

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/3

Irene Koronas
Out of Favor

In the middle of Indian Land, South Carolina, Connie Agard lives and creates from the landscape, she paints with meticulous attention to the natural details. Taken from her wild landscape surroundings, which are fast disappearing, because new housing developments are encroaching onto the pristine landscape, she records the lush greens, birch trees, ponds, canoes, the wild vegetation and animals, horses, cows, birds and sky. Like an Andrew Wyeth painting, each painting has its own narrative about place and experience of place. Unlike American romantic painters, (the age of reason) Agard is a visual artist, a realist painter, painting regional scenes.



Each canvas is primed with gesso. Graphite is used in the initial process, drawing the image by hand, then with acrylic, she paints in the dark and light shadows, the last layer done with oil paint, profiles the landscape. Her landscapes are done outside of our national parks. She paints the landscapes which are outside the housing and service developments, malls and medical centers, gas stations, all the facilities needed to sustain residents. The regional landscapes are our national heritage and are becoming "out of favor." As such, open ranges are easily viewed, as in the way,

of progress, and this may also apply to landscape painters, in that, landscape paintings may not be considered modern or contemporary. At least in the genre which Agard uses. Realism. Detailed realism.

Outside the community where Connie Agard lives, along the back roads and highways, trees loom. Small dusty homes embed the forest of pine and maple trees; firecrackers (sold here) signs





dot the gas station islands where people pull off the roads to get beer and milk and to fill up their tanks with gas. There is a mixture of new and old automobiles and pick up trucks. There are people with deep southern drawls and those with a northern quick talk, impatient to be on their way to change the south, into, where they migrated from. Even though most people, who come to settle in the south, left where they came from, to get away from, where they come from, they still bring their "from" with them and are often people who feel the entitlement of not being from the south. This applies to aesthetics as well. The landscape painter maybe considered quaint, instead of, an intrinsic, impartial environmental activist; a person who paints what is there,

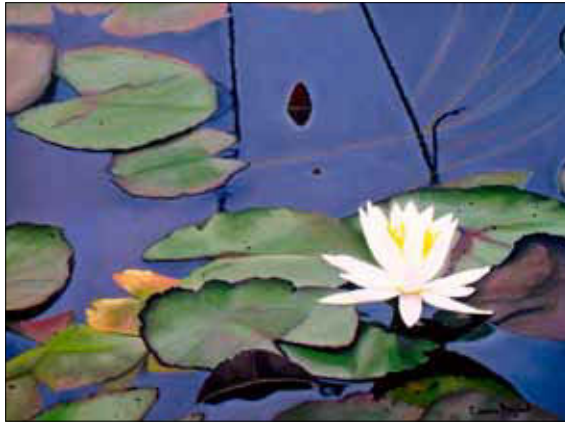
the landscape. The landscape before it becomes an impression or an abstraction of itself, or a non objective abstraction, like a groomed backyard pretending to be wilderness.

Agard paints the details, leaves and wild grasses are transformed on her canvases, into magnificent paintings that some people think are "out of favor" because reality is out of favor and often is replaced by garish pigments and abstract forms that some galleries presently thrive on. Her work reflects our landscapes, our winding rural towns. There is no abstraction or experimentation with what is reality. Often experimental art goes awry leaving the viewer to wonder what it is, instead of being able to relate with what is.



Agard's creative works, are her way of being an environmentalist. She understands the constant natural changes within the landscape and the effect of outside changes brought to the landscape by outside interests. She recognizes all the differences, the green tints between grass and leaf, between leaf and brush. All

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the swaying tree tops that indicate direction. All the light and dark movements on the land, let her know the time of day, the season and the mood presented, by her brush strokes. The reflections on water indicate, what is shallow or the depth of a pond or lake. The velvet reds and all the color variations one flower may contain as content. The magnificence the landscapes present. The horses, birds, barns, bridges, and people who live on these open ranges. Each paint-

ing wakes us up to what is around us. We, as an audience, can appreciate the reality of nature and not have to deconstruct it's immense contribution, if by no other means, but just because a tree is a tree rooted into the soil, rich with texture and mulch. We are sustained, nourished by realism. Landscape paintings are never "out of favor."

Connie Agard's painting can be viewed at www.connieagard.com

