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Landviews of Commonplaces

The following description of 1840, is not only a very accurate and complete one, but it is also a very interesting one, as it contains a full and complete account of the various events and circumstances which have taken place since the first settlement of the country in 1790. It is a very valuable and interesting work, and one which every person who is interested in the history of the country should possess.



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THE WILKE HOUSE.

Landviews
of
Commonplaces

February 12 – March 20, 2021
Curated by Jeannine Bardo

Todd Bartel
Katrina Bello
Etty Yaniv

Landviews of Commonplaces

An exhibition that redefines the landscape of truisms.

Imagine yourself standing atop a man-made stone mountain, far from the only land view you've ever known, a land view with an endless horizon of sea and ice. But now you find yourself *among mountains and great gulfs and precipices, all made by the work of human hands*.⁰¹ And you are awed and overcome. How do you save yourself from this madness?

*I see things more than my mind can grasp; and the only way to save oneself from madness is to suppose that we have all died suddenly before we knew, and that this is part of another life.*⁰¹

– Arnarulunnguaq

First View
by Jeannine Bardo

Close to a hundred years ago, these words were spoken by native Greenlander, Arnarulunnguaq as she peered down from the lofty pinnacle of a skyscraper in New York City. Arnarulunnguaq was a key member of arctic explorer Knud Rasmussen's Fifth Thule Expedition, which crossed the Northwest Passage. Part of a three-person team, she was the first woman to complete the journey from Greenland to the Pacific in 1924.

Standing at the top of one of these man-made stone mountains, she looked down on a landscape once cut by glaciers, now hacked and parceled by generations of alien settlers who considered the wilderness something to convert and civilize. Her previous worldview was a life of acquiescence to nature, of accepting its all-encompassing power and existing within this power. Imagine finding that all you acquiesce to is a lie. Man is greater than god. Your land view has a new landscape.

Landscape is a common word, understood by most people as meaning the visible features of a countryside or land. The land we see before us. A word so commonly used in the English language, that its definition often goes unchallenged. It is a given, a truism in language. I look at the land and what I am looking at is a landscape. *It is what it is. Some things never change.* But language does change. It is alive, it is fluid and it is steeped in the history of the people who bring it form and keep it alive. It is often the dominant language of the victors, which in turn becomes subverted by the oppressed as a form of resistance. Language, like land, is forever forming and reforming, buckling under seismic forces of change, rising and merging and traveling and transforming.

*Like desire, language disrupts, refuses to be contained within boundaries. It speaks itself against our will, in words and thoughts that intrude, even violate the most private spaces of mind and body.*⁰²
– bell hooks

The artists featured in *Landviews of Commonplaces* bring their artistic worldview into the language of the landscape. They refuse to postulate the tired relationship our modern world has wrought on the land that sustains us and they burrow down to find new language that addresses our emotional, psychological and physical reliance on the natural world.

A Name Means A Lot Just By Itself⁰³

Artist Todd Bartel's critique on language inspired the title for this exhibition. The word *landview* is taken from Bartel's writings on the etymological problematics of the word landscape, first introduced "as a technical term of painters (OED) that evolved into land panorama. However, when Bartel searched its roots he found it to mean open land, cut, scraped, hacked into creation. He proposed the word *landview* "to assist the dialog about land use, natural resources, and the

changing climate." *Landview* negates the violence of possession and control connected to the original word *landscape* and offers us a counter meaning that instead promotes "viewing", "re-looking" and "respecting" land.

Bartel has a profound respect for the medium of collage and equates it metaphorically to all the forces in the Universe. A constant layering of connections that cannot be untangled and is ever-changing, life, death and renewal, matter forming masses, memories built on experiences, actions with consequences . . . a manifest continuum.

The collection of Bartel's works in *Landviews of Commonplaces* are from his *Landscape Vernacular* series in which he continues to use language along with collage as a medium.

In my "Landscape Vernacular" series, I always incorporate a definition of a word related to landscape history, such as "land," "sublime," "deforestation," "glacier," and "iceberg." In this series, I specifically use the puzzle-piece fit method because the series addresses the myriad forces that have come to bear on the ways contemporary cultures treat land and there are a lot of parts to that puzzle.

A Single Event Can Have Infinitely Many Interpretations⁰³

As an artist Etty Yaniv is a force, and as such, the language in this part of the essay may start and stop and undulate and whirl in order to harness the energy her work and her person emanate. Yaniv is known for grand and imposing installations that often dwarf the viewer and create tension. Static objects with so much visual movement and scale, they emulate a series of forces: a vortex, tsunami, twisters, and geological objects of schist and mica, layers of time eternal formed in the eons of the rocks we stand on. They are objects of unconformities, beautifully crafted, yet seemingly impossible to imagine as the work of one individual.

