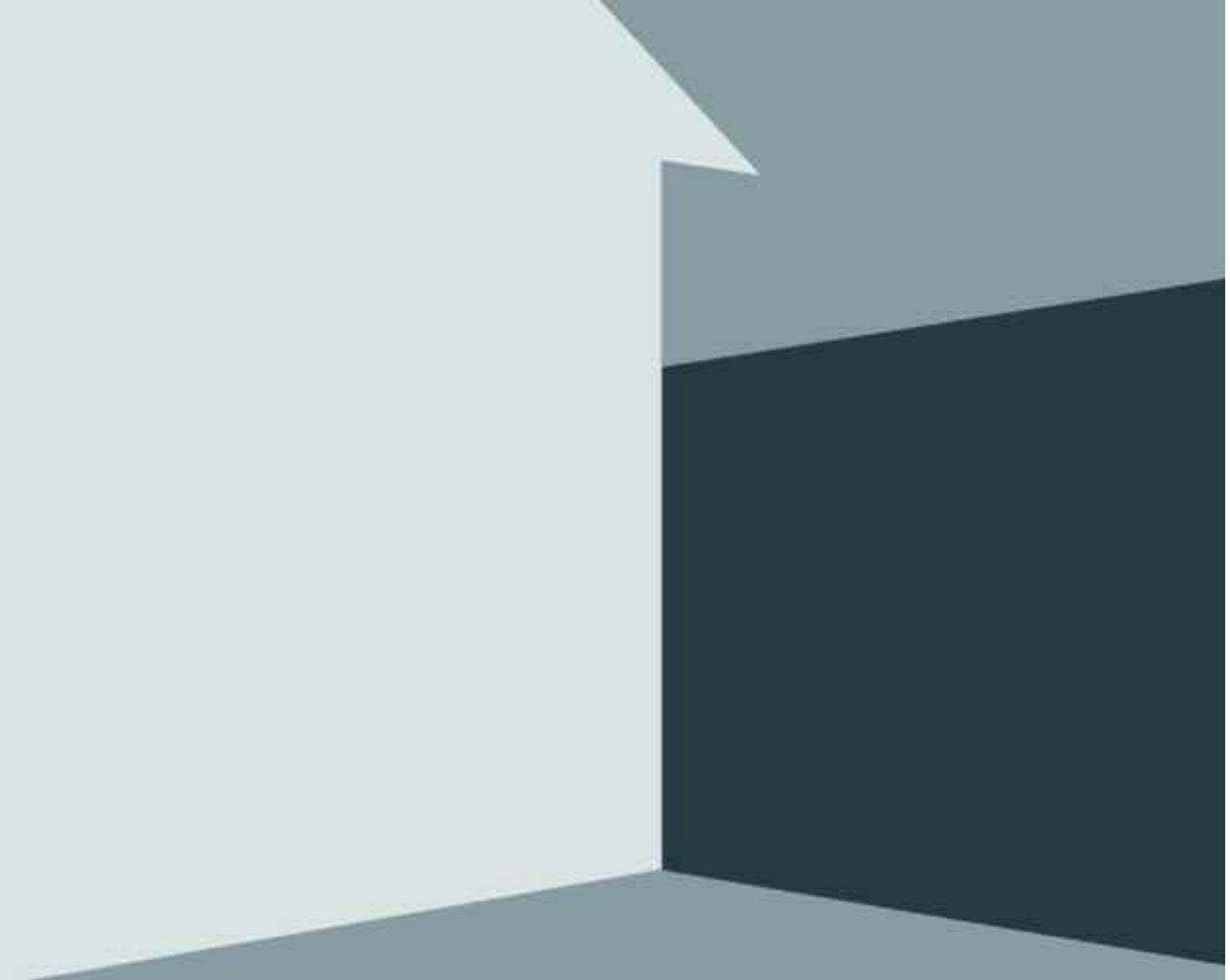


Debra Bermingham

Charles Burchfield

Quentin Curry

Rayna deNiord

Soren deNiord

Edwin Dickinson

Lois Dodd

Kim Dorland

Duncan Hannah

Louisa Matthíasdóttir

Kristine Moran

Shane Neufeld

George Nick

Devin O'Neil

Fairfield Porter

Charles Ritchie

HOME

CURATED BY ERIC AHO

april 3 – june 1, 2009

Westport
Arts
Center

51
Riverside
Avenue

Westport
Connecticut
06880

It could be argued that home as a subject in art has existed as long as homes themselves. In the 20th century — which is the primary context for Westport Arts Center's *HOME* exhibition — home wove its way through every medium: movies (one of my favorites is Home for the Holidays where a daughter comes home for Thanksgiving to a mix of pathos, humor and dysfunction); music ("Country roads, take me home, To the place I belong" by John Denver comes to mind right now); poetry (Frank O'Hara's musings about New York " … the acrid dryness of your paper/reminded me of /New York's sky in August before the/nasal rains …"); and visual art, including 1960s conceptual art projects that critiqued the commercialization of the American dream (such as Dan Graham's *Homes for America*). Considering this lengthy history that permeates everything from pop culture to high art, an exhibition about home could take infinite forms.

For his exhibition, *HOME* curator, painter Eric Aho, decided to create a trail of bread crumbs for viewers to follow beginning with early modernism, moving through postmodernism, and ending with a work made this year. Aho sticks to unique works, meaning there are no mediums designed to be multiples (prints, photographs, videos) here. The artist's hand is palpable in *HOME*, implying that interpretive rendering of one's environment still finds a "home" in creative endeavors. These artists overlay, montage, crop and embellish (via pencil marks, brush strokes, spray paint, etc.) their subjects which are primarily neighborhoods, interiors, landscapes, and houses encountered at home or work. With the paintings and drawings of Kim Dorland, Louisa Matthíasdóttir, Fairfield Porter, and Edwin Dickinson, the artists' towns, homes, studios and neighborhood streets are rendered with everything from the quick sketch, to geometric squares of color to a mix of graffiti and Abstract Expressionist bravado. Landscape architects Soren and Rayna deNiord draw sound and topography, lending the show its most patterned, conceptual offerings. There is a surrealist strain in *HOME* as well. One cannot help but think of dreams when studying the dark and hazy drawings of Charles Ritchie or the spare paintings of domestic spaces by Debra Bermingham.

HOME offers visitors a cross-generational exhibition that touches on the influence of home in the visual arts for more than seventy years. It is a fitting exhibition for the Westport Arts Center, which is celebrating its fortieth anniversary and emphasizes dialogues in contemporary art through a diverse exhibition program. We are grateful to Eric Aho for his imagination and hard work in curating the exhibition and to Dede Cummings for designing this catalog. I would also like to thank Tom O'Connor for identifying Eric as a guest curator and, as always, a special "thank you" to our Visual Arts Assistant Maura Frana for designing the invitation postcard, as well as for her invaluable contributions behind the scenes. Westport Arts Center would also like to thank our sponsors Fine Homes USA Connecticut, *Connecticut Cottages & Gardens*, Connecticut Commission for their role in making *HOME* possible.

Terri C. Smith
director of visual arts
Westport Arts Center

About the Curator

Eric Aho is a painter whose work has been widely exhibited and is held in may private and public collections including the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; the Ogunquit Museum of American Art, Maine; and the New York Public Library. The DC Moore Gallery in New York will present an exhibition of recent work in October 2009. He lives in Saxtons River, Vermont.

HOME is a subject rife with clichés and platitudes. Those in our society who do not have a fixed residence are, more often than not, viewed with suspicion and cast as outsiders. Those of us who do may fail to think about what home means in larger terms. As the artists in this exhibition manifest, "home," is a concept more richly nuanced than one would imagine primarily because the material at hand is both exciting and provocative.

