

Painting notes

March 8, 2020—I started to paint a Marrakesh lemon graft onto a sour-orange rootstock. I like the tree, but eat the fruit. I painted the lemon I'd grafted because I grew it, knew it, trusted it.

Johan Jumps from a Tree into the Pond

When I swim in the pond, I feel the weeds and mud beneath my feet. I can't see what's there, but I get a sense of what it is by how it feels. I tell the painting something, the painting tells me something—till we reach equilibrium.

Stu Sugar

Stu Sugar first appeared in Havana within a canopy of staghorn ferns—he followed me to Gibara, Guantanamo and Baracoa, Cuba.

He's followed me since—a suit but no body.

But when the suit has a body I paint him—saw him on the farm. He doesn't communicate through speech—his words end up as my thoughts—I've found his sense lies between his words in my mind.

The Greek

Dimitrios, known as the Greek, had a beautiful spirit. He was prominent in Windham, N.Y., Greek Orthodox community. He lived close by, kept many goats, bought pigs from us and made a fine moussaka.

I had affection for him but never knew him—he lived in a trailer, but I never went in. He knew I was an artist, but he never came to my studio. When Anne and I walked past his trailer last summer his belongings were dumped outside for the trash pickup. The Greek had died. He knew I was an artist and he told me he owned a landscape painting that meant a lot to him. The painting was outside in the trash with the rest of his belongings, destined for the Windham dump. He liked the painting so much I thought I'd put his painting in one of my paintings.

Sharkey's Cows

In the field, Sharkey's cows are Holsteins, black and white. In the mind, they're red or green. Both are real. Just depends how you look at them and remember them. Sharkey's farm abuts ours. Sharkey's grandfather owned the farm. Before he retired, Sharkey was, for many years, a detective in the 40th precinct in the South Bronx.

Alexander The Great's Cortege

The long journey of Alexander the Great's funeral cortege is well known. So I was surprised to see it on Cornwallville Road. The gold and finery were much diminished—rot had entered the wood, the wheels shot, and I couldn't make how it was moving—I saw no horses as it passed by. But I saw it—it was there. I just don't know for sure where it was going.

Anne and Lemons Leaving the Greenhouse

Anne was working in the greenhouse. She opened the door and walked out. Her silhouette progressed like a series of stills. As the door was open, a gang of lemons seized the opportunity to flee—like canaries escaping a cage.

My studio is fifteen feet from the greenhouse.

Why would they land there?

I think my representation of them in the greenhouse offended them, like the subject of a portrait who hates the portrait. The message was clear.