



Halo ●●●●
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Undersea Sky 14" x 14"

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I dedicate this book to my family, my unbelievable wife, Laura, and three amazing children Eleanor, Damian, and Vivian. I could not have pursued this path without their support and love.

Introduction

I paint what I am trying to understand. I paint what I am trying to make peace with. I paint what I can't make peace with. I cannot paint anything as it is, in the still shot interpretation. I paint notions, intangibles, abstract concepts, and emotions. I paint Passion, Compartmentalization, Democracy, Rage, myself, addiction, situations, events, conflict, sex, dreams and hopes and vague memories.

I paint to learn more; to learn what I don't know I already know, and it comes out. Painting is an engaging process of discovery that provides insight and speaks to me. It is a process of experimentation and growth. It is process of trial and error and chipping away. I yearn for the truth and the answer to the question Why? I paint to escape into my own universe. I paint because I want to scream. I paint because I hope someone gets it.

I paint because one day I will effect change. I will make a difference, although I am old and getting older. I paint because I am not dead yet. I paint to tell a story and I share that story, when there is one. It is typed out and placed on a sticker on the back of the painting. This way you can know exactly what I was thinking about when I created each piece.

The story explains what different elements of the painting signify. They tell the story behind the painting and usually make for an interesting read. I think that it is the stories that really make my art special. Once you read them, you will know them as you will see them told in the paintings. This is the connection that I love. Art filling in the gaps left by words.

My style is colorful as are life, dreams, and people. Although I have some common techniques, I try not to get into the rut of painting the same thing. I am broad and each painting is deep, but the inventory on any topic is usually singular. My style, like me, is blunt and honest, and perhaps lacking some diplomatic element. My work is truthful. We call my movement Abstract Symbolism. In Abstract Symbolism, a story is told through symbols in the abstract form, colors take on meaning, patterns signify something, and it is possible to learn the language to some degree.

My art provides me with perspective, insight, truth, and peace. I hope my art gives others a feeling that moves them, a story they can share, or a perspective to consider. Please enjoy this publication and feel free to tell your friends about it. Thanks for your interest, I truly appreciate it and I hope you enjoy the paintings and the stories.

Best Regards,

Grant Cleveland

Original acrylic on canvas paintings available at:

Visit www.grantcleveland.com for more information.

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2' x 4'

CPS

Emergence



Emergence

CPS, 2' x 4'

The start of the day, the start of a new job, the start of a new year, the start of a new marriage, and so on. We emerge every day and transform ourselves throughout the course of our lives. When we undergo these changes and start on these journeys, it is exciting and enticing! Why else would we do it?

This painting captures the moment prior to emerging into a new life or world. During this moment, the color pops a little more, everything is a little crisper, and one feels good! One can plainly see the whole spectrum and take pause with wonderment in its beauty.

The foliage represents that which nourishes us and comforts us- that allows us to embark upon our journey. It is our past memories and lessons. The vines especially tell the tale of wisdom with each vine representing the truth. As you can see, the color changes on the vine and grows brighter or gets deeper. This is to reflect that these truths change as one ages and learns and gains wisdom.

Then through this archway of the past, one must push through to get to the promised land of the future. With everything we have and will be, we go forward and emerge.





20" x 24"

CPS

Compartmentalization



Compartmentalization

CPS, 20" x 24"

Suppression and compartmentalization are two vital tools I use in coping with life and pushing situations away that I do not want to deal with. Some think this is unhealthy, but I find it to be necessary, if not imperfect.

For what we compartmentalize and suppress becomes us as it leaches out of the boxes we put it in. This painting is a reflection and celebration of this coping technique. It is not about the why or the consequences, but rather the act itself.

All kinds of shapes and sizes of boxes are necessary depending on what one is trying to avoid thinking about. Some of these boxes are connected, some are adjacent and some are divorced by the super-highway of forgotten thoughts. The predominant color of the large boxes is orange, representing

The metallic and gold that thread their way through the painting represent thoughts, ideas, feelings, and experiences that are being imprisoned, stealthily escaping, or being released. It is the leakage, undecipherable from the legitimate thoughts, that are dangerous and corrosive to our core and essence as individuals. The more that is boxed and put down, the more that will bubble unwittingly to the surface to remake us.

This is supposed to be a slice of the overall way complicated structure needed to repress, box up, and put away unwanted memories and thoughts. The totality of the structure would be exponentially larger as this is but a slice.

The painting is a celebration of surviving and a warning to not become what you repress.





36" x 24"

CPS

Collective Doors

Collective Doors

CPS, 36" x 24"

Collective Doors is a straightforward simpler painting with a more complicated message. Obviously the doors are of great significance. They represent of the different places that humans can be at a given time. Their parallel meaning shows all the different terrains and situations on earth from a physical level.

What is interesting though is how the doors are all connected from their origins into the future. We all come from the same place. Even though we are individuals, we are collective. Intuition, first impressions, déjà vu, gut instinct, connectedness all whisper the same message: "We are one. We are connected."

The zig zag lines and bright colors signify the energy between us, like signals between brain cells. The bottom references the pain and blood and sweat from which we were born and created, both in actuality and ancestrally. Even though we come from pain, we yearn for pleasure. Everyone is born alone but they want to be together. Our history is made up of an almost robotic crunch of blackness, but our future is light, airy, and bright.

So in the end, this is a painting about hope and building bridges, or recognizing what is already there. It is about striving for joy when coming from hurt. It is about finding our way together and transcending all that is wrong.





