

cynthia byrnes  
contemporary art

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Artist Statement

When I come to paint something, I'm seeing something that moves me and I'm trying to experience it. I'm working from observation but I'm also noticing all these other senses. How do I capture the entire experience of the moment of discovery? How do I show visually everything that I'm feeling, smelling, things I see in my periphery, my mood, my anxieties of the day, my pleasures, my pains? All of it goes into the moment I'm having, and it becomes essential to get that into the painting.

Line, shape, color, and form can become something that's other than just visual elements. They can behave in the place of my other senses, emotions, and thoughts. Then the image brings the heart and the soul and everything else that is happening. Somehow, it's the job of the artist to do that, to bring those other things too. It's a way of showing every second of my life.

To just give someone visual experience is something that's already happening, but to give them the entire experience, that's what brings someone into a painting or the painting comes into them. Every new experience has the power to evoke every other experience we've ever known. Just being here is like being there or anywhere else. It's like a toddler taking in the world that way, and it is all just raw data, it all just is.

And you realize this is what it means to be alive: to allow each moment to be, to give permission to the moment without judging, just experiencing all that is happening right now. That is what painting allows me to do, and it allows me time to sort of mellow out, to take in the momentary experience and give it breath and expand it. To experience the inseparableness of art and life.

Stacks, my current body of work, began in 2014 and is ongoing. Stacks includes paintings, drawings, and prints on both a large and small scale. Derived from looking at Chinese Landscape Painting, I utilize the formal device of stacking elements vertically and horizontally as a means to organize the image graphically. It is a formal exercise which examines how our brains decipher and interpret a two-dimensional image; how we recognize and understand space, form, light, scale, color, and texture from simple visual cues; and how formal elements can possess the qualities of our other senses, emotions, feelings, and thoughts.