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For Immediate Release

*SCAPES*, November 9, 2023 - January 3, 2024

*SCAPES*, an abbreviated form of the word landscapes, is the title of the 2023-2024 season's second show opening at the Flinn Gallery in the Greenwich Library on November 9, 2023. Traditionally nature has been a core component of artistic expression and the artists displayed in this show approach the subject with a decidedly contemporary view of the visual world where changing landscapes from human intervention encroach on traditional expectations of what we see around us. The three artists, **Paul Balmer**, **Julie Langsam**, and **William Ruller**, all share an abiding connection with the natural world and approach landscape portrayal with a reflection of both optimism and apprehension. The varied works of these three artists attest to the imaginative ability to revitalize the environment. Curators Alexis Abram and Mia Newton invite you to view their works at an opening reception November 9, from 6-8, and during the eight weeks that follow.

**Paul Balmer**'s exposure to nature's phenomena and changes stem from his wide geographical exposure. His South African youth was followed by work as a commercial illustrator in Australia, Boston, and New York before settling in New Canaan. His artistic approach has also undergone a visceral transformation. From neoclassical subjects he moved to cityscapes and textural exploration for his paintings. "While landscapes have always been a theme of mine, the process is more subconscious. I paint from memory and doing so is a more fluid process." His approach is about atmosphere created through tonal color and raw active canvases. Thick applications of paint may be followed by sanding, scratching, and scraping the surface with power tools revealing dark lines from a black undercoat. Balmer's paintings encourage viewers to pause and absorb the dreamlike atmosphere of a place and reflect on the fleeting beauty of nature.

Now teaching at Rutgers in New Jersey, **Julie Langsam** is a New Yorker by birth and education. However, her artistic epiphany occurred after she accepted a teaching post at the Cleveland Institute of Art. Here, Langsam was "blown away" when she encountered the vast midwestern horizon depicted in the work "Twilight in the Wilderness" by 19<sup>th</sup> Century painter Frederic Church. Although her interest was in contemporary art and architecture, "his Utopian vision combined with a romantic yearning for the ideal" inspired her. She has created her own embodiment of these artistic visions in this exhibit. In her photo drawings, which Langsam calls "Landscape Interventions", the sky appears as a prominent feature, washed in rosy hues of dusk

or dawn. Her canvases feature brilliant vistas surrounded by wide open spaces punctuated by a single, sharply defined, computer generated shape in a non-organic color. The result is both jarring and witty, creating tense energy. The artist identifies them as intervention or interference. They are placeholders for the literal impact of human intrusion on the landscape. Langsam wants her arresting photo drawings to increase awareness of the effects climate change has on both people and communities.

**William Ruller's** early exposure to nature's contamination by industrial waste contributes to his perspective on changing landscapes. Born in upstate New York, he observed the devastating effects that dumping leftover dyes from the leather mill had on the local stream. His atmospheric paintings indicate an awareness of the way intrusions can foster cycles of deterioration that can be supported by hope for regrowth. With a BA in painting and ceramics from SUNY, Plattsburg, Ruller moved west and worked in pottery production in Oregon before earning an MFA from Savannah College of Art and Design. Currently he is teaching in Paris and lives in southern France. His atmospheric canvases reflect the cyclical appearance of growth and degeneration in an environment contaminated by human intervention. Yet his belief in nature's potential power to reclaim the landscape appears in his uneven, textured surfaces whose tones and colors suggest building up in contrast to taking away.

All three artists share an interest in the condition of our natural world and in their artistic approaches to landscape there are notes of hope as well as concern. **Balmer, Langsam** and **Ruller** call attention to the dangers of careless human intrusion, but they also give us the opportunity to imagine a renewed environment where landscapes can revitalize and heal.

#### **Events:**

Opening reception: Thursday, November 9<sup>th</sup> from 6-8pm

Artist talk with Paul Balmer on Sunday, November 19<sup>th</sup> at 2pm

Artist talk with Julie Langsam on Sunday, December 3<sup>rd</sup> at 2pm

The Flinn Gallery is funded and sponsored by Friends of Greenwich Library. It is located on the second floor of the library at 101 West Putnam Avenue, Greenwich, CT. Gallery hours are Monday-Saturday 10am-5pm, Thursday 10am-8pm, and Sunday 1-5pm.