

SOLITARY SURVIVORS

THE ELBROCHS' DEEP-ROOTED INTRICATE MASTERPIECES

This is a love story. A mesmerizing tale about two people who've shared their life more than 51 years, but, in actuality, the "love story" began long, long before that — over 1,100 years ago in English trees. That's when certain trees began their life, and many centuries later entwined the lives and passion of a couple of artists named Lawrence and Victoria Elbroch.

It's complicated, you see. They are from different geographic areas. She, the United Kingdom. He, New York City. They met and found that their mutual love and respect of trees was a key factor in ultimately melding their lives and art together. A love story indeed. With many deep roots.

Victoria works in mixed media. Ink, watercolor wash and on a grand scale. The detail, patterns and textures she captures in unforgiving mediums leaves one in awe. Her husband, an accomplished photographer in his own right, often collaborates with her, creating a digitized version of her work and selectively removes negative space, creating a palette of tree parts made through hand and mechanical means. The works generated are intricate masterpieces.

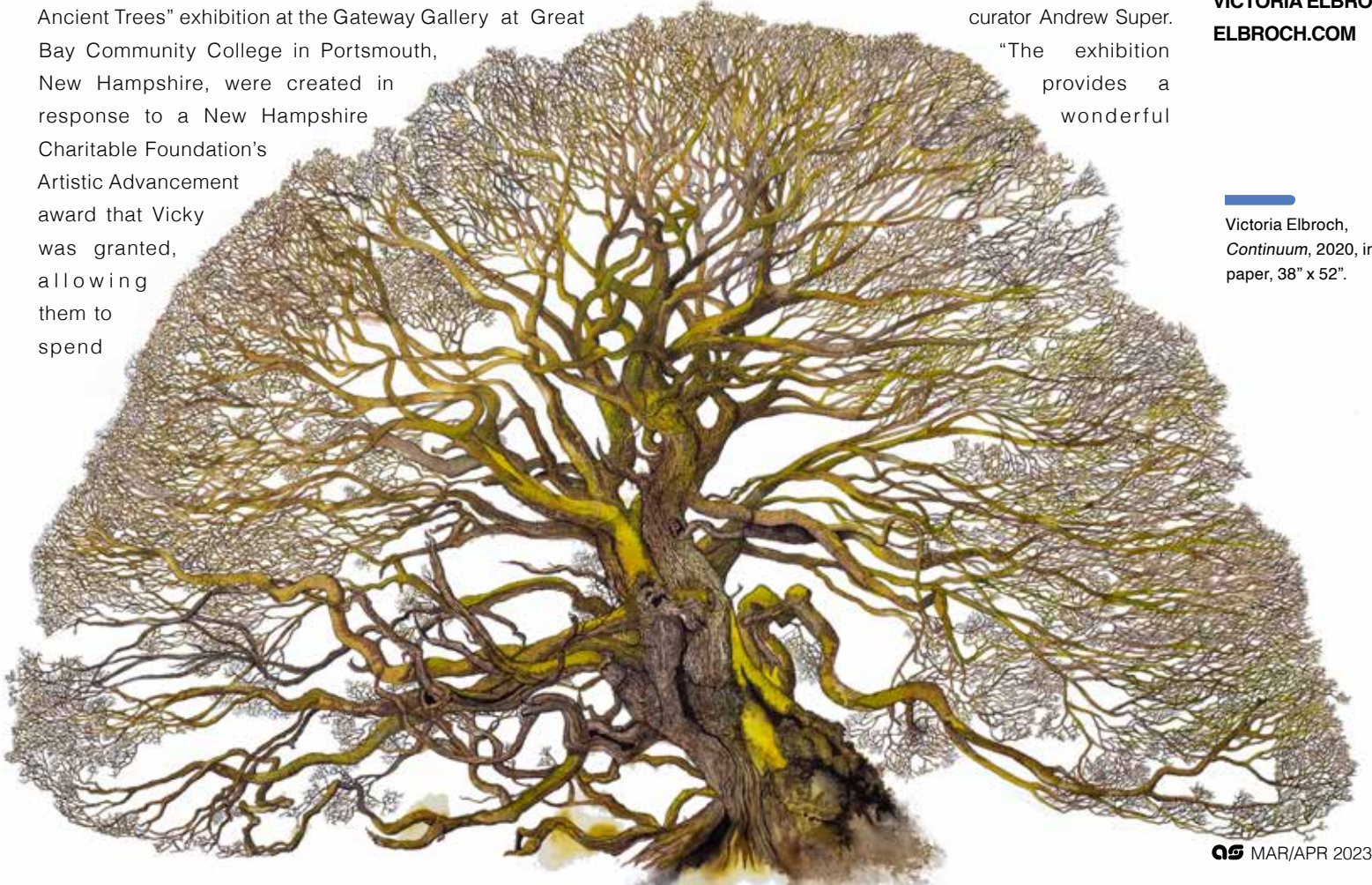
Many of this exhibition's pieces in their "Encountering Ancient Trees" exhibition at the Gateway Gallery at Great Bay Community College in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, were created in response to a New Hampshire Charitable Foundation's Artistic Advancement award that Vicky was granted, allowing them to spend

