

Mutual Gaze Call and Response

curated by Riki Moss

ARTISTS

Cami Davis
Janet Fredericks
Linda E. Jones
Riki Moss
Janet Van Fleet
Emiko Sawaragi Gilbert

MUTUAL GAZE / CALL & RESPONSE

by Riki Moss, Curator

In Mutual Gaze/Call and Response, six artists turn their gaze to the planet and find the planet looking back. The gaze is mutual, it is returned. The seen is the seer. The planet calls, the artist responds with her work and in turn, it is the work calling to you, the viewer. You, too, enter the conversation, answering the call with your own response. Call, response, layer upon layer, an ongoing conversation placed within the larger interaction of humankind and the earth over time. In this way, we are all part of one interwoven story; responsible, collective, enormous, while at the same time, personal, individual and minute.

Winooski, Vermont is a mill city in transition and the gallery space reflects this. It's large and the walls are white, but by no means is the space a white box gallery. It's raw, industrial, with high ceilings, exposed pipes, minimal electricity, gray concrete floors and large windows looking out on traffic. Lighting is crude: at night, the artwork is washed by car headlights. It is what it is, a reflection of the state of the city, an added layer of the story.

Taken singularly, each artist offers a separate and distinct portal through which the viewers can gaze into and enter the contemporary conversation with our planet. By collecting these visions together in one exhibition, the gazes interact with one another, melding at the edges, to form a collective gaze adding yet another layer to the dialogue.

The exhibition is anchored at each end with two large installations. Janet Fredericks' *River Scrolls* is a cascading, pulsing river of color and light contrasting in mood with Riki Moss' monochromatic, dark *Paper Forest*. In the center, a wall-papered graphic collaboration of Emiko Sawaragi Gilbert incorporating the exposed electric service box provides background to Janet Van Fleet's found object sculpture. Together they form the collaborative installation called *Blowing In The Wind*. Flanking it on the left is Cami Davis' nine-panel painting *Blackbirds Singing In the Dead of Night*. With its deep color, birds and irises, it leads to the *River Scrolls*. On the right, Linda Jones' three panels from her "Decay" series point the way – with branches, iconic circular image - to the *Paper Forest*.

The artists in this exhibition are all established, mid-career Vermonters working in the realm of environmental art, curious and concerned, some more activist than others.

Mutual Gaze/Call & Response

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“The term environmental art is used in two different contexts: it can be used generally to refer to art dealing with ecological issues and/or the natural, such as the formal, the political, the historical, or the social context,” said Wikipedia.

While each artist in this exhibit responds to particular elements of their natural or cultural landscape – Fredericks with the New Haven River, Moss and Jones with the forest and earth, three of the artists deal with specific issues for this particular exhibition.

The mixed media, site-specific collaboration between Emiko Sawaragi Gilbert and Janet Van Fleet, *Blowing In The Wind*, considers nuclear power as one human activity that has had profound effects on the planet’s life forms.

Emiko Sawaragi Gilbert wallpapers photographs of the destroyed Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant and the currently-operating Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Plant in Vernon -- both reactors of the same design. These images provide a backdrop for a sculptural work by Janet Van Fleet, a rusted steel mesh cylinder stuffed with fresh leaves. Over the course of the exhibit the flora will dry, shrink, and brown, providing an opportunity for meditation about time, change, and death.

With her painting, Cami Davis, environmental activist and teacher, looks at the February 2011 die-off of the blackbirds in Arkansas and responds. She writes: “What we do to Earth we do to ourselves and by extension, what we do to the universe we do to ourselves. These ideas are constant companions during the process of making a painting. Moving fluidly across cultural boundaries, symbolic imagery taken from various sources: Hindu/ yogic practices, Buddhism, Earth based traditions, esoteric Judeo-Christian sources, and the new sciences, are paired with abstraction that corresponds to the felt and sensed. In this way I attempt to visually converse between the inner (meaning) and outer (phenomena).” The painting presents images of irises and blackbirds in dialogue with one another as a metaphor for exploring human’s collective awakening. The color range of this painting is deep and powerful, enticing us along a sensory path leading to our falling in love with the endangered birds.

