

ARTIST STATEMENT

One can paint for a long time only to discover they know very little about it. I come to the canvas free of preconceptions and open to possibilities. Pictures and images are not so much the aim as a resolution, a crystallization of shape, color and mark into a whole of an experience that has resonance. I am most often lost in the process of painting, struggling to find a way out and feeling very much a beginner until that moment of clarity. For a long time now, my work has found a resolution in a kind of illuminated landscape. Spaces of color and light akin to the mountains and seas of my travels open up between tectonic plates of color and form.

Lately, my work has been picking up on the smaller moments in the landscape - not the broad sweeping vistas of the Italian countryside or the New England shore but my own backyard and garden. A period of deep introspection and personal transformation has led to looking more closely at the intimate forms of leaves, branches and lines in nature. Plants and flowers find their way into my vocabulary of paint that only recently avoided any reference to representation.

Printmaking has offered a bridge between my drawing that investigates natural forms and the paintings that work in layers of color and light. Observations in my studio garden of grasses and leaves are the basis for a series of layered monoprints in etching and woodcut. Familiar to my process of painting, these images are printed in different hues, their orientation often turned upside down, then paired with additional or repeated images in color to create depth and interactions of form. Printmaking has offered up new processes - namely that of collaboration with experienced printers - that are now feeding my painted work. An intimate, personal moment of reflection through image, now works its way through the ecosystem of art-making in a process requiring many hands and the skills of others.

The Waterlilies, painted by Monet, have served as inspiration for the larger canvases from this recent time period. Also influenced by the intimate gardens that he built for himself, Monet brought to life in paint and mark the sensual world of color and light through the romantic forms of flowers and plants near the water. As an abstract painter, that I have found myself at this moment exploring plants and flowers is an astounding development. Once again I am lost.

- Michael Rich