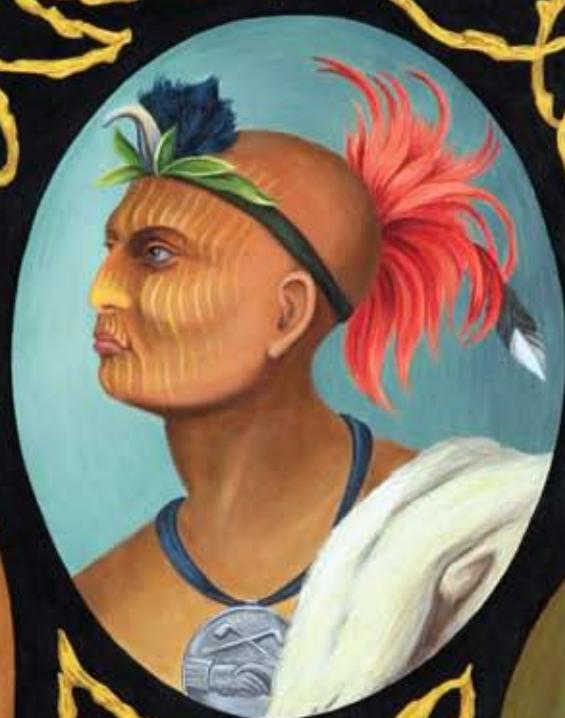


AMERICA



Beautiful & Possibility

Dangling Man

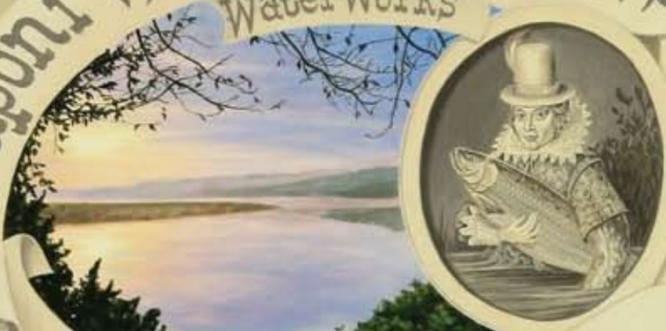
The American Challenge



CLAIM YOUR DEMONS

21st C. Cowboy vs. Indian

