



Mary Sheldon Scott
Paintings

THE BEHNKE
FAMILY GALLERY
AT CORNISH

Cover & back cover: *Island* (2017), detail

Facing page: *Star//Snake* (2017), detail

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Mary Sheldon Scott *Paintings*

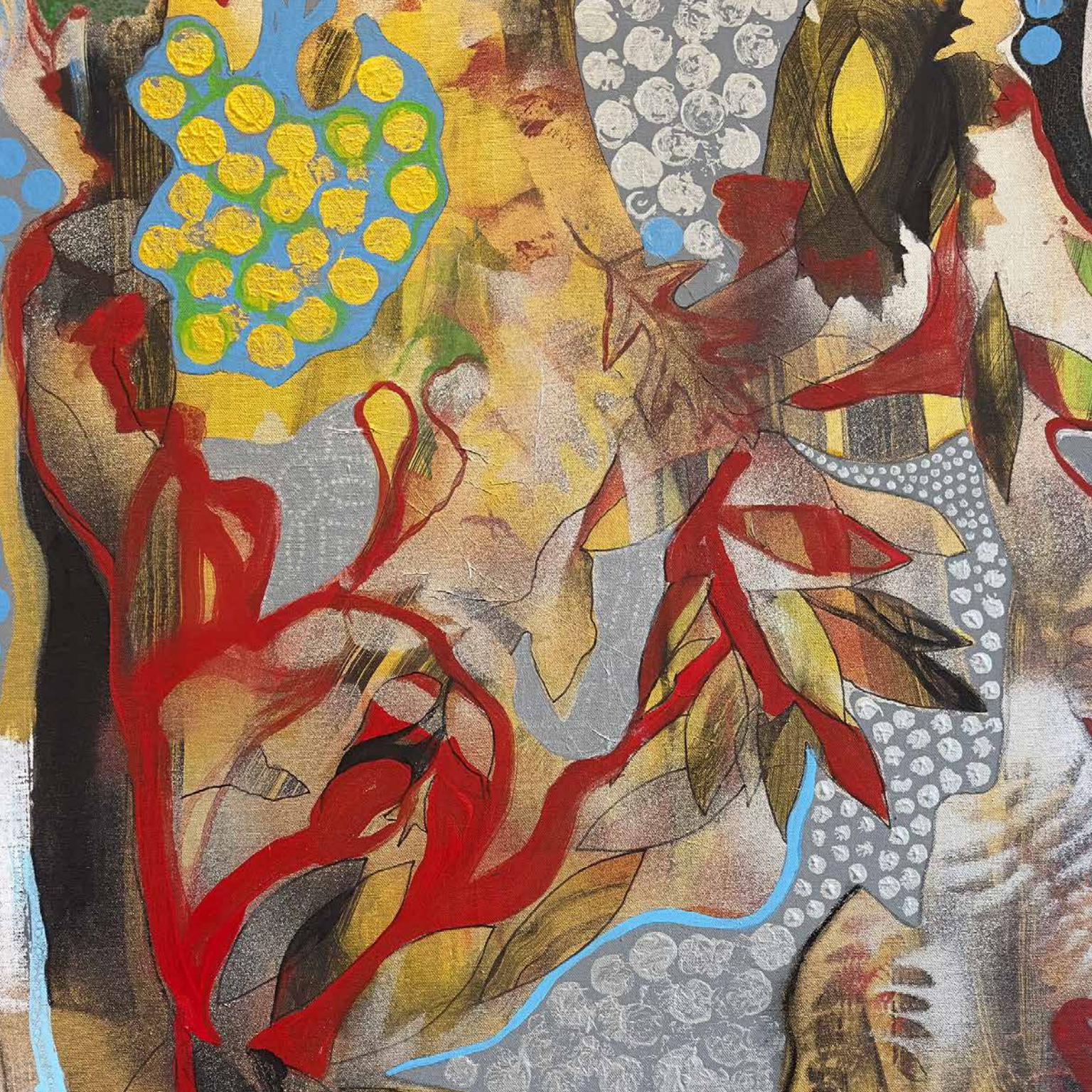
June 9 – August 12, 2023

Curated by Robert Campbell

The Behnke Family Gallery
Cornish College of the Arts
1077 Lenora Street
Seattle, WA 98121