Janet Fredericks doesn’t have an issue around water, she wants to understand it, to study its vocabulary, to become its voice through her art. She immerses her long scrolls of paper in the river, where she begins to learn its language by studying its formations, its currents, its ebbs and flows, by tracing in graphite the lines of rocks and following its paths. The long scroll drawings in this exhibition were first immersed in the New Haven River, and then brought to the artist’s studio to be worked on. When the separate scrolls arrived here in the gallery, the group of artists helped Fredericks

The great discovery of contemporary science is that the universe is not simply a place, but a story – a story in which we are immersed, to which we belong, and out of which we arose.

This story has the power to awaken us more deeply to who we are.... And this changes everything!!!

From *The Journey of the Universe* by Mary Evelyn Tucker and Brian Swimme, thanks to Cami Davis.

install them across the high walls and down along the floor. Handling the paper was exhilarating, for it felt infused with the actual river rather than an image. It carried its history. The installers felt themselves part of the artwork as together they explored its bends, dips and flows. The water called, the artist responded, as will you, the viewer.

Linda E. Jones pulls her imagery from natural decay, using oil and mixed media on wood panels to explore emerging and disintegrating life. The three pieces shown in this exhibition are from her “Decay” series, which began when she came across a snag (a dead standing tree) whose cavity contained stacked, pancake-like fungus. She drew what she saw, but then, wanting to work more viscerally, thought to rip open hollow door panels to provide a space to hold the fungi. Jones realized “that the base and material itself was referencing the subject and content, [and that this] led to more sticks, bark, more discoveries and internal explorations—both literal and figurative. My work is about intuitive response and process. The viewer will bring his or her own experience to the finished work forming a widening circle of call and response creating what is referred to as mutual gaze.”

Riki Moss explores the nature of the forest by recreating it with its own material: paper. What was taken away is now given back. This multi-media installation is a collection of sculptures made with hand-made abaca paper pressed over forms and reassembled into new entities. It is her particular fantasy of a collaborative nature, ripe with forms moving in and out of existence, curious re-arrangements of fauna, humans and flora, with random snippets of language and hints of the outside, all caught in a tableau of the moment. Symphonic sounds of the woods recorded by the sound artist John Bullitt emanate from hidden motion-activated “singing eggs”. Now and then, we hear a snippet of Pavarotti singing an aria. The lighting creates shadows along the large white walls that deepen as night descends. The lights from the oncoming traffic outside flashing over the shadows tell us that there is a world outside the Forest.

Mutual Gaze/Call and Response is meant to entice the viewer to join a conversation about the sometimes perilous relationship humankind has with its planet. Questions are raised: have we lost our sensory connection to a universe we feel increasingly separate from? What is the planet telling us, as we force ourselves upon its resources? Do “endangered species” actually matter? What do we see when we look deeply into the water, the dirt, the buzzing life forms beneath our feet? Art in this exhibit opens our senses to the pull of our marvelous Earth. But there are no answers. What one takes from this experience—joy, grief, anger, wonderment, marvel, a call to action, heartbreak—is up to the viewer.

Emiko Sawaragi Gilbert & Janet Van Fleet *Blowing In The Wind*

Vague images of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster and the currently-operating Vermont Yankee plant provide a backdrop for natural forms and a standing figure stuffed with fresh leaves, intended to dry over the course of the exhibit.

Emiko Sawaragi Gilbert began her work as an artist while studying ceramics in Kyoto, Japan. She married an American and eventually moved to Vermont. She has continued to produce and exhibit her works while traveling back and forth between these two countries. Her primary works are executed in the form of an accumulation of charcoal pencil lines on paper, but she also does occasional installations that embrace the beauty of plant forms and/or acknowledge the issues humans face in the course of their lives on the planet.

