

The Longwood Center for the Visual Arts

Alex Grabiec, Curator of Exhibition

A River and A Fish

It would be remiss not to acknowledge that this exhibition was organized during the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact that the pandemic has had on countless aspects of life is far beyond the scope of this short introduction. But, my sincere hope is that through Jill Krutick's *Nature Reimagined*, and the book that is in your hands now, that you may find comfort in color and discover a haven in an artistic practice. In these paintings that radiate hope and tranquility, Krutick deftly re-images the natural world into personal and inviting compositions filled with texture and emotional gestures. As a group, these works of art speak to themes of time, memory, and self-discovery – all while offering a place of respite found within that knowledge.

In many ways, the pieces selected for the exhibition were inspired by a day's walk outside. This stroll can be anywhere really, in your neighborhood, backyard, the closest state park, or even an urban area. (Is nature where humans aren't? Or is it somewhere else?) While moving through and enjoying the landscape, we typically move from one destination to the next. We happily invite being distracted by a neat-looking rock or a small clearing in the trees to see a sliver of a waterfall. Nevertheless, we are always surrounded by images and objects in our peripheral vision worthy of a closer look.

*Nature Reimagined* seeks to mirror this experience. As one views the earth tones and textures present in *Gemstones*, out of the corner of their left eye, *Freebird* hangs with its flowing lines while it hints at wildlife flying above. Furthermore, to the right, a school of fish (a triptych including *Brook Trout*, *Brown Trout*, and *Rainbow Trout*) suggests a close-by body of water and acts as the foil to the birds that are in the sky. For these fish to be in the same river at the same time is not impossible, but not to be expected. However, in the context of an art exhibition, one can start to play with those expectations and create new possibilities that bend or subvert preconceptions. This elemental group of paintings is complemented by neighboring celestial compositions.

*Sunspots 1-4*, which is one of the smaller pieces on view, depicts perhaps the largest subject matter in the exhibition, the sun. Through its solar warmth, one is invited to momentarily situate themselves to a shift in scale. *A New Sunrise* is directly behind and suggests the perpetual orbit and rotation of our planet. Through *Mystical Night*'s cool, complementary, twilight palette, the painting completes this illustration of both personal and geological timeframes. This intersection of the individual and the planetary is further expanded on in *Before You* and *Against All Odds*.

The thrilling narrative depicted in *Against All Odds* is of a sailboat racing a storm to a finish line of a race. *Before You* is an embryonic composition reflecting on life before a child is born. While certainly coming from personal experience, through a lens of nature, these pieces can also begin to illustrate the pressing matter of climate change. The duality of a personal story coupled with a larger, global concern suggests that opposites aren't so, but rather deeply linked.

An extension of Krutick's Dreamscape Series, *Shenandoah River*, further explores the artist's affection for bodies of water and the inherent metaphors they can possess. While most of the series may reflect oceans and seas, it is not a stretch to see how literally and figuratively this piece flows into this particular body of work. The composition in *Shenandoah River* blurs the line between a macro and micro vantage point with its depiction of the river's edge. The river's boundary is always moving yet always in the same place. This back and forth opens the door for countless interpretations, but concerning the painting: when is something abstract? When is something representational? Do the two have to be at odds?



The pristine and flawlessly reflective Dream Lake found within the nearby Luray Caverns recalls geographic proximity and emotional resonance to this painting. To illustrate this thought; say if I photographed Dream Lake, printed it at roughly 8x8 feet, turned the image upside down, and hung it on a wall; one would see more than an inverted photograph. One would see that the reflection (the image) is now indistinguishable from the actual thing it represents. Moreover, this observation still rings true within Krutick's body of work in *Nature Reimagined* – that the image of nature exists within nature itself. And, only by an artist's engagement in re-imagining the experiences and landscapes

found within it, perhaps at that moment one can gather that, paradoxically, one can *see* more when something is abstracted.

If to write is to remember, then certainly 'to paint is to remember' is true. The paintings on view are an extension and a remembrance of experience from the artist. As a viewer, looking at these works of art is the experience. Through time, memory, and personal challenges, it is clear to see how Krutick skillfully intersects the earth, sea, sky, flora, and fauna with paint, canvas, and brush.