

SEPTEMBER 8 - OCTOBER 30, 2020

**THIRD COAST DISRUPTED:  
ARTISTS + SCIENTISTS  
ON CLIMATE**

**BARBARA COOPER**

**DEPS ARTIST PROFILE**

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Glass Curtain Gallery - Columbia College Chicago  
1104 S Wabash Ave, 1st Floor, Chicago, IL 60605  
Gallery Hours: Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
*Capacity of gallery is 10 visitors and masks are required.*

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# THIRD COAST DISRUPTED:

## Artists + Scientists on Climate

*Third Coast Disrupted: Artists + Scientists on Climate* is an exhibition of newly commissioned artworks culminating a yearlong conversation between artists and scientists centered on climate change impacts and solutions in the Chicago region.

Through science-inspired sculpture, painting, collage and more, the artworks examine local impacts -- happening here and now -- ranging from extreme heat to flooding to habitat loss, and beyond. They also shine light on local solutions underway, like "cool roofs," nature-based approaches to slowing stormwater, and backyard habitat restoration. Some imagine future possibilities.

*Third Coast Disrupted* is based on the notion that art can connect and engage with people on an emotional level. It can pique curiosity, be unexpected, tactile, interactive, evocative, and memorable. It can slow people down, inspire them to reflect, move them to talk to each other -- and spur them to act.

**Curatorial Team:** Project Director & Lead Curator, Christine Esposito; Science Curator, Liam Heneghan; Art Curator, Lisa Roberts; Senior Consultant, Meg Duguid

**Participating artists:** Jeremy Bolen, Barbara Cooper, Hector Duarte, Rosemary Holliday Hall, N. Masani Landfair, Meredith Leich, Andrew S. Yang

**Participating scientists:** Elena Grossman, MPH; Daniel Horton, Ph.D.; Abigail Derby Lewis, Ph.D.; Aaron Packman, Ph.D.; Katherine Moore Powell, Ph.D.; Desi Robertson-Thompson, Ph.D.; Philip Willink, Ph.D.

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# BARBARA COOPER

**Barbara Cooper** embeds sustainability and an ecology of wholeness in her work through the use of repurposed materials. She manipulates solid material in a fluid manner creating forms referencing movement and growth. Cooper states, “Influenced initially by animal architecture, where form correlates with function, the idea of material efficiency continues to impact how I build structures. We can read a fluid history of growth embedded in solid form, whether it is in a body, a tree, or geological strata, where the immense scope of a landscape and the history that is literally embedded within it spans an amount of time beyond our comprehension. But growth can also be impeded, intruded upon, deformed, and compressed by conflict or lack of resources. And that is where I find my focus now—on the environmental issues facing us today.” Cooper’s work appears biomorphic and is process-driven, growing from the inside out with imagery evolving from paring down forms in nature to their essentials.

**Barbara Cooper** works in sculpture, drawing, and public art. Additional projects include gardens and structures for dance and theater. Depending on the objective of the project, she utilizes diverse media such as wood, metal, paper, glass, and found objects. A graduate of Cranbrook Academy of Art and Cleveland Institute of Art, Cooper’s work is in the collections of the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, John Michael Kohler Arts Center in Wisconsin, the Smithsonian National Museum of American Art, Honolulu’s Contemporary Museum, and the Illinois State Museum. She has had numerous residencies and fellowships internationally.

[www.barbaracooperartist.com](http://www.barbaracooperartist.com)



*MATRIX*, 2018, wood and books, 30" x 30" x 13" photography by Eileen Ryan.

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*FUSE*, 2018, wood and books, 26" x 38" x 9" photography by Eileen Ryan.

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*MAELSTROM*, 2017, wood and books, 27" x 26" x 8" photography by Eileen Ryan.

