

THESIS

THE EDGE OF PLACE

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ABSTRACT

THE EDGE OF PLACE

My thesis work uses clouds as a metaphor to explore transition, change, and shifts. I track the origins of my interest in landscape painting by discussing nineteenth century Hudson River School painters — the first to celebrate the American landscape in a traditional oil painting method. Their practice of painting *en plein air*, in addition to their mobile studio practices as artist-adventurers, influences my paint language and approach. Frederic Church's painted cloud sketches are highlighted for his process, materials, and relationship to place. I argue that these paintings, both finished and unfinished, exist in a state of liminality. Next, I detail a search for the "local" in the presence of multicenteredness and movement, as outlined in Lucy Lippard's text, *The Lure of the Local*. In my series *Holding Patterns*, and my thesis work *The Edge of Place*, I question what it means to find a sense of place within shifting localities. I reference contemporary approaches to landscape and skyscape painting within the context of Lippard's discussion. The history of liminality is followed, using anthropologist Victor Turner's work as a launching point to discuss how liminal spaces are illustrated in my paintings. My work is also supported by Rebecca Solnit's text *A Field Guide to Getting Lost* to show how relationships in flux can be mirrored in the landscape. Finally, time as a marker of liminality is discussed within the context of my paintings.

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THE EDGE OF PLACE

My thesis work uses clouds as a metaphor to explore transition, change, and shifts. For almost eight years, my husband Dan and I have lived long-distance due to both my educational pursuits and his military career. Throughout this time, the foundation of our relationship has been built on intermittent weekends together, intentionally investing in deepening a partnership that makes both separation and independent life sustainable. We are especially fortunate that we can visit each other. The product of this distance is a substantial amount of time spent in between — in between farewells and reunions, homes in different cities, deployments and graduations. This back and forth promises to continue as Dan pursues a career in the Army. These life experiences have manifested in my paintings, as I have chosen to navigate the time apart and shifts in location through painting what I see as a constant, reliable source of place: the sky.

Plein Air and American Landscape Painting

My work was not always grounded in transitory spaces. My undergraduate studies focused on nineteenth-century Hudson River School landscape paintings. More specifically, I was interested in works by artists Thomas Moran, Frederic Church, Albert Bierstadt, and Thomas Cole. These artists impressively depicted expansive American scenes on large, oil-painted canvases, often basing their studio paintings on field sketches produced through travel. One such painting is Thomas Moran's *The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone*, which he painted after traveling west with the John W. Powell expedition through the Green and Colorado River canyons (Fig. 1). Precisely painted, down to individual leaves on trees, these artists expertly used color to convey spatial depth and luminous light. Hudson River School painters wanted a viewer to feel as if they were in the landscape themselves. Works by Moran, Church, and Bierstadt

transported viewers to geysers in Wyoming, Yosemite Valley in California, and even to South America and the Arctic. The movement of these artists into the West was motivated by Manifest Destiny, a nineteenth-century belief “that expansion of the US westward toward the Pacific Ocean was destined and justified,” though this idea of “progress” was “[not] easy or pleasant for those who were impacted by the country’s rapid growth,” especially Indigenous peoples.¹ Although demanding foot travel was a component of their movement, Hudson River School artists utilized emerging forms of transportation like steamboats and railroad — forms of industrialization they chose not to depict in their romanticized landscapes. These painter’s depictions of the American landscape have had an enduring and complex impact on how landscape is preserved, appreciated, and perceived today.

Also important to these artists was plein air painting. Producing large quantities of sketches in both oil paint and drawing mediums, these works often served as studies for their formal masterpieces, but are lively, compelling works by themselves. Despite period emphasis on studio paintings, Frederic Church admitted that plein air painting was, “of all employments...the most delightful.”² An excerpt from the September 1860 issue of *Cosmopolitan Art Journal* describes the vision of these artist-adventurers with unique, mobile studio practices:

Our artists are quite generally ‘out of town’ — which means gone to the antipodes, or anywhere else that a good sketch can be had. The hope of *that* great picture, of which every artist dreams, sends them into every imaginable locality in quest of *the* sketch. They straddle mountains, ford rivers, explore plains, dive into caves, gaze inquisitively into clouds...sail seas, run into icebergs, [and] scald themselves in Amazonian valleys[.]³

¹ “Manifest Destiny and the West,” National Gallery of Art, accessed December 2, 2018, <https://www.nga.gov/education/teachers/lessons-activities/uncovering-america/manifest-destiny-west.html>.

² Andrew Wilton, *Frederic Church and the Landscape Oil Sketch* (London: National Gallery Company Limited, 2013), 9.

³ Eleanor Jones Harvey, *The Painted Sketch: American Impressions from Nature 1830-1880* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1998), frontispiece.

Some artists traveled independently, and others, like Thomas Moran, were hired artists on survey expeditions out west. Thomas Moran's painted sketches helped persuade President Grant to establish Yellowstone as America's first national park in 1872.⁴ These sketches had a profound influence on the American public's view of the American landscape during the nineteenth century, as the sketches were taken as photographic truths — although artistic liberties were taken even when working directly from nature. A vision of America and its landscape developed due to the images produced by artists on expeditions and travels; America was understood through these works as a land of endless opportunity and abundant beauty.

