

WOOD PAINTINGS IN WOODEN BARN

(Renovated Wood, Good wood, Old wood in Wood Barn)

I've seen some beautiful and inspiring exhibitions in the wooden rustic barn and landscape of Duck Creek Farm. This 19th-century barn was once owned by abstract expressionist John Little, who in the 1950s, used this it as a studio and meeting place for artists in the then burgeoning art colony of Springs, East Hampton. The Arts Center at Duck Creek honors this legacy by ensuring that the Arts Center at Duck Creek is free and welcoming to all - access to the arts should be a free for every member of the community.

I am very excited by the Barn itself and its restoration/renovation. It is a wonderful open space - very warm. I knew that I had artworks that would be lively in this space. In the 2000's I made "Paintings" from old wood and found wood, that I had collected over the years. I found this material in dumpsters, at the EH town dump, construction sites, homemade furniture from yard sales and earlier paintings on wood that I had made. I feel like I was recycling and/or renovating this material by cutting, gluing pieces together, and sometimes painting the parts, to create wooden constructions. The work for the most part is not overly large but I thought large enough to inhabit this space.

In 2000 I visited Newark Museum of Art and was greatly intrigued by "The Narrow Loom Weaving of Africa" exhibition. It reminded me of an earlier long held a fascination with the beautiful Navajo Indian "Chief Blankets" and I have visited the Hubble Weaving center and Trading post in NE Arizona. These aforementioned events and my ongoing dialectic between the "Modernist" formal and Dadaist liberation have been the influences that has conspired to produce this work.

In the spring of 1999 I had the opportunity to compose a musical score for Faith Hubley's animated film entitled "Africa". While doing research for this project I encountered a book titled "Flash of the Spirit" by Farris Thompson. In his discussion of Mande, Ewe and other Ghanaian weaving he makes reference to rhythmized textiles. I was instantly alerted. I had been wanting to work with rhythm in my paintings since I began painting in 1990. These fabrics, geometrically decorated with symmetry, but an off-kilter symmetry, were created by weavers singing as they worked. I had also witnessed this in Arizona where I saw Native American weavers doing the something similar. I understood that the geometry and symmetry they created was being dictated by the song or music they were singing; the rhythm guided their hands in the designs. It is similar to the idea of poetry as technology, which makes perfect sense. Poetry, verse, rhyme, rhythm is a way of defining things, keeping track of this information, recording and storing this information to be passed along to others. Weaving, being one of man's earliest technological/art forms, clearly is a representation of this. Another idea that is presented in Mr. Thompson's book is the intentional flaw or the wrong note. African weavers would intentionally make their designs slightly asymmetrical as musicians would regularly introduce an "off" note or tone.

I've always loved African culture being a musician. At this time, one would have to be totally ignorant not to appreciate the tremendous and beautiful influence African culture has had on all forms of American music and art. Another book "African Rhythm and Sensibility" by John Miller Chernoff has also been instructional and informative. The author gives us a lengthy discussion of "cool", which is an ancient African and perhaps human mode of being. The author, who spent many years in western Africa studying drumming and rhythms, tells us that the master drummers taught that younger, less experienced musicians played from the "heart" and they criticized this, explaining that for one to truly develop their skills as a player they must get beyond this heated self-expression. One must play from one's being, but also be detached enough to bring objective appraisal to the act. As an adult, artist and a drummer for many years, I think I finally understand this concept, I know I tried to affect it most of life but I didn't know why, but I also subscribed to the "heated playing from the heart idea" as a younger musician. To me this concept of "cool" is part of my ongoing concern with expressionism and formalism, the topical and the eternal, self-involvement and communication.

I must also mention that my mother and grandmothers for a number of generations have been great quilters. The tradition of American quilt making has been influenced by the African narrow loom fabric tradition. The use of all materials (every little scrap of left-over fabric) to create something useful and beautiful is a very worthy ecological, social, and healthy endeavor.

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2023