

Alix Hitchcock Statement

This series of encaustic paintings on wood panels is a continuing exploration of the medium of encaustic. In most of the pieces there is imagery that evokes a sense of narrative or memory, with figures, human or animal, emerging from mysterious environments, some of which seem to be actual places, others only patterns from nature or elements of life.

Many of the pieces in this series are inspired by a recent trip to Wyoming, where I found the crows at Yellowstone, cast-off antlers, and barbed wire fencing. In addition, I have included Crow Indian imagery from a shield, and the idea of Native American petroglyphs on stone surfaces, where symbols of shamans, journeys, settlements, and clans abound. Star constellations add to the symbolism: Altair, the Eagle, Orion, the Hunter, and Ursa Major, the Bear, which includes the Big Dipper and the North Star. The open starry sky is a large part of the West, and I imagined earlier peoples overwhelmed by its presence at night and in their lives.

In some pieces I transferred charcoal drawings or color photographs onto the wax. Some direct drawing with wax color pencils is applied to the top layer in a few pieces.

The encaustic medium is an ancient Egyptian medium which is now used by contemporary artists. Beeswax is melted with Damar crystals (for hardening) and pigment is added for color while the wax is melted. The wax is then applied hot to a firm surface (like wood panel), then fused into the under layer with heat (heatgun, iron, etc.). Many layers can be added or taken away in the process. The encaustic paintings cool and harden to a durable surface. They can be handled as any painting on panel or canvas.

In all the pieces I strive for contrast between the illusion of visual depth vs. two-dimensional surface color and textures.

Color relationships and overlapping imagery are important for creating these illusions and atmospheres. The sensual nature of the wax, whether opaque or translucent, is meant to draw the viewer in and engage them in this illusory world.

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