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INTRODUCTION

Mary Sheldon Scott has said that each of her paintings is “the story of movement.” This entire exhibition is such a story: a meandering line that reaches outward and folds back towards itself. It’s an unfurling, an unveiling, a homecoming of sorts. For over twenty years, Scott has woven deep ties with Cornish College of the Arts — having worked as executive assistant to three Presidents, taught as Visiting Faculty, and served as Interim Chair of the Dance Department — but her paintings may be a revelation to many. Her dance and choreographic work are likely more familiar to the Seattle arts community, along with her collaborative performance work with composer (and husband) Jarrad Powell. For more than five decades, while her public profession revolved around dance and performance, she has also forged a visual practice, making paintings and drawings in various studios, in a garden at her mother’s East Coast home, even here at Cornish in a rented studio in the Beebe Building.

Scott’s visual work intersects with her kinesthetic work in abundantly evident ways — through gesture, rhythm, the visceral qualities of material, and the bodily connection with scale and surface. But the paintings also offer something different to Scott. She speaks of the magic of materials and a sense of “ongoingness.” The paintings in this exhibition — all created in the last ten years or so — are a revelation of her endless learning, problem-solving, and immersion in process. We see and sense the layers of color, texture, line, and shape that are laid down, built up, scraped away, and “excavated” (to use one of Scott’s phrases). These lamina play with our

perceptions of figure and ground, time and space. So-called background or negative spaces may contain multiverses of pattern or they may be a fresh layer that paradoxically lifts up (or “digs out”) a positive shape nearby.

Years ago, Scott began by drawing and painting the human body but then, one day, the shadow of a tree fell across an empty canvas. That life-changing moment originated her long series of tree paintings, followed by less representational evocations of nature. Even in the most abstract works, there are connections to nature and the body. Titles always come after improvisation and experimentation, sometimes pulling forth a perceived image or association:

“Seed”

“Black Branches”

“Bone Tree”.

In this way, Scott shares roots with great abstract expressionists like Helen Frankenthaler and Joan Mitchell whose art also corresponded with nature in wandering ways. Mitchell once said, “I could certainly never mirror nature. I would like more to paint what it leaves me with.” Much like nature, Scott’s luminous works of art leave us with a sense of wonderment, connection, and, yes, ongoingness.

Gayle Clemans, *art historian, arts writer,*
Cornish Art Department co-chair

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

I have been working as a choreographer and as a visual artist for 50+ years. These journeys evolved side by side, but my choreographic practice took a public route while for many years my visual practice unfolded privately. My approach to painting is deeply informed by my lifelong exploration of the kinesthetic range and intelligence of the human body. Through this lens, I explore the surface of the canvas with an understanding that all mark-making is evidence of our physical being, and that our inherent organic reality creates a connective bridge, in essence a dialogue, between the human body and the living forms of the organic world.

For me, each painting is a vessel whose meaning hovers between the literal and the abstract. My forms function as skins containing hybrid images. Cradled within each form are the broken pieces - a language of memory intuitively stitched from fragments and impressions. The presence of movement is essential in my work, and central to my process is the excavation and mapping of a tangible presence of energy. In the end what I seek is not the description of image but the story of movement unfolding within the two-dimensional field.

In my work I am drawn to the place in which disciplined action and accident intersect and I am particularly interested in heightening visual tension between the raw and the refined. I insert decorative elements into the organic energy of each surface, essentially embroidering the work. For me the decorative elements don't tame... rather they amplify and bond with the wild energies, adding a complexity that deepens, grounds and empowers the resonance of the work.

