

CONTENT

ISSUE 12.0
Jan/Feb 2020



Silicon Valley's Innovative
and Creative Culture
DISCOVER



Harumo Sato
Painter/Illustrator/Muralist

Featuring:
Nicholas Knopf
Teatro Visión
Pippi Boards
Linda Gass
Mild Monk

CONTENT

DISCOVER 12.0

Jan / Feb 2020
San Jose, California

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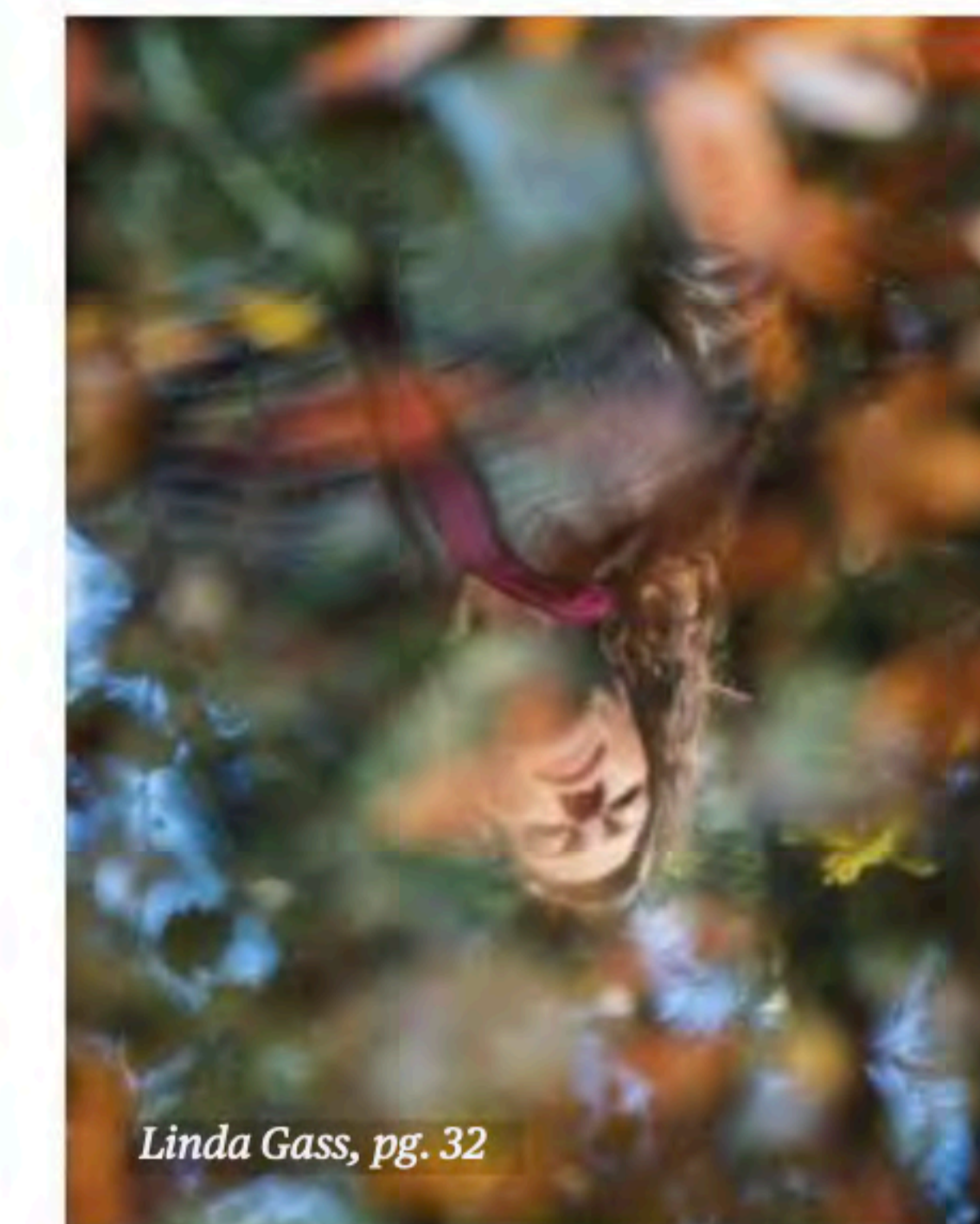
