

In Medias Res:

Into the Middle of Things

An MFA thesis

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Submitted to the College of Creative Art

at Miami University

Spring 2025

Wild Geese by Mary Oliver

You do not have to be good.

You do not have to walk on your knees

for a hundred miles through the desert repenting.

You only have to let the soft animal of your body

love what it loves.

Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.

Meanwhile the world goes on.

Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain

are moving across the landscapes,

over the prairies and the deep trees,

the mountains and the rivers.

Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,

are heading home again.

Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,

the world offers itself to your imagination,

calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting -

over and over announcing your place

in the family of things.

Introduction

This poem sums up my feelings toward art, toward life, and how these feelings have developed in the past few years. In this time my attitude toward painting has become more personal but at the same time, I feel more universal. For now, I feel grounded in the call and response of perceptual painting that is captured in this poem. This game of marco-polo with the world as it is described in the last four lines of the poem are also reflected in the title of this paper, *In Medias Res*, meaning “into the middle of things.” Originally, this term is a literary device for beginning in the middle of an action, coming back to exposition only after, if at all. This device is known to be used in Homer’s *Odyssey*. Homer’s *Odyssey* has been taken as inspiration for a number of more contemporary story structures including the Coen Brothers’ movie, *O Brother, Where Art Thou*, and James Joyce’s *Ulysses*. *Ulysses* in particular has had a profound effect on my worldview and intersects with concepts of embodiment philosophy. My understanding of perceptual painting is molded by this confluence. I present my paintings from an embodied stance that utilizes literary metaphors.

The Middle: The Appalachian Trail, Embodiment, & *Ulysses*

Embodiment is a concept that collapses the distinction between the mind and the body, and eventually the body with the world. It states that the environment is not “other” but instead part of us (Lakoff, 566). It challenges the dualistic western narrative in philosophy, aiming at a non-dualistic theory. I find this holistic attitude in other thinkers like Goethe and Steiner. George Lakoff’s book, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, opens with three profound statements: “The mind is inherently embodied. Thought is mostly unconscious. Abstract concepts are largely metaphorical (Lakoff, 3)” to emphasize this second point, as it is crucial to my practice, he continues, “It is the rule of thumb among cognitive scientists that unconscious thought is 95 percent of all thought – and that may be a serious underestimate (Lakoff, 13).” This is a terrifying statement and can potentially undercut much of the confidence we have as individuals with a conscious will, but it has also led me to a new kind of trust and faith in myself and my environment.

While painting outside, I use my body to project empathetically into the environment. For example in my painting *Massies Creek* (2024), I approach the landscape with the similar mentality of looking for a backpacking campsite. I will traverse the available space on the beach stopping at different points on the perimeter to check for visual alignments in the distance. I kick

the sand at my feet a bit. I take a few deep breaths, trying to pull the air from the most distant part that I think I want to paint. I pet the nearest tree's bark then set up my easel next to it.

Looking out over the water I begin to observe as widely as I can muster in the moment (this



1 *Massies Creek 2024 oil on panels 22 x 25"*

ability expands or contracts depending on the day and where I am at internally) I see rocks and water below with trees arching overhead creating a space that feels both like a chapel and the interior of my mouth. I begin to think about and try to keep aware of the interior of my mouth as I paint. Similar to an animator making faces in the mirror to draw a character, I make the shape of my mouth represent the scene by widening it. At the same time I track my tongue along

the roof of my mouth while my eye and hand work in sync to paint the branches I see overhead.