The origins of my interest in Hudson River School artists, and by extension plein air painting, sat at the intersection of travel, exploration, and the genre of western landscape painting. Hudson River School painters embodied the spirit of the artist-adventurer, which resonated with me after a cross-country bike ride my family and I completed in 2013. That bike ride became the topic of my undergraduate thesis work. I further explored this idea in a subsequent cross-country trip in 2015, following in the footsteps of Thomas Cole, Frederic Church, Thomas Moran, and Albert Bierstadt.⁵ For three months, I traveled, searching for the same views they painted plein air in the nineteenth century. I reproduced their paintings on-site with my own pochade box and panels. I hiked miles with my painting gear to find their “view.” The trip took me through Cole and Church's homes in the Hudson River Valley, and through many national parks, including Acadia in Maine, Rocky Mountain in Colorado, Yellowstone and Grand Teton in Wyoming, and Yosemite in California. Over a century and a half later, they taught me about plein air painting and the American landscape. I became somewhat disillusioned with our parks system, both believing fully in the value of preserving our country's most

⁴ Karl Kusserow and Alan C. Braddock, *Nature's Nation: American Art and Environment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 16.

⁵ This trip was made possible through a grant at Xavier University's Brueggeman Center for Dialogue.

beautiful natural sites for public use, but also witnessing the negative impact of tourism on these places. Additionally, Hudson River School paintings falsely implied these spaces were largely uninhabited or portrayed misleading friendly relations between white explorers and Indigenous peoples. The American landscape has changed since the mid-nineteenth century, and their depictions of place should be viewed with a critical eye. I still, however, found great formal and aesthetic value in how they painted their sketches — especially Church.

Frederic Church's cloud studies and painted sketches were of significant interest to me. I was able to plein air paint at his home in Olana, New York and I adopted some of his painting techniques after studying his sketches. I started using more coarse-bristle brushes that retained their strokes, in addition to working from a warm, reddish underpainting which was preferred by Church and many Hudson River School painters.⁶ Artist and illustrator James Gurney describes a notable Church sketch, *Sunset Across the Hudson Valley, June 1870* on his blog, *Gurney Journey* (Fig. 2):

Because of the way oil paint can retain its brush character when it is scrubbed on, [Church] suggests a lot of detail with a bristle brush. The foreground trees seem to have their full complement of leaves, but the light leaf textures are the light-toned board showing through. The line of trees at the bottom probably went down in a matter of seconds.⁷

Though some retain a striking amount of detail for such small studies, many of his cloudscapes are “impromptu, virtuoso sketches,” capturing a fleeting moment.⁸ Church worked on a smooth paper or thin board, prepared with a warm, neutral color wash.⁹ He was committed to the practice of plein air painting abroad and locally. Sketches from his home on the Hudson River

⁶ Wilton, *Frederic Church*, 10. Church's surface preference is detailed here.

⁷ “Frederic Church's Oil Sketches,” Gurney Journey, last modified April 29, 2015, <http://gurneyjourney.blogspot.com/2015/04/frederic-churchs-oil-sketches.html>.

⁸ Wilton, *Frederic Church*, 29.

⁹ Wilton, *Frederic Church*, 10.

“form a kind of meteorological diary of his life in that spectacular spot[.]”¹⁰ In the winter of 1871 he painted daily, studying the sunset or twilight from his studio window.¹¹ An example from this time period, painted at Olana, illustrates Church’s skill with color and light — *Sunset above South Mountain from Olana*. It features pastel color washes and precise yet gestural mark-making (Fig. 3). Church’s practice is linked undoubtedly to his chosen locality: “...he produced [the sketches] in large quantities, reflecting his love of the place and his untiring devotion to the recording of natural phenomena.”¹² I am interested in both aspects of the Hudson River School painting experience: that of the traveling artist who works from a portable paint box, mobilizing his studio practice, and that of Frederic Church’s Olana studies, who, in addition to travelling, also cultivated a “home” practice celebrating a specific chosen place in the world.

The mid-nineteenth century saw a “growing presence of the oil sketch, notably the ‘finished sketch’ as recognized works of art in exhibitions and private collections.”¹³ The “finished sketch” was a term “invoked to praise a painted sketch that the artist had brought to pictorial completion — a fully painted surface, with enough care in the composition and resolution of individual forms to be legible, and in some cases exhibitable.”¹⁴ Despite acceptance of the painted sketch as a finished piece, many are liminal works, existing between a state of finished and unfinished, polished and unpolished, formal and casual. Defining artworks as sketches implies a different read by viewers. In 1859, Church exhibited *Twilight, a Sketch*, and a reviewer from the *New York Times* described his piece as the most masterful painting in the exhibition, praising Church’s “marvelous aptitude at seizing the truth of color” and his “rare and

¹⁰ Wilton, *Frederic Church*, 9.

¹¹ Wilton, *Frederic Church*, 29.

¹² Wilton, *Frederic Church*, 30.

¹³ Harvey, *The Painted Sketch*, 99.

¹⁴ Harvey, *The Painted Sketch*, 19.

brilliant atmospheric effect” (Fig. 4).¹⁵ The sketch was “exempt from the more stringent consideration of compositional sophistication and surface finish required of easel paintings,” but still held its own in comparison to “finished” pictures.¹⁶ Contemporary painting accepts a range of sketch-like works, which operate differently than “studio” paintings, often capturing brief moments, an intuitive response by the artist to a subject or concept, and intimacy both with the artist and the piece itself.

