

On the Precipice

Sibylle Peretti's explorations of industrial encroachment on the wild American landscape call to mind Thomas Cole's Hudson River School paintings.

BY SAMANTHA DE TILLIO

*What is necessary, after all, is only this: solitude, vast inner solitude.
To walk inside yourself and meet no one for hours—that is what you must be able to attain.*
—Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*

In the 19th century, the Catskill Mountains and Hudson River Valley were changing. Industry, logging, pollution, and the resultant ecosystem degradation were encroaching on a land long held sacred by the Lenape, Stockbridge-Munsee (Mohican), and Kanien:keha'ka (Mohawk) people. The solitude of the wilderness heralded by Rilke was already threatened. In 1835, in response to what he saw as a cultural apathy for the beauty and value of nature, American painter Thomas Cole (1801-1848) wrote his "Essay on American Scenery," which he delivered as an address in New York City the following year, and again over subsequent years.

In the essay, Cole exalts nature as a source of creative inspiration, intellectual enjoyment, and a "keener perception of the beauty of our existence."¹ This he paints in stark opposition to the general population's distraction by the shallow frivolities of life, claiming poetically (and a bit presumptuously, if also correctly) that "Heaven's roof to them is but a painted ceiling hung with lamps."² In focusing on the wild landscape, Cole was instrumental in establishing an idealized natural aesthetic, one which incidentally was not so much unadulterated as it was Romantic. Henry David Thoreau (1817-1868), who similarly defined a contemporary idea of the wilderness, said of his cabin in the woods: "But for the most part it is as solitary where I live as on the prairies. It is as much Asia or Africa as New England. I have, as it were, my own sun and moon and stars, and a little world all to myself."³

If Cole's landscapes represent the wild as much as they depict it, Thoreau's cabin on Walden Pond was less *in* the wilderness than inhabiting an exotic idea *of* the wilderness generated by the author. (His closest neighbor was only a mile away, and he could see the railway from his porch.)⁴ Despite this focus on the untouched, Cole also makes a case for the importance of cultivated scenery; those gardens and parks—landscaped public and private spaces—that constitute most people's daily experience of the natural world. It is here that some comparison can be made to the philosophy of contemporary glass artist Sibylle Peretti, who, having grown up in a heavily polluted manufacturing and mining city, feels a closeness to the rawer, in-between places.

Where Cole speaks of cultivated beauty, Peretti is inspired by British environmental writer Marion Shoard's theory of the "edgelands," those overlooked landscapes existing between rural and urban, which she characterizes as "an unkempt wasteland frequently swathed in riotous growths of colorful plants" and punctuated by warehouses, superstores, derelict industrial plants, office parks, golf courses, allotments, and fragmented, frequently scruffy, farmland.⁵ As a girl in Germany, these edgelands offered Peretti, a child living on the border of an industrial landscape, an opportunity for discovery and imaginative play as well as an education in nature.

Though on opposite ends of the spectrum, both artists describe places that exist on the threshold, somewhere between those of total human intervention and untouched wilderness, which, in their own way, have the capacity to spark the imagination and tempt interest in the non-human world. While seeking to honor the land, even mythologizing in the case of Cole, both his and Peretti's landscapes provide glimpses of the tense relationship between humans and the ecosystem from which we find ourselves (at least in part) severed. As Cole queried in his treatise: "Why was the earth made so beautiful or the sun so clad in glory ... when all might be unrobed in beauty without affecting the insensate multitude...?"⁶

For the artist and father of the Hudson River School, the sublimity of the American vista—captured in paint both in the Catskill Mountains of New York, where he made his home, and throughout the Western states—evoked a divinity otherwise hard to reach in contemporaneous times. And although his oeuvre focused on the grandeur of landscape, he also poignantly criticized contemporary culture, such as in his five-painting series "The Course of Empire," which charted the rise and fall of civilization through an arc from the unadulterated wilderness of *The Savage State* (1834) to the nascent hopefulness of *The Arcadian or Pastoral State* (1834), from the excesses of *The Consummation of Empire* (1835-36) to the fiery apocalypse of *Destruction* (1836), and finally the post-apocalyptic degradation of *Desolation* (1836).



Tchefuncte, 2019. Painted, engraved and silvered kiln-formed glass. H 60, W 80, D 1 in.
COLLECTION: PRIVATE



Thomas Cole, *The Course of Empire: The Savage State*, 1834. Oil on canvas. H 39 ¼, W 63 ¼ in.
GIFT: NEW YORK GALLERY OF THE FINE ARTS. COLLECTION: NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY. DIGITAL IMAGE: OPPENHEIMER EDITIONS

At this same time, during the presidency of development champion Andrew Jackson (who also passed the so-called Indian Removal Act of 1830), Cole painted *View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, after a Thunderstorm—The Oxbow* (1836), which Metropolitan Museum of Art curator Elizabeth Kornhauser describes as a “shocking bifurcated scene of wilderness on one side and settled land on the other” that juxtaposes a lushly painted forested region, aggressively cultivated farmland, and direct signs of deforestation in a composition that warned of the dangers of industrialization on the landscape. (Notably, this landscape no longer exists due to flooding and human-made changes in topography.)⁷ Similar evidence of clear-cutting is illustrated in an untitled 1825 landscape in which a red jacket-clad man can be seen segmenting a felled tree in the foreground. Behind him, in the near distance, is a barn and a cabin, smoke billowing from its chimney, and to the right a man in blue pets a dog. Further afield, cows are at pasture. An isolated stand of three trees commands the center of the scene, two of which are entwined, as if clinging to each other in anticipation of their shared fate.

