



JAMES COOK

DAVIS DOMINGUEZ GALLERY *est. 1976*

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Wabunsee 07 #5
50"x70"

Fred See, collector, Interview with James Cook:

FS: What goes into your choice of subjects?

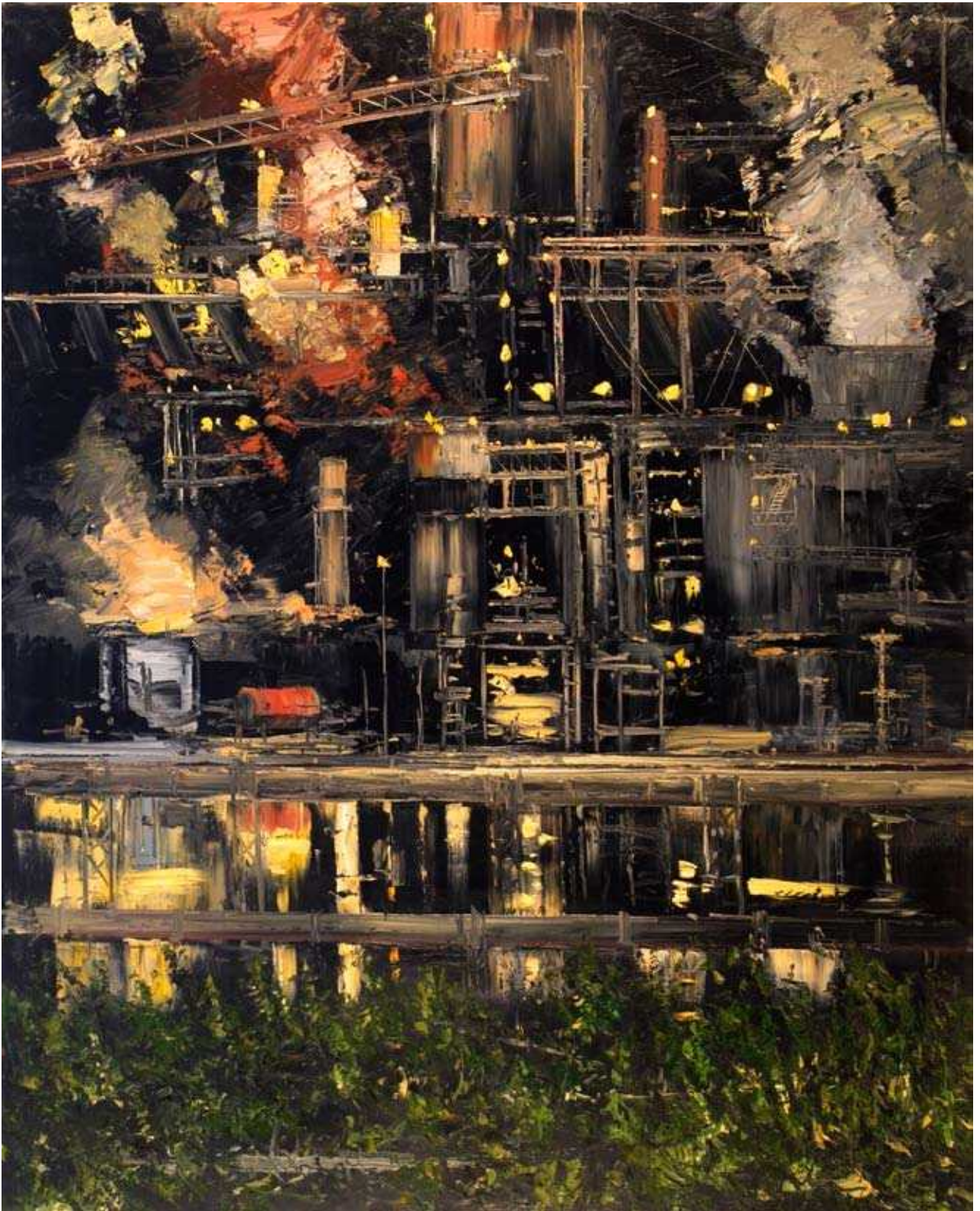
JC: I visit themes over and over again for years.

FS: To what extent do you plan a work or is it spontaneous?

JC: It's more choreographed than it is 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. It is mixed in and what's underneath is drawn up so one color invades another. You have to choreograph that interaction between one layer of detail and another. To my mind the plan is about the material itself and how it can be made to say what I want it to say. If I were to say, well I want golden light upon this tree, it might work but you never know what's going to happen when the gold hits the blue. I make some kind of interaction happen, but I can't know where it's going. It always takes me somewhere I don't expect.

FS: What's your work day like then?

JC: 9-5 or 9-4 or whatever the light is doing. It's with the light you know. There has to be enough daylight. I'm not perfectly color sensitive.