Contemporary painters are still interested in space, time and the experience of place through a plein air painting practice. Beau Carey, a contemporary plein air painter, maintains an outdoor practice that informs his larger studio works and produces finished, field-executed pieces. Ideas of mobility remain inherent to contemporary plein air practices. Through Carey’s practice, he realized he “can paint just about anywhere” with a mobile studio, aided by many new paint and travel systems.¹⁷ Plein air painting, he says, “slows me down and allows me to dwell in a place” and allows “an engagement with a particular place over a length of time.”¹⁸ He works in extreme conditions, from the Arctic to rocking boats, and responds to a variety of environments, as seen in his painting on paper, *Arts Coast* (Fig. 5). The plein air paintings are “finished works” in the field, and function as “primary documents of that particular place and my interaction with it.”¹⁹ Evidence of place inserts itself into Carey’s paintings through the significant time he spends getting to know the essence of a location. When he works in the field, wind asserts itself by blowing dust and leaves into the painting; his marks shift if the temperature

¹⁵ Harvey, *The Painted Sketch*, 100.

¹⁶ Harvey, *The Painted Sketch*, 100.

¹⁷ Tess Thackara, “These Artists Travel the World to Paint En Plein Air,” *Artsy*, April 6, 2018, <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-artists-travel-iceland-brazil-paint-en-plein-air>.

¹⁸ Beau Carey, “Far North: Interview With Beau Carey,” interview by Claude Smith, *New American Paintings*, October 14, 2014, <https://www.newamericanpaintings.com/blog/tags/beau-carey>.

¹⁹ Carey, interview.

requires heavy-duty mittens.²⁰ But he also includes additional interventions through “X’s,” marks and lines that interrupt the landscape. “[T]hose little interventions in the work tell something about a place that a sketch or photo can’t,” says Carey.²¹

While the paintings in *The Edge of Place* are not painted plein air, I draw upon the language, spirit, and finish of the painted sketch to evoke the same fleeting quality I feel is present in Church’s cloud sketches and the work of Beau Carey. I use direct, plein air painting techniques in the *Wayfaring* and *Scrolling* series, both part of the body of paintings that make up *The Edge of Place* (Fig. 6, Fig. 7). They are typically finished in one session, working wet paint into wet paint. Similar to the variable conditions of painting outdoors, my process of working sketch-like on paper yields many failures — some paintings are prized, others are tossed. The paper I use is toned with amber shellac, similar to the smooth-textured, stained paperboard used by Church. The smaller, unframed works that comprise *Wayfaring*, and the ease with which the *Scrolling* pieces roll up, give these pieces a portable quality indicative of a sketch or study. Additionally, *Scrolling* retains the unfinished nature some of Church’s studies exhibit. *The Beehive and Sand Beach from Great Head, Mt. Desert* and *Cloud Study* are such examples (Fig. 8, Fig. 9). Clearly Church ran out of time to finish these paintings on-site, an effect also achieved in *Scrolling*.

Considering Church’s work in context to the time period when he was painting, plein air painting may have been a rejection of quickening lifestyles ushered in by industrialization and technology. Unlike Church, I work from photographs, a burgeoning technology in its infancy during the time of Church’s painting career. I bring the outside inside by gathering photo reference spontaneously, typically when I am in movement from one place to another: walking to

²⁰ Thackara, “Artists Travel the World.”

²¹ Thackara, “Artists Travel the World.”

my car, stopping on a bike ride or hike, or looking out a car's passenger window. It is important to me that I source these photos. They are connected to a personal, brief, fleeting experience and captured with the tool at my disposal, a rudimentary phone camera. I feel that these snapshots offer a similar intuitive quality to the painted sketch.

Liminality

Due to developments in technology that led to hypermobility, specifically, the automobile and the airplane, I was able to make frequent flights during the first two years of graduate school from Colorado to North Carolina to visit my husband, who was training to become an Army Special Forces commander. Because I was spending so much time in airplane seats, my observational vantage point shifted upwards. This perspective found its way into my work and I tried to assemble a sense of place, disconnected from the ground and in between two localities. The first evidence of this in my work is the elimination of stable horizons from my paintings. My focus at this time was on the sky alone as I grasped for a place or a sense of the familiar within the movement back and forth. I saw this flight space as liminal, in between two destinations. The paintings are on vertical, shellacked paper, with thin washes of paint, high-key values, and soft colors. *Holding Patterns* was named for aircrafts awaiting permission to land, where the plane exists in a continuous flight path until given grounding directions (Fig. 10). The paintings are caught in a current and awaiting stability, with contemplative vertical views, calling to mind a prolonged gaze out a window. Passive to the landscape, a viewer looks at length, but cannot see enough to grasp anything definitively — this window view grants both access and denial. Seeing these images repeated indicates a state of perpetual sameness, an adherence to no place, and a familiarity with elsewhere.

In these paintings I reference the work of Dutch painter Carla Klein. She alludes to means of moving through space using the imagery of airplane tarmacs and car dashboards interrupted by window reflections, as illustrated in her painting *Untitled* (Fig. 11). Klein uses her own photographic images as a launching point, and moving “from painting to painting, the group can nearly be read as a travelogue — an existential journey wherein end points become irrelevant.”²² She veils unexpected colors in front of monotone images as a means of dividing outside from inside, and pushes her work towards abstraction. Klein’s work is both connected to the artist-adventurers of the nineteenth century in her focus on travel and response to place, but also moves the conversation from a grounded sense of place to one that exists in the in-between.