For *Landviews of Commonplaces*, we are treated to a series of lusciously layered paintings made by Yaniv in the wake of a novel force, COVID-19, that is still sweeping through humanity as of this writing. The COVID-19 pandemic lockdown changed Yaniv's trajectory, for a moment, and the work she produced, while diminutive compared to her installations, are mere glimpses into the maelstrom. Moments of time slowed for clarity during a chaotic and thrilling flight. A flight that takes the viewer

through windows and portals and overhead for a bird's eye view of interior and exterior landscapes. Each painting exists as a microcosm of one of her installations and affords us an intimate view into her world.

Absolute Submission Can Be a Form of Freedom⁰³

The Tagalog translation of "to hold in one's hand" is *hawak*. Tagalog is the standardized language of the Philippines, the homeland of artist Katrina Bello, whose drawing and video series *Hawak/Hold* is included in *Landviews of Commonplaces*. The video series is a collection of static images of her daughters' cupped hands holding a moving image of the Pacific Ocean and the accompanying drawing series are graphite renderings of the Pacific Ocean's surface in the shape of the negative space contained within her daughters' cupped hands. This beautiful expression of control and loss of control over life's circumstances convey the emotions of loss felt from the physical distance between Bello and her daughters, a continent and an ocean apart from each other.

Bello's early identity is grounded in the sea and where

she first felt a sense of freedom. The black sands of her childhood home of Davao City, Philippines, touched the water's edge of the massive Pacific Ocean and was her playground. A place shaped by volcanic forces and extreme weather phenomena, forces beyond our control, yet the perfect place for a child to explore and feel free. Bello still carries the sands of the black shore with her, safely tucked away in a vial, now dry and grey without the ocean water to imbue it with a deeper value.

The immediacy of drawing, its visceral, emotive action is what Bello chooses as a means of expression, her appeal, her pathos, influenced by Gilles Deleuz' philosophy and his notion of expressivity in nature "... that nature possesses ways of expressing itself through color, marks, shape and movement just as humans utilize our voices, marks and movements for expressions." There is truth in this, we are nature, we are the ocean, we move as nature. The natural world is our "other".

Bello holds the sands of another time and place to remind her of the colors and values of her freedom, and in her *Hawak/Hold* series, her daughters hold the monumental boundless sea. The Pacific Ocean that surrounds the archipelago of Bello's homeland has no

end, its current name was titled by a foreign visitor to its waters in the days when the globe was carved into territories. These boundaries are constructs, map lines that we use to compartmentalize and control, but in reality, our worldview is connected by the Global Ocean, one body of water connecting the shores of all the land we can view and the more we try to convert and civilize this wilderness, the closer we come to full acquiescence, willingly or unwillingly.

01. Raffles, Hugh. *The Book of Unconformities: Speculations on Lost Time*. New York, Pantheon Books. 2020.

02. hooks, bell. "Hooks on the Language of Power." *Works and Days*. <https://newlearningonline.com/literacies/chapter-7/hooks-on-the-language-of-power>. Accessed 2 January 2021.

03. Holzer, Jenny. *Truisms*. 1978-87. MOMA, New York.

Second View

by Michael Bardo

Imagine yourself standing atop a ridge, alone on a precipice, far from any trail, and looking out upon a lush, radiant valley. The sun climbs higher and higher in the sky, the world around you shines brightly, vibrant and alive. You breathe crisp, vital air. You are a singular being surrounded on every side by an uncontrollable beauty. And you are awed by this.

Yet, as the sun reaches its zenith, your thoughts shift. The shadows of the treeline stretch themselves out and swallow you in obscurity. You are no longer singular but alone, surrounded by a land that is indifferent to you. You fear it and the urge to control it begins to burn from somewhere deep within.

From this fear, the parasitic relationship humankind has imposed for centuries upon geography emerges. We seek to control what we fear. Yet there is something deeply human about this codependent connection between fear and control. The reaction is innate and exists to some extent in all of us. Psychologically speaking, it is widely agreed that the more fearful a person is, the more likely that person will feel the compulsive desire to control his or her surroundings. ⁰¹ One of the most popular responses to dealing with

anxiety attacks is the grounding technique, which suggests that the best way to relieve the anxiety one might be feeling is to focus on specific items or sensations from one's surrounding environment. What better way to ease fear or panic than to break down one's environment into small, palatable, and easy to control bites?

By looking side by side at the way we respond to feeling out of control and the tendency the natural world has of reminding us of how little control we truly have, it is easy to see how this relationship has taken place. Beyond this idea of control, or lack thereof, nature has a talent in forcing us to confront another fear of ours: the unknown. Connections between our fear of losing control and our fear of the unknown are obvious. We are not afraid of the dark itself, we are afraid of what might lurk in the dark. In much the same way, we are not afraid of a dark wood or a deep sea, but what unknown terror might await us there.

