

296 WEST WEBSTER AVENUE
MUSKEGON, MI 49440
PH. 231/720.2570
WWW.MUSKEGONARTMUSEUM.ORG

MUSKEGON MUSEUM OF ART

SPILLWAY



“I am intrigued by the effects of people on the land and the resulting contrasts between natural and man-made forms.”

RESTEEL



OVERVIEWS & AFTERLANDS

LANDSCAPES BY JIM NAWARA

OCTOBER 19, 2007
THROUGH
JANUARY 20, 2008

FRIDAY ,
OCTOBER 19
Opening Reception
5:30 pm
Artist Talk
by Jim Nawara 7:00 pm

“The evidence of human activity, whether subtle—as in the case of pruned trees or mowed weeds, or dominant—as in the presence of buildings or roads, is everywhere.”

Detroit-area artist Jim Nawara is inspired by the history of place and process. His landscapes, many compelling in their verdant serenity, are infused with subtle tensions and contrasts. They are without figures, yet notated with marks of human activity and man-made forms. They are based on observation, but driven by invention. And they are records of the passage of time: changing light and shadow, remnants of man-made forms, the layering of medium during the creative process. The artist explains:

I am intrigued by the effects of people on the land and the resulting contrasts between natural and man-made forms. The evidence of human activity, whether subtle—as in the case of pruned trees or mowed weeds, or dominant—as in the presence of buildings or roads, is everywhere. I often choose locations which people have occupied and abandoned.

I do not use the human figure directly in these depopulated landscapes, because I hope to involve the viewer directly with the spirit of a place.

OVERVIEWS AND AFTERLANDS brings together 22 works created over a 35-year period in the artist's prolific career. The earliest paintings are "overviews" that present plausible landscapes seen from an aerial viewpoint. *Pools*, for example, evolved from Nawara's experience of flying over a construction site covered with weeds. Rectangular pits had been bulldozed to collect rain and ground water. The artist imagined six pools filling with silt and debris and slowly disappearing—two pools at the lower right



are barely visible. Vehicle tracks suggest scale and human intervention. Illusionism, abstraction, and the factual flatness of the canvas also come into play.

Works from the late 1980s to the present are "afterlands"—ground-level observations of actual places in Michigan, Vermont, and Ohio that show the aftermath of human activity on natural and man-made surroundings. The intersection of floodgate and boardwalk create multidirectional movement in the landscape of *Spillway*; a concrete block found on the shores of Lake Michigan is an enigmatic ruin in *Monument*; a rectangular outlet could, bathtub-like, drain this artificial pond in *Drain*. A non-pastoral subject is *Rock of Ages*. This view of a Vermont quarry delivers a different sense of scale, form,

OVERVIEWS & AFTERLANDS

LANDSCAPES BY JIM NAWARA

Pools



texture, and color from most of the other works and speaks directly to the historic, and ongoing, alteration of the local landscape.

All of these subjects are evocative and dreamlike. "Subject matter is simply a vehicle to express something intangible beyond itself," says Nawara. "Ultimately the work is about imagination, memory, and the process of painting."

Jim Nawara has been part of the Detroit art scene for nearly 40 years. He is professor of painting and drawing at Wayne State University and a contributing author to the forthcoming book *Remapping the Humanities: Identity, Community, Memory, (Post)Modernity*, published by Wayne State University Press.



ROCK OF AGES

*All images courtesy of
the artist*

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

1. *Pools*
Acrylic on linen, 1974
Collection of the City of
Livonia Arts Commission
2. *Court*
Oil on linen, 1984
Collection of R. L. Polk
& Co., Southfield, Michigan
3. *Larned's Land*
Oil on linen, 1985
Collection of
Doug and Carol MacLean
4. *Big Gulley Road*
Oil on linen, 1987
Collection of
Ron and Jill Teachworth
5. *White Rock*
Oil on linen, 1987
Collection of
Alex and Karen Shepard
6. *Resteel*
Oil on linen, 1991
Collection of the Artist
7. *Night Garden*
Watercolor on paper, 1998
Collection of Citizens Bank,
Washtenaw Avenue office,
Ypsilanti, Michigan
8. *Blue Fence*
Oil on linen, 1999
Collection of the Artist
9. *Cherry Creek, February*
Oil on panel, 1999
Collection of the Artist
10. *Empire Sunrise*
Oil on panel, 1999
Collection of the Artist
11. *Greenan Forest*
Oil on linen, 1999
Collection of the Artist
12. *Purple Beech, June*
Oil on linen, 1999
Collection of
Robert and Susan Schafrath
13. *Spillway*
Oil on canvas, 2000
Collection of the Artist
14. *Drain*
Oil on linen, 2001
Collection of
Alex and Karen Shepard
15. *Monument*
Oil on linen, 2001
Collection of the Artist
16. *Vansen's Island*
Oil on canvas, 2002
Collection of the Artist
17. *Lock*
Watercolor and ink
on paper, 2003
Collection of the Artist
18. *Rock of Ages*
Oil on linen, 2003
Collection of
The Wudcoski Family,
Grosse Pointe Shores,
Michigan
19. *Chevy Shadow*
Watercolor on paper, 2006
Collection of the Artist
20. *Harvest Moon*
Watercolor on paper, 2006
Collection of the Artist
21. *Sundown*
Watercolor on paper, 2007
Collection of the Artist
22. *Barre*
Oil on linen, 2006
Collection of the Artist



SUNDOWN



DRAIN

This exhibition is underwritten by the
VanKampen Boyer Molinari Charitable Foundation.
Additional funding has been provided
through a grant from the
Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs.
Media sponsor: The Muskegon Chronicle

VanKampen Boyer Molinari
Charitable Foundation