The concept of liminality is present in the work of Carla Klein. The transitory nature of living in multiple places forces one to confront the spaces in between, and as a result, the concept of liminality has become central to my work as well. Liminality can be traced back to British anthropologist Victor Turner, who cites ethnographer Arnold van Gennep’s ideas of *rites de passage* in chapter four, “Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*.” Van Gennep defines a passage as “rites which accompany every change of place, state, social position, and age.”²³ After a separation occurs, from a group, social structure, or culture, Turner writes that “during the intervening liminal period, the state of the ritual subject...is ambiguous,” but ultimately results in “growth, transformation, and the reformation of old elements in new patterns.”²⁴ Being in a state of transition is an “inward and conceptual process.”²⁵ Turner says the liminal is “that which is neither this nor that, and yet is both” and “neither one thing nor another; or may be both; or neither here nor there; or may be nowhere, and are at the very least

²² “Carla Klein,” Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, accessed March 1, 2018, http://www.tanyabonakdargallery.com/exhibitions/carla-klein_2.

²³ Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), 94.

²⁴ Turner, *The Forest of Symbols*, 99, 94 for respective quotes.

²⁵ Turner, *The Forest of Symbols*, 96.

‘betwixt and between’[.]”²⁶ I see my work existing in the ambiguous period Turner describes, as seen in the halted compositions in *Scrolling* and quick studies in *Wayfaring*. Ultimately, I hope for the growth and transformation that follows. My intentional color palette throughout *The Edge of Place*, and the concluding painting *Building* that sees a material shift from paper to canvas, alludes to the emergence of a positive, long-lasting change that follows many of life’s major passages.

Clouds are an apt metaphor for ideas of movement and liminality, always both constant and shifting. This duality is embedded in each painting — they are slow and quick, continuous and interrupted, present and fleeting. These dualities are also embedded in Byron Kim’s *Sunday Paintings, 1/7/01 to 2/11/18*, where Kim has painted the sky every Sunday for seventeen years. A review of Kim’s *Sky Paintings* helps articulate my own pull towards the sky (Fig. 12):

Even as the *Sunday Paintings*’ texts register an array of personal and political changes over time, their skies remain relatively constant. Kim skillfully captures the sky’s subtle variations with his brushstrokes and color gradations, but the fact is that an arbitrary square of sky doesn’t change much from day to day; viewed from a distance, the paintings, gauzy and calm, appear interchangeable. This contrast gives the work much of its force. Whether Barack Obama or Donald Trump has been elected President, whether Kim’s daughter, Addee, scores a goal or rides the bench, the sky’s celestial indifference remains the same.²⁷

Both Kim’s inner and outer worlds revolve onwards against this great equalizer, the sky. For me and perhaps Kim as well, this is an immense source of comfort: that beauty is everywhere, change is everywhere, and all we have to do is look up to remember.

In *Holding Patterns*, the air space between two physical locations represents the liminal. The works in *The Edge of Place* also exist in liminality. The painted sketches *Wayfaring* are both finished and unfinished, in addition to the *Scrolling* pieces, which are left purposefully halted.

²⁶ Turner, *The Forest of Symbols*, 99, 9 for respective quotes.

²⁷ Louis Bury, “Painting the Sky on Sunday,” *Hyperallergic*, January 27, 2018, <https://hyperallergic.com/421526/byron-kim-sunday-paintings-james-cohan-2018/>.

Work in the series has a feeling of mobility and portability, as if awaiting the word to pack up and go. The scrolls easily roll up from the bottom, and the smaller sketches detach from the wall with simple pins. Even the painting *Building*, the only work on canvas, is split into six stackable sections that can be easily packed up and moved (Fig. 13). Interruptions move purposefully through the work — none of the images are entirely “whole” or present, finished or complete, although they are trying to be. The imagery is both specific to place and no place, capturing specific moments in time without noting any specificity of location.

Rebecca Solnit expands upon ideas of transition and distance as they impact relationships in *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*. She talks about “collaborating with chance” and “being at home in the unknown,” a place even the most stable and secure live.²⁸ Naming my relationship with transition as a collaboration indicates a sense of control or at least active partnership with change. Being content living and loving in the distance and through change is the work I set before myself and embed in the paintings. Solnit’s ideas of edges are also important to my work. Titled in part in homage to some of Solnit’s passages, *The Edge of Place* is explored through stops and starts, bringing attention to the edges of the paintings. The edge is a form of liminal space — the indicator of something ending before something else begins; between deckled edge and wall, scroll and floor, painting and unpainted paper, and canvas front and canvas edge. They represent endings and beginnings. If liminality includes separation and transition, as Victor Turner suggests, these spaces are important moments in the works.