The natural connections between fear of the unknown and the desire to feel in control of one's environment have combined over the course of a millenia to develop a sense of ownership by Westerners over their

environment. This concept of superiority over land has leaked into nearly all aspects of Western culture: ownership of land is often considered a human right; Manifest Destiny essentially made the ownership and collection of more land our ultimate goal as Americans; and it has even seeped into our everyday language. The word landscape, as mentioned by artist Todd Bartel, "has evolved to mean land panorama and not only refer to cultivated land and paintings of land. . ." This is an important development due to the etymology of the word "landscape." As Bartel mentions in his artist statement, the word derives from "scrape" or "hack," words that certainly bring forcible control to mind. As a counter, this exhibit provides us with the alternative landview. In landscapes, we recreate the image of the world as we feel it should be, a way that allows us to feel a sense of control over the outside world. In landviews, we relinquish that ownership, see the world as it is, and concede to freedom, to the knowledge that this earth is bigger and more vast than we are.

The artists in *Landview of Commonplaces* propose this alternative relationship with the world around us. Rather than reacting to the uncontrollable and the unknown with fear and, in turn, the obsessive desire to control,

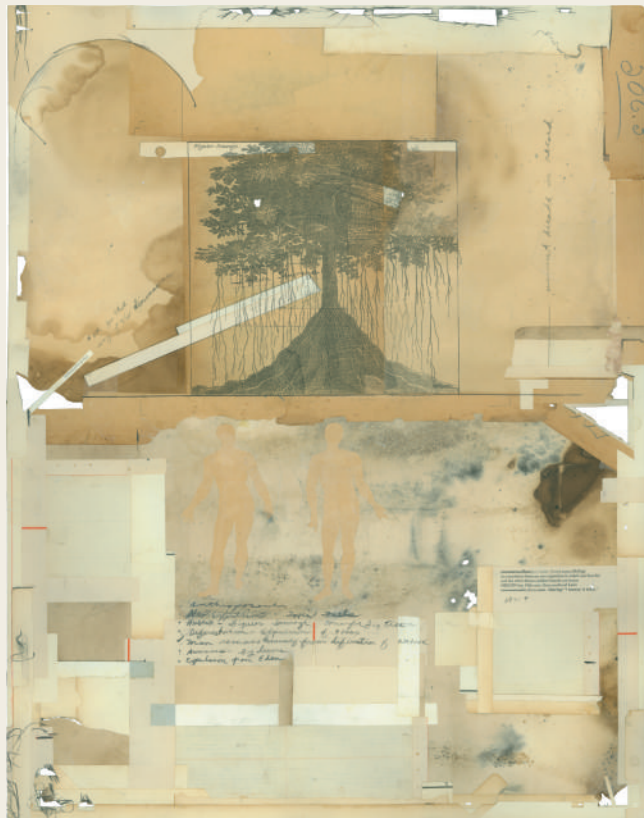
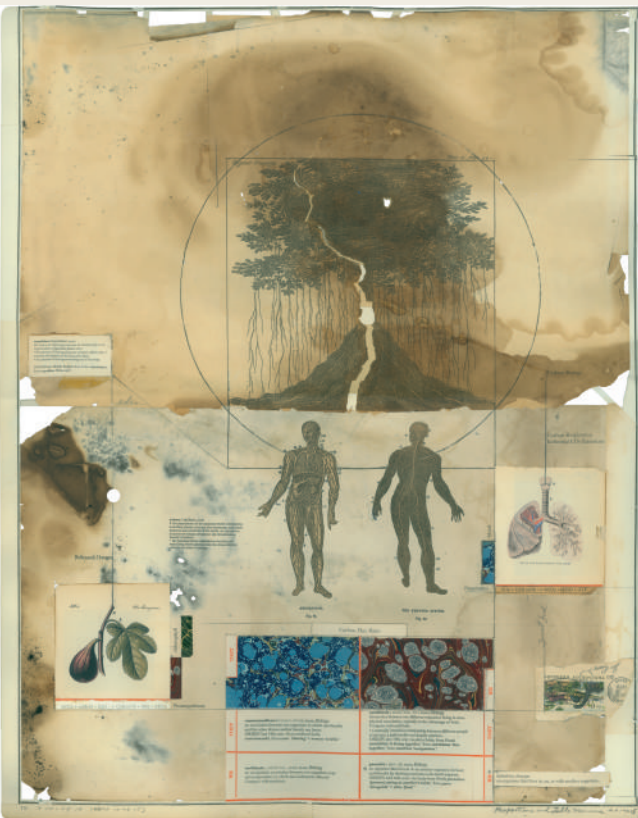
Todd Bartel, Katrina Bello, and Etty Yaniv propose here that we lean in to that fear. Although fear and control will eternally be intertwined, fear and freedom share the same relationship. As natural a partner as control is to fear, freedom exists as its counterpoint. Existentialism, a philosophy which revolves around the freedom that comes with being human as well as the anxiety-inducing responsibility that comes with that freedom, is a clear reminder of the enduring marriage between the two. ⁰²

Landview of Commonplaces is an indication that the urge to control is not the only answer to our fears. By reminding us that freedom can not exist without fear, the artists in this show also remind us that there can be no true beauty in the world around us if we allow our impulses to smother that which we can not control. In this show, the artists provide a voice for the collective social anxiety that comes with relinquishing control over geography--or worse, admitting that our guiding hands have actively harmed the land which we so deeply admire and rely upon. As viewers, this show reminds us of the feeling of the unmitigated vitality that comes with true freedom, freedom that can only be attained when both human and landview are liberated. We are only as free as the world in which we live.

