

Face Time: Kate Katomski — art in industrial ruins

By **Kathryn Skelton, Staff Writer** - June 17, 2018

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Through her artwork, Kate Katomski has celebrated quarry ruins in Vermont and Tennessee, and now she's on to Maine.

She's interested in the natural environment, who worked there and what the stones built. An exhibition of her collages, sketches and watercolors will appear at Kimball Street Studios in Lewiston through June 27, and this Tuesday, June 19, she'll give a talk about her work at 5:30 p.m. at the Lewiston Public Library.

Why quarries? Why Maine? We asked.

Name: Kate Katomski

Age: Mid-career artist

Lives: Portland

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How did pursuing your artwork start for you? My first career was in horticulture and alternative environmental design. I was taking evening classes to fulfill my passions for art history and ceramics. At this point in time, I was selected as a young professional to travel to mainland China. We visited historical sites, agricultural communes, art museums, universities, medical facilities and complex engineering projects. We also visited porcelain, textile and jade factories. It was on this trip that I decided to pursue art as a career. I received a bachelor of fine arts degree in ceramics with a minor in textiles from the University of Washington, in Seattle, and an MFA from Maine College of Art. I worked as a professional artist and art educator in New York City for 30 years and have recently moved to Maine. Living in Maine has allowed me to focus on my studio work.

What made quarries stand out as a point of interest? I've had a lifelong attraction to old ruins, and make a point to visit them on my travels. The quarries are industrial remains left behind from facilities that were made by man to extract the earth of its bounty, that now lay

fallow. There's something beautiful watching mother nature reclaim what was once hers. Observing this process appeals to my love of architecture and botany. The contrast between the lush color and organic line of nature and the sharp, geometric line of the cut stone and industrial waste inspires composition.

Can you talk about the quarry or quarries you're studying in Maine? I received an Artist Project Grant from the Maine Arts Commission to begin research for "Quarry Project – Maine." I was awarded the Stephen Pace House Residency in Stonington on Deer Isle by Maine College of Art during the summer of 2017, which launched the project. I knew Stonington was once a thriving port for the industry and I was familiar with the Deer Isle Granite Museum.

I've explored, photographed and sketched Crotch Island Quarry, Green Island Quarry and Settlement Quarry. During the winter and spring of 2018, I visited the Vinalhaven quarries. I've used the Maine Historical Society, the Deer Isle and Vinalhaven Historical Society as resources. I am interested in what architecture masterworks were built from Maine granite and the local and immigrant history that worked in and managed the quarries. More quarries will be added as research develops.

What can people find of yours at the Kimball Street exhibition? A collection of prints from two series, Quarry Project – Vermont and Quarry Project – Tennessee. I combine printmaking and photographic processes: lithography, etching, chine colle, silkscreen and cyanotype. I use marble dust, maps, archival images of the quarries, my own photographs and sketches of the quarries to create the compositions. The selected prints from the Tennessee series were created in collaboration with master printer Beauvais Lyons, using pink Tennessee marble as the litho stone. Some of these prints were used in a multi-media video presentation, which was featured at the Knoxville Museum of Art. This exhibition introduces Quarry Project – Maine, which is a work in progress. It displays my process and the materials used to research and set a course of how I will proceed with describing the granite quarries of Maine. Also, included is a mixed media sculpture that honors the role of women in quarry communities

What do you hope people take away from the work? The prints and sculpture layer both past and present. They expose architectural history and social history. I would feel a sense of accomplishment if people go away seeing, feeling the pulse I see in these industrial ruins.

You moved to Maine full-time two years ago after decades in NYC. What's been the biggest adjustment? Having to own a car. In NYC, walking was my mode of choice for transportation. If I needed to go far, I could take advantage of New York City's amazing and

comprehensive public transportation system. While Maine has many lovely and wonderful things about it that I truly enjoy, I do miss my walking.

A must-see spot or thing you'd tell someone from Maine visiting New York this summer on vacation that they need to check out? The Metropolitan Museum of Art – Cantor Roof Garden. Friday nights are free. A stunning view of Central Park, East Side, West Side and Midtown, with a summer sunset over the Hudson River — it's a plus.

Must-see spot you'd recommend in Maine to someone traveling here? Stonington on Deer Isle.

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Kate Katomski (Submitted photo)





One of Kate Katomski's quarry-inspired pieces of art. (Submitted photo)

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