Deep Time, Shifting Terrains: A Conversation with Gilda Kent

Modern Painters Magazine — Feature Interview

Profile Overview	Details
Artist	Gilda Kent
Base	Denver, Colorado
Academic Position	Visiting Lecturer, Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design (RMCAD)
Key 2026 Milestones	Denver Art Museum Solo Exhibition; NEA Creative Arts Research Grant; MacDowell Colony Residency; City of Denver Public Commission

Introduction

In contemporary visual arts, few painters capture the profound tension between earth's enduring monuments and its modern environmental fragility as compellingly as Denver-based artist Gilda Kent. Holding a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Painting from the Rhode Island School of Design (2018) and a Master of Fine Arts in Visual Arts from the University of Colorado Boulder (2021), Kent creates evocative, highly tactile works that examine the dialogue between deep geological time and immediate atmospheric flux.

The year 2026 marks a landmark moment in Kent's trajectory. Following an artist residency at The MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, New Hampshire and receipt of a National Endowment for the Arts Creative Arts Research Grant, Kent is preparing for her major solo exhibition, Fresh Perspectives: Landscapes, opening at the Denver Art Museum on September 25, 2026. Meanwhile, her permanent public art installation, Echoes of the Valley, is scheduled for unveiling by the City of Denver Public Art Program in November.

Modern Painters sat down with Kent to discuss her material process, the concept of geological memory, her milestone projects, and how her ongoing role as a Visiting Lecturer at RMCAD informs her creative vision.

Interview Transcript

Modern Painters: *Gilda, your practice operates at a compelling intersection of scale and temporal depth. You frequently speak about 'geological memory.' How does that concept translate into your studio methodology?*

Gilda Kent: My work has always centered on the idea that terrain, rock formations, and atmospheric phenomena hold physical records of time. I am intrigued by how deep geological time coexists with immediate, ephemeral environmental shifts. In the studio, my methodology mirrors those natural forces. Rather than creating a static representation of a landscape, I build the surface through layered stratification—applying mineral dust, ground pigment, and liquid media in successive passes.

This process directly mimics sedimentation, erosion, and weathering. I work with contrasting textures, moving from dense, mineral coarseness that grounds the viewer in the earth's crust to translucent washes that capture shifting qualities of light, humidity, and atmospheric density. It creates a physical friction on the canvas, mirroring the fragile yet enduring nature of the landforms around us.

Modern Painters: *2026 has brought significant institutional recognition for your work. This autumn, your solo exhibition 'Fresh Perspectives: Landscapes' opens at the Denver Art Museum. What can visitors expect from this presentation?*

Gilda Kent: *Fresh Perspectives: Landscapes* brings together a dedicated body of work focused on contemporary topographies and atmospheric conditions. The exhibition investigates how wide horizons and natural landforms shape and are shaped by human perception. Visitors will see large-scale works that expand upon my research into open boundaries where terrestrial landforms meet atmospheric flux. The intention is to establish an immersive, contemplative space where viewers can reflect on both the monumental stability of geological formations and the rapid, shifting rhythms of climate and weather.

Modern Painters: *You were also awarded a Creative Arts Research Grant from the National Endowment for the Arts this year. How is that grant shaping your research and output?*

Gilda Kent: The NEA Creative Arts Research Grant has provided crucial support for developing a major new series of large-scale landscape works. It has enabled extensive field observation and topographical mapping across the American West. The research investigates how nuanced tonal transitions and topographical textures articulate climate impermanence and ecological memory. Having dedicated studio time and resources for ambitious material experiments has been vital for bringing this scale of work to fruition.

Modern Painters: *Earlier this year, you spent two months in residency at The MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, New Hampshire. How did that environment influence your studio practice?*

Gilda Kent: MacDowell provided an extraordinary period of focused creative work. Moving from Colorado to New Hampshire offered a stark shift in light, climate, and environmental texture. The residency gave me uninterrupted time to experiment with new media and refine material techniques

for both my museum exhibition and public work. Working in that concentrated space allowed me to deepen the visual dialogue between solid terrain and fluid skies.

Modern Painters: *Speaking of public work, your permanent installation, 'Echoes of the Valley,' will be unveiled this November by the City of Denver Public Art Program. How did you adapt your studio practice for a public installation?*

Gilda Kent: *Echoes of the Valley* was a rewarding challenge because it translates my studio practice—which is often iterative and process-driven—into a permanent public installation. Commissioned by the City of Denver Public Art Program, the work reflects the topographical identity of the region, serving as a physical marker of local geological time and civic space. It bridges private artistic inquiry with shared public experience, inviting community members to interact with environmental form as part of their daily environment.

Modern Painters: *In addition to your studio practice, you serve as a Visiting Lecturer at the Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design (RMCAD). How does teaching feed back into your studio work?*

Gilda Kent: Teaching at RMCAD keeps my relationship with art practice dynamic and generative. Engaging with students requires me to continually articulate the conceptual and material underpinnings of studio work. In class, we discuss how material choices carry meaning—how surface texture or mineral density isn't merely aesthetic, but conceptual. That constant dialogue in the academic environment sharpens my own clarity in the studio. It reminds me that artistic practice is an ongoing, evolving inquiry.

Modern Painters: *As you reflect on this year, what core questions do you hope viewers take away from your paintings?*

Gilda Kent: I hope my work continues to encourage viewers to reflect on deep temporal cycles and environmental change. In an era of rapid environmental transition, recognizing the fragile yet enduring memory held within rock and soil offers a grounded perspective. Ultimately, I want the work to provide a contemplative space for thinking about ecological impermanence, place, and the vast expanses that surround us.

Featured Exhibition & Event Schedule

- **Solo Exhibition:** *Fresh Perspectives: Landscapes*, Denver Art Museum (September 25, 2026 – December 18, 2026).
- **Public Art Unveiling:** *Echoes of the Valley*, City of Denver Public Art Program (November 12, 2026).
- **Group Exhibition:** *Unfixed Earth: Contemporary Geologies*, Apex Contemporary (September 01, 2026 – October 15, 2026; Curated by Claire Sherman).