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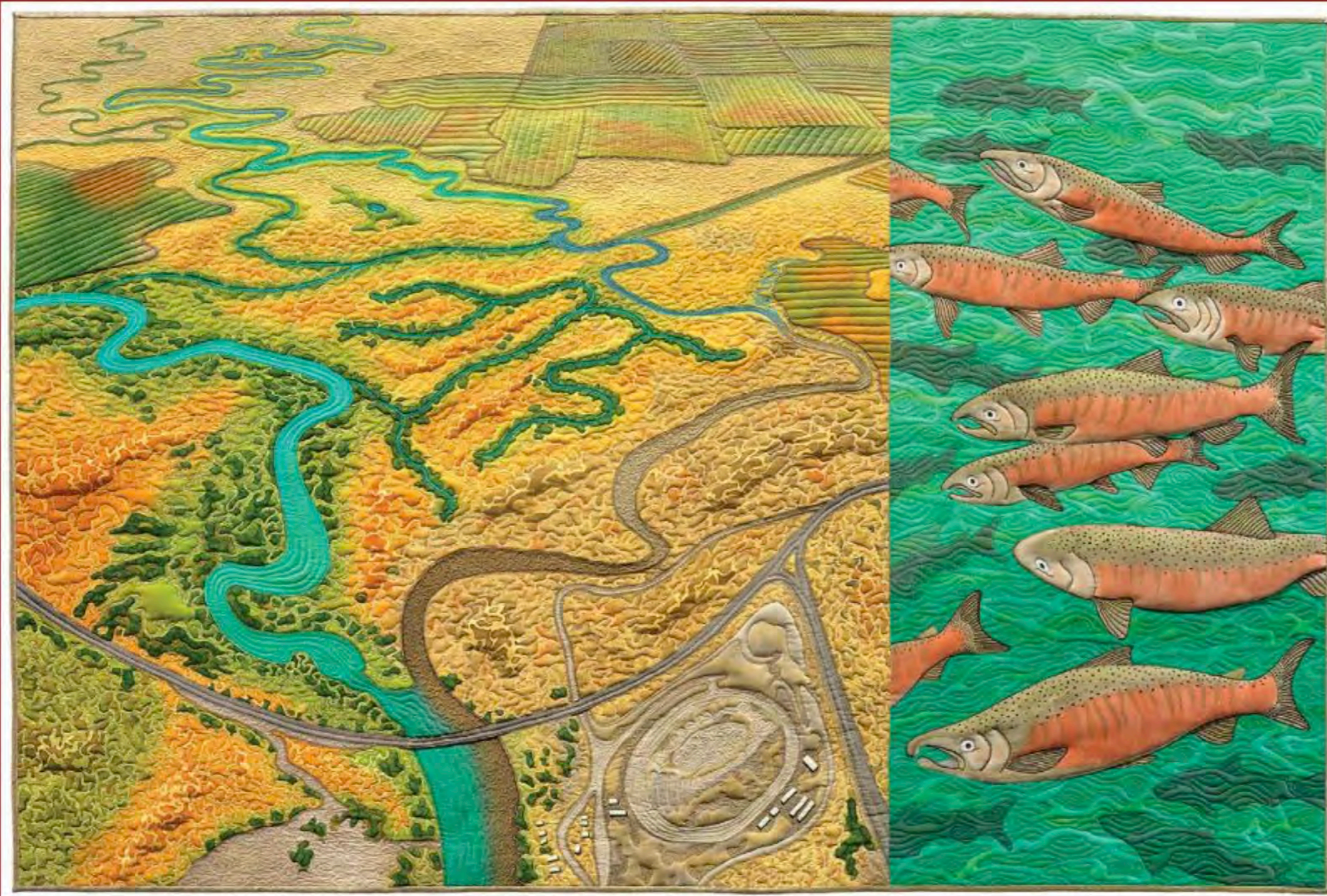


LINDA GASS

Stitched Paintings

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San Joaquin Merced Revival



Owens River Diversion

“I use the lure of beauty to look at the hard environmental issues we face.”

