

Idaho Artist Aaron Johnson Brings His Gouache Paintings to Gallery East

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Missing the Present



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Price—An exhibition entitled “Missing the Present,” by Idaho artist Aaron Cordell Johnson, is on display at Utah State University Eastern’s Gallery East in the Central Instruction Building (CIB). The exhibition runs from February 3-27.

This series of landscapes, painted with a relatively unconventional medium, gouache (or opaque watercolor), depicts various settings or locations in the artist’s neighboring Palouse Region of Idaho. He says of these views, “The paintings I create are the result of time, searching for just the right cloud formations, watching the colors, and experiencing what it means to be in an environment. Through these experiences I use color, brushstrokes, drawing, and texture to express the lay of the land and its effect on me.”

Johnson’s paintings are straightforward—seemingly effortless—applications of paint but full of color and detail. With swipes and dabs of the brush, Johnson is able to capture the fleeting moments of light and billowing clouds over the landscape.

“This series explores ephemeral moments in everyday life—recognizing their beauty while embracing their impermanence,” Johnson explains. “When you notice the beauty of a smell, a gleam of light, or the intensity of a color, you experience a complex awareness: gratitude for

the experience, shadowed by the knowledge that it will soon be gone.”

“As an avid nature lover and passionate painter, I hope to use my work to heighten our awareness of the significance of our surroundings, such as the way a cloud floats, how a dead tree’s branches pierce the sky, or the brilliant colors of the evening sky. Each painting is the culmination of absorbing, listening, feeling, and observing my surroundings.”

Johnson grew up in a small southern Idaho town and is the son of a high school art teacher and Emery County-native parents. “Art and the outdoors have always been a part of my life. I grew up visiting the San Rafael Swell each summer, visiting museums and national parks.”

Johnson attended Pacific Northwest College of Art, where he received his BFA in painting and printmaking. After a three-year break and some time spent working in Montana, he moved to Moscow, Idaho, where he attended the University of Idaho and received an MFA in 2011.

Johnson participates in regional and national plein air events and exhibitions, including a relatively recent exhibition called “Landscape Today” at the Harrison Center in Indianapolis and an exhibit at the Grand Central Atelier, plus a plein air exhibit at the Sugarlift Gallery, both in New York. Currently, he is showing work in the Sears Invitational Exhibit in Saint George, Utah.

He is an associate professor of painting and drawing at the University of Idaho and lives in Moscow with his wife and four children.

Gallery East is located in the Central Instruction Building, and its exhibits are free and open to the public during the academic year from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and is closed weekends and holidays.

A reception for this exhibit is scheduled for February 12, from 6-8 p.m. Students, faculty, and interested public are welcome to attend.

Contact Noel Carmack at (435) 613-5241 or email noel.carmack@usu.edu for any questions about the exhibit.