



April 2019

## **Artist Interview with Lisa Kellner:**

### **Could you tell us about these paintings and where they originated?**

I began making these works on Mylar in conjunction with the installations I was making using silk organza and raw pigment as my installation materials. It started with the need to create a space that was ethereal in nature and embraced translucent qualities. I like exploring the spatial concerns of painting whether it be in three dimensions or two. These paintings on Mylar use the same raw pigments and paints as the installations. The square configuration on the mylar is a great boundary I can manipulate and play with. The Mylar brings out the translucency of the paint and really allows light to come through the work. I use water and specifically ocean water to make these works. When the paint is combined with the water, it kind of does its own thing on the Mylar. At that point the liquid paint and I do a bit of a dance, moving and shaping the forms on the Mylar. I never know what I will ultimately end up with and I really like that. Gravity plays a major role here as well. Once its dry I begin drawing on the Mylar hundreds of tiny shapes. Between the movement of pigmented water and the ink drawing, these works are really about control and surrendering that control.

### **What is island life in Maine like? How does it compare to some of the other places you have lived?**

I've been coming to Maine since college and knew I wanted to try living here. I live on an island of about 2,500 people that expands to about 5,000 in the summer. What most attracted me to this place was the amount of untouched landscape that surrounds me here, both land and sea. Living in a small town you realize quickly that there are many different points of view and ways of living. But you all have one common value and that is a real love of being surrounded by nature and a need to live simply and uncomplicated. I find that people respect each other's privacy and individuality here because that is what they most value. When I go to my local coffee shop in town, I have lengthy conversations with people whether I know them or not. It's so different than in a city where you go into a coffee shop and everyone is sitting alone with their computer. The other aspect of living here is that weather and nature are the dominant force. I've learned to really pay attention and not take for granted a sunrise, calm sea or the constant

change of colors and shapes in the landscape. When I first moved here I was watching an osprey build its nest. One day a bald eagle swooped down and stole one of the osprey's babies. I witnessed a battle in the air between the two ospreys and the eagle. The eagle won and we found the remnants of the baby a few days later on our road. The osprey screamed and cried for the rest of that day. It was awesome and horrific all at once. Things like that are a normal occurrence here. I've learned to value what's important and try to bring that into my work.

**You currently work primarily with mylar and silk. Are there other materials you have or would like to experiment with?**

I use materials that inform the ideas behind the work. I'm really not married to any particular material. I am more interested in how to convey the ideas I want to come through in my work. Mylar and silk are the perfect materials to allow me to explore facades, the meaning of a surface layer, as well as light and shadow as painting elements. I have worked with clay, porcelain, rubber, wood, plaster, and other materials. In my installations, I incorporate lighting elements, wood structures and wall drawing as part of the work. I am now playing with video projection as part of the installations, both to portray the installation in a new way and to enable participants to become part of the piece. I think of the viewers as the final component in the work. Basically, I am always experimenting. Sometimes they work and sometimes they don't, or its something I know I will come back to later. Right now I am working on a project using found objects and trash.

**You state that nature is your greatest teacher. Could you elaborate?**

As the world has become this interconnected place through new media, the internet, and social media, I find it very easy to feel a strong disconnect and to sort of losing myself in the web of all of this technology. It can be very distracting. By being in nature I am instantly brought into the present moment and reconnected to my truth. There is nothing like a five, six-hour hike in the woods to experience being present for a long amount of time. I have a little patch of land in which I am growing my own food. It's been a learning process fighting the elements, the deer and rabbits, clearing and building up the soil. But there is nothing more satisfying than going into the garden when you are hungry and eating what you pick right then and there. Every single moment is different here and I have learned to pay attention to the changes in light, tonality, and configuration of shapes that occurs from one moment to the next. I incorporate what I experience in my work. In my paintings, I want to bring out the essence of one instant and explore it to its fullest.

**In a past life you were a mural painter in New York. If you were to paint one more mural, what and where would it be?**

I am currently working on a large painting that takes the point of view of someone sitting completely immersed in an untouched natural landscape for a lengthy period of time. What occurs is all of your senses become super specific and on point. I would love to make a large mural painting that did exactly that: spotlight one perfect moment of clarity, light, tonality, and dimensionality as experienced in this environment. I have been hiking deep into the woods and just sitting and sketching there to see what comes up. It's still winter here, so it has been quite interesting to do this. Then I bring this back to my painting. I am not trying to duplicate what I see representationally. Rather, I am trying to bring out the essence of that environment through the use of shapes, painting applications, color, and light. The works on Mylar are all about this process too. Large paintings and even larger murals allow for that complete immersive experience. This is also what I try to do with my installations. Once this series of large paintings are completed, I would love to use them as the basis for a mural on a building in an urban environment. My hope would be to create a mural that encouraged people who walked by it to reconnect with themselves instead of just looking at an image of something. I want my work to engender a pause, a moment of reflection. When I was a mural painter working for clients, I always painted representationally whether it be a ceiling of wildlife and bamboo structures or a scene from a jungle, etc. That was 15 years ago. This new mural would be more in line with my current work and the ideas I am trying to express abstractly. I think now, more than ever, art has the power to reconnect us to our best selves and it seems more important than ever to do this. It's why I go into the studio every single day.