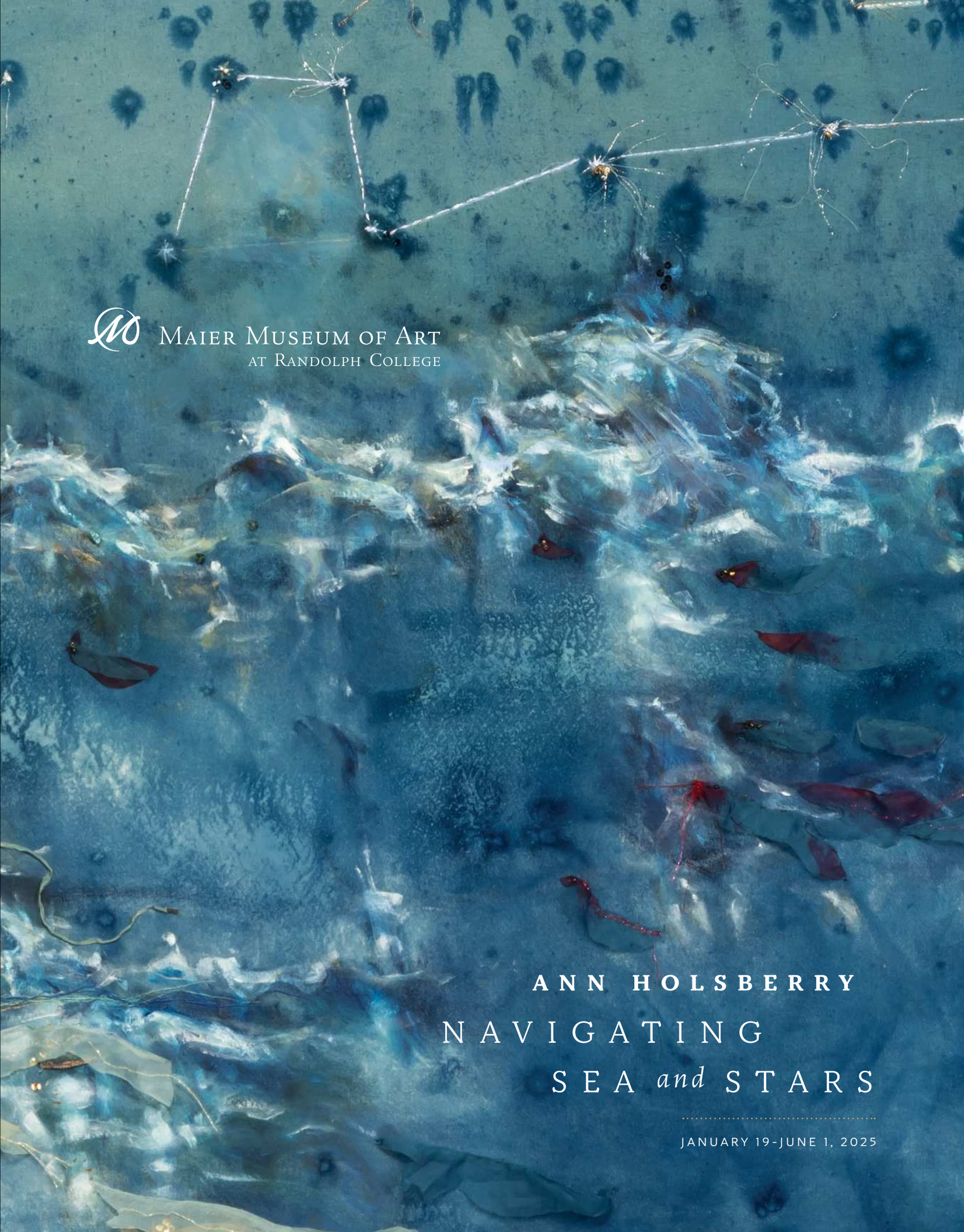
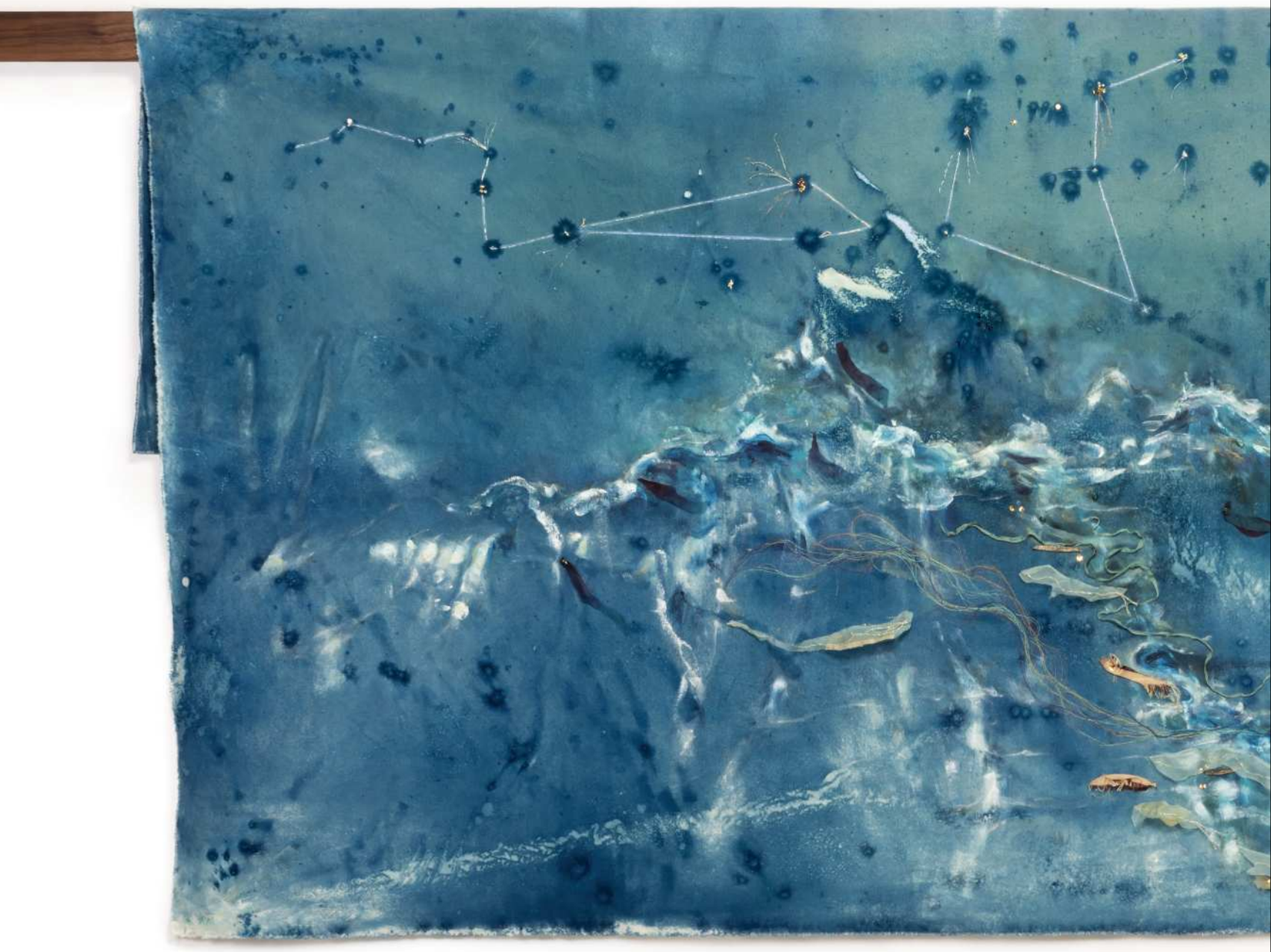