I paint and draw on canvas, paper and wood. The materials I use include acrylic paint, sumi-e ink, watercolor, pencil, pastels, markers, glitter glue. I challenge the surface with water — spraying, wiping, diluting, scrubbing, blotting the paint to build a complex surface. I articulate the residual map using drawing, masking, stenciling, cutting and collage to strengthen the images and build coherence. The use of strong color amplifies the emotional resonance.

Mary Sheldon Scott, *visual artist, choreographer*

Works

Seeds (2019)

Vessel (2019)

Tree Story (Gold) (2018)

Tree Story (Grey) (2018)

Tree Story (White) (2018)

Black Branches (2017)

Seed (2018)

Island (2022)

Star//Snake (2017)

Untitled (2019)

Seed (2023)

Dragon Walks (2019)

Dreaming (2018)

Refuge (1) (2019)

Refuge (2) (2019)

Garden (Gray/Blue/Red) (2022)

Untitled (2012)

Voice (2018)

Golden (1) (2013)

Golden (2) (2013)

Gray Flower (2019)

Image: *Untitled* (2019), detail





Seeds (2019)

30" wide x 40" high

acrylic, spray paint, pencil on canvas



Vessel (2019)
30" wide x 40" high
acrylic, sumi-e ink, pencil, marker on canvas



Tree Story (Gold) (2018)

30" wide x 40" high

acrylic, glitter glue, pencil on canvas



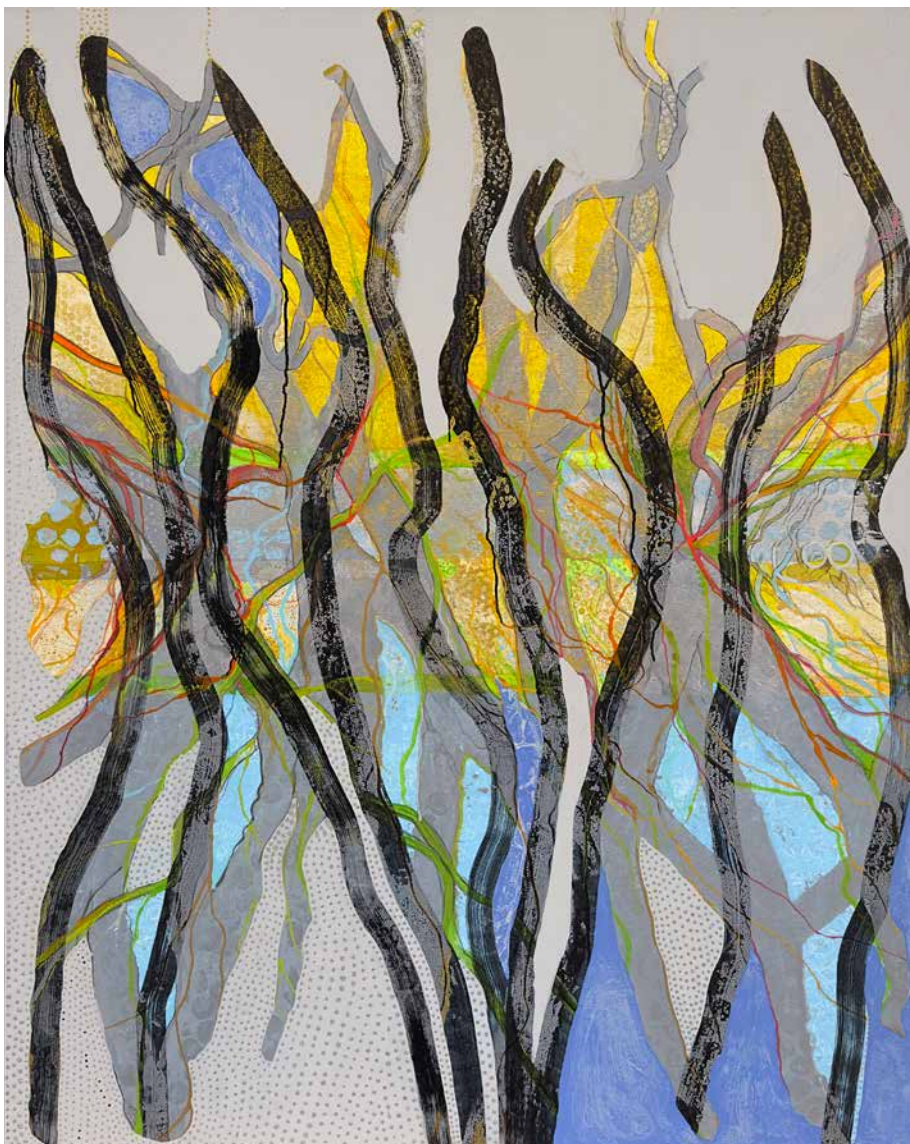
Tree Story (Gray) (2018)

