

https://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/entertainment_life/art/tula-telfair-lasm-exhibit-will-show-off-her-epic-vistas/article_a9bc43a6-5d2f-54ca-83ee-f0e92bc135eb.html

Tula Telfair LASM exhibit will show off her epic vistas

A world of dreams

By Robin Miller romiller@theadvocate.com

Feb 7, 2015

1 of 5



Photo provided by the Louisiana Art & Science Museum -- TulaTelfair's painting, 'The Unfamiliar Truth,' is part of the exhibit, 'A World of Dreams: Landscapes by Tula Telfair,' which runs through March 15 in the Main Gallery of the LASM.

Tula Telfair always sees color, even now on her drive into New York from Middletown, Connecticut.

She describes the scene over the telephone, the atmosphere forming blocks of color above the horizon line. Like the weather, it's always different, offering surprises that find their way into her landscape paintings.

She'll travel to Baton Rouge on Thursday, Jan. 29, to lead a gallery talk about 14 of her paintings making up the Louisiana Art & Science Museum's exhibit, "A World of Dreams: Landscapes by Tula Telfair." The show runs through Sunday, March 15, and marks the first Louisiana exhibition of Telfair's work.

"This will be my first trip to Louisiana," says Telfair, who teaches art at Wesleyan University in Middletown and is represented by Forum Gallery in New York. "I'm excited, not only about the show, but about having the chance to see the state." And you never know what might come of her visit.

"Visit my website a year from now, and you might see landscapes inspired by the weather and atmosphere in Louisiana," Telfair says.

Weather and atmosphere form the foundation for Telfair's landscapes, all epic-scale vistas that act as windows into another world.

"This is where the viewers become part of the painting," Telfair says. "Each person sees a different place, and they become a part of it as they stand in front of the painting."

So, whereas her piece, "Reshaping Mythology," may be reminiscent of Ireland's rolling hills for one viewer, another may see it as foothills leading into Tennessee's Smoky Mountain range.

"They're familiar, but they're just out of reach," says Elizabeth Weinstein, the museum's curator. "There's always something that's off, something that's not quite right — a reminder that this isn't a real place."

“I love hearing about the places people see in my paintings,” Telfair adds. “The landscapes could be anywhere.”

The paintings are mined from a childhood filled with world travel.

Telfair’s father was a geologist and prospector whose job landed him everywhere from the African jungles to Swiss Alps. His family traveled with him, and extremities soaked into Telfair’s consciousness. She may not have detected this while growing up, but it showed up later in her artwork.

“I did figurative work – it was hyper realistic,” Telfair says. “The unconscious played a part in my landscape paintings. I started painting abstracts, drawing horizon lines on paper and painting above and below the line to learn about color.”

Colors morphed into weather.

“Then I started thinking about how a landscape would look in the weather,” she says. “If it’s midday on July 12, what would the landscape look like in terms of color? I would see it in greens and blues and pinks.”

The museum’s label points out that Telfair’s work draws upon the “long tradition of landscape paintings from the backdrops of Renaissance through the Romanticism of the 19th century.”

“But to be a good realism painter, you have to be a good abstract painter,” Weinstein says, standing close to Telfair’s Arctic-themed painting “Civilization Could Not Do Without It,” in the museum’s Main Gallery. “Look at how the colors are divided in the

water's reflection. Now back up and see what happens.”

The blocks of color mesh to create a complete picture as the viewer backs away, the same effect produced by Claude Monet's impressionistic lily pond paintings.

“I mix the colors for that specific place in that specific moment,” Telfair says. “And it's not really whether the drawing and color is right, but if it's a moment that feels plausible. Everything becomes more specific as it becomes more realistic, and a lot of painterly techniques are used to create these scenes.”