

An abstract watercolor painting featuring a rich palette of warm colors including ochre, terracotta, and sienna, layered with cooler tones of blue and grey. The composition is characterized by bold, expressive brushstrokes and a sense of depth created by overlapping washes of color. The overall effect is one of organic, textured beauty.

JOHN HERMANSSON

Watercolors & *Verse*

Paintings and poems from letters to
family and friends, 2005–2026

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About this book

For more than twenty years John Hermannsson has sent his paintings to family and friends the way other people send postcards: attached to an email, usually with a few lines about where he was and what he saw, and often with a poem.

This book gathers them, together with the paintings he posted to Instagram over the same years. The Grand Canyon Suite was painted from a seventeen-day dory trip down the Colorado River; the Fagradalsfjall Volcano series from hikes to the eruption in Iceland. Then come Central Oregon, sketchbooks from other river trips, travel sketches, flowers, portraits and birthday cards, a few Icelandic pieces, and a closing section of work in other media.

The poems and notes are his, as he wrote them in those emails. A few letters quoted other poets instead (Robert Frost, D. H. Lawrence, William Blake), and they are credited where they appear.

200 works · 37 poems

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Grand Canyon Suite

*In October 2022 an armada of five dories
and three supply rafts shoved off from Lees
Ferry for seventeen days on the Colorado
River. These paintings follow the river down,
mile by mile, in the order they were sent.*

29 WORKS



Above 128 Mile Rapids

January 11, 2023 · Watercolor

FROM THE LETTER

On the ninth day in a dory rowing down the Colorado River from Lees Ferry, the fossil remains of complex multicellular organisms were behind me as I entered the Precambrian formations of 600 million years ago. It was October 21, 2022, almost 10am, and one hundred fifty-three years since John Wesley Powell's expedition passed this way 'Down The Great Unknown'. The morning light was reflective and serene, and this spot felt like a good place for me to begin a Grand Canyon Suite of paintings. Let the journey begin!