Mataponi vs. Newport News
Waterworks



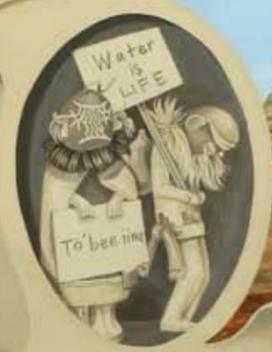
Grassy Narrows



vs. Abitibi & Weyerhaeuser
Boreal Forest, ONT
2002-2008

King William Co. VA
1986-Present

Hopi & Dineh vs. Peabody Coal



Black Mesa, AZ
1970-2006



VILLAINS



ALISON PEBWORTH

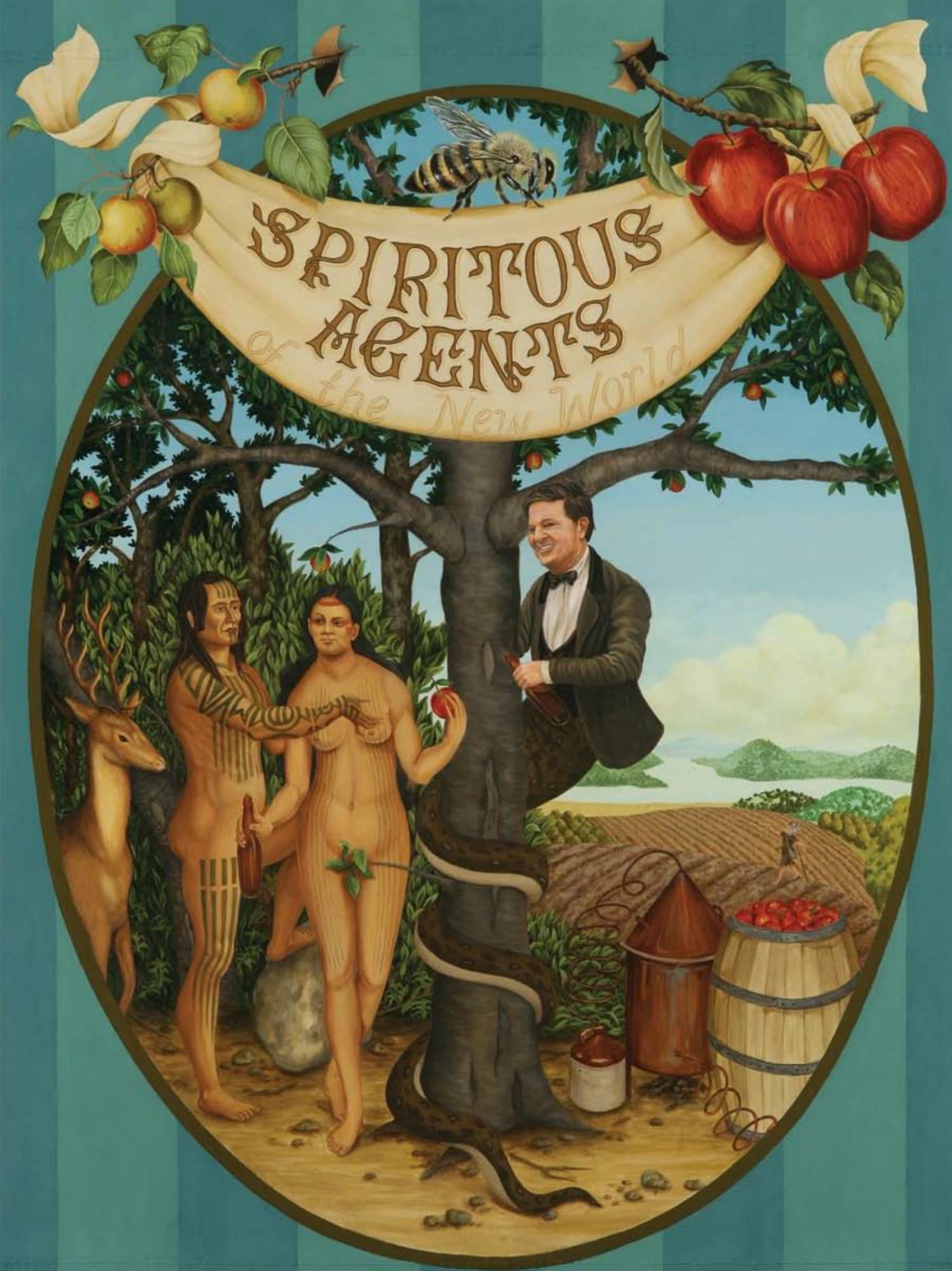
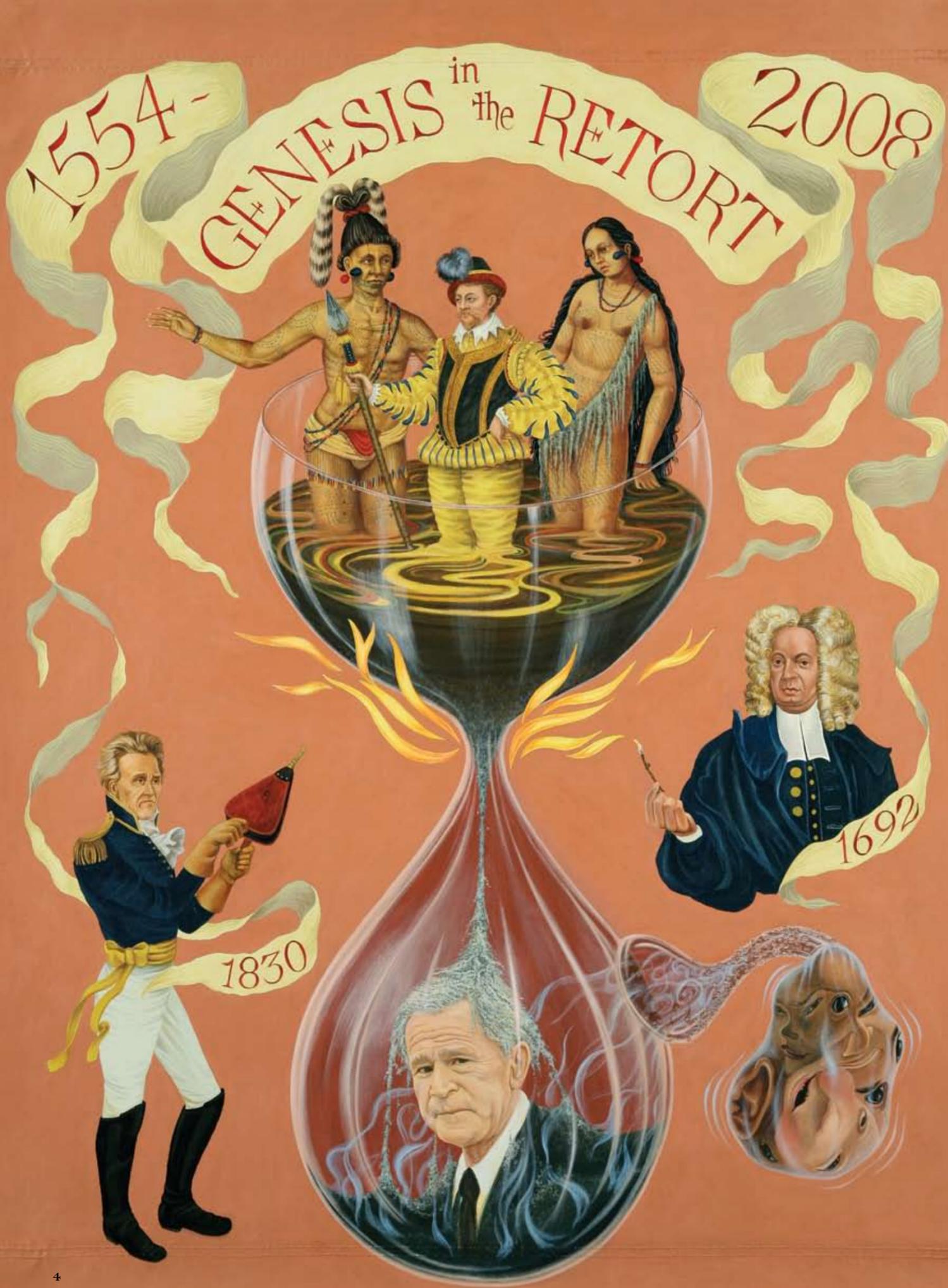
Beautiful Possibility

