



EVA MCCAULEY  
SPLENDID ISOLATION



**Splendid Isolation** (Blinded by the Light Shining on the Sea),  
40" x 50", oil on birch panel, 2020

**S**plendid Isolation is a series of oil paintings exploring themes of isolation, uncertainty, and transience during the strange and surreal time of the global pandemic but also, simultaneously, of enhanced connections, and deepening of the creative spirit.

This has been a time of renewal as we explore new ways to live. Many of us are re-examining our existence and what is most important to us, as we emerge from the pandemic, finding new meaning in our transformed lives as we plot a course in still uncharted waters.

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."*

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The paintings in this exhibition are my response to the pandemic of 2020-22, during which there has been an ongoing struggle to make sense of our shifting world. These paintings embrace uncertainty and a feeling of fragmentation, while also unveiling a beauty arising from creating in solitude, resulting in transitional



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

realizations and insights, during a time of conflicting political tensions, and personal and social constraints. This is reflected in the paintings through strangely lit environments of strongly contrasting light and colour, inhabited by solitary figures.

Most of the images are night scenes, both urban and rural, and inhabited by solitary figures who are dissolving, shifting and not very tangible. Even the ground is shifting beneath their feet. They inhabit places that I have been in the past.

**T**here is a loose narrative being created 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 use a combination of printmaking and painting techniques when executing my oil paintings. When I create monotypes I use a reductive approach, pulling away dark ink with my fingers to create light and reveal form. I have been using a similar process in my paintings, creating

imagery that emerges mysteriously in a haptic way. This generates a powerful feeling of light, created by strong tonal and colour contrasts: acrid greens and yellows, purples, and saturated reds.

Like most artists, I am accustomed to working in isolation, however, making art during the pandemic created an increased intensity of experience that has had a profound influence on my painting process. My studio feels, even more than usual, like a place of urgency and regeneration-- a sanctuary. This has been a pivotal time for my painting, because of the gift of time and space provided by the lock down, and the focus I have been able to bring to my work, to explore new ways of working with a renewed sense of purpose and urgency.

We are living through a life-transforming time with an unseen enemy that is grim and frightening, yet strangely abstract. I have coped with this strange reality through the act of painting which is how



**Splendid Isolation (Night Swimmers, Red Sea)**  
42" X 48" , oil & beeswax on birch panel, 2021



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

I understand and process the world. I have simplified my life, paring it down to just myself, my paint, my panels, and the solitude of my studio. The isolation I have experienced in my studio has been a splendid isolation, a time of rich contemplation and feelings of gratitude. I have noticed that the things most important to me have become amplified, things like human connections, and the time and space to meditate, slow down, and be in the moment.

Paradoxically, this challenging time has offered many more small and unexpected gifts than any period of my life I can recall. Life feels so fragile these days, on both a global and personal level, yet much sweetness has emerged from the struggle and adversity.

Beauty is being spun from bleakness during this time of transition. Indeed, splendid isolation.



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 of



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



Splendid Isolation (Quarry Swimmers at Night),  
36" X 36", oil on birch panel, 2022



Splendid Isolation (Night City),  
40" X 48", oil on birch panel, 2021



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 2021  
Collection of the Nova Scotia Art Bank

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

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 (*Memento 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) and received an Arts Nova Scotia "Creation" Grant in 2022. Her work can be found in public collections such as the Nova Scotia Art Bank, 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

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## SPLENDID ISOLATION

**ARTSPLACE**

**ARTSPLACE Gallery**  
**April 24 - July 31, 2021**  
396 St. George St.  
PO Box 534  
Annapolis Royal, NS B0S 1A0  
902-532-7069  
arcac@ns.aliantzinc.ca

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