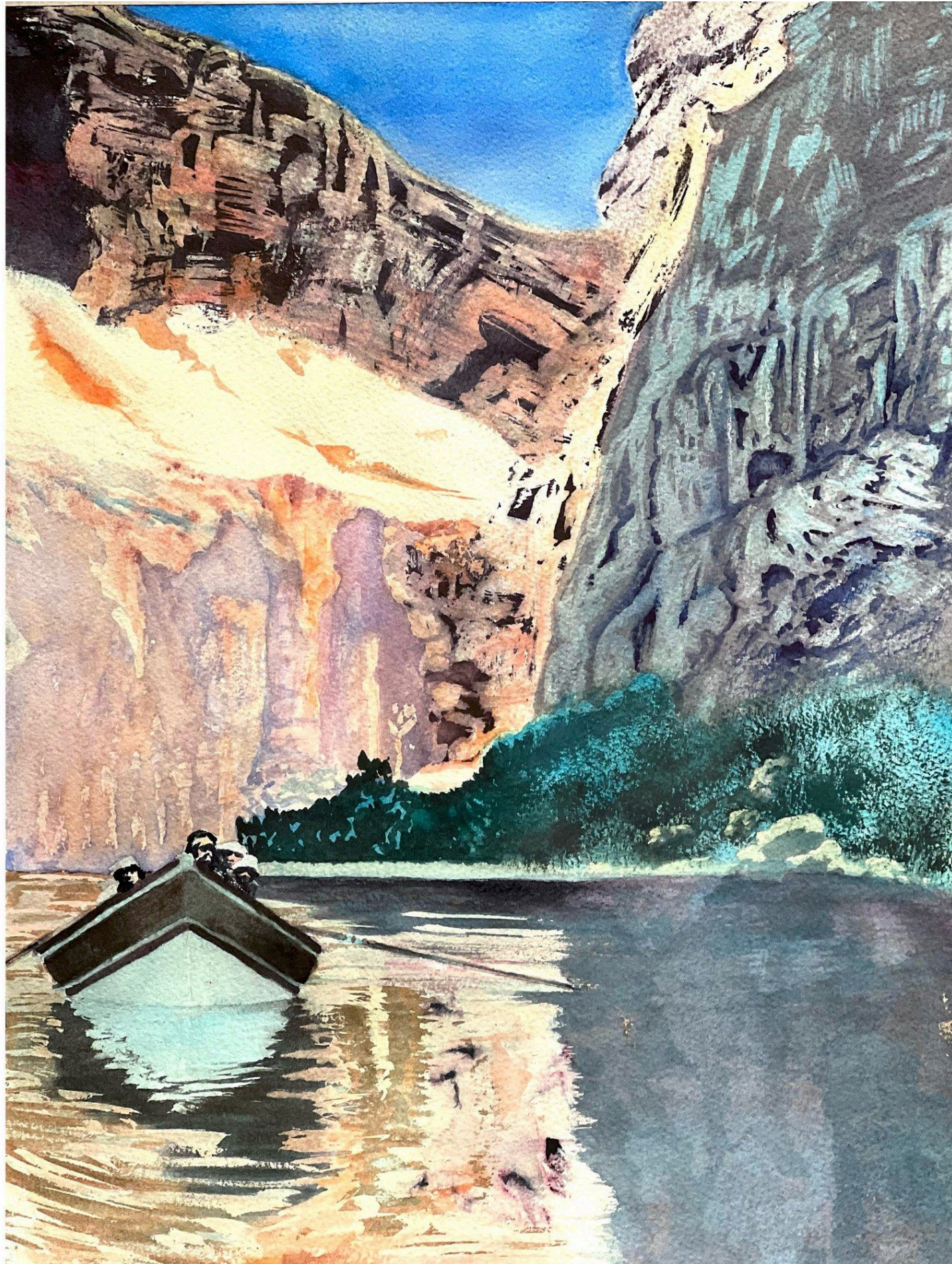
Hot Na Na

February 5, 2023 · Watercolor on paper, 12 × 16 in

FROM THE LETTER

On a calm and sunny morning on October 12, 2022, an armada of five dories and three supply rafts shoved off from Lee’s Ferry, on the Colorado River, beginning a 17-day river trip that launched me on a grand journey through space and light. Four hours of rowing brought us 16 miles down river. It was only 3:30 in the afternoon, but the cliffs were already casting their shadows across the water. It was time to go ashore and make camp. The place was called ‘Hot Na Na’.





Hidden Passage, Hot Na Na

March 4, 2023 · Watercolor

FROM THE LETTER

Gliding through the Grand Canyon in a dory that is specifically designed to handle the powerful currents and unpredictable rapids of the Grand Canyon was a unique experience for me. Grand Canyon dories are handcrafted with attention to detail for both performance and beauty. In the hands of a skilled oarsman, a dory will be faster and more maneuverable than a raft. It's the way to go!