Irvington-Night Rain 07 #1
75"x60"



Wabunsee 07 #4
(detail)



Trinity Bay 07 #3
(detail)

FS: But your industrials are very often extremely dark.

JC: Yes, for instance, I can paint a red on let's say a black in a night sky, a red light on a tower, and I will know that it's red. I can't know the significance of the red and whether it's the right red. That's the problem, I can see many kinds of red. My eye sees it, but my mind can't know if it's right. In the daylight I can know if it's right. I don't know how one would describe that except that painters follow the light, there's something that the sun gives us that is built into the wiring of the brain.

FS: Following that question about abstract painting, 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? It is 78"x104". 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?

JC: 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 just knowing you are able to fully visualize the mechanical process.



*Blue River-
Autumn
07 #1
50"x70"*



*White Mountain Study #1
18"x24"*



White Mountain Study
07 #8
18"x24"

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?

JC: 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?

JC: 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 is an almost total erasure of the human figure in your work. Do you have any plans or wishes to do figurative paintings; or at the moment does the human anatomy interest you less or oppose the scale you want to work on?

JC: There is some reason why I haven't aggressively pursued that line. I'm not sure why, but I suspect why. There is something about painting landscapes that I feel is important for this time and this place. I think that America does not understand this land or how we connect to it, so to me it seems to be the most serious philosophical question for us. I think this has been proved true by what people are hungry for,



Wabunsee 07 #4
70"x60"



Red Horse 07 #1
42"x70"

or that's at least my take on that. I talk to a lot of people about what they see in my paintings or what they don't see in other people's paintings, or what they want to see. They are very hungry for some way of understanding where they are. They've lost their roots, their connection to the land. We were talking about Andrew Wyeth. It's obvious that he understood where he came from and when he grew up and what that connection was. I meet so few people who now understand that.

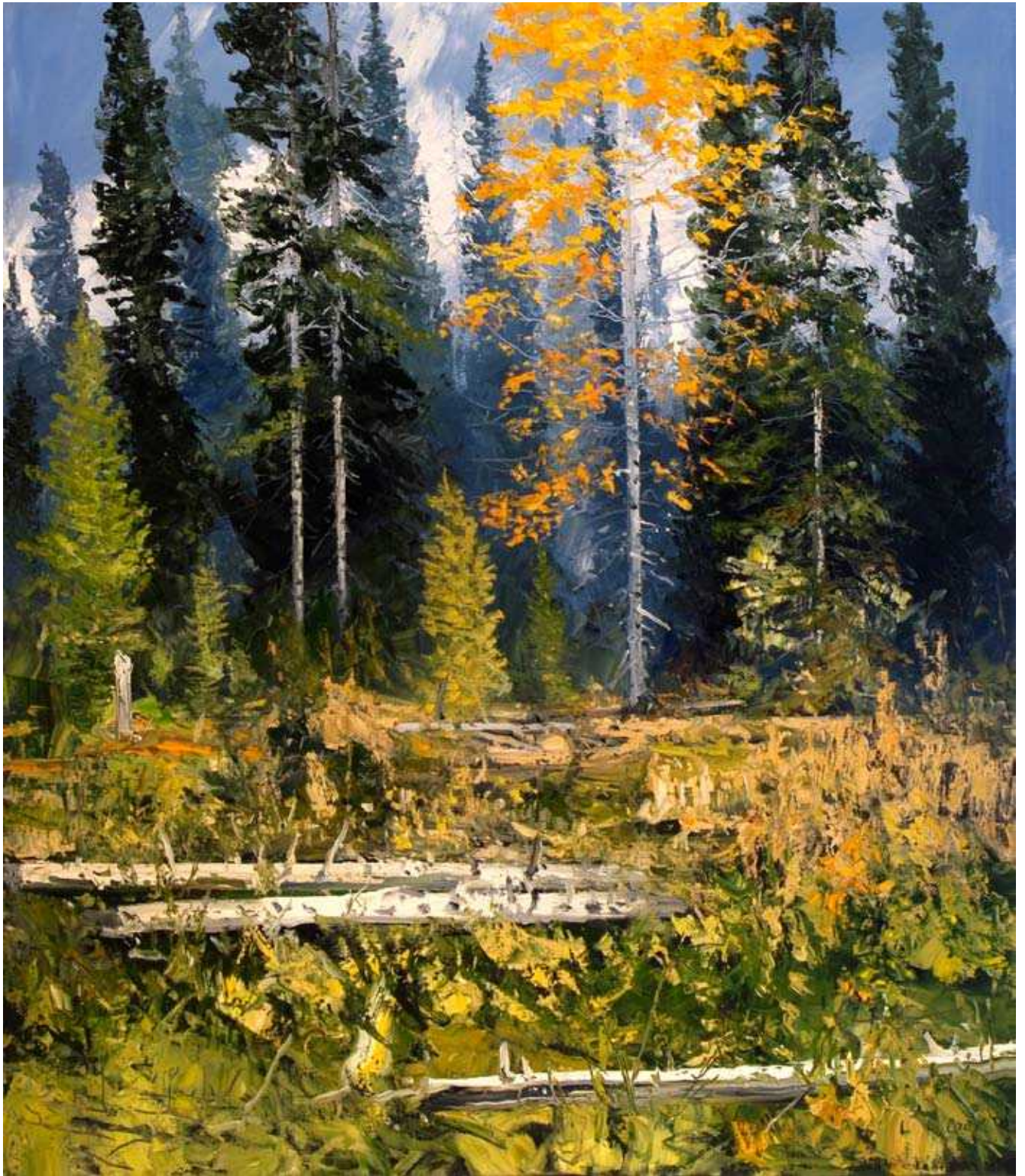
FS: There are numerous art books about American landscape paintings. Do you have the sense that you're painting something that we are losing or that is threatened?