Blowing In The Wind
site specific installation
2012



JANET FREDERICKS

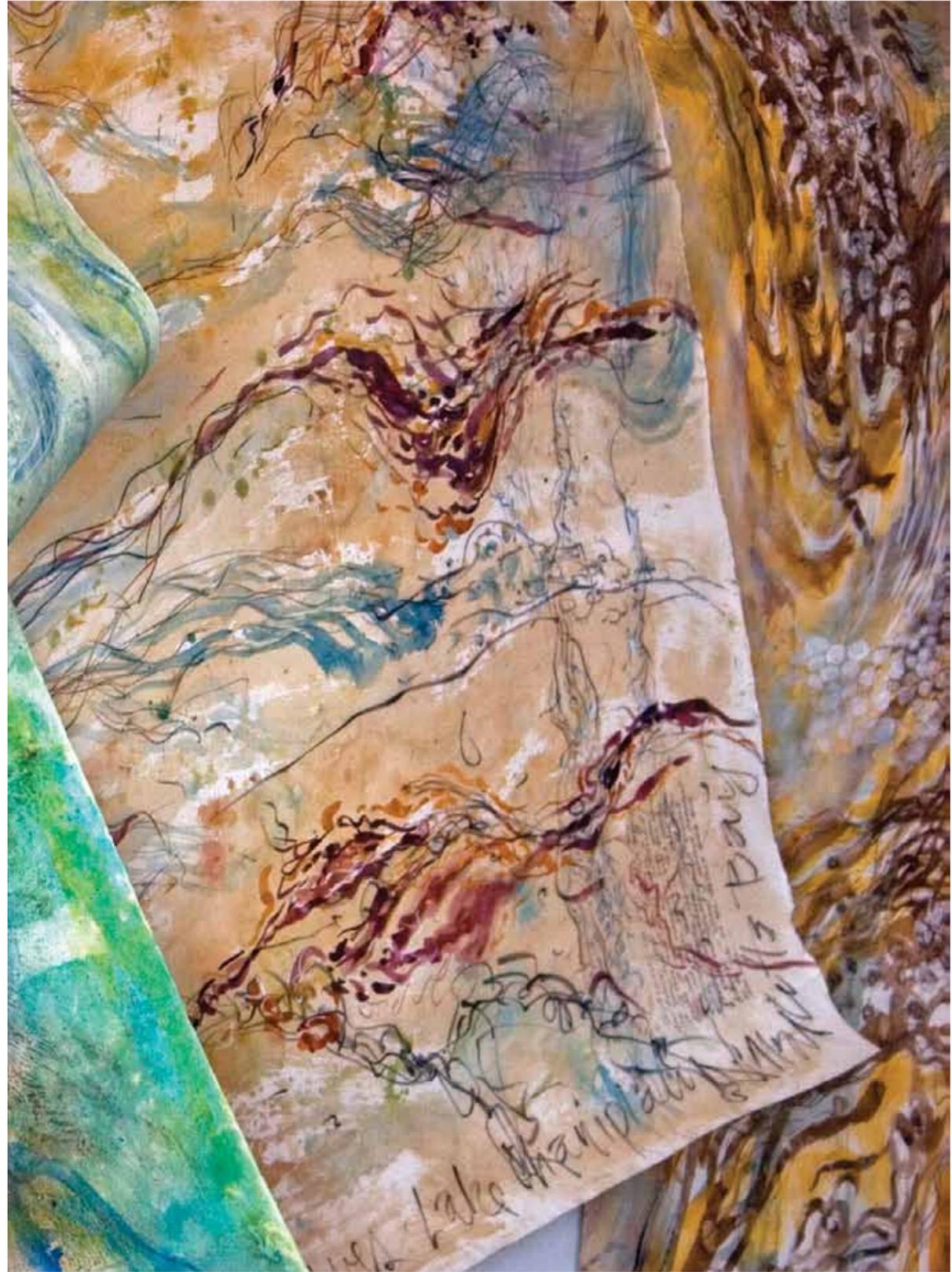
River Scrolls

While water is central to Fredericks' work, she also responds deeply to other elements of her native landscape with paintings and works on paper that are simultaneously maps, indicators of place and subtle tracings of experience. Trees, shrubs, ant hills and plant life, as well as rising landmasses, pathways of wildlife and meandering rivers. She writes, "Together, they form a vital vocabulary with which I give voice. These mappings refer not only to surface topography but to what lies beneath...the seen and unseen."

