

Selected artist statements

My work has always been about the place I live, and the interconnectedness of human, natural, and cultural histories—the subtle, often violent interplay between humans and the planet, the story of what is now called the Anthropocene. I resolved early on to root my work here, to take as my subject the climate, cultures, geology, history, light, topography, and all the grandeur, apologies, obfuscations, and contradictions of the region. This is evident in the bodies of work I’ve produced over the past thirty years related to the history of western expansion and settlement, logging, transportation, recreation, and other, sometimes very elusive and allegorical indications of the human impact on and relationship to the land.

I’ve always gotten ideas for my paintings from ambling and driving the back roads with an atlas, like a backcountry flâneur, exploring the visual and mental drift of moving through the landscape. I think of “place” as a character, with the landscape having agency and a real presence as a fellow traveler. I don’t paint on location; rather, I gather raw data in the form of photographs, sketches, and memories. The paintings are always created in the studio, constructed in my mind out of that source material and the demands of the painting itself.

I’m a painter. I work in the medium of creative solitude—an individual alone addressing another lone individual, the solitary viewer, not from above or below, but at the same height. I work in the pictorial tradition. There’s no “purity” here; these pictures contain the mess of the world. From a distance (or in reproduction) the images appear whole; in person, up close, the paint dominates and the image dissolves into scrapes, jabs, slabs, lines, skeins, thick/thin, opacity/translucency, touch and slippage, liquid speed and dry-brush drag. Imagine a grand prospect. That blob on the horizon, on closer inspection, is a cow. In my paintings, the reverse is true: that thing being rendered, on close inspection, is a smear of line and color. The physical fact of paint meeting depiction is an act of conjuring, and it has never gotten old.

I’m interested in a sense of the uncanny, in the slippage between dualistic positions where a deceptively straightforward image borders on the sublime—it’s the suburbs of the sublime, and it opens narrative possibilities.