

SHEDDING LIGHT ON THE WORKING FOREST

a traveling exhibition of painting and poetry



**KATHLEEN KOLB
VERANDAH PORCHE
MARK O'MALEY**

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"We live in the forest, that huge biome named the Northern Forest, to be exact. In addition to all the products it gives us, the forest is our home. Perhaps that is the reason we often feel restored by simply walking in the woods."

—Tom Slayton

This project celebrates the landscape of the working forest and the voices of those who have honed skills into a livelihood there. **Shedding Light** draws on the artistic friendship of a painter and a poet who are committed to subjects that have been largely overlooked by the arts.

Kathleen Kolb evokes what is solid, luminous, yet ephemeral in the scenes she gathers and painstakingly paints. She talks about how a moment of "emotional ignition" kindles a work of art. As a writing partner, Verandah Porche befriends, questions and listens, to unearth and preserve the poetry embedded in lived experience. She calls this process "finding the verse in conversation."

THE PROJECT: Painter **Kathleen Kolb** and poet **Verandah Porche** have narrowed their focus to those who harvest timber in the rural northeast. The images and the accompanying narratives honor the workers and open their environment and their insights to the viewer. The artistic intent is neither critique nor sentiment, but to shed light on beauty and sensitivity, amid the danger and the din of machines. Kolb's visual art spans a twenty year period and includes many pieces that are in private and public collections. Porche's work distills and amplifies the voices of people engaged with the working forest. In addition, "lighting instigator" **Mark O'Maley** will design innovative ways of sharing the text and images.

THE NEED: This exhibition will engage the community with a vital interest in the forest as a work place, a home, a field of study, and a playground, as well as viewers who have never set foot in the woods. This work matters because everyone depends on the forest for oxygen, clean water, wildlife habitat, soil stability, timber, fuel, recreation, and for inspiration. Consider the forest products that are taken for granted: the frame of a home, intimate paper products, treasured photographs, the pencil and shopping list, the frame of an easy chair, the match, the kitchen cupboard, the coffee table and the books it holds. This is only the start of a thoughtful inventory. Viewing these paintings and poems

can enrich an appreciation of the working of our forest landscape. It will provoke conversations about stewardship and how we care for our home places and our community.

Shedding Light On the Working Forest

is scheduled at the Brattleboro Museum and Art Center for October 2, 2015 to January 3, 2016, in conjunction with the Windham Regional Commission's forest initiative. It will appear subsequently at the Vermont Folklife Center in Middlebury. It will travel to the Vermont Supreme Court October through December 2016. In January 2017 smaller versions of the show will be at the State House cafeteria in Montpelier and at the Central Vermont Medical Center, in Berlin, Vermont. We are also approaching several venues beyond Vermont. This versatile traveling exhibition of paintings and poems can be adapted for a variety of sites: museums, galleries and public places. The Vermont Folk Life Center, Brattleboro Museum and Art Center, and Dave Mance at Northern Woodlands magazine are working with the artists on next steps to launch the project.

Shedding Light will include a full color catalog, including essays by an art critic and a forestry professional, to document and disseminate the project. A website will also be available.

THE ARTISTS:

A contemporary realist painter working in oil and watercolor, **Kathleen Kolb** is known for her dramatic handling of light. She has participated in roughly 40 solo shows and 80 group exhibitions, most recently at the New Britain (CT) Museum of American Art and Sanford Smith Fine Art in Great Barrington, MA. In Vermont she is represented by West Branch Gallery in Stowe, Furchgott Sourdiffe Gallery in Shelburne and Galerie Provenance in Middlebury. Her large watercolor *Bristol Sawmill* won the Paton Prize for watercolor in 1998 from the National Academy of Design in New York. Another of her watercolors appears in John Driscoll's *The Artist and the American Landscape*. Her painting *Dawn Loading* was published in *Freedom and Unity, A History of Vermont* (2004).

