

An abstract painting featuring a dense, intricate pattern of swirling, overlapping lines. The color palette is dominated by cool blues and purples, contrasted with warm oranges, yellows, and hints of green. The lines vary in thickness and direction, creating a sense of movement and depth. The overall effect is a complex, textured composition that draws the viewer's eye into its chaotic yet balanced structure.

Susanna Coffey



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Susanna Coffey  
**GOING TO GROUND**

**November 3 - December 15, 2016**

Alexandre Hogue Gallery

The University of Tulsa School of Art

# Introduction

Welcome to the Alexander Hogue Gallery, the School of Art's exhibition space located in Phillips Hall on The University of Tulsa campus.

We are pleased to host an exhibition featuring a contemporary painter with a distinguished reputation. This recurring exhibition is made possible by the Ruth Mayo Memorial Distinguished Visiting Artist Endowment. A dedicated student of the fine arts and interior design, our patron Ruth Mayo was a lifelong supporter of cultural institutions in the Tulsa community, among them The University of Tulsa's School of Art.

With the help of the inspired forethought and generosity of Ruth Mayo and her family, and particularly Cathryn Mayo Moore, the School of Art fulfills the mission it has set for its gallery. At the institution we teach both theory and practice of artists and their work, perspectives and ideas; we see the Hogue Gallery as a powerful tool in which we give our students the first fibs into the business of art from becoming a working artist to the minutiae of hanging a show in the a gallery which includes all curatorial, registrar and preparatory duties involved in the hanging and management of a gallery. The most successful results are the programs that are effective because they serve the university, the students and the public who have a chance to interact with the visiting artist and the public who attends our programming at the Hogue Gallery. And we hope all will be pleased with the exhibition.

Susanna Coffey is the 2016 Ruth Mayo Distinguished Visiting Artist. Since at least 1980, Susanna Coffey has exhibited her paintings regularly in galleries both here in the United States and abroad, and most especially in New York and Philadelphia. The School of Art is honored to welcome the artist to the middle of the nation, to Tulsa, Oklahoma.

We offer special thanks to Mark Lewis, the School of Art's painting professor, for his extraordinary care in ensuring the Mayo exhibit is a success, to the gallery staff Devin Howell, Jini Kim, Melissa Johnson, Shawn Phillips and to Nataly Anderson, the Third Floor Design student who worked on producing this catalogue.

M. Teresa Valero  
Director, School of Art



*Ringers, 2016*

# Figure in Place: Paintings by Susanna Coffey

## By Jennifer Samet

The recent work of Susanna Coffey synthesizes multiple dichotomies, including figure and ground; abstraction and representation; life and death; beauty and violence; male and female; skin and interiority; masking and individuality. Three paintings in the exhibition are representations of

Coffey's late father. The earliest work in the show is "My Father is Sometimes a Mystery" (1980). This phrase is scrawled as text at the bottom of the painting. Her father's face is shown in a form resembling a waning moon. The right half is in shadow, melting into dark painting ground. "Edwin R. Coffey" (2003) is a frontal portrait of her father, his head and shoulders set against a camouflage-patterned ground. The painting "Late Snow" (2012-15), although seemingly abstract, was inspired by a memory-vision of her father in a field. Other paintings are more oblique, yet poignant references to her father.

"Dad's Camo Poncho" (1999) is a self-portrait, also with camouflage-patterned ground. More generally, Coffey's explorations of landscape are rooted in

childhood experience. Her father was involved in developing and building roads, so Coffey moved frequently with her family, and wandered through countryside that would have otherwise been inaccessible. Coffey's paintings become investigations of the inherent problem of portraiture: the capturing of likeness, versus showing "lifelikeness" - the spirit or feeling of a person Coffey has continued to grapple with this question She has taken it to the extreme of representing person and place in an entirely tactile and visual way—through the matter of paint itself, rather than image or text. They are metaphysical portraits.





