

Galleries Museums Artists/Studios Theatres Schools Framers Fine Crafts

# 2020-2021 The Art Guide

To SOUTH COAST MAINE and SEACOAST NEW HAMPSHIRE





## REPORT FROM THE ARTIST

### Victoria Elbroch

Recipient of the 2019 Piscataqua Region Artist Advancement Grant

*“The tree which moves some to tears of joy is in the eyes of others only a green thing that stands in the way. Some see nature all ridicule and deformity...and some scarce see nature at all. But to the eyes of a man of imagination, nature is imagination itself. As a man is, so he sees.”*

Excerpt from a Letter from William Blake to the Reverend John Trusler, 1777.

Left: Drawing by a giant beech in the Peak District, the Midlands of the UK. Photo by Lawrence Elbroch.

This report was written by the artist in late 2019. Her grant year is July 2019 to July 2020.

Extraordinary trees, especially ancient oaks, cast a spell over me. Their strange gnarly bark and peculiar anatomy awaken an uncontrollable urge to stop and draw. These majestic survivors are a metaphor for all I hold dear: wisdom, family, connection, shelter and resilience and as a reminder of the fleeting nature of our lives in comparison to their lengthy life spans. Trees and forests worldwide are in a relentless confrontation with a warming planet. I can't help wondering how much longer the oldest trees will be around, with toxins in the air, climate change upsetting the seasons and violent storms ravaging the country?

It is with awe and respect that I try to alter perceptions with my work, reminding all of us of the threats to, and importance of the natural world. I have read extensively about how trees communicate through their root systems using

**The NH Charitable Foundation's Piscataqua Region Artist Advancement Grant** recognizes the important contribution of working artists to the cultural life of the region by providing an annual financial award to promote the artistic growth of visual artists and craftspeople. The purpose of the award is not to reward past work, but to recognize the applicant best positioned to continue the improvement of their artistic career.

**PREVIOUS RECIPIENTS:**

- 2018: Sachiko Akiyama, Portsmouth, NH – *sculpture and printmaking*  
2017: Cathy McLaurin, Danville, NH – *sculpture*  
2016: Carly Glovinski, Dover, NH – *conceptual artist*  
2015: Cheryle St. Onge, Durham, NH – *photographer*  
2014: Lauren Gillette, York, Maine – *conceptual artist*  
2013: Justin Kirchoff, Eliot, Maine – *photographer*  
2012: Bear Kirkpatrick, Dover, NH – *digital media artist*  
2011: Kim Bernard, Rockland, Maine – *kinetic sculpture and installation artist*  
2010: Gail Spaien, Kittery, Maine – *painter and installation artist*  
2009: Lynn Szymanski, Rollinsford, NH – *wood and mixed media furniture and sculpture*  
2008: Ross Cisneros, Milton, NH – *new media*  
2007: Kirsten Reynolds, Newmarket, NH – *installation, sculpture, photography and digital images*  
2006: Barbara Rita Jenny, Portsmouth, NH – *digital print making and installation*  
2005: Tim Gaudreau, Portsmouth, NH – *eco-art*  
2004: Maureen Mills, Portsmouth, NH – *hand thrown and altered stoneware*  
2003: Katherine Doyle, New Castle, NH – *painting and drawing*  
2002: Gary Haven Smith, Northwood, NH – *stone sculpture*



*Tree search in the morning fog, Kedleston Hall.*  
Photo by Lawrence Elbroch.

the "wood wide web" and look after their families to maintain forest health. They are themselves ecosystems supporting teeming, invisible life in the branches and under the forest floor. Through my work I try to encourage people to take the time to imagine both worlds, one above the ground and the other below, seated in the enduring landscape.

I will be traveling on a deeply personal journey to England, land of my cultural heritage, for four weeks in March 2020. For forty years, I have had to focus on producing works to make sales at a rigorous schedule of shows for financial security. In the last decade I have cautiously allowed myself to experiment with drawing and mixed media, eventually giving up outdoor shows altogether to be more adventurous with my work.

