

**James Pringle Cook**

**The Painted Image: Recent Paintings**

**Mulvane Art Museum**  
**Washburn University**  
**Topeka, Kansas**

*The Painted Image: Recent Paintings by James Pringle Cook*

October 5, 2013 - January 26, 2014



Photo by Ward Cook

*Thanks to staff of the Mulvane Art Museum for their commitment and work in organizing the exhibition and educational programs for “The Painted Image: Recent Paintings by James Pringle Cook”:*

Carol Emert, Curator  
Michael D. Allen, Exhibitions Preparator  
Kandis Barker, Education Curator  
Jane Hanni, Assistant Education Curator

*Thanks to all those who helped make this catalogue possible:*

South Wind Gallery, Topeka, Kansas  
J. Willott Gallery, Palm Desert, California  
Gail Severn Gallery, Ketchum, Idaho

**James Cook** took his first art classes at the Mulvane Art Museum when he was about seven years old. That early exposure to art launched Cook on a lifelong exploration of urban settings, landscapes and nature. There have been many paintings completed since his first art class at the Mulvane Art Museum, and we are pleased and proud to present this exhibition of new works by James Cook.

Cook studied painting and printmaking in Emporia where he received B.A. and M.A. degrees. He went on to study in Wichita where he earned an M.F.A. degree. In 1971 he took a faculty position at the University of Arizona in Tucson where he taught painting and “Readings in Contemporary Art”. In 1978 Cook resigned from the U of A in order to work full time in the studio. Since that time, Cook has earned the distinction of being one of the country’s most important landscape artists.

Residing in Tucson, Arizona, and traveling the world, exposes Cook to diverse environments that inform his aesthetic views. Inspired by nature and the world around him, his canvases are powerful evocations of nature’s majesty. Cook’s work has been described as monumental, but the essence of his paintings (whether it is a cityscape or landscape) is contained in the singular brush stroke, line, and mark he orchestrates. Each stroke, each line, each mark is a distinctive note contributing to a chorus that echoes and resounds in a grand symphony. The viewer may be inspired by the grandeur of colorful and untamed worlds created by Cook, but it is the radiance of the painted surface that invites one to plunge into the depths. There is a lush quality to the surface of the canvas that is visceral, and even as you are engaged in the ripples of still pools, the patterns of fall foliage, or the complex patterns of a city skyline, it is the thick impastos and scraped textures that engage the senses in the expressive temperament of the medium.

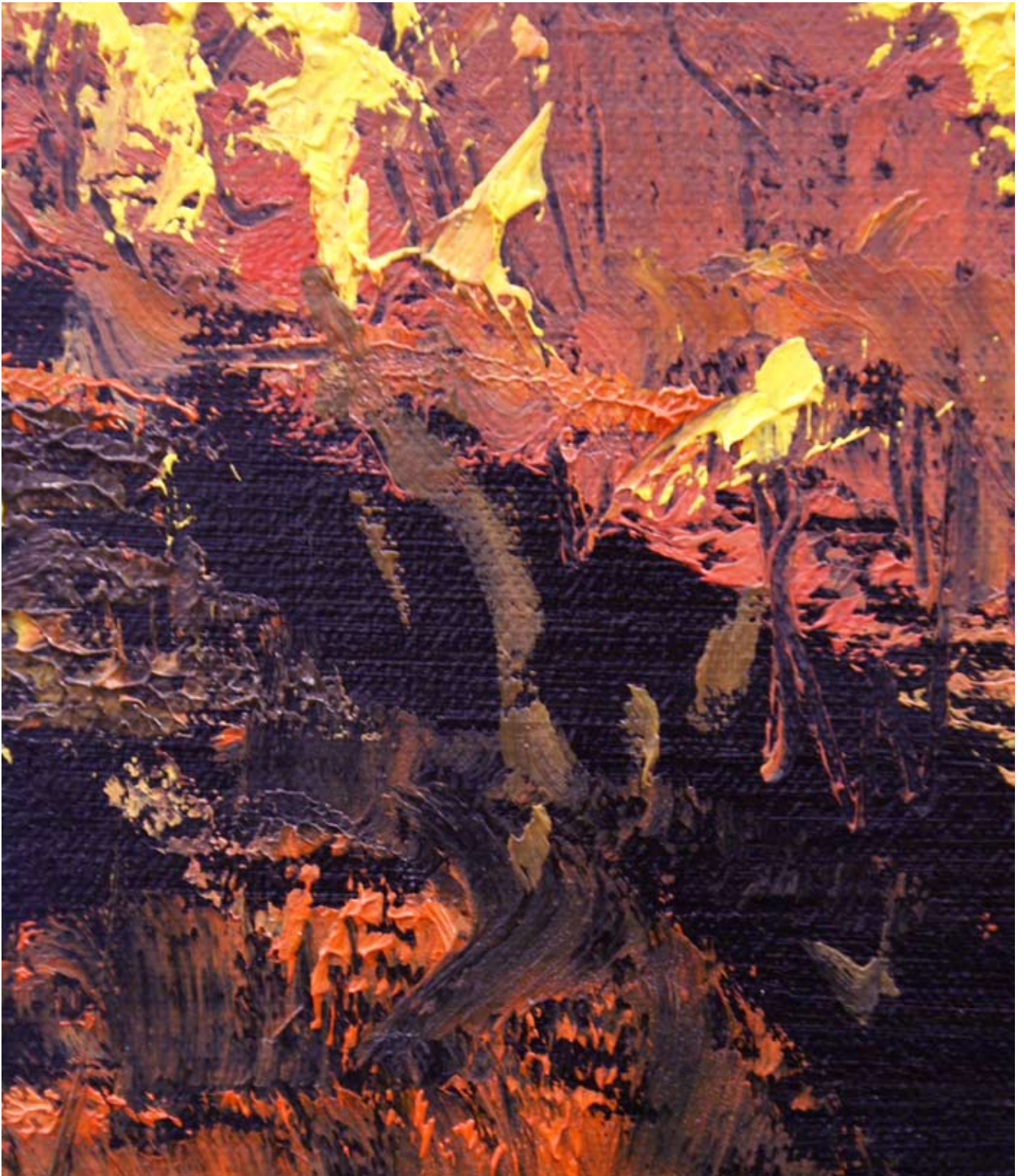
It is obvious that James Cook is in love with paint. To experience his paintings is to comprehend the spirit of color, depth and movement. His love of beauty finds its way onto the canvas as he strives to create visual excitement. Cook compares himself to abstract expressionists in the way that he works, noting that there is a great deal of invention in the paint itself.

