

ABSTRACT

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Perception of memory, the present and the future is continually shaped and reshaped by sporadic incidence. Arriving as lucky strikes, freak accidents, poor health, chance meetings, and epiphanies of the mind, unforeseen events interrupt and alter routines, making our lives unpredictable and open to blind circumstance.

Inspired by patterns and anomalies in the natural environment, these eight thesis paintings merge variation with repetition. They reflect the notion of shifting expectations due to unexpected occurrences.

LIFE, NATURE AND PAINTING

By

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of the requirements for the degree of
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2007

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Chapter 1: Life, Nature and Painting

Perception of memory, the present and the future is continually shaped and reshaped by sporadic incidence. Arriving as lucky strikes, freak accidents, poor health, chance meetings, and epiphanies of the mind, unforeseen events interrupt and alter routines, making our lives unpredictable and open to blind circumstance.

Inspired by patterns and anomalies in the natural environment, these eight thesis paintings merge variation with repetition. They reflect the notion of shifting expectations due to unexpected occurrences.

Observing the sky, mountains and forest, inspires the sense of wonder in this work. These observations yield metaphorical associations between human experience, the environment and painting to connect the constant shift of the natural universe to the fleeting, unpredictable circumstance of human life.

The vague, continual movement of the sky inspires these flowing compositions. Miles of atmosphere blend in an imprecise space of organic shape and tone, indefinite to the eye. Clouds hover in distinct elevations, similar to the layering process of paint. At night, bright spots of the universe poke through, reinforcing our limited presence. The streaming gaps between clouds are transient voids, pores in a sea of imagination. The sky is a colorful morphing pool with deep layers and floating objects, similar to the combinations of painted areas, strokes and marks that compile each painting.

As with the atmosphere, the moving, rolling mountains of western Massachusetts encourage these large tonal shifts, carving pleasant vertical and

horizontal rhythms along the horizon. Densely forested, looming and surrounding, they are mysterious peaks of exploration. As approached, these roaming monochromatic shapes appear to change into broad patches of moving color, as large groups of different trees come into view. When physically engaged, the mountains become a deep, forested world, where one can walk, contemplate and get lost, similar to the desired effect of engaging these paintings. The manmade world all but disappears, as congested twisting visuals, harmonic sounds, lavish textural ranges, and unique smells overwhelm the senses.

The forest interior is a complex, intricate web. Trees, rocks, soil, plants, streams and animals combine in an endless flow, changing with the wind, water, and sunlight, just as the arrangement of painted marks do on these wooden surfaces when carefully inspected. Close detail merges with blurry, distant form, as the intertwining arrangement of shape, line, tone and texture becomes a game of great visual diversity.

Trees stand vertically and diagonally against the land's shifting horizontal course. Trunks of many shapes and sizes recede into the distance, marking territory with deep atmosphere and tonal contrast. Bark, rough, thick, bumpy, thin, smooth, peeling, even shiny, inspires endless textural options in paint. Branches dissect the air; these exceptional, unparalleled lines entertain a song of darting color, as birds and squirrels mingle above. Leaves flicker or rest, light and dark, a speckling dance over the background. Reaching ground to sky, trees, the forest's everlasting backbone, capture the notion of steady change and progress. Weaving a beautiful pattern of undetermined support, they are a fleeting resource to man's encroachment. Metaphors of our delicate lives, trees experience a proud, yet incidental course.

Steadying the soil and diverting streams, rocks support the forest floor and sprinkle it with amazing visual details. Mammoth, miniscule, sharp, rough or smooth, rocks shelter plants, animals and insects, stimulating many painted tones, textures and shapes. Weathered forms of stability and weakness, their surfaces are a playground of light, color and shade, history maps of eternal forces.

