





BLOWDOWN

Meredith Nemirov

I don't remember the exact date that the trees started lying down in my paintings. It was sometime after we walked through that blowdown on Horsefly Mesa. The recent storm had left the forest floor strewn with downed trunks and limbs and branches perched diagonally atop them. My formal painter brain was attracted to this new orientation of tree and the shapes that were created between trunk and earth, branch and trunk.

Changing the tree from vertical to horizontal freed the work from a traditional landscape orientation and the stacked trunks and branches created visual layers. I started to think about the pressure of wood against wood and the subsequent erosion. I wondered about the subterranean activities taking place as a result of this decomposition. It was exciting for me to imagine or envision an entire world of something moving around under the surface of the forest floor. What was happening and how did it take place?

I love words, especially the unusual ones that describe the landscape. I referred to Barry Lopez's wonderful book, *Language for a New American Landscape*, when I chose 26 words, from a to z, ait, bogan, catocin, to use as titles for a series I had just finished.

Vocabulario is a group of small monochromatic studies of the shapes on the trunks of the aspen trees. Once abstracted these shapes looked like geologic formations or land forms. I chose the most unusual words whose definitions were suggestive of the image.

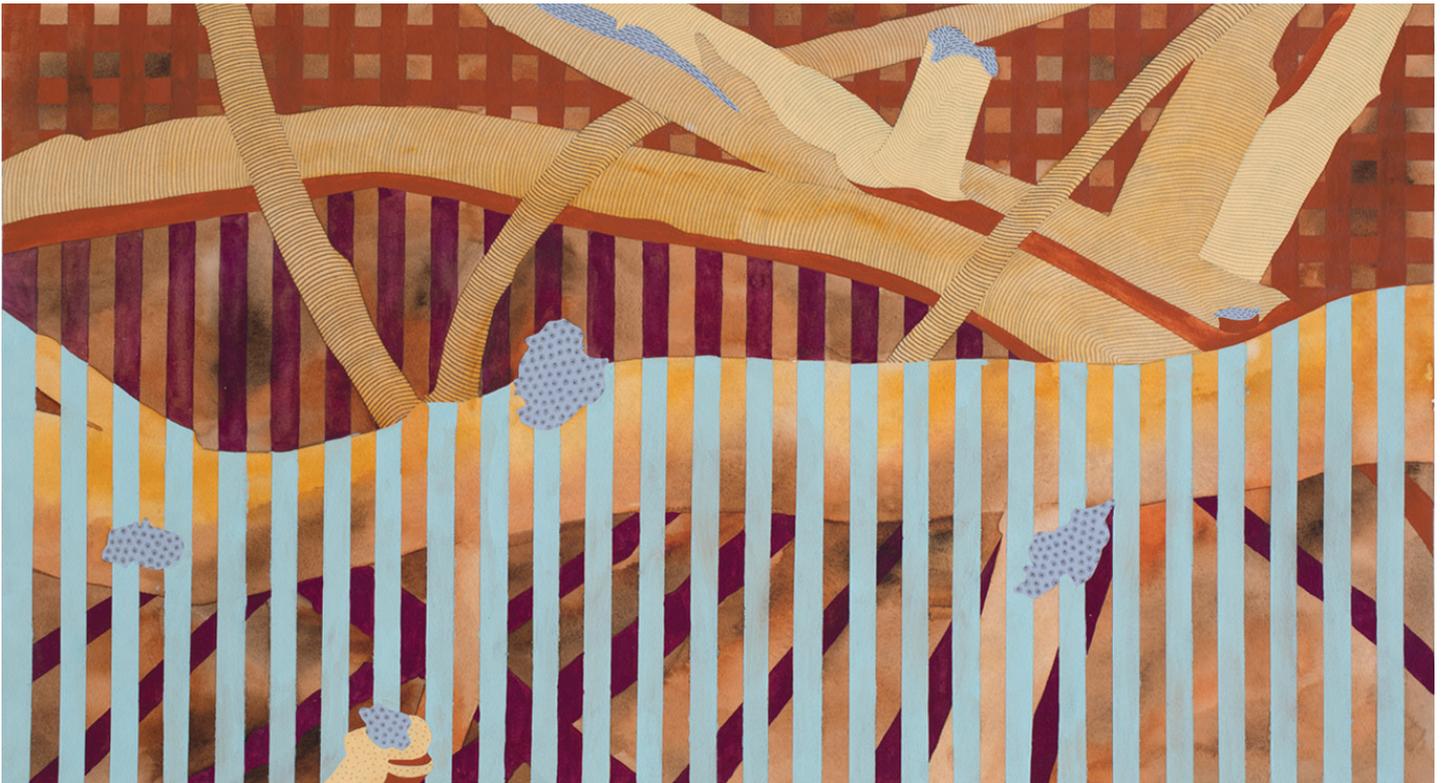
I had been following Robert MacFarlane's posts of a nature word a day. There was a link to his article, *The Secrets of the Wood Wide Web* published in the *New Yorker* in 2016. This opened up a new world to me and I started reading about what scientists were finding out about the mycorrhizal network.

Now I had a whole new list of words, abiotic, blowdown, cambium, scientific terms relating to the forest and the process that I was wondering about. What I was attempting to express in my paintings was how I could depict these processes using abstraction.

Combining an abstracted form of the tree with a graphic representation of an invisible process. These new words, hyphae, mycorrhizal, rhizotrons, created images of interlacing and snaking tubes and skeins all indicative of a senescence but also of a vital living community of organisms coexisting underground.

My work, for the past 15 years, has focused on trees and trees in the landscape. I paint and draw on-site in the aspen forests of the San Juan Mountains in SW Colorado.

My work has always been about how everything is connected.



Meredith Nemirov's show titled BLOWDOWN: FEEDING THE FOREST FLOOR will open on June 22nd at Michael Warren Contemporary, 760 Santa Fe Drive in Denver; <http://www.michaelwarrencontemporary.com>.

Other works by Ms. Nemirov are on view at the gallery MiXX Projects in Telluride, Colorado, at 307 East Colorado Avenue; <http://www.mixxprojects.com>. ↑