30" wide x 40" high

acrylic, pencil on canvas



Tree Story (White) (2018)
30" wide x 40" high
acrylic, pencil on canvas



Black Branches (2017)

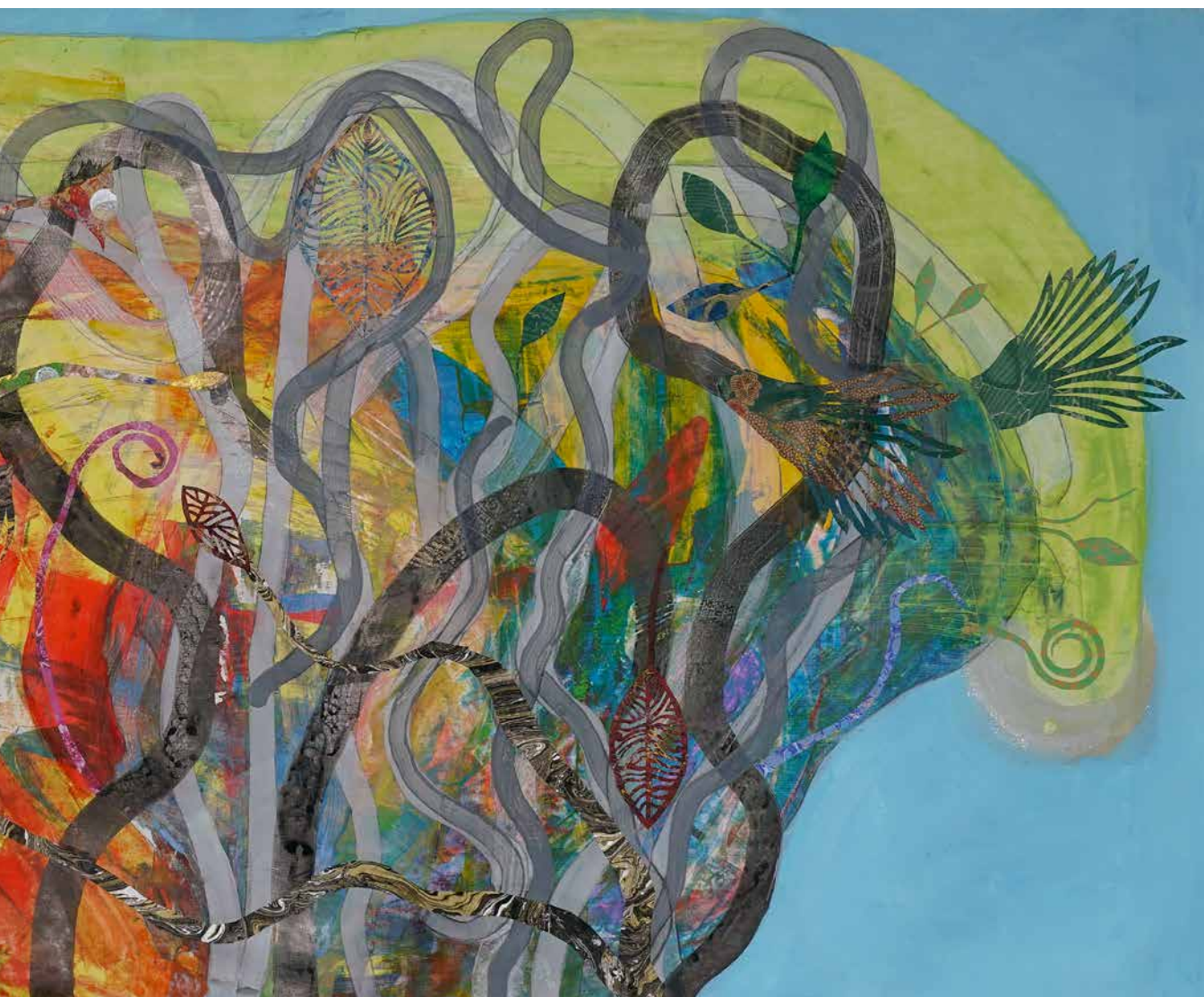
48" wide x 60" high x 1½" deep

