

DB: I was recently working on an essay on Edward Abbey, who wrote *Desert Solitaire*, for the *New York Times* on the fiftieth anniversary of that book. And 2019 is the hundredth birthday of the Grand Canyon becoming a national park, so right now I'm looking at a book by a man named Joseph Wood Krutch called *The Grand Canyon*. He wrote the best book in my opinion on the Grand Canyon, and we're trying to get it reprinted, with a new introduction.

So I'm constantly trying to go back as a historian and find classic books that pertain to the wilderness and get them back in print and shed a new spotlight on them. And the other thing that's more of interest to me these days is the issue of environmental justice, such as recognizing the importance of Cesar Chavez's fight against pesticides and the public health concerns of that. And there's a book I highly recommend called *Women Strike for Peace* by Amy Swerdlow. She deals with women from the peace movement in the 1960s and with all the women working on the antinukes movement and beyond. Right now I'm very high on *Women Strike for Peace*, as I recently discovered it, and Joseph Wood Krutch's *The Grand Canyon*.

EM: Your book on Alaska, *The Quiet World: Saving Alaska's Wilderness Kingdom*, stresses that the saving of natural resources is essentially a never-ending battle that must be fought against commodification and development. My mother was a ranger at the Grand Canyon, and its preservation was more or less the most important thing in her life. Losing the fight for Glen Canyon devastated her as well as many others. Has there been a fight you've been especially emotionally invested in?

DB: Yeah, the big one for me, and the prompt for writing *The Quiet World*, was that I went camping up in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge [ANWR] in Alaska, and then I spent time in the Brooks Range, and it's the most beautiful country, the amount of teeming wildlife and solitude. Arctic Alaska was really a spiritual journey for me. So whenever I can, I've tried to protect that part of the world from oil and gas drilling. Dwight Eisenhower created ANWR in 1960, and they discovered oil in it in 1968, and ever since, people have been looking to gouge our nation's biggest wildlife refuge.

I feel like I'm a great protector of that particular ecosystem. But I'm also very concerned as I speak to you about what's going on in Lake Erie. The Great Lakes don't have a Sierra Club operating in earnest up there. Lake Erie was cleaned in the 1970s and '80s, only to end up in terrible condition right now.

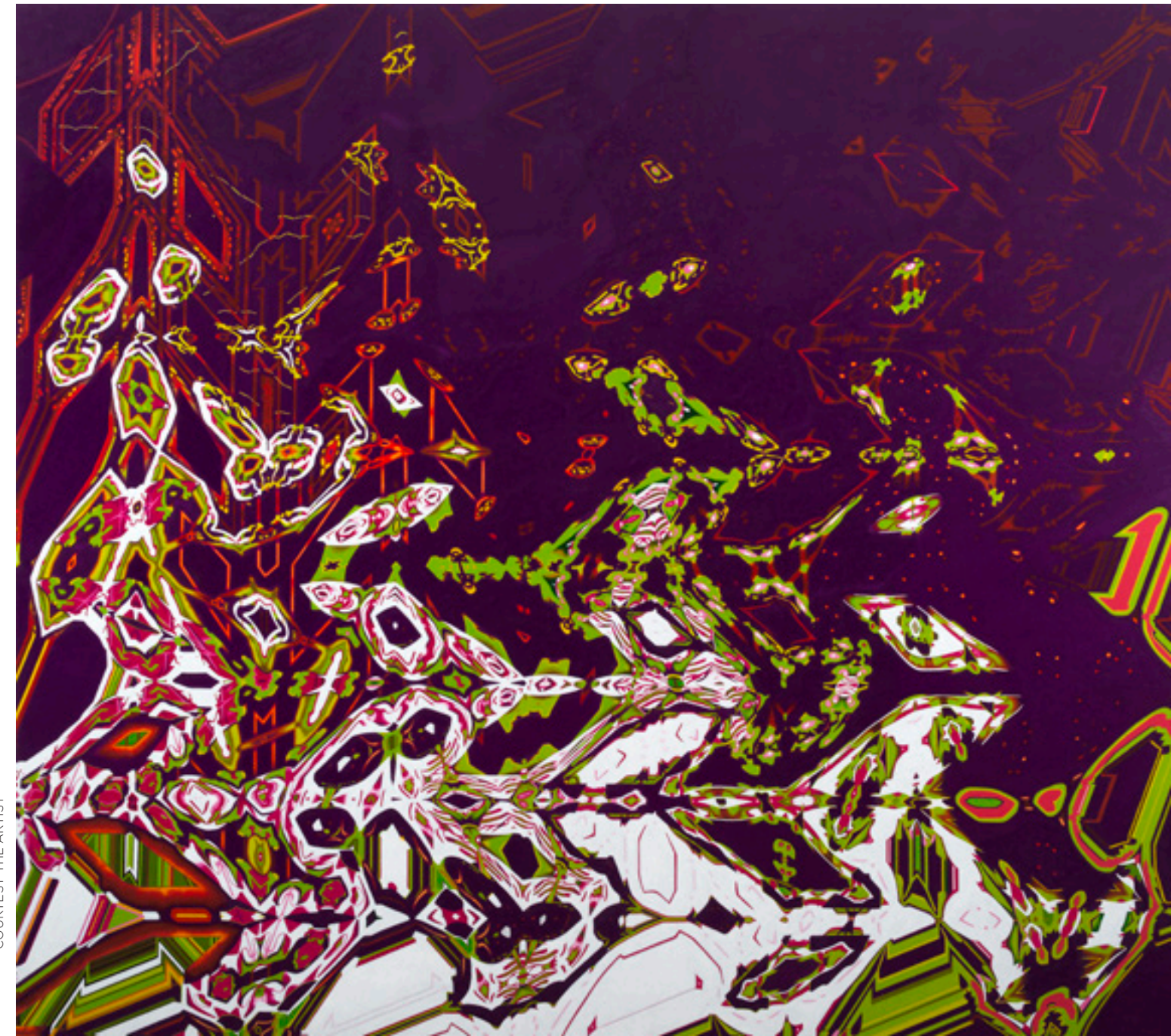
And so, you just have to keep weighing in with op-ed pieces, testifying before Congress, writing articles, books, and just doing your part. I try to go to as many college campuses as I can to talk about American wilderness and the preservation of public land.

Douglas Brinkley is the Katherine Tsanoff Brown Chair in Humanities and Professor of History at Rice University, a CNN Presidential Historian, and a contributing editor at *Vanity Fair*. In the world of public history, he serves on boards, at museums, at colleges, and for historical societies. The *Chicago Tribune* dubbed him "America's New Past Master." The New-York Historical Society has chosen Brinkley as its official U.S. Presidential Historian. His recent book *Cronkite* won the Sperber Prize, while *The Great Deluge: Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans, and the Mississippi Gulf Coast* received the Robert F. Kennedy Book Award. He was awarded a Grammy for *Presidential Suite* and is the recipient of seven honorary doctorates in American studies. His two-volume, annotated *Nixon Tapes* recently won the Arthur S. Link-Warren F. Kuehl Prize. He is a member of the Century Association, the Council on Foreign Relations, and the James Madison Council of the Library of Congress. He lives in Austin, Texas, with his wife and three children.

Elizabeth McKenzie's novel *The Portable Veblen* was long-listed for the National Book Award for fiction and received the California Book Award for fiction. Her work has appeared in the *New Yorker*, the *Atlantic*, *The Best American Nonrequired Reading*, and others. McKenzie is the managing editor of *Catamaran Literary Reader*.

IRA UPIN

Still Life, 2016
Oil on panel, 72 x 80 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST