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A conversation between cities, continents, places and objects: Dudley Zopp's 'Landscapes, Vessels and Jars'

By **ELI KEEL** | June 7, 2019

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"East Creek" by Dudley Zopp

Many artists are rootless, while others travel far from their roots to find images and places and even objects that catch their eye for creation. **Dudley Zopp**, whose solo show "Landscapes, Vessels and Jars" opens at **Moremen Gallery** this weekend, is one of the latter.

Maybe it would be appropriate to say she has multiple root systems.

A creator from a young age, Zopp initially studied language in

college. She got a bachelor's and a master's degree in modern foreign languages at the University of Kentucky. Then, like many artists, she found avoiding her artistic instincts was not quite so easy, so she studied drawing and painting at UofL's Hite Art Institute.



Dudley Zopp | Courtesy

A Louisville native, Zopp had been painting landscapes for years when an offhand invitation charted a new course for her.

“I had an invitation from friends of my parents ... They invited me to Maine and said, ‘Come visit us,’” Zopp tells Insider. “I loved it here. It was the landscape I had been imagining and painting out of my head.”

After that initial visit, Zopp found herself going back again and again, finally moving there. Finding the right landscape has had effects on her newer works as well, even when it didn't lead to pictures of places.

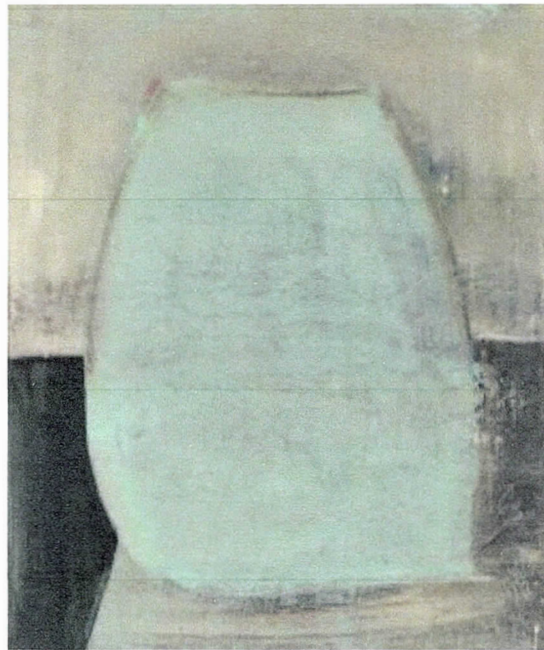
“The jars and vessels came out of a residency I did in Spain in

2011, and I had gone over thinking I would ... work with the landscapes,” says Zopp. “And I was really taken with the olive jars and other kinds of jars and urns that were scattered around the grounds of the residency. So I just started on them, and when I got back to the studio here in Maine, I did a whole series.”

Though this was a departure from what most think of as “landscapes,” it’s worth noting that in a way, it’s just a different terrain, one anthropologist would call a cultural landscape. Zopp took that cultural landscape home to Maine.

The focus on vessels and jars stayed with her, and when she began preparing for a residency in Italy, she was hoping to paint similar cultural objects. But once again, her eye strayed, this time to the far horizon.

“Years later I went to Italy for a residency, and I arrived there thinking, ‘Surely there will be wonderful urns and vessels in Italy, and that’s what I will work on there,’ and when I got there, I couldn’t take my eyes off the far horizon,” she explains.



“Celadon Jar” by Dudley Zopp

Zopp says these sorts of shifts aren’t a proclivity for her alone, but that going somewhere can often shift an artist’s focus.

“Residencies have a way of upending your expectations, and

you're really free to work on whatever you want," she adds.

Both bodies of work are indicative of Zopp's practice and the way she heads out to gather ideas, but when she makes the majority of work, she does it at home. In recent years, that practice has led to an inversion of her past travels.

"(Before I moved to Maine) I would come up here, and I would do sketches and take photographs, then I would go back to my studio in Louisville and make a painting based on Maine. So now that I'm in Maine, I found it really interesting that I go to other places and then come back here to make work."

Those places include Louisville, and those trips back to her hometown led to this exhibition at Moremen Gallery.

For this trip home, Zopp is mixing the bodies of works — the landscapes, vessels and jars — that have never been shown together, though they each received their own exhibitions. Showcasing them all together reveals new thoughts, ideas and themes that each share.

"I'm sure I'm going to have a lot of ideas coming out of that," says Zopp. "But I don't know what they are yet."

"Landscapes, Vessels and Jars" opens Friday, June 7, with a reception from 5:30 to 8 p.m. It continues through July 6. Moremen Gallery is located at 710 W. Main St., next to Proof on Main and 21c. Regular gallery hours are Wednesday through Saturday, noon to 5 p.m.