

human subjects of the paintings. The landscape helped move the story forward. By the 17th century a shift was occurring. While French painters had designated history paintings as the greatest in the hierarchy of painting genres, artists like Claude Lorrain were producing works that started to challenge that system. Paintings of the *pastoral* landscape provided city dwellers with views of the simple, unspoiled rural life often associated with the work of shepherds. These idealized views were fictional and escapist, like the feelings the artists sought to induce in viewers.

Meanwhile, in the Netherlands, the Golden Age of Dutch painting had ushered in a new market-based system where landscapes became a commodity and a favored genre of painting. Jacob van Ruisdael, among others, produced idealized landscapes that also included hidden symbols. Symbolic appearances of structures like churches and windmills alluded to religious themes if one knew the symbolic visual language of such imagery. These symbols are less prevalent in contemporary landscape views, yet the emphasis on idealized natural beauty is still evident in works like Marco Zambrelli's.

In the 18th and 19th centuries a move toward Romanticism impacted landscapes just as much as other modes of painting. In England J.M.W. Turner was producing pre-Impressionist images that seemed to nearly disintegrate pictorially as they edged ever closer to abstraction. The Romanticist tendencies were also apparent in works by certain Hudson River School artists in the United States. Frederic Edwin Church, in particular, took the Hudson River style further into the western frontier, expressing the power and grandeur of nature in his sublime compositions. That sublime quality of nature is found in several works in this exhibition. The lithograph by Louis LaBrie examines the tumultuous sky as a storm front speeds in. Conversely, Barry Gealt's *After the Tornado* is deceptively calm as it portrays the wreckage after a storm. Even Brian Kelly's work considers the glories of nature found in the phenomenon of the Northern Lights.

Our modern conceptions of landscape artists are often based in the late 19th century, flowing from the *plein air* (painting out in nature) paintings of the Realists and Impressionists. The soft focus, blurred effect that appears in Jean Solombre's *Clear and Obscure*, as well as the work of Michael Zwack, was first present in Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot's paintings. Corot recognized that photography was going to ultimately change the direction of painting. In fact, that direction kept changing through Impressionism and on into later periods. The K. Umlauf print in this exhibition relates to both the palette and formal abstraction of Post Impressionist Paul Cezanne. After Cezanne, painting would often become increasingly nonrepresentational.

Most evident in this exhibition is the idea that the fondness artists have for the landscape has never diminished. Interest in the landscape was evident in the work of Pop artists (Richard Hamilton) to seemingly more Conceptual or Earth Works artists (Vida Hackman). No matter what the style, artists have continued to gain inspiration from their natural surroundings and viewers still enjoy the results of their creative efforts.