The wet rocks feel like teeth. This bodily relationship to the environment and how I approach painting are a form of thinking. They are a way of conceptualizing. A hill may be a hip bone or a passing cloud might feel like my late childhood dog. While painting I sometimes imagine what it would feel like if my hand was giant and came down to pet the tops of trees. Or when looking at the horizon I take a breath trying to pull in the air which I see in the distance. This expresses my need to paint from observation. Lakoff states, "A major function of the embodied mind is empathic... The capacity for imaginative projection is a vital cognitive faculty. Experientially, it is a form of "transcendence (Lakoff, 565.)" he continues, to say this has profound implications when the "meaningfulness of ordinary experience becomes the basis for a passionate spirituality (Lakoff, 566)"

I started working from memories based on my experience hiking the Appalachian Trail. Although I made a few paintings (*ref. image 9 on page 12*) and some drawings with good compositions, they felt stiff and too



2 *Philip Guston The Line 1978 oil on canvas 71 x 73"*

self-conscious. This feeling was in stark contrast to my recent experience hiking, where I felt the least self-conscious I have ever felt since I was submerged in childhood. My experience hiking was one of a parallel submergence, into nature, that had embedded in it constant novelty and empathic connections with other hikers and the natural environment. Some examples of these connections can be as simple as paying attention to the change in weather or listening to a hiker's story during a snack break. Despite this flowing, idyllic picture on the surface, it was still challenging and I was miraculously willful. I found myself completely confident I could accomplish something that I had no business thinking I could accomplish considering it was my first time backpacking. Part of this confidence was a feeling of being carried, protected, and an inherent faith in the generalized task (role) I had assigned myself. I want to express this delicate holding of seemingly opposite points of view, of will and grace (Buber, 7) in my current work and that I was missing when making paintings primarily in the studio.



3 *Tabletop Landscape* 2023 oil on panel 24 x 36"

I found I could not *tell* an audience about the qualities of this experience in a literary or narrativized way, but instead had to *be* these qualities in action and utilize the communication of painting itself where color and mark are used for expression. Because of this, I moved toward painting still-life setups from perception as seen in *Tabletop Landscape*. By sculpting trees from

imagination and painting from perception I was

able to marry some of my experience hiking with my new location in the studio.

This was an important step because I was able to paint from direct observation. Eventually, this became the key which enabled me to gain enough confidence to address the landscape directly outdoors. Painting from perception is an embodied process. Using your body as a measurement device in reference to the visual world, walking through the site, taking in color, and projecting oneself into the environment by metaphorical thought are all important aspects of making a painting. This process is what provides the proper nourishment for me to keep working. I am made present and always grasping. Martin Buber in his text *I and Thou* states how time works in the process of drawing a tree. "It is embodied: its body emerges from the flow

of the spaceless, timeless present on the shore of existence (Buber, 14).” Aided with some observation to push up against, I am able to maintain this presence. Time changes precepts constantly, more than it would when utilizing a photograph as reference, where you are the only one moving psychologically and the primary reference of a photograph does not change.

Much of my motivation in working from observation comes from a sense of play. “Nature is ennobled, while spirit is moved from its invisible height into the visible world. As formulated by Steiner, the play-drive produces artworks that satisfy our reason and whose intellectual content is simultaneously present as sensory existence (Kuuva, 40).” Hawthorne expresses a similar driving force in his book on painting saying to paint for fun and practice. This is not to be confused with an unserious predisposition. Heraclitus and Neitzche have both gotten to this point succinctly, “Man is most nearly himself when he achieves the seriousness of a child at play.” and “The struggle of maturity is to recover the seriousness of a child at play.” I have



4 Oxford Steam Plant 2023 oil on aluminum 9 x 12"

fortunately had the opportunity to play outdoors for a good amount of time as a child and this relates back to the submergence, or involvement, I felt in hiking. Hawthorne himself simultaneously presents us with the seriousness of the matter saying, “The view that you must take is that this is a piece of God’s outdoors... You ought to tremble before it, and not sit down like a magician and try to make windows (Hawthorne, 57).”

It is something like the play drive intersecting with the death drive one senses in Van Gogh’s work that motivates me. I believe this tension is present in the work, *Oxford Steam Plant*. There is a playfulness in the visual pun of a tree juxtaposed with a mound of industry in the background. Some sense of severity and urgency is expressed in the weather of the scene and in the inscription at the top of the composition where the day and time (*Apr. 4, 2023 1:00*) of the painting are recorded. Painting on hard surfaces also heightens this aspect in my process. I typically paint on smooth wooden panels, but the ice-skating-like quality of painting on aluminum makes every mark feel slippery, similar to the feeling of trying to maintain opposites while working.

