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There is no disputing the signs: Danko was meant to be a painter

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Susan Danko, Grassland, Acrylic on Canvas 28"x 30"

Along with accident and coincidence, there is "synchronicity" -- the experience, as one online encyclopedia defines it, of having things happen in a way that suggests an underlying pattern.

Meet artist Susan Danko, who cites her "mixed-up" path toward becoming a painter, as if to apologize.

"I always knew that I wanted to be an artist, put it that way," she says, "but when I was younger, I wasn't sure how to get there. One day, my husband and I sat down and I said, Art is something you've really wanted to do. Why don't you go to art school?"

"It was like a dream," she adds, a bolt from the blue.

But once Danko graduated from the Cleveland Institute of Art in 1998, the underlying pattern began to form. Galleries immediately responded to her advances. Pinned to her wall is a recent issue of Angle magazine, which featured her painting "Grassland" on its cover.

After winning a prize at the Butler Institute of American Art in Youngstown, she was scooped up by Cleveland's A-list Bonfoey Gallery. And now she is joining a group of about 20 artists to bid farewell to E. Gordon Gallery in a show that runs through Saturday, Dec. 16.

The synchronicities pile up in Danko's light-filled Parma studio:

There is the bulletin board of randomly clipped images -- plant forms, a Chanel ad -- that almost perfectly mirror the finished collage (called "Years") on the opposite wall, except that the latter is marked by her exquisite eye for the circulation of color and form.

There is the view of the woods through the studio's glass doors, forlorn reality on a rainy November morning, and the partly finished painting Danko has set in front of it, echoing and rebuffing rainy November in radiant green and gold.

In other words, Danko's visual language is something she is able to "read" backward or forward -- from reality to artifice and back -- even if its exact grammar remains elusive.

"I came to realize that when you put what you like in a painting, it's so much stronger," she says. "It seems like such a simple thing, but there are so many ideas you could pursue."

For Danko, one critical idea is the uneasy intersection of nature and technology, particularly the way that "no matter how far away you get, technology is still there. . . . I like the idea that nature may take over, branches wrapping around towers and wires."

Or, as Ezra Pound once put it: "There is so much beauty / How can we harden our hearts?"
But beauty can exact a price.

"There were a lot of times when I almost quit," Danko says, "but then something would come along and I'd keep going. I'm starting to think this is what I'm supposed to be doing."

Hardly an accident.

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