

In the past decade, my work has addressed the experience of living in the Anthropocene, focusing mostly on the malfeasance of the oil and gas industry. I emphasized corporate indifference to CO2 levels, oil spills and exploding trains and pipelines, which I endeavored to depict as acceptable risks and destroyed ecosystems as collateral damage. I have referenced the general indifference of our consumer society, both individual and corporate, which I have often incorporated in my paintings and drawings as a clown doll. Implied in much of the work is the conundrum of those that are not indifferent of necessarily having to participate in consumption of fossil fuels and consuming plastics while simultaneously condemning them. Over time, my work has incorporated the effects of climate change on social unrest, habitat loss, plastic pollution, and vulnerable species. With the increase in drought and mega fires and their deadly impact on migratory birds, my work increasingly examines the impact of climate change, habitat loss, and plastic pollution on birds. Birds are the most visible and benign wildlife, but often the most vulnerable, especially those that migrate. I was particularly motivated to make this change after the mass die off of migratory birds in September of 2020 at the Mexico/New Mexico border. Caught between smoke from mega-fires to the west and an unusual cold front to the east, over one million birds literally starved to death by the time they reached the border. I have lived near the pacific coast flyway in Skagit Valley along the Skagit River for 20 years. The changes of season are marked by the departure and arrival of visitants to my bird feeder and observations on my daily walks past diked waterways and riparian scrub to an estuarial wildlife area. Most of the birds I have chosen to depict were represented in the mass die off, and many could have come from somewhere on my morning walks. Truly “canaries in the coal mine”, I see these migratory birds as harbingers of the future for all species.

In the bird paintings, as with the paintings of fossil fuel disasters and plastic pollution, my intention is a sort of an extreme truth telling. In my process, I sort, re-arrange and re-create found photo images as source material until I have a more succinct narrative of what is going on. I create a distillation of the reality of the climate crisis. My intention is to create works that are simultaneously seductive and confrontational. The seduction comes with lush color and high contrast. Especially with fire and explosions, it is hard to look away. The confrontation comes in the drama of an explosion, the heat of a wildfire, or the direct gaze of a bird. I want the viewer to stop, look, and think about their relationship to these events.