

Reinventing the Landscape



A Fresh Look at Traditional and Contemporary Painting

March through June, 2011

Miami International Airport
North Terminal Gallery – Concourse E

We are pleased to present to you this unexpected and remarkable collection of painters reinventing the landscape on their own terms. Although their work is visually quite diverse, as a group, these artists are linked in their ambition to reconsider and re-imagine their outside world. At once, we can see that this work is about a broader landscape – a psychological terrain that is captured in paint. The work is about what these artists care about, what is most near and dear to them: whether it is literally a land that was taken

away from them, or a lost life and the desire to reunite that life with the current one, a way to organize discrete but rather varied experiences, a cultural and historical archive, a concern for the natural environment, or even a means of healing wounds. These artists have taken external reality and developed their own visual language to express their innermost loves and concerns. The works, small dramas in a way, are constructs of their minds, of minds that rely as much on their immediate perception of the environment as on

memory and synthesis. As François Cheng says in his classic book, *Empty and Full*, “painting ought not to be content merely with reproducing the external aspect of the world; it must re-create a universe born at once from the primordial breath and the mind of the painter.” As a group, these artists are asking us not to just see the “pretty scenes” but to take a leap with them and to take in the world not in our usual ways.

Yolanda Sánchez, Ph.D.
Director,
Airport Fine Arts & Cultural Affairs



Elisabeth Condon



Nancy Friedemann



Mark Messersmith

A landscape is a piece that is emotional and psychological.
Jim Hodges (artist)



G. Mirta Paula



Paul Sierra



Elizabeth Thompson

Elisabeth Condon



Pigeon House, 2010, enamel on dibond, 48" x 72"
(Courtesy of Dorsch Gallery, Miami, FL and Lesley Heller Workspace, NY)

My paintings propose landscape as a container for disparate elements, space for imaginary travel. They merge places I have visited, such as Cadaques, Saratoga Springs, and Miami with Brooklyn and Tampa, where I live and work.

Because global and digital culture renders space fictional while science confirms the world as a

projection of the mind, I find it impossible to consider landscape as a unified entity, any more than a painting can be. **I heed the Chinese principle of landscape as a combination of memory and experience, its elements in rhythmic conveyance of internal and external perception.**

I use pours of color and gesture to construct and break down form.

Acrylic paint proposes subtropical humidity, while oils evoke the brick and mortar constructions of urban life. Figure/ground relationships shift into Chinese-inspired "butterfly" perspectives. Each composition is a riff on Chinese scrolls, replacing mountains and trees with sketchbook drawings and digital projections.

Nancy Friedemann

In my drawings and paintings, I have borrowed from botanical illustrations, actual lace samples and depictions of lace from Spanish Colonial painting in order to examine the invisible paths of cultural memory born from exile from my homeland in Colombia. During the last four years, I have expanded my endeavors by introducing iconic images from Colombia. This research deals with the Colonial Botanical Expedition of 1783. The begonias,

orchids, and pasifloras are not just beautiful flowers as illustrated during the colony. They are part of the iconographic history of Colombia and of my own iconographic cultural archive. **This is the same flora that I knew intimately in my youth as it grows freely in the Sabana de Bogotá and was cultivated in my own family's backyard.**

The intensive labor in making each work is about slowness, feeling and

thinking; it is about doing a work that honors manual labor and where I manage an economy of materials. Each mark is indelible. My options of life are integrated ethically in my art, as I reflect and challenge the roles that historically have been assigned to women, in terms not only in the division of labor, but also in the division of artistic and intellectual spaces.



On the Margins of a Portrait (detail), 2009, enamel on dibond, 36" x 144" (Courtesy of the artist and Bernice Steinbaum Gallery, Miami, FL)

Mark Messersmith



*Deceptive Nature, 2006, oil on canvas and mixed media with carved wooden parts, 72" x 74"
(Courtesy of the artist and Bernice Steinbaum Gallery, Miami, FL)*

These paintings continue to explore the themes of spirit and struggles within the modern world's "natural environment," and its lands and creatures, which still manage to survive in fairly natural conditions, but often in small and isolated habitats throughout the Southeastern United States. My work concerns the change and impact on the natural environment and the inevitable forced migration, dislocation and devastation of all the flora and fauna, which inhabit these lands.