Maier Museum of Art
at Randolph College

ANN HOLSBERRY

NAVIGATING SEA *and* STARS

JANUARY 19–JUNE 1, 2025



Ann Holsberry: Navigating Sea and Stars is sponsored by Nancy Gottwald '55 through her membership with the Maier Museum of Art at Randolph College. The creation of this exhibition catalogue is generously supported by members of the Class of 1965, Mary Brewer Guthrow, Calley Eaton Jones, Meg Green Maguire, and Martha Hildenbrand Scott.

This page: *Earth, Sky, Water 1*, 2022, cyanotype, oil paint, and embroidery on canvas suspended on walnut board, 47 x 125 in.

On the cover: Detail from *Earth, Sky, Water 1*

NAVIGATING SEA *and* STARS

JANUARY 19–JUNE 1, 2025

Ann Holsberry's work celebrates the inherent beauty of the natural order of things, in scales ranging from the microscopic to the cosmic. She depicts intricate networks found in nature using mixed media, especially incorporating the photographic process of cyanotype. She frequently works in direct collaboration with natural phenomena, using sunlight to expose prints on paper or fabric. Using materials sourced directly from surrounding ecosystems, she often allows time- and weather-based anomalies to influence surfaces before returning to her studio where they are embellished with pigments, inks, wax, and embroidery. Her long-term practice is a meditation on environmental changes that require both humans and animals to adapt to new ways of navigating the world. Holsberry seeks to represent the vast and the infinitesimal as a unified whole.