The purpose of this exhibition is to explore the boundaries of perception, the vagaries of memory, and the impact of imagination. Here, "home" is to be understood as an open-ended idea encompassing feelings in concert with the imagination. The artists gathered in this exhibition examine the world they inhabit. Their responses touch upon the personal, social, imaginative and psychological to evoke a wide range of meanings and associations derived from direct observation, childhood memories, dreams as well as physical, conceptual and intellectual responses to inhabitable space. Some artists respond directly to the visual and even the auditory. For others, physical space — both, experienced and conjured — is a tool for invention. All of them share an affinity for the nuances of memory, the unpredictable dynamics of imagination and an openness to engage new boundaries of perception— one in which looking at the world with the eye causes the mind and the heart to blur.

Since the early stages of planning this exhibition, much has changed in the day-to-day world of nearly every American. While political, editorial and social commentary was not intended to be at the forefront of this exhibition, these works nonetheless address many current issues as they inform, remind, engage, enrage and comfort. Seen through the lens of the current economic crisis, these artworks reveal the extent to which we are involved in a broadly collective public and personal relationship with house and home. An involvement that is fueled by the news media, conversation with friends and family, and chance encounters with strangers. Across the country families experiencing deep economic challenges are losing their homes. Houses, which were bought and sold as speculative commodities now stand vacant in what may emerge as the new ghettos of the 21st century. The sub-prime housing and loan crisis has undermined the pursuit of the "American Dream," which included turning one's unique idea of home into a tangible reality.

Through their work, these artists point out that our range of associations with home is as wide and varied as our own unique circumstances. But the notion of home is seldom a fixed idea. Instead, it is as conditional as our memory and vulnerable to change without notice. These artists help us understand that, while we can spend a tremendous amount of effort constructing a physical environment around us, we are also compelled to remember that home is a creation born of the search for emotional and psychological health and a human desire for shelter from the world. In essence, each of us carries some image, feeling or memory of home forged, primarily, while we are young.

The artists in *HOME* employ a wide range of approaches, from the traditional to the confrontational and represent a wide span of age and experience. In the year coinciding with the Great Depression several prominent figures from an earlier generation — Charles Burchfield, Edwin Dickinson, Louisa Matthíasdóttir, and Fairfield Porter — were either just beginning or already working towards the iconic images we know them for today. Their work and subsequent careers, no doubt, were shaped by both the unique closeness and strange distance conferred by that traumatic period they had experienced. Because this key group of artists is regarded for their deeply felt, personal observations of the visible world, they establish a vital context for the exhibition in which memory, imagination and discovery resonate throughout the assembled works.

If Charles Burchfield, Edwin Dickinson, Louisa Matthíasdóttir, and Fairfield Porter are the bricks and mortar of this exhibition, then contemporary artists complete the construction. Debra Bermingham places us in a deep dream world from which we look at the familiar light, textures and rooms engrained in our imaginations from childhood. Quentin Curry's magically constructed environments connote a powerful sense of human futility. Rayna deNiord and Soren deNiord are brother and sister and both are landscape architects. Rayna creates conceptual drawings that represent a feeling for the ways that sound resonates in a confined space. Where Rayna is reacting to internal environments, Soren is responding to the external environment and discovering ways to bridge the outside and the inside using drawing as a fundamental tool towards those discoveries. Hushed and unhurried, Lois Dodd's paintings catch us off guard. Her images unfold at a pace foreign to our accustomed contemporary sensibilities. Dark and humorous, Kim Dorland's paintings mix crude graffiti and exquisite rendering to conjure the bleakness of rural Canada — the very edge of civilization. Duncan Hannah's paintings communicate a contemporary vulnerability through the awkward staging and formality of 18th century English-inspired paintings. Psychologically charged space based on painterly sensation is experienced with Kristine Moran's large-scale painting. Shane Neufeld is a painter's painter and architecture student who relies on perception and material sensitivity to generate ideas for architectural form and space through drawing. George Nick is a realist painter who discovers physical detail with loving painterly accuracy. An architect with a sculptor's attitude of curiosity, Devin O'Neill gives us insight into the conceptual development of a guesthouse proposed for the New Mexico desert. Charles Ritchie's drawings conjure the image swashing around in the suburban retina — a memory and experience that is hauntingly familiar and especially American.

To be certain, these sixteen artists create a dynamic structure. Their contributions to this exhibition encourage us to remember that "home" is a complex and fragile construction. In *HOME*, the effect is intentionally unfinished giving space for the viewer to move in.