—Linda Gass

THERE'S A SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT of abstraction in flying by plane—after all, you're hurtling through the air in a metal tub at 30,000-plus feet, but the most surreal moment of your flight is that first glance through the plastic cabin window at the terrain far below. From an aerial angle, the landscape is broken down in a patchwork of shapes and condensed colors like a massive, earthy quilt. Linda Gass captures that feeling through her map-like “stitched paintings,” art that addresses water and land-use issues in California and the American West.

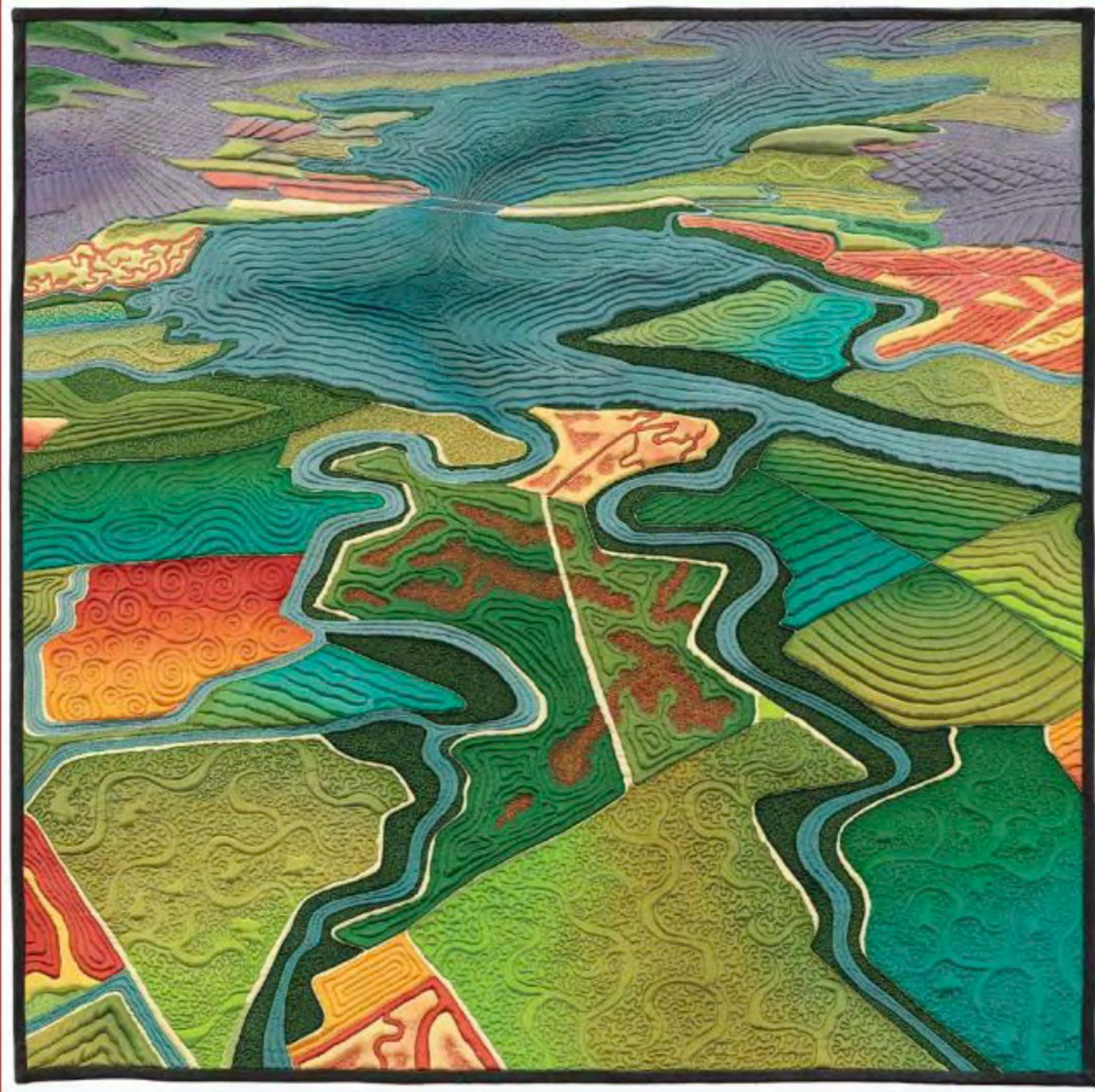
Although she also works with glass, Gass has an obvious soft spot for textiles. “With textiles, they tend to have a comforting feeling to them,” she describes. “We're used to wrapping ourselves in them. We sleep under them.” Her intricate designs are fashioned by drawing with