Stephen Vollmer writes, “Cook’s paintings are powerful while remaining remarkably sensitive to an environment that is fully revealed through the brush and mind of the artist. In each painting one is fascinated by his ability to translate refracted light through color interwoven with textures, shadows, and depths of field. Adeptly he guides us down paths we might normally not see, to look more closely at the space and planes between the fore and backgrounds.”

James Cook has been engaged in a lifelong dance with light, texture, shadow, and space. Through his paintings, Cook shares a vision of the world that hovers between the intimate and the heroic. Seeing nature and the land through his eyes expands our awareness and understanding of the world around us.

Connie Gibbons, Director  
Mulvane Art Museum





*Detail*





*Detail*





My work is more choreographed than planned because there is a sequence of marks that interact to portray the subject. If you pick up a brush or a trowel or something and lay down a line, the line is broad... it's narrow...it's three dimensional. It plows up paint and changes the mixture of color. You have to choreograph that interaction between one layer of detail and another. It always takes me somewhere I don't expect."

--James Pringle Cook



**Selection from Dan Leach interview:**

**JPC:** When I was young I thought I had to be a poet, too. You can, of course, if you choose to now, but I'm more inclined to think you just have to look hard, really look hard...and then just be absolutely faithful to what you have seen. Where ever it leads you that is where you go.

**DL:** *I look very hard, too, but unfortunately I was not given the gift to translate it into a drawing or painting. I think that particular gift can be amplified by your study and learning. There had to be a germ of genius there, and I use that word not to throw at you, but there has to be a germ of genius to be able to translate what you see into paint or words.*

**JPC:** To me it's not that we are so brilliant that we come up with this or that. We invent a new way of seeing. It's not Edison and the light bulb to me. It is rejecting anything that doesn't ring true. That may involve a very lengthy process of rejection and invention, but at some point what I try to do is to find a mark that rings true. That mark or the series of marks in the painting somehow ultimately doesn't offend my eye and says something about what I saw. Things that aren't right offend me.

I wrote a little bit for a British fellow, Clive Pates, that I know who put together a show and he asked a question about gesture. I might have overstated what I meant, but I think so much of gesture in a painting is sort of slap dash. It postures as content when it really isn't meaningful. It is just the blizzard of the demand for attention. I think that every single movement carries content. To me if it doesn't carry content I don't want it. I keep rejecting the one that doesn't have the content in favor of the one that does. At some point I get to the real place where everything is speaking the same language.







**JPC:** My painting attempts to create in paint some of the qualities of the natural world that excite me. I work with the plastic properties of paint as a dimensional medium. The measure of success to me in my work is the moment that nature flashes back to me under my hand.

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*Bradford Road - Autumn*  
oil on linen  
60"x70" 2013





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*West Wind - Gray & Gold*

oil on linen  
85"x79" 2005





**Selection from Roy Sieber article:**

**RS:** I first met Jim Cook and saw his paintings, sometime in the early 1980's on a visit to a mutual friend. On a walk under a typical Tucson sky we discussed clouds - in nature, and in Tiepolo and Constable, among other painters.