My paintings build on stories (either real or conjectured), along with my own observations of, and concerns for, all the creatures that move within the shrinking environment they inhabit. **Creatures moving between and over one another, hoping to survive the chaos of our modern lives, in the darkening illuminations of their fading wilderness.**

Powerful birds, vigilant panthers, wary gators, blackwater swamps, old cypress trees, still inhabit my Florida paintings, along with back road citrus stands, and careening logging trucks. Paintings I hope will, warn us all, of a time and a place, midway between hope and despair.

G. Mirta Paula

I have always been a fervent admirer of nature. My spirit is raised, when in my hands I hold a brush, spatula, jig, etc. and I begin creating and completing - like pieces of a puzzle - a landscape, a structure, or any of my various works of art. It gives me great pleasure to be able to demonstrate to the world, through my talent, what can be achieved when one enters and studies the wonderful world of nature. My true inspiration is always based on God's creation. I imagine a sunset, the lulling sound of the sea, the chirping of a bird, the melody of the falling rain, the unmistakable smell of damp earth, and many other examples that would make the list endless. I bless and thank the Lord for giving me the privilege of being one of His chosen using me as a channel to manifest His beautiful creations through my works of art.



Retomando el Camino, 2005, oil on canvas, 40" x 30"

Paul Sierra

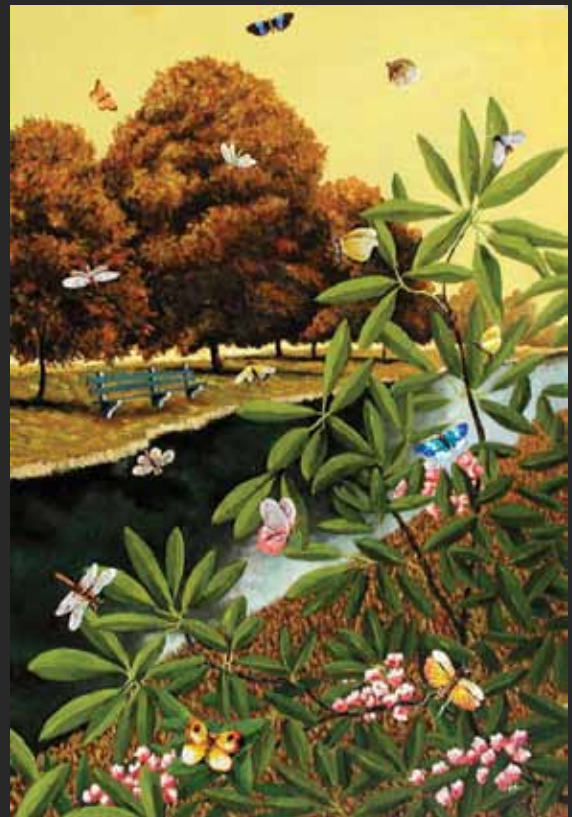
A painted landscape is always more beautiful than a real one, because there is more there.
Fernando Botero (artist)

Because I was born in Cuba and have lived most of my adult life in the U.S., my artistic and emotional links to my Latin roots are intertwined with influences from North American art and culture.

Art provides a means for leaving the past behind and not getting lost in the limbo between the old and the new life. Art is of great help to the immigrant, allowing him to transform the chaos of his life into a positive vision.

Art heals the spirit by virtue of the creative act, which helps us to find a new identity in our memories and myths. **The act of painting becomes the act of memory, a line drawn from the present to the past and back again, establishing our identity as a person.**

We seek continuity in the face of disjuncture. And we find it by making ourselves the hero of our own personal odyssey.



Inhabitants, 2006, oil on canvas, 42" x 60"

Elizabeth Thompson

Georgia O'Keefe once said God told her that if she painted the mountain behind her house in New Mexico enough times, she would own it. **I don't think I own the Everglades, but the Everglades certainly own a part of me.**

I lived in the Everglades as a participant in its Artists in Residence Program. As the time for my adventure drew near, it was the reality of living alone in the wilderness that was truly terrifying. My fears were unfounded. I found the solitude heightened my awareness and intensified my connection to the intricate ecosystems surrounding me.

Nature's ability to heal and adapt proved inspirational. The contrast between energetic growth and overt decay serves up a multitude of images that illustrate the cyclical relation between life and death. Over the course of my stay, the sloughs, domes, mangroves, pine forests and strands became my Walden Pond.