The male figure wielding an ax became one of Cole’s symbols for the effect of industrial progress, and he uses it again in numerous

works including *View of the White Mountains* (1827). The background is dominated by a majestic snow-capped mountain vista and a river that snakes into the painting’s midpoint. Yet the foreground is crudely bisected by a road, trees felled on either side. Where the road disappears in the distance, two figures are just visible, and further along a man carrying an ax indifferently over his left shoulder follows its left perimeter until he seems to stop mid-journey to gaze at the last remaining tree in the painting’s foreground. The trunk of its twin, once standing adjacent, has cracked violently, sending its canopy to the ground at a sharp angle across the other in a symbolic foreshadowing.

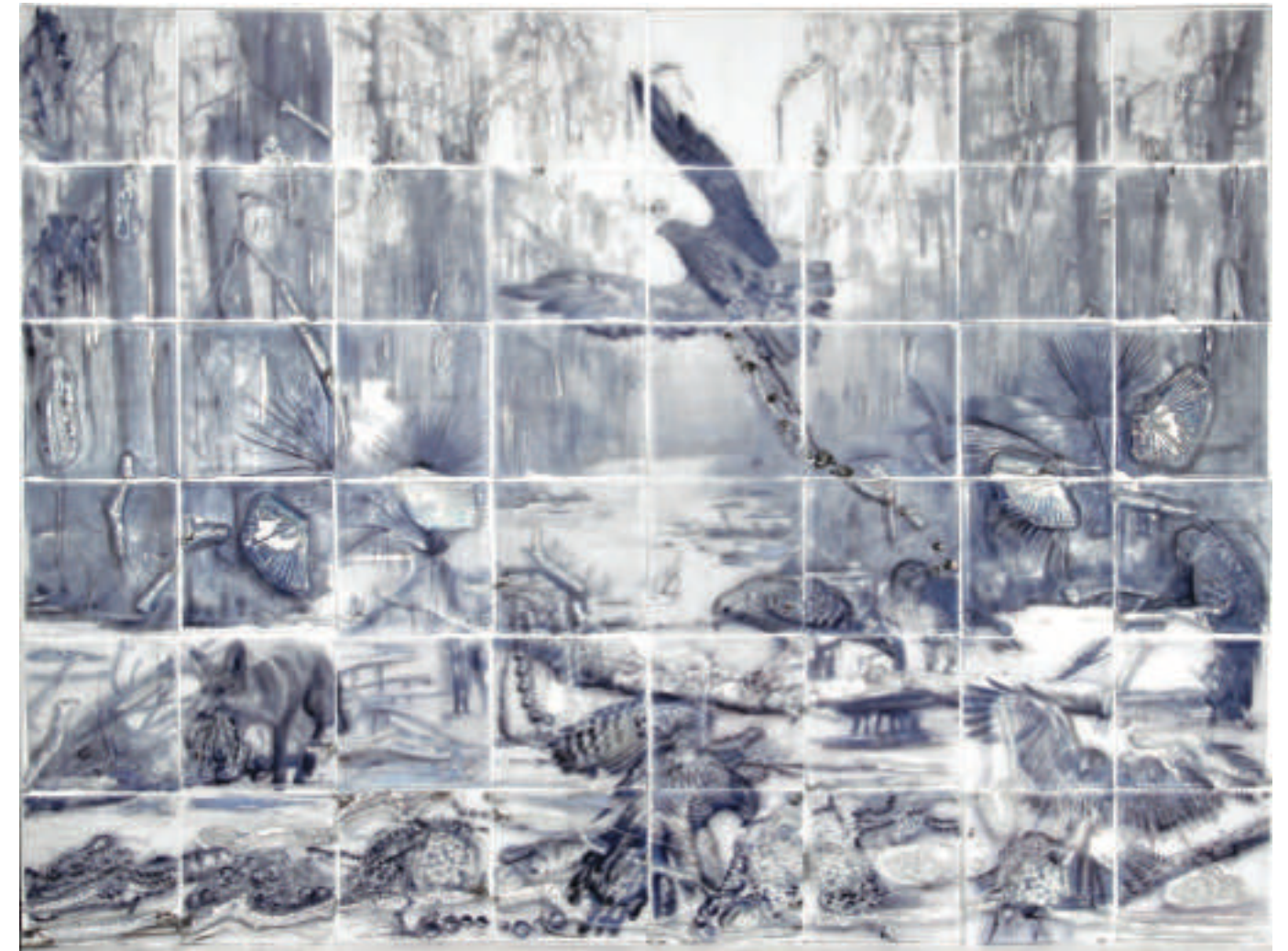
Such turbulent transformation is alluded to in the work of Peretti, whose glass-panel landscapes depict the industrially scarred and battered areas of New Orleans, where the artist now lives. Indigenous artifacts and urban detritus alike are washed in and out by flooding along the city’s edges, resulting in a landscape in perpetual flux. The metamorphic New Orleans landscape is exemplified by *Tchefuncte* (2019), a sizable work comprising 48 panels of glass, which illustrates the Tchefuncte River in Louisiana. The overall composition is densely packed with layered imagery concentrated around the perimeter of the work, depicting a

canopy of willow trees above and a shoreline strewn with ropes below. An allusion to the state’s maritime history, the ropes coil and writhe like snakes, rendered in silvered glass that shimmers like scales. A young girl sits on the banks of the river sheltered by weeping willows, the innocence of the child allowing her to meet the fox, who stands opposite her, as an equal. Between them, the sea of ropes threatens to ensnare one or the other, both subjugated by the actions of men.