*Edwin R. Coffey, 2003*



*Dad's Camo Poncho, 1999*

Coffey probes the questions of difference between a person's external and internal life, what remains hidden from sight, our connections to larger societal identity, what we become after death, our spiritual presence versus our material one. In the last few years, Coffey has engaged with two media: acrylic spray painting using stencils, and slower-paced oil paintings. Her newest paintings bridge the media.

This is one aspect of the idea of "Going to Ground" (the title of the current exhibition), where portraits are allowed to dissolve into ground and matter – visual manifestations of "dust to dust, ashes to ashes." In "Ringers" (2016), Coffey merges the two modes of painting within one portrait. A self-portrait in a backwards baseball cap is vertically mirrored by a vertebrae-like formation, rising from the more naturalistic head. It becomes the mask-twin to the self-portrait.

Coffey used an enlarged ink-jet print of one of her spray-painted, stencil pieces to work from, to create the ground around the portrait, and the mask-twin. "Late Snow" is densely worked, with a centrally and symmetrically placed blue-white form, textured like snow-covered earth. At the lower corners and sides we see touches of green and red peeking out from below. The painting has a "spine" – a subtle vertical line of whiter-white. It might represent a part of the landscape – the top of a small hill, or a path running through a field. However, the white line can also be read as a nasal skeleton, so that the painting reveals a ghostlike, obscured head and face.

These spinal, vertical forms can be found in several of Coffey's paintings – the stencil works and also the more naturalistic portraits. They suggest common markers between human and non-human beings – skeletons, gene structures, and replicating strands of DNA. They suggest connections that run deeper than our daily lives.

Coffey recognizes that the visual flood we experience in our image-saturated culture puts us constantly in the position of existing in two places at once. Imaging figure and place is an opportunity to be in a place we are not. Here, that alternate place is metaphysical. It transcends the image we project of ourselves in the world, the surfaces we willingly share, and what we know of another.

