

INMAN GALLERY

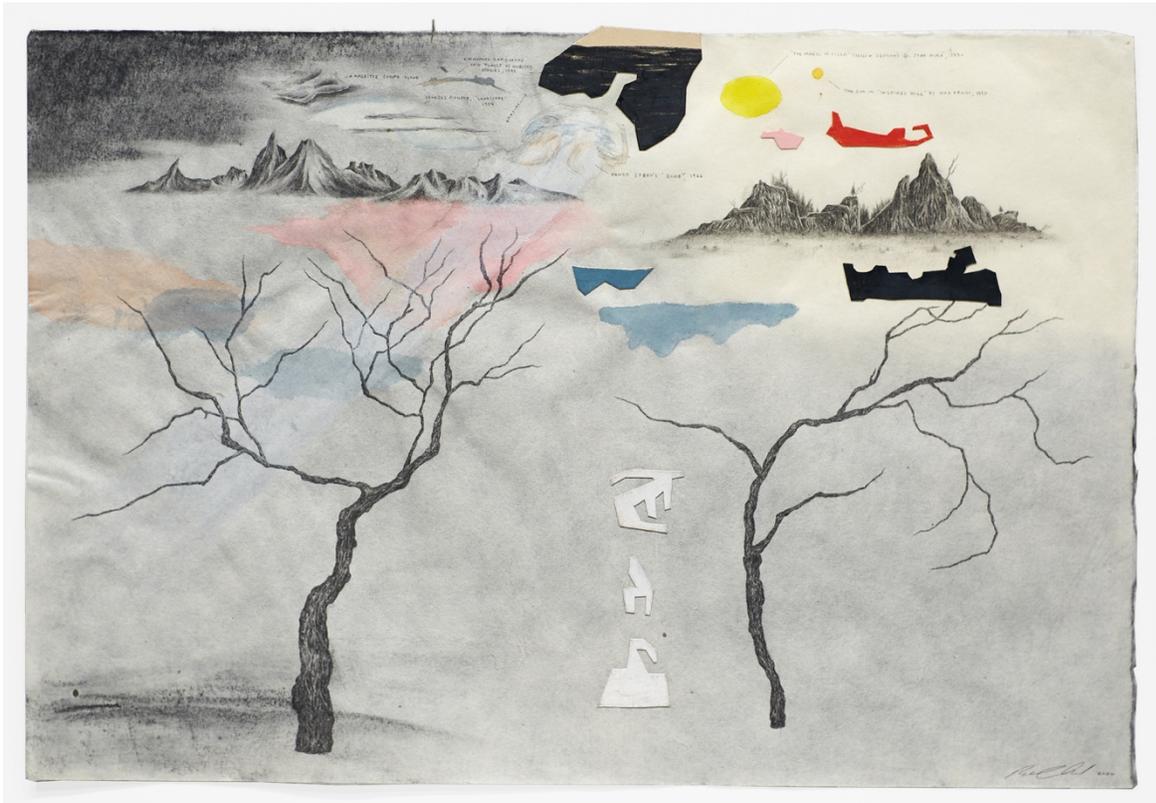
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 1, 2020

Inman Gallery is pleased to present:

Robyn O'Neil *IN PIECES ON FIRE*

September 12 – October 31, 2020

Exhibition open by appointment: Tues. – Sat., 11 – 6



Robyn O'Neil, *Kupferstichkabinett/Houston, TX, 2020*, graphite, watercolor and colored pencil, 12 1/2 x 18 3/8 in

Inman Gallery is pleased to present two concurrent exhibitions to celebrate the gallery's 30th anniversary: *IN PIECES ON FIRE* by **Robyn O'Neil** and *Our world swells like dawn, when the sun licks the water* by **Angela Fraleigh**. The exhibitions present new bodies of work by each artist. On view beginning Saturday, September 12, they will continue by appointment through Saturday, October 31, 2020. In lieu of a public opening, there will be public programs via Zoom scheduled throughout the run of the exhibitions and interested visitors may make appointments to view the shows in person.

Robyn O'Neil's prodigious career places her in the company of some of the great landscape artists in the history of art. Known for her detailed narrative drawings that often contain art historical references, her drawings in dry media range from intimate landscapes to large-scale, multi-panel works. Often surreal or symbolic, her drawings reference personal narratives and art historical allusions, and deal with themes of memory, identity and climate crises.

