

Austin Cathey
Artist Statement

Mapping the Storm

Mapping the Storm deals with the sensation of being lost, often within a turbulent environment, as I work through the storm of upheaval that encompasses myself, as well as larger social, political, and environmental worlds. Within these large-scale works, I think of myself as a cartographer, utilizing different languages of mapping to construct paintings and drawings that simultaneously create and navigate environments in a state of unrest. Current work often adopts a satellite perspective of these storms, not only as a mapping mechanism, but also to reflect on how very small we are from larger - and more spiritual - perspectives. Influences for these works range from topography to navigational charts, from the dirt beneath your feet to a nebula in the cosmos. While simultaneously embracing and questioning my heritage of Abstract Expressionism, Romanticism, and American landscape, I construct these conceptual terrains from the mental energy that I bring to the work in the studio. I also see my work in communication with the artistic legacy of seeking the sublime, of using visual experience as a vehicle to explore the vast forces that expand beyond our understanding.

Art is an essential aspect of trying to understand the human condition and our place in a chaotic and possibly infinite expanse, and in response my work questions viewers' relationship to that experience, establishing an abstract visual space for reflection and contemplation. On many levels, my art is personal and intuitive, full of experimentation, and a constant interest in materiality. Works within this body explore other non-traditional materials such as dirt, rock salt, grass/straw, plastic, string, found/reclaimed objects, spackle, and plaster. Exploring and developing different processes with these materials keeps me constantly challenged by my work, and at times my studio can seem more like an alchemist lab. These works on paper are soft-edged and atmospheric due to the use of fluid mediums, such as inkwash, most often left to pool and evaporate many times over. The traces left behind serve not only as a metaphor for our temporal metaphysical nature, but also to reference our constant struggle between control and uncontrollability.