

REWIND

REVIEW

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PROFILE

Digital Drawing Room: MFA Fine Arts featuring Claire Tetenbaum

by Yu Jin Sung



Starting May 10, you can view work by students in the MFA graduating class on the website 2021.CCAMFA.art and in the [Class of 2021 Showcase](#).

Works in this series were written by students in Glen Helfand and Maria Porges' respective graduate writing seminars this past fall and spring.

In Claire Tetenbaum's black and white ink painting *Disparate World*, a hunched-over figure with pleading, desperate hands is hardly recognizable since it is surrounded by black, cloud-like shapes that are varying in density levels. The black form blooms in the air and encircles the human figure as if it is intent on swallowing him. Contrary to the title of the work, the dark shapes seem to be so assimilated to each other that they cannot be distinguished in this chaos.

Tetenbaum applies this ambiguous and abstract visual aesthetic in her paintings because that seemed the most suitable way of getting the warning message to the people regarding the destruction of nature. For example, the simplified human figure that appears in almost all of Tetenbaum's paintings is a device that allows viewers to unconsciously identify themselves with the character in the dark narrative and effectively empathize with the despairing undertone of the work.

Her recent shift, from oil paintings using various colors and more prominent shapes to black and white ink paintings, has allowed her to focus on the message of the paintings, preventing her from putting too much attention to forms and colors which sometimes hinder the free flow of thoughts.

The depiction of nature in her work is both chaotic and surreal, breaking the confines of humanity. This allows her to build this image of human interaction with nature instead of objectifying it in the eye of the beholder. Like a rolling sea beyond human control, nature depicted in the paintings almost engulfs the canvas, seeming both dreamlike and destructive in its forms and colors.

By focusing on humanity's relationship to the world surrounding us and how the observation of it can become surreal when thinking of its infinite scale and time, Tetenbaum believes her work can be a catalyst for reminding us of our responsibility to save nature.