JC: I was reading something a couple of days ago about a painter painting a moment which passed. That place passed, but the 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.

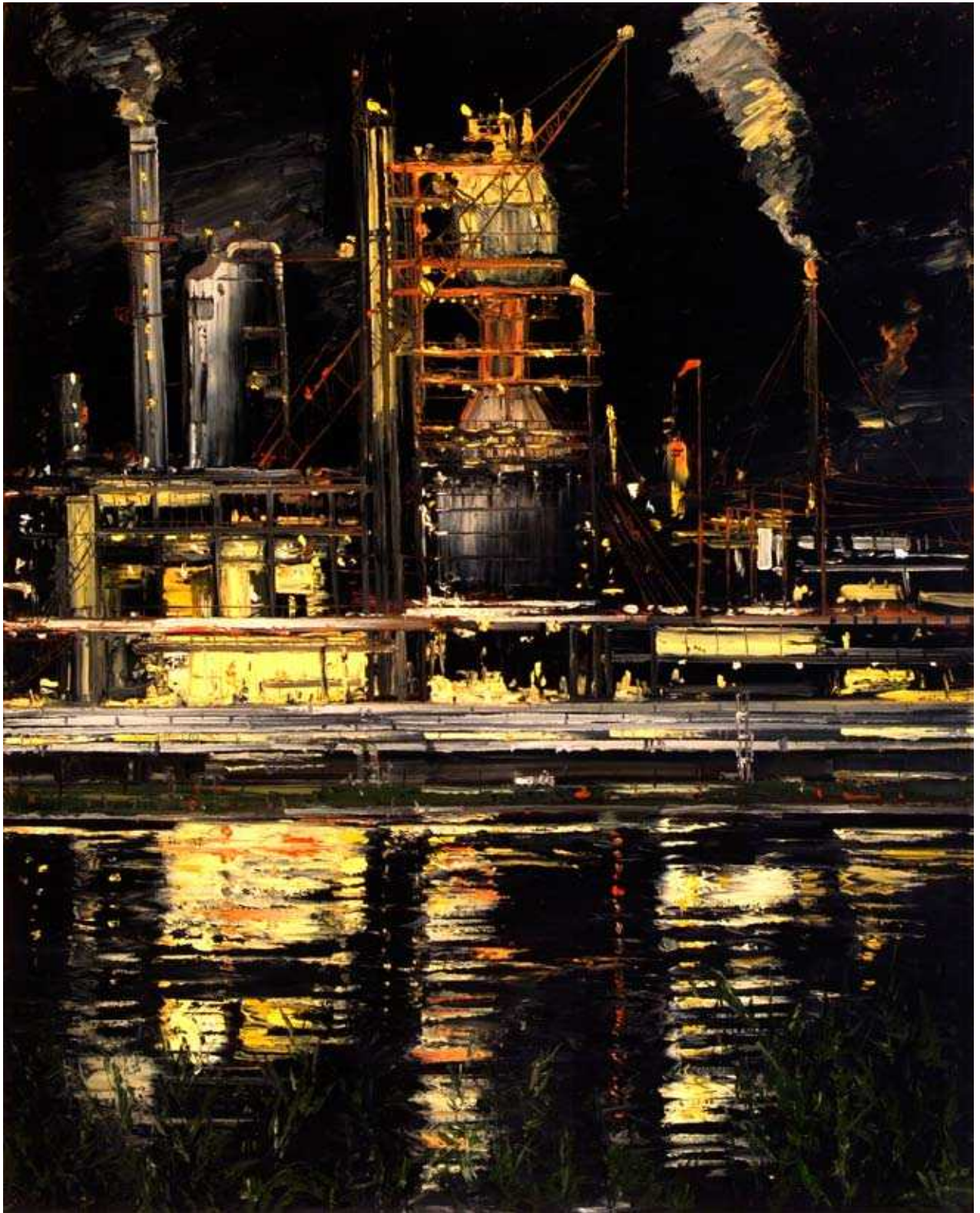
FS: Some landscapes don't go away, they're encroached upon, destroyed, despoiled.