Earth, Sky, Water 1, Detail Sky A and Detail B

Adrift, 2024, cyanotype and wax on paper on panel, 26 x 38 in.

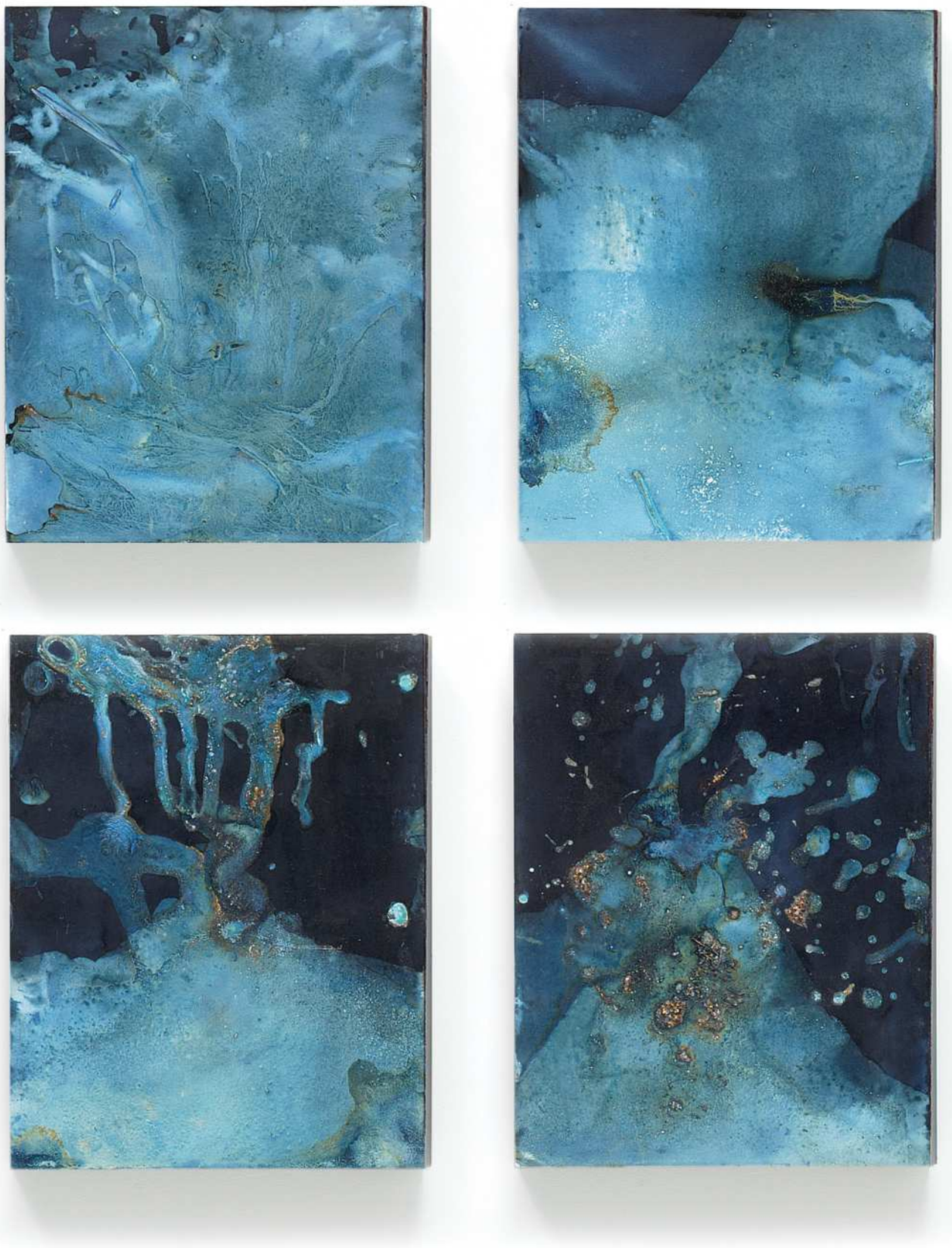
THE ART *of* PROCESS

BY JAN MARLESE
WITH ANN HOLSBERRY

Ann Holsberry's relationship with nature began in childhood, where she spent time on the inland waterways and white sand beaches of the Florida Gulf Coast. After high school she journeyed northward, studying art in Virginia and law in upstate New York before settling in the San Francisco Bay Area. While practicing law and raising her son as a single mother, she continued her painting practice, eventually transitioning to it full time. Her work from this period explored the fragility of the environment and inland waters, which expanded to include the extensive loss of kelp forests along the California Pacific Coast due to ocean warming.