acrylic, sumi-e ink, ink, glitter glue on canvas



Seed (2018)
48" wide x 60" high x 1½" deep
acrylic, sumi-e ink, marker, on canvas





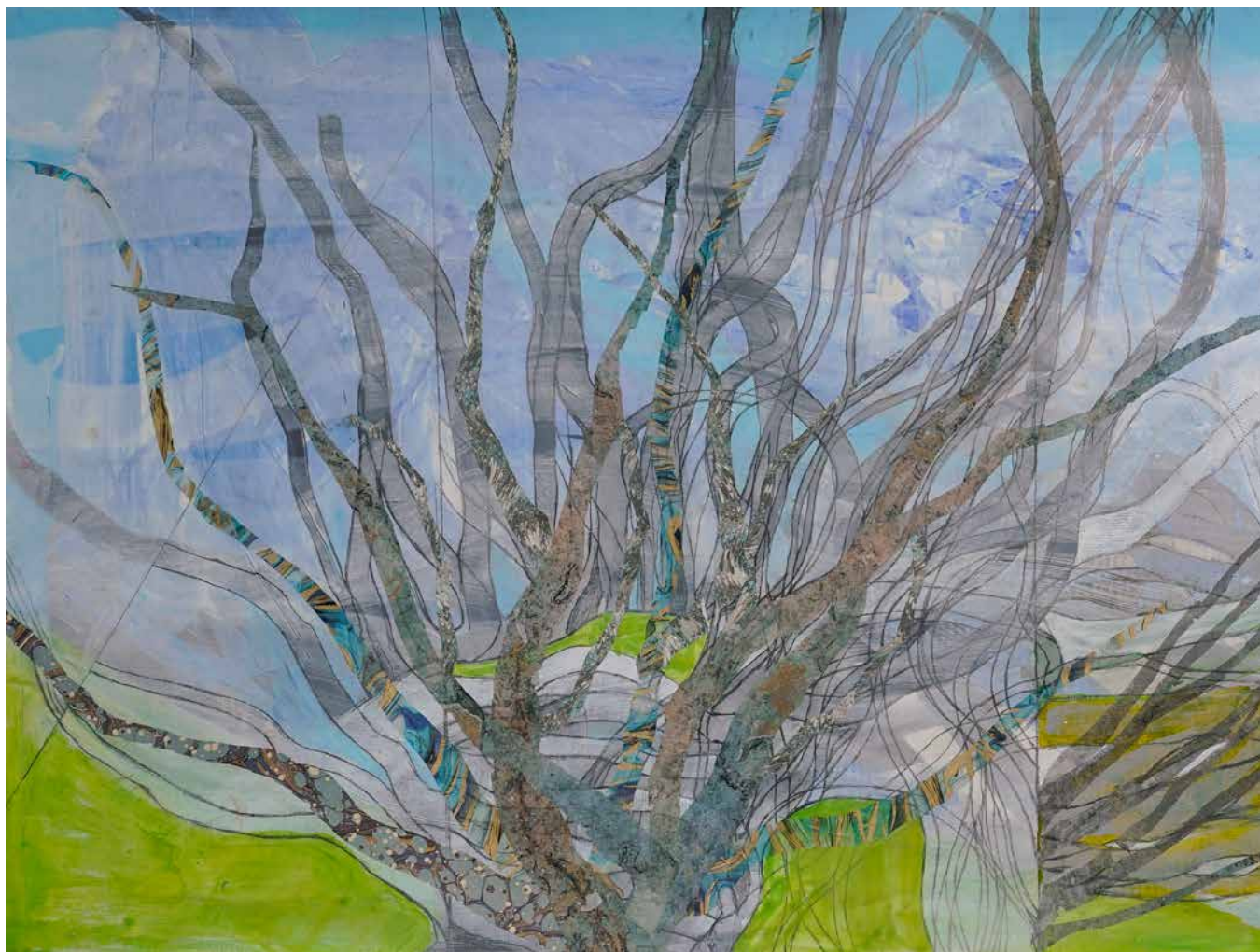
Island (2022)
87 1/8" wide x 36" high
acrylic, marker, pencil, collage on canvas paper