I am also inspired by the modernist novels of James Joyce, particularly *Ulysses*. In his novels, he is known for creating a portrait of his home-country Ireland through a series of vignettes. Because this novel was essentially a post-modern novel written in a modernist culture, it feels very contemporary, or meta-modern. The viewer is let into the scene through a fluid stream-of-consciousness writing that prioritizes the subjective embodied experience of the characters. My approach to painting reflects this. One: because the paintings are concerned with the local landscape. And two: because I prioritize and incorporate a bodily experience in presenting this landscape.

In addition to granular bodily metaphors in the book, *Ulysses* also has a schema used by Joyce that assigns each chapter an organ of the body. For example, the chapter *Calypso* represents the kidney, while the chapter *Ithaca* represents the skeleton (Joyce). The Idea is that when reading the book, new faculties are presented to the reader's organs on a spiritual level. I



5 Example of a greek Herme



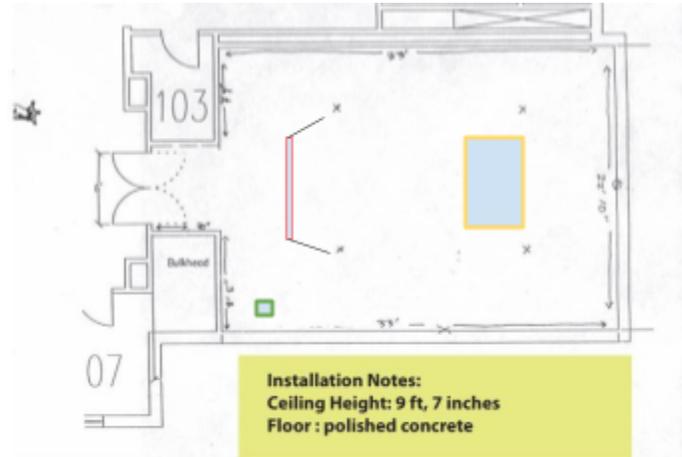
6 Installation shot containing a double-sided painting with wooden stand

would say I had a parallel experience in hiking the Appalachian Trail where there was a literal rising in my body as I walked North. Starting out my feet hurt from not being used to the weight of a pack, then my knees from the mileage, then suddenly my stomach seemed to wake up and I was hungry all the time. Somewhere in the middle of the journey I finally felt I could connect deeply with those around me (heart) and in the northernmost states, I was attuned to the sights (eyes) from drawing and taking photos while also feeling clarity and peace in myself (brain).

This idea of a schema comes about in my work in various ways, such as assigning a painting (1 *Massies Creek*) to represent the mouth. I like to think that the paintings know of each other the way a tongue knows of toes. This idea has melded with embodiment philosophy and brought about new forms in my practice extending beyond individual paintings.

In ancient Greece, a form of sculpture called hermes were used as markers in the environment to help travelers find their way. They take the form of a square pillar with a human bust on the top with a depiction of male genitals below, often with location information between the two. While traveling in Europe over winter break, I saw some double sided paintings from the baroque era, early renaissance altar pieces one could walk fully around, as well as these hermes. These were seen as foreground to the background thoughts of the numerous bulletins, signs, and even rock cairns I used to find my way on the Appalachian trail. These numerous and layered experiences, coupled with the continuous experience of me standing outdoors and painting at my french easel, inspired me to make double sided paintings and stands to present the paintings in a way that utilized a bodily motif, one that collapsed an easel, a presence, and an environment. One side is a portrait, the other a landscape to add to this bodily association. Armstrong uses Cézanne as an example of an artist whose perceptual paintings attempt at collapsing the pictorial triangle—painter, picture, viewer—into creature entities that challenge (Armstrong, 149).

