

Venti

Jamie Morse

Featured Artist

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I use the imagery of land as a language to explore emotions that arise from contemplating our existence. The universe, and our presence within it, is a mystery. Contemplating our existence gives rise to the full spectrum of emotion. That we exist at all is both joyful and terrifying, beautiful and hideous, constructive and destructive. Our existence is mystifyingly confusing while essentially simple and easily understood. It is difficult to discuss such contradictory emotions with words. Images and music explore and express feelings with an acuity that words do not.

Landscape is a vocabulary that is universal to all cultures. We all come from the land, are nourished by it, and eventually return to it. The land is our oldest metaphor. Using on-site studies from life rather than photographs, Morse creates expressive landscapes made with the hand and eye alone. These works embrace the interpretive nature of Being, rather than the mechanical nature of Seeing. Composing poetry with landforms, he uses a visual language that is more felt than understood.

Emotions arising from interaction with the landscape are intuitive reactions to the world that do not require conscious reasoning. These are the ancient emotions, whose origins are prior to the invention of vocal language. A wide, clear field feels calm. A small lake enclosed by trees feels safe. Birds returning in the spring bring relief from the worry that winter will never end. The moon's soft presence is like the comfort of friendship. Approaching storms stir helplessness, awe, and anxiety. Mature trees ill with blight stand as reminders of the cyclical process of growth, death, decomposition, and the nourishment of new life. We wonder what is down the road, over the hill, or around a river's bend. The mirrored reflection on the surface of water inspires us to contemplate our inner selves.

Morse's work is not intended to describe scenery the way that a photograph does. Instead, a visual record of thinking, feeling, and responding to the world emerges on the canvas. The passage of time is evident in the careful mark making and craftwork that occur as a result of the artist Being-in-the-world. The paintings are built up, striving to look like something made of paint, so that there is no confusion about the illusion of pictorial space. These are objects of emotional metaphor that respond to the ontological awareness that we exist, not reproductions of perceived beauty. The canvases show the process of struggling to understand the space we exist within by retaining evidence of geometric grids, the modification of composition and color choices, and the patina of thought and craftsmanship as the artist works to comprehend existence within a world that we are somehow consciously detached from. In this sense, the paintings document the world's contemplation of the artist as much as they record the artist's contemplation of the world, for they are one and the same.