

Where Do We Stand?

The ground perpetually shifts beneath us. The change of seasons freezes and thaws the soil. Roiling magma ruptures Earth's crust. Life, in its many forms, roots, burrows, and otherwise shapes and textures the surface. In our ever-changing world, humans draw invisible lines called borders and build mountains, fill land, and dam water, and thus lay claim to places, regions, and territories. What does it mean to find our place on Earth, in Pittsburgh, or on the grounds now occupied by Carnegie Museum of Art?

In this gallery, the museum curators bring together artworks that reflect on the artists' place in time and history—from Robert S. Duncanson, who recorded his presence by painting the American landscapes he traversed in the antebellum era, to Cauleen Smith, who explores geology to think deeply and broadly about contemporary life. Artists here represent land as powerful, sacred, bountiful, and beautiful, all the while addressing human histories of violence and dispossession of its Indigenous stewards and forced agricultural labor. This gallery charts a dynamic range of emotions expressed by artists in their creative response to their environment, like a seismograph that records Earth's rumblings—both felt and unfelt. In its many representations here, land teaches and urges us to ground ourselves and know where we stand in relation to our mutable world.