

CYNTHIA-REEVES

# SARAH AMOS

## Complex Geographies



JUNE 20 - JULY 26

1315 MassMoCA Way, North Adams, MA

## SARAH AMOS: Complex Geographies

Contemporary artists' extensive use of multiple media within a single work and the increasingly blurred division between media categories such as digital printing and photography are accepted norms in the art world today. However, many artists become easily lost in the facile game of mixing media, fusing or layering different art forms but failing to combine the aesthetic and conceptual substance that is essential to creating a significant work of art. With her inventive explorations of both the possibilities of printmaking and parameters of landscape, Sarah Amos stands apart, creating dynamic visual exchanges played out on paper, canvas, and recently, felt.

A native of Australia who currently resides in a remote area of Northern Vermont, Amos is drawn to the distinctive characteristics and underlying structures of natural environments which serve as inspiration for much of her imagery. Her yearly travels to Australia to visit family and promote her work, renew her fascination for the country's striking expanses of open desert with its predominantly ochre/orange/brown palette and other-worldly land formations. Her recent sojourns have included treks to the arresting rust-red monolith, Uluru (formerly known as Ayer's Rock) which rises abruptly from the open plain, the thirty-six domed stone masses, Kata Tjuta (the Olgas) nearby, and the dried bed of Lake Mungo, renowned for its 100,000 year-old sediments.

The forms that Amos employs in her work range from organic to architectonic, calling to mind molecular structures (see Middle Point), cellular growth sequences (see Five Sepals) as well as strata suggested by the extensive layering, stacking, sectioning, banded patterning, and configurations of dotted lines found throughout her recent work. Working within a highly abstracted visual language she frequently uses titles that underscore her interest in probing the natural and scientific worlds, as evident in First Bounce, Mother of Thousands, Wave Hill, The Narrows (all 2014), Black Box Gum (2013), Beech Nuts (2012), etc. Examples such as Earlier Territory (2009) and Red Chronology (2011) indicate her mindfulness of the imprint of past eras on the landscape, and how through close scrutiny she attempts to convey, or at least hint at ancient cultures by referencing manifestations of their existence.

Like many artists working today, printmaking plays a pivotal role in Sarah Amos's creative expression. Artists such as Terry Winters, Kiki Smith, Kara Walker, and Trenton Doyle Hancock, among others, embrace printmaking as a significant part of their artistic practice, along with other media, such as painting, sculpture, installation and so forth. But for Amos, who trained as a master printer at the renowned Tamarind Institute in New Mexico, and then worked at the highly experimental and collaborative Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop in New York City, printmaking lies at the heart of her artistic process.

One key element of Amos' artistic approach is her penchant for mark making—she has spoken of her compulsive need to produce art as a means of comprehending the world around her. Printmaking offers a host of options for mark-making and layering that are germane to Amos' artistic concepts. She culls from an arsenal of techniques, but primarily exploits the linear and tonal passages she can create with carborundum etching and the multi-level built up and recessed surfaces and diverse textures of collagraph<sup>1</sup>. She will also use multiple passes through the press to attain the desired effect. Her attraction to printmaking lies less in its ability to make

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A collagraph is a print made using a collage technique in which various materials (fabric, cardboard, textured paper, etc.) are applied to a flat base (most often cardboard or wood) to produce a multi-level, multi-textured surface. Typically the entire plate is thinly coated with a clear varnish or acrylic medium to protect the materials before inking and printing. The plate may be printed as a relief by rolling ink onto the raised surfaces only, or it may be printed as an intaglio plate by spreading ink over the entire surface (making sure it gets into the recessed areas) and wiping the raised surfaces clean of ink. See the descriptions of the technique provided at <http://www.swanseaprintworkshop.org.uk/printmakingprocesses/collagraph.htm> and <http://www.printshop.org/web/Learn/Glossary/>, accessed June 6, 2015.

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multiple editions of a completed image than in the specific aesthetic effects different methods can produce. Although she has made some painting studies on canvas, her strong preference for the textural variety and subtle overlays of imagery that she can achieve by combining printed elements with painted, drawn, stitched or other hand applications to produce unique works prevails.

