

Lorraine Serena
Sanctuaries



Long Ago and Far Away II
Charcoal pencil on paper, 2011 - 2018

Lorraine Serena: Sanctuaries

Lorraine Serena's large-scale landscape drawings and her retablo-inspired assemblages reflect the Ojai based artist's prevailing interest in the spiritual, the mysterious, and often ambiguous relationship between humans and their environment.



Long Ago and Far Away I
Charcoal pencil on paper, 2014 – 2018

Sanctuaries showcases the artist's shrines created of found objects and images in the 1990s, called Santuarios, which reference religious art - albeit personal not denominational, as well as her recent series of landscape drawings in charcoal, *Long Ago and Far Away*, which recall the sketches made by traveling artists in times gone by.

Whether in paintings, drawings, collages, or assemblages, Serena's artistic practice can be described as reflective, spiritual, and deeply personal.

Further, Serena is the founder and artistic director of the international, cross-cultural women's art project, *Women Beyond Borders*, begun in the early 1990s, and calls community building among women around the world an important part of her artistic practice.



Cascade and Conversation
Mixed media, 1993



Cascade
Mixed media, 1990



Original Moment
Mixed media, 1990

The introspective nature of the private altars is countered by the almost overpowering, awe-inspiring expanse of Serena's landscapes. Both genres have been an important part of art history for centuries. What interests in this exhibition is that the intimately scaled, intricate constructions, as well as the large drawings become inspirations for the mind and retreats for the soul.

On the one hand, Serena's Santuarios lure the viewer in with their beauty, colorfulness, and narrative detail, typically found in religious shrines and altars of cultures around the world. Many of them present scenes of whimsical, fictitious encounters between humans and natural as well as celestial forces, recalling religious legends, ancient mythology, and popular fairytales.



