

The Natural Progression of Things

When I was a child I had a very vivid dream. This dream was unlike any other dream I had ever had. It felt real in a way that seemed even more real than my conscious waking state. In this dream I was peering from a very low vantage point, high above and all around at a very light blue clear sky and a multi-color rocky shoreline which seemed to be composed of rock that has more in common with gems than with any usual rock on the surface of any part of the earth that I have ever seen. I had the sense I was in water, but may have been on the land. Perhaps there was no water. But the presence of water seemed to be inside me. It may have been outside of me as well. There was a sense of immense and enormous natural beauty, perhaps unlike this earth in its seemingly unending crisp and intense pristine perfection, but also very much of this earth in its elements. The thing I remember even more than the beautiful surroundings was the sense of complete peace and contentment, and knowing that this was the planet that I live on. I believe this dream came from some sort of deeply imbedded DNA memory of primordial life on earth. –From an artist statement, 2011

In my recent *LANDS AND PEOPLES* “offshoot” series, *The Natural Progression of Things*, I aim to bring together specific personal, historical and cosmological events with biological processes essential to life. The use of white as background creates a dense, rich, pure unifying layer upon which I love to build my story.

In my series *The Natural Progression of Things*, the words ‘historical’ and ‘cosmological’ go hand in hand, bringing together my long-standing practices of painting and personal narrative. I aim to create a new hybrid form of history painting while taking an allegorical view into the cosmological and biological processes essential to life. These works illuminate ideas about the environment and evolution currently making their way to the forefront of global consciousness via popular culture. I explore how all that we think, read, see, feel, hear, eat, basically how all of our cognitive experience influences and determines how life is evolving on this planet, not only as scientific phenomena of a very distant past, but also as a current process that is happening with our every thought and breath. The visual elements incorporated into these pieces are derived from an archive of family photographs, which I have been using for over two decades, coupled with images from vintage encyclopedias, specifically the *Lands and Peoples* books (which I have been painting from for over a decade). My use of biomorphic abstraction continues in these works as a framework upon which the figurative/realist portions rely. The writers who influenced these paintings (particularly Rachel Carson and Deepak Chopra) had a deep and profound impact upon my understanding of not only my self, but also the world around me and how I experientially exist within it, as a part of it, and how we are all united in these experiences. From the big bang to early childhood experiences, our collective and individual memories and beliefs define us on a cellular as well as planetary/universal level. Images have a role to play in this. A good historian portrays the human subtext, and in doing so creates meaning.

Water to Land is the title of the second painting in this series and my largest single oil painting. On un-stretched linen, it spans 85 x 196 inches.

My background concerning this work: My earliest years in college were spent studying biology, including genetics, in an environmental science program, amidst a landscape where the mountains came down directly to the sea. The seeds were planted for a life-long interest and fascination about where we came from, as well as an appreciation and deep love for the natural world surrounding and inside of me. Being married to an oyster farmer for many years, and living on and working the shoreline confirmed and cemented my feeling a part of the processes of evolution. Then, as an artist, I was able to flesh out how the strength of storytelling, in addition to the vast plethora of images available pertaining to our histories, are tools in which to create some kind of meaning, baby steps into defining who we are and where we came from and where we may be going.

(Forthcoming: TEXT PIECE of approximately 2-4 pages about the large oil paintings.)



The Natural Progression of Things 2011, Apex Gallery, South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, Rapid City, South Dakota

This was a very appropriate venue for this body of work. The Museum of Natural History on the School of Mines campus houses many specimens and relics which speak to the evolution of life on our planet.



Primordial Soup (All Those Years Ago) 2009-2011. Oil on linen 85 x 108 inches (216 x 498 cm.)



Water to Land, 2009-2011. Oil on linen , 85 x 196 inches (216 x 498 cm)

Some environmental catastrophes occurred over the course of the two years it took me to paint *Water to Land*, and were incorporated into the piece, including the Japanese tsunami & the BP oil spill. Personal references also emerged.



The Natural Progression of Things, 2011, Apex Gallery, South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, Rapid City, South Dakota



Gallery View: *Aller, Flax Workers & Casals*, each 40 x 30 inches, oil on un-stretched linen.

From the press release of the **Apex Gallery, South Dakota School of Mines and Technology**:

“Jill Poyourow’s most recent work is in the genre of history painting. In the traditional sense this style of painting usually depicts a defining moment in a narrative. However, Poyourow’s work holds our attention by its dynamic and eclectic references to multiple sources. The artist mines family history, art history, biology, and evolution. These sources are, in her own words: “refracted through an imagination populated with visions of fractal-like organisms, creatures and life forms.” Her artwork reflects an expansive romp through history connecting disparate cultures on an organic level while underscoring our common humanity.” — Deborah Mitchell, Apex Gallery Director, South Dakota School of Mines and Technology



LEFT:
Skaters, 2011.
Oil on panel, 36 x 48 inches
(91.4 x 121.9 cm.)