

John Lee

Artist Statement

My painting is an attempt to unify observed color divisions. There is no reliance on chiaroscuro. I work from direct observation in my studio. It is my hope to tame, but not destroy, the exhilaration of color that I find in neutral color areas, such as shadows, cardboard, walls, and metal filing cabinets. The subjects, the views that I paint, are primarily 'discovered' while spending time in the studio working. The space is primarily painted as I find it, with little to no editing or composing of the objects. I want a sense of 'Thereness' with the objects and planes that I paint; I want everything to sit in space. Each painting is a meditation on both the setup and the painting, and hopefully the feelings and excitement of various felt moments in each work will translate to a sympathetic viewer.

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I am a Responsive painter. My paintings are engagements with visual stuff. I see certain color events and planar rhythms that make me want to respond to them. Representation (of things or places) is not my goal. Rather, I am interested in expressing both a sense of hefty weightiness and a sense of diffuse fragility. I want a feeling for the pressures and gravity of the planes (floors, walls, forms) as well as the airy diffuse quality of the color, light, shadows, and reflections.

I am often inspired by the colors I discover in mid-range light and shadow, which can offer subtly dramatic contrasts. These contrasts include dull and reflective, neutral and intense, lighter and darker, dense and airy. Often it is the case that I see the contrasts as simultaneous occurrences.

I paint directly, working in front of the subject while observing it at all times. The paintings are worked on for a long time, with constant revision of the color. My process is both analytical and intuitive, an open search for what feels right. Mostly I want the planes to find their place in space, yet I also enjoy instances where the color hovers above, lies within, or possibly lands on the picture plane. Given the way that I make a painting, the final expression may be that of a personal anxiety.