01. Steimer, Thierry. "The Biology of Fear and Anxiety-related Behaviors." National Center for Biotechnology Information. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3181681/>. Accessed 1 January 2021.

02. Bakewell, Sarah. *At the Existentialist Cafe: Freedom, Being, and Apricot Cocktails*. Great Britain: Chatto and Windus. 2016.

Landviews of Commonplaces Artists



L: Todd Bartel, *Proportions and Table Manners* (front), 2014, Collage, 24.5 x 19.1 in.

R: Todd Bartel, *Proportions and Table Manners* (back), 2014, Collage, 24.5 x 19.1 in.

Landviews of Commonplaces

The history of collage and the history of landscape painting are the same story.

Since 1995 I have dedicated my artistic inquiry to understanding the interconnected histories of these two art genres. The *Landscape Vernacular* series is a rule-based, research-based project that addresses the history of land depiction, changing attitudes about land use and land ecology, and associated terminology. Catalyzed by interlocking combinations of text and image, the *Landscape Vernacular* collages juxtapose vintage and facsimile ephemera from the 18th- through 21st-centuries to raise questions about modern capitalism's simultaneous devaluing of nature and the fetishization of property.

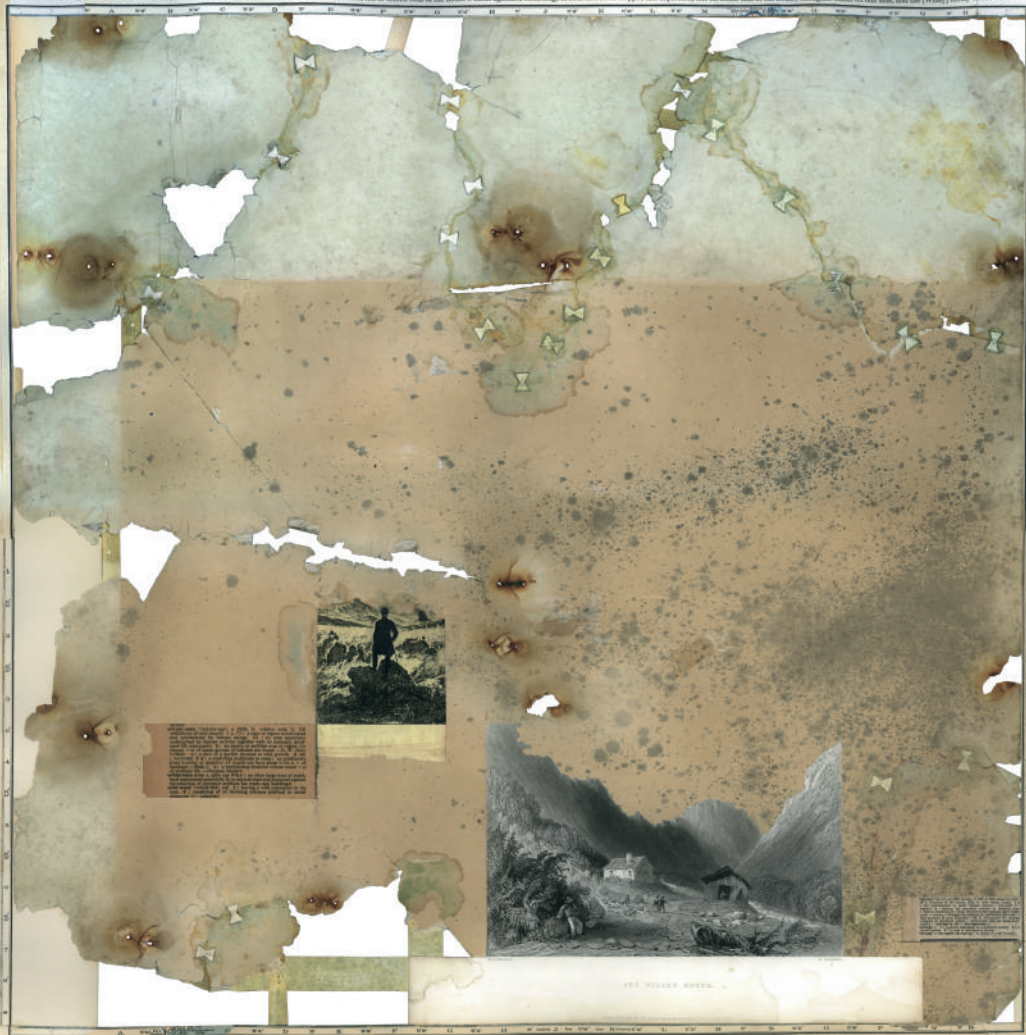
Omnipresent in my work is an underlying belief in the power of change. I know of nothing more significant in this world of ours than the transformation of the self.

