



KENISE BARNES FINE ART

BRETT EBERHARDT

STATEMENT

There are many ways in which the thing I am trying in vain to say may be tried in vain to be said.
- Samuel Beckett

Gaston Bachelard's widely influential *The Poetics of Space* takes on the subject of inhabited spaces and the role these spaces have in our psyche, giving our imagined selves a place to reside. In the poem "The Blue House," Tomas Tranströmer, 2011 recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature, refers to his house: "It has stood more than eighty summers. Its wood is impregnated with four times joy and three times sorrow". My paintings are about impregnated surfaces and objects. I have become transfixed by blemishes and remnants in the material world around me. They initiate thoughts of time, the lives of others, mortality, happenstance and the symbiotic relationship between us and the spaces and objects that surround us. These spaces and objects affect us deeply and we affect them, altering them over time, both purposefully and inadvertently.

To make one's own appreciation understood and compelling to another is extremely difficult, especially when that appreciation falls on subjects as stark and plain as the worn surfaces, static objects and spare spaces depicted in my paintings. Painting has a long history of making the banal compelling, but I hesitate to claim this as my sole purpose. My motivation to transform into paint what I am drawn to visually stems from the desire to offer something new, something tangible only in the form of a painting. It is important that these images are constructed with this material, not simply to put emphasis on a subject that might otherwise be overlooked, but for the discovery and possibilities of the medium used to construct the image. "The medium is the message", Marshall McLuhan famously wrote. My paintings of the painting paraphernalia in my studios and my painting process merge the subject with the medium and embrace the state of flux and arbitrariness of the objects and surfaces that exist in spaces designated to painting. *Leaking Linseed Bottle* is the perfect example of this - a leaking linseed bottle wrapped in a plastic Walmart bag set atop a random studio box, although deliberately staged; each element is a culmination of improvised utility and undirected histories. *A History of Painting* is a literal record of my painting history - the sediment layers are the leftover medium poured into the jar after each painting session. This was a studio object of improvised utility long before it became a subject of a painting. Similarly, the subjects of *Blue Table* and *Studio Corner* share in an accumulation of surface histories and human activities over time, the blue table was jerry-rigged together with repurposed materials by a novice in need of a table and the studio corner was the result of a cycle of alterations and repainting by multiple individuals in a space that has existed for nearly 100 years. The oil paint on the surfaces of the paintings *Dominican Table* and *Jeffery's Table* becomes the splotches and modulations on the surface of the objects that are my subject. Because each table resides in a painted place - especially emphasized by the coated bricks behind *Jeffery's Table* - the lines between real paint and conceptual paint are deliberately blurred. The relationship between the material of paint and the idea of paint is also at play in *Blue Baseboard*, which is also meant to evoke a space by means of a small, normally unregarded detail, but one that is impregnated with experiences as described in Tranströmer's poem. It is a romantic idea, projecting such meaning on inanimate objects and spaces, yet supported by phenomenology. As we spend time with objects and in spaces, what was once ordinary can

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psychologically gain meaning. In Dave Hickey's controversial essay: "Enter the Dragon: On the Vernacular of Beauty" he writes, "The comfort of the familiar always bears with it the frisson of the exotic, and the effect of this conflation, ideally, is persuasive excitement—visual pleasure."

I choose subjects whose histories are in dialog with my process of making a painting. It is through the accumulation of glances, assembled moments and chance occurrences in my efforts to describe these subjects in paint that the viewer is invited to reach the contemplative state I am after—a new awareness of our most simple surroundings and the often unconscious impact these spaces and objects have on our lives. I make people pay attention to nothing because I think the whole world is there, not just the material world, but time, change and the combination of randomness and deliberateness that makes us and the things around us what we and they are.