Beginning in the 1990's with images of ship hulls and lake fish, water has been integral in Fredericks' drawing and painting. In 2000, she collaborated in an exploration of the water with Dona Seeger. In 2006, she began a four-year collaboration with Canadian poet Guy Jean, that culminated in an exhibit of large drawings made in the New Haven River and La Ruisseau de la Brasserie in Gatineau, Quebec; as well as a book of poems titled *Et L'eau Repondit... And Water Answered*.

installation view
River Scrolls
watercolor and graphite
size varies
approximately 30 feet each





RIKI MOSS

The Paper Forest

Beginning from a foundation in ceramics and encaustic painting, Moss has exhibited widely over 30 years. She received Vermont Arts Council development grants, was awarded residency at The Vermont Studio Center and is a recipient of the New York City-based Art Matters grant. Her MFA is from The Vermont College of Fine Arts in Montpelier. Since 2004, she has been working with handmade abaca paper, creating separate sculptures to integrate into a growing entity she calls *The Paper Forest*. In 2010, a partial installation was included with the UN Conference on Biodiversity exhibit in Nagoya, Japan, COP10, called "On The Planet"; and later shown in two museums, Museum Rijswijk and CODA Apeldoorn, for the Holland Paper Biennial. A variation called "The Tunnel" was presented at the Shelburne Museum in the summer of 2011 for the "Paper in 3-D" exhibition. Single sculptures have been exhibited in shows throughout the country. In September 2012, Moss will present images from *The Paper Forest* at the Images and Voices of Hope Summit, an international meeting that promotes a global dialogue dedicated to strengthening the role of media as agents of world benefit.

Each installation of *The Paper Forest* is site specific. In process: portraits created with masks over taxidermy forms. These are mounted so as to appear to have broken through the walls. Where possible, video projections may be added, in order to expand the space by suggesting a world outside the tableaux.

