

Jeannine Bardo: Solastalgia
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Callahan Center Gallery, St. Francis College, Brooklyn, NY
curated by John Ros

The world vibrates. Parts move in measurable amounts around us — throughout us. Invisible energies persist. Motion translates into activity. Activity, sometimes into activism. Throughout her life Jeannine Bardo has planted herself firmly into the ground as an artist, community activist and educator, yet her works speak to an interest in that movement which surrounds us and shapes us. Bardo cultivates her persistent energies of constant motion onto the page. It is with this energy that Bardo also presses on us — an affront in gesture and meaning so that we too may experience solastalgia, psychic or existential distress caused by environmental change.

Solastalgia therefore is a fitting title for this exhibition that comes full circle for the artist. We are presented with the genesis and (current) conclusion to a body of work that is at once attractive and foreboding. We are asked to confront this dichotomy in order to begin our own process of negotiation. At first notice, there is luminosity and succinctness in graphic quality pointing to a lush landscape. Underwater or overhead, these coral reefs or aerial views of winding rivers through rolling hills captivate our senses. Bardo's desire to lead with beauty is somewhat paradoxical. She sees the radiance of the landscape she experiences everyday, yet she is ever-aware of its fleeting presence. Bardo records, but also relives, providing the groundwork for possible revival.

Bardo activates her two-dimensional surfaces primarily with clarity. The more overt passages of decorative heavy-handedness, as in *Soliphilia II*, 2016, relates directly to the abuse of our land for our own means. This is where the challenge really begins. The decorative quickly haunts with questions like: *Why metallic?* — precious metals extracted through mining. *Why prussian blue pigment?* — a synthetic color not readily found in nature. *Why Tyvek?* — a synthetic DuPont material. All seemingly contrary elements to present an environmental cause for nature. These visual questions become menacing. By validating these contradictions, Bardo comments on the very use of these products as a means of destruction to the very thing she mourns. Like scorched land is scarred by atrocities of man-made

disasters, Bardo's works, too, reflect the effects of accelerated anthropogenic global warming. The use of the metallics and blue pigments are almost farcical in relation to the works that feature them. But Bardo uses them in a less obvious way. Embedded or set in a way to taunt.

Solastalgia presents a timeline of sorts, like counting growth rings on a hallowed out tree and though these works are actively labored, they present themselves as records and warnings. The surfaces are developed with effect as we feel both the pressure of the object and of the artist. This pressure is symbolic of the contradictory sense of the work and how it might exploit the land it is trying to preserve. Most importantly, Bardo is charging us with action. A recent Yale/GMU* study states that, "[e]ven though 'two in three Americans are either moderately or very interested in global warming,' public opinion research finds that 70 percent of Americans 'rarely or never discuss global warming with family or friends.'"

Solastalgia represents our memories and the good times, while also bringing to light the imminent devastation that lies in milestone upon milestone smashed in records of climate change science. This is not only about our planet, but about the lives of our friends and families and our future generations. This tension is the exact anxiety that motivates Bardo as she asks the same of us. Here our broken landscape is laid for you to witness. Now, take action.

*<https://thinkprogress.org/end-climate-silence-cbe439a31a8e#>

GALLERY CENTER:

Soliphilia II, 2016 (shown in parts)

Graphite, wax, encaustic, powdered pigment, chalk, acrylic on Tyvek

BACK WALL:

Scroll, 2011

Sumi ink

WINDOW WALL:

Soliphilia I, 2016

Graphite, sumi ink on Tyvek

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