JAMES LINEHAN

STATEMENT 2017

I have been painting landscapes in Maine for over twenty years now, but I still think of them as my *new* work. When I first came to Maine, I fell in love with the landscape, but resisted the usual charms of straight landscape painting “because they were too predictable.” I had painted landscapes, often as portions of collage-like works, over the years in Arizona, Cyprus, New Mexico, and North Carolina. But it took nearly ten years of living in Maine, and trips to a family camp near Machias to change my mind and to fully pursue landscape painting. I painted a number of mural sized paintings, in schools mostly, through the Percent For Art Project run by the Maine Arts Commission. Those big things had *everything* in them, and I often included the local landscape in a big stewpot of imagery, to ground these artworks in the real world of rural Maine for these kids. I loved painting the landscapes from Troy, Old Town, Gorham, China Lake, Enfield, Buckfield, Clifton, and a number of other places.

Always an eclectic painter I respond to a variety of visual impulses. As a student I was a shape-shifter, never staying too long with one style, one professor, or one particular influence. My paintings have often been hybrid crossovers, embracing elements of both abstraction and representation. Artists like Michael Mazur, Jon Imber, and Gerhard Richter, are particular favorites, “painter’s painters” who bridge that gap successfully.

I started painting at a farm way down east in Machias, and eventually in Roque Bluffs, Islesford, Acadia, and Brooksville. I have never been good at “art tourism” and it takes me a long time to get comfortable painting a place. I don’t often paint *en plein air*, I’m a studio painter who photographs, draws and does watercolors on site, and then I paint in my Bangor studio throughout the year. The material quality of paint is what I love most. I love to work in oil, acrylic, encaustic, casein and watercolor, and I’m currently working on a new series of larger paintings, focusing on the rocky coast around Schoodic Point.

I try to avoid melodrama, no sunsets or thunderstorms, just *presence*. I want to elicit the *zen hum*, the beauty and peace of a few quiet places. These paintings are meditations of a sort for me. When I’m working on them the *language* of the brushstrokes feels like I’m weaving, or making a tapestry. I love that feeling towards the end of a painting, the tautness, as you plant the last brushstrokes that tell you it is done… all sewn up. These new paintings from Schoodic Point have been challenging to realize… the muted colors and the drama of the geology still give me a delicious, satisfied feeling of peace.