

American Underland



Artist Daniel Duford stands in front of his painting *Paisley Caves*.

Art appreciators gathered to welcome artist Daniel Duford at the opening reception for his exhibit “American Underland” at Archer Gallery on October 1. The exhibit closes on December 20, so if you missed the reception, you still have time to visit this exhibit.

Duford chatted with guests, who included Clark students, staff, faculty, and community members.

He created all the exhibited work after his January 2024 residency at PLAYA in rural Summer Lake, Oregon, a land of open spaces and sagebrush at the edge of the Great Basin.

Standing in front of his painting *Paisley Caves*, he spoke about how spending a month in that landscape influenced his art. He spoke about walking across shallow, frozen lakes and taking in that landscape. He observed and said, “I took a ton of photos.”



Gallery Director’s Statement: I was initially drawn to Daniel Duford’s work because of his rich color palette and the unique mix of painting, drawing, and ceramics in his practice. I also appreciate how he combines landscape imagery with shamanistic and folkloric symbols to lead the viewer on a poetic journey—a deeper sense of time and space is brought to the forefront.

Our country is coming up on an election and, at times, the campaigns have felt shallow or short-sighted. In other words, the problems and solutions seem to have a four-year expiration date. This exhibit presents an alternative look at our country. The work on display depicts North American landscapes, characters, and stories that have long roots and deep time.

“That sense of time and change connects us to the larger, living world. That’s true deep time,” Duford says in an interview for Artsy.com. My hope is that this exhibit is both visually evocative for viewers and starts conversations around what it means to be American. Archer Gallery is excited to welcome this engaging political show that is refreshingly non-partisan just in time for the election.

American Underland events

- *Exhibition: September 16 – December 20*
- *Saturday reception: November 2, 1-4 p.m.*
- *Artist Talk: October 15, 1-2 p.m. (in person, PUB room 161)*
- *Virtual artist workshop: November 7, 1:30-3:30 p.m.*
Zoom: <https://clark-edu.zoom.us/j/89432337559>



Artist Daniel Duford stands in front of his sculpture *Wellspring Processional Gonfalon*.

Artist’s Statement about American Underland: The motifs filling these new works are the Janus head, coyotes, and processions. Janus is the Roman god of doorways, of endings and beginnings. The double-faced god presided over city gates marking times of war and peace. Old Man Coyote too has many faces. He is the Changeable One. Coyote the deity created death, the stars, and lots of chaos. His stories are bawdy, absurd, and alive with the electricity of a living landscape.

Coyote the animal has a complicated relationship to the United States’s history of Puritanical programs of extermination and persistent resilience. The procession is an image I’ve long been interested in. From Goya’s penitents to Courbet’s *A Burial at Ornans*, the procession can be solemn, grotesque, mocking, or an exuberant carnival.

Given the flowing energy of protest movements in the past several years, I see the image of the procession as an image of collective soul. I am more interested in the chthonic

energies rumbling beneath the ground and lava flows animating the collective unconscious of the nation.

About the artist

Daniel Duford is an artist, writer, and teacher. His work tells stories drawn from North American history and mythology. He is a 2019 John Simon Guggenheim Fellow, a 2010 Hallie Ford Fellow, and a recipient of a 2012 Art Matters Grant. His murals and public art can be found throughout Portland. His books include *John Brown's Body*, *The Unfortunates Graphic Novel*, *The Naked Boy*, and *The Green Man of Portland*. His work has been shown at MASS MoCA, The Atlanta Center for Contemporary Art, Maryhill Museum, Bellevue Arts Museum, Clay Studio, The Boise Art Museum, Museum of Contemporary Craft, PICA, and The Art Gym at Marylhurst University. Residencies include MacDowell, Crow's Shadow Art Center, and Ash Street Project. His writing has appeared in *High Desert Journal*, *Parabola*, *Artweek*, *ARTnews*, *The Emily Dickinson Award Anthology*, *The Organ*, *The Bear Deluxe*, *Ceramics Monthly*, *Ceramics: Technical* and *Ceramics: Art and Perception*. His work has been reviewed by *The New York Times*, *The Village Voice*, *New York Press*, *The Albany Times Union*, *The Oregonian*, *Sculpture Magazine*, *Art Papers*, *Artweek*, *The Willamette Week* and *The Portland Mercury*. He is currently the Visiting Professor of Art at Reed College and Creative Director at Building Five in Portland, Oregon. [Learn more here.](#)

About Archer Gallery

Archer Gallery serves the students and community of Clark College by exhibiting contemporary art in a not-for-profit educational setting. In order to exhibit work that has a strong interest for an academic institution, the gallery brings work that fulfills at least one of the following criteria.

- Regionally, nationally, or internationally exhibiting professional artists
- Artwork that has a strong connection to new contemporary art concepts or methods
- Artwork that connects to Clark College Art Department curriculum and programs
- Works by artists with significant historical influence on contemporary art practices

<https://www.clark.edu/campus-life/arts-events/archer>

Photos: Clark College/Susan Parrish