Throughout this process, her convergent interests in art, science, and the environment led her to experiment with the interplay between materials and subject matter in her creative work. This dual approach led her to express her ideas through transferred images in combination with drawn and painted elements, which led her to the cyanotype process that would become a major focus of her work.

Cyanotype is a 19th century photographic printing process that creates images without a camera. This is accomplished through the application of an ultraviolet, light sensitive, iron-based solution to paper or fabric, which is then dried in the dark. Objects are then laid on the treated surface and the assemblage is exposed to sunlight, creating an image where placed objects leave white "shadows" against a Prussian blue background. The cyanotype process is thus a mix of photography and



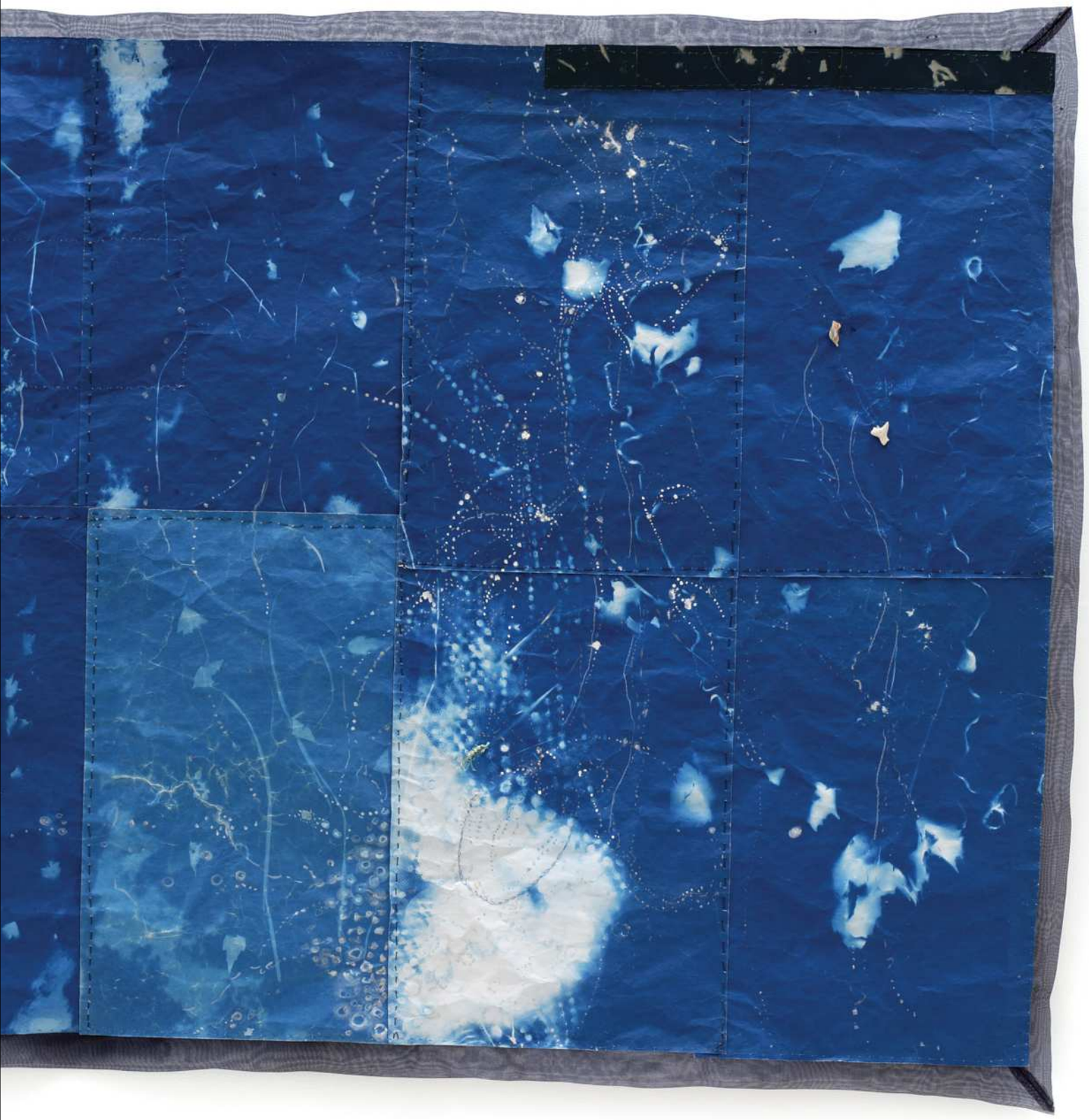
Flow, 2021, cyanotype, oil paint, and wax on paper on panels, quadriptych, 33 x 27 in.

printmaking, defined by both its exposure to light and the shapes, sizes, and textures of the objects used to create the form.