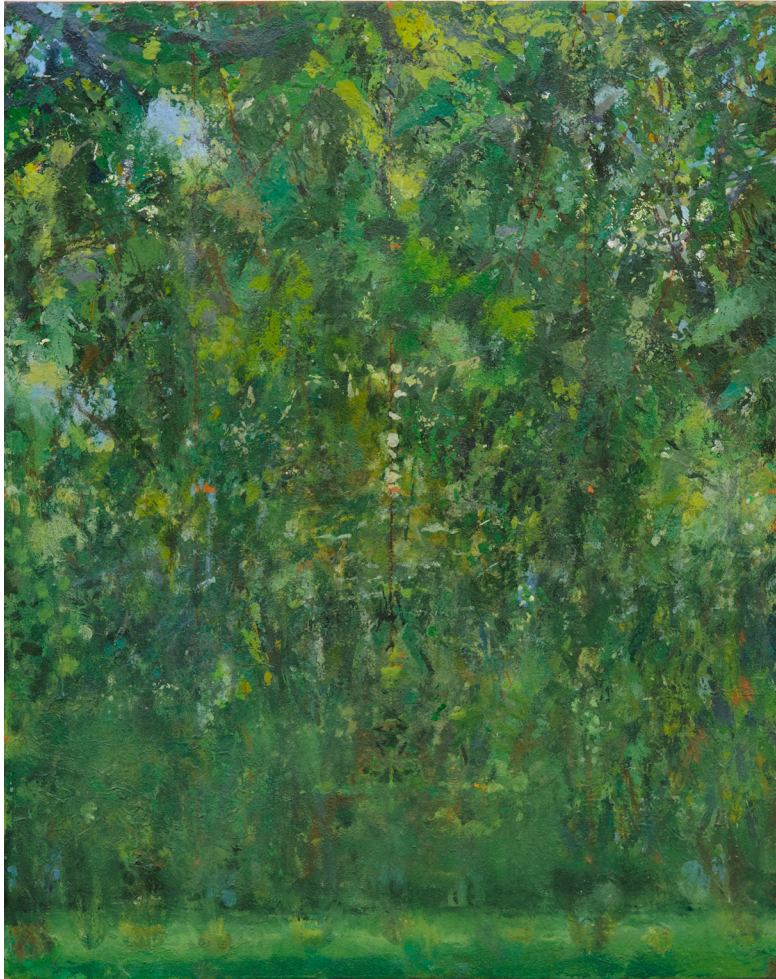




*Late Snow, 2015*



*Surface, 2012*



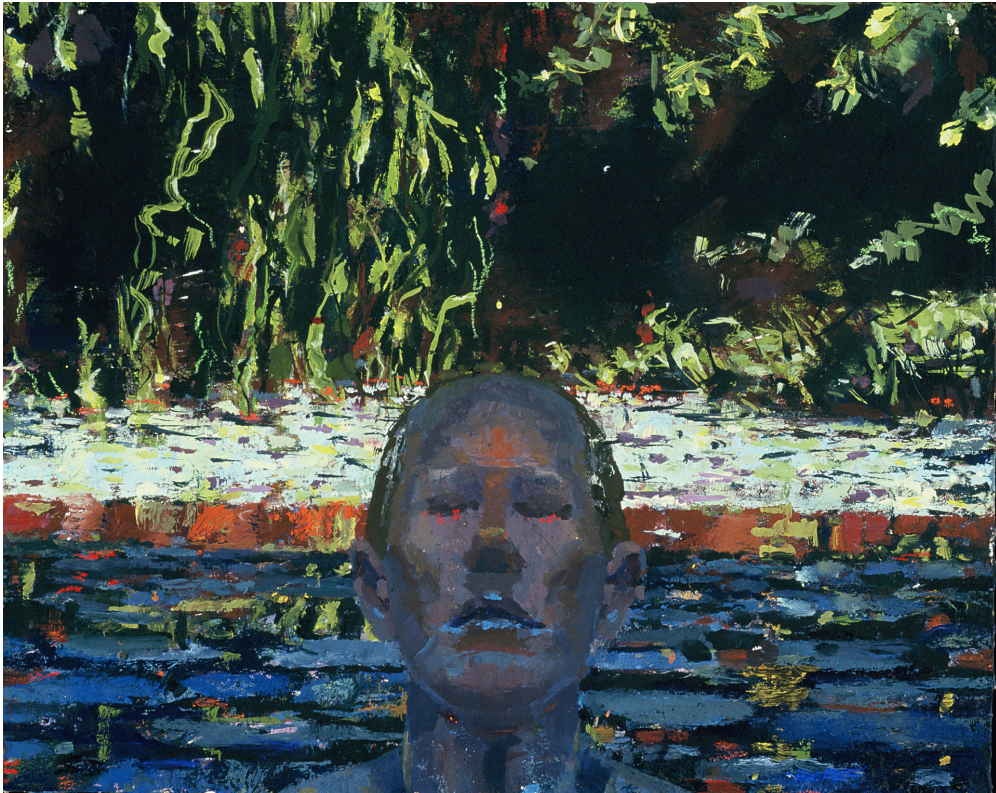
*Apopenia, Jane's Gardener, 2012*



*Void of Course, 2015*



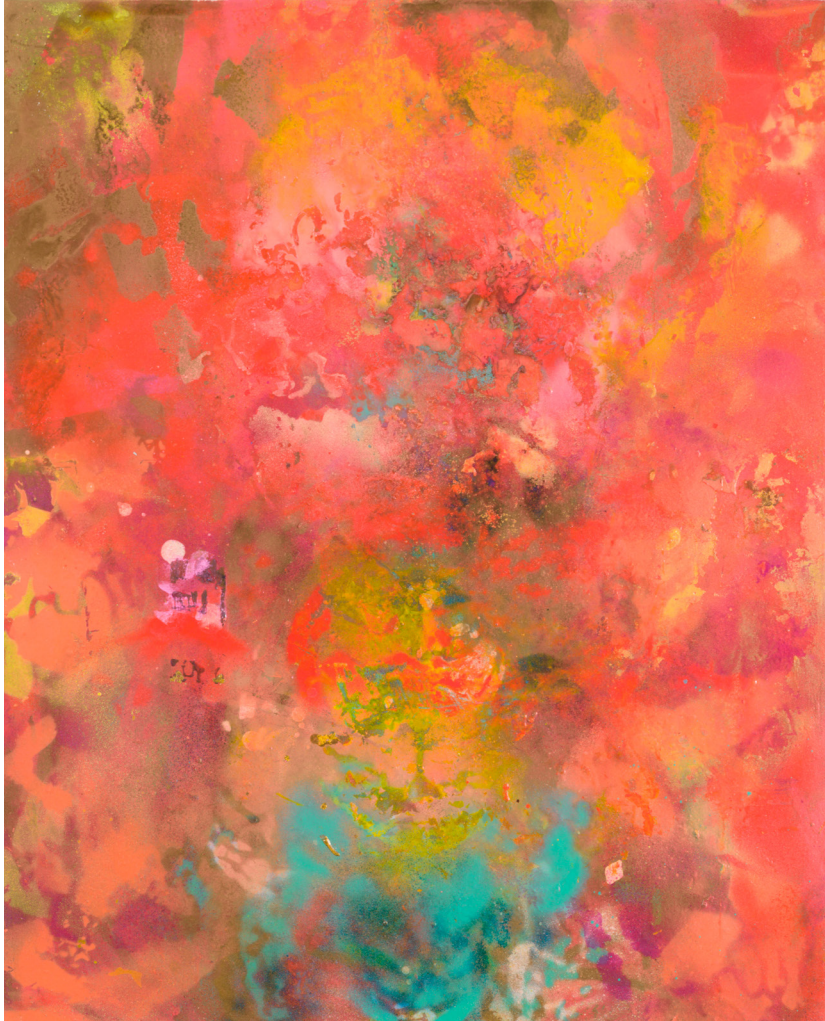
*Headstand, 2011*



*Water Years II, 2006*



*Alluvian, 2016*



Oz, 2015

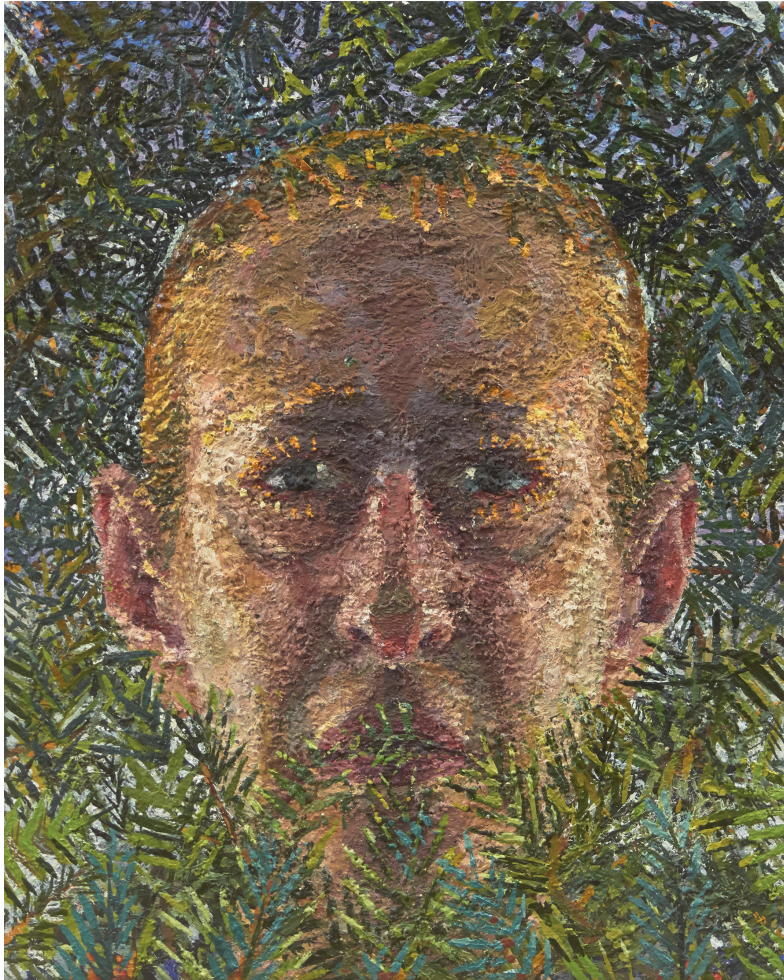




*Walking, Leo, Evening, Salem, 2013*



*Kali*, 2015



*Green, 2013*



*Self Portrait (lunette), 2010-2016*

## Resume

Born: New London, CT

### Selected Solo Exhibitions

- 2016** *Going to Ground*, The Alexandre Hogue Gallery, the University of Tulsa, Tulsa, OK.  
**2015** *A Night Painting Project*, The Anchorage Art Museum, Anchorage AK  
**2014** *Elemental*, Steven Harvey Fine Arts Projects, NYC (Review, video interview Gorky's Daughter)  
**2012** *Apophenia*, Alpha Gallery, Boston MA (reviews)  
*Nocturnes*, Steven Harvey Fine Art Projects, NYC (review)  
**2011** The Robert & Elaine Stein Galleries at Wright State University, Dayton OH  
The New Bedford Museum of Art, New Bedford, MA  
