

# HELEN CHELLIN

Process and paint work together on my canvas. I begin by collecting images for the canvas as seen in my mind, by camera or from internet searches. At first, there are many narrative images worked into the canvas surface. I paint into these images and they lose their precise meaning, morphing into ones that are more fluid in construct. The selected worlds emerge as singular worlds in themselves peeking in and out of a vastness of space. Some exist in whiteout conditions as they did in Iceland, or imagined worlds seen floating in a clear night sky allowing me to view auroras unobstructed. The relationship between these vast spaces and my narrative worlds continually morph together in a dynamic range of clarity and uncertainty, a multivalent plane of time and space.

Living in Hawaii changed how I perceived the world around me. My paintings and artist books tell stories about how the forces of nature and culture are brought together. On the Big Island of Hawaii, I founded the Red Cinder Creativity Center, and acted as director of this artist-in-residency program until 2012.

I was an artist-in-residence at the Cite International in Paris, and the de Young Museum in San Francisco, receiving a State of California Arts Council grant as a teaching artist.

In 2008, I created, *Tsunami: The Great Wave of Plastic Pollution*. This was a science and art installation/performance at the Army Corp of Engineers Bay Model in Sausalito, California. At 455 Market Street in San Francisco, I had a one person show titled *Toxic Beauty* using marine debris plastics collected at South Point Beach in Hawaii.

In 2009, my work about volcanoes was shown at a USGS Open House in Menlo Park in an exhibit called, *The Art in Science*, and at Harvard University in an exhibit titled, *Runaway Nature*. I completed a painting series titled, *One Hundred Views of Kilauea Volcano*. The first fifty paintings in this series were exhibited at the Wailoa Arts and Cultural Center in Hilo, Hawaii in October 2013. This series exists as a two volume book set.

Summer 2013, I traveled to Japan to do fieldwork for my artist book, *The Art of Arranging Japanese Volcanoes*. I painted the forces that produce instability inherent in Japan's natural world, and contrasted that world with a world of order, balance, and harmony found in Japanese Ikebana (flower arranging).

In 2014, I participated in the 50/50 Show, at the Sanchez Art Center in Pacifica, California, building on images from the *Art of Arranging Japanese Volcanoes* series. During December of 2016, my work was viewed in a group show at the Canessa Gallery in San Francisco.

During 2018, I made a winter journey to Iceland. The cottage I stayed in was close to Thingvellir National Park, in the middle of a vast space, empty of man made things. In Iceland, nature dominates culture. I saw landscapes and skies in whiteouts. I photographed them, painted them, and combined them with my imagined auroras.

July of 2018, *The Art of Arranging Auroras in Whiteout Conditions*, was published. This new edition of my artist book, both in printed and digital forms, was transformed in collaboration with book designer and editor, Amy Reilly. Together we arranged the collection of paintings into a process narrative, a graphic story. The original paintings, Maggie, the cottage, the weather conditions, and the megalithic Cairns of stones, have now become a cast of characters who have a story to tell.