

Mel Prest

### In Praise of Planetary Time

On April 4, 2015, I was on a residency at Willapa Bay in southern Washington State. I awakened at three AM and went outside. For nearly three hours, alone in darkness and silence, I watched a blood moon eclipse gradually turn the lunar surface into an opaque brick-red orb. I was stunned by the sensation of planetary time, where slow and subtle comic changes could awaken me from a sound sleep.

I feel an echo of planetary time in my own art practice of painting. For the past 16 years I have focused on color and the many short brushstrokes that create a line.

In Praise of Planetary Time centers on the work of three large paintings, each approximately nine feet square. The three works are a memorial to another human and the qualities the human has/ had. In the center of the canvas is the master color and theme of each painting. With a double-zero brush, and no straight edge or measurement, I painted concentric squares slightly altering the color on each round. Each day I began by painting the master color: in this way I built in a "time marker", or an easy-to-identify point where I began each eight or ten hour day. One can view this time, compressed into a single, flat object of the painting, and 'read' passages and breaks in time. Each painting is a devotional practice like chanting of mourning, pairing small human marks on a large scale. The slow, ritualistic painting at the pace of the sticky brush feels like planetary time.

The show title comes from "In Praise of Shadows", an essay written in 1933 by Jun'ichiro Tanizaki. The author examines differences between traditional and modern aesthetics, architecture and craft. The essay discusses differing artistic intentions and lauds the patina of time as a comfort in face of modern efficiency.