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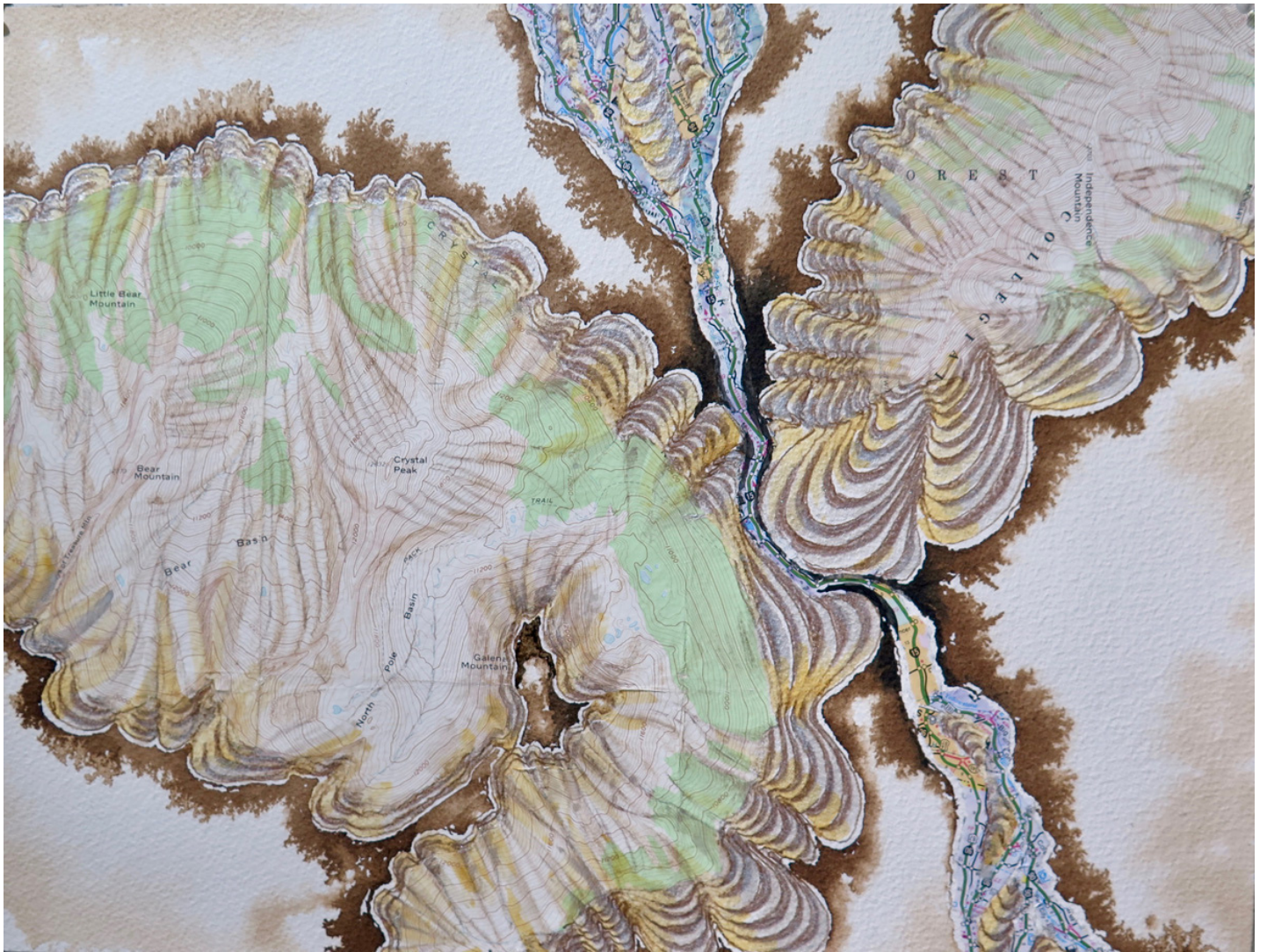
*STRATA*, 2017, wood and books, 32" x 78" x 5" photography by Eileen Ryan.