One of Holsberry's first cyanotype compositions, *Lido*, was created in the fall of 2013. It began as smaller panels that were later stitched together with the various pieces created in a range of locations including France, Italy, and Northern California. After its unification into a single piece, *Lido* was further enhanced by the addition of gouache, ink and embroidery.

The fine white lines in *Lido* refer to the migratory patterns of birds, an aspect of the natural world that has long fascinated Holsberry. Each winter she travels to the Central Valley of California to watch the mass migrations of waterfowl as they fly south from Canada. Using actual wings found in the area, she created the striking paper cyanotype *Traces*, a piece that invites reflection on the movement of humans and animals across the globe.

In some of her work, Holsberry uses found objects–such as mechanical drawings discovered in an old book in her travels–as both genesis and inspiration. An imagined version of a real-world machine served as her starting point in the large 49-panel work *Prima Materia*, which



Lido, 2014, cyanotype, gouache, ink, beads, bone, and thread on paper with silk organza, 36 x 43 in.

uses layers of paint and wax to build texture and dimensionality. The title of the piece refers to the original matter of the universe, from which all other matter derives.

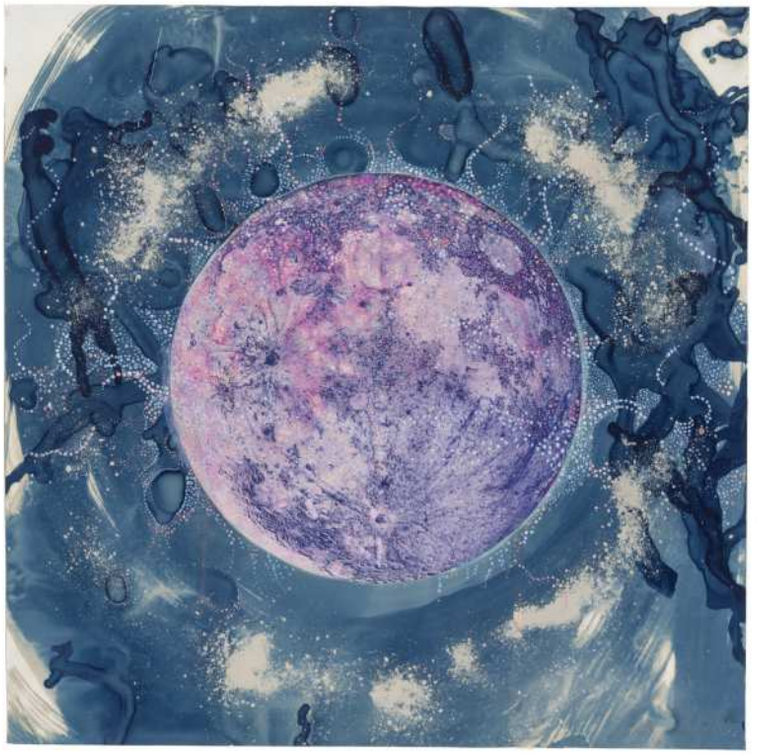
For Holsberry, the process through which a piece is created is as important as the final result. Since childhood she has been inspired by the transformative power and healing effects of art, leading her to study (and eventually teach) Process Painting, an intuitive form of artmaking. In this process, as she allows the artwork to develop, her goal is to uncover and give shape to the hidden forces and unseen energies that drive the physical world. In Holsberry's *Cosmologies*, for example, she explores the cosmic forces that produce tidal patterns on earth. This theme is further explored on the *New Navigation Installation Wall*, where a luminous starry sky meets turbulent waters.

The power of nature is ever present and far-reaching in Holsberry's work, from the swirling patterns produced by coastal waters to the cosmic skies of the *Cosmologies* series, where deep cyanotype shadows contrast with colorful painted and embroidered

Tidal Glitter 3 and 4,
2023, cyanotype, ink, and
embroidery on paper,
30 x 24 in. each

Emergence (Cosmology 9),
2021, cyanotype and ink
on paper, 39 x 26 in.

Big Pink (Cosmology 12), 2024, sun print, ink, and embroidery on paper, 26 x 18 in.



patterns. Her fascination with exploring the world beyond the physical realm is evident in other pieces as well, including *Emergence* and *Pink Moon*.