JC: So is the corner of your yard.

FS: There's a French historian, Jean Staravinsky, who once said that all memorials, all monuments, are signs of a lost or failed meaning. There's a great difference between your painting and either Wyeth or Maynard Dixon. Both of those painters are as you said earlier, haunted by what's past, or going to pass. It's difficult to imagine Dixon's deserts passing, but many of the scenes are just gone. Many of the



Red Feather 08 #1
70"x60"



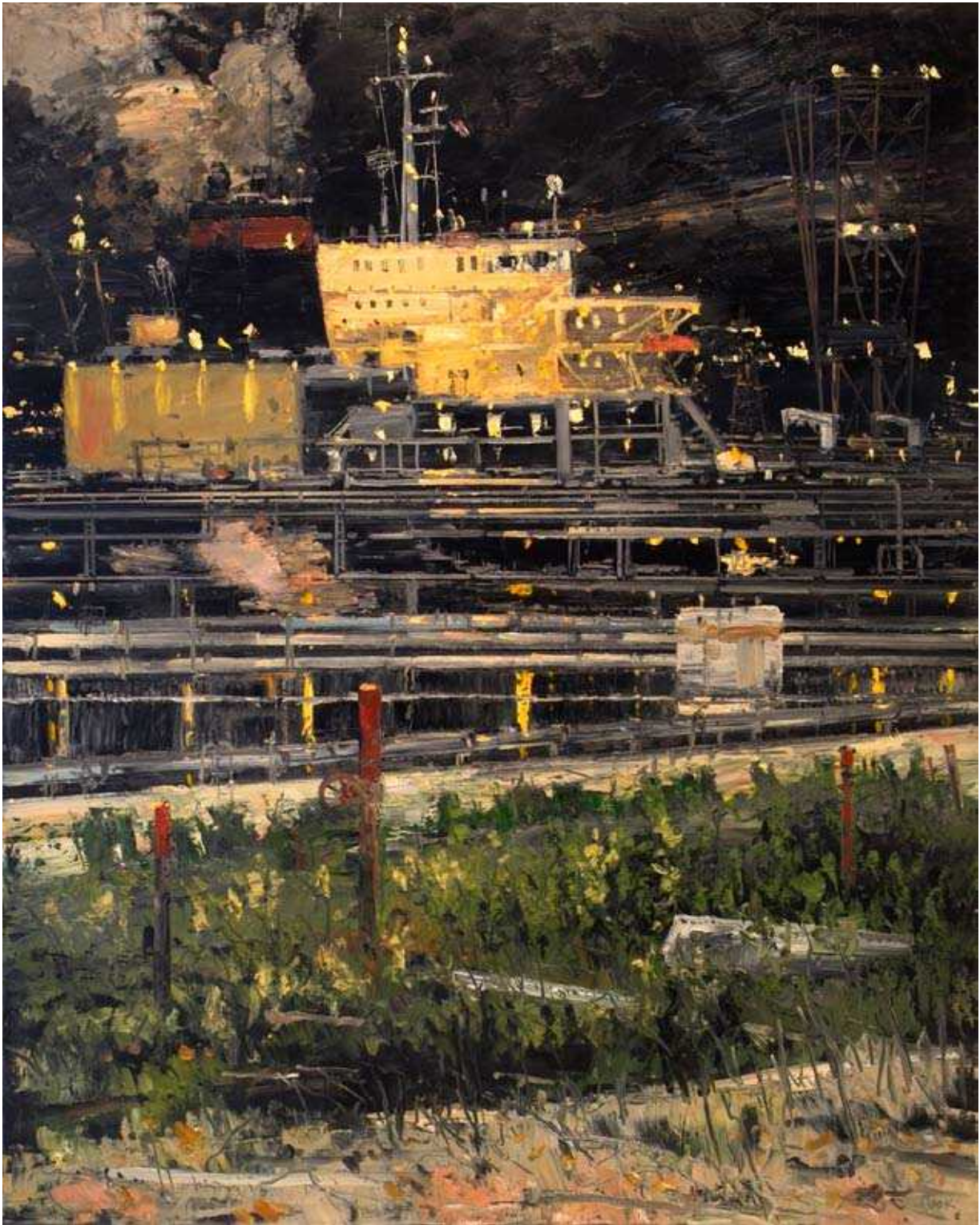
Trinity Bay 07 #3
75"x60"



Velarde July 07 #1
60"x70"

scenes that are gone have become industrial scenes. I don't want to force you to say that your landscapes are memorials of something threatened.

