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Park Projects: April Street, The Mariners' Grand Staircase (Armoured Stars, Flying Clouds)
12 paintings with accompanying sound. Installation view, Santa Barbara Museum of Art (2018)

April Street The Mariners' Grand Staircase (Armoured Stars, Flying Clouds) Inaugural Park Projects installation at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art On view August 19, 2018 – February 17, 2019

August 31, 2018—The Santa Barbara Museum of Art (SBMA) announces April Street: The Mariners' Grand Staircase (Armoured Stars, Flying Clouds), a site-specific installation on view through February 27, 2019. Housed in the two-story atrium at SBMA's entrance, this presentation represents the inauguration of Park Projects, a new series of installations designed for the Park Entrance stairwell.

The inspiration for The Mariners' Grand Staircase (Armoured Stars, Flying Clouds) came initially from the Museum's seaside location as well as the architecture of the Park Entrance staircase, which recalled for the artist grand staircases of historic mansions. Researching sea exploration and commerce during the California's Gold Rush, Street became fascinated by the story of Eleanor Creesy's historic maiden voyage on the great clipper ship the Flying Cloud. As the ship's navigator, Creesy held an unusual position for a 19th-century woman of her time. She became instantly famous on August 31, 1851 after sailing from New York to San Francisco in only 89 days—less than half the time the voyage usually took. Her husband, Josiah Perkins Creesy Jr., was the ship's captain.

Street's multimedia installation effectively reimagines the Museum's Park Entrance staircase as the grand staircase in the Creesy home. Comprised of 12 charcoal drawings and fabric relief paintings that range respectively from the representational to the abstract, the hue-saturated paintings appear to morph into sculptural objects as swaths of pigment appear to swell forth from the surface. Shifting between the two dimensional and three dimensional, such aspects recall the dimensional play suggested in surrealist paintings by Rene Magritte, Yves Tanguy, and others.

The Mariners' Grand Staircase (Armoured Stars, Flying Clouds) is accompanied by sound (emitted by speakers placed near ear level) that conjures a fictional conversation between the navigator and her sea captain husband as they ascend the stairs at day's end. The conversation emerges from a background of noises recorded by the artist during her own travels. Constructed by the artist with inspiration from famous novels about the sea, including *Treasure Island* (Robert Louis Stevenson, 1883) and *The Old Man and the Sea*

(Ernest Hemingway, 1951), the dialogue proceeds forward but also circles back as the couple eventually repeats each other's lines. The artist's envisage of the seafaring couple, their setting, and exchange provokes subtle shifts in sentiment and meaning, creating a new narrative that subverts time and place.

April Street's works combine the material experimentation of 1960s–1970s feminist practice with allusions to the theatricality, illusionism, and palette of 17th-century Dutch still-life painting. She continuously repurposes her paintings with displaced objects, personal stories, and art historical references to ignite an interchange between the viewer and the works about representation, duration, and absence.

April Street lives and works in Los Angeles and studied bronze casting in central Italy and painting at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Recent solo exhibitions include *Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects* (2018); *Cassiopeia loves Grimaldi* at Kinman Gallery, London (2016); *Lay Down Your Arms at Various Small Fires*, Los Angeles (2015); and *Nothing Lasts Forever at Five Car Garage*, Santa Monica (2015). Her work has also been featured in the group exhibitions *Pussy, King of the Pirates* at Maccarone, Los Angeles (2018); *The Good the bad and the ugly* at Gesso Artspace, Vienna (2016); and *Veils* at The Underground Museum, Los Angeles (2014), and others. Reviews of her solo exhibitions are published in *ArtForum*, *Art in America*, *Art Review*, *San Francisco Arts Quarterly*, *LA Weekly*, *Contemporary Arts Review LA*, *Hyperallergic*, and the *Los Angeles Times*.

April Street: *The Mariners' Grand Staircase (Armoured Stars, Flying Clouds)* is the inaugural installation in SBMA's Park Projects, a series of site specific installations that takes advantage of the Museum's temporary use of its Park Entrance as the main point of access during the current renovation project. Commissioning temporary installations of works by cutting edge contemporary artists, these projects provide increased visual impact as well as opportunities for meaningful engagement.

April Street: *The Mariners' Grand Staircase (Armoured Stars, Flying Clouds)* coincides with the artist's residency at SBMA's Ridley-Tree Education Center at McCormick House and a series of interactive projects and environments designed by the artist, including *Deep Sky Objects made visible for Everyone*, a corresponding installation in the Museum's Family Resource Center in fall 2018.



April Street, *The Volcano at Sunset* from *The Mariners' Grand Staircase (Armoured Stars, Flying Clouds)*, 2018.
Acrylic, charcoal, and hosiery fabric on wood
Image courtesy of the artist and
Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects



April Street, *My Eleanor* from *The Mariners' Grand Staircase (Armoured Stars, Flying Clouds)*, 2018.
Acrylic and charcoal on wood panel
Image courtesy of the artist and
Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects



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Installation view, Santa Barbara Museum of Art

The Santa Barbara Museum of Art is one of the finest museums on the West coast. Its mission is to integrate art into the lives of people through internationally recognized exhibitions and special programs, as well as the thoughtful presentation of its permanent collection.

Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1130 State Street, Santa Barbara, CA.
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