Remaining Silent
Mixed media, 1990



Bird Man
Mixed media, 1990



The Search
Mixed media, 1990

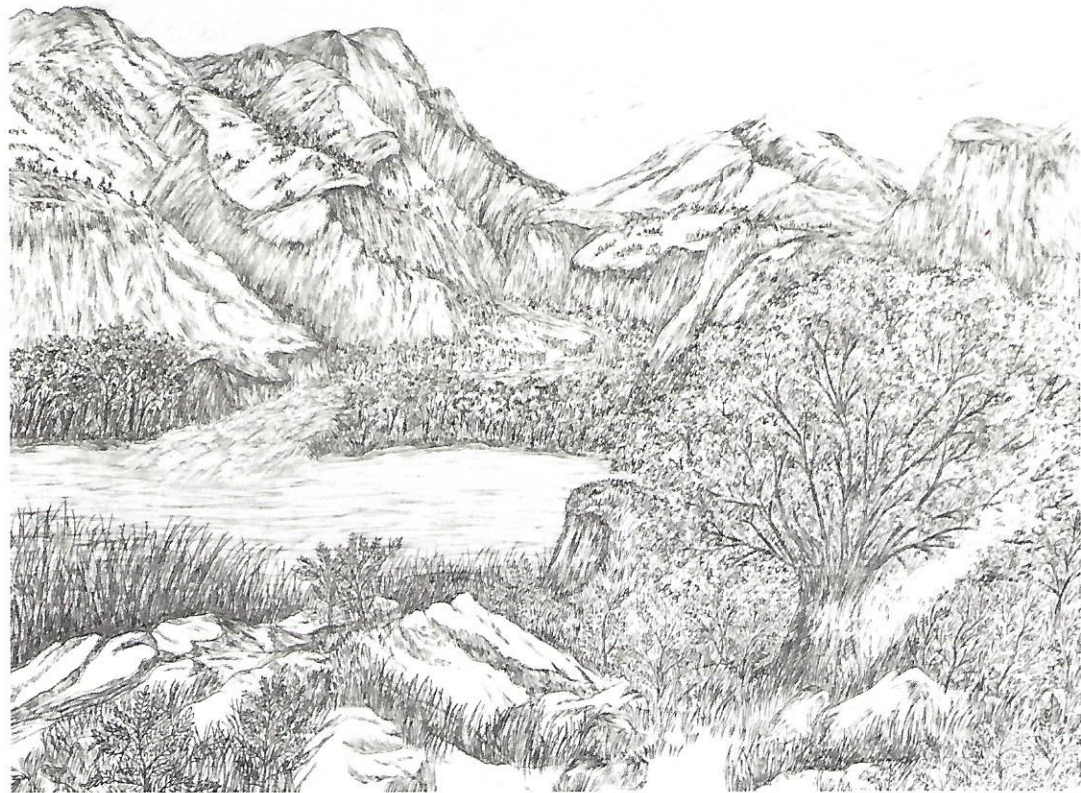


*Where Flowers
Ceaselessly Open*
Mixed media, 1993

On the other hand, Serena's landscapes compel with an almost compulsive attention to detail - every blade of grass is finely rendered -, as well as a succinct capturing of the immense forces of nature, whether it is torrentious waters or towering trees. Her drawings recall the sublime, a concept prominent in landscape art during Romanticism, as well as feelings of nostalgia for the untouched, untamed nature before industrialization and expanding human settlement.

Yet, it is exactly that nature that has, more recently, evoked not only feelings of soul-nurturing retreat from social woes, but fears of retribution, destruction, and powerlessness, as dams broke, riverbeds flooded, boulders rolled, and fires roared. Thus, this exhibition invites the visitor to contemplate anew the multilayered relationship between humans and their environment at the beginning of a new millennium.

— Anette Kubitza, Curator



Long Ago and Far Away 1
Charcoal pencil on paper, 2011 – 2018



Lorraine Serena

Visual Artist

Founder and Artistic Director,
Women Beyond Borders

Lorraine Serena received her BA and Master of Fine Arts at UC Santa Barbara and lived in Carpinteria and Montecito for several years before moving to Ojai, where she currently resides.

Serena began her career with a series of extensive collaborative installations at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art in 1969, 1970, and 1971. These interactive environments described by critic Richard Ames as a "raucous display of visual virtuosity," included over 600 student participants.

Serena continues synergistic work to this day by way of the international collaboration, Women Beyond Borders, initiated with artist friends. With over 1,000 artists in 50 nations, this endeavor has honored and connected women for over two decades. The WBB process, acting as a catalyst for building community, expanded Serena's art form into the realm of what is today considered public practice.

Individual work includes paintings, collages and found object tableaux, which have been exhibited nationally and internationally in venues such as: LACE, Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions; Rackham Graduate School, University of Michigan; Santa Barbara Museum of Art; Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum; National Museum of Women in the Arts, DC; Paula Cooper Gallery, NYC; Orange County Center for Contemporary Art, Santa Ana; Lango Forum on Women, Beijing, China; Center for Visual Arts, Oakland; The New York Academy of Art, NYC; Woman Made Gallery, Chicago; The Woman's Building, Los Angeles; National Museum of Kenya, Nairobi; Contemporary Museum of Oaxaca, Mexico; Antikenmuseum Basel und Sammlung Ludwig, Switzerland; The State Russian Museum Complex, St. Petersburg, Russia; Galleria Extra Moenia Arte Contemporanea, Todi, Italy; Teen Dewal Mandir Temple Kathmandu, Nepal; Akino Fuko Museum, Tenryu, Japan; Sculpture Square, Singapore.

For more information please visit: lorraineserena.com or womenbeyondborders.org

Artist Statement

Themes in the *Santuarios* are played and replayed, foretelling tales of water, fire, fear, exploration, renewal, tranquility, liberation, death. Free from specific systems, these symbolic narratives are the daydreams of a life, sanctuaries of devotion.

Materials are chosen from sources both sacred and profane, ranging from Persian miniatures, 19th Century engravings, and flora and fauna, to objects, beads, and other embellishments. Forms weave into mythic tableaux often allowing figures to explore life's quests for truth and meaning. The work is informed by philosophical perspectives, ranging from perennial Vedic concepts to current transformational thought.

As a counterpoint, the series of large charcoal landscape drawings, *Long Ago and Far Away*, signify at once solace and turmoil, and they speak for themselves.

— Lorraine Serena