

# Artist Statement

My paintings operate somewhere between abstraction and the cognitive world, between the unknown and the known. The works often begin with a general idea. I might be reflecting on spiritual or corporal concerns, memory or whatever occupies my thoughts at the moment. Once the first marks are initiated all bets are off about the outcome. I try to paint what I believe in, eliminating any marks or images which feel disingenuous, listening to what the painting is telling me to do rather than imposing my will on the work. In this way, it is my hope that the paintings aren't driven self-consciously. They should emerge from a more enigmatic, less familiar place. In the process of painting, initiation, manipulation and removal of marks becomes one of action and reaction. The paintings emerge slowly, one on top of the other, until they tell me I am done.

Although my work is often categorized as abstract, I see it as inhabiting a space between objective and nonobjective painting. Both serve as a matrix for what are essentially autobiographical works. I am interested in the symbolic potential of the objective world and the possibilities abstraction presents in suggesting the unknown. These relationships are unfettered with the baggage of conventional representational or pictorial space. It is easiest to consider the work when broken down to a couple of key elements: structure and content.

Structurally I am interested in works that operate in discreet spatial zones. These spatial zones can be identified by shifts in pallet and scale and ultimately operate as metaphors of the complexity of our experiences in this life. The content of the work can be broken down, in its simplest form, into three categories. One category is the autonomous mark, i.e., marks that do not serve the master of depiction. The assignation of value to these marks is purely subjective as there is no pictorial reference for one to consult. These marks must feel genuine, not mediated through the screen of the intellect. In some way the motive behind these marks mimic those of the abstract expressionists.

The next two categories of content explore structural forms, both biomorphic and architectural. Forms found in biology and in architecture constitute an important part of the visual language of the paintings. The organic forms found most often in the work are structural in nature; they are the residues of a life once lived. For me they suggest the temporal. In their infinite variations they have provided an inexhaustible reservoir of fascinating forms. As the metaphor of structures that support life forms was extended, my research led me to the works of Frei Otto and Buckminster Fuller. Both architects looked extensively at models found in nature to develop the ideas surrounding their work. Their drawings detailing structural models like cable trussed tension forms and the

structural nature of soap bubbles, plant forms and the like, have made for a fascinating and rich arsenal of forms that have found their way into the visual language of the paintings.

In some way, the intellect can analyze the work, but ultimately, when the paintings are working, it is hard to explain the how and the why. It is easy to make a formal analysis of the work and to position it in the great and diverse continuum of contemporary painting, but ultimately the painting must do its work from a more subversive place, a place familiar yet enigmatic, known but unknown. It is this place that the paintings attempt to inhabit.

—Tim Craighead