Place and Multicenteredness

Longing for a sense of familiarity, while enduring shifts in place, is not unique to me or to American military families. Foster children move from home to home, uncertain how long or permanently they will be with a given family; Indigenous peoples around the world have been

²⁸ Rebecca Solnit, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost* (London: Penguin Books, 2005), 5, 10, respective quotes.

forcibly removed from their ancestral homelands and made to live on reservations, disconnected from deep roots and connection to place. Artist and activist Ai Weiwei has repeatedly addressed the global refugee crisis in his work, including the installation *Laundromat*, which features “2,046 articles of clothing that have been washed, steamed, and organized, after being salvaged from the abandoned refugee camp in Idomeni in northern Greece” (Fig. 14).²⁹ He further addresses this crisis in *Law of the Journey*, a 230-foot-long black, inflatable boat with over two hundred figures, and a documentary titled *Human Flow* (Fig. 15).³⁰ Artist Do Ho Suh creates full-scale, hand-sewn replicas of his former homes in translucent fabric, such as *The Perfect Home II* (Fig. 16).³¹ Suh was born in Korea, but works and lives in London, New York, and Seoul.³² He “[draws] on a longing for home,” in addition to universal issues of global migration and cultural displacement.”³³ His soft, portable sculptures let him, as he says, “carry my house with me,” bringing a sense of home wherever he travels.³⁴ Unlike the refugee experience Ai Weiwei discusses in his work, Dan and I have both choice and privilege in our distance. Our movements have minor financial impact and occur in pursuit of our personal goals and growth; we also have an inherent support system in each other. But because of our experience of frequent movement, I connect to these artist’s work and seek to find my own symbol and imagery of a “portable home.”

²⁹ Kate Brown, “Ai Weiwei Will Make the Refugee Crisis Personal in His Upcoming Qatar Show,” *Artnet*, March 6, 2018, <https://news.artnet.com/exhibitions/ai-weiwei-qatar-1237127>.

³⁰ Elizabeth Grenier, “Ai Weiwei’s Biggest Installation to Date is a Giant Refugee Boat,” *DW*, March 16, 2017, <https://www.dw.com/en/ai-weiweis-biggest-installation-to-date-is-a-giant-refugee-boat/a-37970102>.

³¹ “One: Do Ho Suh,” Brooklyn Museum, accessed March 1, 2019, https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/exhibitions/one_do_ho_suh.

³² “Biography,” Do Ho Suh, Lehmann Maupin, accessed March 3, 2019, <https://www.lehmannmaupin.com/artists/do-ho-suh/biography>.

³³ Brooklyn Museum, “One: Do Ho Suh.”

³⁴ Brooklyn Museum, “One: Do Ho Suh.”

Lucy Lippard, a writer, curator, and art critic, writes of place and the local in her book, *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society*. Here, Lippard defines “local:”

The intersections of nature, culture, history, and ideology for the ground on which we stand — our land, our place, the local. The lure of the local is the pull of place that operates on each of us...It is the geographical component of the psychological need to belong somewhere...The lure of the local is that undertone to modern life that connects it to the past we know so little and the future we are aimlessly concocting.³⁵

Lippard’s idea of *local* includes the need to belong intertwined with physical place and social experience. This differs from ideas of “landscape” as interpreted by the Hudson River School.

For these artists, landscape is an observed place, seen at a distance, not in its entirety.³⁶ Lippard also talks extensively of “place” in *The Lure of the Local*. She says there is an intimacy to place, achieved by living in a landscape.³⁷ Lippard expands on place as:

...a portion of land/town/cityscape seen from the inside, the resonance of a specific location that is known and familiar...entwined with personal memory, known or unknown histories, marks made in the land that provoke and evoke. Place is latitudinal and longitudinal within the map of a person’s life. It is temporal and spatial, personal and political...place has width as well as depth. It is about connections, what surrounds it, what formed it, what happened there, what will happen there.³⁸

In light of Lippard’s descriptions, my work questions: what does it mean to be without a local?

What does it mean to find a sense of place?

Fortunately, Lippard helps to answer my questions as she goes on to describe “multicenteredness” in *The Lure of the Local*. Lippard’s concept of multicenteredness describes a person who belongs to many places that often differ greatly from each other. We become multicentered when we enter new spaces and become part of their existing hybridity.³⁹

Multicenteredness both changes our images of place and helps us hone in on place with clarity

³⁵ Lucy Lippard, *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society* (New York: The New Press, 1997), 7.

³⁶ Lippard, *The Lure of the Local*, 8.

³⁷ Lippard, *The Lure of the Local*, 7.

³⁸ Lippard, *The Lure of the Local*, 7.

³⁹ Lippard, *The Lure of the Local*, 5-6.

and open eyes. “Still, to feel such exhilaration in returning, one must go away,” writes Thomas Hine in a book review of *The Lure of the Local*, and I think this is true.⁴⁰ When we belong to multiple places, when these places contain stark differences, when we leave and return, our sense of a place differs from one who remains stationary. Having had the opportunity to live in various locations across the United States, I can identify the characteristics and experiences that defined these places for me. Each new place adds to a web of understanding that becomes its own unique space of connected “centers.”

Time

Linked to liminality and multicenteredness is a sense of time. In *Time* by Whitechapel Gallery’s Documents of Contemporary Art, Amelia Groom writes about “the fragmentary experience of time that characterizes today’s globalized geographic mobility.”⁴¹ In a globalized and mobilized age, time seems to be experienced as frequently interrupted as we are presented with more opportunities and distractions than ever before. Ideas of time interrupted runs throughout my work. External schedules like airline timetables, military deployments, and school calendars often dictate how my time is spent. Those in and near the military require constant flexibility, as plans are always fluid and follow a top-down approach. But the same technology that fragments time also facilitates many moments of connection, making distance communication secure, reliable, affordable, and rapid.

Like Kim’s cloud series, Linda Stillman’s *Daily Paintings* span many years (Fig. 17). Stillman’s project is an ongoing series of small, acrylic and gouache sky paintings on paper and panel started in 2005.⁴² Each painting is a marker of time — a day, a week, grouped together in

⁴⁰ Thomas Hine, “All Over the Place,” *The New York Times*, August 17, 1997, <http://movies2.nytimes.com/books/97/08/17/reviews/970817.17hinelt.html>.