The format of a schema has gotten me thinking much more about structure, or the framework my art is presented in and how that structure can reach the viewer to shape their view of it. I see the opportunity for this as greater due to the fact that many of my paintings are on the smaller side. Structures like shelves, three-dimensional stands and custom frames can reflect the body and highlight those empathic connections I feel in the environment. The layout of my Thesis show contains a schema inspired by a campsite. I have a hanging element which reflects the bear-bag (a way to hang food from a tree to keep it away from bears) and a larger framework structure which holds paintings but also a lot of air similar to a tent. Finally a backpack is found in the french easel used as a prop in the show, which incidentally I have attached old backpack straps to. Just as in *Ulysses*, the schema is a tool used by the artist to attach meaning and assign spiritual utility to work. It does not have to be understood literally and is best left to work on the audience in a slow and unseen way.



7 Gallery Mockup: red, yellow & green elements representing a schema

Spirituality & Politics

Martin Buber's text, *I and Thou* contains some relevant comments on spirituality. Prior to reading this text I inherently had thoughts about painting that are parallel to Buber's words. Reading Buber has refined these thoughts. I would often tell myself that my paintings required determination and luck and that the making of them was best approached as one would approach a deer in nature. You cannot walk directly toward the deer, but to get closer you have to take an oblique angle, getting at it indirectly. In order to reach the I–Thou relation with nature Buber describes the indirect process of addressing nature. “Timid glances move out into indistinct space, towards something indefinite...hands sketch delicately and dimly in the empty air, apparently aimlessly seeking and reaching out to meet something indefinite (Buber, 26).” After reading Buber, my determination and luck have been redefined as will and grace which he states are qualities required to transform an I–It relationship to an I–Thou relationship. Interestingly, Simone Weil also speaks on these topics attaching attention to will and intelligence to grace. Weil also says that absolutely unmixed attention is prayer (Weil, 117).

In his book, *War and Peace in the Global Village: An Inventory of Some of the Current Spastic Situations That Could Be Eliminated by More Feedforward*, Marshall McLuhan describes the death of the old sense of ‘nature’ with the birth of the satellite. He also makes a number of references to James Joyce in his books. One reference is made saying that technology has brought us into Joyce's “heliotropic noughttime” because the artifice of our collective history is constantly present. The continual presence achieved while painting from perception finds its

origin in a different source and thus achieves a different result. McLuhan also expresses the need for something to ground us, saying that “We have simply got to create anti-environments in order to know what we are and what we are doing (McLuhan, 177).” I rely heavily on satellites when hiking and often use satellite imagery when scoping out potential locations to paint. But I know there are spots in the middle of these experiences that do feel like anti-environments. For me, the purpose of perceptual painting, and plein-air painting especially, is to ground myself and find



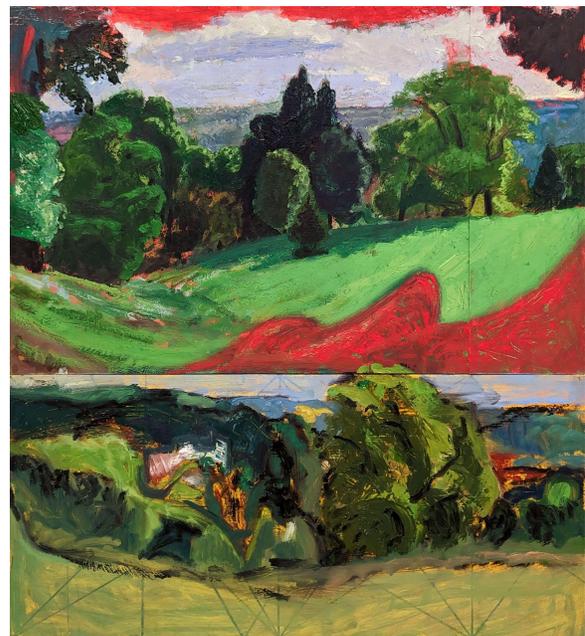
8 Main Loop Overpass 2024 oil on panel 16 x 16"

these anti-environments, internally or externally. I believe they do not have to be a physical destination; a specific spot that a satellite cannot reach, like under a bridge somewhere (although it may help) although ironically they are often public spaces. They are also not something so isolated inside oneself that others cannot relate to it. I believe the anti-environments are to be found exactly within Buber’s I–Thou relationship and the indirect walk it takes to get there. Through a sensitivity to mark and color, my work aims to present the viewer with portals into these anti-environments.