To create the large piece *Earth, Sky, Water 1*, Holsberry carried a cyanotype-coated canvas to the edge of the ocean where she dipped it in seawater to capture the ebb and flow of the ocean at that particular time and place, further influenced by the effects of wind and sand. After the development process was complete, she enhanced it with the addition of pigments and embroidery in the more calm and controlled setting of her studio. Similarly, in her recent focus on sea-kelp ecosystems, Holsberry uses kelp from California beaches in the exposure process, seeking to capture the power and mystery of the ocean as well as the beauty and fragility of near-shore kelp forests. Reflecting upon the ongoing decimation of sea kelp ecosystems, she is inspired to

Pink Moon,
2021, cyanotype, ink, archival print on paper on panel, 36 x 36 in.

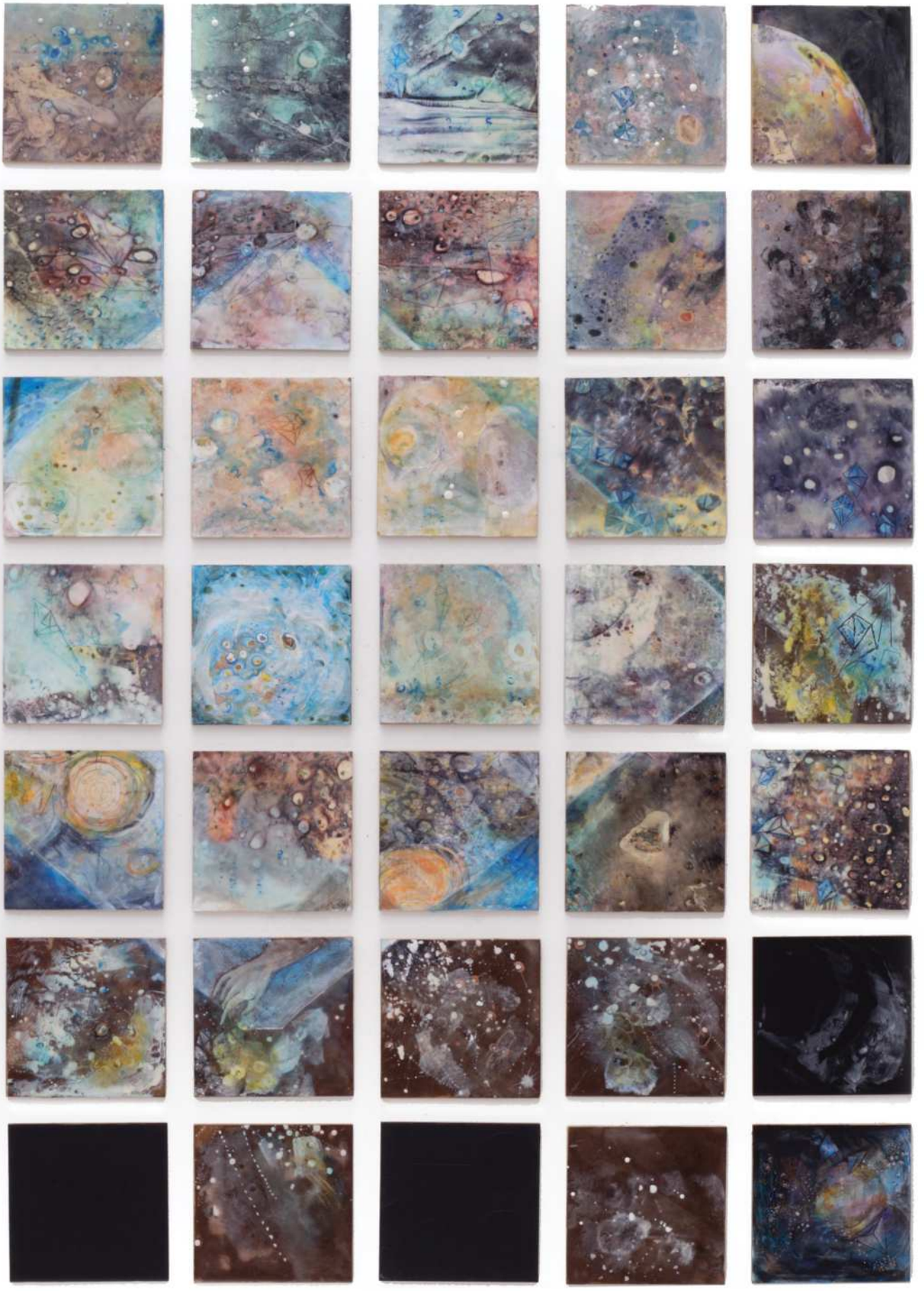
Mardi Gras/Solstice (Cosmology 6),
2015, cyanotype, ink, Dura-Lar, and machine stitching on paper, 23 x 15 in.

imagine the possibility of emergent hybrid lifeforms and cross-species evolution as seen in the colorful and vibrant pieces *Tidal Glitter* and *Adrift*.

