



Coming Up for Air | Elizabeth Awalt



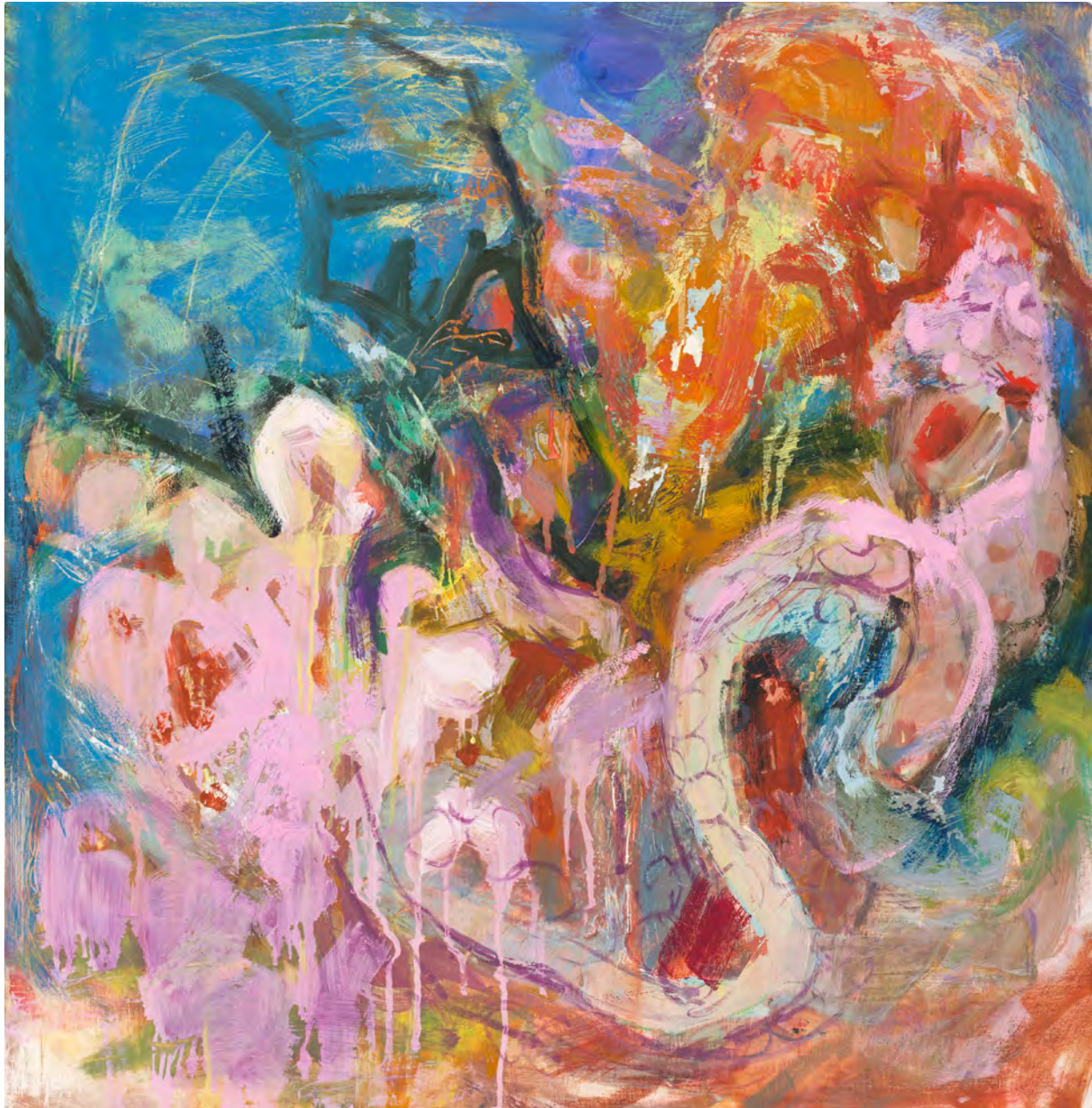
Coming Up for Air | Elizabeth Awalt
Exhibition Catalog