I recognize that it can seem antiquated or ineffectual to present small plein-air paintings in today’s age. Somehow this work is seen as apolitical to contemporary senses. I believe in approaching my artistic practice from the bottom-up perspective. In that, the smallest actions and forms it is built on must meaningfully contribute to the whole. I have already expressed how I arrive at the embodiment-anti-environment posture toward the world by working from perception. Briefly now, I want to express my feelings on landscape painting through the eyes of a contemporary politically motivated artist because these feelings are not absent from my work. The fact of working outdoors in the United States designates my ability to paint primarily from publicly accessed spaces, or the societal commons. In certain parts of Europe, “freedom to roam” laws would change this. It depends on the location, but an action like picking berries is protected by laws like this while more disruptive acts like starting a fire are not. I think negotiating the commons is an example of a bottom-up political approach that exists in my practice. I am

obviously a multi-user of these spaces, from rock-climbing to hiking and painting. A large part of the formation of my identity as an artist, and just more generally as a person, has taken place in public spaces. Without them I would have a much less self-actualized and less rich identity. Lakoff reminds us that our bodies are directly tied to what we walk on, touch, breath and move within. Our bodies' corporealities are part of the corporeality of the world (Lakoff, 565). "It is through empathic protection that we come to know our environment, understand how we are part of it and how it is part of us. This is the bodily mechanism by which we can participate in nature, not just as hikers or climbers or swimmers, but as part of nature itself, part of a larger, all-encompassing whole. A mindful embodied spirituality is thus an ecological spirituality (Lakoff, 567)."

I can speak to American landscape painting in the way I understand it through my process. American Landscape painting can be associated with ideas like Manifest Destiny and individualism. It is somewhat ironic that I have found and felt most naturally and privately myself in public spaces. Refiguring how we situate and conceptualize the societal commons for Americans could be something like the reintegration of indigenous perspectives. On the Appalachian trail I had some sort of familial epiphany while looking at an Eagle. It was a sober experience where contemplating the bird led to a sudden realization of identity within my familial unit. All the relationships between me and my family members were redrawn clearly and vividly. You can see a macroscopic version of



9 Mt. Storm Reverb 2024 oil on panel 20 x 23"

this identity epiphany synchronizing with the natural environment on the Mexican flag. On it is an image of an eagle on a cactus holding a snake. This image comes from the prophecy of the nomadic Pre-Aztec people. Seeing this specific image indicated where they would settle to found the city of Tenochtitlan, later Mexico City. This type of meaning-making from the everyday environment is an example of the spirituality which Lakoff describes and that Buber advocates.

While painting in public spaces, I naturally share it with other beings. In this painting, *Mount Storm Reverb*, I was between a birthday party on the right and another group of children playing on the left. One of the children from the birthday party, a young girl, came up to me as I was painting and watched me as I worked. I showed her some of my tools and ended up mixing up a peach color for her to paint some roots that were near our feet. They took the general shape of the red motif in the above panel. As I continued painting I ended up covering the peach roots with pure red which the panel was originally primed with. To me, this became a signifier of the sonic experience of making the painting. Because I was between two groups each making noise, I felt like I was in a channel of sound. The lower panel was painted at a 90 degree angle to the above panel on a different day, with different light. The title *Mount Storm Reverb* denotes the sonic quality, but also the doubling of the panel and scene at a different angle. This whole experience and how I arrived at the artwork was not entirely a conscious decision but a series of relational ones, starting with the collaboration with a young girl at a birthday party.

