

Joe Bender Artist Statement

My paintings do not represent, recreate or express anything; they are not abstractions from nor do they specifically signify anything else; each one is a visual and organic whole. My paintings are an attempt to sublimate self-expression through focusing on the perceptual nature of color as reflected light. My paintings seek to integrate chance, environmental interaction, time and the participation of the viewer.

Why paint? For me, painting constitutes a sufficiently complex set of personal predilections, cultural conditionings and other obscure motivations, such that I have a difficult time elucidating a coherent argument for continuing to do it. Some possible rationales are: painting as an act of rebellion against the futility and unfairness of life in the face of the certainty and finality of death (hence my fascination with the potential permanence of oil paintings, and the use in my paintings of materials and methods that promote permanence); painting as a dialogue with other painters (past, present and future); painting as a vehicle for creating objects of/for contemplation; painting as a method of uncovering and sharing essences that cannot be communicated verbally, narratively or through pictorial representation.

The paintings presented here are a response to questions both perceptual and formal that began to preoccupy me several years ago. What formal and familiar constructs can be eliminated from a painting so that only its essence remains? Is it possible to create paintings sufficiently difficult and demanding of their audience that they effectively resist assimilation into mass (pop/dominant) culture? Is it possible to paint in such a way as to eliminate gesture while unambiguously retaining the hand of the artist? Is it possible to create paintings that are both confrontational and contemplative?