by Rebecca Solnit

AMERICAN IDEALISM made Alison Pebworth want to be more than just a painter who sent her works out as orphans into the world. Admiration for everything from the expeditionary artists of the early nineteenth century—Karl Bodmer and George Catlin among them—to *Buffalo Bill's Wild West* made her want to tour her work and present it as though she herself was a snake-oil salesman or a Chautauqua speaker bringing wonder to the backwaters and remote reaches of the country. And in each place she visits (or visited in 2006 on her *Looking for Lost America* road trip), Pebworth gathers up insights and attitudes; she is a listener as well as a presenter, and the people she meets are invited to be more than an audience.

One of the most potent elements of Pebworth's America is that it is primarily an interior realm—the vast space between the coasts, the places where the country looks in on itself rather than out to other lands; where it looks at its past, the site where the Indian wars left their traces and many of the Native peoples still live, the small towns from which the soldiers who fight today's wars often come. It's in these places that we might reach back and then forward; these were the haunted lands, the places of séance and reincarnation and vision.

Beautiful Possibility is a project whose aesthetics rhyme with its intentions, for these paintings recall *McGuffey's Readers*, old Sears catalogues, patent medicine labels, circus and wild-west-show posters, paintings on the sides of barns and wagons, the vernacular world of art made for the everyday and for everywhere, not for the rarified world of art museums and galleries. The project reaches back to these old forms of visual communication and forward to the socially engaged art of her peers, the art not about social ties and ideals but engaged with those things as they exist, or with altering them. Pebworth's work speaks to that old effervescent language of hope and hype beneath which lie the older American dreams of transformation, of beautiful possibility. In her work is the unbroken continuity of our history, which is both the best and most tragic thing about this country, its curse and its dreams mixed up together and flapping in the wind.





A NEO-PILGRIM'S

ROAD MAP to LOST AMERICA!



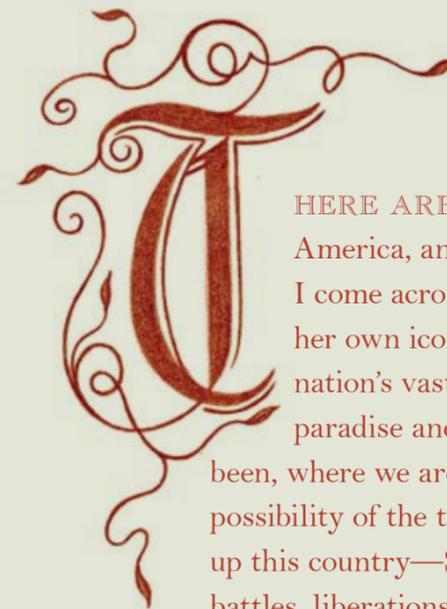
- 1 COWICHAN
- 2 KLALLAM
- 3 KWALHIOCUA
- 4 FLATSKANAI
- 5 KARCK
- 6 HUPA
- 7 TURATULABAL
- 8 KAWAIIISU
- 9 CAHUILLA
- 10 HALCHIDHOMA
- 11 MARICOPA
- 12 CHAKCHUMA
- 13 WISHAM
- 14 TENINO
- 15 UMATILLA
- 16 MOLALA

LEGEND

- HISTORIC TERRITORIES - NOT SUBJECTS TO PATENT © 1800
- MAJOR HIGHWAYS TRUCK OR BUS-OPERATIONS © 2004
- LOOKING-LOST HISTORY TOUR BOARDSIDE SHOW & TELL 2006-2007
- BEAUTIFUL POSSIBILITY TOUR 2010-2011







HERE ARE SO MANY AMERICAS, so many interpretations of America, and Pebworth's digs deeper and rings truer than most others I come across. Like the alembic she paints in *Genesis in the Retort*, her own iconographic imagination distills the forgotten histories of our nation's vast interior, the racial mixes and conflicts, the dreams of paradise and hustles of peddlers, into a mirror that reflects where we've been, where we are, and where we may be heading. This could be the beautiful possibility of the title, the sense that if you know the ingredients that make up this country—Sacajawea and P. T. Barnum, itinerant dreams and land battles, liberations and massacres, hybridizations and erasures—you can make the future from them. The old explorers took sextant and telescope to establish a position in the wilderness. They did it for mapping and for conquest; some of us do it now in the hopes of a reverse exploration, a rediscovery of what was overlooked, overwritten, repressed. Pebworth's work is nothing if not a counter-discovery mission to the people and for the people (and by one of them, a quiet woman from Texas). Here in paint, in landscape and figure and letters, are our metaphysical latitude and longitude.

