

As a guide map for how one could approach my work, I often like to tell a story from my childhood to create an analogy. When I was a young boy of five or six years old, my family was living in a trailer park in the deep south. Behind the last trailer of the front row, there was a narrow dirt trail that ran alongside the property fence. One day while playing on that trail, I discovered a faint and peculiar grey handprint on the back of the metal trailer. The handprint appeared to depict elongated fingers and a small palm that melted away at the wrist. The nails were abnormally long, grotesque and eerie.

There was a palpable connection in my mind as to where this handprint had come from. At my grandmother's house, there was a children's bible that I would look at when visiting her. On page one hundred and one there was an illustration of Lucifer being cast from heaven. He was a brown creature with a partially human form and a long thin tail. His legs mutated into hooves instead of feet. He had webbed wings of a bat that resembled semi-transparent membranes. Much of his body was covered in fur and his ears came to a tipped point. He had dark arched eyebrows with well-defined cheekbones and lips. He was almost handsome in the face. Then, there were his hands. He had long unkempt nails in the image. His nails matched exactly to those of the handprint behind the trailer. In my child's mind, this strange impression on the back of the trailer was the handprint of the devil.

This pivotal event of my childhood is a classic example of the illusions and misperceptions that characterize the sensation of pareidolia. This experience is defined as a psychological phenomenon involving a vague and random stimulus, often an image or sound, being perceived as significant. Common examples include seeing images of animals or faces in clouds or hearing hidden messages on records played in reverse. Our man in the moon or the moon rabbit of Asian cultures can also be considered a product of this phenomenon. It is an idea that has driven my endeavors as a visual artist and it is an excellent place to begin when talking about my work. The paintings I make do not appear abstract, and in reality they cannot be. I use representational imagery within each work to a varying degree. What may be considered peculiar is how I use representational imagery in a free associative and purely intuitive manner. I mix and layer images together in a way that is reminiscent of an abstract painter layering color. And I always find it fascinating to see what will happen in the amalgamation.

I choose imagery based on a number of considerations including the mood I am striving to create, compositional concerns and the texture of the work. Most importantly however, it is an affinity for what I find beautiful and a sheer curiosity about the eccentric associations these disparate elements attach to one another that drives me.

Over time, I have become increasingly aware that as an artist I make it simultaneously easy and complicated for my audience. My paintings are often perplexing in that they present questions with no explanations. Yet they are simple when one discovers that the questions have no right answers. I see myself as the designer of an expanse of clouds. Each member of my audience will find their own images and stories within these clouds; and discover their own handprint.