

HOW
BLANE TO
DE ST. MOVE
CROIX A
LANDSCAPE



MASS MoCA





Moving Landscape, 2020

Wood, plywood, foam, plastic, paint, branches, dirt, other natural and recycled materials, model trains

Moving Landscape features a series of miniature landscapes on model railroad cars — depicting tundra, wetlands, forest, desert, etc. The train cars revolve in a circular loop through the entry wall of the exhibition and into the gallery behind it. These landscapes are in perpetual motion, akin to a snake chasing its own tail. With this gesture, De St. Croix reminds us that holding onto these ever-changing landscapes, despite our human desire, will always be just out of our grasp.



Broken Landscape IV, 2009

Wood, plywood, foam, plastic, paint, branches, dirt, other natural and recycled materials

Broken Landscape is based on De St. Croix's travels along the length of the U.S./Mexico border, conducting a 2,300-mile research trip along the fence construction. While the border itself is 1,900 miles, there were multiple locations where De St. Croix needed to travel out of the way in order to reach the desired points. Over the journey he visited fifteen border crossings, speaking with people on both sides of the border communities (both geographically and ideologically), including residents, fencing contractors, border patrol, and journalists. This work reconstructs a section of the border as a monumental miniature. The sculpture divides the space, acting as a border itself.



Pyramiden/Permafrost, 2014

Mixed media and recycled materials

Pyramiden/Permafrost is based on the utopian settlement of Pyramiden, an abandoned Soviet coal-mining community in the Svalbard Archipelago in Norway. First settled in 1927 to demonstrate that communism could reach all points on the globe, the harsh Arctic environment and depleted natural resources proved futile. The town was abandoned in 1998, leaving an eerily preserved ghost town. This sculpture depicts the snow-covered peak that overlooks the town on top, and inside the shipping crate is an image of permafrost.



En Plein Air: Svalbard, Smeerenburg, 2014

Dirt, rock, and natural material from the Arctic, wooden crate, recycled paper pulp, acrylic paint

Plein Air Arctic Permafrost Landscape, 2020

Mixed media and recycled materials

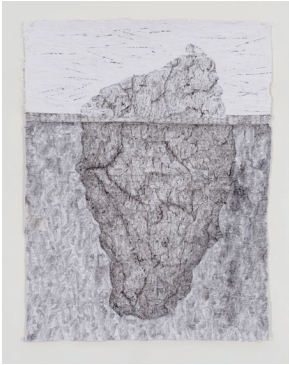
Permafrost not only provides preservation and structure in the Arctic; it is also starting to thaw at an alarming rate due to climate change. *Plein Air Arctic Permafrost Landscape* was sculpted along the Arctic Ocean. Due to erosion, along the coast permafrost in northern Alaska has been exposed. *En Plein Air: Svalbard, Smeerenburg* was created in Norway when De St. Croix participated in The Arctic Circle residency.



Dead Ice, 2014

Recycled foam, wood, paint, Aqua-Resin, and EcoPoxy

Dead ice is a scientific term for ice shed by a “living glacier,” which sits motionless to thaw into the ocean. The sculpture *Dead Ice* explores the ideas of failed human exploration and the never-ending battle between humans and the environment. Depicted are two sides dividing the gallery space: one natural and one human. On the natural side, we are presented with a representation of dead ice, while on the other we see what appears to be a ghostly remnant of the hull of a ship embedded in the ice. The white covering seeps through the slats of the structure, envisioning the powerful way in which nature consumes the man-made, highlighting the futile desire to tame the landscape.



Arctic Landscape collage drawings, 2014-15

Ink on paper, digital archival prints mounted on canvas

The works in this series begin with on-site aerial and on-the-ground photographs. De St. Croix uses these base images as source material for his unique drawings. The drawings are then scanned and turned into digital archival prints, which are then shredded and layered onto canvas, with further ink drawing across their surface. This process – like the use of sketches to make a final painting – allows De St. Croix to create composites that evoke the ever-changing Arctic environment.



Tony Gerber

How to Move a Landscape, 2020

Blane De St. Croix, directed by Tony Gerber

4k video, produced by Market Road Films and BDSC Studio, LLC

On his 2019 trip to Utqiagvik, Alaska, De St. Croix was accompanied by director Tony Gerber and a film crew who are working on a documentary about the artist's process and work. Presented here is the first public footage from the film.