⁴¹ Amelia Groom, ed., *Time* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2013), 13.

⁴² “Daily Paintings,” Linda Stillman, accessed March 7, 2019, <https://www.lindastillman.com/daily-paintings/2>.

different installations to express even longer spans of multiple years. Both artist's projects are open-ended in their duration. Stillman's paintings become a means of organizing the time of daily life, providing structure, order, and purpose to her days against the chance variation of her subject matter. Kim continued adding pieces in his series *Sunday Paintings* each week during his show at James Cohen Gallery in 2018. Again, Kim's work collectively creates a timeline of both his personal life and public happenings, bridging inner and outer worlds. Lippard talks about time as a key factor that changes our relationship to place. Time separates place from landscape, or elevates distant, impersonal landscape to intimate, personal place. Time is also a shared ritual that creates a sense of place and local, developing the longer we spend in a particular locality. Here, Stillman and Kim become familiar with a universal skyscape, looking up daily and weekly to, ironically, become grounded.

In my work, time acts as markers of liminality. *Wayfaring* shows stuttering lines that act as a floating horizon among the expansive skyscape. *Scrolling* suggests scenes stuck in time, prevented from progressing or being fully realized — the scrolls themselves take on the characteristics of a timeline. *Building* prevents the viewer from grasping the sky at once, interrupting the continuum or duration. Transition in these works connotes time as a repetitive, predictable action in an otherwise time-less space. The paper paintings leave behind their own linear markers in my studio, leftover lines outlining the edges of many sheets of paper, building on each other as their own marker of time (Fig. 18). George Kubler discusses the inherent unknowability of time in his essay, *The Shape of Time*. "We know time only indirectly by what happens in it, by observing change and permanence, by marking the succession of events among stable settings, and by noting the construct of varying rates of change."⁴³ In *The Edge of Place*, time both accelerates and halts.

⁴³ Groom, *Time*, 29.

Concluding Remarks

My skyscape paintings use clouds to explore change and liminality. From the Hudson River School to contemporary artworks, artists have been exploring ideas of place, the local, and mobility. My search for a sense of place and local continues beyond the work in *The Edge of Place* as relational and locational shifts continue to be a significant part of my life and the lives of many others. Although there is no formula in navigating one state of being to another, there is comfort in this place that follows me. Rebecca Solnit says, “a relationship is a story you construct together and take up residence in, a story as sheltering as a house...a castle in the clouds made out of the moist air exhaled by dreamers.”⁴⁴ When “together” is exceptional and homes are a series of rentals, it can be difficult to construct a story — but, it continues to manifest despite any complexities, which could perhaps be said for all relationships no matter the circumstance. Romance and love stories “*should* move through place and desire,” Solnit says. Mine certainly does, promising partnership through the unknown.⁴⁵ “Every love has its landscape,” and the sky is mine.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Solnit, *A Field Guide*, 135.

⁴⁵ Solnit, *A Field Guide*, 150. My italics.

⁴⁶ Solnit, *A Field Guide*, 118.

FIGURES



Figure 1, Thomas Moran, *The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone*, 1872, oil on canvas, 213 x 266.3 cm.



Figure 2, Frederic Edwin Church, *Sunset Across the Hudson Valley, June 1870*, 1870, oil on paperboard, 11 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 15 $\frac{1}{4}$ in, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.



Figure 3, Frederic Edwin Church, *Sunset above South Mountain from Olana*, about 1870-74, oil on buff academy board, 26.2 x 35.2 cm, Olana State Historic Site.



Figure 4, Frederic Edwin Church, *Twilight, a Sketch*, 1858, oil on canvas, 8 ¼ x 12 ¼ in, Olana State Historic Site.



Figure 5, Beau Carey, *Arts Coast*, 2015, oil on paper, 26 ½ x 19 in.



Figure 6, Emily Sullivan, *Wayfaring*, 2019, oil on shellacked paper, approximately 125 x 52 in (various dimensions based on installation).



Figure 7, Emily Sullivan, *Scrolling*, 2019, oil on shellacked Mulberry paper, 37 x 84 – 108 in (height varies based on wall measurements and installation).



Figure 8, Frederic Edwin Church, *The Beehive And Sand Beach From Great Head, Mt. Desert*, 1850, oil and graphite on cardboard, 10 ½ x 15 ½ in, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.



Figure 9, Frederic Edwin Church, *Cloud Study*, 1871, oil and graphite on paperboard, 10 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 12 $\frac{15}{16}$ in, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum.



Figure 10, Emily Sullivan, *Holding Patterns* series, 2017, oil on shellacked paper, 44 x 30 in.



Figure 11, Carla Klein, *Untitled*, 2013-2014, oil on canvas, 59 x 177 1/8 in.



Figure 12, Byron Kim, *Sunday Paintings*, 1/7/01 to 2/11/18, 2001-ongoing, oil and graphite on canvas, 14 x 14 in each, detail of larger installation.



Figure 13, Emily Sullivan, *Building*, 2019, oil on canvas, 96 x 60 in.

