



"THE ELSEWHERE OF ANOTHER WORLD"
2013
GRAPHITE, INK, AND COLLAGE
ON VINTAGE PAPER, 33" X 22 1/4"

Val Britton's work is about journeys—of all types: emotional, life, road, imaginative—both literally and figuratively. And like a satisfying journey, it is richly layered, uniquely personal, intuitively motivated, and ever-evolving. Britton grew up in urban New Jersey and attended RISD (the Rhode Island School of Design), where she earned her undergraduate degree in printmaking, which she felt was a natural choice given her love of drawing and craft. To this day, she maintains a firm commitment to working with and on paper. "The program at RISD was rigid," Britton explains. "It's very rigorous and process-oriented, and that training still informs my work to this day."

Following undergrad, Britton moved to Brooklyn where she subsidized her art making with various freelance jobs, all in the worlds of craft, design, and art. Technically and formally well-versed—"My undergraduate studies were very technical," she says, "but not a lot about content"—she began to focus more on subject matter. The first place she drew from was examining her relationship with her father, who had been a car mechanic and cross-country truck driver; he died suddenly when Britton was finishing high school. Early works feature masculine references, such as eighteen-wheelers, against soft, feminine backgrounds—Britton's early attempts to reconcile her feelings about her father's passing. The work changed tone notably, however, in graduate school.

After four years in NYC, Britton decided to move west to earn an MFA, which she did at CCA. She has remained in San Francisco ever since, and currently keeps a studio space in a converted warehouse in the Bayshore district. Indeed, the shift in her work began with her drive out here: a two-week trip guided by an atlas; this provided greater insight into her father's life (which had previously been a greater mystery to her), as he'd made many such journeys. The work she started



creating became more abstract with clear references to maps and travel. At CCA, Britton was encouraged to loosen up her work and go bigger, a direction she's been heading in ever since; an example is a recent almost room-sized installation at ICA in San Jose—part of a show that also featured larger two-dimensional works—and a piece she's working on for the San Francisco airport, which will measure 9 1/2-by-55 feet (for that, Britton will translate one of her works onto laminated glass; it will be on permanent display as of summer 2014).

Britton's work these days reflects a steady progression from that which she started at CCA; it has the look of a map, with lines connecting hubs or otherwise intersecting across space (the airport commission features what very much resembles the flight path maps found in the back of airline magazines); amorphous shapes take on the role of lakes.

Britton's employment of any number of mediums and techniques—watercolor, the stitching of thread, cutting, crumpling, and a lot of layering—provides texture and depth, giving the work both a linear, mapping narrative as well as temporal; they are works made over time. It is worth noting as well that Britton doesn't plan her pieces; "I embrace the intuitive," she says, "and like to see how one decision leads to the next; each piece develops as it's being made." This further adds to their journey-like quality; they are quite literally the map of her creative journey.

The recent installations Britton has embarked on are three-dimensional representations of her wall works. They feature intricately cut out and embellished pieces of paper linked together with purposely thick string, which mimics the lines she draws on paper. The installation at SJICA employs the same pieces of paper, with a few additions, used in previous incarnations of this work, but it is far from a replica of the previous installations; each time, Britton assembles the pieces anew, again creating in the moment. The installations, as with the two-dimensional works, are as constructive of space as they are destructive; structured and contained but also breaking apart, certainly a reference to the cycles of life and death and the journey between, which is at the core of Britton's inspiration.

—CHÉRIE LOUISE TURNER

"Val Britton: Intimate Immensity" remains on view at the San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art, from February 23 – May 18, 2013. www.sjica.org

"Val Britton: Celestial Wanderings" will be on view at CES Contemporary, from June 1 – 27, 2013. www.cescontemporary.com



LAURIE HASSOLD

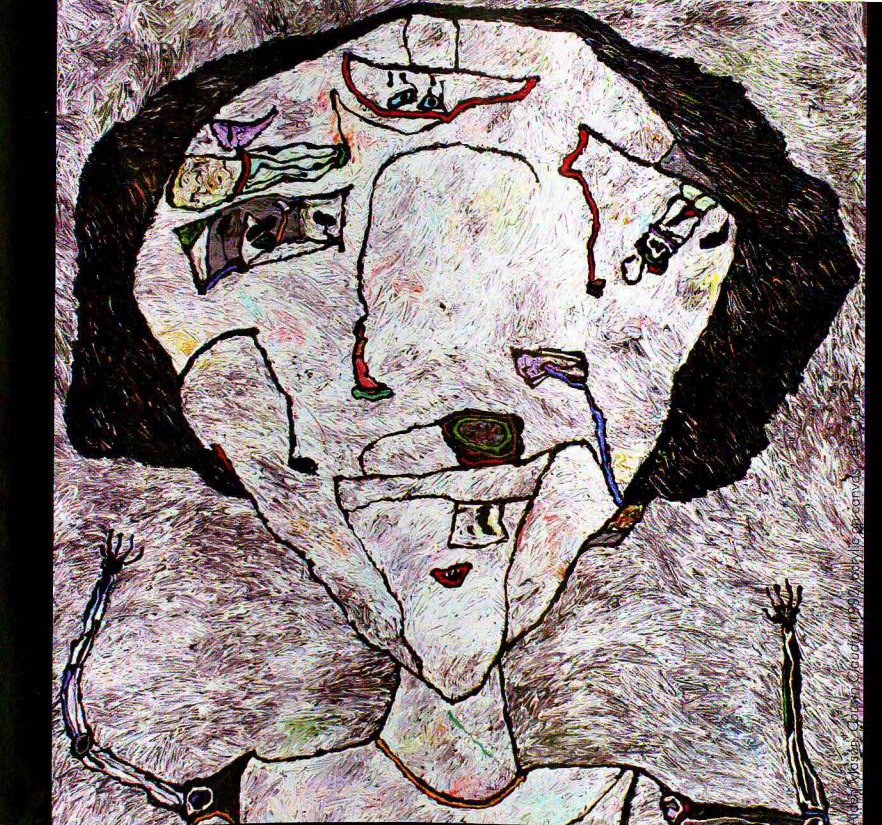
"Nostalgia for the Future"

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949.376.8800
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"Explaining the Future to an Extinct Hare"
mixed media sculpture h: 34" x w: 24" x d: 12"



ALDEN MASON FOSTER/WHITE GALLERY
220 THIRD AVENUE SOUTH, SEATTLE, WA SEATTLE@FOSTERWHITE.COM 206.622.2833