



September / October 2008
Layering Landscapes
Jimmy Baker



Jimmy Baker, *Kunar Twilight (Catskills)*, 2008. Oil and resin on canvas, 81.3 x 61 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

The excitement I get from painting comes from the challenge of making it engage the world I experience, while consciously acknowledging such a dense and complicated history as a medium. I'm not trying to create "new"

paintings, just ones that feel appropriate to our constantly changing world.

I have always been interested in the twilight between fact and fiction. Living in Ohio has shaped my perception of global events through the ubiquitous lens of digital media. The sublime setting of Cincinnati has influenced the structure of my work, creating a tension between being nowhere and everywhere at once. The Internet has provided a virtually infinite landscape of images and opinions that has begun to mutate how I think about my work. It is headed into a blurred realm of uncertainty, where images are less defined, playing more on the fears and dispositions of the viewer and creating more of a mirror than a window.

My current paintings are rendered with oil on canvas, and then coated in resin. I've always wanted my surfaces to cool down the expression of painting, to make them feel more like questionable documents than blatantly personal objects. The resin is extremely reflective and creates a mirror-like finish that seems to speak to what is outside the image than what is contained within it.

Painting has been very difficult to embrace as my main medium. I want my paintings to connect to video, photography, and digital imagery in a way that feels natural, not forced or illustrated. Using classical subjects like landscapes and portraiture have afforded a balance to the materials and subjects in the work. I began using the landscapes as a way to explore sentiment in American painting. Now they are more about limits: the limits of expansion. I am looking at contemporary expansion on a national and global scale, particularly in respect to the historic notion of American Expansion, of frontier, promise, and hardship.

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