

The paintings in this show were made over the course of the past year. During that time my family and I split our time between Falcon lake, Manitoba and Indianapolis, Indiana where my wife, Noni, started teaching two months before the pandemic began. Many of the paintings in the exhibition depict spaces around where we live (aside from one California memory). These places include an abandoned railyard near our neighborhood in Indiana, the town cemetery in Falcon Lake, and a forest area with one of the many daily CP Rail trains traveling through it in the provincial park we live in while in Manitoba. Part of the reason the paintings depicted places closer to home was the reality of the pandemic which limited travel. I was at home taking care of my young son and we would walk often to watch trains or trucks and cars on the highway. But I also wanted to paint places that I could explore more closely and spend more time making drawings as subject matter from the paintings.

The resulting paintings speak to the time in which they were made. They show how events, political decisions and actions affect and are imprinted on these specific places. But they also show my headspace during the making of them. Although they were made before smoke from the wildfires blanketed our area in Manitoba in the summer, the images of trains traveling through brush fires and their aftermath clearly highlight the consequences of our warming climate on the landscape. The mourners in the Falcon Lake Cemetery painting wear masks in order to protect their community from the pandemic that is still ongoing in our communities. The abandoned rail yards and spurs in Indianapolis show the deindustrialization in the midwest while also hinting at nature reasserting itself when allowed to. The artwork depicting a limestone quarry in Indiana is an exception in that it shows the historical use of a space I visited (the painting shows quarry workers cutting and removing large blocks of stone in the 1980s). The paintings depict areas that show how we have privileged the shipping of goods, the sanctity of private companies and exploitation of resources over sustainability, fairness and equality.

When I was making these paintings I didn't want to privilege a certain visual vantage point over others. Some give a bird's eye view in which the landscape becomes a diagram of the various uses of human objects and natural elements in the place, in others an on the ground perspective was more apt. For the Milner Ridge prison painting it was important to have a perspective at ground level from outside to highlight my privileged status as someone outside the carceral system. I wanted to show how we hide the places where we imprison people in our community, and to highlight the impenetrable inside/outside of the prison space.

For me painting is a material process, in which I build up an image through many layers. I make many corrections and alterations, scrapping away as often as adding paint. Working in series, images of railroads, pathways, rocks, and foliage are repeated obsessively. Much like the spaces I represent, the paintings are constantly being built up, altered, and torn down. The paintings of quarries, pathways, and abandoned rail sidings describe a landscape in which neglected areas have been lived in, worked in and altered. I use painting to represent these things because it does not claim to be, nor can it be confused with, a depiction of objective reality. These works depict my subjective experience and interpretation of landscape through the medium of paint.