the sewing machine, guiding the fabric with her hands while controlling the speed and movement of the needle. Averaging a mile's worth of thread per year, she coalesces teeny tiny stitches into textured patterns that reflect their environment—rolling grasslands curve and loop, rows of crops form neat lines, rivers and oceans coil and ripple.

The highlight is certainly the water, not just in texture but in color. Through silk painting, this artist commingles an ever-changing blend of aquamarine and turquoise, cyan and seafoam. Her H2O interest was initially fostered by her mother. Gass recalls her mom frequently warning her that if she didn't finish her salad, it would rain the next day (a superstition carried over from her own childhood in the particularly rainy country of Luxemburg). But the threat didn't carry the same

heft, considering LA's stubborn lack of rain. “We have all these lush green lawns and swimming pools,” Gass remembers pondering. “If it doesn't rain here, where does our water come from? I had no idea. You know... it comes from the tap!” Later, she was shocked to learn that none of LA's water came from local sources.

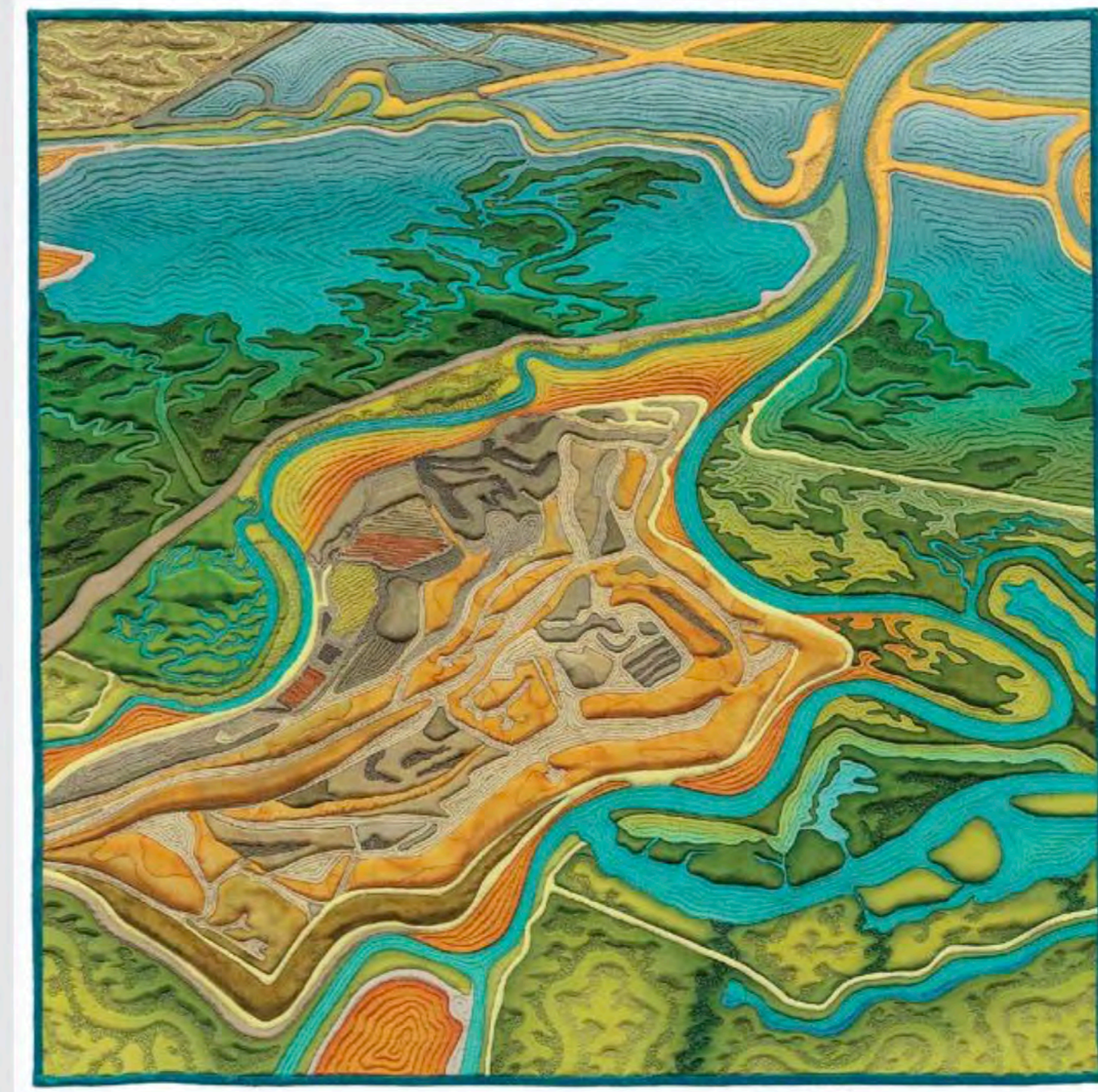
Gass's enthusiasm for maps also started at a young age. The artist's face softens with nostalgia when she speaks of hours spent whirling her Rand McNally globe. “I'd play this game where I'd spin the globe, and I'd close my eyes and put my finger on it, just to see where it landed,” she smiles. “Mostly it landed in the ocean because it's mostly water. Which also left this big impression on me of how much of our planet is water. It was this process of discovery.”



