



## **Jen Dragon**

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Gadsden, AL- The photographs of London Amara will be on view at the Mary G. Hardin Center for Cultural Arts starting February 18 and running through April 16, 2022.

In 2017, artist London Amara made a discovery; deciding to experiment with large-format collodion wet plate photography—an antique medium that was nonetheless new to her—she identified the perfect fusion of her long-held aesthetic and conceptual preoccupations. Through a photographic process that is at once convoluted and immediate—she develops her pictures on site using an ice-fishing tent as a mobile darkroom—Amara began to explore the people and places in which she was interested with a newfound directness, also extending the most important formal qualities of her previous work in abstract painting, drawing, and sculpture.

The results of this transformative period in Amara’s career, seen here, are magnetic. In the large, lush silver gelatin and pigment prints in this exhibition, Amara reveals her passion for the intuitive, wordless language of nature. In intimate portraits of family and friends, interspersed with studies of the dense, wooded landscapes of Ohio, Florida, California, and British Columbia, she presents a strikingly beautiful vision of melancholic romanticism that also reminds us of the planet’s fragility—and of our critical role in its preservation.

Inspired in part by the work of contemporary photographers Sally Mann and, to a lesser extent, Justine Kurland, Amara imparts both her landscapes and portrait shots with a highly personal aura of nostalgic longing—she was raised in the remote forests of rural Ohio and enjoyed a wild, outdoor childhood. All her subjects, whether animal or vegetable, are offered as representatives of an ancient wisdom, possessors of a unique sensitivity to the cycle of life, death, and decay that metropolitan living tends to suppress, but which will only gain in significance as the human race struggles with existential threats.

Having shifted gradually from the biomorphic and gestural abstraction—and, occasionally, the handwritten text—that characterized her previous work toward the explicitly representational focus on landscape and the human form that is on display in this remarkable exhibition, Amara’s work has accrued an immediately perceptible confidence and profundity. Informed by experiences in her own life—a car crash in

2009, for example, strengthened her interest in the complexities of the human body, not only as a biological entity, but also as the locus of experiences and relationships—her imagery is now fully aligned with what she terms her “first language”—the wordless speech of the natural world.

Artist London Amara was born in Columbus, Ohio, in 1977. An alumna of Columbus College of Art and Design, she has exhibited at the Columbus Conservatory (1998), Sidney & Berne Davis Art Center, Fort Myers, Florida (2009, 2013 and 2018), and Tampa Museum of Art (2016). She has also undertaken commissions for clients including the Tampa Bay Lightning hockey team, and was the recipient of the 2013 Vincent LeCavalier Commemorative Commission. Amara’s work is represented in the collections of Allstate Insurance, Diamond District, Fine Mark Bank, Florida Gulf Coast University, Innisbrook and has been discussed in *Art SWFL*, *Arts Tampa Bay*, *duPont REGISTRY*, *Florida Weekly*, *Grandeur*, *Gulf Coast Times*, *Fort Myers Magazine*, *Fort Myers News-Press*, and *Spotlight*. It is also the subject of a 2012 film from Rising Sky Studios (now Digital Caviar). Amara is currently at work on a book scheduled for publication in 2020.

Amara maintains studios in Columbus, Ohio, and Bonita Springs, Florida, and is represented by Katharine T. Carter and Associates.

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