

Anna Wonnell: Artist Statement

Genesis /*noun*/the origin or mode of formation of something

For thousands of years, humans have depicted a strong connection to the circle through art and architecture. Many artists and architects have used this primitive shape as a meaningful compositional element because of its relationship to the earth, human mindfulness, spirituality, and the cycle of life. The circle or sphere is at the beginning of everything from the core of the earth to the tip of a paintbrush, and it continues to reveal itself in my work.

My artistic process relates to the circle in many ways. I feel very close to the natural world, and my art depicts that through reimagined landscapes. Although each painting is unique, I experience a similar cycle with each one. This cyclical process of making helps me relate personally to the Earth, my identity as a human and a maker, and the conscious and subconscious choices I make. This quote from Genesis 1:1-4 describes the Christian version of the creation of our planet. I find it to be a useful metaphor to describe my art making process.

"In the beginning (god) created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the spirit of (god) was hovering over the waters. And (god) said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. (God) saw that the light was good, and he separated light from darkness."

In the beginning (of a painting), all that exists is energy and matter. Everything that happens next is a product of creation, evolution, or improvisation. Looking at a blank surface and staring into the unknown is exciting. As the artist, I have complete control, yet my work begins at random. It is like a dance. The beginning of a painting is like a Big Bang or genesis: quick and full of energy, materials splashing, dripping, and interacting with one another to invent something that did not exist before.

Next I take a step back and think. Recognition comes with observation, and the picture begins to reveal itself. This step in the process is evolutionary. I must make decisions about what to do next based on what has already been discovered. I look at what I have created and judge what needs to be added, subtracted, or revisited. Several layers of paint build up on the surface and the painting emerges into a balanced and complete image.

As the artist I am never truly satisfied because I constantly feel the need to create something new, no matter how many paintings have been completed. As a human being, it is one of our first instincts to make. Creating new art and the process of genesis is what connects my mind, body, and spirit to the primitive and basic human identity of being a maker.