A Time to Wonder

by

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In today's fast-paced modern society, information and entertainment are at our fingertips, accessible at any time we want. Because of this, we are constantly bombarded with new information every second; especially when all of our attention is on our electronic devices. This culture prevents people from stopping and appreciating the small details around us. It's important for us to slow down to see what's going around us and pay attention to the small details. Landscape paintings readjust our sights on nature and to its mystic characteristics.

It has taken me a while to realize that I am an artist. My mother was an artist but was never able to pursue it, so some of her artistic creativity passed down onto me. I watched a lot of animated films from Disney and Pixar; they all had great impacts on me. Art has a special narrative element that I loved. With the proper composition and color palette, an unspoken narrative scene is created. Even though it's lacking dialogues and text, the viewers can get a sense of the narrative. Many of my paintings will usually tell a story or a scene of an adventure. There are no characters or figures within them but this will help the viewers imagine their own characters or even themselves in the paintings. This helps the audience relate to the paintings more and gives a new perspective on what they fail to notice. I start the process by taking what I see or sketch and then envision them into my imagination. Sometimes, I even use clay to mold them into different shapes and sizes. I don't always accurately replicate what I saw onto the clay but those inaccuracies bring new ideas to my work. Other times, I would find them while I am looking around my studio. I've used dirty oil rags to as a reference to my work. There will be times when the messy paints on my studio walls will look like a formation of rocks. It's very easy for me to make from my imagination since I

spend a lot of time daydreaming and observing my surroundings. Especially when I was a lot younger, I spent most of my daytime exploring new locations in my neighborhood's forest to fill my imagination. Even though I would revisit the same locations, I would constantly find something new that inspired me. New insects and plants appeared and old ones disappeared with changing seasons. Like the book *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* would describe it, "I used to be able to see flying insects in the air. I'd look ahead and see, not the row of hemlocks across the road, but the air in front of it." (Dillard p. 15) The rich color palette of each season constantly shifted. New aroma filled the air and covered me with a new sensation of my surroundings. All of these brought me new and surrealistic ideas like colors, composition, and mood. It was almost as if the force of nature would construct a new playground for me to play in every time I visited it. Life is full of small things we fail to recognize and it's good to stop to take in the moment.

Charles Burchfield is a landscape and cityscape painter, he is mostly well-known for his watercolor based on different periods of his life. I connect with his work because of the subjects he depicts. Burchfield always preferred to go out into the location to paint his landscapes. I also enjoy going to different locations to do my artwork. It helps me to come up with new ideas for the finished products. Charles Burchfield always viewed nature having as a mystical experience full of wonder, chaos, and beauty. No matter how nature changes, he always found new special meanings in them. I view it the same exact way, every time of day, the different seasons, living organisms and weather has their own special themes. But despite the similar passion, I do my artwork differently. I like to include certain small details within my work to give the full experience and wonder. Burchfield generalizes and emphasizes the mood with color and movement of

his watercolor. Much of my work has characteristics of being very alien and foreign. I do this by exaggerating certain features for example; the lumps on the tree branches are turned into puss-like growth.

Many artists today and in history have influenced my direction as being an artist. Some of these artists are Tom Uttech, Inka Essenhigh, Claire Sherman, Miton Avery, Charles Burchfield, Nikki Maloof, Williem De kooning, Jules Olitski, and Thomas Moran. Not all of them are primarily landscape painters but all of them have made some work relating to landscapes. Few artists like Williem De Kooning and Nikki Maloof works with landscapes but also includes figures in them. I love the different various interpretations each artists give of landscapes and backgrounds. They all have different processes and you can tell just by looking at the finished products that they've all experienced landscapes differently. Inka Essenhigh and Claire Sherman like to go in without much planning. Both of them enjoys going on road trips to different locations to find interesting composition and details. I used their processes and techniques in "Grand". If you look at those 3 works, I've used thick and bold marks like Claire Sherman while keeping the surrealistic theme and composition of Inka Essenhigh. Tom Uttech likes to take all the chaotic characteristics of nature and organize them orderly and symmetrical. For example, in some of his compositions, the rock formations and the trees will mirror each other on left and right side of the paintings. Another feature of his work is having the foreground, mid-ground, and background. In "Lonely Rocks" I added depths just like Tom Uttech did. Wolf Kahn, Claude Monet, and Karen Hale are artists that have certain visual similarities but I would not include them in my group show. They would not be included in my group show because their works are too within reality. They use very

foreign and unique colors but they only set predetermined mood and are too representational.

There are some artists that have inspired my work but do not have any obvious connections to them. Few of these artists are Edward Hopper, Helen Frankenthaler, and Alex Katz. Despite Edward Hopper and Alex Katz mainly focused on figures and non-nature background, both of them have excellent framing and compositions. They make the audiences' eyes look at specific moments. Edward Hopper goes further by giving the viewers less complete picture so they can finish the narrative of those paintings. Despite Helen Frankenthaler's way of taking away all narrative contexts, her use of color helps create moods and feelings like no other.

