

# The Art of Evan Summer: Landscapes, Nocturnes, and Pigs

**Judy Maloney and Evan Summer**

*Exhibition Opening, Juniata College Museum of Art, April 18, 2013*

Judy Maloney is Director of the Juniata College Museum of Art, and Evan Summer is Professor of Art at Kutztown University.

**A**s a boy in Buffalo, New York, Evan Summer had many occasions to view Niagara Falls. The unusual perspective—“looking down at something so majestic”—impressed him, as did the massive hydroelectric power plants that dominate the landscape around Niagara Falls. In images like *Landscape XX*, or *Darkening Sky*, these visual memories from childhood assert themselves yet become something very different: the massive man-made structures are tumbling, or sliding; the natural forms seem less majestic than menacing, encroaching upon what man has made. Drawn into the landscapes by Summer’s strong perspective lines, the viewer finds himself in uncertain terrains, under dramatically changeable skies. These are, Summer says, “desolate places where there’s just no end to them and no sense of direction or goal . . . just more landscape to wander through.”



Figure 1: *Landscape XX* (1987)

Collage of paper and board on panel with graphite, pastel, powdered pigment, and acrylic,  
40 x 54 inches



Figure 2: *Darkening Sky* (1987)

Collage of paper and board on aluminum with graphite, pastel, powdered pigment, and acrylic, 60 x 75 inches

In part, Summer says, “time and change” become the subject of his landscapes, and also of his images of abandoned buildings—like *Interior X*, in which, again, converging perspective lines lead the viewer back and back through empty, decaying rooms. “The man-made structures have this kind of geometry to them, while the forces of nature tend to break down that geometry; it’s two things working along in different directions. Everything is in flux. Time can really be measured in terms of the change that occurs to these objects.” And perhaps that accounts for the unease in a viewer that is drawn into Summer’s spaces, then finds himself in the midst of that processes of time and change, so concentrated as to be felt.

Summer’s power as an artist may lie in his ability to render such mysteries of existence through technical precision. He is primarily a printmaker, specializing in the traditional technique of etching on copper plates, though he also uses other intaglio processes of engraving, drypoint, and aquatint. Intaglio refers to the printmaking techniques in which an image is incised into a surface, and the incised line or sunken area holds the ink; the differences in the techniques lie in how, and by what instruments, the image is incised. Summer also works in collagraphy, in which textural materials are affixed to a plate, or board, then inked and pressed onto paper. Finding he “liked the plate more than the print,” he has also created large-scale collages; in these the built-up surface is not printed onto paper, but *is* the art work.



Figure 3: *Interior X* (1982)  
Collagraph, 30 x 25 inches

Imagery and technique, Summer says, “have become so intertwined in my work that it’s hard to separate one from another.” Discussing his work Summer uses the phrase “mark-making,” language particularly meaningful to printmakers. “Most etchings, or some etchings,” he says, “are printed in black or one color. We don’t have the variety of color, all we have is tone, and that’s made with marks. And so the texture, the nature of the surface, is all determined by the marks we make.” Through his precision in “making marks,” Summer builds images that are structural, dynamic, atmospheric . . . and beautiful.

#### ARTIST’S STATEMENT, BY EVAN SUMMER

The works in this exhibition, “Evan Summer: Unknown Landscapes,” at Juniata College were done over a period of more than thirty years. My work has changed significantly during this time. Subjects move from architecture to landscape to insects and animals and then back to architecture. I add new families of images and then go back to previous subjects or combine old images to create new ones.

Throughout this time I've remained very interested in creating prints, especially etchings and collagraphs. These prints are closely related to, and in most cases developed from, my drawings and collages.

The etching plates are created over a period of time and in many steps on copper plates. In the exhibition I've included the plate of *Baby Phattie*, a small print of a pig, along with the preliminary drawing and final print. Collagraphs are printed from plates that are built up like collages. Like the etchings they are hand inked and printed by hand, one at a time, in small editions.



Figure 4: Preliminary Drawing



Figure 5: *Baby Phattie* (2012)  
Etching, 9 x 6 inches

The interiors and landscapes reflect time, history and memory. Things have been built and events have occurred in these places but now the abandoned structures are the only sign of human presence. They are about time and change, and are symbolic of conflict—conflict between human creation and the forces of nature. I feel a sense of mystery even though I created these pictures. In all my work there is a strong interest in form and space, and also for craft and tradition. Linear perspective, mark making and technique are intertwined inseparably with imagery, and the two have evolved together in my work.



Figure 6: *Landscape with Sloped Horizon* (2004)  
Lithograph, 33 x 28 inches

My interest in form extends to a fascination with plants, insects and animals. It started with drawings of vegetables and continued in a series of images of insects, toads and farm animals. As I studied and drew these forms I was surprised by the complex structure as well as the variety of colors, textures, and patterns, and I became especially interested in beetles. They were beautiful but because of their size and appearance, they made me a little uneasy. I didn't want to hold a preserved specimen. It was interesting to me how beauty, fear and ugliness could co-exist with these creatures . . . and it reminded me how similar my concerns were when I was working with interiors and landscapes.

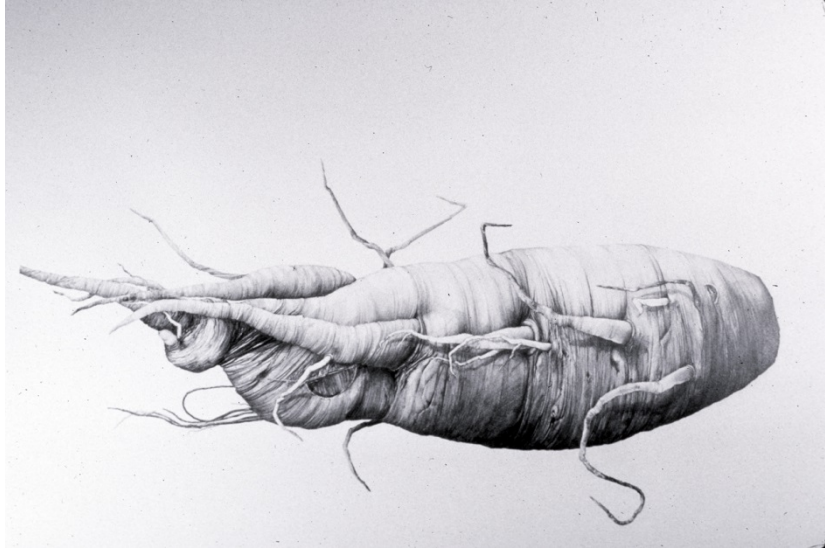


Figure 7: *White Radish* (1988)  
Etching, 22 x 28 inches



Figure 8: *Odontalabis* (2006)  
Graphite, 29 x 23 inches



Figure 9: *Toader* (2012)  
Lithograph, 10 x 11.5 inches