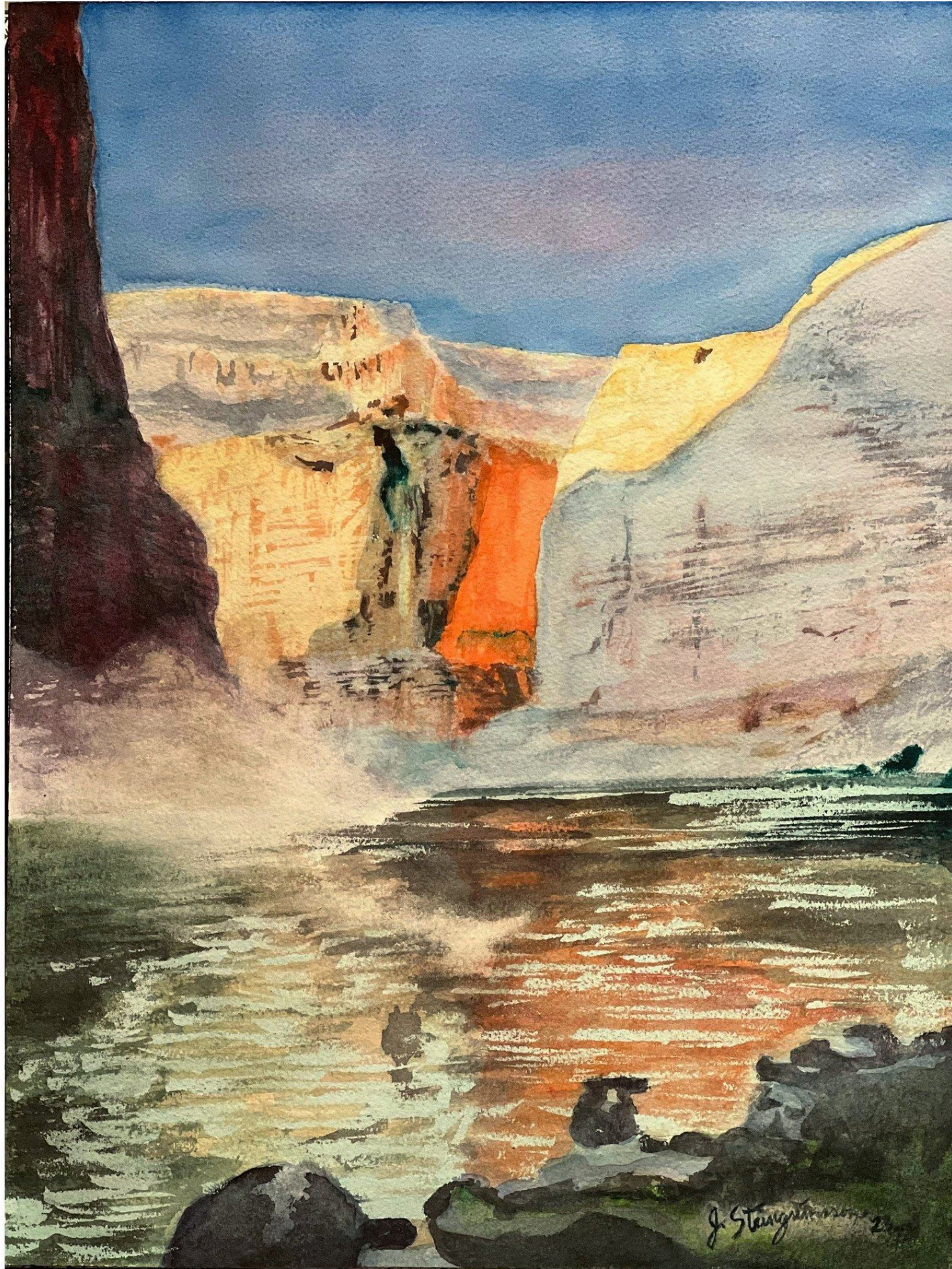
After Two Days

March 20, 2023 · Watercolor

FROM THE LETTER

Well after the break of dawn, fantastical shadows cling to cliffs. The dory silently slips past stone faced guardians of the realm like a shadow bearing souls into the underworld, the dory drifts deeper into the canyon with the current. Two days on the river has me in wonder what two weeks more might possibly be like.





Sunrise at Buck Farm Canyon

April 10, 2023 · Watercolor on paper, 12 × 16 in

FROM THE LETTER

On day four, after shoving off from Lee's Ferry on the Colorado River, I rose at 6:30am to the sound of air blown through a conch that reverberated off of surrounding cliffs like an elk's mating call, which meant it was time for coffee. Being neither a coffee drinker nor an elk, I lingered to watch the sunrise that was creeping down cliffs and reflecting off of earth-toned striated rock to create a dazzling display of red-oranges and golden yellows in a mist.

