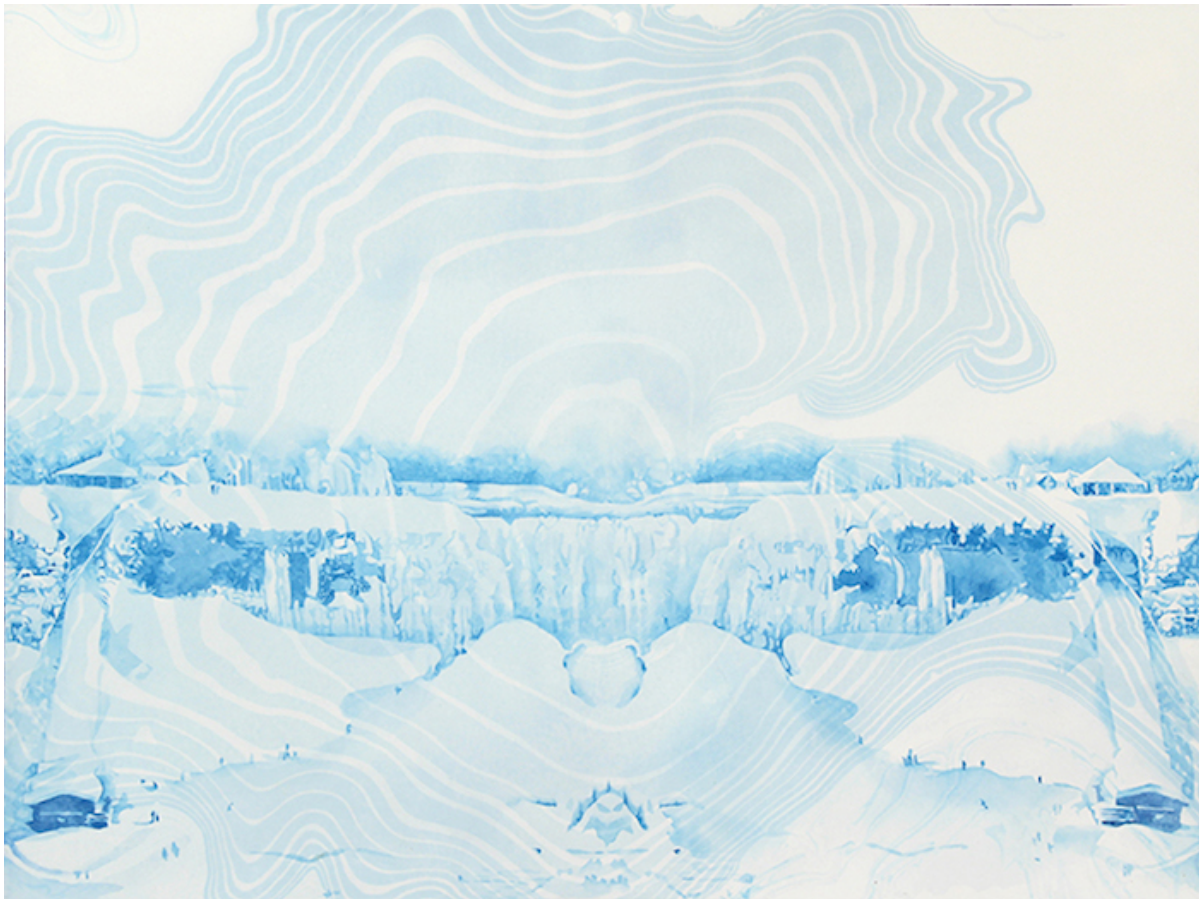


New American Paintings

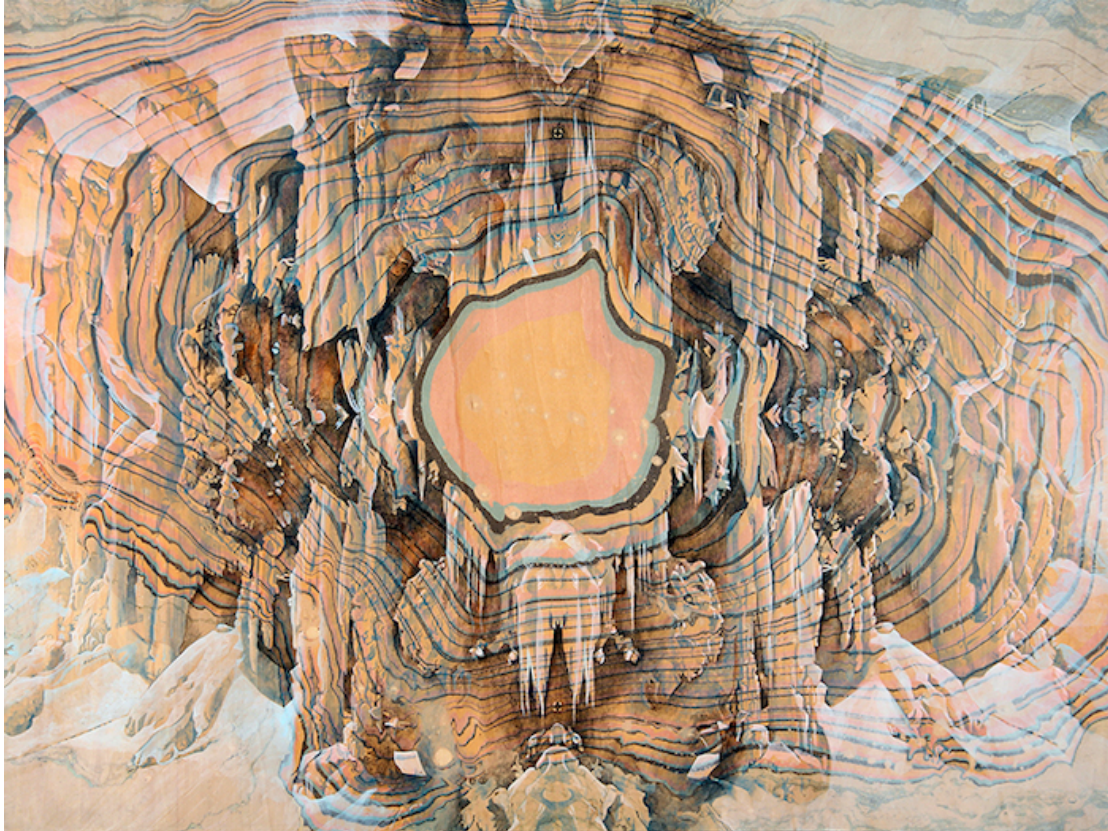
Frozen Time: Rebecca Bird's "Niagara Falls" at Kopeikin Gallery