Plants thrive around trees and the ground. Flowers, leaves, stems, and roots are a miraculous flow of line, shape, tone and texture. Vibrant flowers dash vivid color in an overwhelmingly earth-toned scenario. Stems are elegant living lines, thick to thin, connecting unique shapes. Calculating, roaming roots grab soil, constantly absorbing, poking for more. This opportunistic system bounds in all directions. Energetic and full of life, though clinging to ample supplies, plants symbolize the adapting curiosity of humankind.

Trickling, rushing, resting, or flooding, streams weave a nourishing path through it all. Transparent, twinkling and blinding, water and sun miraculously frolic; inspiring a play of light these paintings passionately seek. Objects float on the surface, or within the depths, like clouds in the sky, describing many distinct layers. Fish and insects carve invisible exploratory lines, similar to the eye's pathways around these compositions. Rocks, soil, and residue pattern the bottom, mapping gravity's pull on water's force, just as the small details, scrapes and textures do in relation to the larger shifts and shapes in each painting. Unlike anywhere else, streams of the forest celebrate movement, discovery, surprise, excitement, and chance in a stunning resemblance to the many options and possibilities in our lives.

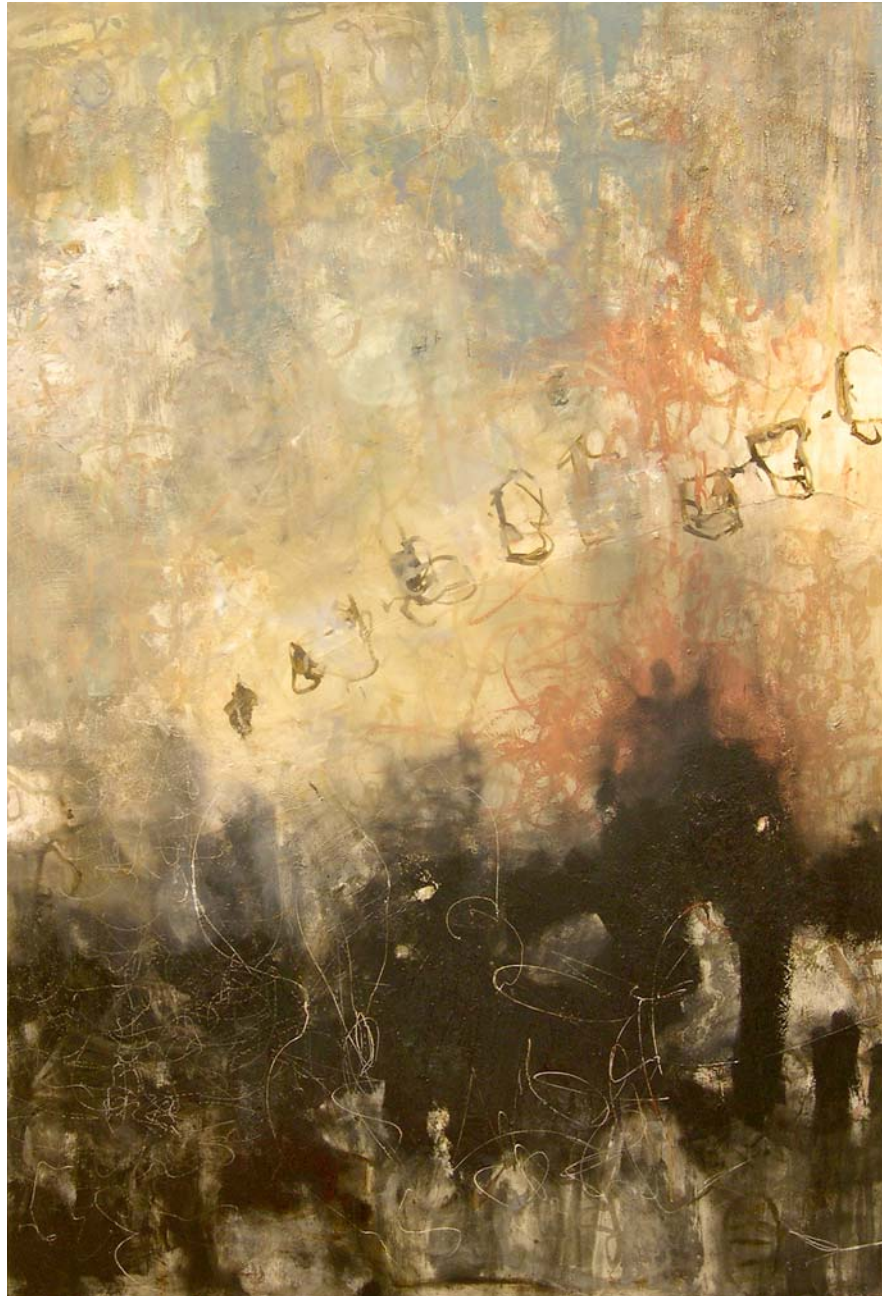
Ultimately, sparking this visual quest is a lifetime investigating the vast, drifting sky, rolling mysterious amplitudes of surrounding mountains, and the untailed congestion of the forest's deep, animated labyrinth. These perceptions underlie a connection between nature, human experience, and the act of painting.