It is compelling to view the insistent mark-making aspect of Amos's work in relation to some of the patterning and shapes that occur in the dirt drawings, body and bark paintings, and other art forms used by the Aboriginal people of Australia in place of written language to relate their creation stories. In particular the banded spirals and concentric circular or ovoid shapes used in Aboriginal art to symbolize waterholes and rock holes, respectively, would seem to resonate with some of the forms that appear in Amos' work. But perhaps most intriguing is the comparison of the artist's sequences of dotted lines with the Aboriginal use of dot patterns to obscure symbolic imagery to keep the information secret from those unable to decipher it. Whether intentional or not there seems to be a connection between this method of concealment in the Aboriginal context and Amos' interest in exploring how cultural histories are visually manifest but are often buried or go unnoticed. The broader association of dotted lines with tracings of what had been or what might yet be in diagrams and blueprints further enriches the correlation. Further, one should note the commonality of dotted line work and other repetitious mark-making among a variety of art practices of indigenous cultures that have captured Amos' imagination, such as African and New Guinean textiles and artifacts, Japanese prints and Sashiko embroideries, among others. The universality and interconnectedness of this human impulse is also significant to the world view Amos seeks to convey in her unspecified landscapes.

One cannot help but consider another chief aspect of Amos' approach to art making as at least partly tied to her nation of origin. Her proclivity for working on a grand scale is hard not to see in relation to the vast open regions of Australia. The fact that her grandfather was a highly regarded mural painter may also have influenced her sensibility for large formats. Regardless of the impetus, the size of Amos' work undoubtedly enhances the evocation of landscape and the viewer's experience of an environment. The edge-to-edge imagery, more common to paintings than prints, further suggests an extension into the viewer's world. However, the spatially indeterminate settings in which Amos' forms reside range between earthly, subterranean, cosmic, or even undersea realms—the latter two suggested by the dark backgrounds of works like First Bounce or Middle Point—imparting a sense of timelessness and universality to the imagery.

While the artist's most recent work certainly shares some of the same visual vocabulary found in her earlier projects, there is an increased physicality evident, due in large part to her expanded use of fabrics (canvas, hemp, jute, hemp, and felt), stitching and the addition of padded forms that literally rise from the surface. One of Amos' great strengths is her ability to continually experiment and improvise, challenging herself to achieve new aesthetic goals. Having struggled to pair large sheets of very expensive paper, mounted to canvas to reach the scale she desired in her work, she stumbled across a large bolt of inexpensive felt at a fabric store and realized that the dimensions would perfectly suit her needs. Luckily the mixed synthetic content of the felt made it highly receptive as a printing surface and opened the door to alternative formats. She had already begun to add collaged elements to her surfaces but the use of felt instead of paper as the primary support led her to diversify her mark-making through stitching, adding forms that were printed on and cut from other materials, and building up dimensional elements with batting. Her intimate knowledge of the accumulative process used to create collagraph matrices undoubtedly informed these experimental approaches.

Also notable in Amos' new work is the appearance of bulbous and figural forms evocative of vessels from various cultures (Top End, The Narrows, and Paradise), jelly-fish or mushroom-like organisms (Middle Point, Jingli and Thunder Egg), or, in the case of the bright orange-striped entity that stands out in sculptural relief in Top End, an exotic faceless figure in a hooded costume suggestive of a Japanese warrior or actor whose wide sleeves envelop his clasped hands (though a more mechanistic reading of this figure is also plausible). The abstracted inhabitants and visual vocabulary of the artist's implied prehistoric/futuristic

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landscapes are ever evolving, and have been presented from perspectives that range from map-like overviews to excavated strata to immersive environments. The hybridity of Amos's art is integral to her creative expression. Culling from the aesthetic characteristics of printmaking, painting, drawing, collage, embroidery, tapestry, and other media, she successfully grapples with the complexities of the constructs of "landscape" and the natural world in her boldly ambitious and delightfully engaging compositions.

Shelley R. Langdale  
Associate Curator of Prints and Drawings, Philadelphia Museum of Art  
June 2015



## ABOUT THE ARTIST



Sarah Amos' concerns with implied landscape, both real and imagined, and her mastery of the printmaking medium are hallmarks of her work. In this new series, which won Amos a Joan Mitchell Grant, the artist comments:

"My work is evocative of the Australian landscape especially the palette that is typically desert, arid and sun burnt in color...when I think of the surroundings that best support and feed my work, it is in the open vistas and desert colors that truly excite me. My interests are still immersed in the natural and scientific worlds and this recent expedition to Lake Mungo, which inspired my latest body of work, allowed me to visually dissect and scrutinize ancient cultures and geological oddities, two longstanding interests of mine."