Eric Aho

Saxtons River, Vermont

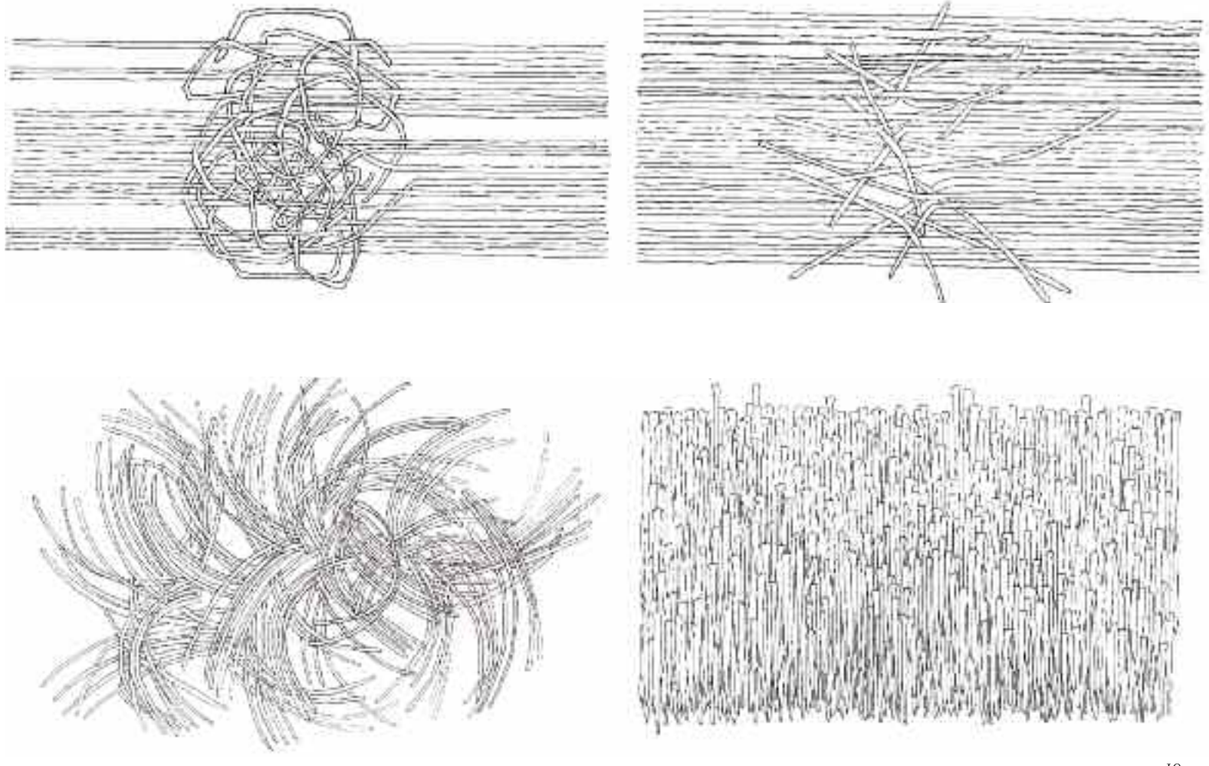
March, 2009

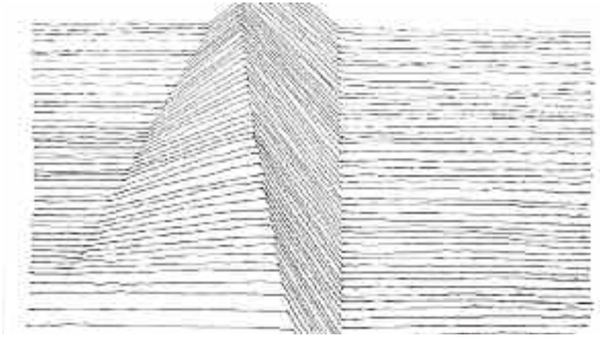
Debra Bermingham (b. 1953) places us deeply in an austere, yet dreamy, world in her painting *House of Mirth*. The title refers to 19th century Scandinavian playhouses for children and not, as some may have thought, to Edith Wharton's gothic novel. The abode of merriment here, in fact, is Bermingham's studio where one becomes lost in play of another sort. For her, and indeed for many artists, it is a special place far from the pressures and routines of daily life. This separation from the real world is further sensed in the figure, mask in hand, which we assume is a self-portrait. This is a room of familiar textures and light, elements that frequently become engrained in our imaginations. It has the strange quality of being both empty and full. Bermingham builds up the paint in many thin layers to establish a watery surface born of the painter's need to activate empty space and make tangible the volume of air. As though startled awake from a dream, we sense the retinal static of moonlight as the shifting light on the floorboards animates the still room.

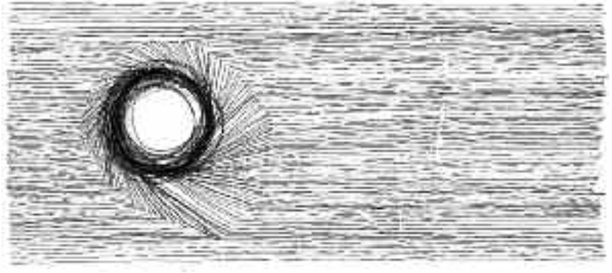
Charles Burchfield (1893–1967) painted *House and Trees in the Snow* sometime around 1940, when the artist was entering a prolific period of new work. This is predicated on the artist's unparalleled personal response to his surroundings near his home in Gardenville, New York. Works such as this were to become catalysts of engagement for all of the senses. Through an invented individualistic iconography, nature would be conveyed in unmitigated glory. In *House and Trees in the Snow*, Burchfield has considered the weathered, but solid, American heartland in the sensible foursquare dwelling that is long on sturdy vernacular function and short on decorative ornamentation. But all is not as it appears: the branches of the tree in the front yard appear to be seething despite the cold winter light. The severed trunk arrests the arboreal reverie with a sobering reminder of what has been recently lost. The tension here might suggest larger issues ringing quietly throughout the collective consciousness across the American landscape, chiefly that while the Great Depression had been addressed, the trauma of World War II was only beginning.

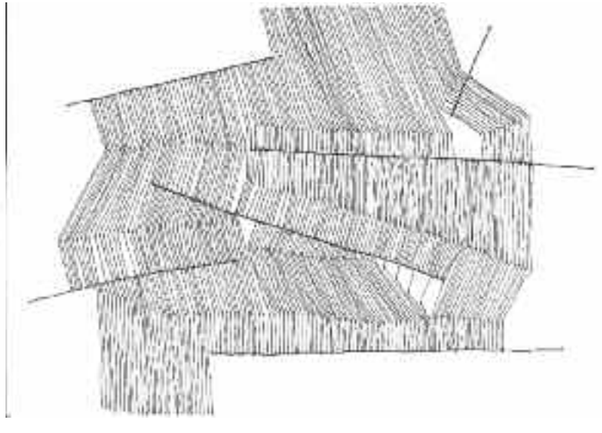
Quentin Curry's (b. 1972) paintings connote a sense of human futility. *Outcast* is an imaginative reflection of the artist's rural studio in western Pennsylvania. By placing the trailer and workshop with its attendant debris in this mountain retreat, he suggests that the painter's existence is that of an outcast–a forlorn existence which is situated within an autumnal wood of unmatched beauty. Overwhelmed by the domestic, the suburban, the urbane and the banal, this artist-in-recluse gives up the struggle to dominate his environment and instead resigns to his surroundings. There is something both radical and respectful in Curry's vision as he responds to the legacy of 19th century painter Frederic Church, to the first generation American Modernists and to the contemporary art dialogue. Curry discovers his images and landscapes through curiosity and an engagement with materials. By incorporating an unusual process of pressing layers upon layers of intensely pigmented stone dust through cheesecloth, details emerge and are then scraped away. The results bring to mind, simultaneously, an awareness of medieval tapestries, the modern pixel and Piero della Francesco's frescoes. By mixing mechanical expression and alluding to painterly expressionism, Curry's work offers promise of a spiritual escape from the trappings of our immediate environment.

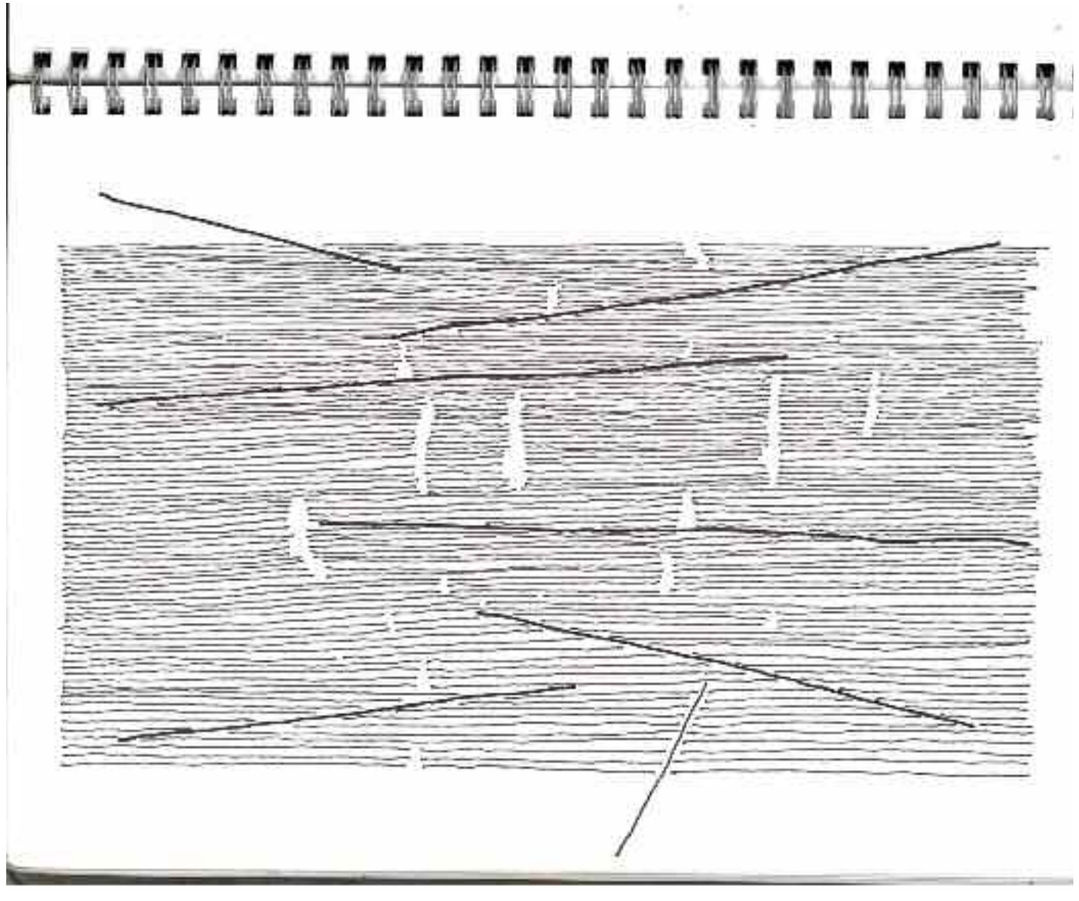
Rayna deNiord (b. 1978) is intrigued by the concept of architecture as more than the framing of space. She believes it is also about the things that are experienced or happen within that framework. For deNiord, music has its own architecture in that it can create illusion. She invites us to consider the following: "What does an ugly room with beautiful music feel like?" To her ear and, indeed by extension, her eyes, sound invites creative solutions for defining a physical and habitable space. "This is home," she concludes. Rayna deNiord posits that architecture, while a container, is not static. Rather, it is susceptible to unexpected change from within. Since this quality of perception is heavily influenced by sound, her drawings respond to an imagined acoustical architecture. In doing so, she ultimately becomes an inventor of "systems" which serve to map the intangible, including the path of the sound itself. Much like the radical sound structure maps of the cartographer Johannes Grannö (1882–1956), deNiord reminds us that what we see is deeply influenced by all the senses in concert. The eye is not independent, but is subject to a melding of sensory responses.