Liminal landscapes in their ability to shapeshift, swamps grow and shrink as water collects or recedes with the rainy season or a period of drought. Peretti captures this moment of fluctuation in her work *Great Dismal Swamp* (2018). Spanning 60 inches in height and 80 inches in width, the sizable puzzle of wall panels depicts a fox and a kettle of hawks amid the marshy waters at the center of a swamp crisscrossed with fallen trees, sticks, and fan-like plants. The animals excavate mounds of the artist’s

signature Mardi Gras beads, which clog the landscape. Actively removing the beads with mouth or talons, the animals are also entangled, beads coiling around the foxes left hindleg and entangling the wing of a hawk. Here is a visual language often used by Peretti, where urban animals—foxes, coyotes, hawks—who live in proximity to humans, are in a state of conflict with the human detritus in their surroundings, evoking the destruction and occupation of their habitat.

Waterways provide an important source of inspiration for Peretti, populating work including *Banks of Long River* (a scene similar to that depicted in *Great Dismal Swamp*); *Pearl River* (2017), which centers on a fox so laden with strings of pearls it’s as if he transforms into a hybrid creature; and *Mississippi Banks* (2018), in which two children play among the shallows of the river’s edge, hunting for treasures amid pools of water and scrub grasses. The devout attention of the children in this work



Great Dismal Swamp, 2018. Forty-eight kiln-formed opaline glass tiles, engraved, painted, silvered, paper appliqué. H 60, W 80, D ½ in.
COLLECTION: BARRY ART MUSEUM; CAROLYN K. AND RICHARD F. BARRY III PURCHASE FUND



ABOVE *Pearl River*, 2017. Carved, engraved, painted and silvered glass, acrylic, paper. H 48, W 70, D 1 in.
COLLECTION: PRIVATE



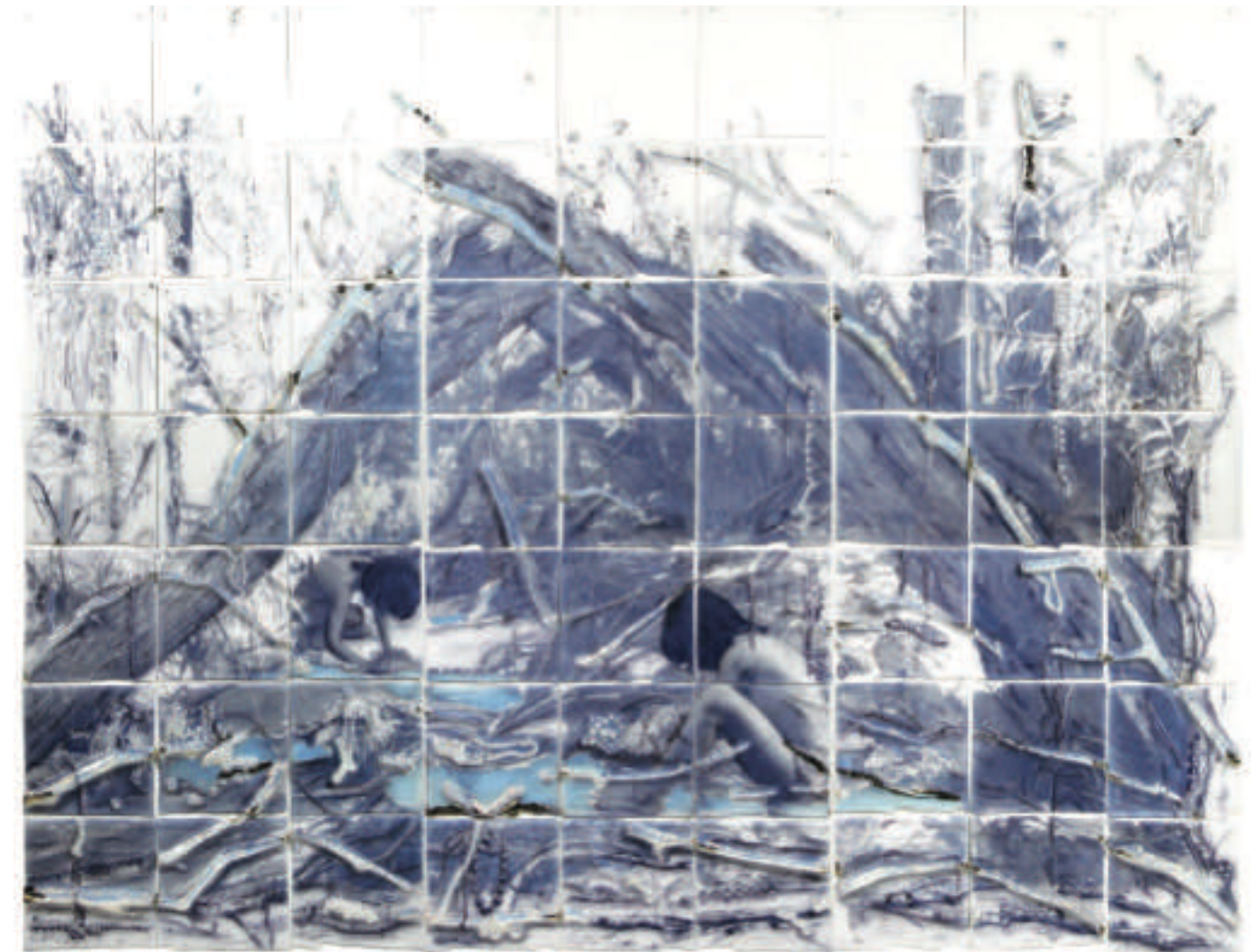
THIS IMAGE **Thomas Cole**, *The Course of Empire: Desolation*, 1836. Oil on canvas. H 39 ¼, W 63 ¼ in.
GIFT: NEW YORK GALLERY OF THE FINE ARTS. COLLECTION: NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY. DIGITAL IMAGE: OPPENHEIMER EDITIONS

underlies the little-valued beauty of this perpetually fluctuating landscape and its ability to contain expansive, if miniscule, ecosystems. A tree, broken and bent across the 63-panel composition, frames the children in a triangle, as if they are in a play fort, a private world all their own. Where Cole's lumberjack symbolizes severance, Peretti's children, full of youthful innocence, are enchanted and in communion with the land, illustrating an ideal state of union.

