

Artist Statement

At this time a year ago, pre - covid, I was working in my usual manner in the studio. Landscaped referenced, minimalist oil paintings might best describe what I have been doing the past several years. I had just finished up a large expressionistic oil painting ("Migration", 72' x 70") in March of last year. I also had many small oil color studies that were very rich and dense in texture and hue. I have to check my timeline on my instagram account to recall what I was doing when. Left to my own memory I would be out of luck as this pandemic has warped time for me. Sometimes it is so much faster and other times crawls along. This work makes up part of A Straw in the Wind.

We had to close the gallery in March and a couple weeks after that happened, feeling antsy, I decided to pull out a lot of old thick canvases, raw and unstretched and cut them into 5' x 5' pieces. I stapled them to my studio walls and began to paint with house paint, acrylic, gouache, oil pastel, pastel, oil sticks, charcoal, whatever I could get my hands on. I used big brushes from the hardware store. The paint was thinned with lots of water. In the summer I would take these pieces outside and hang them on my clothesline and shoot them with the hose. Sometimes I let them lay on the grass in the back yard for a few days (camping out). I called this approach "anxiety busting" and recommended it to friends. It was very cathartic and I had no rules for myself. The paintings often began as landscapes or just big gestural strokes with uninhibited color. As the work progressed over the months I found myself gravitating to the square as an imposition on these untamed paintings. "Contained", above is part of this series in the exhibit.

As an artist getting work ready for an exhibit or finishing a series, it is only then that I start to understand what I have been up to. And not completely, some mystery always remains. But it became apparent to me that this containment... these restrictions... what does a body need to do to accommodate that? Physically and psychically, what do we give up? What do we gain? I don't need to have answers for these questions. The 5 pieces from the Containment series is a visual expression of the experience for me. I then produced one final piece for the exhibit. Back to the stretched and primed canvas as a diptych, but with freedom of mixed media, "Boundless", the top image.

I hope you enjoy the exhibit and find many things in the work that intrigue you.

Margy Lavelle
February 2021