installation view
The Paper Forest





CAMI DAVIS

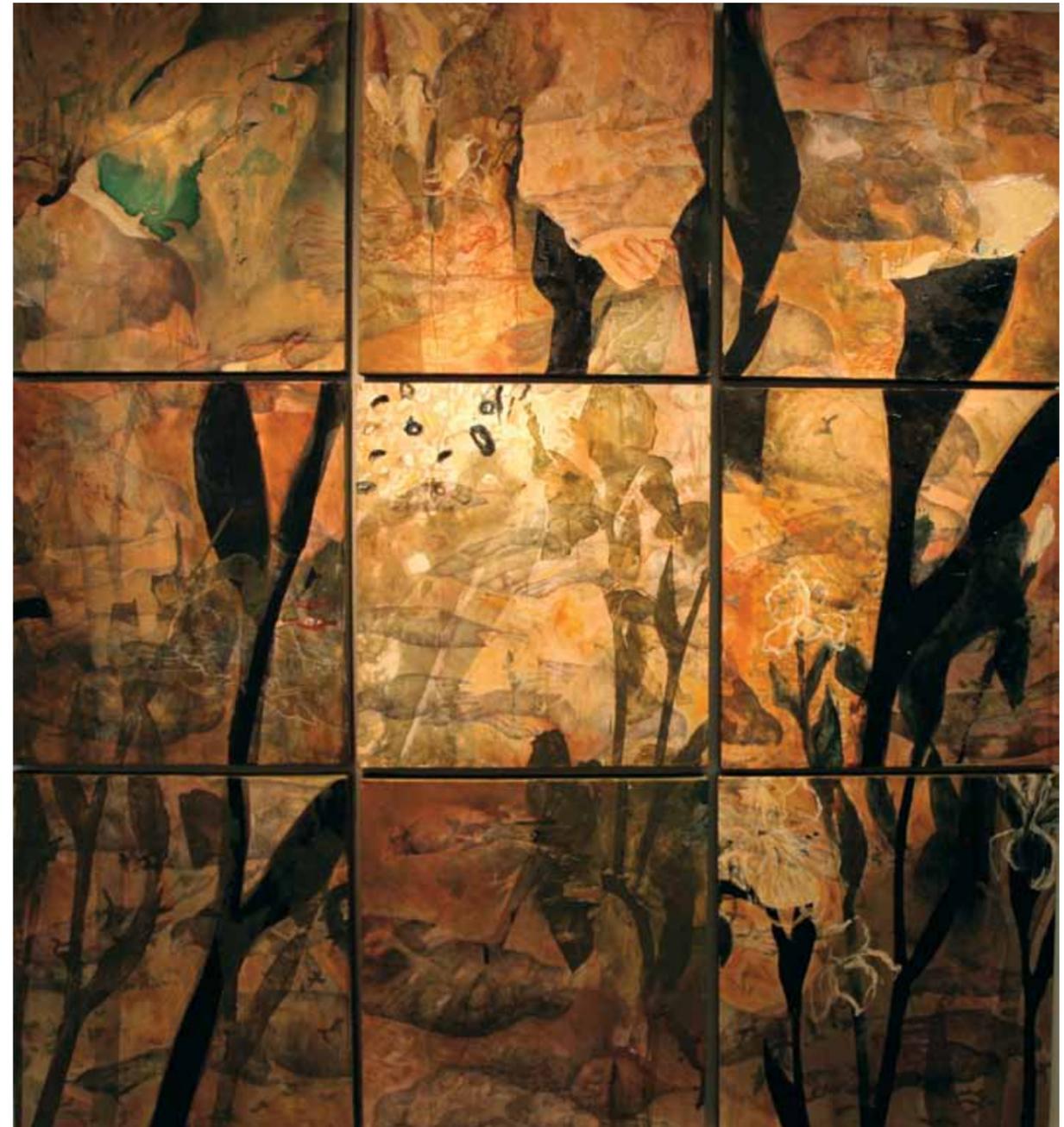
Blackbird Singing in the Dead of Night

Stunned by the alarming indicator of our human=nature imbalance, *Blackbird Singing in the Dead of Night* was painted in response to the Arkansas blackbird die-off of February 2011. The painting pairs abstracted iris forms with blackbird imagery. In medieval western painting, the iris was the symbol (among many attributes) of the union of heaven and earth. Birds in Celtic art also symbolized the mediation of spirit and matter. In this sense the Beatles' lyrics as title suggests that the blackbirds can be understood as a metaphor for exploring humanity's collective awakening.

Davis explains, the "...content directly refers to issues of living sustainably, [or where the] imagery engages symbolic language to suggest the wider inquiry into the nature of being: honeybee collapse with apple blossom, lotus and white rose (Buddhism and esoteric Christianity); Arkansas blackbird die off and iris (Celtic blackbird and western painting use of the iris); Tar Sands with narcissus (hubris). She considers the solitary practice of painting as the essential conversation from which the public community projects evolve.

Davis is a lecturer with the University of Vermont's Department of Art and Art History, an adjunct lecturer with UVM's Environmental Program. She teaches painting, drawing and transdisciplinary courses on art, ecology and community. She has exhibited widely since 1981, received numerous academic awards, residencies at the Vermont Studio Center and a Jackson Pollock-Lee Krasner Foundation Grant for painting. Davis is an activist for peace and sustainable development, presenting and conducting workshops. In 2001, she joined Sally Linder in walking the Ark of Hope filled with Temenos Books from Northern Vermont to New York City in response to the September 11th terrorist attacks.

Blackbird Singing in the Dead of Night
5' x 6'
painting



Janet Van Fleet

Museum Cases

Janet Van Fleet's *Museum Cases* reference an old-fashioned "curiosities" museum. The configuration is flexible, so each space in which they are installed becomes a new "museum", with visitors making new meaning out of the small works in each case. Her sculpture materials are weathered man-made and natural materials.