August 11–October 1, 2022

Cove Street Arts | Portland, Maine

A solo exhibition of work from the Coral Reef Series and the Maine Kelp Series

On the cover: *Coming Up for Air*, 79" x 42," 2021 (detail)



My Octopus, 24" x 24," oil on wood panel, 2017–19

Collaborations with the Sea

Kelley Lehr
Gallery director, Cove Street Arts

Elizabeth Awalt's *Coming Up For Air*, featuring large-scale watercolors from her *Island Kelp* series and oils from *Coral Reefs*, is equal parts passionate ode to the profound beauty and impenetrable mystery of the sea, and emotional appeal for action on behalf of the rapidly warming and acidifying ocean with its miraculous profusion of life. This work has palpable energy, alive with motion, conjuring dynamic properties of the sea through loose but bold brushstrokes, translucent washes of watercolor, and spontaneous marks that revel in the joy of their liquidity.

Pondering Awalt's exuberant oils, the word "Technicolor" springs to mind due not only to the vivacious intensity of their palettes, but also a pervasive sense of motion captured in time. An exotic proliferation of living beings is encountered, all subject to the eternal flux of deep-water currents. Awalt conveys this perpetual motion by manipulating paint into thinly spread arcs and swirls, creating the opaque blur of water in motion.

In the works on paper, ocean water is *literally* incorporated via paper soaked in a tide pool with kelp incorporated in the paintings process. These are paintings of the ocean in the usual sense, but they are also "of the ocean." This series is paradoxically rough and elegant, raw and refined. Much of their fascination lies in the sun-etched silhouettes and embedded bits of native kelp, whose alginate repels liquid pigment, creating orbs and auras of negative space and adding an element of chaos and chance. Creating these "collaborations with the sea" affords the ocean a type of "genius" or consciousness a la Wallace Stevens's *The Idea of Order at Key West*.



Undertow, acrylic ink on Arches watercolor paper, 72" x 36" (left)



Divers Bouquet, 76" x 76," oil on linen, 2017

Artist's Statement

Coming Up for Air

BREATHE... Whether 80 feet below the surface of the ocean or in my studio, I'm reminded that a simple inhale and exhale keeps us alive — and focused. When scuba diving, a deep inhale causes the body to rise, and a deep exhale allows the body to descend. Controlling the breath keeps the body buoyant; inhaling and exhaling through the regulator creates sound and bubbles, and the rhythm of the breath is meditative and soothing.

Two bodies of work are included in this exhibition at Cove Street Arts, the *Coral Reef* series and the *Island Kelp* series. Each series finds its immediacy in my direct experience in the environment: scuba diving in turquoise Caribbean waters; and collaborating with the sea and kelp on a Maine island. Water...it's movement, transparency, light, and the life within it...bind these two series together.

I began scuba diving late in my life so I could witness the magical underwater landscape that has been ravaged by climate change in recent years. The experience of diving is akin to Alice's fall down the rabbit hole in *Wonderland*: an immersion in an alternate universe of infinite blue space, anthropomorphic forms and psychedelic colors teeming with life. I have only begun



Coming Up for Air, 79" x 42," ink and acrylic on Arches watercolor paper, 2021

to investigate its
overwhelming beauty.

While diving,

I draw in a small
waterproof sketchbook — taking in the visual stimulation all
around me. Drawing from life cements what I am observing
into my memory and captures the moment I am in. I also
photograph underwater for later reference in the studio,
particularly the color and light my drawings can't capture.

I've spent half my life during the summer months on
an island in Maine. The woods and sea have provided me
with unlimited subject matter. On the island I work plein
air, and the paintings in the *Island Kelp* series are made in
collaboration with nature. I soak the paper in seawater, lay
kelp onto the paper to create a form, and paint to allow the
liquids to pool and bleed where they desire. The transparency
and movement of the water and the atmosphere, light and
weather are the elements I'm after. I embrace not knowing
what the final painting will look like when it is finished.

