

# 11 Artists Give Landscape Art a Much-Needed Makeover | The Creators Project

Andrew Nunes — Aug 12 2016



*Kate Stewart, Installation View. Photos: Dawn Whitmore, courtesy of the artists and Arlington Arts Center*

Landscape art reaches beyond the limits of scenic nature painting in *Strange Landscapes*, an ongoing exhibition at [Arlington Arts Center](#). The works in the 11-artist show use a mix of literal and fictional landscapes as lenses into looking at a wide spectrum of societal issues, ranging from racism, transphobia, and other identity issues, to the politics of civil war in Colombia.

“I’m fascinated with destabilizing expectations and presenting the landscape as an elastic, malleable, and potent source of inspiration for artists,” tells [Karyn Miller](#), one of the curators of *Strange Landscapes*. “I think of it less as pushing the boundaries of how we define landscape and more as exploring how conversations about landscape (whether actual physical environments or the history of landscape as an artistic genre) intersect with other issues,” adds [Blair Murphy](#), another curator of the exhibition.



*Matthew Mann, installation view*

There are works in the exhibition that directly incorporate and engage with nature, but do so in ways unlike a typical landscape painting would. [Edgar Endress](#)' menagerie of birds are sculptural cutouts stacked upon a chair, individually flat but coming together to create a three dimensional scene of chaotic aviary congestion. The birds are incredibly detailed, but are scientific illustrations rather than photographs, resulting in an installation that hovers between concrete reality and representational illusion, alluding to both but aligning fully with neither.



*Edgar Endress, installation view*

*Beautification This Site*, an installation by [Katarina Jerinic](#), shows nature photo-realistically, but done in a cynical manner by highlighting the overlooked and less than glamorous aspects of natural life. The project is the aftermath of the artist's participation in the [Adopt-a-Highway](#) program, for which she maintained an area of green space in Brooklyn for a few years. Her installation includes a collection of photographs showing the ceaseless maintenance required of the space, along with the legal documents highlighting the bureaucratic nightmares involved with participating in the program, as well as a Google Map aerial rendering of her small patch of land, which come together to reveal the absurd and heavy-handed complexity involved in nature politics.

*Katarina Jerinic, installation view*

Realism takes a step back in [Jaimes Mayhew's](#) *Samesises Island*. The installation depicts a fictional island in the shape of a pregnant seahorse, meant to represent a utopic environment where “transgender men who are attracted to transgender men can live without fear of violence,” according to the gallery. Fabricated images of island landmarks like “Lactation River” and “Mt. Hairyla” are placed next to photographs of trans men living in surreal bliss, hopeful imagery that is an unfortunate contrast to the actual scenario transgender individuals face today.



*Jaimes Mayhew, installation view*

*Strange Landscapes* ends up feeling nothing at all like a typical landscape art exhibition, an approach that is ultimately more refreshing in its expansion of an otherwise rigid stylistic approach: “Landscape [art]’s expansiveness means it’s a really rich starting point for exploring a wide variety of topics. At the same time, it feels like landscape is often overlooked or under-discussed in conversations about contemporary art, possibly because it’s often associated with a very specific lineage and tradition that can sometimes feels outmoded,” Murphy explains to The Creators Project. “The exhibition was an exciting opportunity to delve into the possibilities of landscape, with a focus on artists who are reimagining what it can be.”



*Matthew Colaizzo, installation view*

*Strange Landscapes* will be on view at the [Arlington Arts Center](http://www.arlingtonartscenter.org/) until October 2nd, 2016.

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