Van Fleet sees herself as an archivist "...preserving and bringing into new relationships oddities from material culture and natural history that would otherwise disappear into the planetary dumpster... Therefore, objects that are preserved, plucked out of this rush toward oblivion, take on a numinous quality that elevates them to a kind of iconic status." Her work often has a political or social commentary component. She writes, "Lots of things seem more than a bit awry to me, and it seems unavoidable that this perspective leaks out in my sculptures."

Van Fleet is a self-taught artist who grew up in Santa Fe, New Mexico, studied briefly at the Art Institute of Chicago. The Vermont Arts Council awarded her grants in 1996 and 2005. She has completed commissions for science and environmental museums, and is represented in corporate collections. In January of 2010, she traveled to Nagoya, Japan to create a 36-foot long wall installation in recognition of 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity. Later, she co-curated an exhibit called "On the Planet" in three Vermont venues that combined the work of Japanese and American artists. She has worked extensively as a curator and is a founder of Studio Place Arts in Barre, Vermont, where her studio is located. She has been a reviewer for *Art New England*, and is co-publisher of *Vermont Art Zine*, an online statewide journal devoted to the visual arts in Vermont.





Linda E. Jones

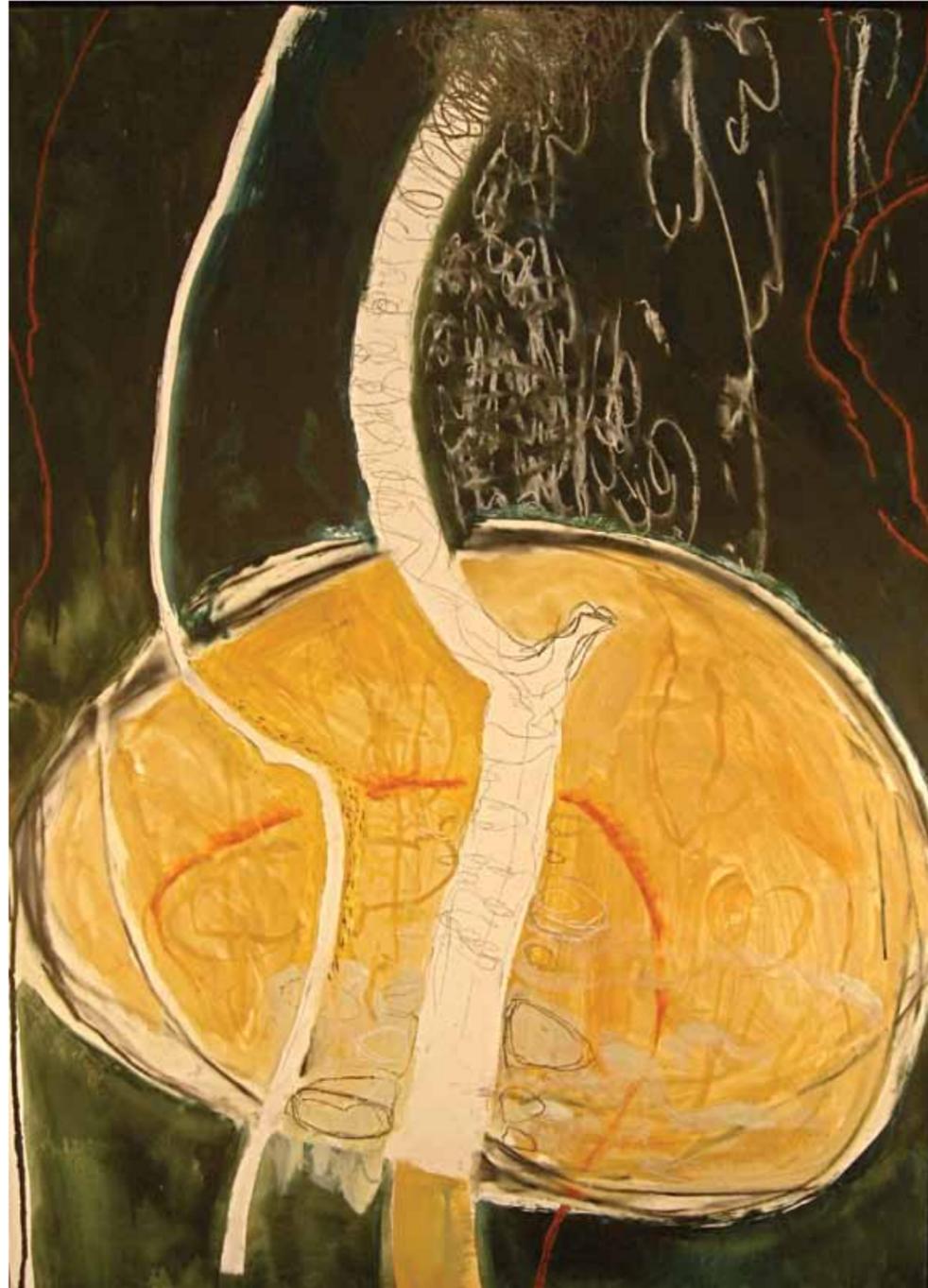
Decay Series

Since Linda Jones' "call" will vary from external stimulation (as in this series), to internal reflection, as with her most recent "Studies" series, much of her recent work is relevant to this exhibition. She says, "Despite the source of the 'call', my response remains the same. Working intuitively, emotionally, physically and perhaps without rationality. The viewer will bring his or her own experience to the finished work forming a widening circle of call and response creating what is referred to as mutual gaze."

Jones has been a painter for over 35 years, exhibiting throughout the US and represented in both private and corporate collections. Her BFA in painting is from Antioch College. She has received numerous awards, fellowships and grants, most recently a creation grant from the Vermont Arts Council and The National Endowment for the Arts. She has been teaching painting and drawing at Burlington City Arts since 2000 and was one of the original members of the cooperative 215 Gallery in Burlington, Vermont.

