on paper
30 x 22 in.
On Cover

Fate and Transport III,
(From Garden of Earthly Delights), 2012*
Ink, watercolor and gouache on paper
30 x 22 in.
Inside, 1

Fate and Transport IV, (Net), 2012*
Ink, watercolor and gouache on paper
30 x 22 in.

Fate and Transport V,
(Potato with Trees), 2012*
Ink, watercolor and gouache on paper
30 x 22 in.

Fate and Transport VII, (Wings), 2012*
Ink, watercolor and gouache on paper
30 x 22 in.
Inside, 2

Piece of Earth, 2012
Ink and gouache on paper
17.75 x 14.25 in.
Inside, 3

*Courtesy of Locks Gallery

RELATED PROGRAMS

ARTIST TALK: Sarah McCoubrey, Mary Giehl & Daniel Buckingham

May 29 / 6.30pm
Join McCoubrey, Giehl and
Buckingham for a talk about their new
exhibitions. They will discuss their
inspiration and technique in an
informal setting.

This exhibition is made possible in part by
M&T Bank, The Blanck Family
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Patricia J. Numann, MD, David and
Nancy Ridings, Louise Rosenfield, Jack
and Stephanie Rudnick, Tonia M. and
Robert B. Salisbury, Dr. Paul E. Phillips
and Sharon Sullivan, and
Catherine J. Winger.

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The operation of the Everson Museum of Art
is made possible with funding from the
Dorothy and Marshall M. Reisman
Foundation, the County of Onondaga
administered by the Cultural Resources
Council, the Central New York Community
Foundation, the New York State Council on
the Arts, a state agency, Everson Board of
Trustees and Everson Members' Council.

Images courtesy of the artist.
Design by Sarah Massett.