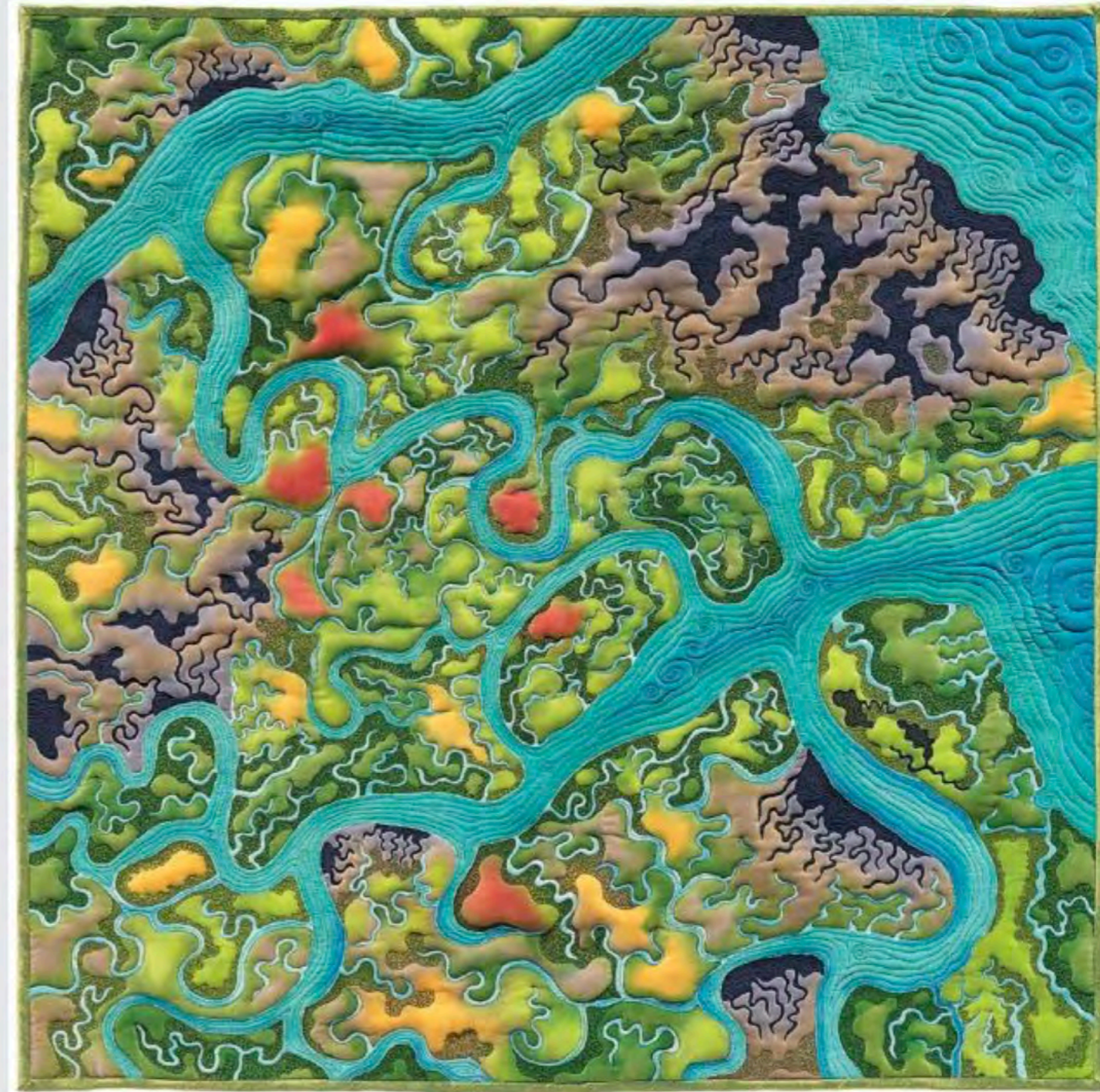
Fields of Salt



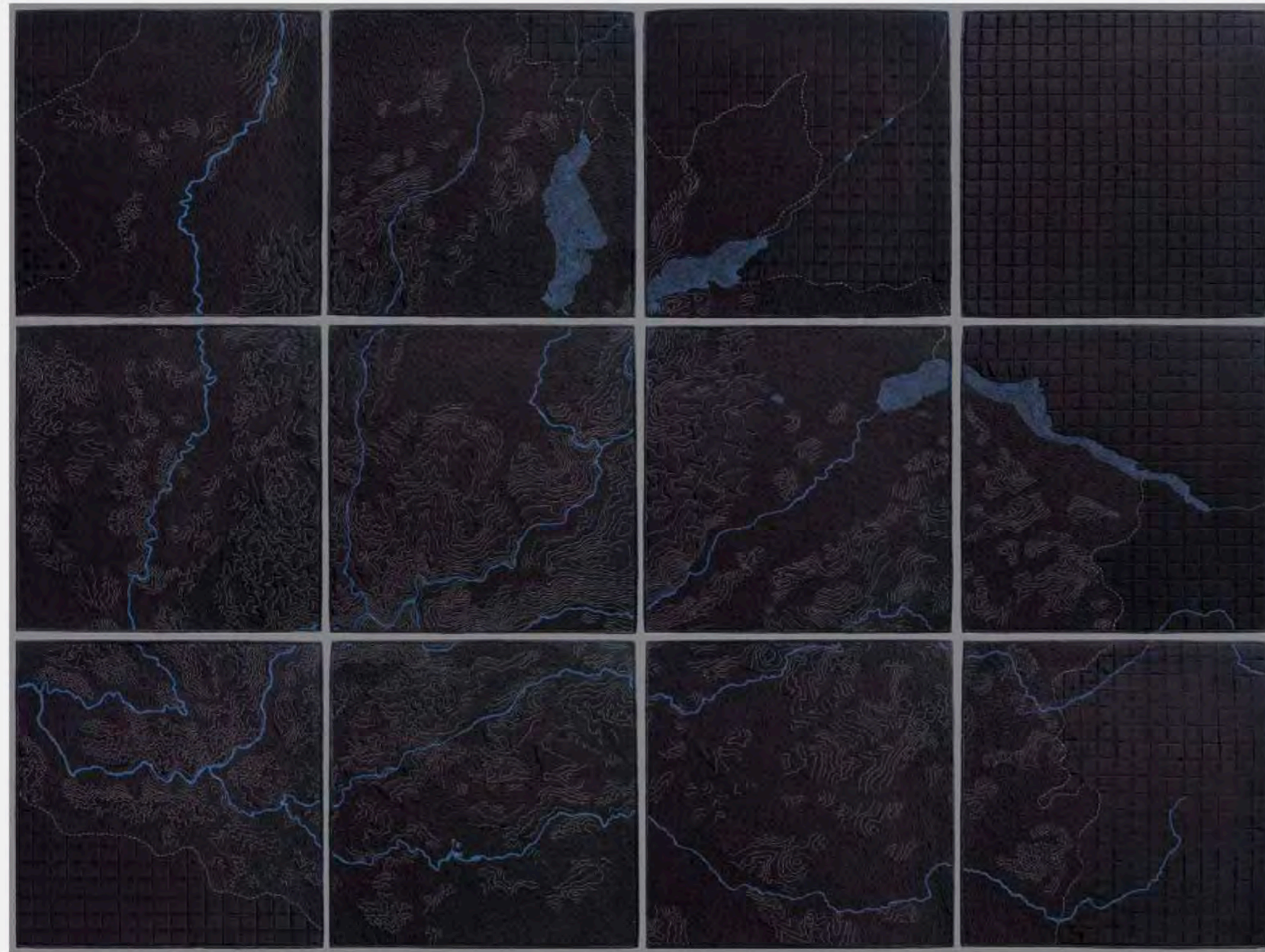
Wetlands Take Over



Sanitary?



Wetlands Dream Revisited



Severely Burned: Impact of the Rim Fire on the Tuolumne River Watershed

THIS PAGE:

Severely Burned: Impact of the Rim Fire on the Tuolumne River Watershed, 2014
 Dimensions: 54" h x 70" w
 Media: Silk crepe de chine, silk broadcloth, cotton batting, cotton and polyester thread
 Techniques: machine quilting, hand stitching
 Photo credit: Don Tuttle

Statement: The Tuolumne River Watershed provides 85% of the water used by 2.7 million residents of the San Francisco Bay Area. In 2013, 96% of the devastating Rim Fire burned in the Tuolumne River Watershed.

Fire is a natural and essential process in the forests of the Sierra Nevada. Centuries ago, wildfires burned slowly and low to the ground, thinning out excess brush and smaller trees, and leaving larger trees to thrive without competition for resources like water and sunlight. The 19th and 20th century policy of fire suppression to save forests and human lives resulted in the unintended consequence

of allowing fast-burning fuel to build up in the form of dead and dry vegetation. Decades of well-meaning forest mismanagement coupled with the consequences of climate change in the form of drought and unusually high summer temperatures resulted in the mega-fire known as the Rim Fire.

In *Severely Burned: Impact of the Rim Fire on the Tuolumne River Watershed*, Gass overlaid the vegetation burn severity map from the Rim Fire on 7.5 minute topographic maps for the region and traced the topographic lines only in the areas that were severely burned. The Tuolumne River and its major tributaries and reservoirs are stitched in blue thread and the light grey stitched topographic lines represent the severely burned areas, highlighting just how much of the Tuolumne River watershed was reduced to nothing but ash.