These unique works on paper and canvas range from mural sized to quite intimate. The small-scale work shows Amos' returned interest to painting on canvas. The artist presents those works in a grouped series. The mural works on paper use Amos' highly textured plates. Amos uses the traditional collagraph printmaking technique in innovative ways by incising lines and adding relief or elevated textures onto the plate. Between multiple passes through the press, and the layering and ghosting of inks, Amos achieves a sumptuous, rich surface to her work. The resulting prints are complex and formal, with a marvelous depth of field and beautifully realized visual language.

A native of Australia, Sarah Amos maintains a studio in northern Vermont and divides her time between the United States and Australia. She is a vanguard of new approaches in printmaking, and continues to teach master classes throughout the United States and abroad.

Most recently, she was a visiting studio art professor at Williams College in Williamstown, MA as well as at Bennington College, in Bennington, VT, and was featured in the Summer, 2013 edition of Art Collector Australia Magazine as one of the most Celebrated Australian Artists to collect. Her work is included in the collections of the Katonah Museum, the Art Bank Australia Collection, the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, the Time Warner Collection in New York City, Alliance Capital, among many others.

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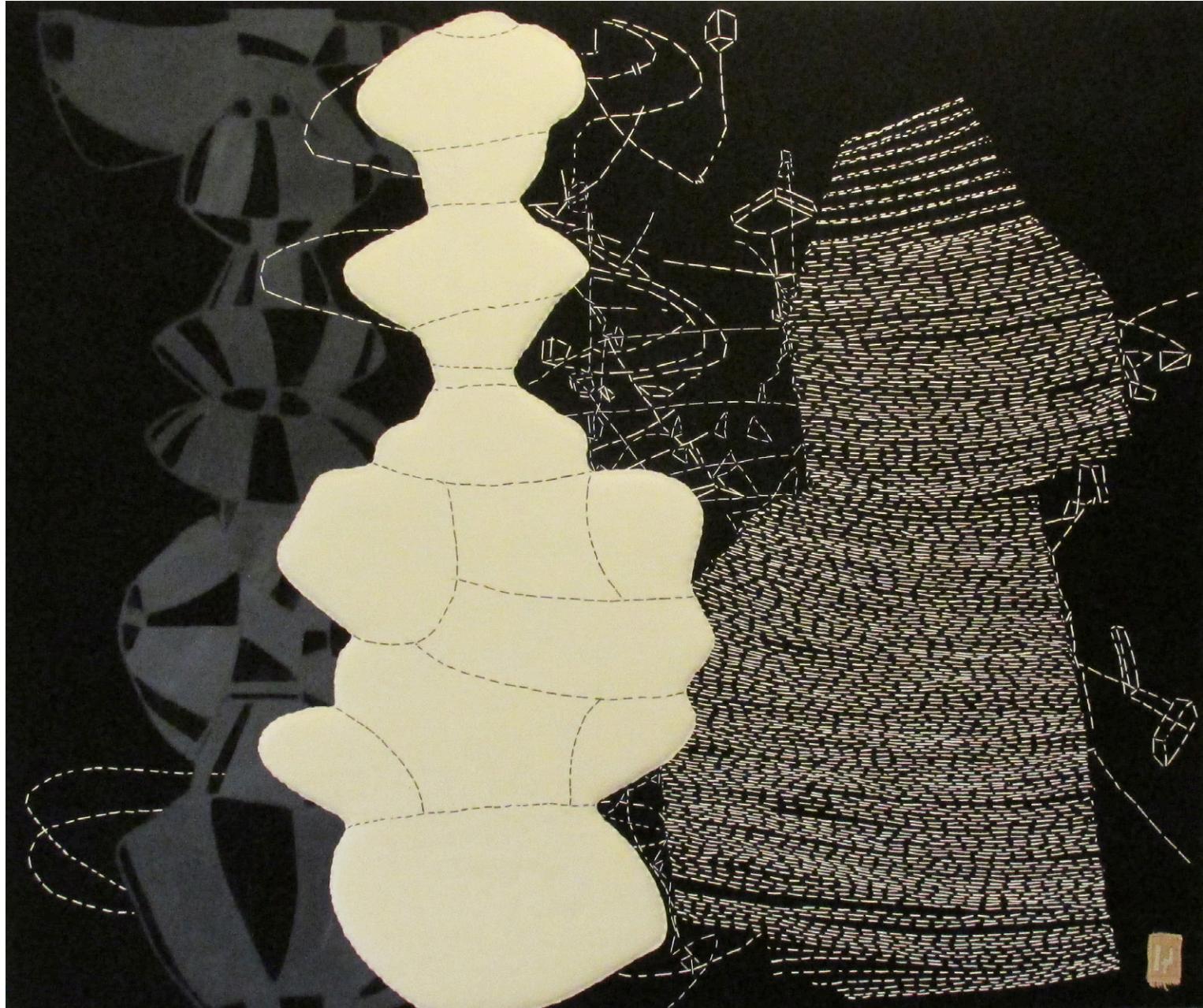


