

JAN FREEMAN LONG

Biography

In 1996 I graduated from the California College of Arts (formerly known as the California College of Arts and Crafts) with a BFA in Painting. Strongly encouraged by several of my painting and art history instructors, I spent my final semester in Florence, Italy at the Studio Art Centers International. During my four-month stay, with considerable travel throughout northern Italy, I became fascinated with the countless aging buildings and ruins I saw. I shot over 40 rolls of film dedicated to close-ups of peeling paint, cracks, worn surfaces etc. This newfound interest in the ways surfaces age tied in with my longstanding interest in aerial photographs of the ruins of indigenous architecture.

For the past eleven years I have been working full time in the studio. By the end of the second year I had discovered the necessity of my work having an open-ended time frame while developing. A significant number of paintings have taken as long as two years to complete, and I usually work on anywhere from 10 to 20 paintings and drawings at a time. Working in a highly intuitive state of mind is paramount.

General Artist Statement

I am interested in the mysterious nature of what endures within an internal landscape. Continually there are shifts, transformations, and subsequent restructuring taking place. When I enter the studio oceanic time prevails; I leave behind the clamoring of measured time, schedules, and deadlines.

Even in the newer work, which employs horizon lines and grids, the open-ended investigation of what is timeless persists, and abstraction is my way into a vocabulary that has no need to define and pin down mystery.

Codicil Series

These paintings have taken shape in a highly meditative, idiosyncratic way—a result of working on them while in a highly intuitive state of mind. I have come to consider this series to be, in part, an antidote to the ever-increasing speed imposed upon us in almost every aspect of our lives.

The Information Age has a firm grip on many of the world's cultures, spin doctors and advertising abound, newly created products are rendered obsolete sometimes within minutes of their release to the public, and new formats for handing and transmitting information are metamorphosing at an ever-increasing rate of speed. This human-induced race incites a sense that we only have so much time left while simultaneously

teasing us into thinking we will understand just about everything throughout much of the universe in the foreseeable future.

In spite of this fast-paced affectation being thrust into our lives, the act of slowing down and steadily looking at what is to be found in stillness takes a strong footing in this body of work. Geometric, code-like compositions are my way into a preverbal investigation that often brings about a fairly balanced use of color, drawing, and painting. I also tend to exercise a certain hybridity of picture making. For example, references to aerial views of the remains of indigenous architecture appear here and there.

During my most productive periods in the studio, time is oceanic. I never know what I am going to work on next, especially from one day to the next. This approach has been integral in following my ongoing fascination with the enduring qualities of what remains to be mysterious and timeless.

Keeping Track Series

Horizontal lines showing up in one painting/drawing after another signaled a shift from the previous body of work. Along with a focus inspired by aerial photographs of indigenous architecture, the work now includes viewing space and imagery in cross sections. Often both ways of viewing occur in the same painting.

The various subliminal meanings evoked by viewing a horizontal marking of space...the horizon, a meeting place, such as the meeting of earth and sky; an edge or boundary; limitations in general; the potential promise of what is yet to come or perhaps what is possible ... for me this broad range of meanings combines with a strong interest in the nuances and shifts in the ongoing exchange between having boundaries/shedding boundaries. I continue to seek out ways of using visual space to acknowledge timelessness within the marking of time.

While painting, I combine mixed media with an emphasis on acrylics, often incorporating drawing and collage into the overall composition. Since I am most at home working in a highly intuitive state, I tend to work on ten or more works at a time, moving from one to the next, so it is common for the paintings to take anywhere from several months to two years before reaching completion. Most of the time I work on canvas, board, and sturdy paper since an ongoing process of layering and scraping frequently occurs. Some areas are densely textured and highly worked while other areas in the same work might appear to remain in a state of early beginning. It is a surprising process, one I am compelled to keep track of.

Preliminary Survey Series

By combining a long-standing fascination with aerial photographs of the ruins of indigenous architecture with my own photographs of the surfaces of aging buildings and ruins in Italy, I discovered the foundation for this series; a map of sorts. The palette I have developed evokes timelessness within the passing of time. I work with various kinds of drawing materials and paints, relying most heavily on modern-day acrylics.

On canvas and paper, with mixed media painting, drawing, and collage, remembered bits of photographs and ancient images reemerge. The focus is on emotional/spiritual content rather than scientifically accurate rendering, clearly referencing ways of creating that were practiced during the Byzantine Era and earlier. Recall of the distant past while incorporating modern materials becomes a catalyst. Out of the old emerges new space, new borders. It is during the final acts of layering, scraping, and painting that beauty and uncertainty appear in the midst of upheaval... noting what is still mysterious.