

CHRISTINE NEILL NARRATIVE BIO

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I had the good fortune to grow up in a family who valued being outdoors, education and our neighbors. Our Manchester, CT neighborhood backed onto wooded acres lined with old stone walls. Relaxation for both my parents, who were trained in the sciences, was building and maintaining our gardens. My maternal grandmother taught me to identify native wildflowers on woodland walks and took me to see the Glass Flowers at Harvard's Museum of Natural History. Early on vacations were spent near Cape Cod Bay. In retrospect, it seems simple, safe and open to options and opportunity.

Memorable high school courses were biology and art because both they connected hands with the brain. I distinctly remember my first look through a microscope of water plants I had collected, then drawing their close-up details. I began drawing on my own, enjoying the quiet concentration of projects. I entered Skidmore College as a bio majors while continuing to take drawing and painting classes. It was a natural transition from the examination of living things in a lab to visualizing those processes as imagery in paintings and prints. I can date my interest in the effects of climate conditions on human activity, and the converse, to a lecture by Margaret Mead. I found the concepts she presented startling and confusing.

In 1969 I arrived in Baltimore to work with Grace Hartigan at the Hoffberger School of Painting at Maryland Institute College of Art. While our painting skills and concepts were maturing, Grace taught us how to be artists.

My work has been exhibited widely in the United States, as well as France and Japan. I'm represented by Goya Contemporary in Baltimore and the work is included in many private and public collections including the Baltimore Museum of Art and The Washington County Museum of Fine Arts. The honors I've received include a Maryland State Arts Council Fellowship and the Mellon Arts Grant. I'm a Professor Emeritus from MICA's Painting Department and live with husband, Designer Lew Fifield, in Baltimore City and the Berkshires of Western, MA.

While a great deal has changed in the natural world, my process echoes early experiences, walking woods and beaches, collecting stones and plant material. I line my studio with the gathered specimens, which I further research and drawn as I layer imagery into painted and digital mediums. Similarly, the concepts have evolved from representing the natural shapes I found wondrous to visualizing the conditions of the climate crisis. The work celebrates the intricacies of thriving ecosystems, yet laments threatened species. Such dichotomies, in nature as in art, bind us together as living entities in, on and of the earth.