Elizabeth Awalt
August 2022





Tropical Flame, 54" x 46," oil on canvas, 2021



Omen, 46" x 38," oil on linen, 2022



Coral Garden, 72" x 60," oil on canvas, 2017





Fifty Shades of Violet, 60" x 50," oil on linen, 2022



Yellow Sponge and Coral, 24" x 24," oil on wood panel, 2022



Deep Sea Seduction, 46" x 38," oil on linen, 2018



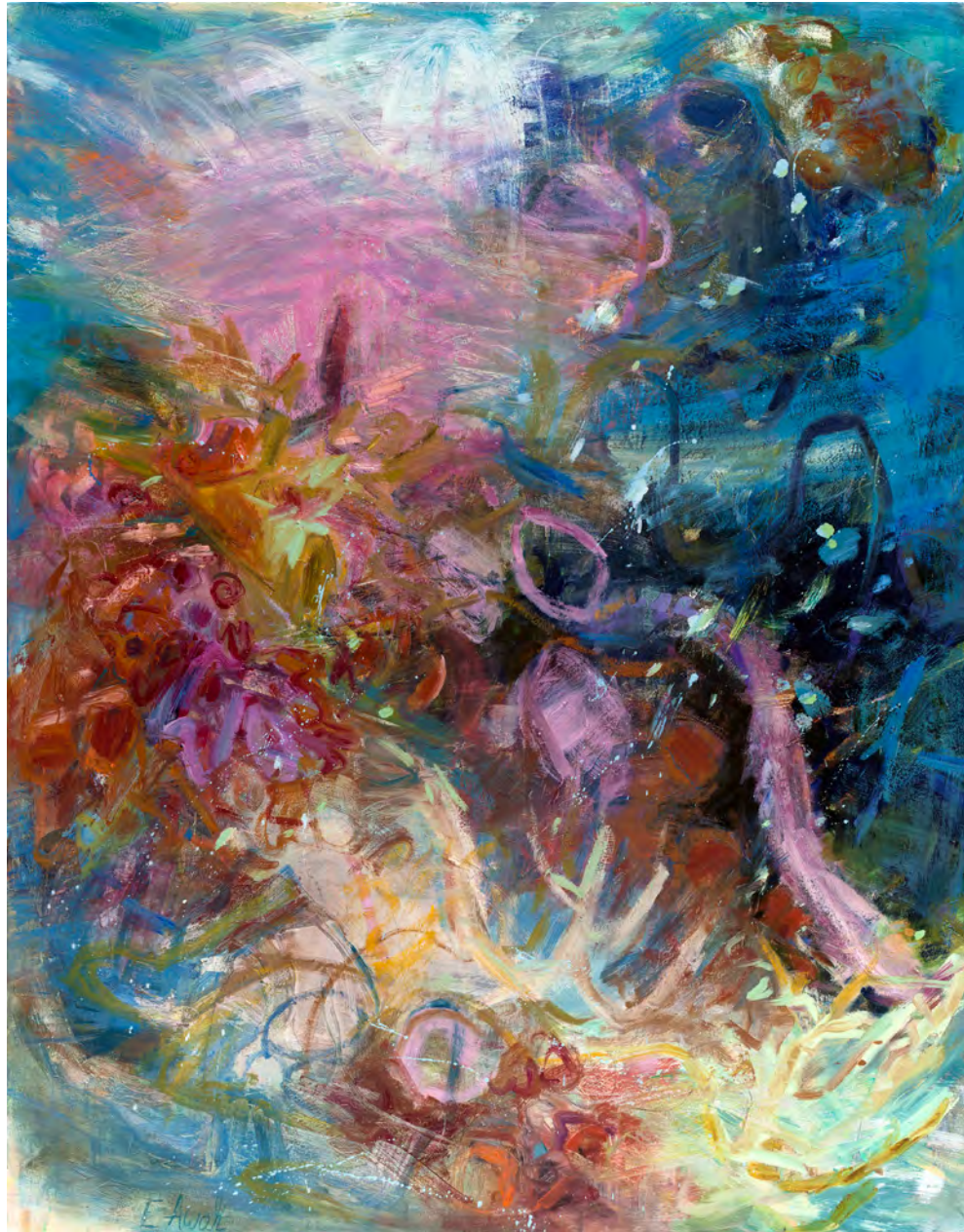
Travelers, 46" x 38," oil on linen, 2020