Kathleen describes herself as a "landscape painter, working and living along the spine of the Green Mountains of Vermont." which provides the "emotional ignition" that infuses her art. In 2009, one of ten artists selected from over 300 applicants, Kathleen joined the ART OF ACTION, a public/private project to create and exhibit work addressing challenges facing Vermont. Her paintings of the logging industry were featured in the winter 2009-2010 issue of *Vermont Life*. With a grant from The Vermont Community Foundation, Kathleen created a series of paintings of icebergs to draw attention to climate change. In a return to illustration, Kathleen accepted a commission from the Vermont Hard Cider Company to create the artwork for the nationally-distributed packaging of Woodchuck Hard Cider.

www.kathleenkolb.com

Verandah Porche works as a poet-in-residence, performer and writing partner.

Based in rural Vermont since 1968, she has published *Sudden Eden* (Verdant Books), *The Body's Symmetry* (Harper and Row) and *Glancing Off* (See Through Books), and has pursued an alternative literary career, creating collaborative writing projects in nontraditional settings: literacy and crisis centers, hospitals, factories, nursing homes, senior centers, a 200 year-old Vermont tavern and an urban working class neighborhood. Verandah's year-long residency, *Self Portraits in Newport: The SPIN Project*, was selected to represent New Hampshire in the White House initiative, Artists & Communities: America Creates for the Millennium, with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts. *Broad Brook Anthology*, a play for voices, honoring the elders in Guilford, Vermont was featured in the town's 250th anniversary celebration. *Listening Out Loud* documents her residency with Real Art Ways in Hartford, CT.

Come Over is a CD of songs written with Patty Carpenter, performed by the Dysfunctional Family Jazz Band.

Verandah initiated and for almost 30 years taught the poetry program at Vermont's Governor's Institute on the Arts. As a poet in the schools, she designs innovative residencies for students and communities. She has read her work on NPR stations, in the Vermont State House and at the John Simon Guggenheim Museum. She was featured in *Freedom and Unity: The Vermont Movie*. The Vermont Arts Council presented her with its Award of Merit in 1998 and Marlboro College, an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters in 2012.

www.verandahporche.com

An instigator of space, bodies, and ideas who wears his heart on his sleeve and the sky on his arm while working in lighting design, scenic design, curation, and installation art—**Mark O'Maley** has a fascination with how people use and enjoy space and believes in noticing everything.

His credits include off-Broadway in New York City, London's West End, regional theater & dance companies throughout the U.S. and festivals in South America and Europe. In Vermont, audiences have appreciated his work at the Flynn Center for the Performing Arts and the Lost Nation Theater. Mark's work, which critics have praised as "penetrating and provocative" and "dramatic" has garnered many awards including: the Kennedy Center American College Festival and the Theater Alliance of Greater Philadelphia.

He is also a photographer.

Mark received his bachelor's degree from the University Without Walls program at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, and his Master of Fine Arts in Interdisciplinary Arts from Goddard College. He has taught on the faculties of and as a guest artist at numerous high schools, colleges and universities, including Concord Academy, Milton Academy, Franklin Pierce University and Harvard University. Currently he is the production manager for the Vermont Governor's Institute on the Arts and on the faculty of the University of Colorado, Boulder. www.markomaley.com

excerpts from **THE ARTFUL LOGGER**

a poem by Verandah Porche
commissioned for a neighbor

Friday the Thirteenth: March,
eerie, raw. Full moon reads zero
and falling. Loggers' paradise.
Sap gels in the maples...

Each elegant scheme
is a rough draft of Utopia.
His dreams are scored
for internal combustion:
hymn of John Deere,
hum of Husqvarna,
loader, skidder, mill.
Chainsaw bar, long as a saber.
Man and his din...

Watch him shoot the breeze
with savvy log-truckers
whose clear-cut gums
size up his jokes,
and level with flatland tree-farmers
whose posted woodlots shelter
greenback bucks...

Day dims. The land curves back
from blacktop, muscular and private.

www.kathleenkolb.com/Shedding-Light.htm

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