16" x 40"

CPS

The Slippery Slope

The Slippery Slope

CPS, 16" x 40"

This painting is about being on top of the world when it suddenly turns and is on top of you, crushing you. It is about being on the right track for years, and taking a slight diversion and losing everything. It is so easy to do. It is worse than gambling in Las Vegas. It is so easy and so common that we don't even see the carnage and wrecked lives of those that can't climb out of that self-inflicted virtual, fiery hell or of even those that do.

The painting shows what it is like when you are on top, and this is represented at the top of the painting with the blue sky and sloping land at the top of the steep drop. One can start down the wrong path with the grass is always greener mentality and end up with nothing. This is shown in the patches of grass leading steadily to the all-consumer fire. Chasing money is another way to end up in the fire and this is represented by the patches of gold. The rabbit holes of drugs, obsession, mental illness, and things beyond our control are represented by the circles on the slippery slope. They can be anywhere and are shown in two places in this painting. The blue mountains of icy isolation, social awkwardness and pain, and distance are another shortcut to the end.

The border or edge of the slope represents the relentless pounding force that continues to push you once you have started down the path. It does not discriminate, it takes young and old, rich and poor, black or white. This is the edge of the slippery slope and the most dangerous part. This path is everywhere and easy to find yourself on.

The destination of the slippery slope is the raging fire that burns us with the consequences of our actions and circumstances. It is pretty, and captivating, this fire.

It is like the call of the Sirens and irresistible to all of us, albeit to different degrees. Once you are too close though, it will devour and destroy you. The resulting explosions, fallout, and pain are shown by the red firework and far reaching orange lines with the surrounding ash and purification. Most that take the fall do not manage to climb back out. I have seen many take that plunge and not return. The brown represents the shit that holds us down and does not let us climb back out.

I am one of the ones that fell into the fire and was able to claw my way back out, although it did take almost a decade and then I came as close as one could to diving back into it and destroying my life and losing all that I have. So for me, The Slippery Slope is both a work celebrating the return and a warning to remain vigilante and not fall back into the searing fire again. It really is a testament to the resilience and to second chances.





40" x 30"

CPS

Life's Journey

Life's Journey

CPS, 40" x 30"

This painting is about the difficult journey we make navigating through our lives. We are born into it from the bottom right corner. Then we have to go left toward the ladder. Most people get stuck in that journey of pain, forgotten promises, defeats, and loss. There is also gold and happiness at this level. Most of it is short-lived, and some of them are vices. While this satisfaction exists, it is not enough for the person on the path of self-actualization.

Some think that the ladder is the journey to heaven, pictured at the top. That this is a journey to be made in an afterlife, leaving the real challenge of life until it is over. I think that it is all here and that life is a practice of the exercises of will power, belief, and transcendence. The ladder is there, and it is our job to find it, through the murky waters of life. I have been on the ladder and been thrown back into the muck more times than I can count, but I can assure you it is there. Although the journey to find our means of fulfillment has been long and arduous, it really only brought us to the start of the really hard part of the journey.

The green cloud around the lower half of the ladder symbolizes the poisons that surround us. These toxins include jealousy, hate, pettiness, revenge, and anything anyone else can do to knock us off. The flames are full in places and mere outlines in others. This suggests that the nature of our pain is part real and part imagined. Our visions and decisions can deliver or deprive us. Either way, it is clear that there is no way to avoid the flames when climbing the ladder.

The blue represents our dreams, goals, and desires. They can get the better of us if they become selfish, too outlandish, or just plain ridiculous. I have been thrown from the ladder by these gusting winds of misplaced will.

Self-actualization, fulfillment, or heaven occupies the top of the painting and that represents living how and where we want to live. I hope that most of us have achieved this state and that our wants and needs are as varied as our residences. If not, I hope they are on their journey and fighting the good fight to arrive at where they should and deserve to be.

As for me, I believe I am at the top. I have been there before though and found it is very possible to be ejected from this state of grace. In fact, I have been. Aware of the precariousness of my position, I have learned from my challenges, defeats, and most importantly my journeys, and pledged to never leave this place. Will it happen? I do not know, but I am trying and that is all I can do.





14" x 11"

CPS

Pathways



Pathways

CPS, 14" x 11"

This is a little painting that tells a big story. So to explain what this painting means, I will first start with the background. The background represents life. The metallic tones represent the treasure in life that surrounds us: happiness, money, people, and the richness of the world itself. The black outlined shapes represent the clouds of tragedy and pain that live here too. The silver line inside is the proverbial silver lining of the clouds of tragedy. This is the background on which the story on top plays out.

The red lines are the negative people. These are the kind of people that things always go wrong for. They are the first on the background because there are many more of these kind of people than any other. They are also here as the bottom-most layer because they get run over, used, and stomped on more than any others, but still are the foundation. If you look at the red lines you will see that they never find gold or the silver lining. Rather, when they hit a cloud, they do not pierce it, but become ensnared in the pain and anguish of the black lines. They bounce from one great tragedy to the next without really experiencing the bounty of life.

The green lines are the opportunistic, positive people that keep going forward and find good in their every encounter. When tragedy strikes, they find the silver lining and exploit it to the maximum, giving them what is needed to propel themselves to the top again. There are fewer of these kinds in the world which is why there are less green lines across the background.

The purple lines are that of the trust fund baby modern royalty. I am talking about the kind that has not had to work in generations and have the majority of the money. They are born into the top and float in the sunshine occasionally raiding the gold and crushing the poor down a little more. All this is show in the purple lines' trajectory.



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