Todd Bartel

Watertown, January 20, 2021

Todd Bartel

They cover a large slide down back of the house in a direction to take the house with it, and where within ten or fifteen rods of the house it came against a solid ledge of rock and there stopped and separated, one on either side of the house, taking the stable on one side, and the [Wife's] family on the other.



Todd Bartel, *Gateway to the American Sublime—The Crawford Notch 1826* (front), 2018, Collage, 22 x 21.9 in.

Landscape or Landview

Because the term landscape—a word introduced as a technical term of painters (OED)—has evolved to mean land panorama and not only refer to cultivated land and paintings of land, the root of the word intrigued me: *lendh2-* open land, heath, prairie; *skep-* to cut, scrape, to hack, form, creation (<“cutting”): shape. Aspects of this root definition deal with nature, creativity, change and alteration—“creation,” “shape,” “form” etc.—but not with the simple act of viewing or encountering natural vista and scenery. The emphasis in this root definition is on the action of making, arranging or rearranging land—as in a painting or the construction of a dam. Furthermore, some of the words, which define landscape’s root, can also be destructive in meaning; all of which confound rather than support the current definition’s reference to scenic countryside. One can read into the terms “form,” “creation,” “cutting” and “shape” to mean genesis or “primitive state of existence,” but scenic

But in the remoteness of New Hampshire is a scene of the sublime, the sacred, and the magnificent: there the lone peaks of granite, bowless and decisive, enclose the clouds
has tonight on a more stupendous rock, get the last bit where a complete, rounded together granite and limestone—there he sees the White Walling 1816—the beautiful,

while the surface and forest haunts of the mountain rest under the shadow of softly veiled snow. ... In some portions of the whole nature
change are, as if the mountains, "The White Wall, Emory on American Geology, Journal, Middle Mountain, January 23rd, p. 8

That showy sublimity of character
could be noted the features of that night.
Thomas Cole, 1816

And then impaled somewhere to
resting for the fate of barkwood in the
face of the ever-changing forms of
nature.
—Spahr, p. 53

Regional artists began depicting the White Mountains in the early 1800s, but it was not until the young
Thomas Cole (1816) an English-born painter from New York, traveled to New Hampshire in 1816
and began producing images of Mount Washington that the artists seriously took substantial interest
in the subject. Cole's 1816 painting "View of the White Mountains, after a Snow Storm" showed the scene around
Mount Washington from the west, rising above a valley blanketed and agitated against dark clouds.
The painting represented a new American approach to landscape that contrasted sharply with a sense of
natural path and shared symbolism. Robert McCulloch has noted, "in addition to evoking ideas of
transcendence, Mount Washington, both as image and symbol, was further codified by endorsement
in an entire history and the values of the American republic." ("Robert McCulloch, Cole to Grant: The
Art of the White Mountains of New Hampshire, Brown University Press, Hanover, N. H., 2014, p. 65.)
—F. Andrew Spahr, *From White Mountains to Iona, in Mount Washington: Crosses of New England, Currier
Worsters of Art, Manchester, NH, 1956, p. 31*

Just before Cole's visit, the North had gained national and international attention following the public
political Whitey tragedy. On the night of August 10, 1816, a violent storm brewed a snowstorm known
that had burst down the steep mountain side into the North, where the Whitey Snow Storm
being named after a high level that fell for safety. Unfortunately, the seven families, with their
lived hands many victims by such, wind, and shattered trees. The events, however, remained shrouded
as the accounts had been treated carefully. The Whitey story was widely reported in the United States and
Europe, and was memorialized in word and image from Federal writings such as *The American* (London, 1817)
by Nathaniel Bowditch (who had named the site for 1817), in historic accounts, the book *The
White Mountains History, 1816*, written by Benjamin Wiley, who visited his brother. Among the many
descriptions of the catastrophe was a 1816 pamphlet based on the letters by Thomas Cole, Daniel Price of the
Whitey that *Annals of the Whitey Falls*, c. 1818. The Whitey and its aftermath quickly became tourist attractions.
—Spahr, p. 25

Visit the site:

Nath. Bowditch

Henry S. Rowan
Scribbler

Don't believe
Washington Irving

panorama is also a separate subject. This seems a subtle distinction to make, but warranted, at present, given the ever-deteriorating condition of the planet. Since it is apparent that landscapes are always touched and influenced by "civilization and artificiality" rather than being about astonishment for what is untouched, I sought a word for a land image that did not conjure up any reference to human land rearrangement. Moreover, I wanted the definition to also be about reverence for land. There was no such single word in our language. And since my conscience would not allow reverie for a term, which could evoke negative connotations of "hacking," I sought etymological alternatives. A new word evolved: landview. "View" seemed to be an appropriate suffix because the root of the word vision is wíed- (to see, to look after, guard, ascribe to, wise, wisdom).