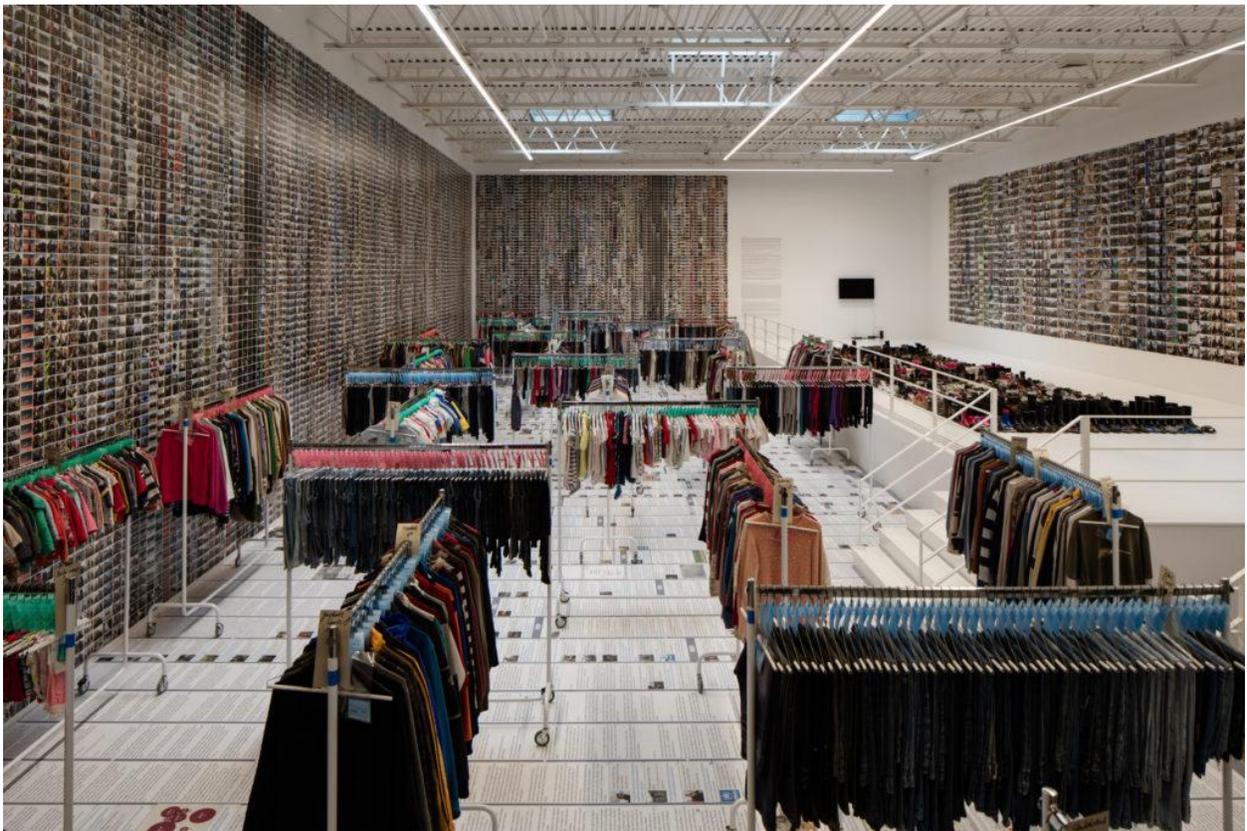


Figure 14, Ai Weiwei, *Laundromat*, 2016, multi-media installation.



Figure 15, Ai WeiWei, *Law of the Journey*, 2017, black rubber inflatable sculpture.



Figure 16, Do Ho Suh, *The Perfect Home II*, 2003, translucent nylon.

