

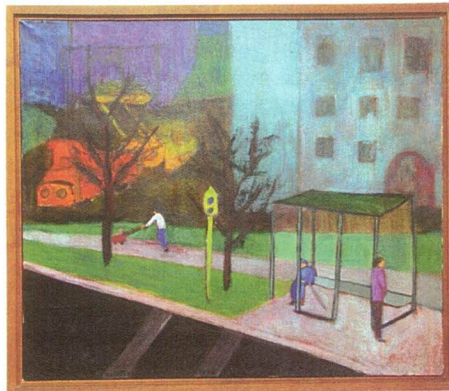
CRANBROOK CONNECTIONS

Studio Place Arts (SPA) • Barre, VT • studioplacearts.com • May 11–June 26, 2021

Marc Awodey, well-known Vermont art critic, painter, and graduate of Cranbrook Academy of Art, often talked with Sue Higby, director of Studio Place Arts, of an exhibit of work by Cranbrook graduates who had chosen the Vermont region to live and work. Awodey passed away unexpectedly in 2012, and Higby is finally actualizing their mutual dream. *Cranbrook Connections* features 13 artists who attended the preeminent center of education in fine art, crafts, design, and architecture.

Oona Gardner's *Evening Tide* wall sculpture in tones of black and grey, looks almost slate-like. The interplay of textured, curved lines and geometric forms against a flat background, is elegant and intriguing. *In the Palm of Your Hand*, a graceful vessel form that ends with an outstretched, playful hand is Jennifer Swanson's captivating contribution. A grouping of Aron Temkin's slab constructed vessels show the artist's consummate skill in glazing and form.

Two minimalist works, *Subjectivity* and *Liquidity*, by Louise Glass imaginatively explore

Marc Awodey, *St. Paul Street*, courtesy of NNEMoCA.

the mystery of matter in plaster, cloth, and felted wool. Fiber artists, Elizabeth Billings and Kristen Dettoni play with experimental modes of weaving using reeds, fiber, and beads. Andrea Wasserman's gold cloth assemblages and France Menck's surreal photography add to the richness of the exhibit.

Marianne McCann's *Climate*, a large central painting of a concerned face, with ten smaller paintings of endangered species and cataclysmic events, seems prescient. The saturated color of Tom Driscoll's *Domestic* reminds us of the humble beauty of the everyday. Included also is a masterful drawing by R.G. Solbert and a gem of a landscape painting by Ray Brown.

An entire gallery is dedicated to Awodey as a tribute to his indefatigable artistic efforts. The Minimalist Press, Poetry Vending machines, Rhombus Gallery, and Vermont Art Zine were some of his creative endeavors in addition to art criticism, poetry, and central discipline of painting. *St. Paul Street*, painted in his signature, raw style depicts an everyday scene of the Burlington cityscape in both its simplicity and complexity.

The adventurous nature of art-making that Cranbrook Academy symbolizes is on full display here, in a memorable and unique exhibit. Awodey would approve.

—B. Amore

PREVIEW: Vermont

EMERGENCE: FROM THE STUDIO INTO THE STREETS WITH LMNOPI, A RETROSPECTIVE

Stone Valley Arts at Fox Hill • Poultney, VT • stonevalleyarts.org • May 1–30, 2021

It is clear from viewing the body of work in *Emergence: From the Studio into the Streets with LMNOPI*, that Lopi LaRoe, a.k.a. LMNOPI, has dedicated her life to painting in the service of environmental and racial justice. She has had a multi-faceted career as a community organizer, activist, and committed painter engaged in the movement, Artivism, which combines art and activism.

This exhibit is LaRoe's first retrospective. In a moving self portrait of the artist, *Rise Up*, a child painted in tones of grey, somberly stares out of a geometrically constructed background. The face seems androgynous. The gaze is mesmerizing, causing one to wonder what is going on behind the eyes. This powerful painting is the study for LaRoe's mural created for the CrossFit RisingStar, a Rutland, VT gym, where it served as the launch for a fitness-based recovery program known as "Phoenix."

Tehuana Maiden is more lyrical and depicts a

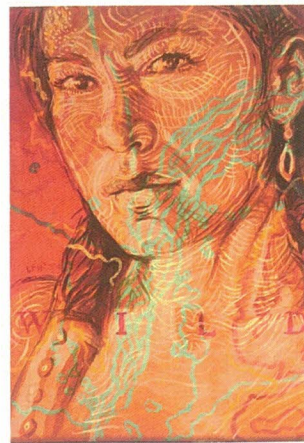
young Zapotec woman from the Tehuantepec Isthmus in Mexico. Her lace-like mantilla and crown of flowers, a symbol of her important place in society, complement her resolute expression. She represents a cultural figure whose traditional ceremonial dress was appropriated by Frida Kahlo to create her own iconic look.

One of the most powerful paintings is *Defend the Arctic*, a portrait of Princess Daazrhahi Johnson, an activist working to preserve her ancestral land, which is part of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Although Princess looks

obliquely at the viewer, she powerfully connects through her eyes. The contours of her face are accented by finely painted lines that take the place of more traditional shadowing. There are also colorful overlays which depict the topography of the region. The almost tattoo-like layering enhances the complexity of the issues raised.

In *Amanda Gorman*, the now iconic National Youth Poet Laureate is memorialized in LaRoe's signature style. It is a celebratory portrait, reflecting the hopefulness present in her inaugural poem, "The Hill We Climb." LaRoe's commitment to art and activism has been a gift to the communities that she has served by giving their lives more visibility through her striking work.

—B. Amore

LMNOPI, *Defend the Arctic* (Portrait of Princess Daazrhahi Johnson).