**2009** *Susanna Coffey, Plantings and Cuttings*, Jerald Melberg Gallery, Charlotte NC  
**2008** *Susanna Coffey, since 2001*, The New York Studio School, NY  
**2006** *Mirar* Isabel Ignacio Gallery, Seville, Spain (catalog and reviews)  
**2004** Alpha Gallery, Boston, MA (review)  
Maya Polsky Gallery, Chicago, IL (reviews)  
**2003** Tibor De Nagy Gallery, NY (catalog and review)  
**2002** The College of Saint Rose, Albany, NY, travels to: The Kendall Art Gallery, Grand Rapids, MI (reviews)  
**2001** Tibor de Nagy Gallery, NY (catalog and reviews)  
The Weatherspoon Gallery, Greensboro, NC (review)  
**2000** Alpha Gallery, Boston, MA, (reviews)  
The Marguerite Oestricher Gallery, New Orleans, LA (review)  
**1999** Tibor De Nagy Gallery, NY, (review)  
**1998** Halsey Gallery, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC  
*Susanna Coffey: Paintings*, Jaffe-Friede & Strauss Galleries, Hopkins Center, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH (review and catalog), essays by Michael Rooks & Eileen Myles  
Galeria Alejandro Sales, Barcelona, Spain (reviews)  
**1997** Tibor De Nagy Gallery, NY (review)  
Ackland Art Museum, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC

### Selected Academic Positions

- 1982 – Present** The F. H. Sellers Professor in Painting at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, IL  
**2013 – Present** Adjunct Graduate Advisor, Columbia University, NY

### Education

- MFA, Yale School of Art, New Haven, CT  
BFA, magna cum laude, University of Connecticut at Storrs

### Selected Awards and Honors

- 2016** The University of Connecticut's School of Fine Arts Distinguished Alumni Award  
**2015** Honorary Degree from Lyme Academy College of Fine Arts  
**2009** The John Hultberg Memorial Prize for Painting, The National Academy Museum  
**2008, 1995 and 1996** The Hassam, Speicher, Betts, and Symons Funds Purchase Award from The American Academy of Arts and Letters  
Honorary Doctorate from The Pennsylvania College of the Arts  
**2006** (May) Residency at The Rockefeller Center at Bellagio, Lake Como, Italy  
**1999** (Since) Member of The National Academy of Art and Design  
**1996** The John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship  
**1993** Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Award  
**1992** Marie Walsh Sharpe Foundation Studio Program  
**1990** The Aeschylus Medal awarded by the city of Eleusis, Greece

### Recent Panels and Speaking Engagements

Beijing National Academy of Painting, Graduation Speaker at The Lyme Academy of Fine Arts,