Swagger, 24x18," oil on wood panel, 2022



Off the Wall, 46" x 38," oil on linen, 2018



Diving Into Pink, 60" x 48," oil on linen, 2018

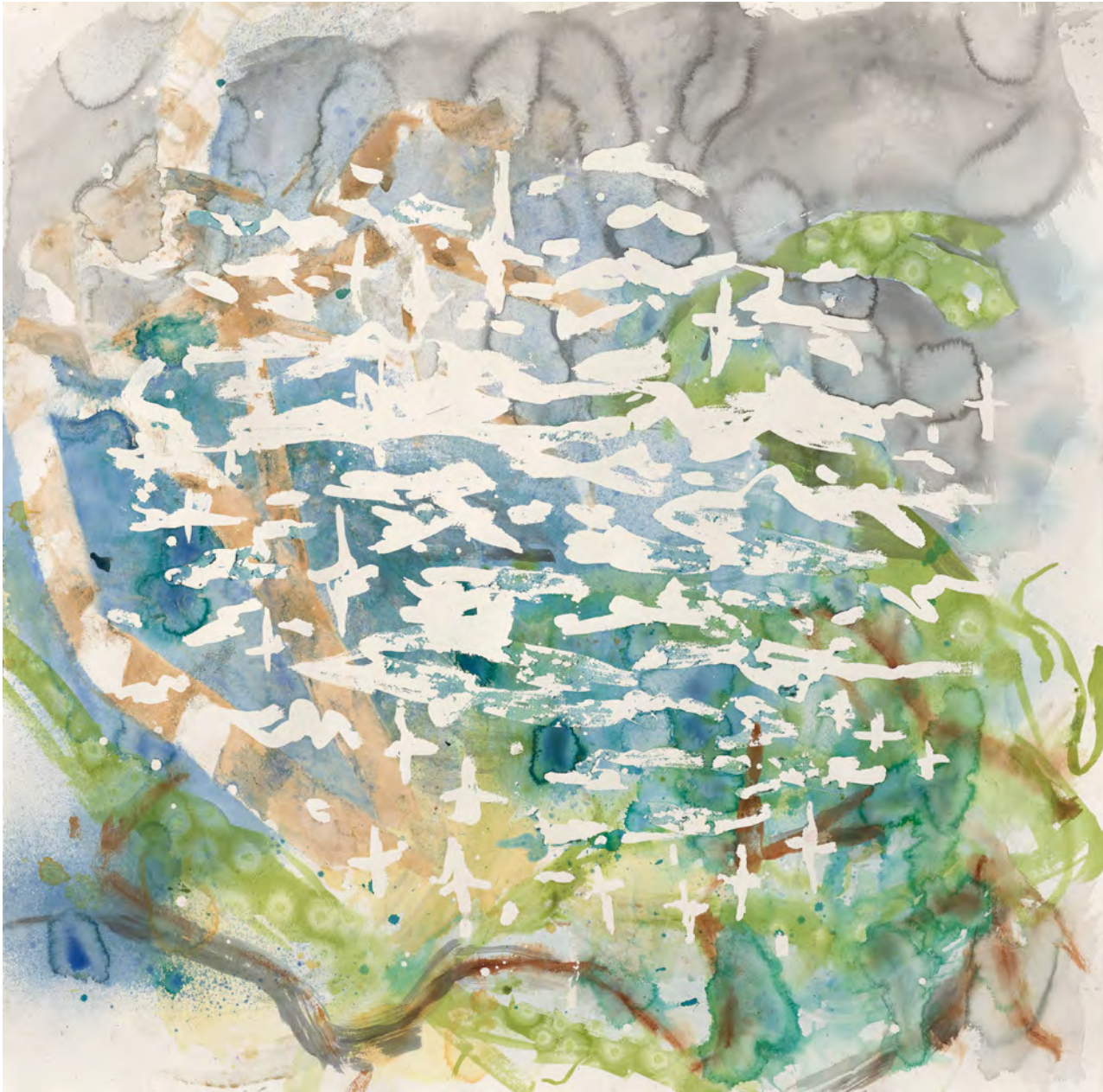


Changing Conditions, 80" x42," ink and acrylic on Arches watercolor paper, 2021. Full image at left, detail below.





Unpredictable Current, 42" x33," ink and acrylic on Arches watercolor paper, 2021



Summers End, 45" x 45," ink and acrylic on Arches watercolor paper, 2021



Floating in the Deep, 43" x 45," ink and acrylic on Arches watercolor paper, 2021



Saltwater Blues, 45" x 45," ink and acrylic on Arches watercolor paper, 2021



Atlantic Twilight, 43" x 45," ink and acrylic on Arches watercolor paper, 2021

Bio & Curriculum Vitae

Elizabeth Grace Awalt

Elizabeth Awalt lives in Concord, Massachusetts and Swans Island, Maine. She received her BA from Boston College and MFA from the University of Pennsylvania. She returned to Boston College to teach and was awarded tenure as an Associate Professor. The artist currently teaches workshops in painting and drawing.

Her work is rooted in the natural world, particularly landscapes of raw beauty or those affected by environmental change. The artist's work has been supported by fellowships and grants from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Provincetown Fine Arts Work Center, and the MacDowell, Yaddo, and Millay Colonies. Elizabeth's work has been shown in Boston area group exhibitions including the Museum of Fine Arts, DeCordova Museum, Rose Art Museum, and