LAND HO! FITCHBURG PAIRS HISTORICAL WITH CONTEMPORARY

"Land Ho!" the impressive new show at the Fitchburg Art Museum (FAM), is a must-see. Mary K. Tiitti's sixth juried project resulted in the result of nearly one year of extensive research on FAM's permanent collection up until her being named for contemporary New England art, Koch Curatori- cal Fellow Cindy M. Marzoccia, whose knowledge of 19th and 20th century American Art brought to light the personal stories behind many of the treasures that FAM owns, pointed toward. The results are stunning and wide ranging, pulling into focus the evolution of landscape painting, mark-making and recent contempo- rary approaches to this genre.

The exhibition is installed in nearly all of the newly renovated galleries on the second floor and bridge of the museum. Nick Capasso joined FAM nearly three years ago, and with his appointment as director came some big changes. Every single gallery has been renovated except for one, and going forward every rotating exhibit will be devoted to contemporary art.

ON A MISSION

"New England artists tend under- scored by their local art institutions who have nurtured their sights to national and international artists," Capasso said. Therefore, this mission is to feature them at FAM, "Land Ho!" is the second in an ongoing series of exhibitions pairing contempo- rary artists in conversation with the artwork in their collection (the first featured the still the genre two years ago). A forthcoming show will focus on portraiture.

If the Fitchburg Art Museum has mounted a show of landscape paint- ings, drawn solely from its permanent collection, there would be obvious gaps. By helping historical works in dialogue with works by contemporary artists, Tiitti creates a conversation of art historical connections. Images by Charles Burchfield, Edward Hopper, Charles Sheeler and Rockwell Kent are hung together, the shore's press release noted, "in a magnificent interpretation, interpretive, intertwining, multi- modal mash-up of landscapes old and new, iconic and fantastic, urban and pastoral." At the entrance, one is greeted by twelve Twisting Humper's majestic "Canyon". Hering's approach to landscape was fueled by neoclassical, political, and imaginative renderings by a generation of artists whose influences differ greatly from one another. 'If landscape by definition entices, "as expansive of scenery that can be seen in a single view" (Bateman's New York), then this show is sure to expand new's definition to include a multiplicity of approaches to the subject. The exhibit is punctuated by such brilliant pairings as Sally Curcio's "Metropolis," with a memory landscape from the Alps people at a Democratic viewpoint of the Congo. These historic "labor" are made of wood and bees, serving as a blueprint of royal family compounds. Another such collaboration is Sandy Libbitt's "Turn Around Town" and Michael Kury's "Malidistant Almo- rath," such pairings and other style pairings that bring to life the show's theme of "Land Ho!" literally words expert.

Leila Deny's "Calling the Earth to Witness" is copious, not in style, but because she is the first to balance the two. She is an artist who responds to an outdoor presence with a deeply profound message that we share the same story when the world. In a similar vein, Sue Mckinlay takes an iconic approach to landscapes in her "This Land is My Land" where she represents each of the 50 states in a single canvas. Artists such as Carla Crane expand our notion of landscapes to include imaginative, her layered pieces referencing topographical hiking maps.

Warren Findlen's collaboratively influenced paintings are crafted into bent and shaped canvases that evoke light lines. Her works blur the line between interior and exterior landscapes. Likewise, Michelle Laurit's work observes the organic shapes of the landscape as they intersect with the geometric shapes of the built environment. Perhaps the most curious of all are Shore Mccormick's lyrical, atmospheric scenes of familiar locations with fanciful titles, alluding to a world of invisible phenomena.

The exhibit runs through January 10.