Discovery and imagination are fostered in this work, by balancing planned use of material with an exploratory approach towards expectation and finish. Fusing effort and time, these paintings record sequences of physical actions and mental decisions regarding tools and surface. Recollections of the natural environment take form as brushes, rags, and knives, apply, move, and remove oil paint to and from the surface. These implements vary in hardness, shape and size, and contact the wood at different pressures and speeds. Resembling the states of matter found in our natural surroundings, consistencies of paint and oil mediums range from watery to solid, while textures vary from rough to smooth, and matte to glossy. Each combination of tool, force, and medium creates a distinct visual and physical mark, resulting in separate painted layers. Visual complexity develops as the layers' differing elements combine in a mesh of varying depth and technique. Tone, form, opacity, and texture are carefully considered prior to painting. Sporadic activity follows, as vigorous scraping, wiping, repositioning, and overpainting, reveal early layers, deface new ones, and blend aspects of each. This momentary activity brings unexpected visual qualities as the layers' attributes interact. The compositions remain flexible and open to complete renewal as emerging layers merge with old ones. Trust in the unknown yields discovery, as satisfaction is overcome. Just as the forms in the sky and

landscape combine in a shifting rhythm, the coalescence of intention and unpredictability generates the curious visual harmony in this work.

These paintings present many questions for the viewer. What happened first, next, and last? How was that mark made? What does this mean? How was this picture created? Deciphering this history is intentionally intriguing. Densely layered, the surface appears deep and convoluted, aimed at destabilizing the viewer's preconceptions. Offering no apparent subject matter, they ask the viewer to interpret and interject. The lack of meaning and complicated painted order confuses the mind, as it departs towards a more contemplative place. Hypnotized by visual complexity, one is now lost in personal thought. No longer focused on painting, the mind is consumed in reflection, springing with joyous and painful memories usually ignored during the day. Adrift in visual bewilderment, one ponders their lifetime. How have unforeseen moments interrupted the cycle? How have these instances reshaped notions of priority and the future? Similar to the quiet absorption prior to falling asleep, or the trickling of thoughts during a peaceful walk in the woods, these paintings induce a sense of memory, opportunity and hope, commonly hidden by concerns of responsibility, business, and routine.