McMullen Museum. Solo shows include the Danforth Museum, Matter and Light Fine Art, Clark Gallery, Soprafina Gallery, Thomas Segal Gallery, GW Einstein Gallery, Caldbeck Gallery, and Cove Street Arts. In April 2019 the artist was invited to exhibit in the Thirteenth Havana Biennale in Mantanzas, Cuba.

SOLO and TWO PERSON EXHIBITIONS

- 2022 Coming Up for Air, Cove Street Arts, Portland, ME
- 2021 Eternity in an Hour, Elizabeth Awalt and Elizabeth O'Reilly, Virtual
End of Summer Blues, Elizabeth Awalt/Tom Fels, Jane Deering Gallery, Gloucester, MA
- 2018 Elizabeth Awalt, Force of Nature, Coastal Maine Botanical Garden, Boothbay ME
- 2017 Sea Change, Matter and Light Fine Art, Boston, MA
- 2015 New Work, Turtle Gallery, Deer Isle, ME
- 2012 Fruiting Bodies, Clark Gallery, Lincoln, MA
Cascade, Danforth Museum of Art, Framingham, MA
- 2011 New Paintings, Caldbeck Gallery, Rockland, ME
- 2008 Lessons in Botany, Caldbeck Gallery, Rockland, ME



Breach, 76" x 42," ink and acrylic on Arches watercolor paper, 2021

- 2007 Sanctuary of Light, Danforth Museum of Art, Framingham, MA
Elizabeth Awalt/Stoney Conley, In Nature, Nesto Gallery, Milton Academy,
Milton, MA
- 2004 Hook, Line and Sinkers, Soprafina Gallery, Boston, MA
Fresh Produce, GASP, Brookline, MA
- 1995 Seasonal Meditations, G.W. Einstein Company, Inc., NY
- 1994 Elizabeth Awalt, Samuelis Baumgarte Gallery, Bielefeld, Germany
- 1990 Yellowstone After Fire, G.W. Einstein Company, Inc., NY
- 1988 Elizabeth Awalt, G.W. Einstein Company, Inc., NY