About two weeks later there arrived in the mail two small cloud studies - on Tiepolesque and one Constable-like. What astonished and pleased me was not only the surprising gift of the delightful oil sketches, but their visual accuracy. In the years since, I have found again and again the same sense of, if not accuracy, then Cook's convincing recapitulation of the world, natural and man made; his ability to convey the sense of place: urban, rural, plains, mountains, seas. Cook's painting convinces the viewer of the "reality" of an unexperienced landscape.

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*Skyline Road #2*  
oil on linen  
36"x60" 2013





**Selection from Ohr Museum (Clive Pates) interview:**

**CP:** *Contemporary art is becoming increasingly eclectic - the playing field is leveling in terms of the relevance of various movements and ism's. Do you think this will allow landscape painting the opportunity to be recognized again as an important and vital medium within contemporary painting?*

**JPC:** I believe that landscape painting has been the form of expression through which modern painting was formed. A living dialogue exists between the works of Turner, Constable, Monet, Cezanne, Diebenkorn, and Auerbach which transmits ideas to us and artists not yet born. It is through new formal ideas that we find beauty in our environment. If it were not for Turner or Sheeler, how could we live in our cities? Without Monet and Renoir, how could we find our middle class lives tolerable?

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*Mission Valley from the Flint Hills #2*

oil on linen  
40"x60" 2013



**Selection from interview with Dan Leach:**

**DL:** *Even those things you mention like the question of pollution that comes from those wonderful factory type entities, you see beauty in.*

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*Artesia-Rain Showers & Steam*

oil on linen  
79"x85" 2013





**JPC:** There is something there that is overwhelming visually. I hesitate to call it really good, but then.... you know we are boxed in here, we thrive because of the certain mastery of nature.

**DL:** *I never read those paintings as though they are glorifying something that is causing harm.*

**JPC:** Certainly, not my intent. I don't think that exists in it. It just happens to be beautiful because of structures and light and form and reflection and all of those wonderful things. It is a powerful experience whatever you think of it. It, also, is a reflection of us. What about Goya and his wartime statements about the Napoleonic Wars or Piranesi's Carceris? The dark side of man is still very impressive.

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*Jersey Twilight*  
oil on linen  
60"x70" 2013



**Selection from Dan Leach interview:**

**DL:** *Can you be misinterpreted if you start out by making a lot of mistakes and then you have to cover it up to get an idea?*

**JPC:** No, you just keep rejecting the thing that is false until you find the one that isn't, but recently I read a biography of DeKooning and there was an enormous amount of erasure going on in his painting process... just constant revision. I've heard it said that the sum and total of all the erasures is the truth in abstract expressionism, but I don't think that's quite right. After reading about DeKooning's process and other painters in that period I think that they were essentially doing the same kind of thing. They were looking for marks that had truth about them.

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*Wabaunsee - Night Fire #2*

oil on linen

40"x60" 2013





**JPC:** There are so many marks that are made trivially or flippantly or in an absent minded fashion. If you let your eye really work for you, you reject those trivial marks. To me it is the same kind of process I've applied to describing nature instead of the human condition or my own personal condition.

**DL:** *I'm curious about the visual content. Whether it was visual content of the landscape or whatever... How did your ability to make the kind of stroke that you made or that element of your surface that has become something of an identifying mark.... How long did it take you? Was that immediate, you just start building or was it intuitive? How long did it take you to make what one could recognize as a Jim Cook painting?*

**JPC:** I believe that I started from the very beginning to do that. The first thing that I can remember about the first journey to an aesthetic experience was in high school. I was painting a scene through French doors. I was supposed to paint what was outside and remember thinking, "I'm going to paint something kind of like Van Gogh". I discovered that I didn't have the marks I needed and it was very large, 7ft. tall and 6ft. wide. I didn't know how to do that. I tried, but I learned immediately some humility then and there.

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*Wabaunsee - Spring Burn*  
oil on linen  
42"x68" 2013





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*Three Sisters - Aspen*  
oil on linen  
70"x66" 2013





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*Thunderstorm 08 #1*  
oil on linen  
60"x50" 2009





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*Morgan's Point - left panel*

oil on linen

78"x96" 1995-96





**JPC:** Men and women around us make their livings struggling with the forces of nature. These people have no need for a lesson in humility in the face of nature's power. Some of the rest of us must occasionally confront our impotence to control this earth. Nature is quite indifferent to our cares and we can only stand mesmerized by the power we see. At the same time often we are thrilled by the courage of our fellows in the face of loss and death. We are pleased by our own spirit.

“Man was made for joy and woe; and when this we rightly know thro' the world we safely go, joy and woe are woven fine, a clothing for the soul divine;...”