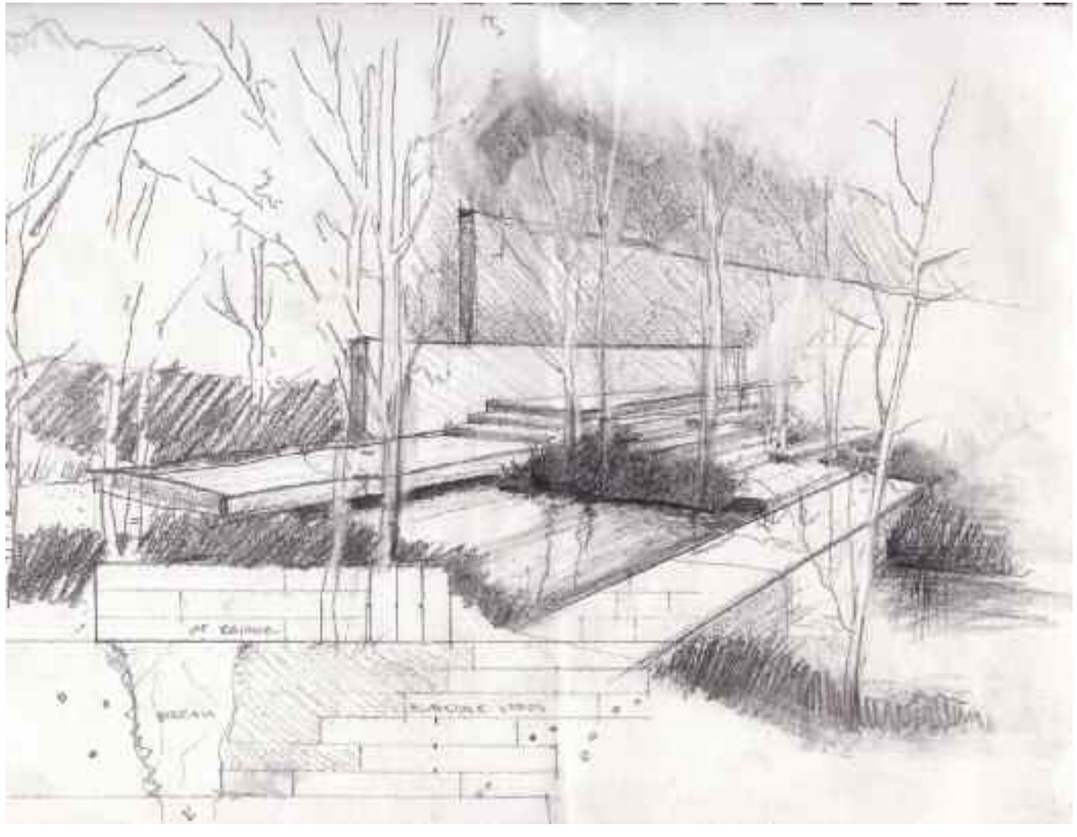


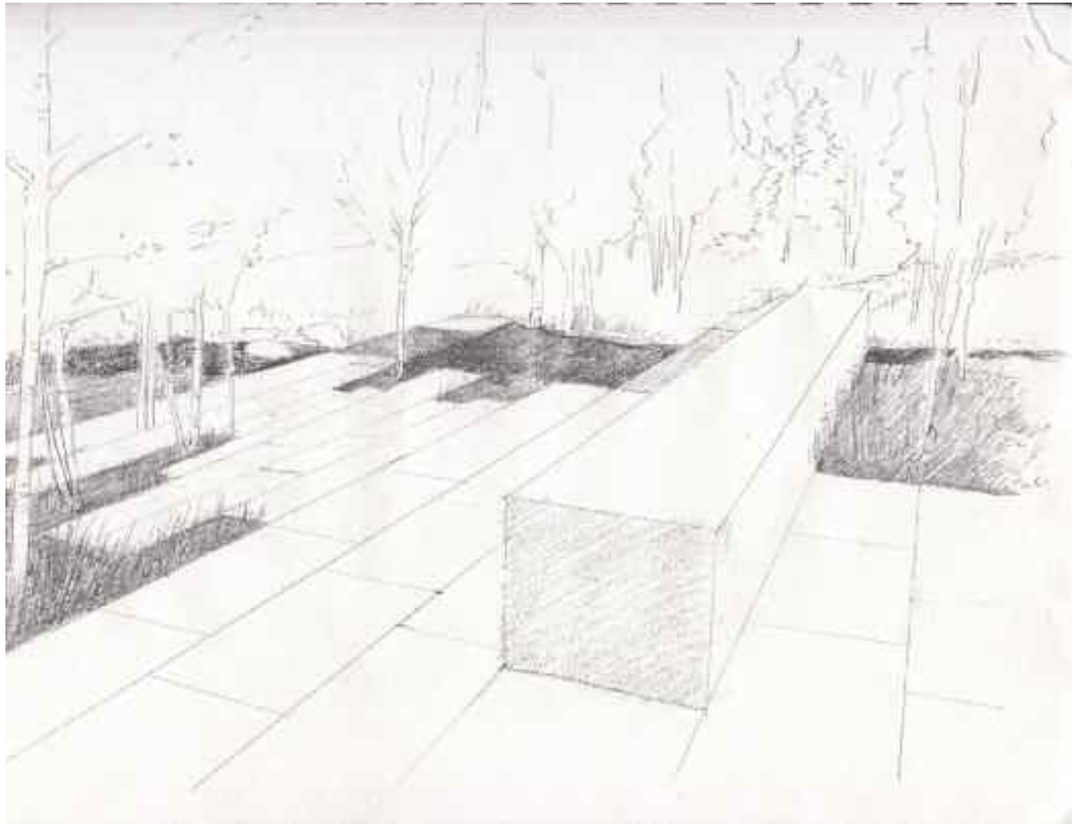


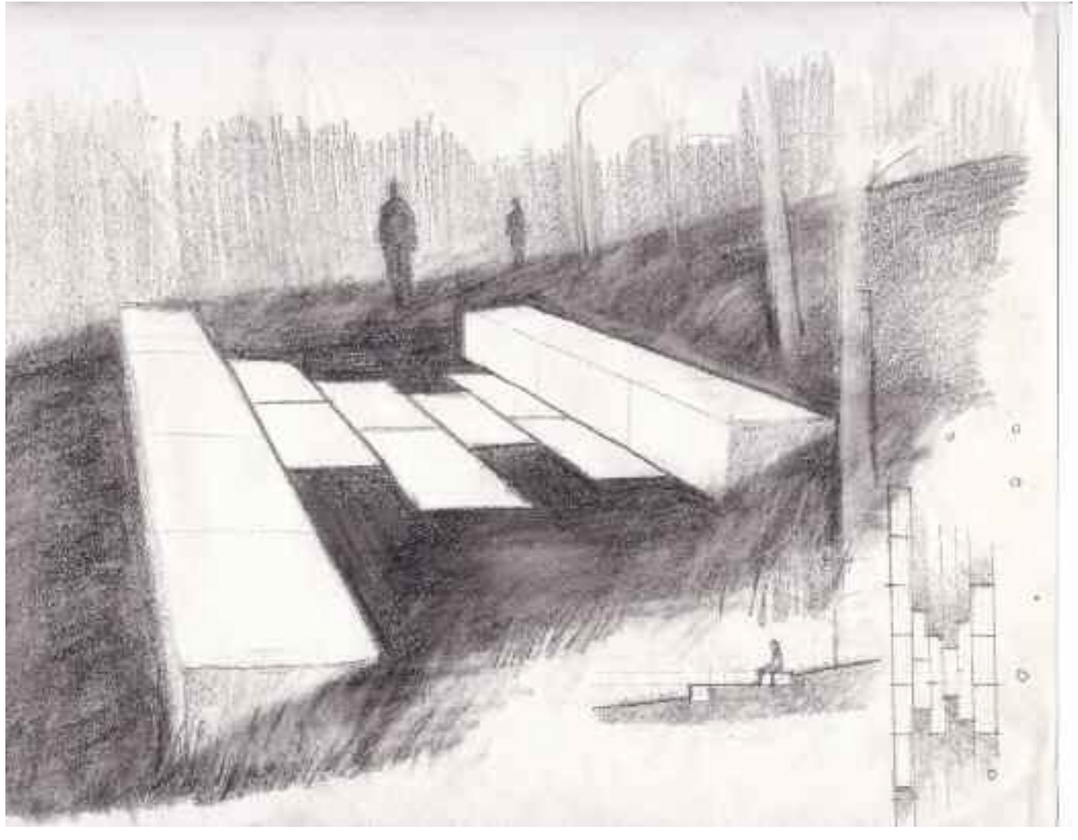


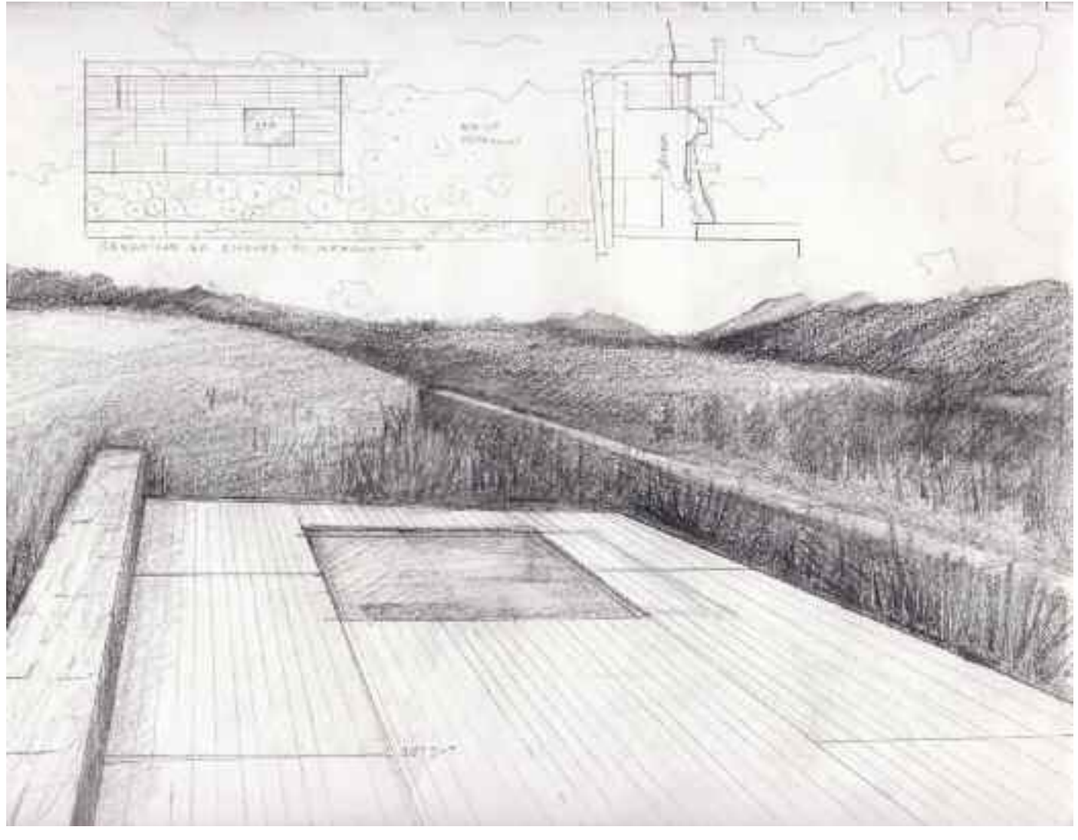
Soren deNiord (b. 1975) Where Rayna deNiord is responding to internal environments, her brother Soren, also a landscape architect, is responding to the external environment. He discovers ways to bridge the outside and the inside, the wild and the domestic. As a student, deNiord traveled extensively with a sketchbook, an open mind and a sensitive and receptive eye. Those early drawings are records of his discovery of the world on the page.

As a professional landscape architect deNiord must be sensitive to how his client lives with the outdoors. In some instances, houses are designed to feel as though the structure is seamlessly sited in a "naturalized" condition, where, after construction, there are no elements recognizable as "built" or "designed." The house appears as if it belongs to the place. This creates an inclusive sense of home in the landscape. In other instances, the built landscape can be intentionally (and obviously) constructed through a more additive approach. Some clients want to extend the sense of home *out* into the surrounding conditions. "In this case," deNiord explains, "we are challenged to study and understand the physical and metaphorical edge — where the house stops, starts and blurs in the landscape. This allows opportunities to draw and propose outdoor living spaces that expand the notion of house/home/domestic in the outdoors."









