

# CONSIDERING CARBON

KATHLEEN THUM

DECEMBER 1, 2023 - MAY 4, 2024

GALLERY A & PETTI PEISER GALLERY



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## Curatorial Statement



In alignment with Appalachian State University's new Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) for 2024 – 2029, ***Climate Literacy and Response-Ability: Cultivating Resilient and Just Communities***, the Turchin Center for the Visual Arts is pleased to present ***Considering Carbon*** by Kathleen Thum. The artist's stated interest is to raise awareness of the disconnection between our dependence on fossil fuels which, although an integral part of our existence, remain unknown and mysterious substances.

According to the United Nations report on Climate Action, "Fossil fuels – coal, oil and gas – are by *far* the largest contributor to global climate change, accounting for over 75 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions and nearly 90 per cent of all carbon dioxide emissions. As greenhouse gas emissions blanket the Earth, they trap the sun's heat. This leads to global warming and climate change. The world is now warming faster than at any point in recorded history."

## Curatorial Statement



By some estimates the existing pipelines used to pump oil and gas out of the ground, if laid end-to-end, would circle the globe 30 or more times. The United States has more miles of pipeline than any other country in the world. ***Considering Carbon*** unearths the often invisible pipelines that are necessary for extracting fossil fuels from the ground and explores the physicality of coal as a metaphorical and literal substance for mark-making. *Considering Carbon* supports the curatorial mission of the Turchin Center to showcase creative responses to local, regional, and global climate change.

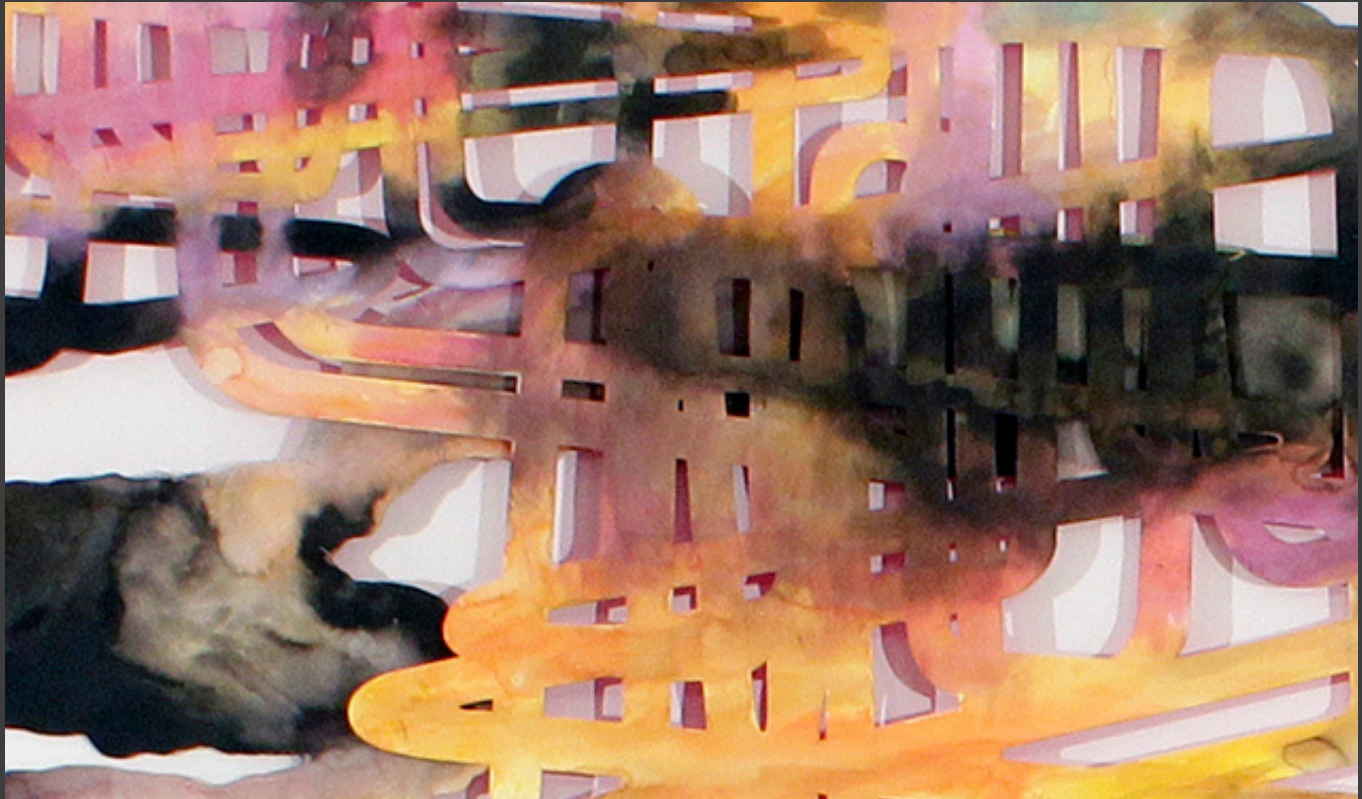
## Artist Statement

The exhibition, *Considering Carbon*, consists of a series of drawings and cut-paper wall installations which explore the theme of fossil fuels, specifically oil and coal. In the exhibition, I use different visual and conceptual approaches to examine the physical, material qualities of coal and oil, as I aim to heighten an awareness of our disconnection and dependence on fossil fuels. Oil and coal are an integral part of our contemporary existence, yet remain mysterious, unknown substances, contained and controlled by the industry.