- Blake

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*Morgan's Point - right panel*

oil on linen

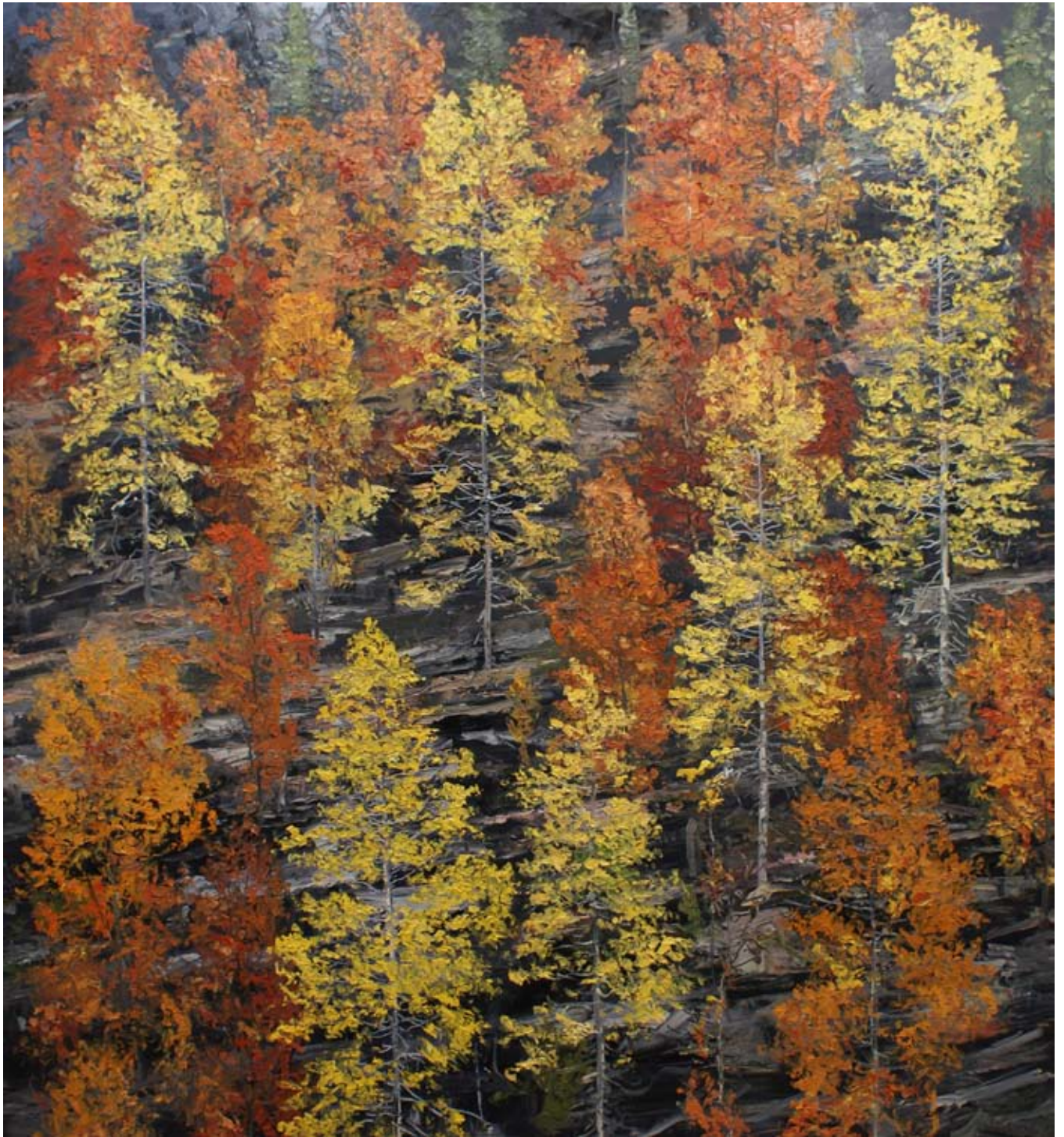
78"x96" 1995-96





*Wabaunsee - July Prairie #2*  
oil on linen  
70"x60" 2007





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*High Bridge #3*  
oil on linen  
85"x79" 2006





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*Whisper #2 - left panel & center*  
oil on linen  
60"x210" 2013





**Selection from Anthony Pessler article:**

**AP:** The landscape is an impossible confusion of matter and energy; earth, air, fire, water, birth, growth, death, decay. The sun shines. The rains fall. The winds blow. Morning becomes day becomes night. The days become months, the months, years. Yet from this maddening complexity and chaos, perfection happens. Every stone and leaf, every cloud and drop of rain, every twig and stream and tree and bird and flower and river and mountain exists in a state of perfect balance and renewal, each tending to its own existence and fate. Thus, the *structure* of the landscape becomes the paradigm for Jim Cook's paintings.

The substance of landscape becomes the material substance of paint, which is also of the earth; mineral pigments from stone and metal, organic pigments from raw earth, dyes, oils and solvents from growing things. The generative force of nature becomes the creative will of the artist, organizing materials and ideas, processes and decisions, into pictures. So a cycle is complete. Materials from, experiences of, and ideas about the landscape become part of our cultural landscape; newly born in a changing world.

