Northern Exposure

Among the most adventurous things an artist from Cleveland can do is join the joyous printmakers’ haven called Zygote Press, then apply for one of the exchange residencies that Zygote sponsors in far-flung places. Zygote’s Ohio Arts Council-funded exchange with Dresden, Germany (the longest-running international residency in the state) is one possibility. Another is the chance to be an ambassador from the lower 48 to the town of Homer. Clinging to Alaska’s southern coast the stalwart members of the Bunnell Arts Center live and work in their pristine (if chilly) landscape, ringed by snowy mountains and accompanied by the occasional moose. The [Rasmuson](http://www.rasmuson.org/" \t "_blank) Artist Residency Exchange Exhibition currently on view at Zygote’s Gallery presents the work of [Sara Tabbert](https://saratabbert.com/)(Summer, 2016),Elizabeth Emery (Fall, 2014), [Amy Casey](http://www.amycaseypainting.com/) (Fall, 2015), and [Michael Walsh](http://www.walshinthecloud.com/) (Summer, 2015).

Amy Casey, last Fall’s intrepid emissary for the two-month exchange, is a Cleveland-based artist who works primarily as a painter. Casey was introduced to Zygote as a recipient of an A.I.R residency/exhibit back in 2006 (a program aimed at bringing painters into the printmakers’ world, and vice versa). She keeps up her printmaking (check it out along with her other work at [www.amycaseypaintings.com](http://www.amycaseypaintings.com)) at Zygote and rents a little workspace there. Over the past decade Casey’s beautifully observed, austerely romantic depictions of the Northeast’s disappearing housing stock, swept aloft in nets of imagination and metaphor -- dragged by hawsers into the empty skies of futurity or clinging to makeshift planetoids -- have won critical praise and wide popularity. She’s represented by the Zg Gallery in Chicago (since 2007) and by Foley Gallery in New York, where she has a solo show opening in September.

You don’t have to specialize in depictions of lonely habitations, sledding across expanses of white paper, to qualify for Zygote’s Alaska gig; but clearly Casey was a natural. She spent the late Fall in the far north walking on the beach, puffing into the mountains, and making a boatload of new friends. She also produced meticulous ink drawings/paintings (done on yupo, a versatile synthetic paper made from polypropylene) of everything in sight, and a number of collaborative works with volunteers in and around Homer. Many of these are part of the exhibit currently on view at Zygote.

“(They) brought me images of a place they considered to be home which I worked from…the volunteers ranged from artists to non-artists,” writes Amy. “In the end, I most valued the exchange itself, the awkwardness of putting ourselves in a strange sort of situation that usually ended up with friendship.. Many of the volunteers ended up actually taking me out and showing me their corner of Homer, and it was a beautiful way to get to know the place.”

Fringe benefit: While she was in Homer, Casey was introduced to Anchorage artists and institutions by the Rasmussen staff, and was invited to show there in an exhibit called Common Grounds, presently at the International Gallery of Contemporary Art. *Excelsior!*

Douglas Max Utter