The southern novelist William Faulkner, who made up his own world of Yoknapatawpha County, famously remarked that "the past is not dead. It's not even past." That's a slogan you could put on the elixirs one might sell at a road show like Pebworth's. It seems fitting that the first time I typed *elixir* I had mistakenly written *exile*. There must be an elixir of exile too, bitter as wormwood, and it might belong in the medicine show here: eau d'alienation. But here are draughts to swallow and go home and a proposal that everyone should go home, whatever home means. Go home with a map on which the thousand Indian nations are still marked, in which there is instead of California a region made up of dozens of disparate nations, and in which Wichita is a tribe, not a town. And know too that *Americanitis* is the title of a book Pebworth dug up, a 1925 book whose full title is *Americanitis or the High Pressure Life*. This is a disease she wants to cure, it seems, and the patent medicine in her wagon is thoughtfulness.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

[Images are listed in order of appearance. Characters are listed clockwise from the top left]

-
- cover* **America: Beautiful Possibility**, acrylic on canvas, 42" x 30"
Euladah Equiano, Tahcoloquoit (Sauk and Fox Chief), Olive Oatman
- inside cover* **Dangling Man**, acrylic on canvas, 42" x 30"
Dick Cheney, Black Hawk, Seven Sisters (Devil's Tower)
- page 1* **21st Century Cowboy vs. Indian**, acrylic on canvas, 42" x 30"
Pocahantas, John McCain (Arizona Senator), Jack Abramoff, John Sterling Boyden
- page 2* **North American Totem**, prisma-color on paper, 14" x 11"
Haida Eagle, Quatchi, Betty Boop, Luchador, Cuauhxi-calli (Aztec Jaguar)
- page 4* **Genesis in the Retort**, acrylic on canvas, 42" x 30"
*Andrew Jackson, Chief Athore (Terre Florida), Rene De Laudonniere,
 "Queen" of Chief Saturiba (Terre Florida), Cotton Mather, George Walker Bush*
- page 5* **Spiritous Agents of the New World**, acrylic on canvas, 42" x 30"
Minatarre and Cree Indians (Idealized), Tom Delay, Johnny Appleseed
- page 6 & 7* **A Neo-Pilgrim's Road Map to Lost America**, acrylic on canvas, 45" x 72"
Tatsi (Cherokee Chief), Jeep (Chief Cherokee)
 Map depicts Native Territories of North America, pre-European expansion (Ca.1600), overlaid with contemporary major highways.
- page 8* **Remembrance. Remonstrance. Re-union.**, acrylic on canvas, 42" x 30"
*Hiawatha (Onondaga), American Eagle, Hendrik (Mohawk Sachem),
 Martin Luther King, Jr., Benjamin Franklin, Thunderbird*
- page 9* **Dynamical Systems**, acrylic on canvas, 42" x 30"
*Eagle and Bear (Haida), Quatchi, Sumi, Butterfly Maiden (Hopi), Betty Boop,
 Progress (Manifest Destiny Goddess), Bear Stearns Bull, Steamboat Willie,
 Tlazoteol (Aztec), Luchador*
- page 10* **Borderless Migration (Dynamical Systems)**, prisma-color on paper, 14" x 11"
- inside cover* **Travels in the Interior (1832)**, prisma-color on paper, 14" x 11"
Mandan Bison Headdress, Karl Bodmer
- back cover* **Beautiful Possibility Still**, acrylic on canvas, 42" x 30"
*Robert Johnson, Hami (Koskimo), Sojourner Truth, Nellie Bly, Sarah Winnemucca,
 Buster Keaton, Mary Purnell, Tshizunhaukau (Winnebago)*
-

This publication was produced in conjunction with Alison Pebworth's *Beautiful Possibility* project at Southern Exposure in San Francisco from March 12 – April 24, 2010.

Alison Pebworth, *Beautiful Possibility*
 WWW.BEAUTIFULPOSSIBILITYTOUR.COM

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ESSAY: Rebecca Solnit

COPY EDITOR: Scott Tennant

SoEx is a nonprofit visual arts organization that supports emerging artists and youth in a dynamic environment in which they can develop and present new work and ideas.

An active presence in the Bay Area since 1974, the organization evolves in response to the needs of artists and the community, engaging the public in the artists' work. SoEx supports artists through three main program areas including the *Exhibitions Program*, *Artists in Education Program* and *Alternative Exposure Grant Program/Artists Resources Program*.



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