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*Whisper #2 - center & right panel*

oil on linen  
60"x210" 2013



**Selection from Anthony Pessler article:**

**AP:** Jim Cook understands paint. He understands that painting is a language of experience, and like any other language, it is continually evolving, building on the momentum of its own history, and releasing the potential of its infinite possibilities to those who care enough to unlock its secrets. Ideally, a painting is not a representation of the world, but rather a presentation of itself and its content.

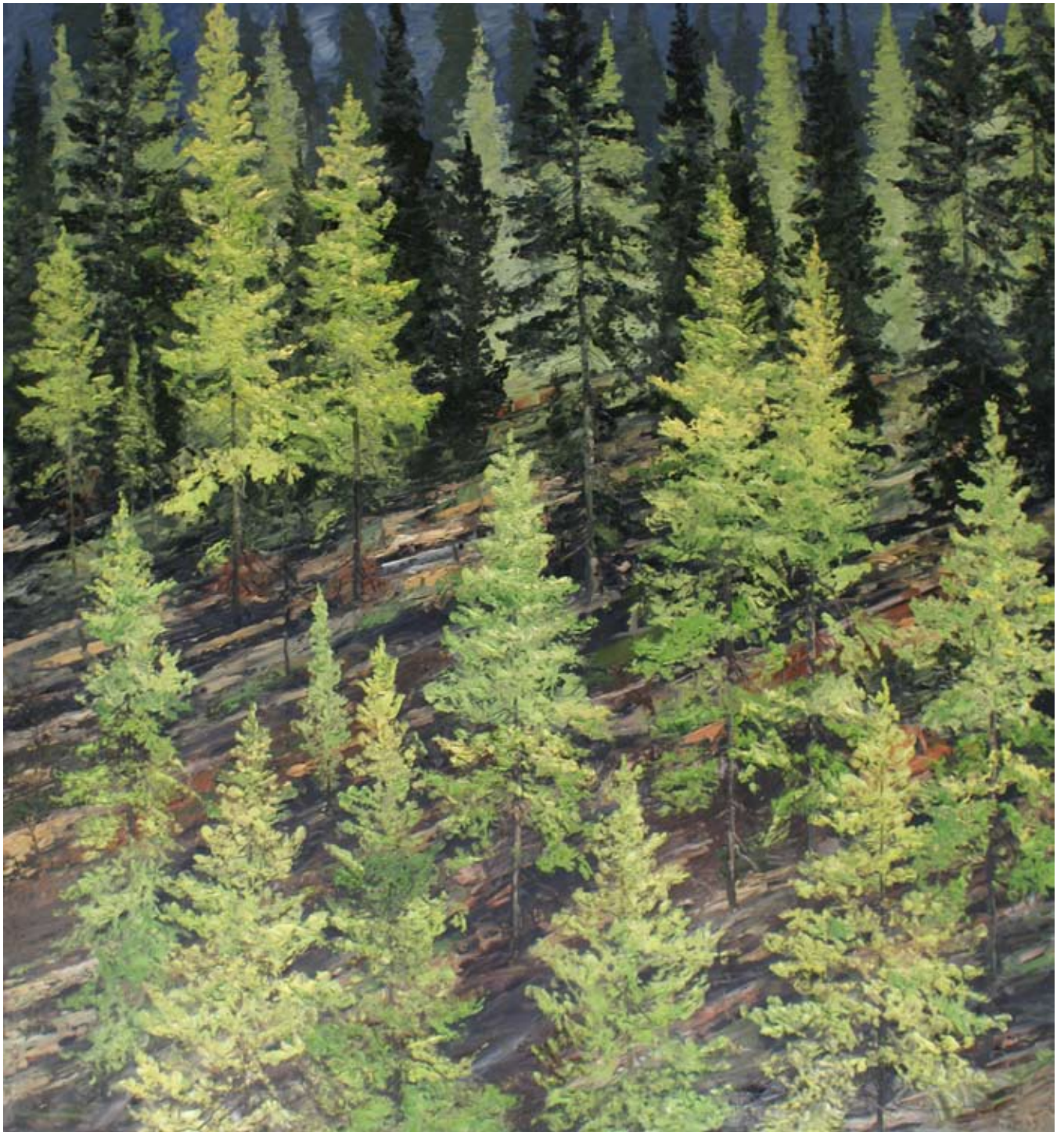
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*Velarde - Old Orchard #2*

oil on linen

60"x70" 2013





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*Cloudcroft - West Wind #4*

oil on linen  
85"x79" 2005



**Selection from Ohr Museum (Clive Pates) interview:**

**CP:** *What place does ‘gesture’, the vitality of mark making play in your own work, and what can this express to the viewer?*

**JPC:** I have tried to find a form of painting that speaks to me from the canvas the way nature stimulates my eye. I find the physical and plastic qualities of paint very stimulating. The challenge is to give to the painted surface the ring of truth and not just the slap dash of gesture.