[Rebecca Bird's](#) painting show "Niagara Falls" at [Kopeikin Gallery](#) is compelling and beautiful. The show features a mix of delicate watercolors on paper and equally fragile acrylics and oils on wood. Something about the balance between the very subtle nature of her works combined with the hard, angular movements within her details compelled me to contemplate and wonder. – *Ellen C. Caldwell, Los Angeles Contributor*



Rebecca Bird | Double Niagara, 2014, Watercolor on paper, 12 x 16. Photo Courtesy of artist and Kopeikin Gallery.

New American Paintings



Rebecca Bird / West, 2014, Acrylic and oil on wood, 30 x 40. Photo Courtesy of artist and Kopeikin Gallery. One room features a series of four paintings on wood which take on the cardinal directions: north, south, east, and west. These paintings serve as an interesting counterpoint to the watercolors in the front room because unlike the blank canvas the paper provides her watercolors, the wood grain provides Bird with a predetermined mine of wood-grain curvatures and movement to explore, mimic, and accentuate with her paint.

Bird [explains](#), “I’m fascinated by images of violent motion stopped, as in photographs of explosions. In these images the unstoppable force of the falls was frozen twice, once by the temperature and once by the camera.” But besides photographic images halting time quite physically in a snapshot, Bird equally captures time by accentuating the wood grain with her paint, emphasizing the passage of time through the very cross-section and growth of the trees on which she paints.

New American Paintings



Rebecca Bird | East, 2014, Acrylic on wood, 30 x 40. Photo Courtesy of artist and Kopeikin Gallery.



Rebecca Bird | North, 2014, Acrylic on wood, 30 x 40. Photo Courtesy of artist and Kopeikin Gallery.

These paintings mesmerized me and drew me in. It was hard to see where the wood was and where the painting takes over, whether Bird was merely emphasizing the grain or creating a faux one of its own. This part of her process of capturing time and creating time, all at once moved me both with its aesthetic and intellectual power.

New American Paintings



Rebecca Bird / Waterfall, 2014, Graphite, acrylic and oil on wood, 15 3/4 x 23 3/4. Photo Courtesy of artist and Kopeikin Gallery.

Inspired by a book of photos from 1911 when Niagara Falls actually froze over, Bird's exhibit explores this natural wonder beautifully. Some of her works seemed totally abstract at first glance. Just glancing from painting to painting, I could see a myriad of crystals forming, with stalactite-like formations, dark purple and blue ice caves shrouded in mist, stunted waterfalls, and scenic hints of humanity on the landscape's horizon in the distance.

New American Paintings



Rebecca Bird | Frozen Falls, 2014, Graphite, acrylic and oil on panel, 16 x 16. Photo Courtesy of artist and Kopeikin Gallery.

Bird composes three of her watercolors in total monotone blue and white -- and these all won me over instantly because of cool hues and delicate charm. I was not always sure what was happening or what was depicted in a painting, as compared to the more obvious ones like "Frozen Falls," but the more cryptic and less overt paintings made me want to know more just the same.

Some images detailed the frozen falls, whose intricate web of ice crystals looked almost like they were made up of particulate matter and junkyard debris...An allusion that prompted me to question whether Bird's paintings were about man *versus* nature or man *and* nature. But then again, isn't that really one and the same? The push and pull between man and nature seems constant and continuous, and Bird captures this beautifully, as she has in past series and shows like "[Everything that Ever Existed Still Exists](#)" in 2006, when she documented intricate details of photographed nuclear explosions as both art object and posited moral question for the viewer.

New American Paintings



Rebecca Bird / Plateau, 2014, Watercolor on paper, 14 x 20. Photo Courtesy of artist and Kopeikin Gallery. In "Plateau" and other works scattered through the show, a seemingly miniscule bridge towers above a large, powerful, and massive precipice that quite literally oscillated between being fluid and solid, flowing and frozen -- with this Bird challenges the viewer to think deeply while reflecting in deep beauty.

[Rebecca Bird's](#) solo exhibition "Niagara Falls" shows at Kopeikin Gallery through February 28th. In 2014 Bird was the recipient of the Ruth & Harold Chenven Foundation Grant to support her new body of large works on panels, which she is working on this year.

[Ellen C. Caldwell](#) is an LA-based art historian, writer, and editor.