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2022 Undercurrents: Water+Human Impact, Concord Center for Arts,
Concord, MA, catalog
Gallery Artists, Caldbeck Gallery, Rockland, ME
- 2021 Remembering Together: Marking Lives Covid-19, Broad Institute, catalog
Landscape, Caldbeck Gallery, Rockland, ME
- 2019 Havana Biennial, Mantanzas, Cuba, catalog
Back to Nature, Caldbeck Gallery, May Group Show
- 2018 May Group Show, Caldbeck Gallery, Rockland, ME
- 2017 A Flower Show, Caldbeck Gallery, Rockland, ME
- 2016 Group Show, Caldbeck Gallery, Rockland, ME
- 2015 Verdant, Trustman Gallery, Simmons College, Boston, MA
Double Vision, Hess Gallery, Pine Manor College, Chestnut Hill, MA
Spring Light, Caldbeck Gallery, Rockland, ME
- 2014 Light is Uplifting, Caldbeck Gallery, Rockland, ME
June Group Show, Caldbeck Gallery, Rockland, ME
- 2012 Spring Group Show, Caldbeck Gallery, Rockland, ME
- 2011 The Expressive Voice: Selections from the Permanent Collection,
Danforth Museum of Art, Framingham, MA
- 2010 Maine Biennial, Center for Maine Contemporary Art, Rockport, ME
- 2009 Drawing, Caldbeck Gallery, Rockland, MA
- 2008 Order Insecta, Concord Art Association, Concord, MA
From a Fixed Point, Regis College, Weston, MA

- 2005 Great Buys: Museum Purchases, Decordova Museum, Lincoln, MA
- 2004 Maine Biennial, Center for Contemporary Art, Rockport, ME
- 1999 Artists at Boston College, McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College,
Chestnut Hill, MA
- 1998 Boston Public Library Collects, Boston Public Library, Boston, MA
- 1995 Herbert W. Plimpton Collection of Realist Art, Rose Art Museum,
Brandeis University, Waltham, MA
- 1995 Directors Choice, Arkansas Art Center, Little Rock, AK
Inspired by Nature, Boston College Museum of Art, Chestnut Hill, MA

AWARDS and RESIDENCIES

- Virginia Center for Creative Arts, April 2018
Massachusetts Artists Foundation Fellowship, Painting/Finalist, 1989 and 1990
National Endowment for the Arts, Painting, Individual Artist Grant, 1987
Massachusetts Artists Foundation Fellowship in Painting, 1983
Yaddo, Saratoga Springs, NY, Summer, 1984
Fine Arts Work Center, Provincetown, MA, 1981-82, 1982-83
The MacDowell Colony, Peterborough, NH, Fall, 1982
The Millay Colony, Austerlitz, NY, August 1982

COLLECTIONS

- AT&T, Chicago, IL
Bank Boston, Boston, MA
Chase Manhattan Bank, New York, NY
Decordova Museum, Lincoln, MA
Danforth Museum, Framingham, MA
Fidelity Corporation, Boston, MA
McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA
Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA
The Snite Museum of Art, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN



TEACHING

College

School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Visiting Faculty, 2002-03

Boston College, Associate Professor, Fine Arts Department, 1984-2000, tenured 1987

Workshops

Concord Art, 2005-18

Truro Center for the Arts, 2018

Mentor

Lesley University, MFA Low Residency Program, 2007

EDUCATION

MFA, University of Pennsylvania

BA, Boston College

Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture

For information visit:

elizabethawalt.com

covestreetarts.com

Photography

Images of artworks by Will Howcroft and Julia Featheringill.

Additional images furnished by the artist.

Ascent, 108" x 36," acrylic ink on Arches watercolor paper, 2021