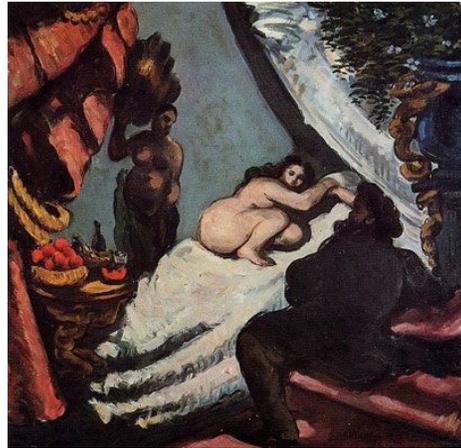
I believe this is a good example of how my practice is political, from the point of making, rather than traditionally thought of political work which is made more in isolation then presented to the public as a political thought made material. An artist working visibly in the public while sharing these spaces literally weaves and sutures the social fabric which is constantly being eroded by technology, politics, and markets. In addition to the typical passing convivial interactions, people who have simply needed someone to talk to have sat with me while I painted at a park and I have since trained in mental health first aid. I also apply Leave No Trace principles learned from my experience backpacking as best I can to plein air painting. Now, I do not believe painting is inherently more important than hosting a birthday in a public space but acting relationally contributes to this fabric and is a meaningful posture to take nonetheless.

Cezanne as Archetype & Color as Nutrient

Although I would place Corot as the bedrock for plein-air painting, I look to Cézanne most often for directionality. Looking at one of those stiff paintings made fresh off of hiking the Appalachian trail and one of Cézanne's early works, I see the trajectory of my time in the last three years as a microcosm of his and the reflection of similar impulses; starting with studio paintings with literary or romantic aspirations and moving toward perceptual work later on from a felt lack. In the preface of Roger Fry's book, *Cézanne: A Study of his Development*, Richard



10 *Bathers* 2022 oil on panel 11 x 14"



11 *Cezanne, A Modern Olympia* 1869 oil on canvas 18 x 22"

Shiff distills some important points regarding nature, the unconscious quality of working from perception, and the analogy Fry makes of the painter's mark being similar to handwriting.

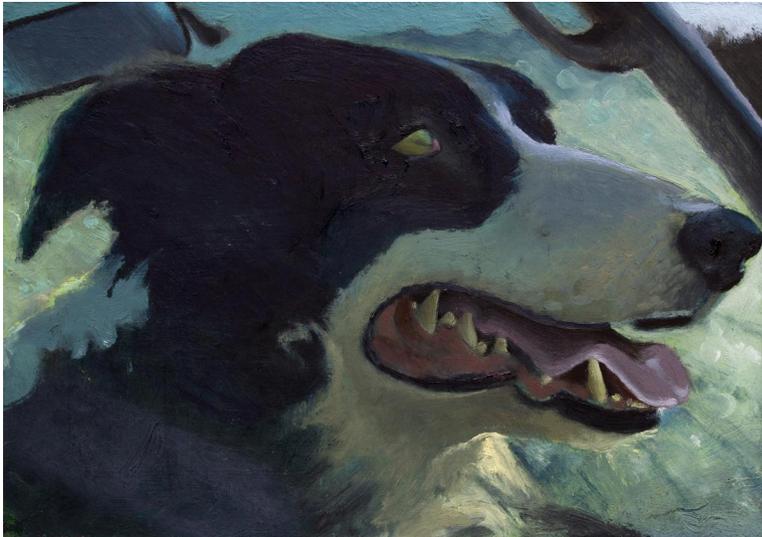
“Fry is suggesting that in the case of those who have artistic aptitude, the natural selectiveness of the eye, its unconscious attraction to certain formal relationships, is transferred immediately to the characteristic rhythmic markings of the hand. This results in eye and hand working in total harmony responsive to the harmonies to be felt in nature. In this sense Fry spoke not only of unconscious realization but of Cézanne’s idea that the artist is the means by which nature becomes self conscious (Fry, 68/Shiff, XXIV).”

In other words, by working from perception, the painting becomes a substrate to record a relational interaction between the artist’s subconscious and nature. The painting is first a representation of the gap between the artist and his subject. But, by taking the posture of Buber, through will and grace, and utilizing the embodiment described by Lakoff, what may happen is what Shiff calls a convergence (Fry/Shiff). From Buber’s perspective this convergence is the “Thou in which the parallel lines of relation meet (Buber, 33).”