Working in the redwood and oak forests along the Mendocino coast of northern California, Holsberry also studies vegetation and canopy systems, as well as fungal and mycelial root structures, which inform many of the prints and paintings in her *Botanicals* series. In *Secret Garden*, a large suspended canvas from this series, she embroidered botanical fabrics from coastal Mexico into a canvas that had been printed in the forest to capture the shapes and textures of local vegetation.

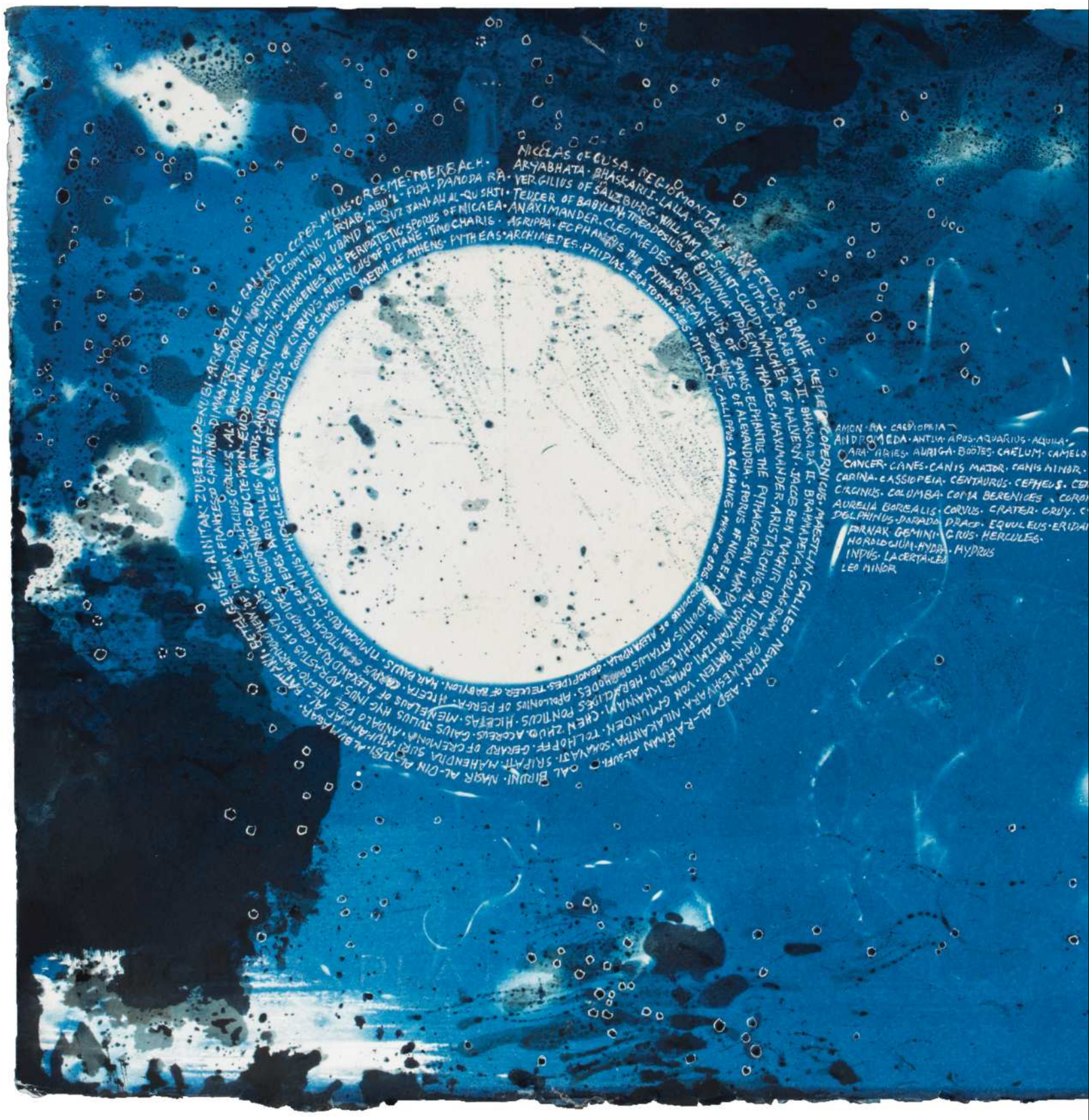
As Holsberry's work demonstrates, process-based artmaking embodies reflection, meditation, conscious mark-making, and careful selection of materials. She finds all this in the coastal shoreline and neighboring forests that have become her studio. Each step is intentional and informed by her desire to study, and in turn reflect through her art, the complex interconnectedness of the world's oceans and other ecosystems. Her work is a reminder of the beauty and fragility of the natural world and the increasing need for environmental awareness and protection of oceans and natural habitats worldwide.