The ethereal quality of Peretti's glass paintings summons a light fog over their surfaces, a trait that is reinforced by the dominance of a muted color palette. This aesthetic seems to speak to a theme of disappearance, her works seeming to disappear before us, as do diverse landscapes and those who inhabit them. Combining a complex amalgamation of processes and materials—glass casting and slumping, drawing, painting, silvering, mirroring, enameling,

and photography—to unparalleled effect, Peretti slumps glass around various aspects of detritus collected (in part) from the locations rendered—ropes, branches, berries, sunflowers, and Mardi Gras beads (which feature prominently in most of Peretti's work as an homage to New Orleans's urban landscape). The resulting collages depict their subjects in reproduced realism. In this way, the artist's landscapes not only evoke place but become place, indebted to both the untamed and human-made, essentially becoming an edgeland in their own right.

These peripheries, areas where intervention begins to bleed into the wilderness, however untouched the land truly is (a Romantic notion that disregards centuries of Indigenous interaction with place), serve an important purpose in the work of Cole and Peretti. By emphasizing an idealized landscape and juxtaposing it against the built environment, symbols of



Mississippi Banks, 2018. Glass, mixed media. H 70, W 90, D ½ in.
COLLECTION: TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART. PURCHASED: FUNDS GIVEN BY RITA BARBOUR KERN



Snow Child III, 2019. Cast glass, pedestal. H 45, W 40, D 20 in.
COURTESY: THE ARTIST



Sibylle Peretti

destruction, or cast elements of detritus from city streets, the artists are able to visually jolt the viewer into a state of awareness. Read through an ecocritical lens, the contribution of Cole's paintings to the nascent land preservation movement, with which it evolved contemporaneously, becomes evident. The artist interweaved subtle warnings into his sublime works by painting allegorical scenes of an American Eden threatened by human activity. Similarly, Peretti's combination of imagery, techniques, and materials result in works that, while deeply beautiful, contain a subtle and sensitive environmental advocacy. Taken together, the art of Cole and Peretti speak to concerns of development, consumption, personal responsibility, and the human place within the greater web of life as well as to a philosophical kinship among two artists who seem to differ vastly at first glance. ■

Glass contributing editor SAMANTHA DE TILLIO is a scholar, critic, and curator thinking at the crossroads of the expanded field of craft and embodied expression. In 2023, she received the Lois Moran Award for Craft

Writing, and was guest curator/editor of *New Glass Review* 43 for *The Corning Museum of Glass*. From 2013 to 2022, she was a curator at the *Museum of Arts and Design* in New York, and has worked at institutions including the *Metropolitan Museum of Art* and the *Smithsonian National Museums of American History and Natural History*, among others.

¹ Thomas Cole, "Essay on American Scenery."

² Ibid.

³ Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (London: Arcturus Publishing Limited, 2018), 111.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Marion Shoard, "Edgelands," *The Land Magazine* (2002), <https://www.thelandmagazine.org.uk/articles/edgelands>.

⁶ Thomas Cole, "Essay on American Scenery."

⁷ Elizabeth Mankin Kornhauser and Alan C. Braddock, "Reexamining the Wilderness Aesthetic: What's missing from Cole's environmentalism is the idea of justice," (Apr 6, 2022), <https://www.metmuseum.org/perspectives/articles/2022/4/oxbow-questioning-romantic-wilderness>.

HELLER

GALLERY

UNTAMED
Sibylle Peretti

March 24-April 30, 2022

Opening Reception: Thursday, March 24, 6-8pm



Crystal Den, 2022

Kiln formed, engraved, painted and silvered glass/paper
17 x 21 x 4/5 in. (43.2 x 53.3 x 2 cm)

NEW YORK -- ***Untamed***, an exhibition of new work by New Orleans-based artist Sibylle Peretti, will be on view at Heller Gallery from March 24-April 30, 2022. An opening reception will take place at the gallery on Thursday, March 24, 6-8 pm.

The exhibition focuses on six new collaged, opaline glass wall panels depicting individual animals, a frequent subject of Peretti's work, set in magical vignettes adorned with beads, crystals, feathers, ginger stalks and sunflowers. She combines altered and manipulated photographic prints or drawings on paper with the slumped and mirrored glass substrate making the pieces dimensional. The layering of various opaline densities allows her to create a subtle, but almost infinite range of whites, pinks and blues, which lend even her most intimate pieces a sky-like expansiveness. Her chosen animals—a fox, a rabbit, a hawk—are the inhabitants of hinterlands,

areas where encroaching civilization meets the wilderness, one of the front lines in the struggle for a better ecological and environmental balance. With this body of work Peretti poses questions about the fragile moment in our quest to stop the human degradation of the environment.