Edwin Dickinson (1891–1978) In the drawing *Studio, 46 Pearl Street*, we see a register of the familiar material surroundings of Dickinson's studio from the winter of 1926. It is a glimpse into an unguarded personal world of an artist known to be droll and gregarious at times, but mostly formal in manner. Despite the realism he exacted, the drawing radiates a casual presence like that of an oft-used and stained paper lunch bag. It isn't surprising then to read Fairfield Porter, another artist in this exhibition, write: "Dickinson makes the most out of the least . . . he is in touch with an elusive, and fleeting, essentiality."

Studio, 46 Pearl Street, Provincetown allows us to peer into the private corner of Dickinson's work space. He shows a cylinder stove and a worn Victorian armchair in exact relation to one another, dissolving into the same sooty light. Several framed pieces hang from a picture rail along with a mask and an unidentifiable object. There is a box, most likely containing his fossil collection, on a side table next to the chair. Rags and hand-hemmed tea towels hang on a dowel, a jury-rigged laundry line over the stove. The slack electrical cord to the left and the taut rope suspending the conical lampshade is a surprise. It constructs a crucial zig-zag line coursing through the center of the pictorial space. A sense of the vertical, otherwise absent in the marks of the drawing, is further substantiated by a downward thrusting harpoon hooked to the picture rail. Partly real, partly dream, partly disclosed, partly hidden, Dickinson's observations are nevertheless, precise. His touch is both uncompromising and oddly forgiving. The dissolving tones press the inherent light of the paper into being. He draws and paints the way we actually perceive the world, in a montage of glance-born information assembled as the eye skates across the subject. In his life-long engagement with and commitment to the observed, Dickinson's razor sharp precision shares the space with a surprising softness.

