

High Desert Journal

WITNESS TO THE WEST



PASTELS: YELLOWSTONE

BY BOBBIE MCKIBBIN



Steaming Pool #1, Yellowstone, 2005
Pastel. 25 × 35 inches
Collection of Missoula Art Museum



Steaming Pool #2, Yellowstone, 2006
Pastel. 25 × 35 inches
Collection of the artist

Increasingly, I am focused the evanescent – a remarkable instance of clouds in wind-driven formation, the dispersal of geyser steam, a moment of fading light in the Bitterroots. In my pastels I am trying to create for the viewer an essentially ineffable experience: to be a witness to the mystery and overwhelming beauty that surrounds us.

The painter John Singer Sargent has been criticized for being only an “eye.” This criticism emphasizes how as a society we embrace the conceptual. I believe contemporary life with its visual riot of images has diminished our ability not to “look” but really “see.”

I love to be an “eye.” I love to draw and I love pastels. I slide open a drawer of chalk and am transported. Blues and violets become the Bitterroot Range, mountains which slowed the Corps of Discovery. I rub fingers through red and yellow chalk and am touched by the sun. Through my myopic eyes light passes through implanted lenses flooding repaired retinas to be transformed into the idea of mountains and streams. What joy!