Star//Snake (2017)
48" wide x 60" high x 1½" deep
acrylic, pencil, marker on canvas



Untitled (2019)
48" wide x 60" high x 1½" deep
acrylic, glitter glue, pencil, marker on canvas





Seed (2023)
98" wide x 36" high
acrylic, marker, pencil, collage on canvas paper



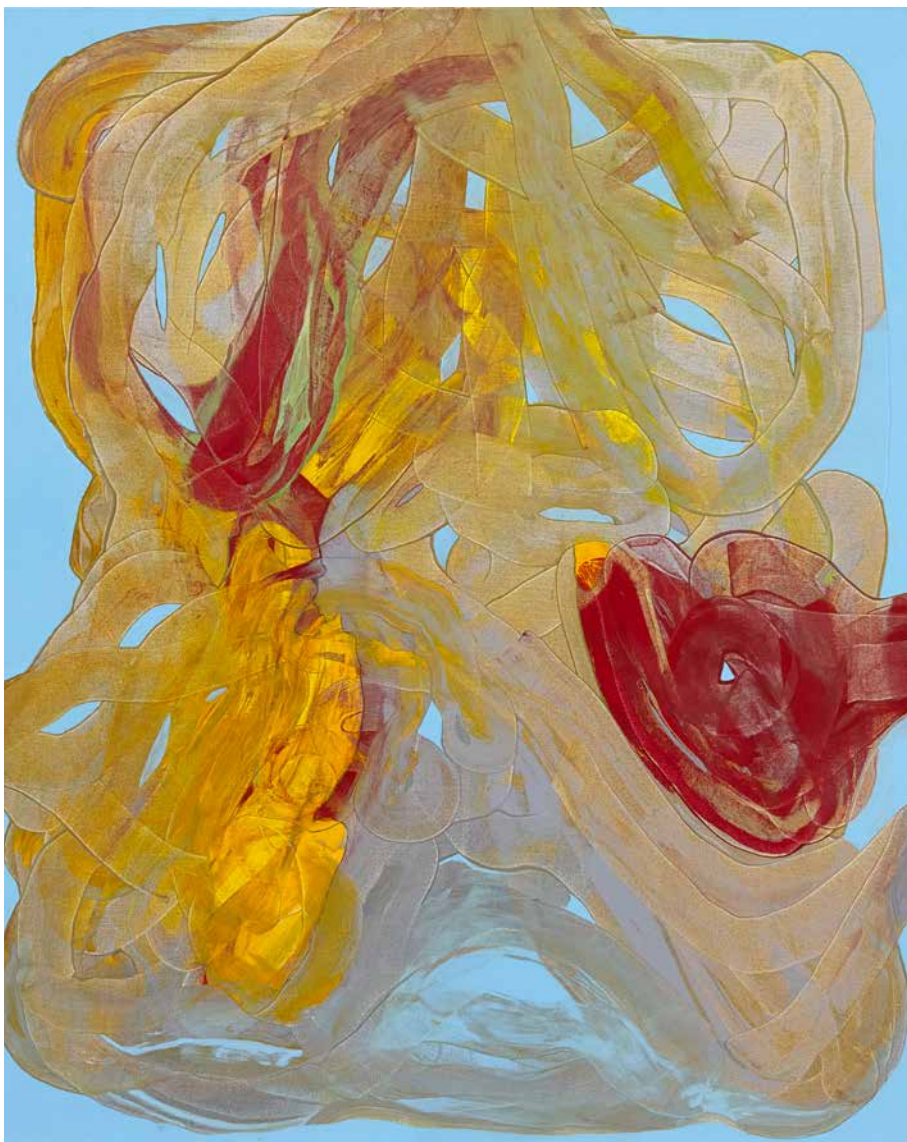
Dragon Walks (2019)