Lois Dodd (b. 1927) While nearly 25 years separates *Window and Ice Bank* (1983) from *Johnson, VT Porch*, May (2007), Dodd's impulse to reduce the idea of place to an essential shape, unencumbered by specificity of detail, is present in both works. She is attuned to contrasting sensations: frozen curtains of ice against the warm window drapes of the interior; light on a porch as a solid form while the house dissolves into the nighttime landscape darkness. Hushed and unhurried, Dodd's paintings catch us off-guard. They unfold at a pace foreign to our accustomed contemporary sensibilities. There is nothing spectacular about the ice bank outside her window, nor is there anything extraordinary about the light on a Vermont porch in the springtime, indeed, even the very making of the image seems unimportant. What is special and curious, is the urgency she gives to the ordinary. A house, a window, a tree; Dodd takes nearly everything — including herself — away from the painting leaving us only the beauty of the actual. In a lingering sensation, absence is what resonates here, as if our beloved has just stepped out of view.

Kim Dorland (b. 1974) combines the visual pollution of graffiti and the literalness of thickly painted surfaces to suggest the bleakness of life found on the other side of the tracks. His images are a midden of castaway details from a dysfunctional world: junk-strewn rural backyards, forests littered with graffiti and cul-de-sacs populated with aimless slacker-teenagers. Because his emphasis is voyeurism on the edge of civilization, works such as *Hillary's House* test our faith in humanity. A figure steps onto the street; another figure crouches in the yard across the way. The painting shows it is late in the day, however, the figure's shadow on the street seems impossible given the overcast conditions of late winter. Or could it be a moonlit scene? Dorland keeps his Romantic impulses well concealed. If not humanity then, perhaps nature's splendor might redeem the forsaken life of this dead end street. Finger-painted snow lingers on the lawns. A four-wheel drive vehicle is parked in the driveway. Spruce trees pierce the rural sky. Months after the fact, Christmas lights are still flashing around the picture window of the blue stucco house. At its front door an evergreen has outgrown its site, pushing hard against the built environment. Dorland's hybrid of styles effectively conveys the violent collision of nature and culture in this marginal world of existential angst.

Duncan Hannah (b. 1952) paints the Chateau in his *Prince and Princess* as lovely as can be, but strips it of any conventional notion of "home." The work, consequently, underscores one of the fundamental themes of this exhibition. The diffident historic grandness of the building, oversized grounds and plantings suggest a contemporary mood of alienation and displacement notwithstanding the staged and kitschy Anglophile scene. The Prince and Princess with their dog and attendant privilege seem displaced in a posture of startling vulnerability. Dwarfed by their pretentious house and isolated on the front lawn, their masquerade is interrupted. Perhaps a messenger has just arrived to declare the end of an era. Hannah's point of departure for this particular piece was a small black and white photo of a work by the British 18th century painter, Arthur Devis (1712–1787) found in a copy of a 1950's *Country Life* magazine. "It is a kind of revisionism, as if Picasso never happened," Hannah states, "I have a personal agenda, roaming around an alternative art history, to see what I can and can't do. It's all part of a lifetime search for an artistic self that could mirror my own interior world."

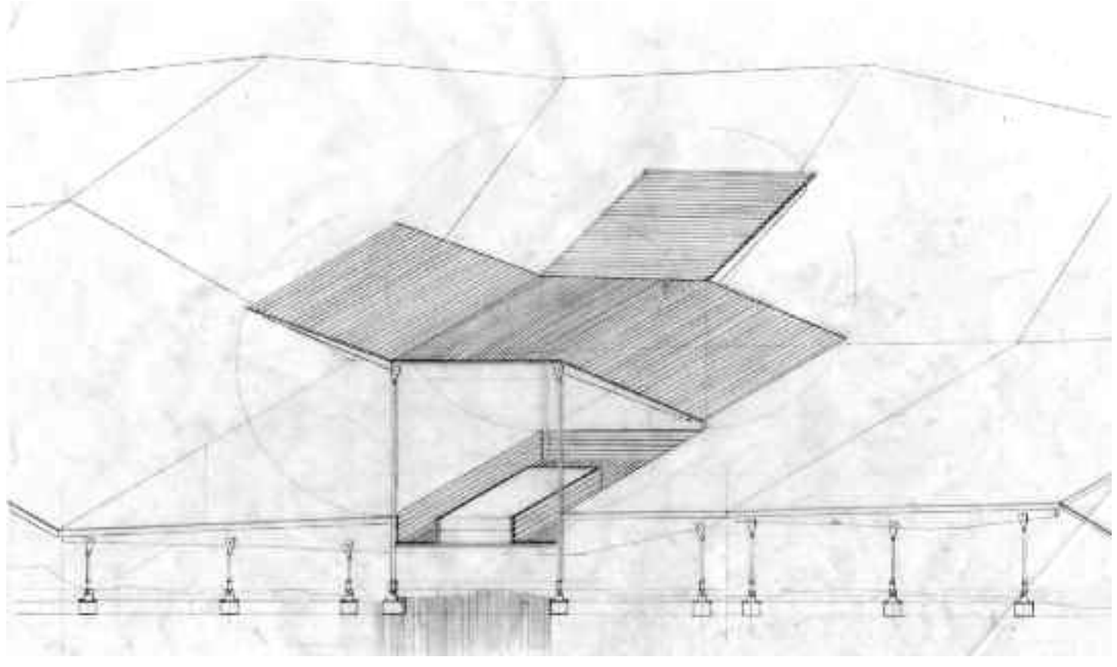
Lousia Matthíasdóttir (1917–2000) To sit with Louisa Matthíasdóttir in her studio was to sit in a particular kind of silence commonplace to Scandinavians and Nordic people, but disquieting to others. A silence based on shared assumptions of honesty, equality and understanding. This is noteworthy because encountering Matthíasdóttir in her physical world was no different from experiencing these qualities today through the means of her paintings. Her works invite us into the visual recollections of her past; we are immediately asked to become her intimate. The paintings are welcoming hosts of our gaze and never ask too much of us. The silence they put forth is their form and that form only becomes awkward when the viewer insists on pressing for more detail. In *Woman in Reykjavik*, painted around 1980, Matthíasdóttir shows a young woman from the neck up (a cropping device perhaps borrowed from another Nordic artist Edvard Munch) gliding along a violet street leading from the icy blue harbor. The figure here is plain but pretty. The three arching present-day street lamps place us in time; otherwise, the old part of Reykjavik appears much as it has since Matthíasdóttir's childhood. The 19th century copper turreted municipal buildings, the weathered tin-roofed longhouse and the surprising turquoise trimmed oxide-red painted buildings stand wedded in shadow and emblazoned by the color of the northern sun. Clouds amass over the mountains on the other side of the bay. The sky is as icy as paint can be. Most likely painted from memory following a family trip, this piece is about maintaining two homes simultaneously–the physical home of the present and the psychic home of the past. The young woman in the painting, glimpsed on a familiar street could be a surrogate for the young Matthíasdóttir herself who left Iceland at the height of World War II to study painting in New York. There, in the din of the big city, it seems Matthíasdóttir learned to retreat to the memory of her Icelandic childhood and youth. It was through painting she found the visual equivalent to the silent pause between spoken statements.

