2005, VII.VIII Two Birches Variant, 48 x 30 Oil on panel

ARTIST PROFILE

SURROUNDED BY NATURE

by Kathleen McMillen

Stephen Pentak paints nature at its most alluring and enticing. Cal
moving water, his universal images are both peaceful and challeng

A painter of endangered places, Pentak is also a dedicated catch-
time visiting pristine places where trout live. While observing the w
experience of being surrounded by nature and often takes photogr
with artist Joseph Albers—whose angular shapes balanced with c
“Art is not an object, it is an experience.”

Pentak was born in Denver, and spent his youth in upstate New Y
Hudson River Valley and the Adirondack Mountains. During this p
meditative and a life-long learning experience. His first exposure t
Thomas Cole, Frederic Church, Albert Bierstadt, George Inness a

Having set aside traditional brushes and pallet knives, Pentak use
brushes to achieve the surface he prefers. He paints on birch pan
stable surface for him to work on. He begins by applying layers an
crimson, violet, and finally blue or green. Each step either covers
reflections and glare on the surfaces. The various layers of paint a
framed. After all, those raw edges reveal the process.

“I started out doing more conceptual, nonobjective minimalist pain
my interest in the outdoors evolved into my work. I sort of let it in t
flop painter,” Pentak says, “I see my paintings in two ways. There’
landscape, you know it has representations of the observable wor
you never forget that you are looking at paint on panel applied wit
compositional structure. The duality takes you back and forth betw
made with paint.”

Pentak initially studied engineering and worked part-time as a sur
lost his eye for seeing the land in geometric grids, which is still evi

2005, VII.V Creekside Variant, 48 x 43 Oil on panel

2005, VII.VI Willows at Elk Creek, 40 x 56 Oil on panel

strong, horizontal plane of the water and then breaks the placidity
creates a tension that resolves itself, like breathing in and out—inh

Despite limited subject matter, none of Pentak's paintings is like a
same subject. It allows him to explore the idea completely and, lik
rigid guidelines. He also likes to keep his habits in check, so occas
painted a series of old-growth sycamore trees in winter, which in C
explore the variety and complexity of the trees that, like birches, h
short, thick or thin, straight or sinuous, and he was able to take art
figurative gestures.

By anyone's standards, Pentak is an established artist. He did his
New York, and received his Master of Fine Arts in painting from Ty
Pennsylvania. Pentak also enjoys teaching, and is a full professor
Columbus. He is represented by a number of exclusive galleries a
major public and private collections, and he has been widely exhib

Pentak paints in a large, off-campus studio where he also welcom
Columbus home since 1983, when he accepted a position as an a
they have three children who are all in college. Pentak travels whe
paintings.

Observing Stephen Pentak's paintings requires audience participa
the scene into a meditative state where the day-to-day world falls
participation could allow you to be engaged in a theatrical perform
variety of players and audience constantly create a new and exciti
senses experience the place; time becomes irrelevant.

Stephen Pentak is represented by Susan Street Fine Art, 415 Sou
reception for his one-man show titled, Stephen Pentak: New Paint
show will run through November 27, but his work is always availab
Saturday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday, noon to 4 p.m. Phone 85

Kathleen McMillen is an art consultant and broker to residential ar
1345.

2005, VII.IX Willows and Phlox at Elk Creek (detail), 30 x 48 Oil on panel

2005, VI.X Phlox and Willows, 28 x 64 Oil on panel

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