Hollow Ground, 2020

Steel, wood, cotton, recycled foam and polyester, eco-resin, fabric, glue

In 2019, De St. Croix visited Utqiagvik, Alaska, to observe the dissolving permafrost as a result of climate change. Using the language of model-making, theater, and special effects, he combines recycled Styrofoam with eco-resins and other earth-friendly materials to model the surface of *Hollow Ground*. When below the work, we see gaping holes referencing the thawing soil. From the gallery's upper-balcony vantage points, the top of the sculpture becomes visible — an austere icy plane. These multiple vantage points, impossible in reality, allow De St. Croix to use art as a tool to interpret and extrapolate his first-hand experience of the landscape, and in turn give viewers a glimpse into the future.



Collapsing Pillar, 2020

Paint, wood, eco-resin, natural and recycled materials

Collapsing Pillar towers over the viewer. For this work, De St. Croix created sections of icy tundra as if harvesting slabs of permafrost from his other work. The piece teeters uncertainly, with sticks propping up the stacked pieces and anchoring them to the wall as if the whole thing could tumble down at any moment. From the balcony, visitors can approach the surface of the sections. The precarity of this work emphasizes the vulnerability of the Arctic landscape – a space both vast and under severe threat.



Cold Front, 2020

Blane De St. Croix in collaboration with Paul Amenta and Sidecar Studios, with technical assistance from Alican Taylan

Cotton, recycled foam, eco-resin, fabric, glue, plastic chips recycled from 67,000 water bottles, video projection

De St. Croix often uses recycled materials in his work to call attention to the man-made objects clogging our environment. By keeping these materials in circulation rather than in landfills, he creates ecologically responsible sculptures. *Cold Front* is no exception, as the glimmering ice-like surface is actually made of shredded plastic bottles. Onto this façade is projected a moving glacier engulfing the visitors' visual field.



Alchemist Triptych, 2020

Aluminum sheet and copper, paint, recycled foam, silver, copper, gold metal leafs

Alchemist Triptych depicts three tornado-like structures in gold, silver, and copper. The forms represent mineral mines extracted from the earth in tapering concentric rings, dangling and vulnerable. Placed at the edge of the gallery's upper balcony, they are viewable from multiple vantage points. Each mine also has a corresponding hole in the floor, impossibly small compared to the forms — perhaps a signal of the land healing itself in the face of extraction.



Two Ends, 2011

Wood, eco-resin, paint, natural and recycled materials

U.S./Mexico Border drawings, 2009

Ink on paper

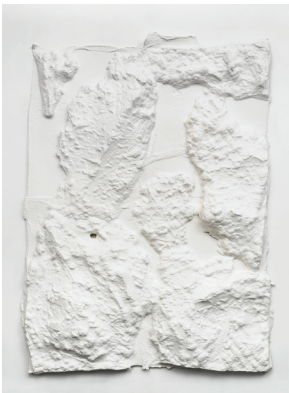
Two Ends depicts the extreme ends of the United States/ Mexico border, based on site visits, and first-hand photographic documentation. One border end concludes in a Texas salt-water estuary, emptying into the Gulf of Mexico. The other ends with the fence line descending into the Pacific Ocean in Tijuana. One end presents an open border void of people, the other a heavily guarded border. Accompanying these sculptures are De St. Croix's drawings based on his research.



Nomadic Landscape, 2012

Wooden crate, acrylic paint, paper pulp, dirt and other natural and recycled materials from the Gobi Desert

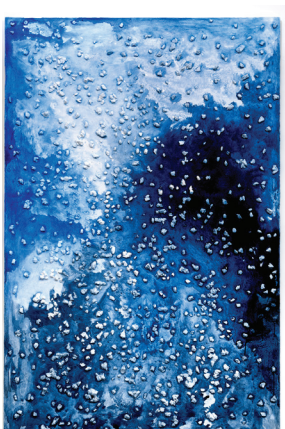
Nomadic Landscape addresses the Gobi Desert, revealing distinctive conflicts within environmental and geo-politics. The miniaturized landscape exists in a custom-fabricated mobile crate container and travels along the path of the prevailing winds—much like the region's soil eroding and being deposited in north-central China as a result of the effects of shifting climate conditions. This is a nomadic work of art that crosses regions and borders, participating in the contemporary discussion about art as a form of both artistic and political expression.



