

## New Silvermine show: Landscapes take on a broader meaning



(<http://arts.hersamacorn.com/10498/new-silvermine-show-landscapes-take-broader-meaning/>)

*Beauty and Ruin: Broken Landscapes, Lost Symbols*, which opens at Silvermine Arts Center Sunday, Nov. 9, presents three intermingling solo shows representing diverse concepts of landscapes. J. Henry Fair's *The Hand of Man* exhibits large-scale photographs of abstract composition where beauty and horror coexist; Carlos Davila creates sculptures using line, form and color in *Neo-Archaism*; and June Ahrens is showing a site-dependent piece titled *What's Left* involving a looping video surrounded by blue walls that are layered with dried pigment mixed with salt.

"What's interesting," says Gallery Director Jeffrey Mueller, "is the vastly different approach each artist has taken to the overall theme of landscapes; I think for many viewers, 'Beauty and Ruin' will redefine what a landscape can mean.

"These works are also illustrative of an idea, that to really experience a work of art, it needs to be seen in person, not on a screen or page... to see the scale, materiality. It is a unique experience to see art in person."

Mr. Mueller has been Silvermine's gallery director for eight years; he also teaches art history at Western Connecticut State University and Sacred Heart University, and occasionally at SUNY Purchase.

A juried show, *Beauty and Ruin* puts the artists' work together in a cohesive way. As Mr. Mueller described it, "When putting a show together, the artists provide the nucleus, the director makes the work marry." When assembling a show, being familiar with the space and the works to be presented, Mr. Mueller has "a thought" of what will go where, but the final presentation evolves in the process.

"I have a less-is-more conviction, but you have to be aware of the two conversations that occur: the work itself and the visitors' experience of it. Creating the presentation is organic; as you begin doing it, certain things become evident; once you see the conversations, that's when it really comes together.

"The first wall visitors see has to have an immediate impact about this show you are about to enter — in this case it will be June Ahrens' piece — then we quietly suggest conversations between the works. We want to create 'ah-ha' moments for the viewer as one work leads to another and builds on the overall concept.

"The notion of landscape differs. Henry's work is a balance of sociopolitical message through the beauty of his images," says Mr. Mueller. The subject in *The Hand of Man* is a damaged environment: deforested landscapes, polluted waterways, hydraulic fracturing sites and waste from refinery operations and other industrial practices. Mr. Fair, who calls himself an environmental activist and lives in New York City, says his goal is to "produce beautiful images that stimulate an aesthetic response, then curiosity, then personal involvement."

Mr. Mueller continues, "Henry creates large-scale colorful photographs showing the exploitation of Earth

for material resources. The paradox is they are horrific, yet unbelievably beautiful. And while the images look abstract, the titles are direct.”



(<http://arts.hersamacorn.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Carlos-Davila-Medusa.jpg>)

Medusa by Carlos Davila.

Carlos Davila, says Mr. Mueller, “brings together the narrative of geometric abstraction and archeology, providing a new vocabulary for understanding the environment.” *Neo-Archaism* displays sculpture, some of monumental size, combining symbols and forms of ancient cultures with advanced technology and modern industry. Born and educated in Lima, Peru, Mr. Davila lives in Ridgefield and maintains a studio in Bridgeport.

Created for the Hays Gallery at the Silvermine Arts Center, June Ahrens’ *What’s Left* evokes loss and fragility while channeling light through a landscape of broken glass. Mr. Mueller notes that “some of the broken glass is so fine it almost looks like powder running down the walls.”

The three-minute looping video serves as the primary element in the composition and contains many of the materials used in the artist’s environment. The integration of materials and images — including hands and a human face — invites viewers to “explore and embrace the residue of lives. Salt and glass enhance the imperfections of the walls, which become a metaphor for the imperfections in each of us,” says the artist’s statement. “The surface partially hides some of the scarring but salt and pigment reveal it in a new way.”



Still from video by June Ahrens, part of her installation.

Repurposed broken glass, clear or blue, is also part of the installation — “random patterns of fallen shards pool and reflect danger, pain and vulnerability.” Ms. Ahrens, who lives in Ridgefield, calls the work “a map of awareness.”

The opening reception will be this Sunday, Nov. 9, from 2 to 4 pm. *Beauty and Ruin: Broken Landscapes, Lost Symbols*, will remain on view through Dec. 23.

Silvermine Arts Center, one of the oldest artist communities in the United States, is at 1037 Silvermine Road in New Canaan. Silvermine Galleries are open Wednesday through Saturday, noon to 5 p.m., and Sunday 1 to 5 pm.

For more information, [www.silvermineart.org](http://www.silvermineart.org) (<http://www.silvermineart.org>) or 203-966-9700, ext. 20.

### Looking ahead...

Silvermine does about 20 shows a year, and two large exhibitions, the most anticipated being annual *Art of the Northeast*, an open call show. It was recently announced that Michelle Grabner, one of three curators of this year’s Whitney Biennial, and its first artist curator, has signed on to curate the 65th annual *Art of the Northeast* with her husband, artist Brad Killam; the show will open June 15. “This is very exciting for us,” Mr. Mueller said. “We are really looking forward to putting this show together.”