48" wide x 60" high x 1½" deep

acrylic, marker, glitter glue on canvas



Dreaming (2018)
48" wide x 60" high x 1½" deep
acrylic, pencil on canvas



Refuge (1) (2019)

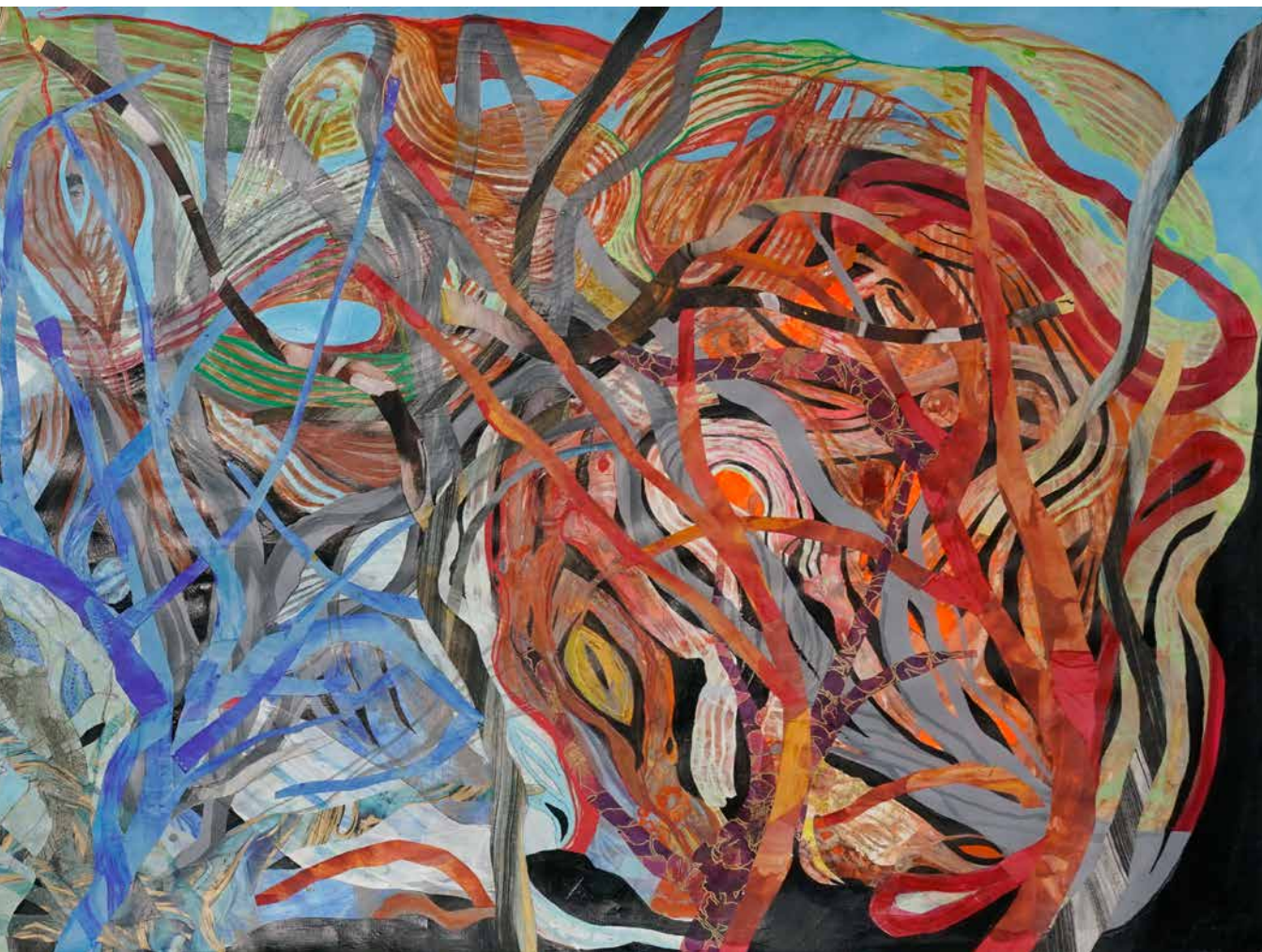
48" wide x 60" high x 1½" deep

acrylic, pencil, marker on canvas



Refuge (2) (2019)
48" wide x 60" high x 1½" deep
acrylic, pencil, marker on canvas





Garden (Gray/Blue/Red) (2022)

95¼" wide x 36" high

acrylic, marker, pencil, collage on canvas paper



Untitled (2012)

48" wide x 60" high x 1½" deep

acrylic, sumi-e ink, pastel on canvas



Voice (2018)
48" wide x 60" high x 1½" deep
acrylic, pencil, marker on canvas



Golden (1) (2013)

18" wide x 24" high unframed
acrylic, sumi-e ink, marker on canvas paper



Golden (2) (2013)

18" wide x 24" high unframed
acrylic, sumi-e ink, marker on canvas paper



Gray Flower (2019)

30" wide x 44" high unframed
acrylic, marker, pencil, glitter glue on paper





BIOGRAPHY

Mary Sheldon Scott (Molly), b. 1952, has been exploring visual media and creating innovative performance works for 50+ years. Scott's visual art work has been presented at BASE (Like Love Exhibition 2017 and Georgetown Art Attack Invitational 2018); Center for Contemporary Art / C.O.C.A (2018, 2019), Velocity's V2 Gallery (2016), Museum of Northwest Art (Artist Talk 2016), The Creative Corridor / Columbia City (2012, 2013), Mary Sheldon Scott Studio in Seattle, WA (2014–2019), and Mary Sheldon Scott Studio in Little Compton, RI (2022).

