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Traces of Earthly Things

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Kristin Frost

Thesis Statement

My strongest memories are visual. I feel connected to the moments of my life that have left imprints in my mind, traces of events that are still thick with color, energy, and purpose. I make paintings, collages, and installations that are visual combinations of events, land forms, and places from the present and the past. Through the repeated reworking of images and ideas in each piece, I reform my own concepts of space and time. Each aspect of my multi-step process changes not only the physical features of a piece, but also the original recollection that generated it. Through this kind of conscious abstraction, I relate past to present, and visualize the transitory nature of experience.

The combination of recognizable and abstract imagery establishes the core of my work, aiming to characterize the relationship of place and time. While objects, people, or places can sometimes be found in the finished pieces, nothing is complete – colors and shapes collide and overlap, reflecting the mind's capacity to rapidly recover thoughts and formulate ideas. Landscapes are often left empty, stripped of color and context, evoking the gaps that are so often found even in our strongest memories. Unity is established through the awkward yet familiar shapes that are formed in each collage or painting. With every change, manipulation, addition, or subtraction that I make, meaning shifts, ideas connect or rupture, and the vague, ambiguous images in my mind are given a physical presence.

My paintings are cropped, intensified, shifted, and manipulated to create strange spaces. There are often identifiable objects or visual motifs adapted from my current surroundings and layered into the work. In a recent work, *Remnants*, I connected two paintings in the three dimensional space of a room with colored tape, string, and painted paper, creating a dynamic interplay of color and movement between them. I am interested in the connections found in these visual forms, and not in the categorization that comes from focusing on their inherent differences.

I reuse collage materials, as seen in *Presence of Mine*, which combines many different watercolor and acrylic collages into one large hot-air balloon shape. I consider these modified, sculptural collages to be paintings in the round. They ask the viewer to become an active participant, using their own memory in order to complete the image. Time and sequence is slowed down, broken up, and reassembled in the literal process of circling these pictorial surfaces. This remaking of memory keeps my process fresh, as each piece is consciously separated from the idea that originated it. Connections are then reconsidered as the work progresses, helping me stay engaged in the present. While history is certainly a part of my work, I actively draw from the influences around me, considering them just as relevant as those that are remembered. In order to emphasize the ephemeral, I capture visual elements from my own history and that of my cultural environment.

I choose colors that evoke the emotions my memories have left me with. Many of these colors are reminiscent of land, sky, and water, as they have left the greatest impression in my mind. Jolts of bright, artificial colors are also found, manmade elements that are imposed, merged, or transferred on to textured surfaces. My work fluctuates in luminosity and clarity, through the variation of opacity and transparency. The juxtaposition of these opposing elements often becomes the focus of the image. I see this kind of abstraction as directly relating to how we experience memories – as a contrast of ambiguity with rare moments of clarity.

My works search for connections and attempt to break free of their original associations through a balance of control and impulsiveness. This combination of elements echoes the transformations that happen over time with memories that hold great importance – they somehow continue to gain value even as they lose lucidity. In my work, this is a backwards process: I begin from memory, bring it into focus in visual form, and then purposefully overlap, change, and manipulate the images I sought to remember. I am an active, conscious participant in the replacing of my old thoughts with these new, physical objects that include multiple ideas and moments in time.