Back when I still lived in South Korea, I used to cut through the forests to take different detours. I would remember seeing all the small strange things like new species of bugs, plants, and trees. When I would pass underneath certain trees, sometimes little worms started climbing down the branches with their silk. It was as if they were waiting for a guest to come visit them. Along the same trees, the cicadas will loudly chant their mating calls and proclaim their affections for their future mating partners. I would watch my steps because certain rocks have wet moss on them and I could potentially slip on them. Running passed by a tree full of birds, caused them to be startled and fly away in panic. "I walked up to a tree, an Osage orange, and a hundred birds flew away. They simply materialized out of the trees."(Dillard p. 16) Stepping on certain plants will cause them to snap and bleed out a mysterious white puss, leaving a trail as I venture forth deeper into the forest. Sometimes, as I am running through the forest, I will accidently strap my legs or arms against the thorn bushes, but I will not notice the wounds

because of the adrenaline pumping through my body. I will only notice them when I stop to examine or collect a treasure I find during my adventure. Sometimes those treasures will be added in my beetle cages for them to explore on. The treasures I found will usually be consistent of strange looking sticks, smooth pebbles, pieces of leaves, and even the shed skins of cicada larvae. Bringing those treasures back definitely made me feel that I brought back the lost treasure. When the seasons change to either Fall or Winter, the same bugs that would greet me, would have disappeared to their next destinations, then a new set of species will appear to take their place. The cicadas laid their eggs to prepared their offspring for the long freezing hibernation. The birds took off into the sky and formed into their own formations to travel to their next destinations. The plants withered and changed into different colors but different species of plants would bloom in their place. Eventually, the clouds came and the icy snowflakes covered the neighborhood. Even though all of the things I enjoyed were frozen and hidden by the snow, I received a new location to explore without having to go to a new place. Every one of those visits were new and special, they placed new memories and inspiration into my heart. And just like how these 3 painters depicted their own moments I was experiencing my moments and painting them in my own ways. “To see nature with the eye of an interpreter” (Burchfield p. IX)

One of the things I enjoy doing is going to parks, hiking trail, sidewalks, and forests. Just like Claire Sherman, I love to get away from the chaos of New York City and get lost in the wilderness. Growing up in a suburban neighborhood in South Korea, I loved to go outside and explore the wilderness. There were a lot of fond memories of

me running through bushes, picking bugs, and laying on the empty field. Those are the places I go to organize and create new ideas.

Since nature is so vast and always changing you never run out of ideas, even when you go the same locations multiple times. Animated films made by Pixar, Disney, and Studio Ghibli inform my work directly. Their use of framing, camera angles, and cropping really give the scenes certain moods, create interesting narratives, or build a scene. The way the filmmakers animate the landscapes and background really change how they feel compared to if they were still. Sometimes when the environment moves in the films they become a completely different surrealistic experience. In some of Studio Ghibli films like Princess Mononoke, the foliage of the trees and bushes move as if they are their own entities. Even when the camera pans around to different scenes, the movement creates strange blur effect, causing all the colors to mix and distort. These characteristics make the whole movie more alive, giving it a unique mystic surreal experience. This is almost similar to the surrealistic experience I got when I explored my childhood neighborhood. The foliage of the tree and bushes expand, contract, and sway side to side. When I spin around to taken in the scenery, all the foliage and colors distort and mix. Sometimes I would purposely do this to get new perspectives and ideas. Even outside of paintings, people depict and express in their own experiences.

Past year, it was a long journey to figure out what the directions of my work was going to be. I knew that fantasy and surrealism were something I wanted in my work. During my first semester of senior year, I had trouble seeing which direction I wanted to go for my work. To help me get started, I would use photos I took from my trip to Japan to help me crop moments where I felt were precious. I would focus onto a path, foliage,

a death tree stomp, or a weird rock formation. My first painting “Peace” was a good start because of the unique perspective and environmental items. In order to push this further, rather than using mainly photographs, I decided to look at my studio and use the environment and objects around me to create my next series. After a few paintings, I had trouble visualizing what I wanted to create. Even though I was able to visualize what I wanted I couldn’t fully imagine it. My advisor suggested that I should use clay to use as a reference. This was an excellent suggestion because not only was it a reference to work from but also when molding the clays, I created shapes and patterns that I would have never expected. Ever since then, I’ve used sketches, photographs, random items in my surrounding, and clay. These are all effective tools to be used for my artwork and I will continue to implement them in my future works.

Landscapes and backgrounds in paintings are very special, they are more than just places to visit but places to experience. Each artists show them in many various ways using different brush strokes, color scheme, compositions, framing, scale, and organizations. Different combinations of those characteristics bring in new and interesting thoughts and feelings. Each of them has special meanings, no matter how they were done. As Charles Burchfield would say, “Every season, every time of day, every change of weather, every flowers and insect, even every direction of the compass has its special meaning.” (p.12-13) We are missing out so much by being on our electronic devices. I truly believe that and our lives’ expectations will improve a lot by doing so.