**CP:** *What can the painted image express that the photograph cannot?*

**JPC:** I find no relationship between painting and photography.

**CP:** *The point between abstraction and realism can be subtle within the painted landscape, how would you describe this relationship?*

**JPC:** All painting is abstract.

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*53rd Street - Midnight*

oil on linen

42”x84” 2011





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*53rd Street Reflections - Midnight*

oil on linen  
65"x45" 2011



**Selection from Fred See interview:**

**FS:** *Your work is powerfully representational, but very close to square inch by inch the surfaces are also very abstract. For example we sit close to the paintings we own. Any segment could be a marvelous abstract painting in itself, but when you back off the panoramic riverscape emerges. How do you physically work on a painting this large? Do you lay it out or map it? Are there special technical problems working on such a large scale? Do you have problems keeping yourself oriented?*

**JPC:** I tend to do an under painting on large pieces in black and white gesso. This allows me to know what the structure is going to be in theory and to know that I can manage that space effectively. That's true whether it's in an urban subject or a very large landscape. As time has passed I will attempt a five foot or six foot painting without a sketch. There was a time when I couldn't do that, but it has to do with your knowing you are able to fully visualize the mechanical process.

**FS:** *What is it like, what are your physical movements like when you work on a very, very large painting? Do you hang it on the wall and work on it? Do you work on an easel?*

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*Equinox - Dawn #2*

oil on linen

42"x70" 2011





**JPC:** An easel, whenever possible because I can raise it and lower it to place my hand in the most comfortable position.

**FS:** *What are your materials or tools or techniques?*

**JPC:** Trowels, most of which are made from tools that are conventional workman's tools, mason's tools, especially large painter's tools. Most painters don't do what I do with their tools. I work with wonderful sash brushes that I found in Italy, and other larger brushes.

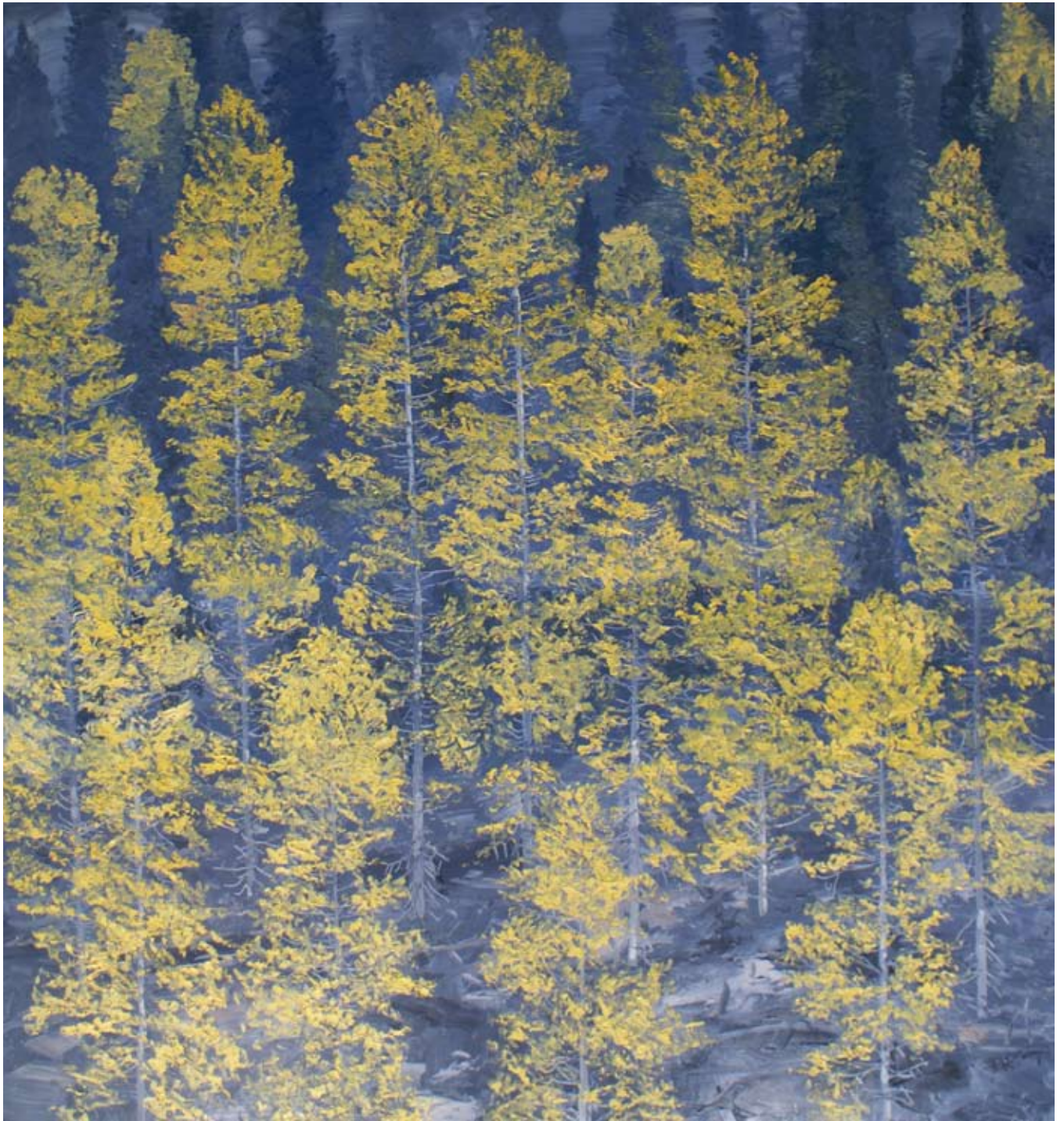
**FS:** *There are numerous art books about American landscape paintings. Do you have the sense that you're painting something that we are losing or that is threatened?*

