

HESSE FLATOW

(2026, February 23). "Sarah Blaustein: Internal Landscapes." *STAMPS School of Art and Design at the University of Michigan*, online.



Sarah Blaustein: Internal Landscapes

FEBRUARY 23, 2026



Sarah Blaustein. Photo: Cayce Clifford

Sarah Blaustein, an alumna of the Penny W. Stamps School of Art & Design at the University of Michigan (BA '04), creates lush and evocative paintings that explore sensation and memory. In her intuitive practice, she works primarily with acrylic, ink, and water. Raised in a suburb of Oakland, California, Blaustein now lives and works in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Blaustein's work has been included in several major exhibitions, including *Overture* at Night Gallery (2024, Los Angeles, California), *Analytic Third* at Hesse Flatow (2025, New York, New York), and *Sarah Blaustein: Present Tense* at the Institute of Contemporary Art San José (2023, San Jose, California), alongside other group exhibitions. In September 2023, art historian Laura D. Corey of the Metropolitan Museum of Art spoke about Blaustein's work at a private salon, *To Radiate*, hosted by Berggruen Gallery (San Francisco, California):

"It's the things that kind of bring us life as individuals. When someone is radiating something, they are really bringing life to those around them. It's that recognition of something intangible... That to me, is where Sarah gives what she gives us."

From March 28 to May 30, 2026, Blaustein will present new paintings in *Field Guide*, a two-person exhibition with textile artist Christy Matson at [Library Street Collective](#) in Detroit. In advance of her return to Michigan, we caught up with her to learn more about her creative practice, her time at the university, and her advice for the next generation of artists and designers.

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Stamps: Tell us about your time at the Penny W. Stamps School of Art & Design at the University of Michigan. What memories do you cherish? What aspects of your experience helped to shape your creative and professional practice?

Sarah Blaustein: Michigan was instrumental in my development as an artist. I internalized the school's action-oriented ethos, which encouraged me to advocate for myself, improve the lives of those around me, and pursue painting. In my senior year, I requested that Stamps fund a multi-week project in Scotland and France. The school approved, and I had an incredible time making work in a new environment. It's a large school where speaking up for yourself and asking for what you want is an essential skill. This continues to shape how I live and work.

The studio classes and spaces enabled my growth. I learned how to work during long, liminal periods, to focus deeply and let the rest of the world fade away. I pushed myself to new physical limits, which was a gift — once I learned to work in that space of exhaustion, I could paint with both my body and my mind, not just with my mind. My painting became deeper and more embodied.



Sarah Blaustein, *Blue Survey*, 2026, ink and acrylic on canvas, 40×60 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

Building a successful studio practice can be challenging. What has kept you grounded and motivated as you've built your career?

Building a practice is the hardest thing I have ever done. But I haven't needed much motivation, because I can't imagine doing anything else. I'm a painter. This is who I am. If anything, pacing myself is a bigger challenge.

Being an artist requires a tricky negotiation between devoting yourself to your work and remaining permeable to external influences. I established intentionality and best practices in my studio early on, and it took me a while to rediscover the sense of looseness and play that invigorates my paintings and keeps them moving in exciting new directions. I've found the most success in my work when I'm both looking inward and feeling open to receiving whatever the world is sharing with me.

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Sarah Blaustein, *Green Swirl*, 2026, ink and acrylic on canvas, 24×20 inches. Courtesy of the artist.



Sarah Blaustein, *Opening Green*, 2026, ink and acrylic on canvas, 40×40 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

What advice do you have for Stamps students who are considering a career in studio art?

I recommend pursuing art if you are compelled to. It's a difficult path, though very fulfilling and rewarding if it's what you want to do. Take advantage of diverse class offerings as well. Although I knew I wanted to be a painter, I studied ceramics, art history, and even poetry. These outside interests offered different perspectives on creative practice, giving me a greater well to draw from in my paintings.

Why is it important for practicing artists to give back to the next generation? How does this take shape in your professional practice and personal ethos?

I'm grateful that artists have shared insights about my work and discussed best practices. When given the opportunity, I am happy to provide feedback to younger artists.

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Sarah Blaustein, *Mapping A 1*, 2026. ink and acrylic on canvas. 60×110 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

What can audiences expect from your works in *Field Guide* at Library Street Collective this March? What do you hope viewers come away from the exhibition thinking, feeling, or knowing?

While working on these paintings for *Field Guide*, I was thinking about imaginary worlds and internal emotional landscapes. Each painting depicts a fleeting, fragile moment or experience shaped by our uncertain world. Every vignette is breathing and alive in its own way.

I want my paintings to allow viewers to access their own feelings and interiority. The works are abstract and open-ended and do not presuppose any particular reaction.

In your view, how do art and design create positive change in our communities in ways that other disciplines may not? How does this take shape in your creative work and practice?

Art marks the passage of time and highlights new ways to create. It is a long-term testament to human ingenuity, creativity, and the capacity for change. Great art is powerful and helps humans access profound ideas and experiences that are hard to encounter in our daily routines.

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Sarah Blaustein, *Synesthesia Lilac Pink*, 2026, ink and acrylic on canvas, 40×30 inches. Courtesy of the artist.