JC: They may be, but they're not intentionally so. I'm not painting this picture to say "spare this tree". I've gone back and back and back to places where the tree dies, the tree falls. There's an aspen where the pine was. There's been a flood, the rocks rolled, something fell off the mountain and dropped on the tree, a little clutch of trees, and it's all different. I paint an oil refinery and I title it *Evergreen*. There's a certain irony in the title. The name of the place came before the refinery. I find it sufficient for me to simply paint what I see. I try to build it truly. I dig as deeply as possible because I think that man and nature are complex enough to take care of the depth all by themselves. They provide the irony for me. I don't do much in the way of rumination.



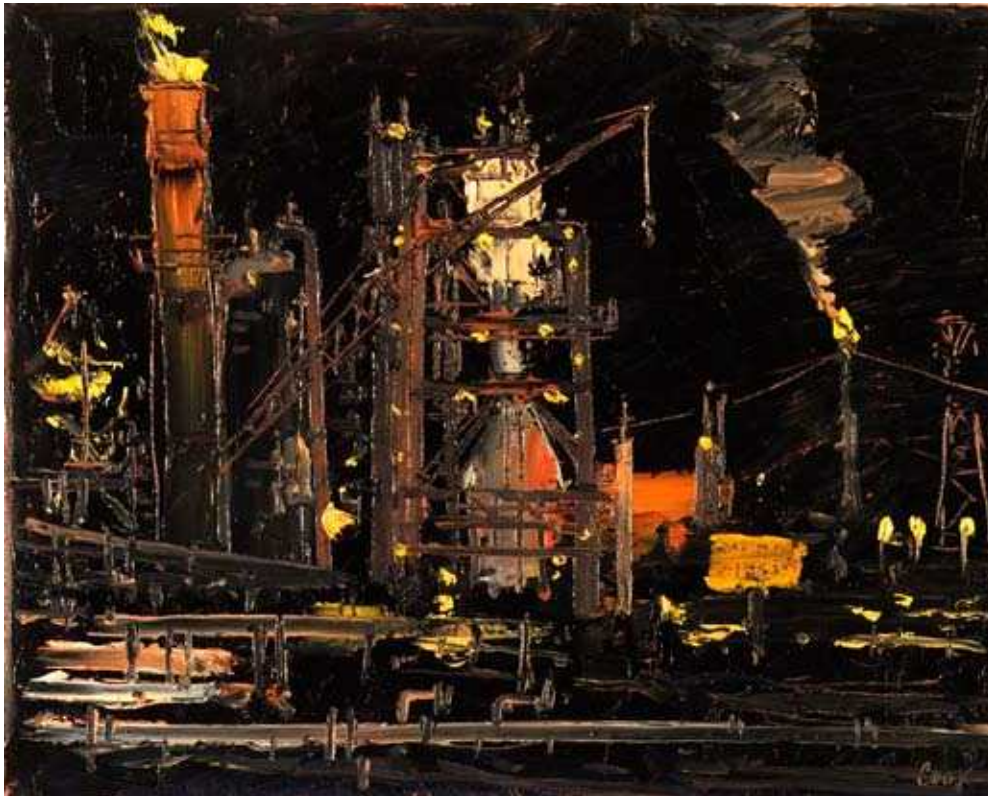
Trinity Bay 07 #1
75"x60"



Hondo 07 #1
60"x70"



*White Mountain-
Cascade 07 #1*
79"x85



Trinity Bay Study #5
18"x24"

Dan Leach, collector, Interview with James Cook:

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

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

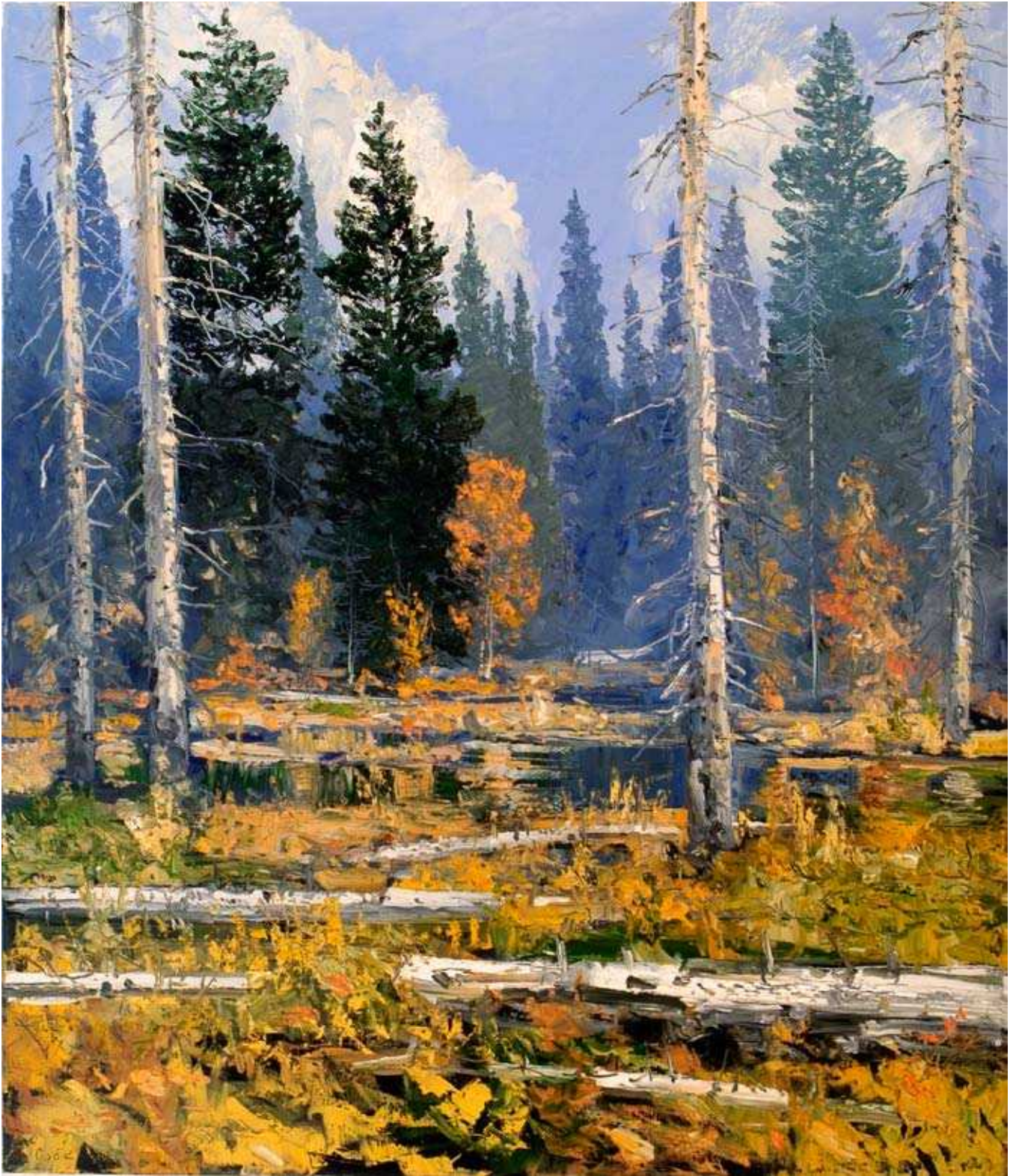
DL: I never read those paintings as though they are glorifying something that is causing harm.

JC: Certainly, not my intent. I don't think that exists in it. It just happens to be powerful 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. Think about Goya and his wartime statements about the Napoleonic Wars or Piranesi's Carceris? The dark side of man is still very impressive.

DL: It is ironic to me that I've driven through that area around Texas going in the direction of Baton Rouge where there are all of those refineries. That's one of the most toxic places in the world and, yet, if you are driving at night through it, you can't help but be struck by its amazing beauty.

JC: It really is amazing. When I was young I thought I had to view nature as 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.....



Red Feather 08 #2
70"x60"