Art can be a powerful statement for anything. My hope is that these paintings, which depict details selected from a vast wilderness, trigger a connection with the Everglades – an eco-system that although altered and threatened, is still magically dynamic.



Palmetto Morning, 2008, oil on canvas, 58" x 65"



Elisabeth Condon's itinerant mode inspires her to reconsider landscape through the simultaneous perspectives of Chinese scrolls. She combines sketches and images of her travels to Asia, Australia and throughout the United States to create spaces for imaginary wandering. Condon grew up in Los Angeles, earned her graduate degree in Chicago and since 2003 divides her time between New York and Florida. Florida conjures memories of Los Angeles, shifting her focus to landscape. Condon stays with this motif, for she enjoys how the landscape form layers time, place and memory. The recipient of a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant and Florida Individual Artist Grant, Condon's artist residencies include Yaddo in Saratoga Springs, Red Gate in Beijing, Note Bene in Cadaques and Fountainhead in Miami. Her recent solo exhibitions and projects include Da Feng Gallery, Beijing, Grantpirrie, Sydney, the Albany Museum of Art, GA, Lesley Heller Workspace, New York and Dorsch Gallery, Miami. Her work is included in the collections of the US Embassy, Beijing, and the Girls Club Collection, Fort Lauderdale, FL.

Nancy Friedemann was born in Bogota, Colombia. She received her MFA from New York University in 1997. Friedemann has exhibited her work extensively throughout the United States, Colombia, Panama and England and is part of several public collections such as the Cleveland Museum of Art. She is the recipient of several awards, among them a Pollock-Krasner Grant in 2001 and an Artist Research Fellowship from the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC in 2009. Her work has been reviewed in various publications such as Art Forum, The New York Times and The Paris Review. She lives and works in New York City and is currently a professor at the New School University.



Mark Messersmith, a Professor of Art at Florida State University, received his MFA from Indiana University. Messersmith has been granted numerous local and international awards. Among those are the Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters and Sculptors Grant Award in 2006, a four-time Florida Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, Individual Artist Fellowship Award and a two-time recipient of the Ford Foundation Fellowship. His paintings have been exhibited and reviewed extensively and are in numerous public collections in the Southern United States as well as Canada, Italy and France.

Born in Candelaria, Pinar del Rio, Cuba, **G. Mirta Paula** graduated from The Institute of Higher Education in Artemisa, Cuba where she received a Bachelor's Degree in Science and Letters. She was a self-taught painter in her native land until she immigrated to the United States. Paula then took courses in commercial design at the University of Miami's Continuing Education Program and also broadened her studies in painting. In addition to her work as a painter, Paula is known for her masterful work in "pen and ink" and for her three-dimensional dioramas depicting scenes from rural Cuba. She has received continuous recognition for her oeuvre and has been the recipient of numerous awards over the past 40 years. Paula has also appeared in many local television and cable channels. Through her lifetime of painting she has come to realize that her sole source of inspiration and greatest teacher thus far is nature.



Paul Sierra was born in Havana, Cuba in 1944. Growing up in Cuba, he wanted to be a filmmaker. After immigrating to the United States as a teenager however, painting became a more feasible ambition and it led him to enroll at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. His lushly colored canvases often depict symbolic landscapes, self-portraits or interiors. His themes include Greek mythology, the exploration of man's most discordant psychological states and the artist's personal journey through life. Sierra has had more than sixty solo shows to his credit in the last twelve years. His works have been acquired as part of numerous significant public art collections, including, among others, the Smithsonian Museum of American Art, the Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art and The Snite Museum of Art at Notre Dame University.

Elizabeth Thompson is a painter with studios in both New York City and Florida. She has exhibited extensively in the US and Europe since 1974 and has completed over 20 mural commissions including projects for the Marriott Shanghai, New York University Hospital, and Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. From a young age, Thompson knew she wanted to be an artist and perfected her skills at Mount Holyoke College, École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris and concluded with a Master's from the Pratt Institute, New York. For Elizabeth nature is "primal and full of energy." She has especially sought to reveal its sublimity in these most recent works, exploring the cyclical nature of life and death.





Front and back cover: Nancy Friedemann, *Tempus Fugit (detail)*, 2010, enamel on dibond, 48" x 72" (Courtesy of the artist and Bernice Steinbaum Gallery, Miami, FL)

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