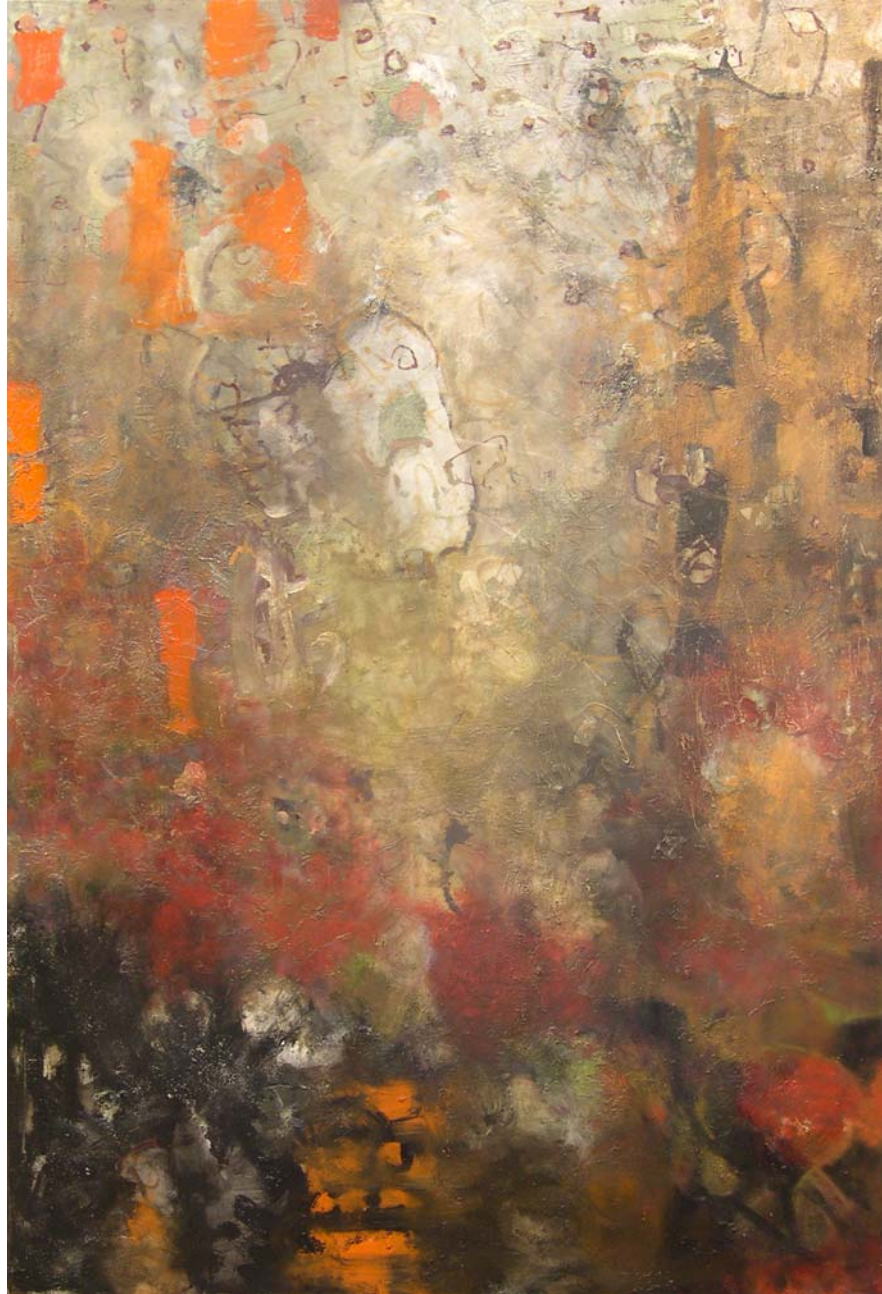
Inspired by the nearly infinite visual patterns and combinations inherent to the sky, mountains and forest, these paintings utilize ambiguous space, with complexity, balance, purpose and accident to explore confusion within a known framework. They are metaphors of our uncertain existence, meant to disorient visual certainty and alter one's perception of life.