Kristine Moran (b. 1974) establishes an improbable tableau of sensation in her large-scale painting *Behind Closed Doors* from 2008. In it, she elicits the disparate presences of poltergeists, self-organizing systems in physics, the rococo charm of François Boucher, and the struggle of Francis Bacon's figures in their arena of angst. Moran's mélange of responses works because she conveys pure painted material at the very moment it becomes an image. The philosopher Gilles Deleuze writes of Francis Bacon, but could as easily be writing about Moran: *"Sensation has one face turned toward the subject… and one face turned toward the object — the fact. It is Being-in-the-World, as the phenomenologists say: at one and the same time I become in the sensation and something happens through the sensation."* Moran's interior is one of restrained order and unraveling chaos — painterly function and dysfunction that recalls a swank living room or hotel lobby draped in a pthalo-moonlight. Exiting the lush velvety details of curtains and couches we encounter her "sensation" in the midst of becoming.

George Nick (b. 1927) is a patient man with a sweet tooth of an eye–a painter who discovers physical detail with exuberance and painterly accuracy. *Amphora Assya*, 2000, is an image of his own suburban living room. There is something awkwardly transgressive about being in such a sun-filled room in the late morning, in the middle of the week, in someone else's home. Perhaps we shouldn't be there. Yet, Nick asks us to linger and look — make ourselves comfortable — don't worry about the psychic trespassing. Dedicated to his wife Assya, this painting is the container of the artist's own life. An effulgent winter light fills the room. A portrait of his daughter hangs on the twisting wall. Alongside the portrait, another portrait — that of pure unrestrained paint — hangs as if it were an Abstract Expressionist work that has both challenged and informed Nick throughout his long career. We discover the television, in one corner, made with a buttery paint and looking rather like a piece of chocolate cake and the large standing vessel, the object of the painting's title in the other. Amidst all the wonderful things he's painted, we wonder about the true subject of Nick's work. Then it occurs to us, Nick isn't painting the objects themselves; he is painting his cumulative excitement at how the world looks. We find ourselves slightly embarrassed, like grown-ups at a kid's party, to admit that we too are bubbling-over, excited to have received the invitation and secretly hoping to lick the frosting on the cake.

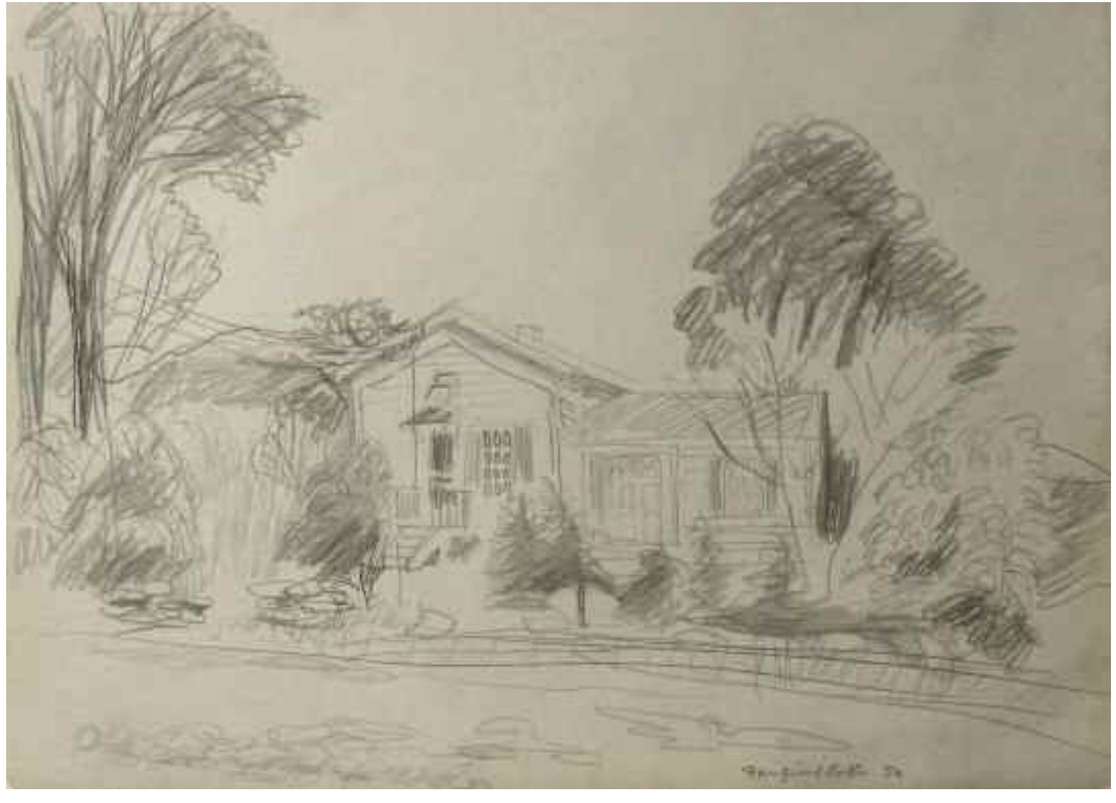
Shane Neufeld's (b. 1982) watercolors of architectural structures remind us of the tenuousness of painting, not unlike Mark Rothko's *Orange and Yellow* of 1956, a work Neufeld holds in high regard. Neufeld relies on perception and material sensitivity in drawing to generate ideas for architectural form and space. He is a painter's painter making the invisible visible in his watercolors. Since he is also a student of architecture, he realizes that sensation produces the armature of these works. The towering constructs appear to be delicate, precarious, reflective, fractal structures. A series of opaque plates embedded within transparent walls rise vertically into a night-blue sky. In works such as *Drawing 1*, Neufeld asks a lot of his medium and pushes at conventional associations of architecture. "Is it possible," he wonders, "that the process of drawing — the imaginative conjuring of space — can create a sensation which might then translate into the bricks and mortar of an inhabitable object?" It may well be, since his works are in fact moored to the process of discovery in the course of the drawing, they go beyond the object towards the visionary. While the play between color and line defines form, the impression of the structure, and therefore the feeling of habitability is obscured, leaving us with the sense of an elusive relationship between space and void.

Devin O'Neill (b. 1971) is an architect whose discerning work begins with an unsatiable curiosity and a compulsion for investigation. His ensuing discoveries might generally be associated with those of a sculptor or an installation artist. His *Lightning Field Project* exhibited here is a conceptual outline for a proposed guesthouse adjacent to Walter de Maria's *Lightning Field* in western New Mexico. Twenty-foot by twenty-foot tiles of Formica, spread across the desert, creating an interior surface on a vast tract of the landscape. The scale and materials of the artificial field, combined with elements normally associated with an interior, originate from an idea, O'Neill says begins with the unexpected materials found in domestic shrines of Mexican homes. In this vein, Christmas lights represent the stars and blue plastic bags represent the sky. This distortion of scale and use of contrasting materials (e.g. decorative fringe dangling and scraping the dirt of the desert floor), creates an unsettling tension with the power to provoke a baseline emotional response.



Fairfield Porter (1907–1975) would find 1952, the year he made the drawing in this exhibition and the year he began writing art criticism for *ArtNews*, to be the year of his first show of paintings in New York with the Tibor de Nagy Gallery. His subsequent career then took shape quietly, leading to the keenly observed laconic organizations of his domestic world, which were influenced significantly by Abstract Expressionism. 1952 was the year Willem deKooning would finally complete the first of the *Women* series and when Jackson Pollock was at work on *Blue Poles*. Porter was also responding to Bonnard, an artist he greatly admired and whose 1948 retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art made a life-long impact. If Bonnard's sense of sunlight was guiding Porter's painting, then Bonnard was also holding Porter's hand as evidenced in this drawing *Clapboard House II*, as it shares Bonnard's casual soft-wristed mark making. *Clapboard House II* could well be a neighbor's house drawn just a few years after the Porter family moved to the then sleepy village of Southampton.

