

Susan Rostow SENSE OF PLACE
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Susan Rostow's sculptures resemble archeological artifacts with biomorphic traits, prompting us to probe into their origin and meaning. Peppered throughout the gallery space, the visceral and mysterious smaller scale sculptures titled *Naiads*, allude to the nymphs from Greek mythology who protect and reside over rivers and marshes. In the background along the walls these hybrid creatures form a comical procession. Going about their business, each projects a distinct gesture—a bulbous loner in orange hues by a tall pale figure with a protruding belly, a pair pausing to engage in a vivid conversation or perhaps an argument. In the front, duos or extended groups of mixed-scale sculptures hint at Rostow's background as a prolific book artist. Here the sculptures reference spliced or carved book spines in myriad playful ways. They metamorphose into volumes of organic forms resembling abstracted human figures, imaginary animals, or both—all painted with rich colors ranging from earth tones to reds and vibrant yellows to algae greens—evoking natural matter.

Another clue to the artist's environmental concerns is evident in the very process of making these sculptures—Rostow begins with collecting organic and man-made discarded objects along the New York City shorelines. Plants, soil, clay, sand, shells, and discarded plastics pile in her studio alongside series of prints representing aged maps of islands, underwater landscape, shorelines, and marshes, based on antique maps she researched during her residency at the New-York Historical Society. In her sculptures she combines these fragmented prints with meticulous fabrications of found natural forms or at times actual found matter like shells and soil. In a labor-intensive process she constructs layers upon layers of paper prints embedded and encrusted with years of applied pigments and sand

This amalgam of process-based layers brings forth a condensed sense of place and time. Textures of abrasive material such as clay and moss-like surface fuse with graphic symbols such as linear markings of shore tides and other signifiers from old maps—into hybrid forms where the lines between past and future, or what is natural and what is fabricated, are seamlessly blurred. Each sculpture becomes a capsule of time-space, and together the grouping forms an ecosystem where parts connect on multiple levels guided by free associations.

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