

James Kao  
Artist Statements

June 2018

Farmland fills that space, almost "naturally", between the village and the woods. Here, too, on these geometric fields, cats and dogs run about, chase after, and consort with hedgehogs, deer, and all creatures untamed.

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August 2017

Above Lac Léman, I squint but fail to see through the layers of clouds. With eyes open, I wait. When the sun shines and the winds blow, I know these cloudy forms will give way to Mont Blanc's icy peak.

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February 2016

When the world I imagine diverges from the world I see, my practice moves from observation to invention.

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December 2014

My observations of the natural world give way to representations, inventions, and perversions.

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October 2013

There is a line, even if unmarked, between natural and unnatural, between built and un-built, between world and earth; and I revel where this line erupts.

Lava turns to stone that lines a Chicago garden.

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August 2012

Owlets cry for food, coyote sirens warn, and frog songs lull me to sleep. I hear a tree fall in the distance. A nest of newts is red and sanguine, and a lone mushroom portends the angel of death.

Eyes open, ears alert, and the forest marks me.

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April 2012

Where language fails, art reigns.

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July 2011

Hokusai envisioned thirty-six views of Mount Fuji, and Cezanne gazed at Mont Sainte-Victoire with fresh energy over sixty times. I, too, am looking for my earthly motif that ranges into the heavens.

I am dreaming of white mountains cast in numberless shades of summer green.

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July 2010

Chinese orthography and primitive art-forms bewitch, and I am drawing towards all that is child-like, animal-like, and angelic.

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February 2008

I sense an artistic responsibility to grasp, process, and re-present our world. This is also my privilege.

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June 2006

I paint quietly and slowly.

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May 2006

My paintings and drawings record direct and repeated observations. Each reiteration of similar motifs marks an increasing intimacy with the world and moves an observational practice closer to a private meditation. My comfort in familiar objects and their spaces manifests in an aging collection of citrus fruit—once-fresh oranges are now desiccated, discolored, misshapen, and hard to the touch; and my desire to escape the mundane impels me toward the uncanny.