



# LADIES AND LANDSCAPE



# BARBARA FEDELER



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Many of us have long admired Barbara Fedeler's panoramic drawings of her ancestral landscape in Northeast Iowa. A large part of their power comes from their deep space and virtual lack of human presence. It is the strength of these works that make this new exhibit especially interesting.

It is always risky and vulnerable for an established artist to explore a new direction. For the last number of years, Fedeler has been looking into an eccentric and unexpected source. She started clipping obituaries of elderly women, some rural, some urban, from the local newspaper. It is remarkable how much character, humor and dignity is revealed in the faces found in these simple public announcements. In Fedeler's new artworks, they become a tender evocation of the collective memory of a community.

Scott Robert Hudson  
Director  
Waldermar A Schmidt Gallery





## Barbara Fedeler Artist Statement | Ladies and Landscapes

The personal histories of these women, powerful in their shared threads and distinctive as individuals, speak to me of Iowa domestic histories and women's work.

The ladies represent ongoing experiments with format, media, and subject. While my major work for a decade has been the Iowa landscape seen from the hills of northeastern Iowa, the ladies relate to subjects from my past, including abandoned farmhouse interiors and small businesses run largely by women. The obituary photos and text are a narrative of changing times and lives, cultural legacies of housewives, farm and factory laborers, teachers, and nurses, and other professions new to this generation of women. Each lady has a name, a name that suggests heritage and community and is distinctive to her time and place. The women chosen for representation have a singular photographic presence, name, or life story.

In 2003 I began keeping the obituary photos and notices of women from the Waterloo Courier. They had interesting names, faces, or life stories. It is difficult to explain my attraction – even now – 7 years later with an overwhelming collection of faces, names, and succinct biographies. I have always liked old things, including names, paper, textiles, and dishes. The obituary ladies are a relatively compact and distinctive collection!

Most of the wallpaper was salvaged from my great uncle Eben's home in northeastern Iowa, and many of the papers date from the early to mid 20th century. Many are ordinary, dull-colored patterns. Some are more exotic and more scenic. They are all fragile, varied in texture, and smell musty.

The rolls of paper with multiple ladies have been drawn with chalk pastels/pencils or painted with gouache. The chalk material is easily moved around, erased, and layered. The single image pieces are collages, using wallpaper for the background, and ink, graphite, gouache paint and for the text and images. All images are drawn or painted from small ( $\frac{3}{4}$ " x  $\frac{3}{4}$ ") black and white newspaper reproductions.

# LADIES



*Map Ladies 2010 5" \* 8.5"*



*Scroll Ladies*



*Book page Ladies 8" \* 5.5"*

# LANDSCAPE



*Looking East* willow charcoal 2009 27" \* 20"



*Northeast of Volga City* willow charcoal 2008 17" \* 48"