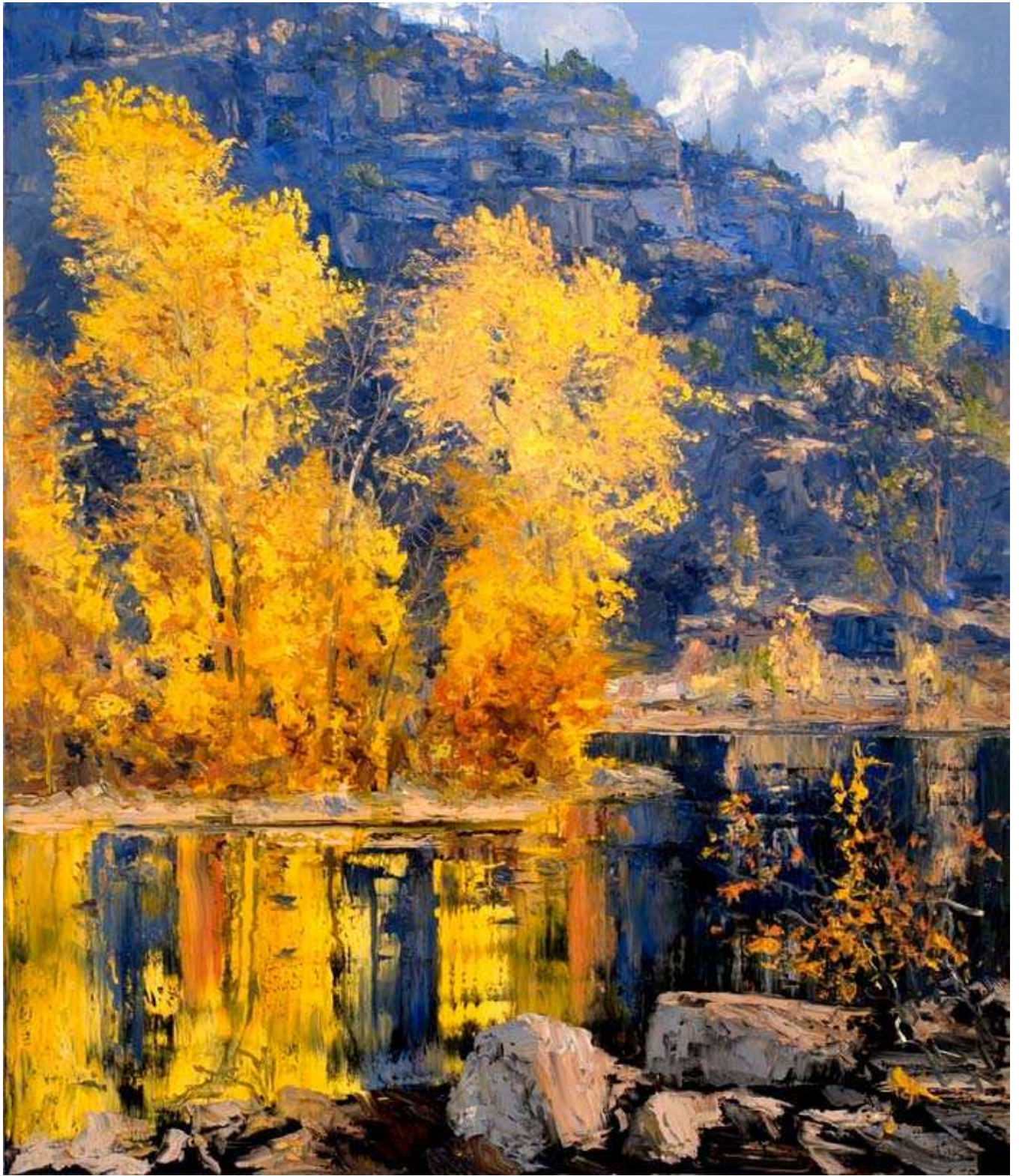
*Hondo 07 #1
(detail)*

and then just be absolutely faithful to what you have seen. Wherever 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.

JC: Well, 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. He 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 every part is speaking the same language.

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?



Sabino Autumn 08 #1
70"x60"



Cape Elizabeth 08 #1
60"x70"



Andino Night #1
24"x36"



Trinity Bay 08 #4
60"x70"

JC: No, I remove the mistake. I keep rejecting the thing that is false until I find the one that isn't. 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. 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?

JC: 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.



Irvington-Night Rain 07 #1
(detail)



Two Lights 07 #1
40"x60"



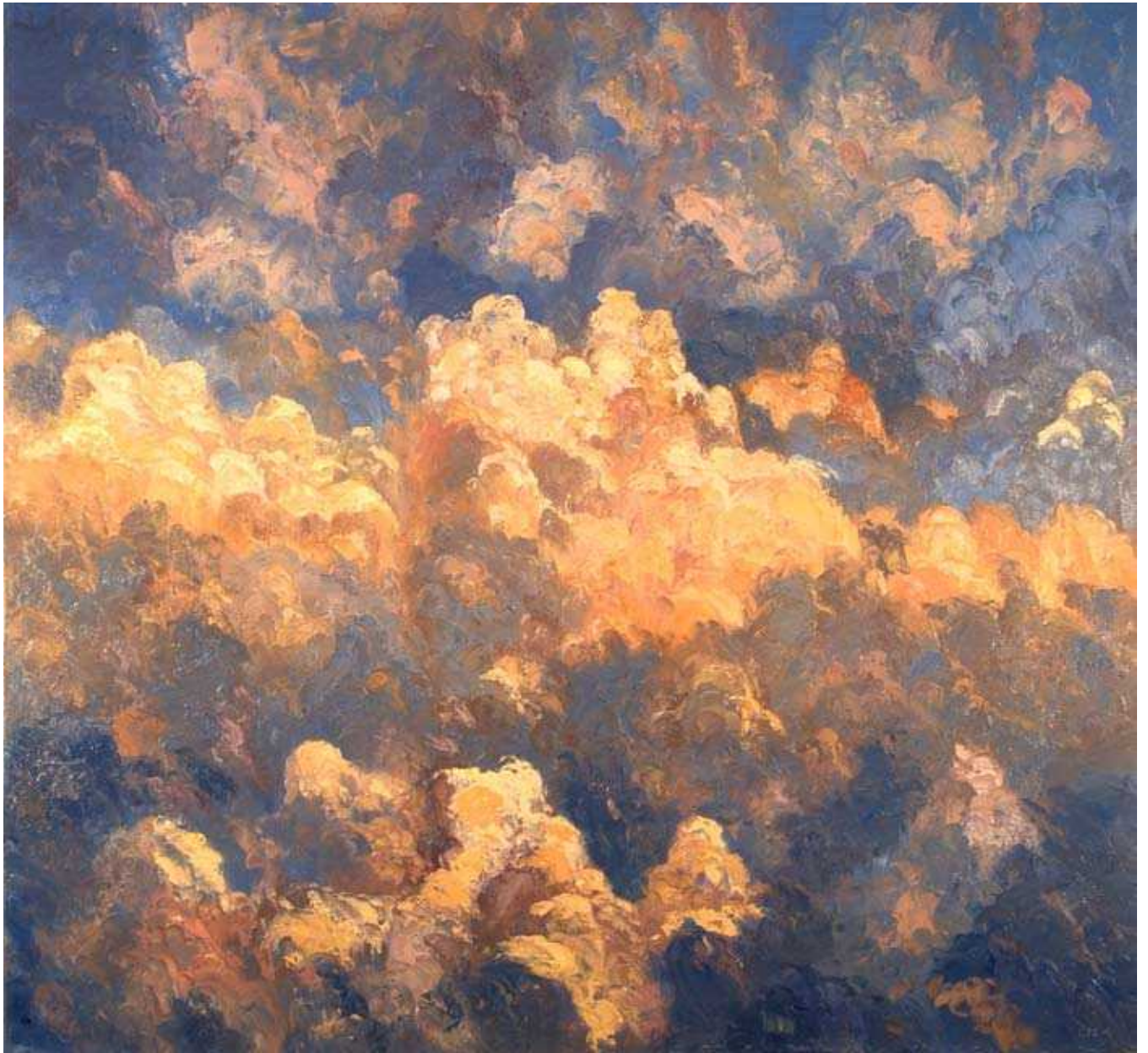
Artesia-Twilight Study
18"x24"