The Anchorage Art Museum, Western CT State University, The Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, The Kansas City Art Institute, Minneapolis Institute of Art, "Portraiture", The Metropolitan Museum of Art

### **Selected Publications**

- 2014** *In Residence, Contemporary Artists at Dartmouth* The Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College
- 2012** *Re: Things In the Lap* Essay on the night paintings by Edmund Chia, published by Pergrine Programs, Chicago IL
- 2010** *Selected Contemporary American Figurative Painters*, Editor, Qimin Liu, Tianjin Peoples Fine Arts Publishing House, China  
*The Sienese Shredder*, edited by Brice Brown and Mark Shortliffe, Sienese Shredder Editions
- 2009** *The Importance of Being Iceland*, Essay by Eileen Myles published by Semiotext(e)/MIT Press  
*Blind Handshake*, Essay by David Humphrey, published by Periscope Press  
Catalog, *Artist's Response: Portraits and Self-Portraits*, from exhibition, *Unexpected Reflections: The Portrait Reconsidered* at Meridian Gallery, San Fransisco CA, by Terri Cohn  
Essay, "Pilgrimage to My Lai: Social Memory and the Making of Art" by Carol Becker in *Thinking in Place*, Paradigm Publishers, Catalog, *Since 2001*, The New York Studio School, essays by Lisa Wainwright, David Cohen and poem by Cyrus Cassell
- 2006** Catalog, *Outwin Boochever Portrait Competition*, Smithsonian, National Portrait Gallery, essay by Dave Hickey  
Catalog, *Slowness*, Heaven Gallery, Chicago Il, essays by Terry Myers and Aaron Walker  
Catalog, *Susanna Coffey, Suzanne Walters* Pi 37 Gallery Athens, Greece, essay by Megakles Rogakos
- 2005** Catalog, *Looking at Herself* Lyme Academy of Art 2005, essay by Eleanor Heartney  
Catalog, *...Never Done: Works by Women Artists from the Puzzuoli Miller Collection*, The Huntington Museum of Art, Huntington, WV essay by Brice Brown
- 2003** Catalog, *Susanna Coffey Recent Work*, Tibor De Nagy Gallery, essay by Mark Strand  
*Challenging Tradition: The Women of the Academy 1826-2003*, By David Derringer and Isabelle Dervaux, The National Academy Museum
- 2001** Catalog *Susanna Coffey*, Tibor De Nagy Gallery, essay by Michael Rooks, Poem, "Blue" by Susan Wheeler
- 1999** *Contemporary American Realist Drawings from the Jalane and Richard Davidson Collection at The Art Institute of Chicago* by Ruth Fine, Raymond Hernandez-Duran and Mark Pascale
- 1998** Catalog, *Susanna Coffey: Paintings* The Studio Art Exhibition Program of Dartmouth College, September, Essays by Michael Rooks and Eileen Myles
- 1989** *Exposures, Women, and Their Art*, New Sage Press, Essays by Betty Ann Brown and Arlene Raven, Photos by Kenna Love

### **Selected Public Collections**

Yale University Art Gallery, The Danforth Art Museum, Framingham MA, The Hood Museum at Dartmouth College, Hanover NH, Honolulu Academy of Art, Honolulu, Hawaii, Museum of Contemporary Art, Seville, Spain, The Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Akron Museum of Art, Akron, OH, Weatherspoon Art Museum, Greensboro, NC, Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, MA, The Brauer Museum, Valparaiso, IN, The Davis Museum and Cultural Center at Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA, The National Academy of Art and Design, NYC The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL, The Print and Drawing Collection of The Art Institute of Chicago, The Rockford Museum, Rockford, IL, The William and Uytendale Scott Memorial Study Collections at the Mariam Coffin Canaday Library, Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, PA, The Catherine T. and John D. McArthur Foundation, Chicago, IL, The Minneapolis Museum of Art, The Joan Flasch Book Collection, Flaxman Library, The Art Institute of Chicago, IL, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL

