

CRISTIN TIERNEY



The Floating Gallery presents 'Out of Paradise'

By **Abby Remer**

June 21, 2024



Marion Wilson used the pandemic in an unusual way. On her daily walk, she became intrigued by a houseboat for sale on Lagoon Pond in Vineyard Haven, perched down the hill from the M.V. Museum. It was Rick Brown's boatbuilding workshop, and Wilson decided to acquire it initially, thinking of using it only as a studio space.

Known for upcycling mobile structures, she turned the workshop into the Floating Gallery, the Vineyard's only art exhibition venue literally on the water. As a cultural space in the Lagoon Pond, the gallery is both a platform and a lens to the environment.

Not originally from the Island, Wilson felt the pull to use the gallery to build community: "I'm next to the marina, down from the museum, and interested in the environment. I thought it would be an interesting platform to connect with people and get to know them."

On her website, she writes, "As we navigate the complexities of climate change, coastal erosion, and environmental degradation, the Floating Gallery offers a poignant reimagining of our place within the world and our responsibility to not only preserve but work in tandem with it."

CRISTIN TIERNEY

Her first show this summer, “Out of Paradise,” features five artists’ explorations of humans’ relationship to the natural world. Here, Wilson is particularly interested in how fine art painting can meaningfully address the environment. “I was trained as an oil painter, but essentially stopped for 25 years because I didn’t know how to make painting talk about the things I was interested in. This made me think, let me look at painters who really believe painting can be political.”

David Opdyke’s artwork explores globalization, consumerism, and civilization’s abusive relationship with the environment. He acquires antique postcards from the early 1900s, when America believed it would never run out of nature to conquer and use. He alters the small photographs by painting images that can bring us up short. For instance, the tentacles of a gargantuan octopus creep up from below, strangling the highway and winding their way through the mountains. In another, foliage slowly overwhelms an industrial bridge spanning the Tennessee River, and starfish and flora threaten to overtake the helmeted and toga-dressed statue on the Dome of the Capital.

“‘Out of Paradise’ presents a powerful reminder of the urgent need to re-evaluate our relationship with the natural world,” Wilson says. “Referencing John Milton’s ‘Paradise Lost,’ the exhibition encourages a shift to loving care and stewardship, which can inspire a more harmonious and sustainable approach to the environment today.”