Fry, who wrote about Cézanne while the artist was still alive, mainly relies on a metaphor for the application of paint to that of handwriting. He goes on to say that this is found in its purest form within the small works by Cézanne because the hand then has the ability to find

unconscious expression (Fry/Shiff, XXIV). I have found in my work that this metaphor holds true while being expanded by combining thoughts from Carol Armstrong's 2018 book, *Cézanne's Gravity* with writing about Goethe's color in *Iconosophy* by Moral.

Armstrong makes an important change to Fry's unconscious Cézanne by comparing Cézanne's point of view to that of a dog's (Armstrong, 144). Interestingly in my application to graduate school, I included a portrait of a dog. Since the painting's inception, I had considered it



12 Portrait of a Farm Dog 2021 oil on panel 9 x 14"



13 Self Portrait as a Hiker 2023 oil on panel 7 x 9"

a self-portrait. Just prior to reading Armstrong, I made a *Self-portrait as a Hiker*. Inspired by my time hiking and feeling a sort of animism, one of my goals with this portrait was to express a gaze similar to a coyote. In *Cézanne's Gravity*, the artist's color is compared to the salivary "glandular activity" in a dog's mouth; wherein "various secretions will gather in anticipation at the approach of various things—concerning ones drawing out nutrients and correcting ones to neutralize poisons (Armstrong, 149)." The result is the painting's colors making a somatic experience into something akin to an animal experience. On the nutrients and poisons, I would like to touch on the color in two paintings. *Fernald Preserve* and *The Serpent's Tail*.

Fernald preserve is a former superfund site. Due to this, a mound was made to bury the contaminated earth. Serpent Mound is a native burial mound where earth is gathered for sacred purposes. The originating mentality behind each mound is diametrically opposed. While making these paintings, the awareness of these facts transcended into a somatic color experience as described by Armstrong. Oil paint, containing toxic material and heavy metals, is squirted onto a

piece of wood and combined to particular ratios. Embedded in these ratios is the entirety of my available feelings. Utilizing these toxins and transmuting them into a painting at Fernald resulted in a pseudo-naturalistic color that borders on plastic. This very manufactured landscape which is used to keep the toxins hidden is felt in the color of the painting. Meanwhile in *The Serpent's Tail*, the color is more muted and naturalistic which I think conveys the alive yet very “dormant” feeling of the site. There is a reciprocation in the warm band of clouds and the warm cast of the greens in the new spring grass.



14 Fernald Preserve 2023 oil on aluminum 9 x 12"



15 The Serpent's Tail 2025 oil on panel 8 x 10"

The sky in the Fernald painting is nearly static. It opens to blue in the center of the top border. This lack of movement adds to an interpretation of the painting that matches its seasonality. *Fernald Preserve* was painted in August, the time of year where Summer is in its full maturation and the fullness of the foliage almost tricks you into believing it will stay this way forever. Even the name, *Fernald Preserve*, denotes this feeling of constancy. Contained in these connotations is the folly which led to such a landscape in the first place.