### **Gallery Representation**

Steven Harvey Fine Arts Projects, New York  
Alpha Gallery, Boston, MA  
Galeria Isabel Ignacio, Seville, Spain

## Exhibition List

*Edwin R. Coffey; Sometimes a Mystery*, 1981, oil on canvas, 19" x 17"

*Edwin R. Coffey*, 2003, oil on canvas, 12" x 15"

*Eris*, 2003, oil on panel, 12" x 15"

*Little Water Years*, 2006, oil on panel, 6" x 12"

*Water Years I*, 2006, oil on canvas, 12" x 15"

*Water Years II*, 2006, oil on panel, 12" x 15"

*Water Years III*, 2006, oil on panel, 12" x 15"

*Transport*, 2008, oil on panel, 12" x 15"

*Aphaia*, 2008, oil on canvas, 12" x 11", collection of Jane Coffey

*Sharon's Potion's Breath*, 2010, oil on panel, 15" x 12"

*Headstand*, 2011, oil on panel, 15" x 12"

*Apophenia*, 2012, oil on panel, 15" x 12"

*Eos on the Left*, 2012, oil on panel, 15" x 12"

*Willow*, 2012, oil on panel, 15" x 12"

*Surface*, 2012, oil on panel, 15" x 12"

*Green*, 2013, oil on panel, 15" x 12"

*New Friends and Old*, 2013, oil on panel, 36" x 28"

*Walking, Leo, Evening, Salem*, 2013, oil on panel, 36" x 28"

*Kali*, 2015, acrylic on panel, 15" x 12"

*Snowblind*, 2015, acrylic on panel, 15" x 12"

*Void of Course*, 2015, oil on panel, 15" x 12"

*Self Portrait (lunette)*, oil on canvas, 2010-2016, 20" x 18"

*Alluvian*, 2016, acrylic on panel, 15" x 12"

*Ringers*, 2016, oil on panel, 15" x 12"

*Oz*, 2015, acrylic on panel, 15" x 12"

*Dad's Camo Poncho*, 1999, oil on canvas, 12" x 11", collection of Ellen Kozak

*Silky, Red Leo to Golden Girl*, 2015, ink jet on silk, 46" x 40"

*Red Rover*, 2016, acrylic on panel, 15" x 12"

*Towards Mt. Mansfield from Starfield*, oil on panel, 6" x 4"

*Johnson Vermont, Gihon River, Mill, John and Louise's House*, 1997, oil on panel, 4" x 6"

*Freeze Towards the North, Gardener Lake*, 2010, Oil on panel, 6" x 8"

*Night House, Johnson Vermont 2000*, 2000, Oil on panel, 6" x 8"

*High Moon, Starfield 1999*, 1999, oil on panel, 3" x 5"

*Looking Toward Norfolk, Autumn 2013*, oil on panel, 2013, 8" x 6"

*The Arno from St Croce Bridge*, 1996, oil on panel, 8" x 6"

*From the Starfield*, 2013, oil on panel, 5" x 3"

*Down College Hill 2000*, 2000, oil on panel, 8" x 6"

*From the 125th St. Pier 11/14*, 2014, oil on panel, 9" x 6"

*Sears Red Horns 2/15*, 2015, oil on panel, 4" x 2"

*Anchorage Sky 11/12/15*, 2015, oil on panel, 8" x 10"

*Gas Station, Milton, PA, 8/15*, 2015, oil on panel, 8" x 6"

*Anchorage 11/11/15, Towards the Knik Arm, Snow*, 2015, oil on panel, 6" x 9"

*Party at Ghost City, Xinjiang 8/16*, 2016, oil on panel, 3" x 5"

*Gurupurnima, 7/15*, 2015, oil on panel, 2" x 4"

*Rose Light Past Delancy, 8/15*, 2015, oil on panel, 8" x 6"

*Lunar Eclipse 9/28/15 from CSV Roof*, 2015, oil on panel, 3" x 5"

OUR SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Susanna Coffey

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