Never forget the small details around you, those small details; they can change your perspectives in life. Life can be hectic and stressful so it’s really easy to miss

things that pass by you, it’s good to stop and appreciate the beauty of what’s around you. Art is a great way to represent that as you have to give special attention to art in order to truly appreciate them.

Images

Peace (2017)

12” by 36”

Oil on Board

Rest (2017)

12” by 36”

Oil on Board

Safe Passage (2018)

36” by 72”

Oil on Canvas

Tree (2018)

36” by 36”

Oil on Canvas

Green Growth (2018)

24” by 36”

Oil on Canvas

The End (2018)

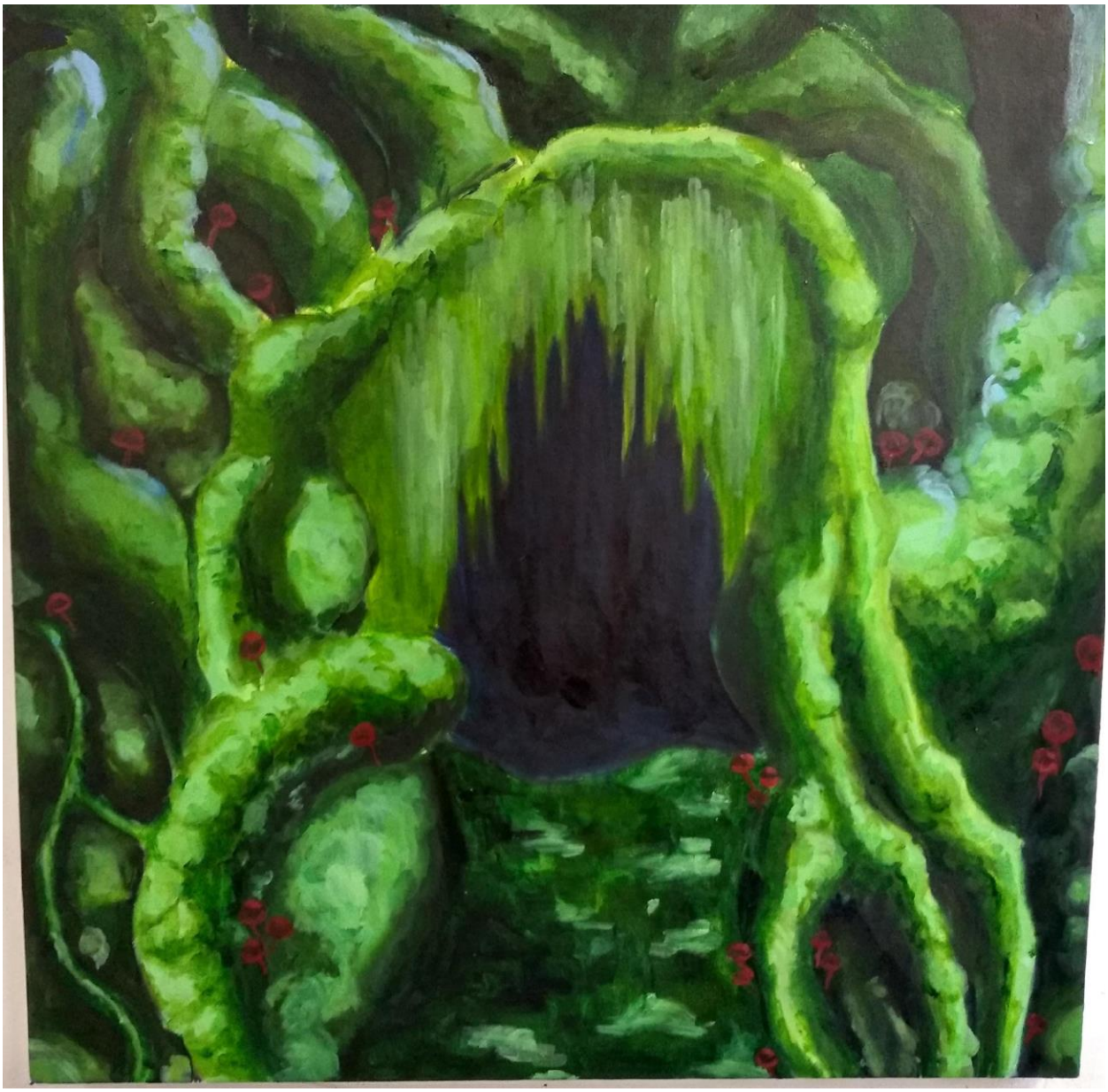
18” by 24”

Oil on Canvas

New Growth (2018)

36” by 36”

Oil on Canvas



Sick Vines (2018)

36” by 36”

Oil on Canvas

Grand (2018)

36” by 36”

Oil on Canvas

Blue Way (2018)

36” by 36”

Oil on Canvas

Purple Way (2018)

60” by 60”

Oil on Canvas

Red Rocks (2018)

12” by 36”, 12” by 36”, 12” by 30”, 10” by 36”

Oil on Canvas

Sunset Rocks (2018)

24” by 24”, 24” by 36”, 24” by 24”

Oil on Canvas

Lonely Rocks (2018)

18” by 24”

Oil on Canvas

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