

A photograph of a wetland landscape. The foreground and middle ground are dominated by tall, vibrant green grasses that appear to be blowing in the wind. Interspersed among the grasses are shallow, reflective pools of water, which give the scene a shimmering, textured appearance. The background shows more of the same vegetation and water, extending towards the horizon. The overall color palette is dominated by various shades of green and blue, with some brownish tones visible in the water and among the grasses.

SUSAN POST

LANDSCAPES



Oxbow

Landscapes

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As every artist knows, it is very hard to make a good painting. And there are ideas that never get started or remain incomplete, or that exist for just an hour or maybe a day before being painted over during the struggle, with only the artist as witness. At some point in the making of any good painting, the process is overtaken by a mysterious concentration of time and attention, made manifest through the haptic application of color. When a good painting is delivered intact it is indeed a triumph of skill and communication.

Two core principles that I hold dear were articulated very clearly by the painter Elizabeth Murray¹: From her journals read in a recent documentary: “The issue is, how do you move - how do you change and take your work somewhere that

you do not think you know about?” And in an interview for the film she says “Whatever it is I’m making ... it’s the one instance where I don’t give a s*** what anyone thinks.” I so admire and strive for that kind of centered strength.

This catalog represents the range of what I care about, and will provide some context for the exhibition.

What follows are images and notes on a few of the paintings that I hope capture and convey some of what goes into making the work.

- Susan Post

1. “Everybody Knows ... Elizabeth Murray” directed by Kristi Zea



Pink Pearl

Moonlight

I spend a lot of time awake at night when the moon is full or nearly so. Like some vampiric urge or a vestige of menstrual synchronicity, moonlight makes me restless bordering on exuberant. I don't turn on the lights, so my eyes soon get used to the dark, which in time will appear deceptively full of contrast and almost as revealing as daylight. I attribute that to the rods working their magic, and believe that this feeling of excitement is at least partly due to the closeness of these values, which the attenuated, reflected light of the sun throws over everything within its reach.



Free

There is no denying that I have the privilege and freedom to do what I can and want to do in my paintings. My course has meandered from expressionist landscape to reductive minimalism before exiting through biomorphic abstraction and back again to depiction. Each time I made the shift it was in response to a feeling that I had begun to make variations, while no longer having a good reason to be doing so, as well as a continued need to work out why I liked what I liked and use that understanding to move forward. It was always my intention to bring the lessons learned in non-objective work to bear on representating landscape.

Calibrating spontaneity and control is really about

disinhibition, attentiveness, expression. It doesn't have to be just one way or the other, there can be different levels of every attribute in each piece, and a body of work does not have to match or be in series. Sometimes I *want* the content not to be overwhelmed by gestural mark-making, but at other times I want it to be reflected by it. A sense of stasis can evoke placidity or the uncanny, while gesture seems to contain racing thoughts, but I have been trying to move away from thinking in terms of dyads or dichotomy.

This painting was the first tree canopy where I expressly wanted to convey my feelings rather than have it be a depiction of a captured moment.



CCNS²

One thing my abstract and descriptive paintings have in common is that the areas between verticals are treated as discreet scenes but also part of the whole. For nearly ten years much of my work was based on an irregular grid or weave, a “plaid” composed of three or four colors and two different sizes of bounded area. The original source for this imagery was the interaction of the shadows of wooden shutters and Venetian blinds in a bedroom window. In its evolved state³, each patch or strip of color serves as part of two distinct vertical or horizontal structural elements, and every part hovers between figure and ground.

² Cape Cod National Seashore

³ *Color Balance* at The Painting Center, 2012

<http://thepaintingcenter.org/susan-post-color-balance>

I then began placing that grid in a field rather than filling the picture plane with it, curious about how that caused it to act more like a noun than a verb. More overt landscape has since re-emerged as subject matter.

The line of seven tree trunks in this imagined landscape derives from a pencil drawing made from a photograph of my parents’ back yard, taken almost forty years ago.

The tropical colors and hot stillness of this dunescape trigger something in me that lies somewhere between languid and hallucinatory.





UFO, Landed

War and Peace

“He got up and went to the window to open it. As soon as he opened the shutters the moonlight, as if it had long been waiting for this, burst into the room. He opened the casement. The night was fresh, bright, and very still. Just before the window was a row of pollard trees, looking black on one side and with a silvery light on the other. Beneath the trees grew some kind of lush, wet, bushy vegetation with silver-lit leaves and stems here and there. Farther back beyond the dark trees a roof glittered with dew, to the right was a leafy tree with brilliantly white trunk and branches, and above it shone the moon, nearly at its full, in a pale, almost starless, spring sky.”

Leo Tolstoy *War and Peace*, Book Six,
Chapter II



Thru the Screen

This one started out as a straight up photo-to-paint image, of the view looking out the bedroom porch door at night, of streetlights and the maple trees that grow in the strip between the sidewalk and the road. It is sort of the inverse of a daylight painting from 2001, *Street Maples*. Back then the trees were much healthier, and since then, one by one they have been cut down.

Decades ago, my husband pointed out a shape that looked like a monster in a painting that I had made of a hanging houseplant, and when I saw something similar lurking in the shadows of this painting, I had to work it out. As I did, it got more and more away from the photograph and eventually I was just reacting to what was happening on the canvas. I had thought that it was finished, but after painting CCNS decided I wanted to be

more deliberate about my choices in this one as well. So now it has had three phases, three lives.

My mother would trim the bushes so as to not encroach upon the view, or even alter it very much. And I get why she did that, but have since come to feel that by attempting to keep change at bay she unintentionally gave me a false sense of stability in what such 'scenery' represented. Perhaps because I have been alive for quite a while now, I see the effects of growth and erosion all around me, and feel they should be considered and valued, because change is an integral part of living on earth.

Failing to adjust to change is like painting oneself into a corner.



Pause

This painting was done from a pencil drawing that was made at night under bright moonlight, with all the lights in the house turned off. The shadow of the railing is a moonshadow, cast upon the snow. I thought about instead making the slope be in summertime, covered with ripening grasses: many brushstrokes, many colors, maybe even impasto. Then back in March, partly because my priorities had shifted, I just stopped painting it. For me, some of the most important things going on right now are going on in politics, in the courts, and in discussions about current events. We are in the distinct danger of forfeiting our democracy, and this is happening *on our watch*. I am frozen in a prolonged moment of thinking that this painting is complete, just as it is. I like how everything that has been done to it is right there, on the surface.





Snow/Dusk/Porch

This exhibition is dedicated to
Lisha and Vera and, most of all,

to Woody