unhurried weeks buried in the landscape of Vicky's childhood in England, where the two of them could study, draw and photograph ancient solitary survivors. They spent time in a cottage on the grounds of a National Trust Property at Croft Castle in the Peak region of England. Surrounded by ancient English trees — 1,000 to 1,500 years old — they would visit the specimens frequently to indulge in their work in the grandeur of that place.

The works are stunningly beautiful. They make one's heart sing. "Metamorphosis," a tree they happened across that struck them with its arresting beauty, was decaying, mostly stripped of its bark with a hollow in the trunk you could see through. The tree's great branches reached for the sky. Growth protrusions looked like gargoyles. A haven for fungi, lichen, insects and small animals trumpeted its resilience. All that biodiversity was still thriving at the late stage of its life. This piece inspired a new direction for Victoria as she added colored ink to her repertoire.

"Victoria and Lawrence Elbrochs' work pays beautiful homage to the importance of these organisms," said exhibition curator Andrew Super.

"The exhibition provides a wonderful



17 FOR OUR 17TH

LAWRENCE AND VICTORIA ELBROCH: ENCOUNTERING ANCIENT TREES

GATEWAY GALLERY

GREAT BAY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

320 CORPORATE DRIVE

PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE

THROUGH MARCH 10

LAWRENCE & VICTORIA ELBROCH
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Victoria Elbroch,
Continuum, 2020, ink on paper, 38" x 52".



Based in Kittery, Maine, the Elbrochs' work centers around a fascination with oak trees and how they serve as markers of the passage of time. The artists stated: "These majestic survivors are a metaphor for all we hold dear: wisdom, family, connection, shelter and resilience and as a reminder of the fleeting nature of our lives..."

"Continuum II," a joint effort, a maze of intertangled moss-laden branches, became more than the whole when Larry took Victoria's images of the tree, and overlaid his photography of it, inserting plants at the base, while meticulously removing negative spaces to create contrast. He said he also learned the value of shooting the subject from the artist's perspective.

Trees have penetrated the Elbrochs' lives so deeply that they relate to a favorite passage from "Underland" by British writer Robert Macfarlane,

who quotes English novelist Louis de Bernieres about a relationship that endures into old age: "We had roots that grew towards each other underground, and when all the pretty blossoms had fallen from our branches, we found that we were one tree, not two. As someone lucky enough to live in a long love, I recognize that gradual growing — towards the things that do not need to be said between us, the unspoken communications which can sometimes tilt troublingly towards silence, and the sharing of both happiness and pain."

opportunity for viewers to pause and reconsider the trees that we encounter in our everyday lives. The artists have cultivated a profound appreciation for the trees and the metaphors they help us create." So true.

The works — hers (singularly created) — and theirs (collaboratively produced) — synergistically intensify the viewing experience. Super said the show presents an opportunity to more deeply ponder the world around us, that it provides a vehicle to think on physical processes that dictate how nature literally functions, our place in the environment and the cumulative nature of the world around us.

Linda (Chestney) Sutherland

Lawrence and Victoria Elbroch, *Continuum II*, 2022, archival pigment print (edition of 20), 22" x 22".



Center for Contemporary Printmaking

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