Lynn Benson has devoted most of her artistic career to studying how human activity affects a vitally important resource: water. In a range of mediums, she represents bodies of water at the center of environmental and political struggles. The Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art and The Volland Store Gallery are collaborating to offer two exhibitions in the region featuring Benson’s work: the first opening in February 2018 at the Beach Museum of Art, the second going up in May 2018 at The Volland Store.

“Water Stories by Lynn Benson” unveils a new acquisition by the Beach Museum of Art, a suite of 101 drawings on paper vellum called Waterplaces. To create her compositions, Benson draws from geographical views provided by satellite and printed maps. Each drawing is mounted on a paper vellum frame constructed by her. A collection of texts written by the artist accompanies the suite of drawings, and describes how a particular body of water has been affected by a human event. Also included in the exhibition is Drops, a more recent series in which drawings replace culture specimens in petri dishes.

In both bodies of work, the artist’s choice to use the properties of paper vellum — with its inherent translucence and brittle texture — creates the effect of a delicate, fragile skin on which water rests. The colors’ richness imparts a jewel-like quality to the artworks, emphasizing water’s preciousness. Remarking on the purpose of her work, Benson says that she wants “to be a part of the conversation as we face enormous change and challenges on a global scale related to our waters.”

This exhibition also presents the artist’s 2018 Friends of the Beach Museum of Art Gift Print, Dancing on the Table. This work reflects Benson’s interest in water sources that flow under the ground, such as the Ogallala Aquifer in western Kansas and surrounding states. The Ogallala has enabled farmers in the Great Plains to produce one-fifth of the total annual U.S. agricultural harvest, but decades of overuse are now causing a significant reduction in the aquifer’s water level. Benson brings attention to this natural treasure through her print, with gold leaf and coloring applied by hand.

Aileen June Wang, Curator

Cover image: Lynn Benson, Ganges Delta, from the series Waterplaces, 2012-2015, colored pencil on vellum paper, 9 x 9 in., Kansas State University, Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art, 2016.71.63, photo courtesy of the artist.

Lynn Benson, China, North of Macau, from the series Waterplaces, 2012-2015, colored pencil on vellum paper, 9 x 9 3/6 inches, Kansas State University, Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art, 2016.71.72, photo courtesy of the artist.
At The Volland Store Gallery, 24098 Volland Road, Alma, Kansas

Telling Water's Story: Art, Science, and Narrative
Saturday, March 10, 2018, 1 p.m.
Presentation by journalist and author Cynthia Barnett, followed by a conversation with Jeff Davidson, K-State watershed specialist.
Sign up for a pre-event lunch with the speakers on the “Happenings” page at http://thevollandstore.com/, or call 785-499-3616.

River Compositions by Lynn Benson
May 5-July 15, 2018
Exhibition of new works by Lynn Benson.
Open Saturdays and Sundays, Noon-5 p.m., and by appointment.
Curator’s talk by Aileen June Wang on the art of Lynn Benson May 20, 2018, 2 p.m.

Related Events

At the Beach Museum of Art
Telling Water’s Story: Art, Science, and Narrative, featuring Cynthia Barnett, Peter Dorhout, and Lynn Benson
Thursday, March 8, 2018, 5:30 p.m.

Artist Talk by Lynn Benson
Thursday, April 5, 2018, 5:30 p.m.
Artist Lynn Benson will share details about making the 2018 Beach Museum of Art Gift Print and other recent projects. Light refreshments served.

Water Stories School Tour
Students will investigate works from the Beach Museum of Art permanent collection related to water by various artists, including Lynn Benson, Herschel Logan, and photographer Jim Richardson. Students will think about Kansas water issues and the environment, and learn more about Kansas waterways above and below ground. Discussions will address environmental science standard K-ESS3.

At The Volland Store Gallery, 24098 Volland Road, Alma, Kansas
Telling Water’s Story: Art, Science, and Narrative
Saturday, March 10, 2018, 1 p.m.
Presentation by journalist and author Cynthia Barnett, followed by a conversation with Jeff Davidson, K-State watershed specialist. Sign up for a pre-event lunch with the speakers on the “Happenings” page at http://thevollandstore.com/, or call 785-499-3616.
Artist’s Statement

I am drawn to forces within the natural world and I watch how we humans perceive and impact these delicate balances. My subject matter is within that dynamic realm. Working with paint, printmaking, fabric, collage, photography, installation, and more, I look for core essences and universals, surprises, fragility, and reverence, in balance with specific issues surfacing in this politically and environmentally challenged world we inhabit.

My current work relates to world water. The amazing meandering lines captured by satellite view of rivers and shorelines provide inspiration for many of my recent works. I play upon the botanical and anatomical similarities in paths of fluids and patterns of growth, relishing opportunities to push paint through layers while exploring fluid dynamics in liquid media. Whether oceans, river deltas, and aquifers, or atmosphere, drought, and rain, my longtime attraction to and interest in water is rooted in proximity to the ocean as a toddler, and awareness of the burning Cuyahoga River in the late 1960s (in part leading to the federal Clean Water Act in 1972). Then there’s the long-ago overheard conversation between my father and uncle, both chemical engineers, regarding pollution in the San Francisco Bay from my uncle’s chemical plant!

It is impossible to ignore the crucial role that water will play in our future. I want to be a part of the conversation as we face enormous change and challenges on a global scale related to our waters.

Lynn Benson
The Friends of the Beach Museum of Art, or FOBMA, commissions a limited-edition print by a recognized Kansas artist for sale to Friends and the public each year. Kansas State University’s “Friends of Art” started the gift print program in 1934.

Lynn Benson produced this year’s gift print, *Dancing on the Table*, in collaboration with master printer Aaron Shipps at Bedrock Art Editions in Kansas City. Each print is composed of seven layers of paper and incorporates several artistic processes: lithography, chine collé, hand-coloring with colored pencil, gold leaf application, and papercutting.

For more information about becoming a FOBMA member or purchasing a gift print, call 785-532-7718 or go to beach.k-state.edu.