Her works are an affirmation of life, represented by the animals she portrays, as well as a warning of the impending loss—societal & environmental—that she has witnessed in the industrial wastelands of her native Germany and the eroding and increasingly flooded lowlands of her adopted Louisiana home.

In addition to the six new single-panel pieces, *Untamed* will feature one multi-panel work, and two cast sculptures, as well as a six-part installation of *Glass Notes*, an ongoing collaboration between Peretti and her husband, artist Stephen Paul Day.

About Sibylle Peretti



Born in Mulheim an der Ruhr, Germany in 1964, Sibylle Peretti first studied glassmaking & design at the State School of Glass in Zwiesel and continued her education at the Academy of Fine Arts in Cologne, Germany, where she received her MFA in Sculpture and Painting in 1993. Peretti's work can be found in the collections of the Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, OH, the newly established Barry Art Museum in Norfolk, VA and most recently to the Huntsville Museum of Art in Huntsville, AL. Peretti's work is also included in the permanent collections of the New Orleans Museum of Art (New Orleans, LA), Corning Museum of Glass (Corning, NY), Carnegie Museum of Art (Pittsburgh, PA), Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (Canada), Museum of Applied Arts (Frankfurt, Germany), Hunter Museum (Chattanooga TN), Speed Museum (Louisville, KY), 21c Museum (Louisville, KY).

Peretti has won numerous awards and endorsements, including grants from the Pollock-Krasner Foundation and the Joan Mitchell Foundation, as well as the 2013 United States Artist Fellowship. In 2018, her work was featured in a solo exhibition *Promise and Perception: The Enchanted Landscapes of Sibylle Peretti*, at the Chrysler Museum of Art.

About Heller Gallery

Since 1973, Heller Gallery has been recognized for playing a seminal role in promoting contemporary sculpture employing glass as its touch stone medium. For more than four decades Heller has exhibited the premier international artists who incorporate glass in their practice and has been a valuable resource for artists, museums and collectors worldwide.



SIBYLLE PERETTI

ALLUVIAL LAND — WHERE DIAMONDS GROW

The resiliency of New Orleans and urban landscapes around the world is a guiding theme of Sibylle Peretti's fifth solo exhibition at Callan Contemporary, *Alluvial Land — Where Diamonds Grow*. In a suite of poetic mixed-media wall reliefs and glass sculptures, the artist imagines a city after a flood, where minerals, gemstones, crystals and glittering beads have washed up along the alluvial plain. With a nod to the genre of magical realism, she depicts animals and hybrid plants joining together to rebuild a reinvented and fertile habitat using artifacts left behind. This utopian, mythical world is reimagined through the harmonious coexistence of horses, coyotes, hares, bobcats and plants-protagonists in a metaphoric narrative of healing and hope.

The artworks are composed of kiln-formed and cast glass and reverse-carved Plexiglas, combining multi-layered painting, drawing, engraving, silvering and photography. Many began with photographs Peretti took across the Mississippi River from her studio in the Bywater neighborhood. The materiality of glass adds a seductive quality, especially to opaline glass and the magical ancient medium of ruby red glass. "The layering of opaline densities," she explains, "gives me the opportunity to create a subtle, but almost infinite range of whites, pinks and blues, which lend my works a sky-like expansiveness."

Born in Germany, Peretti became a Master of Glass Making and Design at the State School for Glass in Zwiesel, later earning her Masters in Painting and Sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts in Cologne, Germany. Her works are included in the permanent collections of the New Orleans Museum of Art, Corning Museum of Glass, Hunter Museum of American Art, Speed Art Museum, Toledo Museum of Art, Carnegie Museum of Art, Shanghai Museum of Glass and Huntsville Museum of Art, among many other public and private collections.

The recipient of grants from the Pollock-Krasner and Joan Mitchel Foundations as well as a United Artists Fellowship, she was the subject of the 2018 solo exhibition *Promise and Perception: The Enchanted Landscapes of Sibylle Peretti* at the Chrysler Museum of Art. She is currently preparing for an exhibition to open next year at the Bergstrom-Mahler Museum of Glass.

Peretti's works embody a dream-like atmosphere of enchantment and serenity. They are multi-layered, both in materials and in their strata of symbolic meaning. The exhibition at Callan Contemporary envisions a more sustainable environment, where the challenges that face New Orleans and other places are met with spirit of possibility and renewal. "I wanted to create a landscape that is magical," she reflects, "where you discover the essence of transformation in a reimagined world."

Richard Speer

RECEPTION: SATURDAY, MAY 4th 6 - 8 PM

EXHIBITION DATES: MAY 1st - JUNE 23rd, 2024

Front Cover: *After the Flood Before the Storm*, 2024, kiln formed glass, engraved, painted, silvered, paper applique, 52" x 84"



Floating Kite, 2024, kiln formed glass, engraved, painted, silvered, paper applique, 17" x 21"



Opal, kiln formed glass, engraved, painted, silvered, 21" x 17"



King, kiln formed glass, engraved, painted, silvered, 20" x 18"



left:

Royaume, 2024

kiln formed glass, engraved, painted,
silvered, paper applique, 42" x 34"

*Terebellum Lyra and
Terebellum Coral*, 2024

kiln formed glass, engraved, painted,
silvered, paper applique, 42" x 17" ea.



