

Damon Freed's Landscapes, by Dennis Helsel

Damon Freed's landscape paintings remind the viewer that a true act of sight involves equal parts looking and feeling. When we look out from our minds into the world, we may gather the appearance of things, but it is only through feeling that we begin to truly see. Damon Freed's landscapes assert the mysterious truth that we each reinvent the world in our own eyes. Through the medium of landscape painting, Freed invites us to more deeply consider how our feelings can shape and transform what we actually see.

Before anything else can be said, one must acknowledge that Damon's work begins with an impulse to capture. One does not travel out into nature as an artist without the intent to bring something back. What Damon brings back to the studio are charcoal drawings which record the energy and feeling of his experience communicating with the environment through his eyes. There would be enough to discuss if the process ended here, but it is in the next phase of his work that Damon truly brings the land to life.

While many landscape painters strive to paint the land through the earthy colors of natural appearance, Damon seeks to reanimate the spirit and energy of the land through the bold colors and expressive marks of spontaneity. It is as if Damon recreates the experience of nature within himself as he renders a new reality within the painting. Infused with the full measure of thought and feeling which brought them into being, the landscape comes to life again in the paintings.

While Damon acknowledges a debt of gratitude to the Post-Impressionist and Fauvist painters of the past for informing his color usage, there is something uniquely joyful about Damon's use of color. There is a curious and unrestrained sincerity and optimism about these landscapes. They seem to come from a place of pure and untouched sentiment so rare to see in an age of unrelenting irony and cynicism.

If we can learn anything from the landscape paintings of Damon Freed it is that the world has more to offer than its appearance alone suggests. However to access the hidden realm of the landscape we must see with more than our eyes and experience the land with the feeling in all of our senses. Damon's paintings exist as an invitation and an offering to experience nature through fresh eyes.