

Nature, Figure, Time...

I'm trying to put into words the catalyst for these works—not what they are—but why they exist... I think about why I'm making these artworks in the midst of making them, often in the rain and in the night, in a way untouchable by the everyday world—it's almost a different earth where I am when I'm working and the world that holds everything else is indoors, asleep. Alone in a forest, I'm a different person, someone more immediate and less interrupted by expectations, even from myself.

The only thing I'm ever jealous of is music. All art possesses a similar quantity of power but translates it or expends it at different rates, and I've always envied music and musicians' ability to have such an instant intimate effect. Music is like fireworks: exploding with emotion and excitement—capturing the senses—fleeting but encapsulating. Visual art is more like a campfire, entrancing still and lasting longer but slowly and more pensively. But as an artist at work, I find the moment of inspiration and the following period of creation to be like music, like fireworks, and often quite emotional. Most people can agree on some level of the scale that nature is not only beautiful but sublime... not only engaging but vital. Over the years, I've spent so much time alone in nature making artwork that the combination has become something beyond both, a synthesis that goes deep into the environment and reflects back to something reflexive and intellectual but hard to explain still... I suppose this is common when artists dive deep into their subject matter and medium, but what feels unique here is that I'm also inside my subject as I work in the forest, surrounded and touched by my medium as it rains—I am merged with the work itself and occupy a certain place that becomes unified with the art and its subject. It sounds like a trite platitude, but I'm just trying to understand the moment of making the work and the feelings attached to it—the reason I keep making it is because this connection is very open and I think accessible to the viewer too.

The reason I began incorporating the figure was because of this connection; my body becomes another tree in the forest as I move slowly through the night, circling the canvas in the mist and rain. In the cold, my limbs become heavy and detached, my bones are like the veins of leaves falling around me. At once, my body becomes more organic than I've ever realized and less important than I would like to admit—the ferns and foliage fit perfectly as a representation of the human form, it makes much more sense than a photograph of light passing through a camera, digital processes, and synthetic printing. As this organic and creative symbiosis occurs in a buoyant and euphoric way, I'm unable to understand how most of the things in our day-to-day lives have given me near-crippling anxiety—money, social interactions, time—they suddenly become estranged and pointless. Then I think about people I love and how important they are to me, how much I wish I could explain these feelings to them—but they are asleep or afar and I know the next day I will wake up and be quickly swept away by the needs of the everyday world—and so I put all of this love, care, and attention into the artwork and it's the only way I can communicate these overwhelming instincts... I am at my best in both heart and soul out here alone in the woods, and I enjoy the melancholy of this longing to communicate because I know at least the art can be shared with everyone.

For these paintings I wanted to focus on this feeling of both loneliness and gratitude—personally and universally—it's a rare time in history when the world is unified by shared fear and support, loss and love. I believe nature is at its most anthropomorphic in a time like this—we've all been isolated at home but a walk in a familiar forest feels like a physical conversation. Reciprocally, I feel like there's been a kindling of honesty about mortality in a way that reminds me of the Renaissance—a time of great change that backgrounds selfish inclinations of a society and focuses on the fundamental concerns of everyone... I have always been interested in the poses of motion in renaissance painting and refer to them for guidance when composing a figure in my painting—and so as I looked for references on the notion of "support," I most often found the embrace was a situation of life or death—as in the Veronese painting *The Martyrdom and Last Communion of Saint Lucy*, or any Pieta or Madonna painting. I became very interested in this polarized symbolism of embrace in Renaissance painting and incorporated it into my works with nature to represent the ambiguity and duality of embrace—using the body as a structure for support at both the beginning and end of life—extending its symbolism in these works by also translating the figures in plants. The bodies are made from the landscape and the landscape paintings made from the same material, so a unified subject and medium, and support. In a way, these works become a reverse etiological myth...

SF
12/2/2021