CALLAN CONTEMPORARY

518 Julia Street | New Orleans, LA 70130



Lovers in Blue, 2024
cast glass, 12" x 10" x 8"

ARTWORK © SIBYLLE PERETTI 2024
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Thursday March 19, 2020 | by Farah Rose Smith (/blog/author/22387)

INTERVIEW: A conversation with Sibylle Peretti, whose upcoming Heller Gallery exhibition has been moved online

FILED UNDER: ARTIST INTERVIEWS (/GLASS/CATEGORY/ARTIST-INTERVIEWS), EVENTS (/GLASS/CATEGORY/EVENTS), EXHIBITION (/GLASS/CATEGORY/EXHIBITION), NEW WORK (/GLASS/CATEGORY/NEW-WORK), NEWS (/GLASS/CATEGORY/NEWS), OPENING (/GLASS/CATEGORY/OPENING), PUBLIC ART (/GLASS/CATEGORY/PUBLIC-ART)



Sibylle Peretti at work in her New Orleans studio.

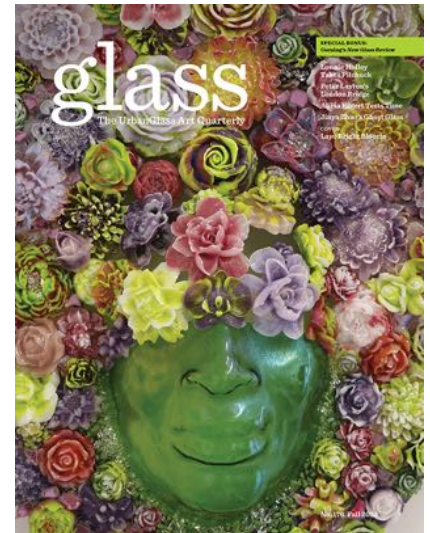
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Glass: The UrbanGlass Quarterly, a glossy art magazine published four times a year by UrbanGlass has provided a critical context to the most important artwork being done in the medium of glass for more than 40 years.

The Latest Issue

Fall 2024 | Issue 176



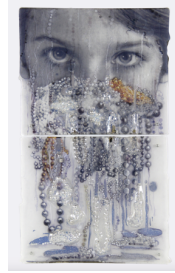
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"Backwaters (<http://www.hellergallery.com/exhibitions#/news-2-3/>)," an exhibition at the Heller Gallery (<http://www.hellergallery.com/>) of nine new major works by German-born glass artist Sibylle Peretti (<https://sibylleperetti.com/home.html>), will shift to an online exhibition in light of the ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis. The in-person gallery event has been indefinitely postponed, with the hope that improving conditions will allow the gallery to reopen. (Heller has temporarily closed its 10th Avenue gallery in the Chelsea art district of New York City, but can be reached via email or phone (<http://www.hellergallery.com/>).) The online exhibition will open on April 2nd, 2020.

The exhibition will feature five wall pieces and four cast sculptures, as well as an installation of the "Glass Notes" series, an ongoing collaboration between Peretti and her husband, artist Stephen Paul Day. (<https://www.wheatonarts.org/stephen-paul-day/>)



Sibylle Peretti, Rising Fawn I, 2020. H 8, W 24, D 13 in. Kiln-cast glass. courtesy: heller gallery

Peretti's work, which takes the form of kiln-formed wall panels or 3-D castings made through the lost-wax process, is concerned with the complex relationship between humans and the natural world. "I like to invite the viewer to journey into an unknown, undefined place of possibilities, mystery, and beauty were we find moments of clarity, solitude, and introspection," Peretti says in

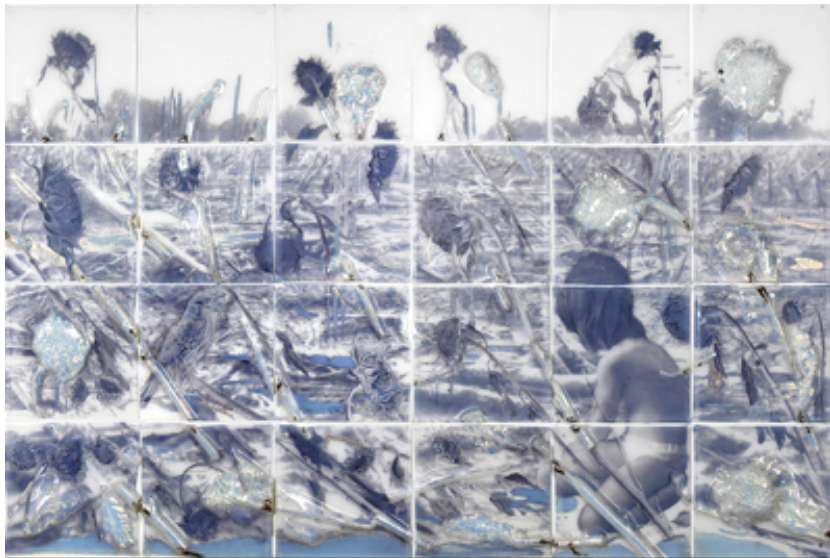
the exhibition announcement. Peretti's upcoming exhibition is titled "Backwaters," a reference to out-of-the-way locales she explores in her neighborhood: "Living in New Orleans just footsteps away from the Mississippi river I explore almost daily the ever-changing alluvial land with its magical backwaters."

The *Glass Quarterly Hot Sheet* spoke with Sibylle Peretti about the work in her upcoming exhibition.

Glass: *Can you discuss the significance of emotion, memory, and solitude in your work?*

Sibylle Peretti: I have always been interested in art that reflects our emotional existence. When I'm moved, I understand from the inside. I see my work as my journey to confront myself with the unknown, trying to create intimate spaces where I can reflect on loss, hope and memory.