In 1993 Scott began a dedicated collaboration with composer Jarrad Powell, forming Scott/Powell Performance to explore their interest in the intersection of movement and sound. Scott/Powell has been presented at

Above: Mary Sheldon Scott in her Seattle, WA studio. Photo by Rob Woolmington.
Facing page: Studio detail, Little Compton, RI.

On the Boards, Dance Theater Workshop/NYC, PICA's T:BA Festival/Portland, OR, Myrna Loy Center/Helena, MT, Pacific Northwest Ballet's Celebrate Seattle Festival, Open for Dancing Festival/Newport, RI, and Velocity Dance Center, and has received support from the National Endowment for the Arts, National Performance Network/Creation Fund, Paul G. Allen Family Foundation, Artist Trust, 4Culture, Mayor's Office of Arts & Culture, SCUBA Touring Alliance, and Centrum.

Scott has received individual grants and awards from Artist Trust, 4Culture/ King County, and the Mayor's Office of Arts & Culture/Seattle. Choreographic commissions include Cornish Dance Theater, Strictly Seattle, Bellingham Repertory Dance and the University of Washington. Scott has been a guest faculty at the University of Washington, Cornish College of the Arts, Reed College, and Velocity Dance Center, teaching creative process, choreography, improvisation, and performance practice.

Education: Master of Fine Arts from the University of Colorado, Boulder, with additional studies at Reed College, University of Oregon, University of Denver, and Cornish College of the Arts.

marysheldonscott.com | scottpowell.org



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