



ART REVIEW: An Energizing Exploration of Sea and Sky at VSOP Projects

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by Sally Grant

It's exciting to see a contemporary art gallery on the North Fork embrace the idiosyncrasies of its adopted historic home. This is certainly the case at [VSOP Projects](#) in Greenport Village, NY which is located in an old, 1860s house on Front Street, with the building's wide-plank flooring and single-glazed wooden windows testifying to its age. The gallery itself is just a little over a year old—Charles A. Riley reviewed its debut show [here](#) for Hamptons Art Hub in June last year—but it is already making its mark on the scene with its focus on emerging artists and interesting art.

"In Search Of," VSOP Projects latest exhibition, is a group show featuring works concerned with the sea and sky and the suggestive space where these elements meet. Organized by the director of the gallery, Jonathan Weiskopf, and guest co-curator Mea Duke, the exhibition itself replicates the rhythmic movement of water and air through the thoughtful choice of artworks and their considered placement. Here—in contrast to galleries in Chelsea, where the spare, white-walled spaces demure to the art—the relationship between the venue and the works is rather more appealingly tangled. The result is a charged symbiosis, where the living past provides a warmly accommodating space for, and is in turn re-energized by, the new.

The mutually enlivening relationship of the past, the present, and the future is immediately apparent in the exhibition's first gallery where *Magenta Starboard Tack* (2017), a large-scale, minimalist sculpture by longtime Greenport artist and sailor [Arden Scott](#), is a striking centerpiece. As indicated by its title, the work's sweeping steel forms, powder-coated in bright magenta, allude to boating but with the position of the sailcloth replaced by an empty void. Paradoxically, it is this absence that lends the static sculpture a sense of exhilaration similar to being on a yacht under full sail.



"Magenta Starboard Tack" by Arden Scott, 2017. Powder-coated steel, 72 x 75 x 90 inches. Back: "Eternal Youth 05" by Masato Shigemori, 2018. Acrylic on linen, 39.4 x 31.7 inches. Courtesy of VSOP Projects.

Both of the other artworks opening the show in this first gallery are complementary reminders of humankind's constant striving to articulate the natural world through visual reproduction. In the

case of the multi-media installation *13 XXX 20XX ~ 5:XXXm, XXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXX* (2018) by [Alexandria Mento](#)—an artist who graduated from the MFA program at Yale only this year—a postmodern approach guides this age-old endeavor. Six screens deliver imagery appropriated by Mento from YouTube videos (the title references the original file), and the constantly changing colors and flickering effect of the manipulated material re-creates digitally the calm and clamor of the sky. The work, with the different colored electrical cords trailing down the wall as essential parts, is a stimulating expression of the artist’s search for “the digital sublime.”

Quietly located by the room’s entrance, *Fig. 43* (1938), on the other hand, is a more traditional painterly response to nature’s sublimity. This enchanting seascape sketch was made by a woman named Dora Gillotti, a 1930s art student whose portfolio Weiskopf discovered at Brimfield Antiques Flea Market. Other than that, nothing is known of Gillotti. While this is a sobering reminder of history’s many forgotten artists and the vagaries of time, the inclusion of her work alongside two other female artists, one established and the other at the cusp of her career, is a hopeful reinstatement of women’s too-often overlooked place in the art world.

In the adjacent room, where an old fireplace mantel is topped with a multitude of miniature porcelain pots by [Yuta Segawa](#), the exhibited works are of disparate style but united by their engagement with the blueness and movement of water. Two large photographs, *Oyster Bay* (2014) and *Gardiners Bay* (2017), by Thomas Halaczinsky realistically capture both the particularity of varying sea conditions in New York bays and the unfathomable expansiveness of the ocean landscape. By contrast, the five small prints that make up Stephanie Cardon’s *Lazy Haze* (2017), revel in the poetics of abstract patterning.



“Lazy Haze” by Stephanie Cardon, 2017. Cyanotypes, 14 1/4 x 9 inches each.
Photo: Sally Grant.

Created by cyanotype, an early photographic process that creates deep blue impressions, and presented within blond-wood frames, the *Lazy Haze* prints’ multiplicity of lines and their grouped arrangement compellingly evoke the shifting layers of sand and sea. A similar concern with the pictorial presentation of moving water informs two paintings by [Masato Shigemori](#), a young Japanese artist whose work is being shown for the first time in the U.S. Drawing upon the Ukiyo-e tradition of painting and woodblock printing, Shigemori’s flattened patterns of blue acrylic paint on linen express the endless motion of the ocean; in *Eternal Youth 05* (2018) such is the turbulence of the waves that the whitecaps have become dragons’ claws.



