



Elise Adibi

The Outermost Painting: the presence of life sustains life, 2018

Rabbit skin glue, oil paint, salt, vinegar, urine and copper on canvas, wood pavilion, wood benches, plants

On view October 2–December 12, 2018

Elements, on view October 2–October 21, 2018

The Bowman, Penelec, Megahan Gallery at Allegheny College is pleased to present *The Outermost Painting: the presence of life sustains life*, a site-specific project by Elise Adibi on view in the outdoor sculpture garden through December 12, 2018. The title *The Outermost Painting* comes from the book *The Outermost House*, written by Henry Beston in 1928. The author spent a year living in a small cottage on the outer beach of Cape Cod, where he observed the passage of time marked by changing seasons. From the outermost reaches of Allegheny's gallery, *The Outermost Painting* will experience fall turn to winter, responding to its surroundings in unpredictable ways. Beston's year of sustained observation from a single vantage point heightened his awareness of environmental shifts wrought by seasonal rhythms. Likewise, from its stationary position in the garden, *The Outermost Painting* will index environmental changes from one season to the next, inviting viewers to consider how larger climate cycles impact their daily, lived realities.

The installation features a single copper painting mounted on a wooden pavilion alongside a lush and aromatic array of plants. Adibi used her urine to oxidize the copper ground, which she then covered with additional copper pigment to create a gestural, monochromatic surface. Once installed outdoors, the painting began to react to humidity and rain, manifesting traces of its oxidized substrate. As the exhibition unfolds, the painting will continue to reveal latent images buried beneath the surface, while weather catalyzes new and unforeseeable surface effects. Like a long-exposure photograph, *The Outermost Painting* will register an image of life in the garden over time.

The Outermost Painting opened alongside the Bowman, Penelec, and Megahan Gallery exhibition *Elements*, in which Adibi debuted four new large-format paintings made of plant-based essential oils and animal proteins. After marking the woven grid inherent to the canvas, the

artist layered the compositions to expand the grids into organic forms alternately reading as ocean waves and particle pathways. Unlike the self-referentiality of much modernist abstraction, Adibi's grids gesture toward nature and the body through their material makeup. In the spirit of connecting with the surrounding environment, which includes the college community, *Elements* also features oxidation paintings created by Allegheny students and faculty. These works came out of interdisciplinary workshops, which sought to combine artistic and scientific perspectives to consider our rapidly changing relationship to the natural world, relationships that are increasingly fraught in the era of climate change.

As both an installation and project of community-engagement, *The Outermost Painting* addresses the urgent need to re-think individual autonomy, instead considering bodies, artworks, and plants as facets of a larger, non-hierarchical network of interdependence and communication. *The Outermost Painting* calls for a new level of attunement to nature. Beston wrote that "the presence of life sustains life" during the winter months when he was alone and the landscape around him was frozen. But even during the dead of winter, life was stirring.

Elise Adibi's has had solo exhibitions at the Frick Pittsburgh (2017), Full Haus in Los Angeles (2016), and Louis B. James in New York (2014), and she has participated in numerous group exhibitions, including shows at The Andy Warhol Museum and the Armory. She was a fellow at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University (2013–14), where she presented a solo exhibition entitled *Metabolic Paintings*. Adibi's work has been reviewed in *Artforum*, *The New York Times*, *Art in America*, and *Blouin Modern Painters*, among other publications. Her work appears in Thames & Hudson's *Painting Now*, as well as William J. Simmon's "Notes on Queer Formalism." She earned an MFA from Columbia University (2007), and she holds a Master of Architecture from the University of Pennsylvania (1994) and a BA from Swarthmore College (1988). Adibi is currently based in New York, NY.

The Outermost Painting: the presence of life sustains life and *Elements* are organized by Paula Burleigh, director of the Bowman, Penelec, and Megahan Gallery at Allegheny College in Meadville, Pennsylvania.

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