Todd Bartel

Excerpt from Terra Reverentia statement

Stamford, 1995

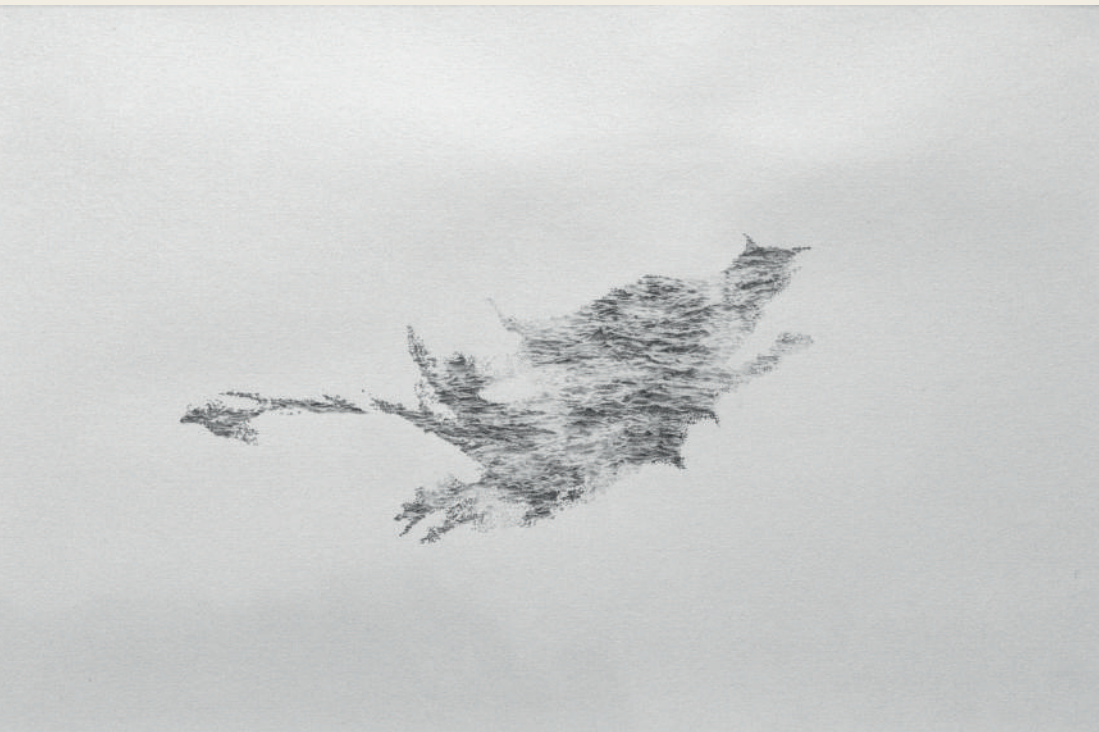


Katrina Bello, *Hawak/Hold (Kai)*, 2019, Graphite on paper, 6.5 x 10 in.

My drawings are about the beauty, complexity, fragility and what is compelling about the natural world. I see nature and our relationship to it as my point of departure in understanding our humanity. What I'm particularly interested in drawing are landscapes of wildernesses, especially the ones that are distant and remote. Deserts, open seas, mountain ranges and forests - their breadth and seeming emptiness speak of what is "other" to our human world, our dreams, our fears and what is beyond our control. These places are also fragile and undergoing dramatic change from increased urbanization.

When I am in the studio making my drawings, questions about our place, effect and purpose in the natural world occupy my thoughts. These questions come from the experience of migrating

Katrina Bello



Katrina Bello, *Hawak/Hold (Kamilla)*, 2019, Graphite on paper, 6.5 x 10 in.

from coastal environments that have undergone dramatic change, and where some parts no longer exist. These questions are what propel me to choose drawing as the medium to carry what I feel and think about these subjects. I count on the drawing medium to be a focused and tactile way of representing the patterns and forms found in nature. I use detailed line drawing, size and scale as the means of insisting on the urgency of the subject of the work. The works are either 5 by 8 feet, or 5 by 8 inches in size. Through drawing, I'm creating spaces that are vast, yet finite and intimate. I want the viewer to get a sense of either being enveloped and surrounded by this space, or the sense that they can hold it in the palm of their hand.





L: Video still: Katrina Bello, *Hawak/Hold (Kai)*, 2019, Looped 20 second video, Dims variable.

R: Video still: Katrina Bello, *Hawak/Hold (Sophia)*, 2019, Looped 30 second video, Dims variable.



Etty Yaniv, *Archipelago 6*, 2020. Mixed media on canvas, 6 x 6 in.