Rainer Maria Rilke wrote: "To walk inside of yourself and meet no one for hours -- that is what you must be able to attain." As an artist it is important to find longer times of solitude. It can be frightening and rewarding at the same time, but its necessary for self-contemplation and to gain insight. Especially in my landscapes I try to create moments of solitude, spaces that stimulate the viewer's senses and invite them to become part of a journey into undefined places of mystery and wonder. The landscapes I photograph and later transform into glass can be compared to stage settings in where nature combined with unexpected elements create sometime surreal, dreamlike atmospheres that are open to the viewers own perceptions.



Sibylle Peretti, Pirka, 2019. Kiln-formed glass, engraved, painted, silvered, photo application. H 40, W 60, D 1/2 in. courtesy: heller gallery

Glass: *Do you have a favorite piece of art from a medium outside of glass that inspires you?*

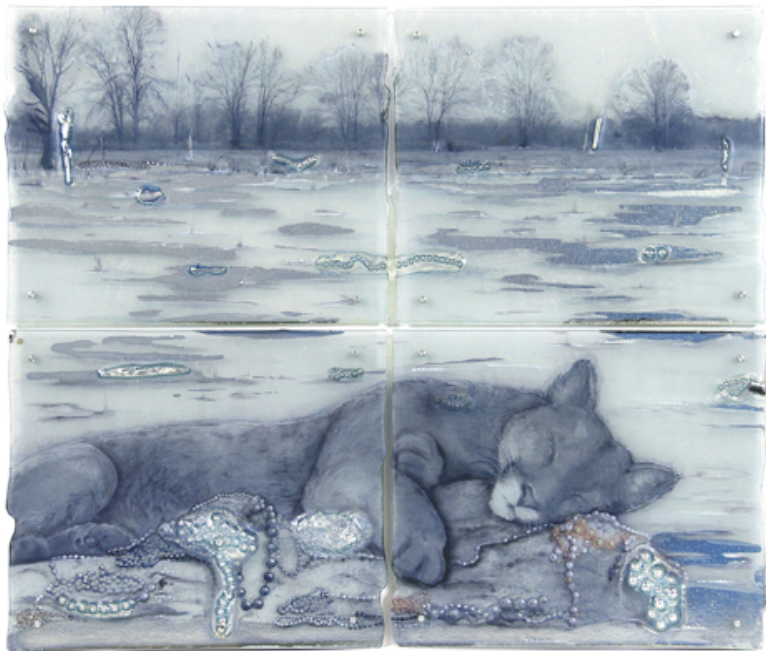
Peretti: Of course there are many...but a recent addition to the Sydney and Walda Besthoff Sculpture Garden in New Orleans, a 60' long ceramic tile mural by Teresita Fernandez, is breathtaking

and in every level inspiring. I love her idea of creating a hybrid landscape where different memories and histories are integrated in one piece. Also the work of German artist Paloma Varga Weisz is very stimulating and I love its authenticity and craftsmanship.

Glass: *Can you talk a little bit about the significance of nature in your work, particularly your interest in liminal landscapes?*

Peretti: One major aspect in my work is to reflect on our disrupted relationship to nature and our yearning to achieve a unity with the natural world.

In my upcoming exhibition "Backwater" I try to describe places that are isolated, but also in a permanent change due to human expansion and flooding. You can see them as liminal landscapes that encourages the viewer to enter. When you look at the piece you see also your own reflection in the mirrored parts of the glass and you become part of the journey.



Sibylle Peretti, *Backwater*, 2020. Kiln-formed glass, engraved, painted, photo application. H 34, W 42, D 1/2 in. courtesy: heller gallery

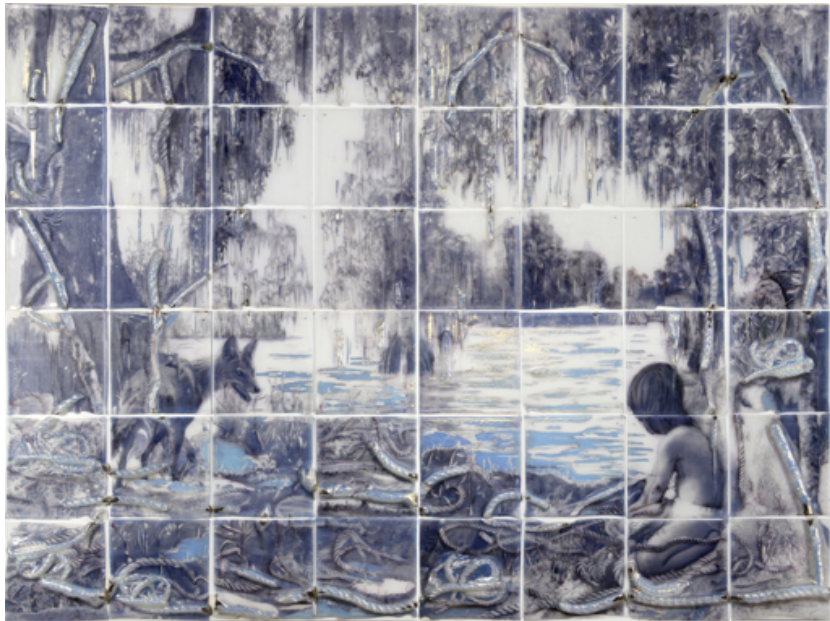
Glass: *Do you feel that your work aligns with the works of the Symbolists, who also sought to uncover hidden worlds and drew upon mystical connections with nature?*

Peretti: The wish to uncover hidden worlds is a beautiful task, full of mystery and the unknown. Its comforting to imagine that there are possibilities to connect to nature in a spiritual way.

