



EVA MCCAULEY  
SPLENDID ISOLATION





*Splendid Isolation (Under the Soaring Sky),*  
5' X 4' oil on birch panel, 2020

**S**plendid Isolation is a series of new oil paintings exploring themes of isolation, uncertainty and transience during the strange and surreal time of a global pandemic.

In his novel, *Kafka on the Shore*, Haruki Murakami wrote:

*Once the storm is over you won't remember how you made it through, how you managed to survive. You won't even be sure, in fact, whether the storm is really over. But one thing is certain. When you come out of the storm you won't be the same person who walked in.*

The paintings in this exhibition are my response to the pandemic of 2020-21, during which there has

been an ongoing struggle to make sense of our shifting world.

The paintings are mostly night scenes, both urban and rural, and inhabited by solitary figures that are dissolving, shifting and not very tangible. Even the ground is shifting beneath their feet. Night is a liminal and solitary time.

They inhabit places that I have been in the past. There is a loose narrative suggested in the paintings, unresolved and open ended. The narrative is deliberately unresolved, to convey the feeling of uncertainty and unpredictability, with everything in flux.

I have been using a combination of printmaking and painting techniques when





*Splendid Isolation (Approaching Storm),*  
40" X 50", oil on birch panel, 2021

executing my paintings. When I create monotypes I use a reductive approach, by pulling away dark ink with my fingers to create light and reveal form. I've been using a similar process in my paintings which creates imagery that mysteriously emerges in a haptic way. This way of working is conducive to creating a powerful feeling of light, created by strong tonal and colour contrasts: acrid greens and yellows, purples and saturated reds. The intensity of the colours in the paintings are deliberately oppositional to mirror the intensity of feeling that comes with recreating a memory of a time and place while the outside world is in turmoil.

These paintings embrace uncertainty and a feeling of fragmentation, but also unveil a beauty arising from creating in solitude, with transitional realizations and insights. Like many artists, I am accustomed to working in isolation, however, this time of the pandemic has created an increased intensity of experience that is having a profound influence on my painting process. As the daily tragedy of this pandemic continues, my studio feels, even more than usual, like a place of urgency and regeneration,

a sanctuary during a time of conflicting political tensions, and personal & social constraints. There is fear in the air, and uncertainty clings to every interaction. What was familiar and predictable no longer is so.

The COVID-19 pandemic has already deeply disrupted our social and cultural structures and wrought unimaginable damage on the global economy. Everything is in flux. Commerce has come to a grinding halt as restaurants, bars, universities, day cares, public schools, cinemas, hair salons and art museums are shuttered. The great financial insecurity and strain around the world is palpable as people lose their jobs, and as self-employed artists lose their gigs. The paintings that I am working on reflect this uncertainty and intensity, communicating the feeling of unpredictable transition and fluctuation.

This is reflected in the paintings through strangely lit environments of strongly contrasting light and colour, inhabited by solitary figures. We are living through a life-transforming time with an unseen



*Splendid Isolation (Night Swimmers, Red Sea)*  
42" X 48" , oil & beeswax on birch panel, 2020





*Splendid Isolation (Tempest), 40" X 48" ", oil on birch panel, 2020*

*[continued on the bottom of page 4]*

enemy that is grim and frightening, yet also strangely abstract.

I cope with this strange reality in part through the act of painting which is how I understand and process the world. I also have simplified my life, paring it down to just myself, my paints, my panels and the solitude of my studio. This isolation I have experienced daily in my studio has been a splendid isolation, a time of rich contemplation and feelings of gratitude. Isolation became for me a vehicle for introspection and creativity. Over the course of this year of COVID, I have noticed that the things most important to me have become amplified, things like human

connections and the time and space to create, to meditate, to slow down and to be in the moment. Making art helps me to process my memories and experiences, to find connections and to understand the world. All my paintings contain the echoes and scars of my own life.

Paradoxically, this calamitous and challenging year has offered me many more small and unexpected gifts than has any year I can recall. Life feels so fragile these days, on both a global and personal level, yet so much sweetness has emerged from all the struggle, anxiety and adversity. Beauty is being spun from bleakness during this time of transition.





*Splendid Isolation (Night Swimming)*, 4' X 5', oil/mixed media on birch panel 2020

## B I O G R A P H Y

Eva McCauley is a painter and printmaker known for her atmospheric, expressive paintings of sky, water and shifting landscapes that explore the passage of time and the transient and ephemeral nature of the spiritual and physical world. She is also a figurative artist, and is fascinated with the human condition, and the fragility of our existence. She divides her time between her studios in Bear River, Nova Scotia, and Elmira, Ontario, painting people and places that are steeped in personal significance. She has also spent a significant amount of time painting and printmaking in

Ireland, where she was invited to be artist-in-residence at the Cill Rialaig Artist Residency in County Kerry seven times.