i.) Peter Gordon, Untitled, Oil paint on wood panel, 6' H x 4' W, 2007



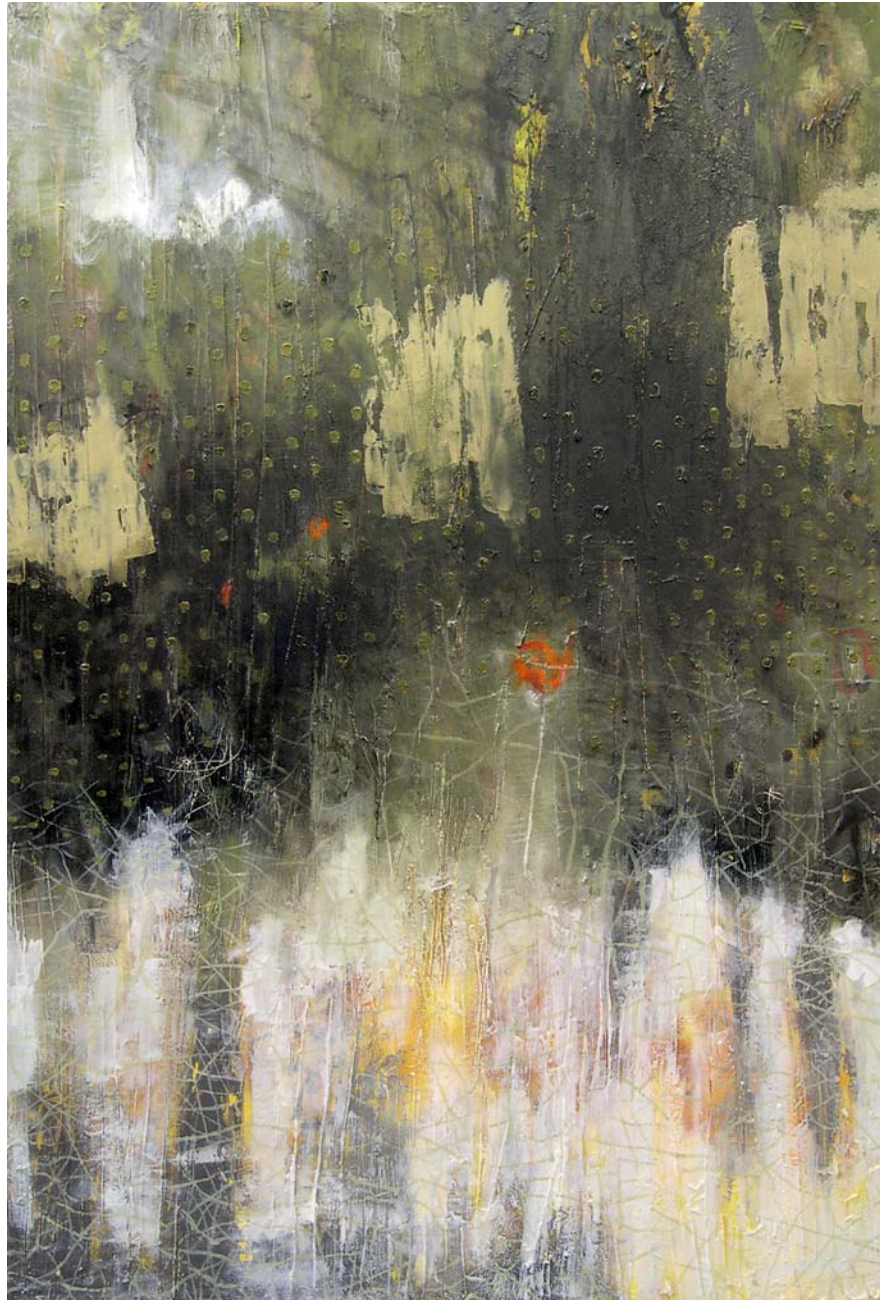
ii.) Peter Gordon, Untitled, Oil paint on wood panel, 6' H x 4' W, 2007