Over Ice, 2020

Cast white cotton paper

Over Ice is a stark white topography made from handmade paper. Based on site photography in Svalbard, the work gives the viewer a sense of aerially surveying the landscape below. This shift in vantage point leads to a vertiginous feeling, an unsettling sense of whether we are standing on the ground or floating above it. Made with the help of the Dieu Donn  paper studio, the work evokes Arctic landscapes based on both image and memory, with the white paper pulp emulating snow.



Arctic Relief Panels, 2017–2020

Recycled foam, wooden panels, acrylic paint, water-based pigments, glue

De St. Croix's drawings and relief paintings show various forms of Arctic ice, such as multi-year ice, which stays frozen for consecutive seasons, or dark ice, which is caked with algae or animal feces. In *Arctic Blue Drift Ice* (2017), the artist begins with a blue-black ground like cold water devoid of reflected light, on top of which he carves sections of ice drifting apart and making the water underneath seem exposed. While in *Arctic Lunate Fracture* (2020) the ice seems like cracks in chunks across the surface, turning the water underneath a milky blue. Lastly, *Dark/Light Arctic Ice Float* (2017) depicts both the visible and underwater sides of a glacier; atop a shipping crate is a stark white berg while inside is the portion usually hidden beneath the water.

Research Galleries

These research galleries illustrate how art can become a persuasive form of communication through its visualization of data, both scientific and personal. Included are field photographs and sketches made by De St. Croix alongside interviews and artifacts from various scientists and climate science advocates, including Oleg Anisimov, State Hydrological Institute in St. Petersburg, Russia; Julie Brigham-Grette, professor in the Department of Geosciences, University of Massachusetts at Amherst; Angelina Davydova, Journalist and Director of the German-Russian Office of Environmental Information, St. Petersburg, Russia; George Divoky, Founder and Director, Friends of Cooper Island, Seattle, Washington; Alexey Ekaykin, Climate and Environmental Research Laboratory, Arctic and Antarctic Research Institute, St. Petersburg, Russia; Brenda Ekwurzel, Senior Climate Scientist, Director of Climate Science, Union of Concerned Scientists; Gretchen Goldman, Research Director, Center for Science and Democracy, Union of Concerned Scientists; Michael Goo, Esq., Associate Administrator for Policy at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Counsel to the House Energy and Commerce Committee, and Senior Policy Advisor at the Department of Energy under the Obama administration; Anne Jensen, General Manager and Senior Scientist for Ukpeavik Iupiat Corporation (UIC) Science LLC, Barrow, Alaska; Marina Leibman, Earth Cryosphere Institute — Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow; Patrick Megonigal, Associate Director for Research, Principal Investigator, Research Labs, Smithsonian Environmental Research Center; Alistair Rogers, Environmental and Climate Sciences Department, Brookhaven National Laboratory, Upton, New York; Bryan Thomas, Station Chief, Barrow Atmospheric Baseline Observatory, Alaska; and Craig Tweedie, professor in the Department of Biology and Director of the Environmental Science and Engineering Program at The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP).

Also on view is an excerpt from a hand-drawn animation by Diana Shpungin titled *To Get Out Of The Way* (2020), depicting De St. Croix conducting field research.



About the Artist

Blane De St. Croix's work has been exhibited both nationally and internationally at Fredericks & Freiser, New York, NY; Sculpture Center, Long Island City, NY; Weatherspoon Art Museum, Greensboro, NC; the Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans, LA; the Johnson Museum, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY; Bass Museum of Art, Miami, FL; the Asia Society, Houston, TX; Värmlands Museum, Karlstad, Sweden; the Kathmandu International Triennial, Nepal Art Council; Gasworks Gallery, London, England; and Smack Mellon, Brooklyn. He is a 2019 recipient of the Lee Krasner Award, in recognition of a lifetime of artistic achievement, from The Pollock-Krasner Foundation, the Brian Wall Award, and the NYSCA/ NYFA Artist Fellowship in Architecture/Environmental Structures/Design, and has additionally received the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship, the Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant for Painters and Sculptors, the Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship, and the National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship in Sculpture.

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