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At Marion Art Center, ‘Illuminations’ plays with shadow and light

Tamalin Baumgarten’s realist paintings and Meredith Leich’s videos and photographs invite the viewer to marvel at the beauty of New England and the natural world

By **Cate McQuaid** Globe Correspondent, Updated July 11, 2023, 12:37 p.m.



Meredith Leich, "Animated Drawings for a Glacier (Cuttyhunk)." MEREDITH LEICH

MARION — The two artists in “Illuminations” at Marion Art Center, featuring realist New England paintings by Tamalin Baumgarten and uncanny yet earthbound videos and

photographs by Meredith Leich, may seem an unlikely pairing. The artists are co-directors of the nearby [Cuttyhunk Island Artists' Residency](#). Their works share a melancholy woven from [chiaroscuro](#) — the play of light and shadow.

Leich's stop-motion animations projected on Alaskan glaciers and rocky remnants of the [Laurentide Ice Sheet](#) off of Cuttyhunk depict the gradual buildup and dissolution of glacial ice. Eerie trickles of light move over rocks in the deep blue of evening in "Animated Drawings for a Glacier," tracing layers of geologic time. In the video, water burbles and waves crash. One seaside boulder with an intricate, luminous pattern resembles a chunk of ice. When it melts into shadow, life seems to seep from the scene.



Meredith Leich, "Rise and Fall." MEREDITH LEICH

In "Rise and Fall" Leich charts the tide line swelling and ebbing along the side of a former sardine canning factory in Eastport, Maine. The time snapshot here is shorter — where have we come since the Industrial Revolution? How far has the ocean risen? Leich's animation suggests that today, the factory would be flooded by high tide.



Tamalin Baumgarten, "Winter Shadows." TAMALIN BAUMGARTEN

There's barely evidence of the touch of a brush in Baumgarten's paintings on panel primed and sanded to be almost smooth as glass. She applies one layer of oil paint at a time and lets it dry before adding another, imbuing the works with subtle shades of pale New England light. Her houses have the reassuring, vernacular familiarity of Edward Hopper paintings. "Winter Shadows" is at once ominous and innocent as tree branches and power lines cast intricate drawings across a street and onto a house.

Dusk or dawn colors everything blue in “Window Light.” Baumgarten’s delicate paint application looks aerated, evoking a fog along the seaside. Vanilla light pours through a small window where the only visible brushwork appears in ruffled window curtains, as if this is where busy life continues while all else is suspended in twilight.



Tamalin Baumgarten, "Window Light." TAMALIN BAUMGARTEN

Using layers and light, both artists pull us out of the rush of human time into wonder. Baumgarten invites us to be present with what is ours. Leich asks us witness what we have wrought.

ILLUMINATIONS: Tamalin Baumgarten & Meredith Leich

At Marion Art Center, 80 Pleasant St., Marion, through Aug. 4.

www.marionartcenter.org/on-exhibit/