The Covid pandemic lockdown prompted Yaniv to create a daily series of paintings on a small scale, capturing her changing and heightened sense of a fluid time in a confined space – as windows onto an exterior place, or a portal into an interior space. How we form simultaneous narratives out of patterns that recur daily, and how we process diurnal time in relation to memory and place, have preoccupied Brooklyn based artist Etty Yaniv since early on. In her installations and paintings, she explores in highly visceral ways how narratives form out of fragmented information. Her work alludes to the fragility of our civilization within a complex ecological system and the details in the layered fragments are like coded messages or excavated memories which present new clues. Each layer documents a particular moment in time and only close-up the viewer may discover the content underneath.

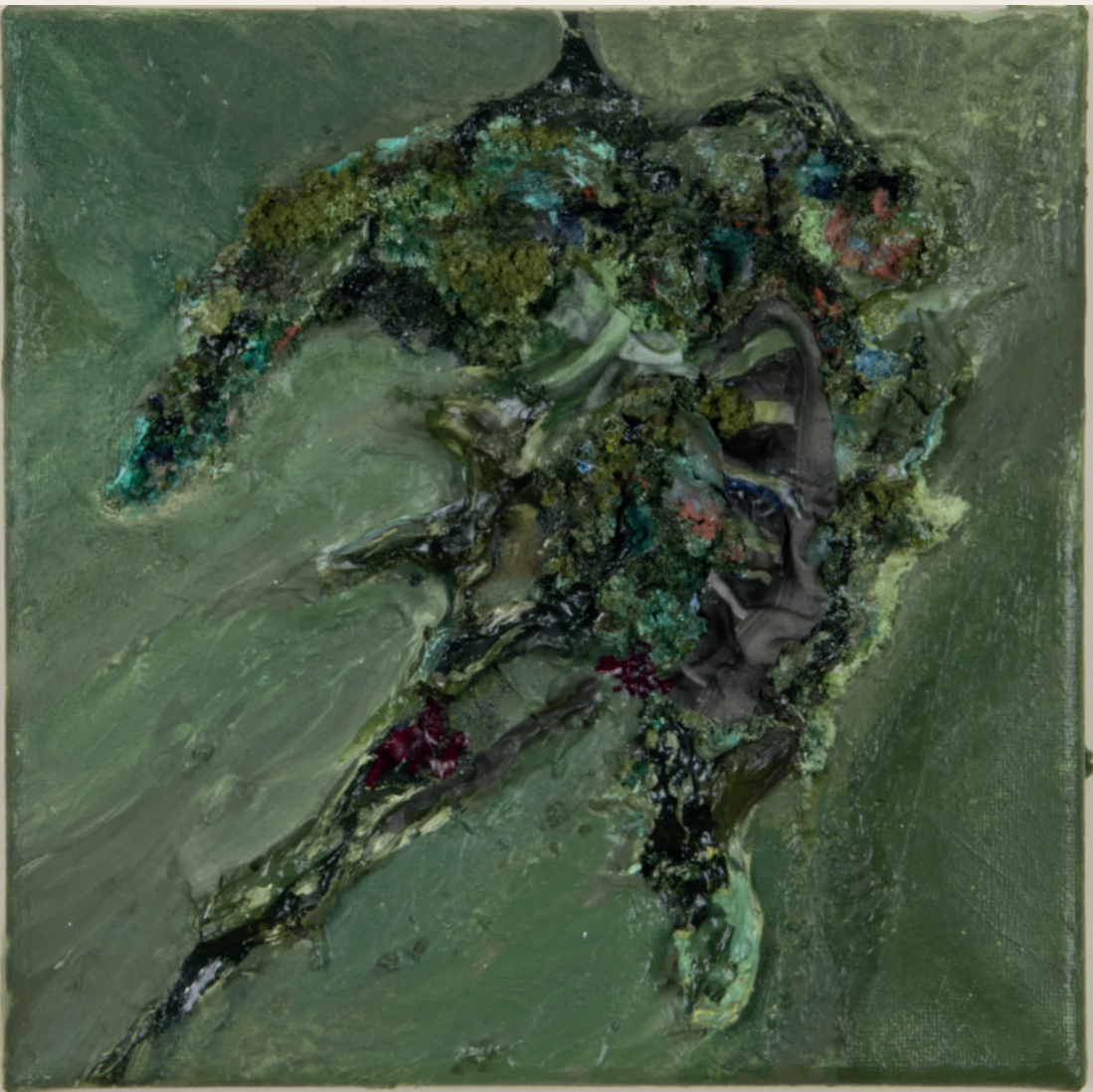
In her installations Etty Yaniv makes highly textured clusters of painted repurposed materials taken from her art studio and her everyday life,

