



December 23, 2019 - 25 Kislev 5780

ARTIST WADES INTO NEW PAINTING FOR SOLO SHOW

By **Heather Solomon** - July 6, 2017



Artist Susan G. Scott brings the forest floor to life at Beaux-arts des Amériques on the Main until July 22. HEATHER SOLOMON PHOTO

Susan G. Scott knows how to get close to her subjects. The artist spent the past two summers ankle-deep in woodland streams, seated on boulders with a watercolour sketchpad balanced on her knees.



She also painted from fallen logs, always surrounded by the bucolic Vermont forest bordering her country home, where she finds an escape from the hurly-burly of urban Montreal.

After toting her impressions back to her René Lévesque Boulevard studio, she produced the most affecting landscapes of her 50-year career. "I took the last semester off, only the second time I've done that in the more than 30 years I've been teaching painting and drawing at Concordia University," says Scott. "I had this very intense time in the studio exploring all different aspects of the sous-bois, the forest undergrowth."

Until July 22, viewers may visually wander into the glades and thickets of their childhood, as they lose themselves in Scott's show, *Variations*, hung at Beaux-arts des Amériques' supplementary location at 5432 St. Laurent Blvd. The

spacious gallery is made up of a main floor exhibition space with two successive mezzanines, the whole area accommodating Scott's 23 newest works.



On the uppermost level, a TV monitor plays a documentary short

in her creative process. This includes a demonstration of how she trims certain rushes in a gap-toothed fashion, using them to elicit multi-lined "stream-like movements" to depict flowing brooks between the trees. The surfaces on which she paints range from paper to TerraSkin, made of bonded ground stones that yield a glass-like surface.

"I spent four years painting only on TerraSkin. But since it comes in a format only 40 inches high and I was itching to go big again, I've just returned to canvas, as well," says Scott, whose largest work in this latest collection measures 12 feet across.

The huge size of some of the paintings and the lack of a horizon line further immerses the viewer into the forest.

Scott has also subtly reintroduced figures after solely focusing on landscapes for the last while. Women and girls, lost in their own thoughts, are so at home within Mother Nature that they blend into the foliage. However, some of the small-scale figures are cutouts, literally glued into the composition as a fleeting human presence. Symbolically, they may fall away as the years unroll, whereas



the eternity of the forest quietly continues to breathe.

The artist captures the feeling of the woods as a regenerative force, with its layers of fallen trees and leaf compost accumulating season after season.

She also sees one of her works, *The World is Round*, as an allegory for life's decisions, asking, "Do you take the forest path that goes to the right or the one that goes left? The question is, 'Will these paths, in fact, join?'"

A number of the paintings are a first for the artist, who is known as a wonderful colourist, in that they are in white and black or Payne's grey. "I listened to an interview with a filmmaker, and he was talking about black-and-white film versus colour film. His point was that black and white becomes more about memory. Maybe that's true with these paintings," says Scott, who has been raising the woods since childhood.



Her handling of white areas parallels the Asian approach, which she calls "open and spatial." Scott picked up this influence when accompanying her husband, a film production designer, on business trips to China and Japan. Some oblong formats, reminiscent of Asian scroll painting, is another takeaway from her travels.

Nevertheless, the works are quintessentially Canadian in their connection to the land and as an ode to the season. Says Scott, "I think we're all happy not to look at winter."

An overview of her oeuvre can be seen [on Scott's website](#). The artist will also be present at the Beaux-arts des Amériques gallery from noon to 6 p.m. on July 8.

SHARE AND ENJOY !





Heather Solomon