JAN MARLESE
Director, Horton Gallery
Stockton, California



Prima Materia, 2013, acrylic, ink, collage, and wax on panels, 48 x 48 in.

ARTIST STATEMENT



Ancient Astronomers,
2021, cyanotype and ink on paper,
17 x 20 in.

As an artist with a background in teaching, environmental law, and the healing arts, my observation of natural phenomena has made me increasingly aware of the delicate interconnections in the world around us, as well as changes in the ecosystem. I draw inspiration from my childhood spent on the waterways of the Florida Gulf Coast, where I was strongly influenced by time spent outdoors–both through objective observation of the natural world, and subjective and emotional connections to it.

In my work, I enjoy the sense of freedom in experimenting with materials and the surrendering of some control inherent in working with unpredictable elements. In particular, I use the experimental photographic process of cyanotype, exposing paper or fabric coated with UV-sensitive emulsion to outdoor light. When I bring these works back to the studio, I enhance them with meditative mark-making and the addition of pigments, inks, wax, and embroidery.

Although references to the natural world or found materials serve as my starting point, I am often reaching toward something more ephemeral and fleeting–a world that lies beyond the physical realm, where things are sensed but unseen. My curiosity about the mysterious, sublime world of the imagination brought me to Process Painting, a method that gives greater rein to the unconscious. This process-driven approach has allowed me to more fully integrate the internal landscapes of emotion and the unconscious into my poetic representations of the natural world.

Tidal Surge, 2021, cyanotype, ink, and wax on paper on panel, 14 x 11 in.

*Sea Floor Awakenin*g, 2024, cyanotype and encaustic on paper on panel, 14 x 11 in.

Site-Specific Installation, 2017, mixed media, dimensions variable

Traces, 2017, cyanotype on paper with acrylic, 36 x 132 in.

Secret Garden 1-4, 2023, unique lumen prints, sun-exposed photograms with found botanical material, 14 x 11 in. each

Roses 1 and 2, 2024, paint and encaustic on panel, 8-in. diameter, each; *Rose 3*, 2024, paint and encaustic on panel, 7-in. diameter

Secret Garden, 2024, embroidery and pigment on canvas on oak board, 41 x 115 in.

Left: *Lost Bouquet 2*, 2018, cyanotype, paint, and embroidery on paper, 21 x 21 in.

Right: *Lost Bouquet 5 and 6*, 2023, cyanotype and embroidery on paper on panel, 12-inch diameter, each

Falling Feathers 1, 2019, cyanotype and acrylic on paper, 36 x 28 in.

BIOGRAPHY

Ann Holsberry grew up on the Gulf Coast of Florida where she was strongly influenced by the culture of nearby New Orleans. She attended Randolph-Macon Woman's College in Lynchburg, VA, where she majored in fine arts and was active in leadership roles and campus activities. She taught art in public schools for several years, and went on to earn a master's degree in urban and regional ecosystem planning at Cornell University and a law degree (JD) studying at Cornell and UC Berkeley. She continued to paint as she practiced law for twelve years in the San Francisco Bay Area, raising her son as a single mother during part of that time.

She eventually left the practice of law to devote more time to painting and to exploring the body-mind connection through the transformative power of art. She also worked as a practitioner of Rosen Method Bodywork and Movement and taught workshops in Painting Process and Movement. For the past two decades she has spent part of each year living and working in Paris where she finds inspiration in the rich artistic and cultural history of France. Accordingly, much of her ongoing work is an examination of the migratory patterns of both people and animals across the globe.

Her work has been shown in numerous exhibitions nationally and internationally, with solo exhibitions at venues including the Morris Graves Museum of Art (Eureka, CA) and the de Saisset Museum of Art (Santa Clara, CA). She has held numerous residencies, and her work is in public and private collections throughout the United States and Europe. Her work has twice been selected for the City of Emeryville Art In Public Places Program, and she is a recipient of two Berkeley Civic Arts Grants.

ANN HOLSBERRY

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All works courtesy of the artist.

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