Glass: *Children are featured heavily in your works, and you describe them as representing "vulnerability in a diaphanous universe" and that you depict children's identities in worlds of adverse layers. In what ways are children the best subjects to convey your themes?*

Peretti: In my work, I use children as my protagonists. It all started 20 years ago when I found a pile of children medical

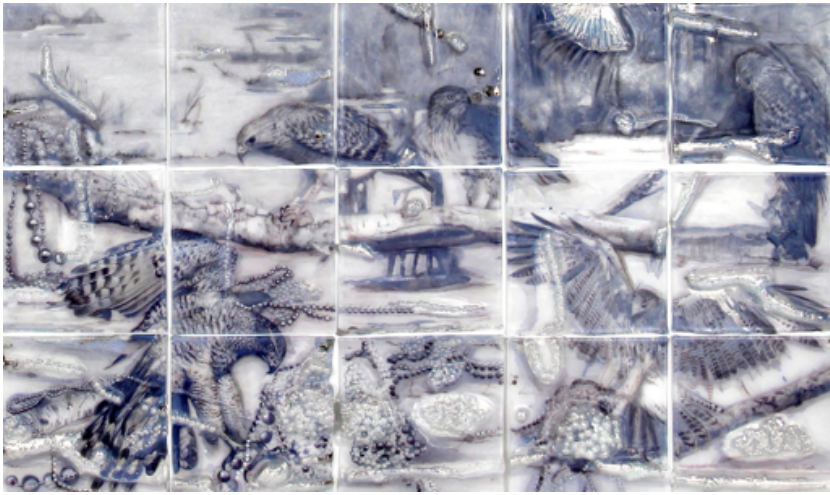
books on the street of Cologne Germany. Not that I was just mesmerized by the beauty and power of some of the images I also felt the immediate need to take them out of the medical context and place them into a diaphanous universe where they may could heal. At the same time they also transformed into prophets knowing something we as adults don't know. They are alive to me and function as messengers.



Sibylle Peretti, Tchefuncte, 2019. Kiln-formed glass, engraved, painted silvered, photo application. H 60, W 80, D 1/2 in. courtesy: heller gallery

Glass: *What is your definition of beauty?*

I don't considered my work as neither decadent nor gothic, but can see in some ways parallels. My grandfather was a doctor and he had a large collection of anatomical specimens and models that showed abnormal conditions of the human body. The colors and their particular beauty fascinated me. Most people would find them discomforting, but as an artist you search to experience these reaction in hope that they lead you to something new. Therefor beauty is for me when something moves me and a moment of clarity touches me, when I get euphoric about finding something out of the ordinary.



"Dismal Swamp", detail, kiln formed, engraved, painted and silvered glass, paper
2018

Glass: Can you describe your work space?

Peretti: My physical work takes place in an 800-square foot space in an industrial building in the Bywater neighborhood of New Orleans. For my works in glass I have a kiln; otherwise I prefer to work on the floor due to the larger scale of the landscapes. My other workspace is located in my head.

Glass: Were you inspired by fairy tales, or does the fairy tale-nature of your work come naturally?

Peretti: The "Snow Children" sculptures were directly based on a Russian fairytale. It's a story about an elderly childless couple building a girl out of snow. The next morning the snow girl is gone, but instead they spot a real child running through the woods guarded by birds. They start loving her as if she would be their own child. But soon as springs arrive she escapes the warmth and wanders towards the mountains where the snow never melts. While the Snow Child embodies hope and a spiritual connection to nature it also reflects on the fragility of life.



Sibylle Peretti, Siblings, 2005. Gass.. H 15, W 22, D 10 in.

I also found the process of making a "Snow child" out of white glass as magical as the story itself. The fragility of glass is directly connected to the temporal human existence. Glass' durability is uncertain and thus it is an irreplaceable metaphor for human mortality. Most of my other work is not directly inspired by fairytales and I don't like when people only refer to them as fairytales. For me they are reflecting realities.

Glass: *Is there any special significance in why you choose hues of blue in several of your sculptural works?*

Peretti: The blue tint is the result of an opaline striking glass overlays. The opaline has the ability to change color from warm orange hues to elegant and cool blue shades. In my wall pieces I use the opaline as a veil to emphasize the mystery.

Glass: *Your works are singularly creative, and yet would not be out of place in an exhibition with artists such as Joel-Peter Witkin, Paulina Otylie Surys, and Gottfried Helnwein. Can you talk a little bit about the intersection of the arts and haunting depictions of beauty?*

Peretti: For me art becomes successful when something strikes you as beautiful, but makes you uneasy at the same time. It's like a moment of clarity but simultaneously will cause confusion. I like to be moved when I look at Art and I want to be haunted by the still unknown.

IF YOU GO:

Sibylle Peretti
 "Backwater"
 OPENING April 2nd, 2020
 Heller Gallery
 Online exhibition
 Website (<http://www.hellergallery.com/>)
 (212) 414-4014 (https://www.google.com/search?sxsrf=ALeKk013rbINRojLl8geRTF4n6HygAO6Hw%3A1584473636059&source=hp&ei=JCZxXrZpobSCB6nEq_gK&q=heller+gallery+nyc&oq=heller+gallery+nyc&gs_l=psy-ab.3..0j0i22i30l4j38.335.2182..2326...1.0..0.124.1392.16j2.....0....1..gws-wiz.....35i39j0i67j0i131j0i20i263.pArBFNqSQY8&ved=0ahUKEwi2i-yhoKLoAhUhmUAKHSniCq8Q4dUDCAg&uact=5#)

