

Upper Peninsula artist April South-Olson's encaustic paintings explore the human connection to the natural world. Within each landscape, Olson aims to capture a single moment in time. Each work in this series is inspired by a pattern in nature or a singular event - the last day at the beach, the first day of school, watching birds fly. The transparency of the material reveals the present moment while illustrating its connection to the fleeting past.

April South - Olson: Points of Interest



Q & A with April South Olson

Were you creative as a child? I was a pretty typical child with imaginary play and coloring in color books. When I would free draw it was often of a house and tree landscape. I was introduced to art and drawing when I was ten or eleven. I remember quietly taking it all in and loving it. After that I was very interested in drawing portraits.

What is one criticism/piece of advice - constructive or otherwise - that still informs the work you make today? 'Lots of color makes it look messy' - It was a criticism when I was young coloring in letters with each being a different color. I'm constantly striving for a balance with opposite or contrasting elements in my work. And I'm also trying to let go and forgive myself so I can let some of the chaos through.

What three (3) things inspire/inform the work you make today? How/Why? The process of making is an incredible force. The shapes and marks that are painted inspire an intuitive reaction that help release an unconscious energy that propels me forward. Human interruptions in the natural landscape, such as power lines, cranes that reach to the clouds, a road through the forest. Building a painting through many layers. Each layer has elements that make connections to shape a history and bring about a story.

What activities help you push through a tough day in the studio? Prepping new canvases, wiring finished paintings, anything mundane.

When did you start calling yourself an artist? Why? Since college. Because I took art classes and for the simple need to make something almost on a daily basis.

Is your work influenced by place? Could you make this work if you lived somewhere else? My work is definitely inspired by the UP landscape, but because I have a low horizon and I focus on cloud formations I could easily transition my inspiration to a different landscape.

Who is one artist you wish you could have coffee with? What do you like about their work? Agnes Martin. I imagine a thoughtful conversation with many great stories. I find her work full of a pondering mystery in its simplicity. I relate to the meditation quality of her repetition and space relationships.

Describe an ideal day in the studio. [Spending} 4:30 am until 3 pm working on a few paintings. A new painting, where I have a lot of experimental things happening. An in progress painting where I come across a new technique. And paintings I'm finishing up because it's extremely satisfying. I live to paint on these kinds of days. The coffee runs cold, food doesn't need to exist, and I never have to break for the bathroom. Pure bliss.

What do you hope to accomplish with your work? I hope to discover peace within myself and better understand my mistakes. Life is hard and painting gives me time to process and think through experiences and ideas.