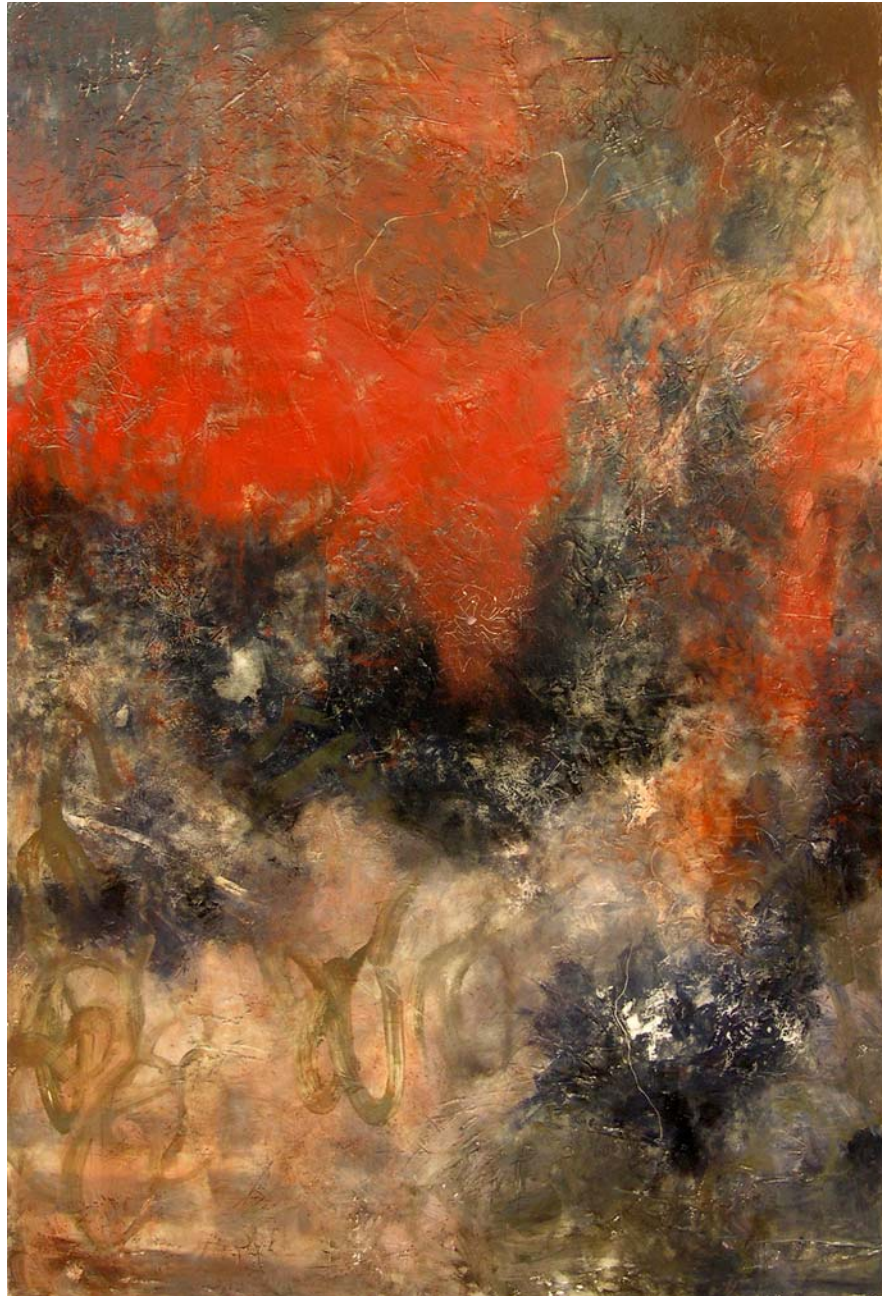
iii.) Peter Gordon, Untitled, Oil paint on wood panel, 6' H x 4' W, 2007



iv.) Peter Gordon, Untitled, Oil paint on wood panel, 6' H x 4' W, 2007



v.) Peter Gordon, Untitled, Oil paint on wood panel, 6' H x 4' W, 2007



vi.) Peter Gordon, Untitled, Oil paint on wood panel, 6' H x 4' W, 2007



vii.) Peter Gordon, Untitled, Oil paint on wood panel, 6' H x 4' W, 2007



viii.) Peter Gordon, Untitled, Oil paint on wood panel, 6' H x 4' W, 2007