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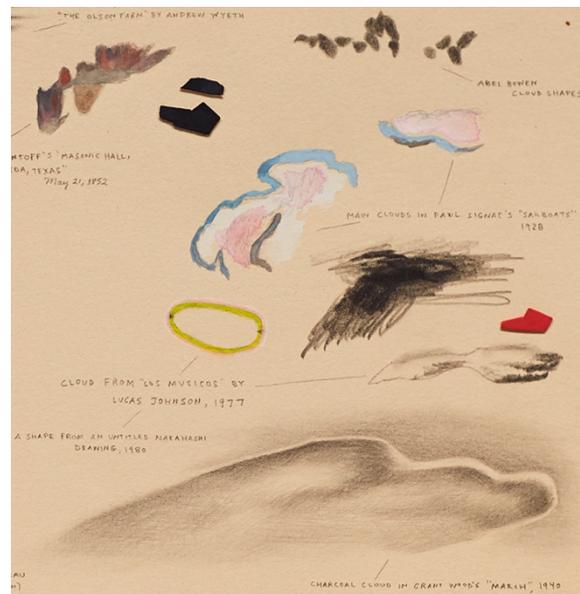
The works in this exhibition look upward, and each comes from O’Neil’s ongoing *Cloudmakers* series, begun in 2018. Two large drawings included in her career-spanning retrospective at the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth (2019) anchor the show, and the remaining intimately scaled works were produced since then. But O’Neil’s cloud obsession can be traced to her youth: a self-avowed “weather obsessive,” she grew up in tornado alley in Nebraska and Texas and was a volunteer weather watcher. O’Neil’s interest in clouds and weather form the basis of these pieces. She recalls:

I wanted to create a storm of sorts out of my ‘collection’ of clouds from art history, literature, poetry, TV shows, movies, etc. It’s also the first time I’ve ever felt the freedom to directly reference artists I love in my work. Those heroes were always hidden in my early work, and I now cherish the freedom I feel to nod to the artists who make me wild with excitement.”

Most of the small drawings were made during quarantine while O’Neil was unable to source her usual art supplies, and the resulting works contain colors and papers that the artist does not normally use. Scraps of recycled drawings reappear as collage elements. O’Neil says, “the papers used in these small drawings all have histories of their own. Which is why you also see that some of the dates on these drawings started years ago.”

O’Neil presents four Texas-art-themed works in the exhibition. *Kupfertischkabinett/Houston, Texas* contains shapes and clouds drawn from works in the Menil Collection by artists such as Rene Magritte, Nancy Spero and Joan Miro. The cloud shapes in *May in Matagorda, Texas* and in *Unknown American* are sourced from works at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. *Clouds at Edwards Plateau...* is loosely Texas-inspired; O’Neil states this work “is about the day I left Texas for the west coast. Something important for me. But one of the main things I didn’t want to leave behind were those Texas skies.”

One of the large drawings, *The Dissolution Documents: Air Quality Unhealthy*, depicts a cloud shape found in one of William Blake’s illustrations for Dante’s *The Divine Comedy*. O’Neil produced *The Dissolution Documents...* while she was living through the threat of wildfires that were raging through Southern California, where the artist was based, in 2018. That period was a precursor to her recent pandemic isolation, and during both she has used the time to explore new, violent techniques of production. For example, *The Dissolution Documents...* is made from paper that she purposefully destroyed using Exacto knife blades and sandpaper to create a rough texture. She also placed some sheets in tubs of boiling water after drawing on them. These intentional acts of destruction were liberating for O’Neil, allowing her to approach the most recent works with a newfound perspective on her artistic practice.



Robyn O’Neil, *May in Matagorda, Texas* (detail), 2020
watercolor, graphite, colored pencil
7 1/4 x 9 1/2 in

Robyn O’Neil (born 1977, Omaha, NE) received her BFA from Texas A&M Commerce, and she currently lives and works in northern Washington State. Her work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at major institutions, including at the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston; the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York; the Sheldon Museum of Art, Lincoln, Nebraska; and the Frye Art Museum in Seattle, Washington. In fall 2019, the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth presented a twenty-year survey featuring the artist’s acclaimed film, *WE, THE MASSES*, which she conceived of at Werner Herzog’s Rogue Film School in Los Angeles. She has been included in many prestigious group museum exhibitions, including the 2004 Whitney Biennial. Her work can be found in the permanent collections of the Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, Texas; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Blanton Museum of Art, Austin, Texas; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas; the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth; Philadelphia Museum of Art, Pennsylvania; and the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York. Further, O’Neil is the recipient of numerous prestigious awards, including a Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant, an Artadia grant, and the Hunting Prize. She also hosts the popular podcast, “Me Reading Stuff.”