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Sarah Amos, *Paradise*, 2014, collograph construction, 66" x 78" x 2½"

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Sarah Amos, *The Narrows*, 2015, collograph and mixed media on felt, 66" x 78" x 2½"

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Sarah Amos, *Top End*, 2014, collograph construction, 66" x 78" x 2 1/2"

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Sarah Amos, *First Bounce*, 2014, collagraph and mixed media on felt, 66" x 78" x 2½"

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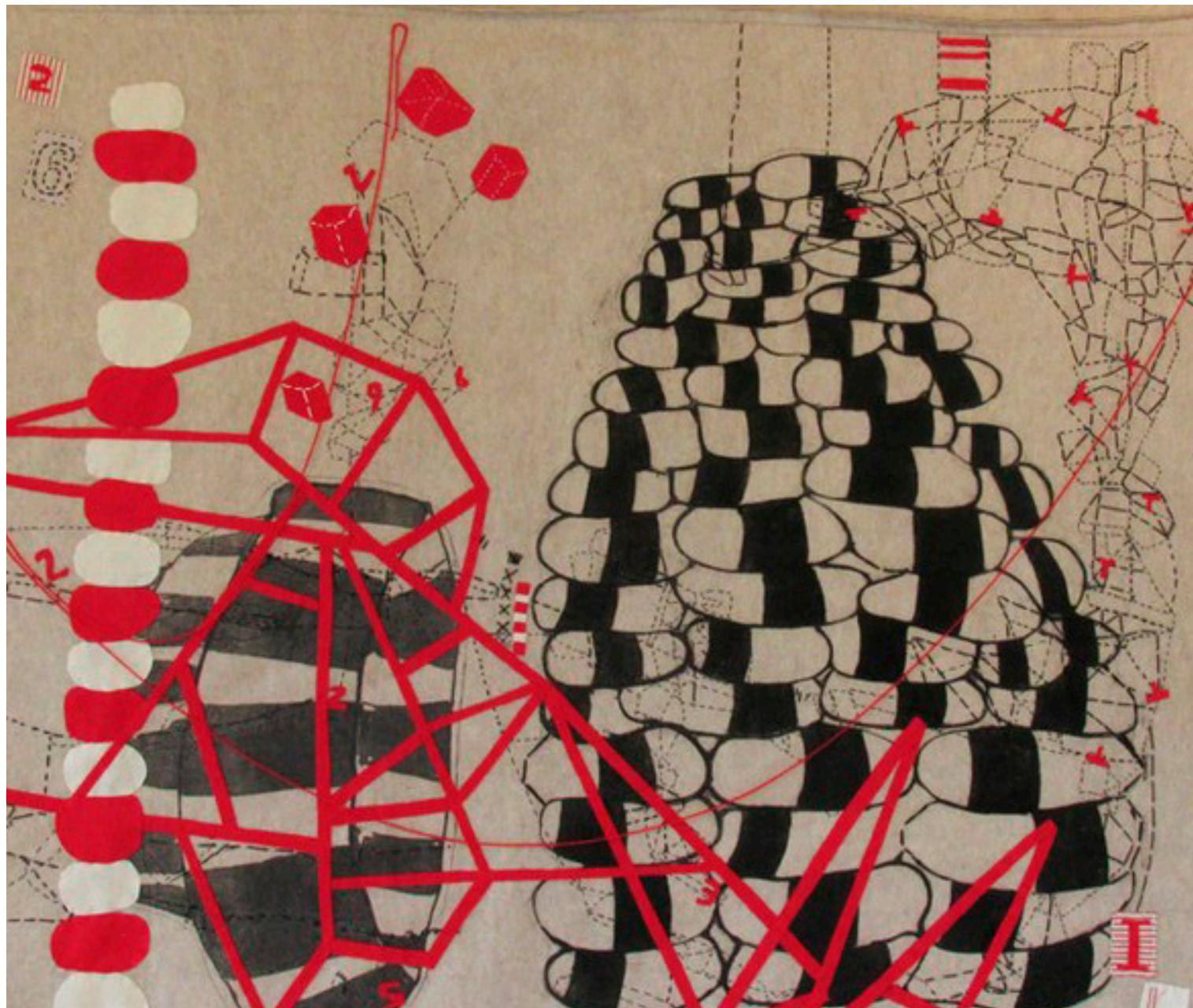
Sarah Amos, *Middle Point*, 2015, collograph and mixed media on felt, 69" x 74"