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*LANDSCAPE REVISIONS 9, 2017*, collaged topo maps and ink on paper, 12" x 16" photography by Eileen Ryan.





*LANDSCAPE REVISIONS 10*, 2017, collaged topo maps and ink on paper, 12" x 16" photography by Eileen Ryan.

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# ARTIST INTERVIEW

Conducted by Kaylee Fowler

**Kaylee Fowler:** How would you describe the relationship between people and nature that is presented in your work?

**Barbara Cooper:** Initially, I felt that that nature was the model for how to be in the world, with its cycles of life, death, and regrowth, which is really about transformation and a continuous cycle. Nothing drops out of the loop; it all regenerates into the next form of life. Subsequently, it seemed that humans were in opposition to nature. Most recently, I have been addressing our impediment upon nature and ensuing constrictions of growth. We cannot afford to see ourselves as separate from nature. It is the environment within which we exist.

**KF:** Your work deals consistently with themes of growth and the environment, but the actual material you utilize can vary, from wood and paper to metals and plastics. How does changing the material of the work change its interpretation?

**BC:** I love juxtaposing opposing materials. Opposites help us understand the nature of something by creating a tension within which they exist. We bring references and

associations to different materials that add depth to an idea or an image.

**KF:** The concepts you explore with your work, such as growth and movement, are by their nature very fluid and immaterial; how do you translate such abstract concepts into something material, and what kind of visuals and materials have you found best to translate these ideas?

**BC:** Metaphor is so important in making work. It creates a parallel and more open-ended image that people can interpret relevant to their own experience. I build on essential forms and processes that are common denominators that are embodied in so many materials on so many different scales. I try to transform a material and manipulate it in an unexpected way. An example of that is how we think of wood, of lumber, as rigid. I try to make it fluid, which it actually was during its growing process. With this particular body of work, I am taking plastic, which we associate with manmade forms like bottles, and transform it into organic shapes which it is ultimately becoming as it embeds into our environment as nanoparticles and fibers.

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# ARTIST INTERVIEW

## Continued

**KF:** Can you speak a little on your experience with *Third Coast Disrupted*? How was the experience of meeting and conversing over the course of year to discuss climate change? Was that something you've ever done before?

**BC:** I loved the interaction with the scientists and only wish that it would be something that would exist over a longer period of time. A year is not very long, what with everyone busy with their own work, etc. Relationships grow gradually and develop from a history of shared memories. We have just started to build those.

**KF:** Are the particular environmental issues in this exhibition ones you have explored before, or were these works inspired by something new you learned in the dialogue preceding this exhibition?

**BC:** This was a fabulous opportunity for me to explore something that has been an important aspect of my life but which I had not put into my work in such a specific way.

**KF:** What do you think is the greatest challenge presented by climate change that artists can meet?

**BC:** The challenge always is how to make the ideas both palatable and relevant for people so that they can absorb the information and, hopefully, act on it. I believe that beauty can serve as a bridge to lead people to difficult subject matter.

# DEPS ARTIST PROFILE SERIES

The DEPS Artist Profile Series, presented by Columbia College Chicago's Department of Exhibitions, Performance, and Student Spaces (DEPS), is a virtual publication on select artists involved with the DEPS Galleries and the Columbia College Chicago community. Our goal with this series is to connect artist and viewer on a deeper level, and to highlight the amazing works and thoughts of our featured artists through interviews, artist biographies, and catalogs of work. Art has always been a way to connect with others, no matter where one may physically be. We hope by presenting the creativity and insights of the people involved in the DEPS Artist Profile Series that viewers may have one more way to stay in touch with and support the arts community.

The DEPS Artist Profile Series is managed by Fine Arts major and DEPS Exhibitions Assistant Kaylee Fowler. Design, animation and illustration by Graphic Design major and DEPS Exhibitions Assistant Gianella Goan.

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Learn more at <https://students/colum.edu/deps> and [www.ThirdCoastDisrupted.org](http://www.ThirdCoastDisrupted.org).

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