



Maysey Craddock. A land apart, a world within



Maysey Craddock, *Cloud Azalea*, 2023. Gouache, flashe and thread on found paper, 48 x 62 in. (52 x 66 in. framed).

Photography Credit: Phil Maisel. Courtesy of Sarah Sheperd Gallery

Sarah Shepard Gallery is pleased to welcome Memphis-based artist Maysey Craddock for her first solo exhibition with the gallery featuring seven new paintings.

Best known for her visceral gouache paintings of ephemeral landscapes, Craddock examines the dualities and mysteries of nature and those relationships to space and time. Through images that reference the wetland ecologies of the northern Gulf Coast, her work engages with questions of ephemerality, vulnerability, and resilience in the landscape. These are spaces where water meets land, thriving in tidal ambiguity and the delicate balance of a breathing sea and constantly regenerating borderland. They are also places endangered by human encroachment, industry, the looming threats of rising seas, and other anthropogenically altered patterns of nature.



Drawing from the artist's experiences of place, the resulting paintings arrive in a re-imagined dream space through abstraction, negation, and erasure. Over time, she discovers and revisits these sites with her camera, documenting their senescence, regeneration, and, in some cases, their vanishing. This potential for disruption and change is mirrored in the transformative process of art-making in her studio. Once she selects a photograph from which to work, she begins by digitally erasing and disintegrating the image, distilling it into, for example, an intricate tree form or a ruptured field of fragments of vegetation - new iterations of meandering undulations with their motion and currents.

She then traces this linear distillation onto tracing paper and, with carbon paper, transfers the drawing onto a substrate of ordinary paper bags that are unfolded and sewn together by hand with silk thread. This laborious process of drawing and re-drawing removes her from the literal photograph and gives her time to enter the image as a meditative space with its rhythms and patterns. Layers of gouache are laid over the terrain of the paper, merging with the folds, stamps, and creases of the unfolded bags and conveying atmosphere and a recollection of the story of these spaces. The paintings that emerge from this process resonate with saturated hues and a beauty that she hopes will elicit new connections to the natural world.

The title of the exhibition comes from the idea of entering nature as a visitor and, to most of us, it is a land apart. Craddock hopes the paintings offer a way to enter these pictorial references to nature and find the world within. The work opens the door for the viewer to imagine themselves in a world, and to find in that kind of visual dream space their internal awareness of landscape, place, and nature. Craddock paints the natural world, but it is densely meditated through her artistic practice. The landscapes are far removed from everyday life and painted at a distance (a land apart), but countless hours in the studio bring them to a world within. When Craddock returns to these places after having painted them, her sense and understanding of what she is seeing and experiencing is enriched by the work she has done. The land apart becomes the world within.

Maysey Craddock was born in 1971 in Memphis, TN, and currently lives and works in Memphis. She received an MFA from Maine College of Art, Portland, ME, and a BA in Sculpture and Anthropology from Tulane University in New Orleans. Throughout her career spanning over 25 years, she has participated in numerous solo exhibitions across the United States and Germany, including the Museum of the University of Mississippi; Sears Peyton Gallery, New York; Cris Worley Fine Arts, Dallas; David Lusk Gallery, Memphis; Washington and Lee University, Virginia; Memphis Brooks Museum of Art; Nancy Margolis Gallery, New York; Taylor Bercier Fine Art, New Orleans; James F. Byrnes Institute, Stuttgart, Germany; Pan American Art Projects, Dallas, TX; Francine Seders Gallery, Seattle; The Foyer, Munich, Germany; Maine College of Art; and the Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans.



Her work is in the collections of many institutions and organizations, including the Brooks Museum of Art; The Arkansas Arts Center; Music City Center, Nashville; Austin Peay State University, Clarksville, TN; Charles Hotel, Munich; FedEx; First Bank, Nashville; NexAir; Pfizer Corporation; St. Mary's Episcopal School and The Assisi Foundation in Memphis. She has received awards, grants, and residencies, including the Tennessee Artist Fellowship from Austin Peay State University; an Individual Artist Fellowship Award from the Tennessee Arts Commission; Artist in Residence at Oberpfälzer Künstlerhaus, Schwandorf, Germany; Artist in Residence at Maine College of Art; and sculpture and painting residencies at the Vermont Studio Center and the Virginia Center for Creative Arts.