The clarity of the building in *Clapboard House II* is absorbed in the lines of benignly neglected and overgrown hedges, plantings and surrounding trees, much like Porter's own house. While not as grand as the nearby mansions, the clapboard house, like much of the architecture of Southampton, was solidly built and respectably aristocratic in profile. Porter, whose father was an architect, was brought up in a milieu of waning aristocratic privilege. Many of his drawings and paintings seize on the opportunity to set the subject at an emotional distance. In this drawing domestic intimacy is literally held at arms length, but at the same time, is rendered with a tender and thoughtful line. There is no particular style or attached attitude, other than the wily inclusion of Bonnard's conjuring line. It is a drawing straight from the hip — the lingering observation of a certain passerby.



Charles Ritchie (b. 1954) creates the images that swash around in the suburban retina with his *Self-Portrait with Night: Two Panels I*, 2005. In this segmented watercolor we encounter intersecting reflections of interior and exterior worlds. True to the nature and condition of memory itself, we are presented with multiple vignettes and pause to orient ourselves. What we see belongs uniquely to this artist, yet is tantalizingly familiar to many Americans. Ritchie draws and paints his home and studio, in the evening and in predawn hours; between the worlds of work and sleep. Disjunction prevails, as lit porches, walkway lamps and windows appear in the periphery, truncated trees levitate into view, and branches become tangled in the chandelier. A palpable urgency pervades the piece, heightened by the tension between a cold exterior and a warm interior. Punched by the sky's intoxicating cobalt-blue, the dynamic of the drawing shifts by yielding to the power of the natural world. Like his frequently cited influence, the insurance executive cum poet, Wallace Stevens, Ritchie maintains a parallel career as a museum curator, while musing on the visual ingredients for exquisite American poetry.

HOME Checklist

Debra Bermingham (b. 1953)
The House of Mirth, 2002
Oil on panel
36 x 24 inches
Courtesy of DC Moore Gallery, New York

Charles Burchfield (1893–1967)
House and Trees in Snow, c.1940
Watercolor on paper
28 x 24 inches
Courtesy of DC Moore Gallery, New York

Quentin Curry (b. 1972)
Outcast, 2005
Oil and stone dust on panel
36 x 48 inches
Courtesy of Stellan Holm Gallery, New York

Rayna deNiord (b. 1978)
No. 025, 2007
No. 028, 2007
No. 093, 2007
No. 143, 2007
No. 157, 2008
No. 205, 2008
No. 216, 2008
No. 228, 2008
All drawings ink on paper
7 x 10 inches
All works courtesy of the artist

Soren deNiord (b. 1975)
Weir 1, 2007
Mixed media on paper
9 x 12 inches

Weir 2, 2007
Graphite on paper
9 x 12 inches

Weir 3, 2007
Graphite on paper
9 x 12 inches

Folly bench, 2008
Graphite on paper
9 x 12 inches

Spa deck, 2008
Graphite on paper
9 x 12 inches

All works courtesy of the artist.

Edwin Dickinson (1891–1978)
Studio, 46 Pearl St., 1926
Pencil on paper
18 ⅞ x 12 ½ inches
Private Collection

Lois Dodd (b. 1927)
Johnson, VT Porch, May 07, 2007
Oil on masonite
11 x 12 ⅞ inches
Courtesy of Alexandre Gallery, New York

Window and Ice Bank, 1983
Oil on masonite
11 ⅞ x 17 inches
Courtesy of Alexandre Gallery, New York

Kim Dorland (b. 1974)
Hillary's House, 2008
Oil and acrylic on wood
35 x 48 inches
Private Collection
Courtesy of Freight and Volume, New York

Duncan Hannah (b. 1952)
Prince and Princess, 2009
Oil on canvas
24 x 24 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Louisa Matthíasdóttir (1917–2000)
Woman in Reykjavik, 1980
Oil on canvas
20 x 30 inches
Courtesy of Tibor de Nagy Gallery, New York

Kristine Moran (b. 1982)
Behind Closed Doors, 2008
Oil on wood panel
66 x 72 inches
Private Collection
Courtesy of Nicelle Beauchene Gallery,
New York

Shane Neufeld
Drawing 1, 2, and 3, 2007
Pencil, ink, and watercolor on paper
8 ½ x 9 inches
Courtesy of the artist

George Nick (b. 1927)
Amphora Assya, 2000
Oil on linen
42 x 42 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Devin O'Neill (b. 1971)
Lightning Field Project, 2000
Collage and graphite on paper
39 x 47 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Fairfield Porter (1907–1975)
Clapboard House II, 1952
Graphite on paper
12 x 16 inches
Courtesy of Tibor de Nagy Gallery, New York

Charles Ritchie (b. 1954)
Self-Portrait with Night: Two Panels I, 2005
Water, gouache, and graphite on fabriano paper
4 x 12 ¼ inches
Courtesy of the Cartin Collection

Acknowledgements

It has been my distinct honor to assemble these pieces and present them on the occasion of this exhibition at the Westport Arts Center. There are many people who have helped make this project possible. I would like to express my gratitude to all those involved.

My thanks go first and foremost to the artists who have lent their works, their time, and provided valuable insight into their creative process.

Several of the pieces in the show come directly from private collections and my heartfelt thanks goes to: Tom Burke, the Cartin Collection, Mark Dean and Nancy Dickinson for parting with their key works for the duration of this show. Nancy Dickinson was especially generous with insight into her father-in-law's drawing, which, I feel, has made my life richer.

The galleries I contacted with requests for loans of artwork were not only willing but were consistently helpful and gracious throughout the organizing of this exhibition. I would like to thank the owners, directors and staff at: Alexandre Gallery, Babcock Gallery, Nicelle Beauchene Gallery, DC Moore Gallery, Tibor de Nagy Gallery, Freight and Volume, and Stellan Holm Gallery all in New York and Gallery NAGA in Boston.

I am grateful to Tom O'Connor for inviting me to step out of my own studio for a brief period and into the worlds of these exceptional artists. Without his objective and critical eye, the words and images related to this show would not be seen to the full. Maura Frana and Terri Smith of the Westport Arts Center brought a discerning and diligent professionalism to the stewardship of crucial details.

I have gained a new appreciation for the role an editor plays in flushing out the core of an idea and would like to thank Timothy Standring for his patience and diligence in working with me. Additionally, I would like to thank Kevin Rita who helped to steer me in the right direction at an early stage and David Calicchio and Chard deNiord for their thorough reading of the texts at various stages.

Finally, I would like to extend a special thank you to my wife, Rachel, for her support and enthusiasm through each stage of this project; and to my daughter, Madelin, and son, Emmett; all three of whom allowed me to disappear in a distraction of another sort for much of the winter.

Eric Aho
Saxtons River, Vermont
March, 2009

HOME was designed by Dede Cummings / dcdesign, brattleboro, vermont

Display Type: ATF Agency Gothic was designed by Morris Fuller Benton in 1932, as a lone titling font. In 1990, David Berlow saw potential in the squared forms of the narrow, monotone capitals. He designed a lowercase and added a bold to produce Font Bureau Agency, an immediately popular hit.

Text: Set in Fairfield, an old style serif typeface designed by Rudolph Ruzicka as a text font. Released in 1940, its design is rooted in the forms of Venecian Old Face types.

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Sponsored with funds from: