

Glass Half Moon | Eleanor Conover | Wellesley College

Glass Half Moon brings a suite of 13 new paintings by Eleanor Conover to the Jewett Art Gallery at Wellesley College. At first glance many appear purely abstract, but look closer, and with time images begin to emerge and recurring motifs may be recognized. The title is a collision of the phrase ‘glass half full (or empty)’ with phases of the moon, and suggests that dichotomies of optimism and pessimism, plenitude and lack were very much on the artist’s mind as she worked on this series through this intensely unusual past year.

Drawing from multiple sources, the paintings together form a landscape where geologic time and the present collapse into a single moment, simultaneously outside of time itself and deeply embedded in the histories of art, science, archaeology, and personal narrative. Their surfaces are a palimpsest of references and materials both. A number of the paintings in this exhibition include pieces of marble, resting against the frames or attached to the surface of the canvas. Marble is a metamorphic stone. Limestone—itsself a sedimentary rock, made up of the fossilized remains of what came before—is subjected to unimaginably intense pressures and heat, deep within the earth. Over time, a transformation occurs, and the limestone metamorphoses into marble. All the works in this show undergo this same sort of metamorphic change.

The paintings grow outwards from the canvas in both directions: up, in overlapping layers of dye, paint, charcoal, and graphite on top of the canvas; and down, in bleach that cuts through staining on the canvas surface to reveal lines made by the wooden support structures that lie below. These support structures, which typically remain unseen in a rectangular painting, are elaborate, as they must be in order to keep the irregularly shaped canvases in steady tension. These formal complexities complicate our ability to site these works within the histories of a more typical, surface-up mode of painting, and mimic the complex webs of allusions made by the imagery, while curious formal tensions (as of carefully bent and braced pieces of wood, or precariously balanced pieces of stone) mimic the tension that exists in these works between representation and abstraction.

Conover is the recipient of the 2020-21 Alice C. Cole '42 Fellowship, which provides funds to support one year of unimpeded time and space to experiment, develop a body of work, and focus on future artistic goals. *Glass Half Moon* features artwork created during Conover’s fellowship year. The Alice C. Cole '42 Fellowship is awarded to an outstanding early-career artist, based on nominations from prominent members of the national arts community. The fellowship is made possible by the generous bequest of Wellesley alumna Alice C. Cole, class of 1942. Aware of the burdens that recent graduates of art school face, Ms. Cole makes it possible for an artist to have 'a limited time free of economic necessity'-- an immensely valuable gift.

This exhibition will be on view in the Jewett Art Gallery starting Sept. 8, 2021, with a closing reception tentatively scheduled for Friday Nov. 5. The Gallery is currently closed to the general public, and open to the campus community during regular building hours. Updates about gallery access and College visitor policies will be posted on the Gallery’s website and Facebook page as we receive new guidance.

For more information, contact Gallery Director Samara Pearlstein at 781-283-2043 or spearls2@wellesley.edu.



ART DEPARTMENT

Clockwise from left:

Understudy

Dye, bleach, acrylic, graphite, oil, and marble on linen with beveled pine
70 x 50"
2021

A House is to Build

Oil on paper with dyed pine artist frame
12 x 9"
2020

Untitled (Trochee)

Oil on paper with dyed pine artist frame
12 x 9"
2020

Blackberry-Picking

Dye, bleach, acrylic, charcoal, and oil on linen with beveled pine
67 x 49"
2021

F/old

Dye, bleach, acrylic, oil, and graphite on linen with beveled pine
54 x 40"
2020

Glass Half Moon

Dye, bleach, acrylic, oil, and graphite on linen with beveled pine and marble inset
67 x 49"
2020-21

Study after GHM

Oil on paper with dyed pine artist frame
12 x 9"
2021

Weather Reader

Dye, bleach, acrylic, oil, and graphite on linen with beveled and stained pine
54 x 40"
2021

Seed (for Sigrid)

Dye, bleach, acrylic, oil, and graphite on linen with beveled pine
46 x 35"
2021

Future Perfect

Oil on paper with dyed pine artist frame
9 x 12"
2021

Self Portrait with Marble

Dye, bleach, acrylic, oil, and graphite on linen with beveled pine and marble base
72 x 52"
2021

Forest Fire Still Life

Dye, bleach, acrylic, oil, charcoal, and marble on linen with beveled pine
46 x 35"
2021

Ellen

Oil on linen
24 x 18"
2021

Eleanor Conover is an artist whose work engages with the physical and material conditions of painting as a metaphor for environmental time and space. Born in Hartford, CT in 1988, she received an MFA at Tyler School of Art, Temple University (2018) and a BA from Harvard College (2010). Recent past exhibitions include Able Baker Contemporary (Portland, ME), Bad Water (Knoxville, TN) and Ortega y Gasset Projects (Brooklyn, NY). Her practice has been supported through artist residencies including Vermont Studio Center, Cow House Studios, and the Joseph A. Fiore Art Center. With an interest in land and the environment, she has additionally been involved in the research of geologic histories in Philadelphia, PA and visual work regarding ecology in coastal places as remote as the Aleutian Islands, AK. She received a post-MFA teaching fellowship at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and has recently relocated to Carlisle, PA, where she is now an Assistant Professor of Art at Dickinson College.