Trinity Bay Study #2
18"x24"



White Mountain Study #2
18"x24"



Monsoon-Twilight #2
79"x85"

James Cook

BORN: Topeka, Kansas, 1947

SOLO

- EXHIBITIONS: 2008 Davis Dominguez Gallery, Tucson, AZ
Gail Severn Gallery, Ketchum, ID
Meyer East Gallery, Santa Fe, NM
Robert Steele Gallery, NYC
- 2005 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
Vanier Gallery, Scottsdale, AZ
- 2001 Gail Severn Gallery, Ketchum, ID.
Davis Dominguez Gallery, Tucson, AZ
Vanier Gallery, Scottsdale, AZ

MUSEUM

- COLLECTIONS: Boise Art Museum, Boise, ID
Des Moines Art Center, Iowa
Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix, AZ
Emporia State University, Emporia, KS
Rahr-West Museum, Wisconsin
Arizona State University Museum of Art, Tempe
Indiana University Museum of Art, Bloomington
University of Minnesota Museum of Art
University of Utah Museum of Art, Salt Lake City
South Dakota Museum of Fine Arts, SD
New Mexico Museum of Fine Arts, Santa Fe
Museum of Contemporary Art, Osaka, Japan
Arizona Sonora Desert Museum, Tucson, AZ
Illinois State Museum, Springfield, IL
State University-Albany Museum of Art, NY
University of Arizona Museum of Art, Tucson, AZ
Yuma Art Center, Yuma, AZ
The Ackland Museum, University of North Carolina,
Chapel Hill, NC
Milwaukee Art Museum, Wisconsin
Princeton University Collection, Princeton, NJ
Denver Art Museum, Denver, CO

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- COLLECTIONS: Allied Bank of Texas, Houston
A.T.&T., New York, New York
The Bank of New York, New York, NY
Canadian Petroleum Collection, Calgary,
Alberta
Cargill Incorporated, Minneapolis, MN
Chemical Bank, New York, New York
Continental Illinois National Bank,
Chicago, IL
E.F. Hutton, New York, New York
Ernst & Whinney, New York, New York
First Bank of Evanston, Illinois
F.M.C. Corporation, Chicago, IL.
IBM, Stuttgart, Germany
The Kemper Group, Chicago, IL.
LaSalle National Bank, Chicago, IL.
Marsh, McClellan, New York, NYC
Mutual of New York, New York, NYC
Northern Trust Company, Chicago, IL.
NYNEX, New York, NYC
Otis Elevator Company, Connecticut
Owens - Illinois, Toledo, OH
Pacific Enterprises Oil Company-Dallas,
TX
Paul, Weiss, Rifkin, Wharton & Garrison,
NY
Piper, Jaffray & Hopwood, Inc., MN
Prudential Insurance Company, Newark, NJ
Quarles & Brady Law Firm, Tucson, AZ
The St. Paul Companies, St. Paul, MN
Sears, Roebuck & Company, Chicago, IL.
Sonoita Enterprises, Tucson, Arizona
Stephens, Inc., Little Rock, Arkansas
Texaco, White Plains, New York
Texaco, London, England
Texaco, Kyoto, Japan
Thomas Duke Company, Troy, MI
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