“Eternal Youth 05” by Masato Shigemori, 2018. Acrylic on

linen, 39.4 x 31.7 inches. Courtesy of VSOP Projects.

Next door to the gallery's pleasant garden, the third room displays a somewhat more random mix of works: a photograph of a Corvette in a coastal parking lot by [Adam Amengual](#); two brightly-colored oil paintings of tropical vegetation by Amy Lincoln; and a series of eight tiny landscapes by another young, emerging artist, [Kate Rasche](#) (b.1990). Rasche's paintings, three of which are in oil on panel and the rest oil on Mylar (all 2018), are likely to strike a note of familiarity to Greenport residents, though perhaps not before reading their titles.



"Toward 3rd Street" and "Bay Avenue Roundabout" by Kate Rasche, 2018. Oil on panel in artist's frame, 5 3/4 x 7 3/4 inches. Photo: Sally Grant.

While appellations such as *Bay Avenue Roundabout* and *Fanning Point* clarify locations in the village, Rasche depicts these from Google Street View rather than visiting them in person. This creates a distancing effect and the still, pared-back nature of the paintings and the absence of people impart an eerie, any-town America feel. *Toward 3rd Street*, in particular, is a deft expression of the uncanny that, with its yellow Google road markings, prompts the viewer to question the perceived nature of his or her surroundings.

The gallery's charms and the exhibition's curatorial storytelling continue upstairs, where artworks are found on the walls of the stairwell, in the bathroom, and in a windowed nook at the top of the stairs (like Segawa's pots downstairs, these are not all officially part of the current exhibition). In this latter space a series of recent ceramic vessels—which their maker, [Jessica Hans](#), aptly describes by the use of such terms as "lumpy"—are scattered across the floor and on a white display plinth. Encountering these organic, variously patterned objects in this enchanting cranny calls to mind a potter's version of the fairytale "The Elves and the Shoemaker."

With the titles *Mountain, Pool, Rain, Cloud, and Rhythm, Grid, Rays, Wave* (both 2018), two multi-colored wood sculptures by [Adam Frezza & Terri Chiao](#) displayed on the walls of the stairwell take up the sense of movement and interconnectedness frequently demonstrated by, and between, the works downstairs. They offer a fitting transition to the lone upstairs gallery. Here three mixed media on Lucite pieces by [Michelle Benoit](#) from her "Sky Brick Series" are placed in dialogue with two oil paintings by Alina Birkner on the opposite wall, *Untitled (One Velvet Morning)* and *Untitled (Nemesis)*, all from 2018. While both artists use a mixture of cool and warm tones in their evocations of the sky, the smooth polish of the former plays off against the latter's rough canvas support, establishing an enlivening display harmony.



“Untitled (One Velvet Morning)” & “Untitled (Nemesis)” by Alina Birker, 2018. Oil on canvas, 67 x 47 1/4 inches each. Back: “Mountain, Pool Rain, Cloud” by Adam Frezza & Terri Chiao, 2018. Acrylic on wood, 37 x 56 x 2 inches. Front: “Hurdle” by Stephanie Cardon, 2018. Concrete & bamboo string, 12 x 75 x 12 inches. Courtesy of VSOP Projects.

This dynamic rhythm, which began with Arden Scott’s sculpture in the entry room downstairs and is evident throughout “In Search Of,” is encapsulated in this room by another work by [Stephanie Cardon](#). Positioned horizontally on the gallery’s floor, *Hurdle* (2018) consists of a number of bright aqua-blue bamboo strings suspended between two concrete blocks.

The contrast between the fragility of the colorful string and the heavy, industrial nature of the concrete creates a mesmerizing tension and, as the viewer moves around the work, the density of the color appears to change, forming wave-like passages of light to deep blue. Recalling the music-making strings of a violin, those of *Hurdle* may be silent but they are no less powerful in their potentiality of expression.

During my visit to “In Search Of,” Jonathan Weiskopf remarked on the rewarding nature of exhibiting in this historic Greenport building. He described how the spaces of the gallery are reincarnated with each exhibition and noted that “the architecture does seem to really move around the artworks.” Perhaps it has something to do with those potter’s elves. Either way, I look forward to the next rendition of this magical space.

BASIC FACTS: “In Search Of” is on view May 27 to July 9, 2018 at VSOP Projects, 311 Front Street, Greenport, NY 11944. www.vsopprojects.com

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