

I am often asked why I chose to work exclusively in monochrome; to this question I have no clear-cut answer, only that this way of working has significance on many levels. The color “black” (which predominates in my work), for instance, is *itself* symbolic. Its myriad associations with night, dreams, mystery, death, the past, and the unconscious all hold a powerful attraction. Yet, aside from monochrome’s immediate psychological impact, my approach to color (or more precisely – the lack of it) is more than a personal preference; I believe it is absolutely indispensable to what I am trying to do.

When I first started to think about painting, to explore my own sensibilities, I knew I wanted to make illusionistic paintings and drawings that were not illustrative – but that were fully realized atmospherically. I saw that the illusion’s beauty lay in the fact that its effect was itself inherently precious, and yet, though color traditionally figures so strongly in this kind of work, I discovered that I had a mysterious predilection for the “colorless”: light isolated in its purest form – as tone rather than as temperature.

To this end, the reductive rub-out technique I am fond of using allows me to work transparently: with a single paint-color there is no mixing of pigments and no layered build-up. I think of the end result as a kind of “painted drawing,” but unlike the typical oil painting (where the thickest paint is most often in the highest lights), the white is merely the ground showing through – like the paper in a watercolor snow scene. I find this look (of ink on a printed page) appealing and a useful association especially in the service of narrative. As I work, the time-spans involved and the commitment to such extreme observation that are called for, often remind me of the unlikely value of *slowness*. It is here, oddly, that I find my truest connection both to photography and graphic novels, and the earliest easel painters. It’s less about paint and paint quality, and more about light, my subject, and the documentation of mood.

With regard to subject matter: the honesty of the nude, its forthrightness and natural expressive power, when placed before a backdrop of darkness, becomes the perfect metaphor. How might we measure ourselves against this ever-present unknown? How great is the difference between the intimacies of what is revealed and the uncertainties of what remains unseen. Here the most paltry light feels spiritual, reassuring, even as it exposes our human vulnerabilities, our hidden animal characteristics. Here experience is distilled to a single moment where the self is pictured as eternal, whether through depictions of animals – such as the dog, the eagle, or the horse – or again, through the human form.

It is my aim to move the viewer, aided by her sense of place and natural familiarity with real light on living surfaces, to a deeper lost level of emotional beauty – something beyond mere self-expression – a window on the very mystery of our lives in the world.