PAGE 13:

Dogpatch: the Sea is Rising, 2019
 Dimensions: 35¼" x 18", 35½" x 18, 35¼" x 18"
 Media: Silk crepe de chine, silk dyes and water soluble resist, polyester or wool batting, silk broadcloth, rayon embroidery thread, polyester thread
 Techniques: Silk painting, digital scanning, digital image manipulation (Adobe Photoshop), digital printing on silk, machine quilting
 Photo credit: Don Tuttle

Statement: Sea level rise, caused by the thermal expansion of warming ocean and the melting of land ice as the Earth warms, is a significant climate change threat to the coastal regions of California. Global sea-level has risen by 7-8 inches between 1900 and 2016, and the rate has increased in recent decades. In 2014, global sea level was 2.6 inches above the 1993 average and continues to rise at a rate of about 1/8" per year.

The most recent scientific estimates for San Francisco Bay were released in 2018 by the California Ocean Protection Council (a State Government appointed council). Projections for 2050 are relatively modest, with a likely increase of 1-foot. However, by 2100 the likely projection puts sea-level rise at between 3 to 6 feet on average. The range of projections is affected by whether carbon emission levels fall significantly or if they continue at current levels.

Using sea-level rise maps published by the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA), Gass has created a series of artworks that show the present cityscape and the impact of three feet and six feet of sea level rise on the Dogpatch neighborhood of San Francisco, where this museum is located. You may recognize familiar features such as the new Chase Center in Mission Bay and Oracle Park to the north.



Dogpatch: The Sea is Rising

A few years later, Gass's time at Stanford continued to cultivate her valuing of sustainable living. "I lived in a co-op house where we ate vegetarian," she notes. "We did recycling, we didn't use paper napkins with our dinners, we baked our own bread and granola...all those good hippie things!" Today, her advocacy-fueled artwork features in a number of magazines and books, including a National Geographic publication on unusual maps and the cover of an environmental science textbook.

COMING EXHIBITION:
 December 19, 2019–May 3, 2020
Linda Gass: and then this happened...

This exhibition will examine the human-made and natural water infrastructure affecting the greater Bay Area, considering present and future challenges with respect to climate change.

Museum of Craft and Design
 2569 Third Street, San Francisco, CA

One of her favorite pieces to date will be included in a solo show addressing climate change at the Museum of Craft and Design (featured until May 3rd). The stitched painting, *Severely Burned*, reveals the crippling damage of the Rim Fire in the Tuolumne River Watershed area through an artisti-

cally rendered vegetation burn map. It's a personal piece. Gass has regularly visited and backpacked Yosemite National Park ever since a week-long class trip in 8th grade taught her an appreciation of the area's ecosystem (from its plants and animals, to the glaciers that carved its valley).

And she witnessed the fire in person. "There was this cloud, like one I'd never seen before," Gass recalls of an intense moment staring out the bus window at the horizon. "It was this cauliflower in the sky. It was not a rain cloud. And the underside of it...the whole cloud was grey. There was no white." The fire burned so hot it had created its own weather, condensing the moisture from the atmosphere into an unnerving pyrocumulus cloud. Gass vividly recollects the flurry of ash later falling like snowflakes, some crusting on

the zoom lens of her camera.

Although her work wades through some harsh realities, Gass takes a surprisingly gentle approach. "I use the lure of beauty to look at the hard environmental issues we face—rather than make artwork that may be more ugly like the subject matter that I'm dealing with that people might not want to look at. Or live with." Visually pleasing images make unappetizing truths a little more palatable. "Otherwise they might want to stick their head in the sand because it's overwhelming," she observes.

Moreover, this artistic choice reveals an optimism in the restoration of natural beauty. Catching a bird's eye view with Gass reminds us we can aim higher. Rather than settle for a flawed standard, we can choose to be better stewards of the planet we inhabit. ☺