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Sarah Amos, *Thunder Egg*, 2014, collograph and mixed media on felt, 69" x 74"

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Sarah Amos, *Five Sepals*, 2014, collograph and mixed media on felt, 66" x 77"

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Sarah Amos, *Wave Hill*, 2014, collograph and mixed media on felt, 69" x 74"

## SARAH AMOS

### BORN

Melbourne, Australia

### EDUCATION

- 2002 Tamarind Institute, Summer Workshop, Albuquerque, New Mexico
- 1998 Johnson State College/Vermont Studio Centre, M.F.A. Johnson, VT
- 1992 Tamarind Institute Master Printer Program, Albuquerque, NM
- 1991 Tamarind Institute/Professional Printer Training Program/Albuquerque, NM
- 1987 Phillip Institute of Technology, B.F.A Printmaking, Melbourne, Australia

### SELECT SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2015 Complex Geographies, Cynthia Reeves @1315 MassMoCA Way, North Adams, MA  
Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne, Australia
- 2013 Above and Below, Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne, Australia
- 2011 Sarah Amos: New Works, Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne, Australia
- 2010 Sarah Amos: New Prints, Gebert Contemporary Art, Santa Fe, NM
- 2009 Intersections: Sarah Amos, Gallery 101, Melbourne, Australia  
Sarah Amos, La Trobe University Visual Arts Centre, Victoria Australia  
New Territories, CYNTHIA-REEVES, New York, NY
- 2008 Sarah Amos, Spheris Gallery, Hanover, NH
- 2007 New Work: Sarah Amos, 101 Gallery, Melbourne, Australia  
Sarah Amos, Potter Gallery, Taft School of Art, Watertown, CT  
Sarah Amos, Victorian College of the Arts, Australia  
Sarah Amos, Reeves Contemporary, New York, NY
- 2006 Sarah Amos, Spheris Gallery, Bellows Falls, VT
- 2005 Sarah Amos, Reeves Contemporary, New York, NY
- 2003 Sarah Amos, The 1708 Gallery, Richmond VI
- 2001 Spheris Gallery, Walpole, New Hampshire
- 2000 Sarah Amos, The Vermont Studio Centre, The Red Mill Gallery, Johnson, VT  
Rewind 99, Cordell Taylor Gallery, Salt Lake City, UT

### SELECT GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2015 Gallery Shoal Creek, Austin Texas  
Miami Art Fair, New York, NY, Cynthia Reeves Projects
- 2014 Sarah Amos and Lorrie Fredette, Brattleboro, VT  
Miami Art Fair, Miami, Florida, Cynthia Reeves Projects  
London Art Fair, London, UK, Cynthia Reeves Projects
- 2013 The Print Show, Heather Gaudio Fine Art, New Canaan, CT  
Art Southampton, CYNTHIA-REEVES, Southampton, NY  
Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne, Australia  
Art13 London, CYNTHIA-REEVES, London, UK  
Art Wynwood, CYNTHIA-REEVES, Miami, FL

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## **SELECT GROUP EXHIBITIONS (continued)**