**JPC:** I was reading something a couple of days ago about a painter painting a moment which passed. That place didn't go away, it just changed. I have painted some places for thirty years, and they have changed, but they didn't go away.

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*Equinox 09 #1*  
oil on linen  
42"x70" 2011





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*Westfall Aspen Mist #1*

oil on linen

85"x79" 2005





**Robert Yassin:**

**RY:** He paints quickly creating richly colored and exciting surfaces. Indeed, his bravura use of paint is akin to the Abstract Expressionists; unlike them, however, he provides the viewer with a recognizable reality, ordered by his own personal vision and controlled by his technical mastery. In subject matter and the interpretation of that subject, Cook's is an American vision which owes much to tradition, but it is tradition that is, in the artist's hands, fully redefined taking on a new, personal, but very important meaning.

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*Phantom Reflections - September*

oil on linen  
79"x85" 2013

## James Pringle Cook

BORN: Topeka, Kansas

### SELECT ONE-PERSON EXHIBITIONS:

- 2013 Iron Tail Gallery, Lincoln, NE  
Gail Severn Gallery, Ketchum, ID  
Mulvane Art Museum, Washburn University, Topeka, KS
- 2012 Davis Dominguez Gallery, Tucson, AZ
- 2011 Davis Dominguez Gallery, Tucson, AZ  
William Havu Gallery, Denver, CO  
Gail Severn Gallery, Ketchum, ID
- 2010 Beaux-Arts des Ameriques, Montreal
- 2009 J. Willott Gallery, Palm Desert, CA  
Robert Steele Gallery, NYC  
Gail Severn Gallery, Ketchum, ID
- 2008 Davis Dominguez Gallery, Tucson, AZ  
William Havu Gallery, Denver, CO  
Gail Severn Gallery, Ketchum, ID  
Meyer East Gallery, Santa Fe, NM  
Robert Steele Gallery, NYC
- 2007 Gail Severn Gallery, Ketchum, ID  
Cline Dale Gallery, Scottsdale, AZ  
Davis Dominguez Gallery, Tucson, AZ
- 2006 Robert Steele Gallery, NYC  
Cline Dale Gallery, Scottsdale, AZ  
Davis Dominguez Gallery, Tucson, AZ  
Gail Severn Gallery, Ketchum, ID
- 2005 Cline Fine Arts, Scottsdale, AZ  
Meyer-Munson Gallery, Santa Fe, NM  
Gail Severn Gallery, Ketchum, ID
- 2004 Gail Severn Gallery, Ketchum, ID.  
Eric Firestone Gallery, Tucson, AZ  
Robert Steele Gallery, NYC
- 2003 Gail Severn Gallery, Ketchum, ID.  
Vanier Gallery, Tucson, AZ.  
Dennis Morgan Gallery, Kansas City, MO.
- 2002 Gail Severn Gallery, Ketchum, ID
- 2001 Davis/Dominguez Gallery, Tucson, AZ  
Vanier Gallery, Scottsdale, AZ
- 2000 Vanier Fine Arts, Scottsdale, AZ
- 1999 Davis/Dominguez Gallery, Tucson, AZ  
Eyre/More Gallery, Seattle, WA
- 1998 Vanier Fine Arts, Scottsdale, AZ  
Gail Severn Gallery, Ketchum, ID
- 1994 Gail Severn Gallery, Ketchum, ID  
West Bend Art Museum, West Bend, WI  
Tatistcheff & Co., New York, NY
- 1995 Davis/ Dominguez Gallery, Tucson, AZ  
Jan Cicero Gallery, Chicago, IL, "New Paintings"



