

Susan Eley  
— Hudson —  
Fine Art

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

January 7, 2021

***This Land.***

**Rachel Burgess, Katherine Curci,  
Deborah Freedman, Rachelle Krieger**



January 14 – February 28, 2021  
433 Warren St, Hudson, NY 12534



Opening Reception: Saturday, January 14, 4-6 PM\*

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The land embracing my home in Upstate NY has been an unimaginable comfort over the past ten months. It is constant, yet ever changing. The environment reflects the passage of time—hour by hour, day by day. I walk the same path every day, charging up the hill with my trusty canine companion, passing from private to state land and back home again. This three-mile loop beckons each day, regardless of whipping wind, icy roads, misty rain or blazing sunshine. What remains unfathomable to me—a city girl to the bone—is the respite and solace these walks consistently provide, a veritable gift to me. It seems too cliché to write, but I have been struck by the ever-changing movement of clouds and the myriad of sunshine colors and the gradients of light that weave their way through the backdrop of the majestic Catskill mountains.

A landscape exhibition was inevitable, given my 2020 mindset and the focus on my natural surroundings. SEFA Hudson's location also influenced this curatorial direction, as the gallery is ensconced in the Hudson Valley, birthplace of the famed Hudson River

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School of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. While encompassing the Catskills, the Adirondacks and the White Mountains, the homes and studios of arguably the movement's most legendary proponents—Frederic Edwin Church's Olana and Thomas Cole's House Cedar Grove—are within several miles of the gallery, flanking the Hudson River.

Representations of the landscape are a consistent subject throughout art history, whether examining Western or Non-Western art. We can look at Aboriginal rock paintings, dating back more than 20,000 years; Chinese Sumi-e ink painting of the first century AD, brought to Korea and Japan in the 14<sup>th</sup> century; moving through Romanticism with J.M.W. Turner's revolutionary atmospheric seascapes; the Modern art of Claude Monet's Impressionist fields and water lilies; and Vincent van Gogh's visions of starry nights under the glowing Arles sky. To mention just a few later examples from the 20<sup>th</sup> century: Arthur Dove's landscapes, that moved away from narrative and headed towards abstraction with their bold form, color and style, come to mind; as do Ansel Adams' grand landscapes in silver gelatin, showcasing the power and the splendor of wild America; and Betty Parson's 1950s abstractions, quick sketches that reveal not simply a site, but how she felt about that place in that moment.

Rachel Burgess, Katherine Curci, Deborah Freedman and Rachelle Krieger are the four contemporary artists featured in *This Land*. Their artworks range from the highly refined and detailed charcoal drawings of land and seascape by Curci; Burgess' romantic landscapes in her monotypes, inspired by coastal Maine; Freedman's dramatic depictions of mountains, reservoirs and lakes in the Hudson Valley; and Krieger's recent paintings, inspired by her walks through a local forest preserve in Port Washington, NY. Made with divergent techniques and styles, each painting or monoprint is an expression of a real locale, a place dear to the respective artist. Whether expressing longing, memory, hope or torment, the artists share collective impulses to mark moments in time in particular places of distinctive beauty.

— Susan Eisner Eley

## **RACHEL BURGESS**

The coast of Maine, and in particular the river Piscataqua near Rachel Burgess' childhood vacation home, has been the artist's muse since the start of her career. Burgess' stunning, expressive monotypes—in single, diptych and triptych format—are visual expressions of these childhood memories. Burgess' landscapes are spare, punctuated by an occasional house or lighthouse. Trees and bushes often line the

coast; yet, they are not the main attraction. Instead, she focuses on where the water meets the uninterrupted horizon line, where grassy greens seamlessly melt into watery edges. Gradations of subtle colors—pinks to blues to warm yellows—underscore the impressionistic views the artist captures, first in sketches and sometimes years later when she revisits particular images from her many sketchbooks.

## **KATHERINE CURCI**

Katherine Curci began this series of charcoal drawings, premiered in *This Land.*, at the start of the pandemic. Working from photographs, both captured by the artist and drawn from outside sources, Curci has completed some 75 seascapes and landscapes. Each scene is fully realized and highly nuanced—rendered in such expert detail that her works can often be perceived as photographs. Featured imagery includes specific places throughout her home country of Canada, as well as in regions of South America and Europe. Carefully manipulating the pressure of the charcoal, Curci achieves all tones—from the deepest, velvety black to pure white highlights, while encompassing all tonalities in between. She captures *sfumato* cloud covers and misty seas, as well as highly detailed and densely populated tree stands.

## **RACHELLE KRIEGER**

Based in Port Washington, NY, Rachelle Krieger has the benefit of proximity to the Sands Point Preserve and to coastal Long Island. Painting *en plein air* plays a significant role in her career. This past year, Krieger created a new series of paintings, which were featured in a recent solo show at SEFA NYC, entitled *These In-Between Days*. As Krieger worked to express her feelings of being at a midpoint in her life, as a woman and as a painter, she also effectively captures what many are experiencing since the start of the pandemic. The world is at a crossroads. Krieger illustrates this anxiety, unease and yet hope and promise in her bright, ever-evolving, living, breathing paintings—rendered with vivid, day-glow colors and deep perspectives that take viewers into the work.

## **DEBORAH FREEDMAN**

Painter and printmaker Deborah Freedman, who divides her time between her SoHo loft and her home in the Hudson Valley—presents six oil paintings from a recent series called “A Better World” (2017). Driven by external factors—personal, political and environmental—Freedman depicts abstract expressions of the Ashokan Reservoir, the Shawangunk Ridge and the Catskill Mountains. In her signature style, Freedman

immerses herself in each painting, encapsulating through bold, wild brushwork a world shifting at that time, following the death of her beloved husband, the 2016 election and the ravages of climate change. Yet, within these dynamic, often tilted compositions, where water surges and froths and mountains shift in tectonic scale—the artist finds great solace and an immeasurable serenity, which pervade our sensibilities too, as visitors to her dramatic landscapes.

## **LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

In an ongoing effort to recognize the histories and contemporary realities of Native American people in the Hudson Valley region, Susan Eley Fine Art acknowledges the Native American presence on the land where our building is located. The Hudson gallery resides within the traditional homelands of many Indigenous nations, including the Mahican, Wappinger, Lenni-Lenape and Iroquois peoples.

\*SEFA Hudson is following the rules and regulations around gatherings in Columbia County, NY; face coverings and social distancing required.

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