

Essential Art:

Work by Blue Mountain Gallery Artists during the Pandemic

June – October 2020

www.bluemoutaingallery.org

Essential Art Spotlight

Jane Beckwith : Loss and Hope

PAINTING

The two paintings here represent both loss and hope.

I painted *The Barren Trees with the Broken Limb* the morning I left my farm for the last time. When I bought the place, 25 years before, the trees were lush. Over time and with neglect, they were in bad shape. The night before, a storm sent the big limb to the ground. It seemed such a symbol at the time!



The other painting is *Preparing for Late Summer Harvest*, inspired by a time when the bees' output was so abundant that many storage hive supers were needed to add space for honey production.

Bees are always under threat from something. Now hornets.

Bees persist!

LIVING



My bedroom is my studio now. It isn't Italy, but how fortunate I am to have a big deck outside my kitchen door for an outdoor studio. The etching press is, of course, back at the College. I have a large work table, illustrated here with my cat in residence. It is covered with boxes of inks and paints. Usually, I will be in Venice at Scuola Internazionale di Grafica, and in Florence at the eponymous art school. I won't be going this year.

With my strict quarantine since February, I have actually found time to take some short workshop classes with Robert Blackburn and a month-long class offered by the Art Students League by Silvie Covey. There are 35 students in the Zoom class! We are working on several printing-without-a-press projects, including Prontoplate lithography, drypoint on plexi, and monoprinting, using found materials.

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TEACHING

Since I began sheltering in place, I have been taking classes while continuing to teach at St. Joseph's College, in Brooklyn, where I am head of the Art Department. This spring my courses included Art as Communication, The History of Modern Art, Painting 1, Popular Culture, and Colonial American History, a class that was to include a trip to Boston for my students. (Covid put a stop to that.)

Painting 1 was a challenge to complete Online. Students were a couple of weeks from finishing their paintings on canvas when we had to abandon them all of a sudden. They

were frustrated and disappointed. I made PowerPoint step-by-step lessons that they could follow, using the little Prang paint sets I had given them at the beginning of the semester. They had another week to complete all the projects. Work has been coming in steadily. Their home lives are complicated. The worries about illness and death mixed with missing their friends leaves them feeling depressed and unmotivated. Many comment about how unfair it is; their comments are oblique because they don't want to seem selfish.

In the Popular Culture class, students left off the idea of making TikToks. Instead, they wrote poetry and made collages about their lives in this unsettling popular culture of the pandemic. Theirs is sincere expression, and I do believe that writing and collaging have helped give them room to be afraid, sad, and hopeful, all at one time.

Jane Beckwith's portfolio of recent prints can be viewed on the Website, [Artsy](#)