- 1994 Gail Severn Gallery, Ketchum, ID  
West Bend Art Museum, West Bend, WI  
Tatistcheff & Co., New York, NY
- 1992 Tucson Museum of Art, Tucson, AZ, “James Cook: New Paintings”
- 1991 Desert Caballeros Western Museum, Wickenburg, AZ
- 1990 Tatistcheff & Co., NYC
- 1989 Davis Gallery, Tucson, AZ
- 1987 Tatistcheff & Co., NYC, “Rural Western Narrative”
  
- 1984 Tatistcheff & Co., NYC, “Mississippi Chronicle”
- 1983 Rahr-West Museum, Manitowoc, WI
- 1982 Frumkin/Struve Gallery; Chicago, IL

SELECT GROUP  
EXHIBITIONS:

- 2013 Davis Dominguez Gallery, Tucson, AZ
- 2012 Davis Dominguez Gallery, Tucson, AZ  
Gail Severn Gallery, Ketchum, ID
- 2011 Exposition de Groupe, Beaux Arts des Ameriques, Montreal, QE  
J. Willott Gallery, Palm Desert, CA  
Family Ties, Tohono Chul, Tucson, AZ  
Davis Dominguez Gallery, Tucson, AZ
- 2010 J. Willott Gallery, Palm Desert, CA (Two Man show)  
Gail Severn Gallery, Ketchum, ID  
Art Toronto, Toronto, ONT  
Davis Dominguez, Tucson, AZ
- 2009 Tucson Museum of Art, Trouble in Paradise, Tucson  
Davis Dominguez Gallery, Tucson
- 2008 Gail Severn Gallery, Ketchum, ID.  
Wichita Art Museum, Wichita, KS  
Davis Dominguez Gallery, Tucson
- 2007 Kansas Masters, Strecker-Nelson Gallery, Manhattan, KS  
Tohono Chul Gallery, Tucson, AZ
- 2006 Robert Steele Gallery, NYC  
Cline Fine Arts, Scottsdale, AZ  
Davis Dominguez Gallery, Tucson, AZ  
Meyer Munson Gallery, Santa Fe, NM
- 2005 “Homage to the Flint Hills”, traveling show:  
Shafer Gallery, Barton County Community College, Great Bend, KS  
Emporia State University, Emporia, KS  
Lawrence Art Center, Lawrence, KS  
Manhattan Arts Center, Manhattan, KS  
Junction City Art Center, Junction City, KS
- 2004 “Homage to the Flint Hills”, traveling show:  
Ernie Miller Nature Center, Olathe, KS  
Cowley County Community College, Arkansas City, KS  
Topeka-Shawnee County Public Library, Topeka, KS
- 2001 Seraphin, Philadelphia, PA
- 1999 Gail Severn Gallery, Ketchum, ID (Two-Person)  
“Garner Tullis: Art of Collaboration”, Associated Artists of Pittsburgh,  
Pittsburgh, PA
- 1997 PLAIN PICTURES: Images of the American Prairie, Joslyn Art Museum

- 1996 Omaha, NE; Kimball Art Museum, Fort Worth, TX  
 1994 West Bend Art Museum, West Bend, WI  
 Eitelgeorg Museum, Indianapolis, IN: "Invitational 1994"  
 1993 Traveling Exhibition: "Art and the Law", West Publishing Company"  
 Kennedy Galleries, NYC; Hynes Convention Center, Boston, MA;  
 Loyola, IL; Law School, Los Angeles, CA; James R. Thompson  
 Center, Chicago, IL; Minnesota Museum of Art, St. Paul, MN

SELECT MUSEUM  
 COLLECTIONS:

Boise Art Museum, Idaho  
 Phoenix Art Museum, Arizona  
 Indiana University Museum of Art, Bloomington  
 New Mexico Museum of Fine Arts, Santa Fe  
 Milwaukee Art Museum, Wisconsin  
 Princeton University Collection, Princeton, New Jersey

SELECT PUBLIC  
 COLLECTIONS:

A.T.&T., New York, New York  
 Chemical Bank, New York, New York  
 E.F. Hutton, New York, New York  
 Mutual of New York, New York, New York  
 NYNEX, New York, New York  
 The Prudential Insurance Company, Newark, New Jersey  
 Sears, Roebuck & Company, Chicago, Il.  
 Texaco, White Plains, New York  
 United Airlines, Chicago, Il.  
 Bank of America, San Francisco, California

SELECT  
 PUBLICATIONS &  
 TELEVISION:

American Artists, February 2000  
 Art Talk, Cover Story 1999  
 New American Painting, Vol. XXIV, 1999  
 New American Painting, Vol. 12, 1997  
 The New Mexican, January 1993, Santa Fe, New Mexico  
 Images Showing Locomotion's Effect, The Philadelphia Inquirer, May 1990  
 Into the Superstitions, January 1989, Channel 12 News, Phoenix, Arizona  
 American Realism: Twentieth Century Watercolors and Drawings, Harry N.  
 Abrams, Jr., NY 1986





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*Jim in studio with Sarah & Chester*

2013

[jamespringlecook.com](http://jamespringlecook.com)

