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The painted American landscape has long been used as a backdrop to tell tales of human trials and affairs. Countless artworks depict mans' conquest and governance of wild lands, or else treat those domesticated worlds as places for our expansion and leisure. Even when seemingly depicting the grandeur of the wilderness, as with the Hudson River School Painters, the work still reeks of supremacy – peering ravenously down from a high rock at the wild young lands. There were less obvious postures of dominance, too; the Impressionists, for example, painted charming and peaceful outdoor scenes to inspire and comfort during times of industrialization and war, in the process reaffirming the misguided idea that nature is our inexhaustible refuge.

I do all I can to prevent my landscapes from becoming backdrops. I use an aerial perspective so that there is no clear foreground, no place for humans to claim dominance or steal the show. I don't paint people atop the land, but paint them into it or beneath it. The humans are a mostly-veiled underpainting, entirely merged with the terrain.

Growing up, my sister and I spent most of our time outside. We explored every inch of our family farm, playing and imagining what took place on the land before we lived there. Were there any bloody battles? Did a mammoth ever sleep there, did a forest ever grow? I'd wonder how many stories were embedded into the land. How many people had loved it? I got to know that land so well that I began to feel like an extension of it, and it in turn became an extension of me: my body, my dreams, and emotions.

Instead of wondering if we belong on this land, I wonder if humans belong to this land. Does it hold something of us, a piece of us? For better or worse, we are here. But can we feel a physical connection to it, and even more so, does it still feel any connection to us? Does a river carry within in it any semblance of a man? Can a pond rest with the countenance of a sleeping girl? Do the rocks of the badlands hold a memory of the violence committed there? These paintings are not an attempt to personify the land, they are more of an exorcism. I am trying to find a wanting of our species within a landscape that we have felt separate from for centuries. Our western conception of nature as separate from us is unsustainable. I want to make permanent those fleeting feelings of connection. I paint humans as physically and psychologically intertwined with their environment so that you cannot differentiate between them. To destroy that land is to destroy ourselves.