Her work explores the process of recollection and how we process memories. Her focus is not on the recreation of a specific image or moment, but the creation of something informed by the act of remembering -- an act which renders past experiences as ephemeral, and constantly in flux, resulting in works which perpetually shift, their images lyrical, ghost-like, and ethereal.

She studied visual art at the Ontario College





Splendid Isolation (Dog Days of Summer),  
20" X 20", oil on birch panel, 2020

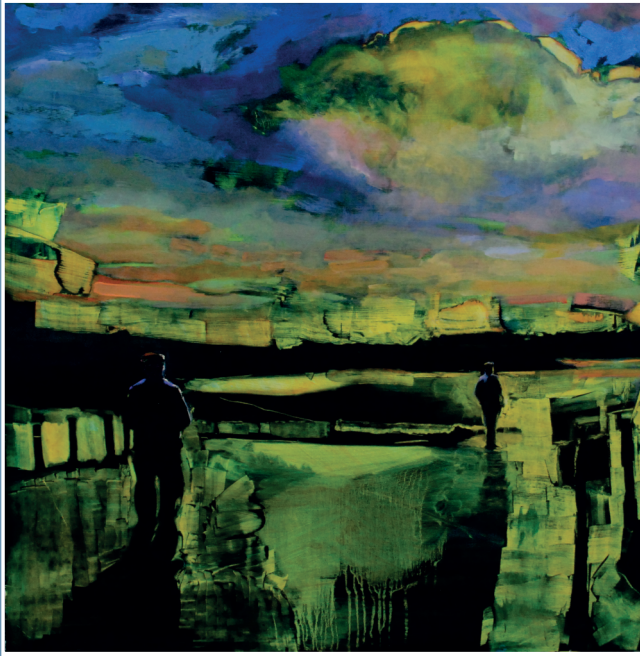


Splendid Isolation (Turquoise House at Night),  
42" X 48" ", oil on birch panel, 2020



Splendid Isolation (Night City),  
40" X 48", oil on birch panel, 2020





Splendid Isolation (Man by the Dingle Pier),  
24 x 24", oil on birch panel, 2020



Splendid Isolation (Neon Night Sky),  
30" X 30", oil on birch panel 2020

## B I O G R A P H Y c o n t ' d .

of Art and Design, receiving an O.C.A.D. diploma in drawing & painting (1983), a B.F.A. from University of Guelph (1994) and a M.F.A. from University of Waterloo (1996).

She has exhibited internationally and nationally, with solo exhibitions at ARTsPLACE Gallery in Annapolis Royal, N.S. (*Splendid Isolation*, 2021); St. Thomas-Elgin Art Centre, St. Thomas, ON (*World's Edge*, 2014); Wandesford Quay Gallery in Cork City, Ireland (*In/Visible-a print installation*, Aug/Sept. 2012); Limerick Printmakers Gallery, Limerick, Ireland (*In/Visible*, 2010); Elora Centre for the Arts, Elora, ON (*Solas agus Scáth*, 2009), Kitchener Waterloo Art Gallery (*Momento Mori*); Open Studio, Toronto (*Ruptured Time*); Bau-Xi Gallery, Toronto (*Colour of Memory; Mutable as Water; Gaze*); and solo and group exhibitions at Harbinger Gallery, Waterloo; the Kitchener Waterloo Art Gallery (*2nd Biennale*, 2005); and the Castellani Museum in Lewiston, N.Y. (*Crossing Borders*). Her work is included in collections in Canadian Embassies all over the world and is part of a Canadian boxed set

collection sponsored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

McCauley is the recipient of a number of awards and scholarships, including the W.O. Forsythe Painting Award (1983), Bronfman Printmaking Award (1993), Warner Lambert Printmaking Scholarship (1994) "Best in Printmaking Award" at the Toronto Outdoor Art Exhibition (1996), "Ernst & Young Purchase Award" (1996), a Canada Council "Quest" Grant for Emerging Artists (2000), two grants from the Waterloo Region Arts Fund (for the *Face to Face Project* in 2017; *Splendid Isolation* in 2019) as well as several Ontario Arts Council grants. Her work can be found in many private and public collections such as the Kitchener Waterloo Art Gallery, Wilfrid Laurier University, Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Waterloo Regional Labour Council, and the Ernst & Young Canadian Print Collection.

She is an art educator and has been a sessional professor of Fine Art at the University of Waterloo since 2002.

[www.evamccauley.com](http://www.evamccauley.com)





Splendid Isolation (The Sea Was In A Beautiful Boil),  
42" X 48", oil on birch panel 2020

# EVA MCCAULEY

## SPLENDID ISOLATION

**ARTSPLACE**

**ARTSPLACEGallery**

**April 24 / June 6, 2021**

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