

Image page 1: "Manifesting," 2020
Mixed Media on Canvas 20"x24"

Image page 2, top: "Lifelines," 2020
Mixed media collage and poetry on canvas
19"x25"x6" (Poem by Lynne Scott Constantine)

Image page 2, bottom: "Still Dancing 2," 2020
Acrylic and ink plus photo collage 16"x12

Image page 3, top: "Still Dancing 1," 2020
Monoprint plus photo collage and ink 16"x12

Image page 3, bottom: "Still Standing," 2020
Mixed Media on Paper 24"x30"



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MAPPING A NEW TERRAIN

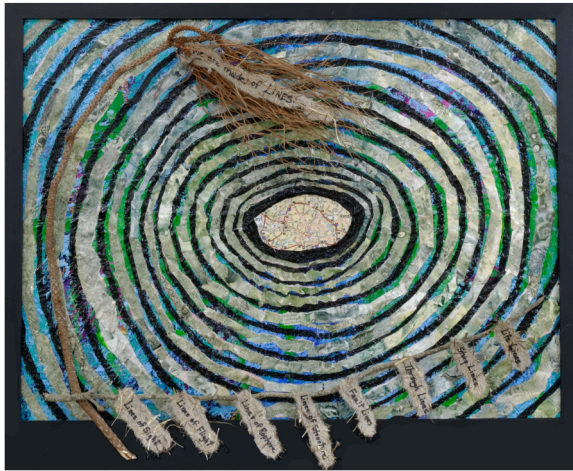
Suzanne Scott Constantine

*We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.*
-T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*

I am mapping a new terrain. A new geographical topography. New cultural vistas and new psychological territory.

I have done this periodically throughout my life. The difference this time is that I have the luxury of mapping this new terrain as a full-time artist. Of exploring the living terrain beneath my feet and above my head. Writing about it, drawing it, creating art out of it.

Part of my artistic exploration in this new terrain culminated in the image above, "Manifesting." Using familiar materials like acrylic paint and modeling paste, I reached for a range of found objects, and I looked for meaning in my process. You'll see sand, rubber rug grip pieces, and lace from my mother's sewing box. I came to see the horizontal line in the center as an uneven and broken trail that becomes dense as it appears under the gold overlay. I understand the gold overlay as a startling manifestation of a helio-centered soul; its tentacles reaching beyond the boundaries imposed by society. It is my signal for radical hope that transcends the limitations of heartbreak and disappointment.



I spent my childhood and teen years in the Raleigh-Cary area long before it became part of a triangle. I left North Carolina happily for a city and state with slightly more northern sensibility.

Six decades later, I moved to North Carolina's Outer Banks. That transplantation from an urban area shook my center, stirred my buried roots, uncovered engrained prejudices, and exposed me to the reality of fragile coastlands. Transplant anything, and it requires the nurturing of rich soil, sunlight, water, and time before roots find new pathways. It was the same for this human transplant.



I moved to a modest neighborhood tucked neatly and securely between the Albemarle and Currituck Sounds. An easy two-block walk to Currituck Sound, with a little beach, bordered left and right by remnants of the maritime forests that once covered the banks of the sound. The mighty Atlantic Ocean and a big sandy beach are but a 10-minute ride across the bridge.

The weather here demands attention, a kind of attention I had rarely paid to it before. The landscape, beautiful despite its fragility, is willing to bend but refuses to give up. This coastal topography is wholly unknown to me, yet it transports my body memory back to the North Carolina of my youth. Wholly unknown;

yet familiar. Is it the scent of the pine trees? The annoyance of mosquitos and no-see-ums? The hopefulness of dandelion wishes?

Wholly unknown; yet familiar. Faced with this paradox, I think about points of connection. And disconnection. What does it mean to live in this stolen-land paradise? Surrounded by contradictions: parkland at every turn; legacies of old "sundown towns"; cadres of people protecting sea turtle nests; long lines at food banks. Paradise, yes, but also paradise lost.

I too blend into the landscape as protector and destroyer. With flawed histories, this land and I chart new paths.

I do not know where my path leads, but I know this place is my trailhead, the clearing from which I am creating new pathways, new connections, new ways of being a human being, an artist, a writer. New ways of seeing, being, and doing. Mine may be a circuitous route, but perhaps all routes to unknown places are necessarily circuitous.

I think of the stunning and powerful pine trees in the maritime forest, rendered headless and shredded by a waterspout from our beloved Currituck Sound. They still stand, living testaments to the power of community and connections. Surrounded by the other pine trees, they are protected and nurtured through their underground pathways. The trees and I stand as flawed beings, in progress, charting new pathways. Still here. It is good.

