

Nature's Glinting

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I love to walk
taking in my surroundings as I go.
I notice everything.
The cracks in the sidewalk.
The contrails that crisscross the sky.
I welcome expansive views where sunrise and sunset
can be seen from one vantage point.
I enjoy the ocean and the roar of cascading waves.
I search for rainbows as storms subside
and I never miss the glow of the full moon
illuminating the night sky.
My walks are a form of meditation
where I carve out space to think unencumbered
and try to make sense of the world.

When I first saw Cynthia Ona Innis's paintings they reminded me of what I see on my walks. They were at once familiar, yet also depictions of the unknown. Innis's mixed media works are exquisite combinations of paint and dyed fabrics that reference physical places: the mountains, the sea and the desert. They are atmospheric— like an expansive sky, filled with the sun's glow, rain, clouds or even fog. The pieces are magical and transformative— they draw from the observable world, changing reality into something ever mutating and expandable, infused with static and unexplained transitions. They invite viewers to let go of preconceptions and become absorbed in a world of abstraction.

Innis's recent body of work, *Glint* was created in the months of isolation we have all experienced, as well as a time rife with climate change, fires, storms, riots and social unrest. Innis makes sense of this strange and disjointed time by layering fragments onto her canvases. The works allude to transitions, loss and notions of timelessness. Though abstract and devoid of people, they are full of emotion and longing that echoes the feelings of solitude felt by so many over the last two years.

Rather than travel to and research new locations, as she did previously, Innis draws from her memories channeling past experiences for this series. In these paintings, she captures perceptions specific to being outside—the expansive glow of the sun, the haze of clouds on overcast days and the varying auras of the California landscape. While the works are primarily spatial, they are also architectural. They

are built layer upon layer by sewing together and combining dyed and painted fragments with fabrics of different textures, ranging from velvet to satin. From afar, these parts cohere to suggest a curious sense of place, whereas up close, the paintings become abstract fields of texture and color. That Innis's works are at once spatial and flat presents an interesting quandary. Aspects of the paintings seem to expand atmospherically while other areas demand to be seen as is: an intriguing combination of collaged fabrics which create abrupt shifts in texture, color and reflectivity. Sometimes visibly sewn together, these ruptures and seams in the surface locate the works formally and engage viewers in a conversation about the ways abstraction and representation can co-exist.

Santa Ynez is a large painting filled with undulating transparent and opaque bands of stained and dyed fabrics that have been stretched across the surface. Different widths of purple and golden-brown strips become lighter in tone as they reach the center of the image to form a quasi-horizon line. Here, Innis captures the sensation of sky meeting land meeting sea and the feeling of being in between: aware of the allure and the push/pull in opposite directions of the mountains and the ocean.

In the smaller painting *Ocaso* (sunset), a stained velvet semi-circle that transitions from gold to light pink and resembles the sparkling interior of a geode is juxtaposed with white and brown clapperboard shapes that extend across the bottom of the composition. These zigzagged striations, created by layering combinations of fabric, paint, ribbon and paper, parallel the breaking apart of the earth along the fault lines that run throughout California.

The glow of light is further expressed in *Summerland*, a large-scale painting that evokes a long walk— perhaps from shore to sea. On the bottom half of the image, Innis sews together alternating bands of light pink painted canvas and mustard colored translucent nylon fabric to simulate the reflection of the sun as well as the motion of undulating waves at the beach on a summer's day. Blue washes evoke sky with drawn horizontal lines that reference the receding horizon as well as the lines of a car's rear window defroster. As Innis recalls a dreamy, warm beach from her past, she also acknowledges that it is almost beyond reach.

In her newest series, Innis creates inviting spaces that offer both respites and something to consider. While the scale, palette and associations change with each body of work, her underlying intentions remain consistent — to explore multiple perspectives simultaneously — above and below, before and after, life and death, the personal and the universal. With *Glint*, Innis has created evocative paintings that celebrate the beauty of her surroundings. The compelling and complex works present more than a glimmer of hope, leading a way to leave the past behind. The paintings inspire us to move forward and imagine an altered and improved future.