Receiving the extraordinary Piscataqua Artist's Advancement Grant from the NH Charitable Foundation gives me the opportunity to further abandon restraint and accelerate my learning. It will allow me to draw undaunted, unhurried; embedded in the landscape like moss on stone and with sharp focus on trees and their environments. I have plotted out a route to visit famous



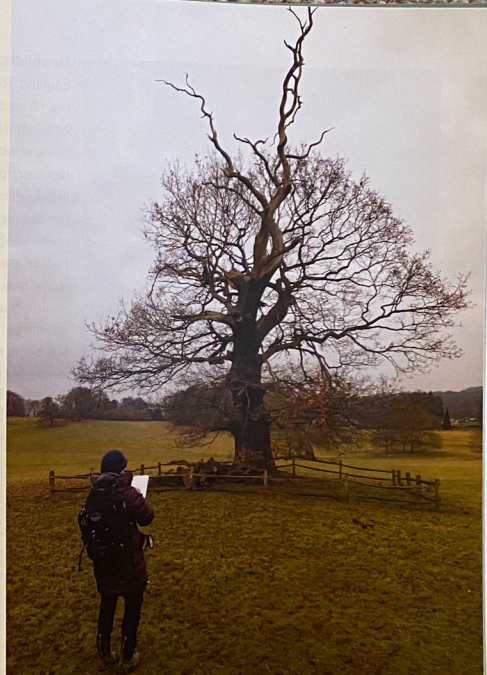
ancient trees across England. I will spend the time with each to absorb their particular character and their connection to the past, present and future of our world. I envisage a whole new series of work, larger and braver in scale than I have dared to try before. In part, my drawings will be a response to a deep yearning for an idealized version of the rural England I left behind when I was nineteen. There is recollection and nostalgia involved, I admit. It has been far too many years since I had extended site-specific time in England to just draw and I feel a mounting excitement at the thought of seeing it again with completely new eyes.

I want my new drawings to be more about telling the story of how things could be rather than about botanical accuracy. I will challenge myself to catch the spirit of these trees using a mixture of detail and mystery and draw attention to how dependent human beings are on their timeless beauty and generosity. I will bring in history by collaging from a collection of my father's Victorian newspapers, more of which will be available in local antique shops. In Cheshire, where both sides of my family originate, I will investigate my familial roots using local libraries and graveyards and include the biographical information within the tree root systems that inhabit my drawings.

*Pointing Skyward*, pencil, ink and wash (sketch book held vertically), 22" x 8.5".  
Photo by Lawrence Elbroch.

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Drawing the chosen tree at Kedleston  
Hall. Photo by Lawrence Elbroch.





*The Heart of the Matter*, ink drawing, 44" x 30". Photo by Lawrence Elbroch.

My childhood was both in India and England. Trees from both places speak to me. I have travelled in India and across Asia in the last ten years—there, people live and worship in the shade of huge banyan or peepal trees. They build temples in their roots and many trees are revered for cleaning the environment and their medicinal properties. I have drawn hurried lines in my sketchbook trying to catch the shape of some of these trees, before our various guides moved the group on and left me behind. On my trip in March there will be no need to hurry and I can see where my imagination leads me.

My partner of nearly fifty years is totally supportive and essential to my plan. Our life and work are a sympathetic collaboration. He will accompany me and do the driving while I navigate our way. He is also a photographer so he will act as documentarian, provide vital technical support and assist me as I go on this journey. He will photograph the new work and later print the transparencies that I will use to make monoprints with

photo-polymer plates. He will also do all the framing of large works.

People have already responded emotionally to my latest drawings and I know the work after this grant will increase its potential impact. Like the trees themselves, some of which share a third of the food they make with other organisms, I will also branch out and connect more deeply with my community. I will also advocate for notable trees this side of the Atlantic to be left to age gracefully and contribute continuity and oxygen to our fragile world.

**IMPACT Exhibition for the  
2019 recipients of the  
Piscataqua Region Artist Advancement Grant**

given by the NH Charitable Foundation  
April 17– May 16, 2020  
Paul Creative Arts Center  
Museum of Art, University of NH

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**Special Exhibition**  
David Campbell Gallery  
League of NH Craftsmen HQ  
Concord, NH  
October 9 – December 18, 2020



Studio portrait in the attic. Photo by Tammy Byron.

Born in Cheshire, England, VICTORIA ELBROCH traveled extensively as a child. She lived in India and Pakistan, but received her education in English boarding schools. She held her first one-woman show in Aldeburgh, Suffolk in 1977 before coming to America with her husband, Lawrence. Victoria started entering National Arts Festivals in 1978 and while raising two children, has had a very happy 42-year career making her living from Drawing & Printmaking.

She is a juried member of the Boston Printmakers, Zea Mays Printmaking and the League of New Hampshire Craftsmen; she also currently serves on North Country Studio Workshop's Board of Directors.

Victoria specializes in drawing with collage and two printmaking mediums, monotype and photopolymer etching. Her latest prints come from drawing both in ink and mixed media with collage. Inspired by a passion for nature and world travel in the UK and Asia, she is creating ever more challenging work.