

# BETWEEN REALISM AND ABSTRACTION

## EXPLORING THAT HARD-TO-DEFINE PLACE

Three very different artists bring artwork of great power and strangeness to the three exhibition spaces at AVA Gallery as they explore questions of the body, narrative and that hard-to-define place between realism and abstraction. I was drawn to this group of shows because of that hard-to-define place, through which I travel in my own work.

AVA Gallery and Art Center is a non-profit space offering exhibitions, classes and artists' studios. AVA's physical structure, with three separate galleries inside one large exhibition space, is ideal for thematically juxtaposing artists like this.

"Slow Transformations through Matter," in the combined Rebecca Lawrence Gallery Entry and Clifford B. West Gallery, includes both paintings and three-dimensional mixed media work by Louise Glass of Piermont, New Hampshire. Her imagery references the forms of the human body in a slow-moving, visceral, deeply internal way. Color is incidental – the neutral tones of an interior that does not see the light of day.

Glass refers to "matter" and "the hand," essentially inviting viewers to touch the pieces not with their actual hands, but with the hands of the mind. She said her work refers "directly to the opposition I see between dominance of vision in the culture and the relegation, therefore, to an inferior place, of touch and knowing by means of the hand and by extension, the body." She wants, she said, "its impact to be felt, physically, viscerally as a communication from the body to the body, and a seduction to and by means of that beauty."

The paintings present a strange dichotomy between what the pieces look like and how they might feel.

Visually, there appears to be an intestinal or testicular reference, smooth yet hairy, winding in and around and over. Glass asks us to move beyond the visual to a place of imagination to experience these mysterious, internal forms with the mind's hand rather than the mind's eye. She challenges us to move beyond the question "What is it?" to ponder a very different, more tactile question, something more like "How is it?"

Glass' pieces walk a peculiar line between appealing and disgusting. They both invite the viewer's touch and yet recall intestines and their contents, creating a dichotomous sense of attraction-repulsion.

In "Reading into Things" in the E.N. Wennberg Gallery, Sarah Lubin's oil paintings abstract disparate images of people and places into something strange and dreamlike – some place you feel you have been before yet can't quite remember.

"My paintings are often connected, but not restricted, to pieces of memories or thoughts that have slightly uncanny elements and that evoke an uncertain mood and disorienting atmosphere," said Lubin, of Lexington, Massachusetts. "In my recent body of work, moments are distilled in space and time, drawing attention to details of life that may not seem realistic and yet have something familiar about them."

Lubin grounds each piece with recognizable human or animal figures and objects, then uses her sense of composition and color to move them into an abstract world. "A lot of the paintings have similar qualities of creating something strange out of something familiar," she said.

That strangeness can extend to her own understanding of her paintings. "Each piece is its own world. They aren't meant to have any specific way of being viewed," Lubin said. "The narrative of each painting is open to interpretation while the overall subject includes color, shape, composition and the history of art."

Laura Karetsky's "Opening to Page 48" is presented in the Elizabeth Rowland Mayor Gallery. Her work is the most deceptively realistic at first glance, drawing from photographs she takes for her iPhone video diary. But Karetsky soon broadens the implied narratives to create unexpected and ambiguous moments in time while speaking to the use of technology in capturing and keeping the images.

"I consider myself a fiction painter," said Karetsky, who divides her time

**TIME, TRANSFORMATION, AND TACTILITY: LOUISE GLASS, SARAH LUBIN & LAURA KARETSKY**  
AVA GALLERY

11 BANK STREET  
LEBANON,  
NEW HAMPSHIRE

SEPTEMBER 5  
THROUGH  
OCTOBER 8

Louise Glass, *Untitled II*  
from the Series "Penumbral  
Tropisms," oil on canvas, 40  
1/2" x 37".





between Brooklyn, New York and her family home in Strafford, Vermont. The title of the show reflects her idea that each piece is like opening a short story somewhere in the middle and reading a single sentence. We don't know where the story is coming from or where it is going, but we know it's going somewhere.

She paints in oil on linen or wood, using a more transparent mix that builds visible layers and leaves the trace of previous painting sessions visible in the brushwork, reinforcing the passage of time.

"Composition is really important to me," Karetsky said. "I think a lot about the abstract structure of the piece."


Tying into that abstract structure will be her collaboration with Manuel Sosa, a Venezuelan-American composer on faculty at the Julliard School. Karetsky met Sosa about three years ago at Yaddo, the Saratoga Springs, New York artists' retreat; this is their second collaboration.

Sosa's piece, "Cantus III," begins with a graphic score with sketches representing the grand gestural movement from each of Karetsky's paintings. Using congas, tumbas and piano, Sosa creates a sound space that echoes the rhythms of the architecture created by the paintings. "Cantus III" will play for the duration of the exhibition.

**Marcia Santore**

LEFT: Laura Karetsky, *Park*, 2014, oil on wood, 20" x 16".


RIGHT: Sarah Lubin, *What Channel*, 2013, oil on canvas, 60" x 60".



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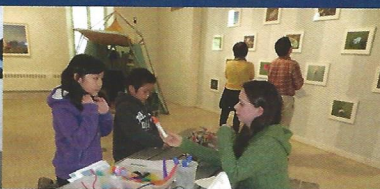

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**Far from Indochine**  
Curated by Chuong-Đài Võ  
Sept. 12 - Oct. 18, 2014

**Opening Reception:**  
Fri. Sept. 12, 6-8:30pm

**Far from Indochine**  
Artist Panel with the Curator and Christopher Capozzola, MIT Historian.  
Free. Tues. Sept. 16, 7pm

**Family Gallery Drop-In Visit:**  
Free. Sat. Sept. 27, 1-4pm

Have a Glass of Wine, Get Creative, Make Art.  
**Thursday Nights @ NAC**  
6:30-9:30pm  
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