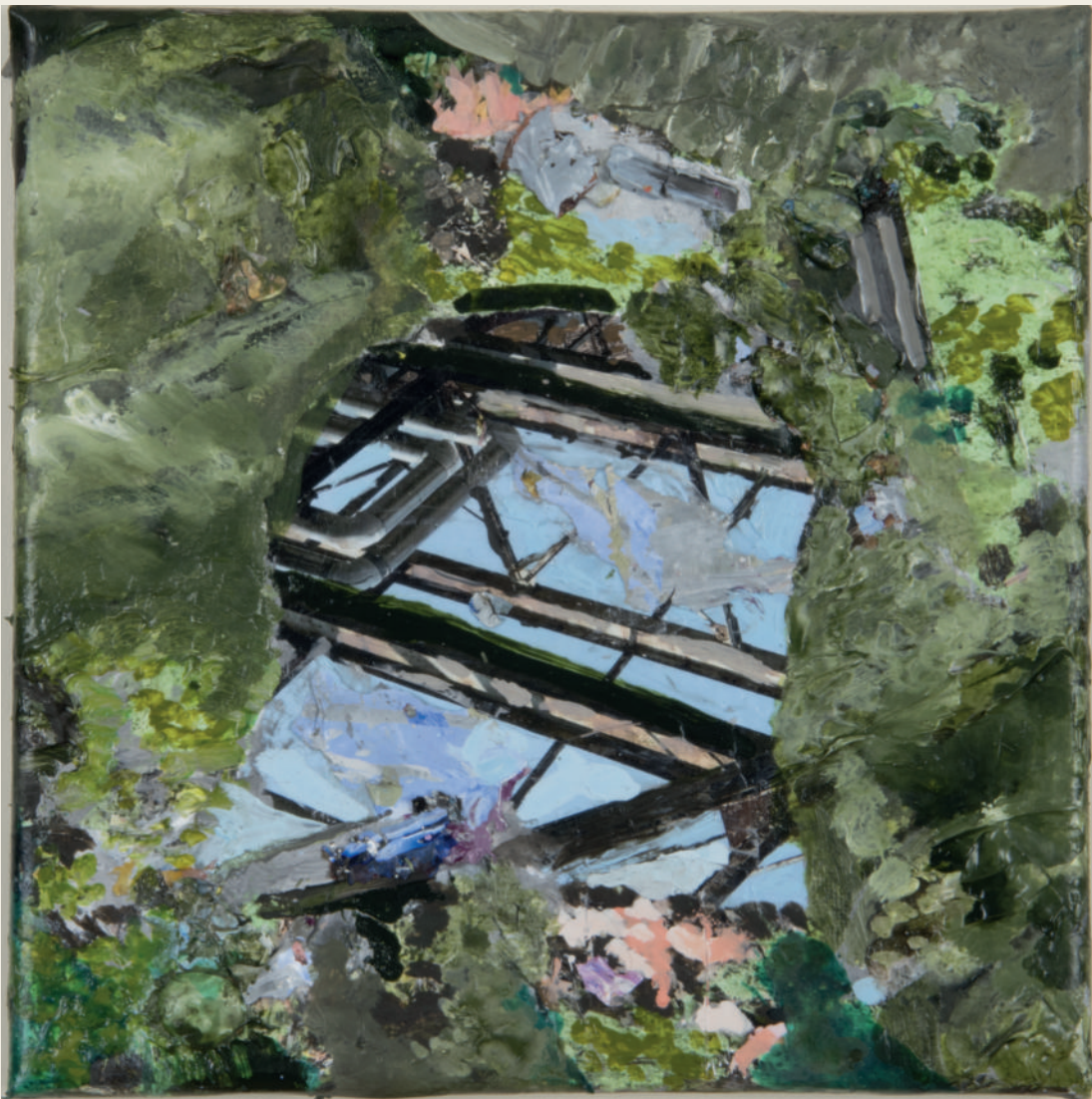
Etty Yaniv



Etty Yaniv, *Archipelago 9*, 2020, Mixed media on canvas, 6 x 6 in.

mainly assorted paper, fabric, and plastic. These disjointed material fragments coalesce into sculptures of varied scales that are all light weight and ephemeral yet by grouping them in dense clusters of detailed layers, they appear massive or even monumental. From afar they seem like tactile segments of abstracted landscapes, but from closeup they reveal tiny narrative documenting vignettes from the artist's daily experiences. Together, these disjointed pieces form a wholistic image while still making the fragmentary visible. The clustered dimensional structures, and not less important, the breathing space in between, create an overall rhythmic flow, activating walls, air, and floor into a visceral environment where the visitor is prompted to walk through and observe from different perspectives. The notions of a concurrent perpetual movement, shifting vantage points, and intra-connectivity between all the fragments, are equally central in Yaniv's overall work..





L: Etty Yaniv, *Terrestrial 2*, 2020, Mixed media on canvas, 8 x 8 in.

R: Etty Yaniv, *Terrestrial 3*, 2020, Mixed media on canvas, 8 x 8 in.



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