Large-scale wall installation artworks in the exhibition consider the infrastructure of the pipeline system through a visual language of abstraction to communicate the vastness of the petroleum infrastructure. In these large cut-paper pieces, I evoke the visceral, sensory quality of the petroleum landscape by using scale, texture, surface, color, and the non-traditional presentation of drawings to engage the body of the viewer.



## Artist Statement



Abstraction continues in the series of charcoal drawings in the exhibition. In the drawings, specimens of coal are simplified into abstract silhouetted shapes to capture the materiality of the coal and the darkness of coal's impact on our environment. These drawings are exhibited as a group and have a collective impact through the quantity and the density of the black charcoal. The black, sooty quality of artist charcoal is used to capture the physical and corporeal characteristics of the sedimentary rock.

Realism is also present in the exhibition, through an additional series of drawings of coal and the display of a collection of fossil fuels. In the realistic drawings, I examine coal closely through a labor-intensive process of observational drawing. The labor and care in rendering offer an ability to step back, observe and weigh different positions regarding coal's place in our world and our disconnection to the land.

Overall, through the artwork, I aim to honor the power that fossil fuels have contributed to creating our modern world and equally convey the dark side of the environmental cost we must bear. It is my belief that art has the ability to problem solve, re-frame, and reflect on the current climate crisis, in order to inspire change in the present and future.

— Kathleen Thum

## Artist Biography



**Kathleen Thum's** drawings, paintings, and wall installations, which explore the ongoing shifting of power between mankind and earth, have been widely exhibited. Selected group exhibitions include *Shifting Sediments* at Marshall University in Huntington, West Virginia, and *The Nature of the Future: Artists Confront the Anthropocene* at Belmont University in Nashville, Tennessee. Her recent past Solo and Two-Person shows include exhibitions at University of Alabama in Huntsville and Broward College in Davie, Florida. Thum's work has also been included in the 2014, 2015, 2017 and the 2023 Manifest International Drawing Annual Exhibition in Print publications.

Kathleen Thum has been awarded several fellowships to attend artist residencies, such as the Millay Colony, Jentel Artist Residency, the Vermont Studio Center, the Saltonstall Foundation for the Arts and the Women's

Studio Workshop. She has received Quarterly Support Grants from the South Carolina Arts Commission and was a recipient of the New York Foundation for the Arts Mark Program. Thum presented her artwork at the 2018 International Petrocultures Conference, a multi-disciplinary conference on oil cultures and energy humanities, in Glasgow, United Kingdom and in the 2016 Petrocultures Conference in St. John's, Newfoundland.

Kathleen Thum received her BFA from Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore and her MFA from Bowling Green State University in Ohio. Thum currently teaches Drawing as an Associate Professor in the Art Department at Clemson University in upstate South Carolina and is the new Graduate Coordinator for the MFA in Visual Arts Program at Clemson University.

## Invitation to Create

"The labor and care in rendering offer an ability to step back, observe and weigh different positions regarding coal's place in our world and our disconnection to the land."

Kathleen Thum



Kathleen Thum's drawings require close observation and a desire to better understand her subject. By slowing down and looking very closely at the pieces of coal, she is able to identify the formal qualities (line, shape, shadow, etc.) that will comprise her drawing as well as contemplate the impact of the subject on the environment and those whose lives it impacts.

Find an object you would like to draw and understand better. Take your time looking very closely and reflecting on the impact of that object in your life as you draw.



# ARTtalk:

Wednesday

March 20, 2024

6:30pm

TCVA Lecture Hall

Behind the Scenes



# Behind the Scenes



# Installation Images



Installation Images



**Selected works  
in the exhibition ▶**



Kathleen Thum  
*Carrying Capacity*, 2014  
Ink and Acrylic on Hand Cut Paper



Kathleen Thum  
*Petrolia*, 2017

Acrylic on Laser Cut and Hand Cut Watercolor Paper





Kathleen Thum

*Offshore 2, 2017*

Ink and Acrylic on Hand Cut Watercolor Paper



Kathleen Thum  
*Combustible Rock*, 2019  
Charcoal on Paper



Kathleen Thum  
*Coal Haze*, 2019  
Charcoal on Paper



Kathleen Thum  
*Acrid*, 2019  
Charcoal on Paper

## Additional Resources

Kathleen Thum Website

Energy in the Southeastern US

Kathleen Thum Instagram

Energy in the Blue Ridge  
and Piedmont

A Review of  
Kathleen Thum's Oilworks

Tracking Decarbonization in the  
Southeast: 2022 Annual Update

App State QEP

Toxic Air: The Price of Fossil Fuel

Library of Congress: Oil and  
Gas Industry: A Research Guide

Pew Research Center

United Nations: Causes and  
Effects of Climate Change

Earth Justice

Artists and Climate Change



THANK  
YOU

FROM THE TURCHIN CENTER FOR THE VISUAL ARTS

The Turchin Center for the Visual Arts at Appalachian State University engages visitors from the university, community, nation and beyond in creating unique experiences through dynamic and accessible exhibition, education, outreach and collection programs. These programs inspire and support a lifelong engagement with the visual arts and create opportunities for participants to learn more about themselves and the world around them.

SHARE YOUR WORK WITH US AT #TCVAATHOME !