Fungus Tree
39" x 32"
Encaustic, graphite, gouache,
oil, pastel & mixed media
on wood panel





(left)

Sticks
38"x28"
Oil, encaustic, graphite
& chalk on wood panel
2010

(right)

Decay I
41"x23"
Encaustic, insulation foam, rice
paper & graphite in wood panel





(left)
Decay III
 41"x15"
 Sticks, encaustic,
 graphite & chalk on wood panel

(right, clockwise from top left)

Study #3
 30"x22"
 Gouache, charcoal,
 graphite on paper
 2012

Study #2
 30"x22"
 Gouache, charcoal,
 graphite & oil on paper
 2012

Study #4
 36"x26"
 Gouache, charcoal, graphite,
 oil & encaustic
 2012

Study #1
 30"x22"
 mixed media on paper
 2012



This catalog was published in conjunction with the exhibition “Mutual Gaze/Call & Response” held June 22nd to August 4th, 2012 at the Energy Co-op of Vermont Gallery at the Winooski Pop-up Gallery District.

About Kasini House



Kasini House is a dynamic creative enterprise that seeks to make contemporary art and culture work. We produce art events such as First Friday Art Walk in Burlington, Vermont. Kasini House Books publishes titles on contemporary art and culture. We publish *Art Map Burlington* and *Vermont Art Guide*, the state's most comprehensive and up-to-date guide to contemporary art. Kasini House ARTSHOP sells art, art products, and books in our online artshop. Kasini House operates an on-demand PRINTSHOP that specializes in working with artists and other creative professionals. Kasini House provides a range of consulting, media, and creative services to a variety of clients. Kasini House was incorporated in Vermont in 2003.

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About Maison Kasini



Maison Kasini is a commercial art gallery that shows Canadian and American, emerging and mid-career, contemporary artists. We focus on art that has a strong conceptual foundation embodied in an accessible object. Through exhibitions and publications, we work to foster a broad and diverse interest in contemporary art and collecting with an eye towards those people who are just starting to build a collection. Galerie Maison Kasini is located at the Belgo Building, 372 Ste-Catherine Street West, Suite 408, Montreal, Quebec H3B 1A2.

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