



Altered Land: Works by Damian Stamer and Greg Lindquist North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh

Altered Land: Works by Damian Stamer and Greg Lindquist (April 16–September 11, 2016) examines the lasting visual, environmental, and cultural consequences of the metamorphoses and cycles inherent in the natural world, as seen through the artist's lens. The exhibition, on view at the North Carolina Museum of Art, considers the landscapes of its immediate localities, as it addresses the broader connotations of the forces that cultivated it.

Damian Stamer and Greg Lindquist, both North Carolina natives, currently work in New York while maintaining ties to their home state. Although their works vary in style and intent, both painters incorporate rich layers of pigment, evident mark-making, and loosely abstracted elements into their compositions, in what the exhibition's curator, Jennifer Dasal, describes as works that "slide in and out of focus."

Stamer draws inspiration from his childhood exploits in rural Durham County, where he would often explore crumbling farm buildings and empty homesteads. He has revisited the same sites over the years, painting landscapes repeatedly to document the changes as they occur over time (repeat visits are indicated by numerals in the titles of his works). His paintings reflect the long-term physical and emotional impact of these pilgrimages, and are surrounded by the sense that one never really can go home again.

Stamer's largest suite of canvases, painted almost entirely in gradations of black and white, recall old photographs—ones that have perhaps been put away, then rediscovered to uncover a forgotten story. Strata are articulated by scratches and splatters, which create a visual and emotional patina suggesting layers of depth of history and memory beneath the formal and organic facets within each composition. The paintings are wistful at times, perhaps over the relentless passage of time, as

they highlight the certain beauty of decay. Stamer's precisely rendered lines and shapes give way to and emerge from nonrepresentational marks, potentially a visual implication of the ever-changing nature of each space portrayed. *South Lowell 18* (2014) records a moment in the life cycle of a lone country building as nature subtly begins to overtake it. Painterly smears and splatters create a lush textural overlay, while adding an element of watery abstraction that serves to obscure and cleanse. The content does not appear static, and seems slowly to morph before our eyes, in and out of layers of time.

Based on actual photographs shot by the artist, these compositions also comment on the layering of diverse processes, here in the form of hand-rendered reproductions of digital images that are in turn made to resemble older forms of photography—forms that have themselves begun to fade into history, much like the objects that populate Stamer's canvases.

Lindquist's work addresses ecological ruin at the hands of big business, in particular through the contamination of North Carolina waterways. His *Duke Energy's Dan River* series is a response to the monumental coal ash spill of 2014, wherein a faulty pipe belonging to Duke Energy's nearby power plant fractured and leaked 39,000 tons of toxic material into nature. The spill contaminated a 70-mile stretch of river and the adjacent land, threatening its ability to sustain life.

Lindquist's paintings effuse bright, lively colors that belie the gravity of his subject matter. He transforms the earthy yellows, browns, and reds typically found in nature into hyper-luminescent hues that, despite their brilliance, read as caustic and agitated. His compositions reflect human-induced metamorphosis, depicting nature as it is forced to exist as a product—and eventual remnant—of humankind.

These abstract narratives function as cautionary tales—although lively and luminous, they hold viewers at a distance. *Duke Energy's Dan River I* (2014) presents as a struggling landscape, squeezed and shaken by external forces. Recognizable details surface and recede among more abstract components, at once creating an engaging, dynamic pattern and suggesting a competition to thrive in the space. Space itself remains at a premium in these densely populated paintings that close in on an atmosphere subverted by chaos.

Anchoring Lindquist's body of work is his installation of *Smoke and Water* (2014–ongoing), which involved a mural the artist painted with the help of teenaged volunteers directly onto intersecting walls, which act as a backdrop for a number of canvases in the titular series. (Hence, perhaps, the title: a play on "smoke and mirrors.") Overall, this exhibition technique creates an intense sensory experience, mimicking a rolling river as it engulfs viewers in its kinetic, energetic vibe.

Ultimately Stamer's paintings display a palpable sentimentality in their sumptuously rendered, fading subject matter. Although the works connect to a specific place, their settings stimulate an emotional response rooted in a seemingly universal urge to revisit and record our personal histories. Lindquist's work is more social indictment than contemplation. The land portrayed in his work withers at the hands of humans, not of time. Still, within this framework of devastation and despair, Lindquist's paintings embrace the eternal flow of the water in them, and, like Stamer's, revere the resilience of the natural forms that quickly spread to envelop and cope with their changing environment.

—Elizabeth L. Delaney

ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT: Damian Stamer, *Patrick Rd.*, 2013, oil on panel, 48 x 72 inches [courtesy of the artist]; Greg Lindquist, *Duke Energy's Dan River I*, 2014, oil on canvas, 68 x 78 inches [courtesy of the artist]