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Individual memories overlap like Venn diagrams. These overlaps are collective or communal memories, joint remembrances of historical experiences that reinforce group membership and bind us together as tribes.

—Rebecca Rupp

As a small child, I fondly remember my grandfather opening his box of old black and white photos and showing me the images of himself and his fellow shipmates aboard the LST Landing Ship. He was onboard during the D-Day invasion in Normandy, and I always wondered about that place, and the historical significance the landing held for the entire world. In sharing these photographs and memories of another time and place, I sensed this collective memory of Normandy. It became a common thread that would continue to bond us together throughout the years. Luckily, while in graduate school, I had the opportunity to study in Normandy, and that experience became the basis of my thesis work. However, I will always be indebted to my grandfather, as his memories helped spark my interest in a time and place that bears so much historical significance for us all. Thus, in turn, I sought to paint a body of works that evoked collective memories of WWII, but also demonstrated the natural beauty and vitality of the landscapes of Normandy in juxtaposition with the landscapes that feature the lasting impact of war such as cemeteries and debris. Through my work, I learned that as landscapes evoked collective memory, they can also become effective teaching tools as well.

Landscape is a stage for life, a theater where events take place and the cycle of life and death continues. Depending upon the viewer, the landscape may evoke nostalgia, sorrow, or joy. This is my motive for painting landscapes. I strive to paint the *set* where people work, live, perish, struggle, rejoice, and create

memories in a cyclical pattern. As a landscape painter, I want my viewers to feel connected to my work, and perhaps, even evoke some sort of collective memory. I feel as though the layers of paint within a landscape not only serve as a visual counterpart to the work itself, but instate a more symbolic meaning as well. The layers of our lives have taken place within the context of a landscape in some way. We are continually building and layering these memories, and the landscape or *place* provides the *set* in which this happens. As an art educator, I decided that I also needed to explore the implications that landscapes and collective memory may evoke within my students.

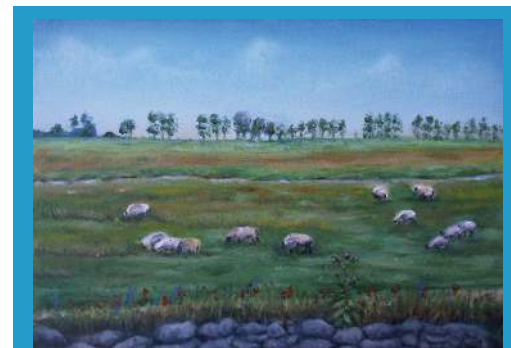
I proceeded to discuss landscapes with my preservice art education students from a historical and personal context. They began to develop lesson plans that centered on the landscape as subject. One student developed a printmaking unit that utilized linoleum carvings to illustrate the collective memory of the farm that her family has farmed for five generations. She also embedded a more social platform within her lesson and her personal work, and gave a voice to the small farmers that are left fighting to keep farms active and successful against the constant threat of urbanization. Some common themes and places arose as well. Many students shared collective memories of their family farms, beach trips, and many first time experiences as well. It should also be noted that older generations were attributed to many of these collective memories as there was often a learning experience that had taken place within a particular landscape or set. Through the development of these lessons and the discussions that ensued, my students explored the implications this type of lesson might have within the K-12 visual art curriculum:

- The landscape can be used to evoke memory that will not only aid students in learning from the past, but will help to shape their futures as well.
- Social studies and visual arts integration mesh well, as one

compliments the other in terms of using landscape as subject within the context of historical significance.

- The landscape and collective memory help students develop an appreciation for others, and foster a bond that reaches across all ages and cultures.
- Through collective memory, students are inspired to find their voice and commit to social issues that may interest them.
- Students may develop a sense of belonging as the landscapes may embody feelings and experiences shared by many.

As the landscape evokes collective memories, it is indeed those shared memories that will continue to teach us about our unique place in a world that remains uncertain. We can always depend upon our collective memories to become the bridge that connects the past to the present, and in turn, gives us a greater hope for the future. ■



(Top) Andrea Ezell Elliott, *Grazing Sheep: Normandy France*, 2004. (Bottom) Robyn Hughley Peterson, *The Farmers Fight Back*. Student work, Converse College, 2016.

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