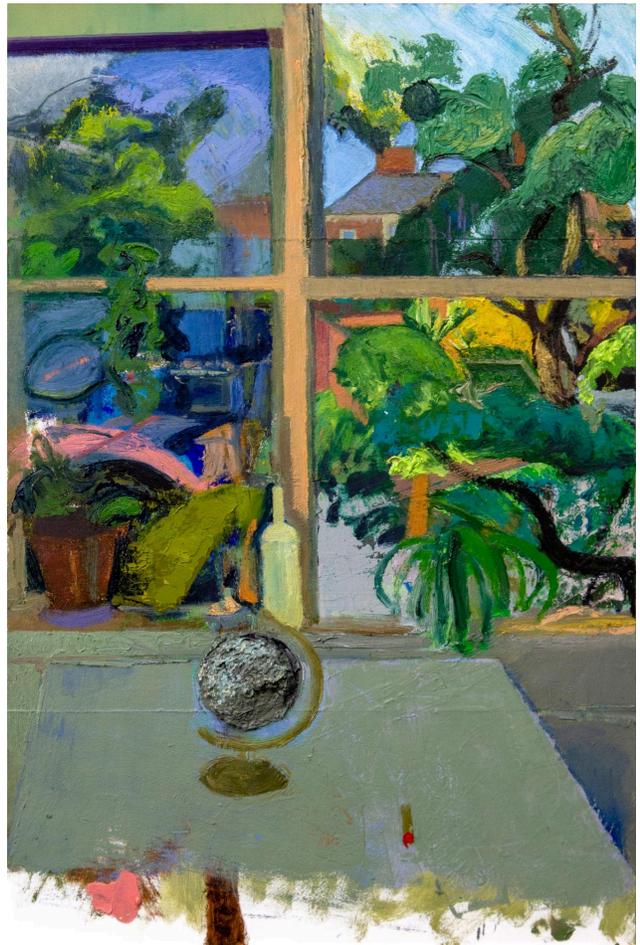
In the Serpent Mound picture the sky is more dynamic due to the diagonal slash of a warm pink. The way this slash reacts to the other diagonals in the picture by affirming or opposing them creates a responsive landscape. The color is also less contained into organized pools as it is in the Fernald painting, with more smearing and dabbing of marks. *The Serpent's Tail* was painted in March, a time of impending change, at the end of the dormant part of the cycle. Because of the conceptual frame I have positioned my work as described above. I typically prioritize *color* over the *disegno* in my compositions because colors have a direct effect over emotion that is mutable (Moral, 248). I feel I pull much of the landscape out in the palette

itself. This is the proverbial dog's mouth. Because color does not exist in the external world but only as an "interactional" phenomenon between the environment and the observer, (Lakoff, 23) it gives me a greater opportunity to search in the relational aspects of my paintings. In his book *Reductionism in Art and Brain Science* Eric Kandel reiterates this point. Color is dependent on wavelengths, however it is a property of the brain, not of the world outside (Kandel, 150). Color is processed by entirely different sections of the brain than form. Rather than the primary visual cortex, it is the regions processing emotion (amygdala) and memory (hippocampus) which also process color. Incidentally, these regions have some overlap with how we interpret and remember faces (Kandel, 146). My prioritization of color and the feeling of relation I have to landscape reflect these facts. Some of my double sided paintings contain a portrait on one side and a landscape on the other. This expresses in some way the collapse of personhood with the landscape or the internalization of the landscape which I feel when painting.

According to Moral, Cézanne said interpretation "is the logic of the eye (Moral, 249)." Goethe claimed color was the word of the eye. Following this, Goethe is quoted as claiming that through the conduit of the body and onto the human soul, color produces an effect "that is tightly linked to the moral sphere. Therefore, color, considered as an element of art, can be put to the service of the highest aesthetic goals (Moral, 244)." Light dies upon entering the eye as a reaction on the retina to produce color. Choosing a color in the moment of perception is a large portion of the relational act. "Colors are acts of light, acts and suffering (Moral, 245)." Buber connects the grasping at Thou to suffering. "Hence the relational act means being chosen and choosing, suffering and action in one (Buber, 11)." Mixing color from perception holds this much weight in my process.

Conclusion

My work is about connecting with the landscape and the world through the primary method of perceptual easel painting. I sometimes use portraits and still life elements to aid in the expression of an integration with the landscape. The method I choose to make work in is decided from the most base elements which give me nourishment and motivation to continue: mixing perceptual color, being outside, and an ability to connect with my body. The skeletal quality of a winter landscape may shape the mood of a painting, but it also affects the practical challenges of painting onsite. Navigating these limits is relational and precisely what leads to unique and specific marks with my painting tools. The legibility of my paintings is a concern and is highlighted through their size and surface. I prefer hard surfaces that record texture and think of marks as a sort of handwriting. Observed color equates felt thought. Sight becomes tactile, the act of viewing a tree at a distance becomes as close as washing a dish. Under limited light, paintings done at night are especially tactile, color more internal. All of these processes force trust, similar to the trust I developed from backpacking. Mark-making and color act as a mnemonic device for presence. Painting can be a form of memory-mining, record keeping, and wishmaking where the image condenses past, present, and future.



16 Seasonal Window Study 2024 oil on panels 22 x 15"

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