



A Vast Expanse
landscapes from the collection of
Appleton Museum of Art

Webber Center Gallery



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Landscape imagery is common among the subjects of art. Chances are high that within homes displaying any artwork on the walls—whether original works or reproductions—landscapes make an appearance. It is no wonder, since landscapes are based in the ancient traditions of western culture. Though the works in this exhibition are more recent—primarily from the later 20th century—their forms are tied directly to the landscape traditions of the past.

The first extant examples of landscapes come from classical antiquity—from the civilizations of Greece and Rome. There are relatively few examples from these cultures since the paintings have often been ravaged by time. Frescoes (paintings made in wet plaster) from the Aegean island of Thera and the Roman cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum have been preserved because they were covered in ash from volcanic eruptions. These early examples exhibit divergent tendencies toward both mimesis and abstraction. Examples of such stunning realism appear in this exhibition in works including the lithographs of Stephen McMillan, while more nonrepresentational imagery can be found in the works of both Gabor Peterdi and Ruth Rodman.

Historically, western art took a hiatus from representations of landscape after the fall of the Roman empire. The more spiritual aims of Byzantine work from this era reflected a golden, heavenly realm instead of the terrestrial sphere. These tendencies flowed right through into the Medieval period. Yet there was a resurgence in landscape imagery with the dawn of the Renaissance. Painter Ambrogio Lorenzetti not only painted a “portrait” of the city of Siena, Italy in his *Allegory of Good and Bad Government*, but an equally exacting image of the landscape surrounding that city.

The Renaissance was also the age of the experiential sciences when artists were employing scientific and mathematical principles in their works to produce believable, illusionistic spaces on two dimensional surfaces. These interests caused artists to look more deeply at their surroundings. Artists like Leonardo da Vinci and Albrecht Dürer produced intensely detailed sketches and studies of plant and animal life in order to better understand the intricacies of the landscape setting. The results show up in their paintings. This thorough investigation of the landscape appears in works in this show, too, like Keith Rasmussen’s *Dungeness Fountain*, which describes a specific scene reminiscent of a Florida landscape.

Other northern European artists of the Renaissance produced scenes that were new to the genre of landscape—the snowscape. The illuminated manuscript paintings of the Limbourg brothers depict the various seasons and months, along with activities specific to each. The painting for the month of February is likely the first snowscape in western art. Pieter Breughel the elder produced a similar series of paintings depicting the seasons, including his own snowy landscape. Interest in this subject has not dwindled considering the presence of several snow filled images in this exhibition, including those by Deborah Clearman, Oliviero Masi, and Francis St. Clair-Miller.

In many early landscapes the element of the surrounding land was subordinate to the content of the painting as a whole. A story was often being told that focused on either the gods or

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.

This exhibition is a selection of prints drawn from the collection of the Appleton Museum of Art. The Appleton Museum of Art was founded in 1982 and opened to the public in 1987. It was a gift from Arthur I. Appleton to the Ocala community. Originally built to display and preserve Mr. Appleton's extensive art collection, today the museum is one of the leading cultural institutions in Marion County. Since 2004, governance of the museum has been through the College of Central Florida and the CF Foundation.

Vast Expanse was curated from the Appleton collection by Tyrus Clutter, Assistant Professor of Art and Art History at the College of Central Florida. Clutter reintroduced printmaking courses to the curriculum of the college in 2011 and was previously guest curator for two exhibitions at the Appleton: *Out of Abstraction: Divergent Directions in Late 20th Century Art* (2013) and *[in]justice: art and atrocity in 20th century art* (2014).

The Webber Center Gallery of the College of Central Florida is pleased to present this exhibition and would like to thank the Appleton staff for their generosity which was instrumental in the organization and display of this exhibition.

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