

Inner Terrain

Kate Cheney Chappell

Artist's Statement

Martin Heidegger defines the holy as "that dimension of existence through which there is illumination of the things that are,... a creative act at the point of engaging the Nothing." Since the death of both my parents, I find myself struggling with the ultimate questions of my existence and purpose on earth. If I render what I see, the woods, stones, and the sea that surrounds the island of Monhegan, for example; how, then, will I know my interior landscape and paint that? What is the connection between the two? "Live the questions now!" said the great German poet Rilke. What are the landmarks, the veins, the wounds and the healed-over places of the inner terrain? How is it connected to the outer terrain and the creatures who share this web of life with me?

I make art to celebrate the natural world and our interdependence with it. For 25 years I have painted the landscape of the small Maine island where I live part of the year: woods, stones, high granite cliffs, and sea. Since the death of both parents, I find myself exploring an interior landscape, an "inner terrain" if you will, of landmarks, wounds and healed-over places. I have turned to printmaking for the great variety of mark, texture and layering it affords, and the pure surprise of the process. The monotypes, collagraphs, and mixed media pieces in this show began with plates moving through an etching press, transferring through weight the imprint of imagery on paper. Poetry is an important part of my process as an artist, whether I write my own in tandem with a series of monoprints, or read and reflect on other poets' words. Complete poems and references are assembled in a book in the gallery. "The flute of interior time is played whether we hear it or not," writes the 15th century poet and mystic, Kabir. Making art is an act of devotion, manifesting outward while listening inwardly. For me, it is a way to "live the questions now", as Rilke says. I experience the answers in and through my physical body, whether in response to a personal setback or loss as in the "Healing the Break" series, or in a keen sense of greater loss for humanity caused by our increasing alienation from each other and the natural world. "Earth Envelopes", "Armistice", and "Explosion of Amphibian Deformities" speak to this concern. Ultimately, I want my art to make us think about our relationships---with ourselves, with other creatures and with our distant ancestors who made the first marks and shared our human impulse to create.

--Kate Cheney Chappell