

Susan Stevens
Artist Statement/Bio
2024

Although I have studied art all of my life, I still consider myself to be self taught. It wasn't until well into my adult life that I pursued the practice of art making, having fallen into the role of an elementary art teacher at my children's school which ignited, and made a reality of, my artistic journey. I consider that time as an art teacher the greatest gift.

Most recently I have been drawn to the work of George Innes and continue to be influenced by his handling of edges and the atmospheric mystery he communicates to the viewer. It stirs an emotion in me which I hope achieves the same mystery in my own paintings.

I feel a strong spiritual pull towards the natural world and the relation between earth and sky. These places are my sanctuary where I feel comfort, freedom, and connection. They are connections to my past and satisfy my hunger for the places that have meaning to me. I am part of them.

I find that I will paint a certain "place" repeatedly to get to know it better and eventually find those elemental simplicities that are the heart. They are no longer about a specific place but rather an emotion. What is it about a place that is so compelling? Is it the light? Is it the space? Is it all the living things? I break it down to the most basic; shifting towards intimacy.

My love for the natural world comes from a strong lineage of land and wildlife conservation. I am an advocate for openspace and the use of public lands and I am grateful for having spent most of my life being able to witness and enjoy wild places that are now under threat of extinction. I cannot imagine a world without it and my hope is that I can, at the very least, preserve these places through my painting.

My influences stem from a variety of painters; from my earliest with NC and Andrew Wyeth, and later with the work of Russell Chatham, Wolf Kahn, George Inness and many others.

I was born in 1961 in southeastern Pennsylvania and lived there my entire childhood. In 1986, I received a BA in Art History from Montana State University. That same year I married and moved south to Hattiesburg, Mississippi where we lived for 38 years and raised our two children. From 2004-2013, I taught elementary art at the school our children attended. I am an active member of the Women's Art Collective, in Hattiesburg, the Mississippi Art Colony, a state-wide organization, The Degas Pastel Society, the Philadelphia Pastel Society, and the Pastel Society of America. My husband and I now reside in Bozeman, Montana.