

Cover Image Statement

No matter where or how we live, we live out, embody, and create relationships of inside and outside, of human and other-than-human, of self and other. The words we typically use to designate these relationships fall far short of realizing the inherent interconnectedness that constitutes them. These words and their juxtaposition---inside, outside, self, other, human, other-than-human, nature, and culture---suggest separate entities, identities, unities, where, really, there are none. The horse I see grazing in the field does not start and stop with his skin, bones, and personality. “He” opens out into interrelationships with green grass, sunlight, cleared ground, soil, plow, chainsaw, fertilizer, rains, farmer, farming practices, food, family, and me, as the watcher. What I see becomes horse grazing in the pasture *in and as part of* those interrelationships.

To see this way changes what matters, what we must attend to, care about, care for, and nurture. It compels compassion for other beings, because there really are no fully other beings. It compels us to attend to these interrelationships, for they have the capacity to support or destroy life, enhance flows or block them. But how can we learn to see this way? How do we undo the destructive cultural habit of looking at things and actions in isolation, and begin instead to really see interrelationships?

Increasingly I turn to the practice of art to express these lived interrelationships, because art has a unique ability to awaken and create them, to provoke thoughtful encounters. It is true that art---institutionalized, territorialized---has produced language and practices that are equally problematic. The habitual five seconds in front of a painting that results in either “I like it” or “I don’t like it” comes with its own destructive blinders. The art market with its multi-million dollar winners and its scandalous “sensations” renders all art—justifiably so—a bit suspicious in the minds of many. Art, however, is worth cultivating for its potential to escape cliché, the known, the habitual. That, after all, is also what art can do for us and, further, is part of the cultural story of what art, as the expression of creativity, is *supposed* to do.

Home is part of a series of paintings that has occupied me for many years. Each of them includes a house in a relationship of becoming. *Home* is more than a composition in which there is a house, a tree, a golden orb (or earth, sun, or ground). My intent is to animate the house in relation to the tree and the ground, in a sense to anthropomorphize their interrelationship. This is so the house becomes something more than a house (Becoming human? Becoming tree? Becoming ground?) and the tree becomes something more than a tree (Becoming human? Becoming house? Becoming ground?). The house-tree-ground interrelationship is, for me, home after all. It is what we must care about and care for.

—jd slack