- 2012    A Complex Weave: Women and Identity in Contemporary Art, Carleton College, Northfield, MN  
Flanders Gallery, Raleigh, NC  
A Complex Weave, Fisher Museum, USC, Los Angeles, CA  
Spheris Gallery, Hanover, NH  
Ground Truth, Housatonic Museum of Art  
Impressed, Helen Day Art Center, Stowe, VT  
A Complex Weave, Salina Arts Cetner, Salina, KS  
Printmaking Invitational, Keene State College, Keene, NH  
Conference of the Birds, MANA Contemporary, NJ, curated by CYNTHIA-REEVES  
Art Vault Gallery, Mikros Series, Victoria, Australia
- 2011    Month of Print, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia  
The Complex Weave, Penn State University, Philadelphia, PA
- 2010    The Complex Weave: Women and Identity in Contemporary Art, Center for the Arts Gallery, Co-Curated by Dr. Martin Rosenberg of Rutgers University, Camden and Dr. J. Susan Isaacs of Towson University, Baltimore, MD  
The Complex Weave, Susquehanna University, Selinsgrove, PA
- 2009    The Complex Weave, Rutgers University, New Jersey  
Ball State University Museum, Muncie, IN
- 2008    Elaine L Jacob Gallery, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI
- 2006    Eclipse Mill, Gallery, North Adams, MA  
The Gallery, Spencer Academy Arts Centre, Kansas, MO  
Weatherspoon Museum, Greensboro, NC  
Hot Pics, 2006, Katonah Museum, Katonah, NY
- 2005    Washington Art Association, Washington Depot, CT
- 2004    Spheris Gallery, Bellows Falls, Vermont  
James Madison University, Saw Hill Gallery, Harrisonburg, VI  
Johnson State College, Julian Scott Memorial Gallery, Johnson, VT
- 2003    Louisiana Technical University, Ruston, LA
- 2002    The Summer Collection, Ballinglen Foundation, County Mayo, Ireland  
The Vessel, The Brattleboro Museum & Art Center, Brattleboro, VT  
Master Prints, The Robert Hull Flemming Museum, Burlington, VT  
The Abstract Mind, New England College Gallery, Henniker, NH
- 2001    The Third National Print Fair, The University of Minneapolis, Minneapolis, MN
- 2000    Printmakers, Spheris Gallery, Walpole, NH

## **COLLECTIONS**

Art Bank Australia, Melbourne, Australia; V.R.C. Flemmington, Melbourne, Australia; Vick Corporate Art, New York, NY;  
Time Warner, Permanent Collection, New York, NY; LaTrobe University Museum, Melbourne, Australia; Alliance Capitol, New York, NY; The Katonah Museum, Katonah, NY; Dartmouth-Hitchcock, Permanent Collection, NH; The Robert Hull Flemming Museum, Burlington, VT; Tweed Museum, Duluth, MN; Medi-Tech Corporation, Boston, MA; The Ted Wassimer Collection, CO Fidelity Insurance Permanent Collection, Boston, MA; Green Farms Academy Collection, Southport, CT; Mark Waskow Collection, Burlington, VT; Prudential Insurance, Boston, MA

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## FELLOWSHIPS AND GRANTS

- 2013 Joan Mitchell Grant
- 2006 Santa Fe Arts Institute, Residency Program, Santa Fe New Mexico
- 2002 Kaus Australia, Residency Program, Rotterdam, Holland
- 2001 Ballingen Arts Foundation, Residency Program, County Mayo, Ireland  
Vermont Studio Centre, Residency Program, Johnson, Vermont

## SELECT PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- 2013 Adjunct Professor, Williams College, Williamstown, MA  
Adjunct Professor, Bennington College, Bennington, VT  
Visiting Artist, Vermont Studio Center, Johnson, VT
- 2012 Visiting Artist, Art Vault, Victoria, Australia
- 2009 Visiting International Artist, La Trobe University Victoria, Australia  
Adjunct Professor, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH  
Adjunct Professor, Williams College, Williamstown, MA
- 2007 Adjunct Professor, Williams College, Williamstown, MA  
Rockwell Visiting Artist, Taft School, Watertown, CT  
Visiting Artist, Victorian College of The Arts, Melbourne, Australia
- 2006 Adjunct Professor, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI
- 94-04 Master Printer / Director, Vermont Studio Center, Johnson, VT
- 02-04 Adjunct Professor Dartmouth College Hanover, NH
- 2001 Visiting Artist, Williams College, Williamstown, MA  
Visiting Artist, Scoula Internazionale Di Graphica, S Croce Venice, Italy  
Visiting Artist, Bennington College, Bennington, VT  
Visiting Artist, Bard College, Annandale on Hudson, NY



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For more information  
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