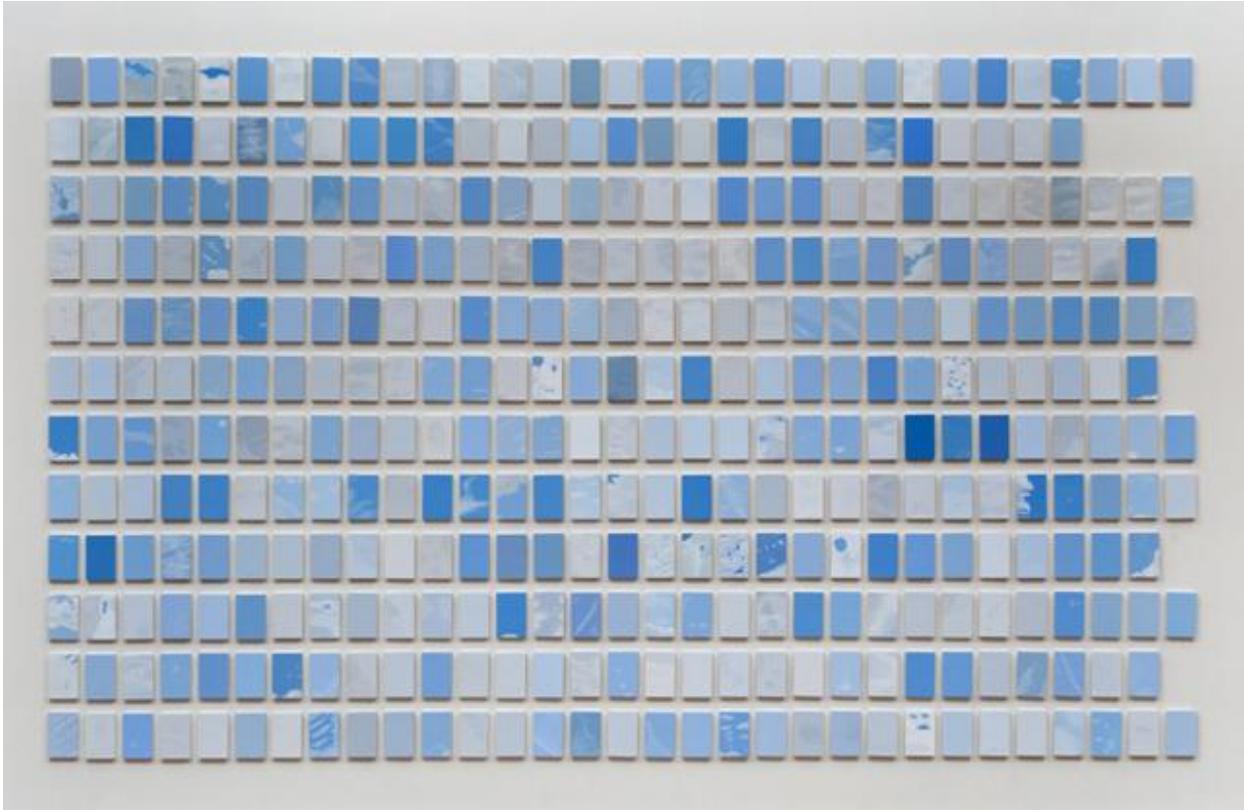


Figure 17, Linda Stillman, *Daily Paintings, detail: 2007, 2007*, acrylic and gouache on paper on panels, 77 x 41 ½ x 3/8 in. Installation shows one year of paintings.

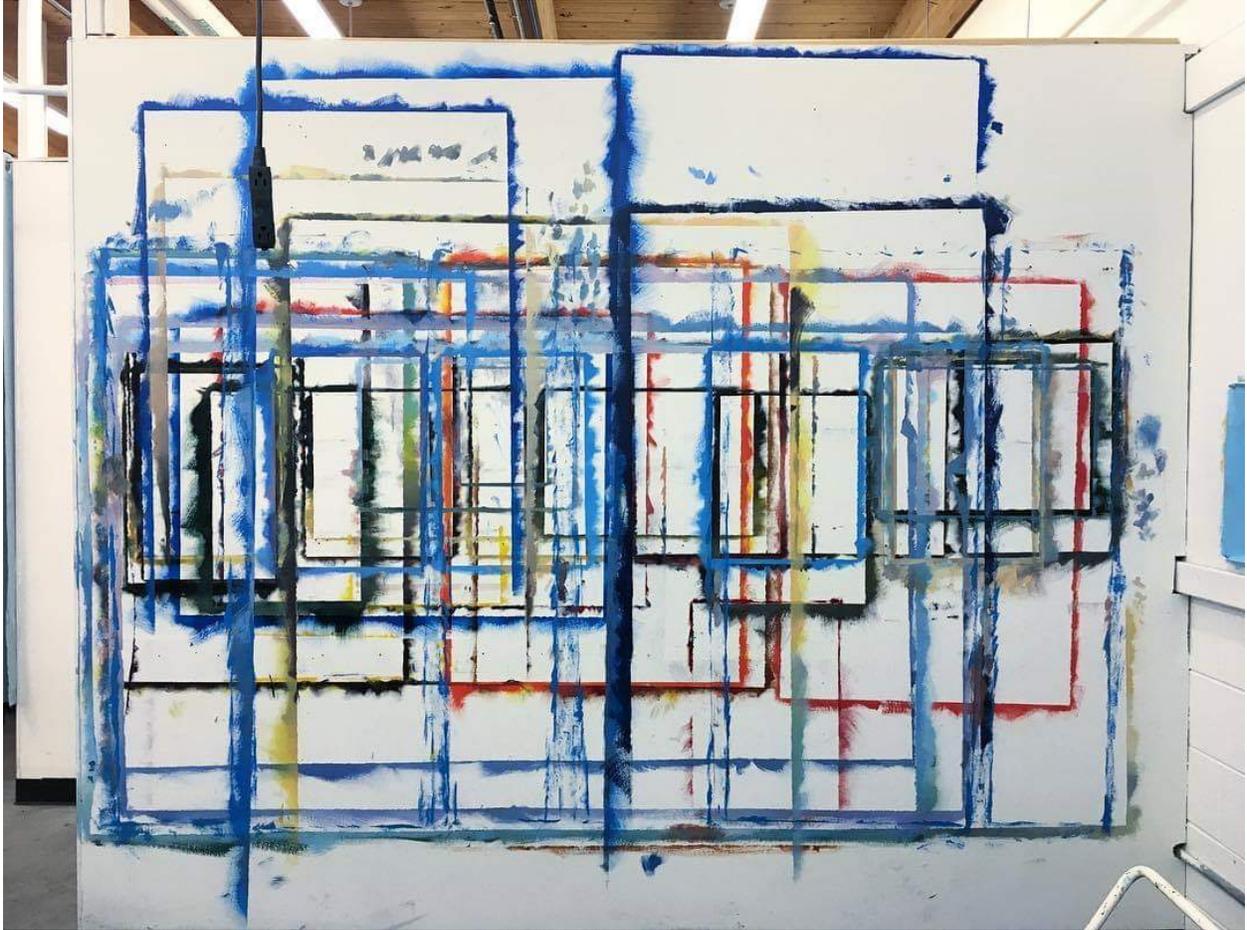


Figure 18, Emily Sullivan, studio photo, 2018.

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