

Jess Beyler

Artist's Statement

I paint to create a moment of sacred space. I think of my work as being shrines or portable chapels of no particular religion, just a place to connect to the unnamed sacredness, a place to step away from the whatever the current anxious buzz happens to be, a place to heal.

I believe the physical and the sacred are closely entwined, so I start with the body's knowing. My paintings begin as dancing or as a ritual that leaves marks behind. My dance training, my martial arts experience, and my meditation practice support that. These disciplines teach that everything that happens in the mind is accompanied by a motion in the body, usually deeper and more subtle than logic can track, and they train one's body to respond to and articulate this mind intuitively, and with precision.

The marks, once made, function like found objects for my intellect, which reads them, appropriates and builds on them. I paint in a tussle between control and release, analysis and passion, a yearning to put things in order and a need to sail right off the edges of the all the maps of my knowing.

My proximate subject matter comes from things that seem empty--sky, ocean, wind, light, deep space, subatomic particles, the shape of motion, the passing of time, the dreaming mind, and the inarticulate longings of the heart.

My most important influences would be Japanese calligraphy in general, the 1st Frolicking Animals Scroll from the 12th Century Japan that is widely acknowledged to be the foundation of Japanese anime (we had a facsimile of it at home when I was growing up) the animation of Hayao Miyazaki, particularly his drawing of water and of the dragon in *Spirited Away*, the light and loveliness of French Impressionism, which I came to understand by living in France for a year, the sheer physicality of Michelangelo, Rodin and Richard Serra, and finally, Max Gimblett from New Zealand.

I hesitate to talk to people what I am doing because I don't want to try to sell people their own experience. In a world clogged with spin, I want my work to be a place of silence where people can have their own meanings. But I do treasure the time that a fairly tough-looking guy told me about his near-death experience. He had difficulty describing it, "but it looked something like that," he said, and pointed at my painting which was hanging behind the bar. (He didn't know it was mine.) "Well, It didn't *look* like that, exactly", he corrected himself, "but it *felt* like that, and", he said, "ever since, I have walked the earth with more tenderness."