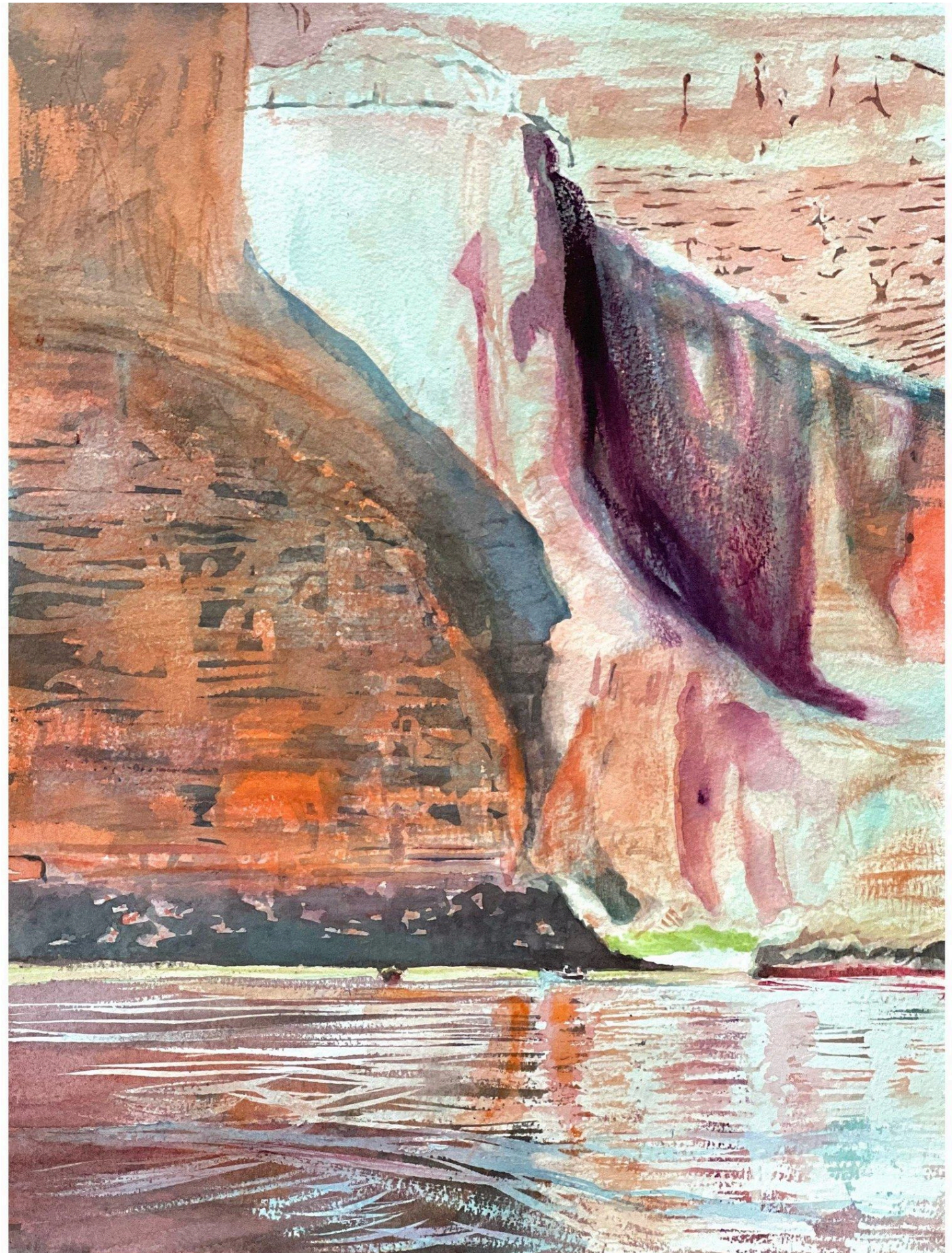
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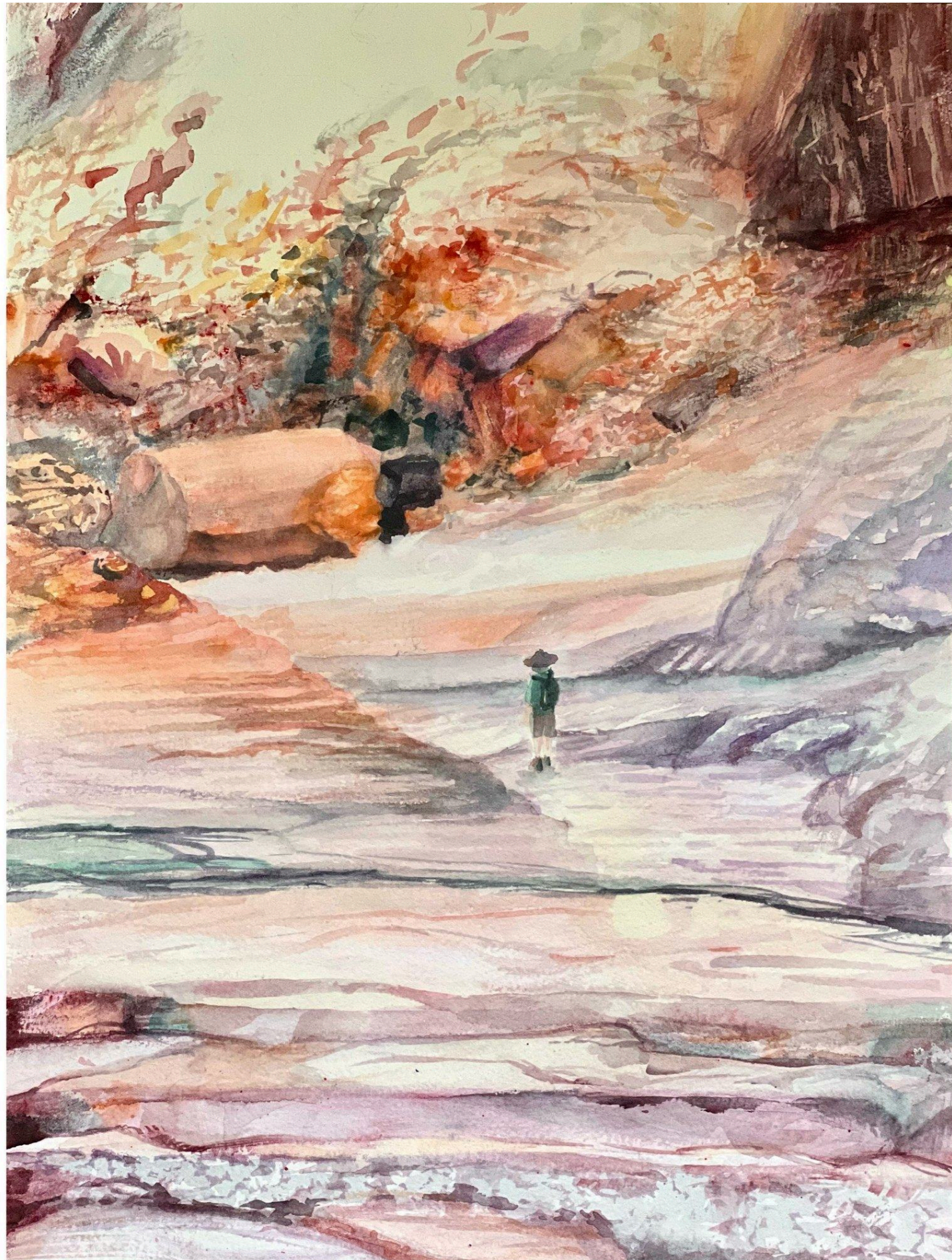
April 30, 2023 · Watercolor

River

*Perhaps it is a river that flows by
the banks of tomorrow around the bend
of yesterday that beckons us to fly
beyond the cliffs like eagles soaring lends
a wing of hope to people drifting down
a river in a boat. A kingfisher's
Rat-tat-tat strafes our spot, oars back around
boat eating sneakers brawling ushers
correcting course, we go with time past snags
and sweepers after yesterday's currents.
The great blue herons bid us well but lag
behind and watch our boat parade like parents.
We anchor for lunch and praise the day ahead
not thinking what to do before we're dead.*

j.b.hermannsson





North Canyon Wash

June 9, 2023 · Watercolor on paper, 14 × 16 in

*A staircase leads to walls with faces red
with rocks and fallen column boulders, come
this way, the canyon calls to us, I'm led
to wander to where water flows down from
between tall red-rock cliffs, we squeeze inwards.*

from "Canyon Frog"

North Canyon

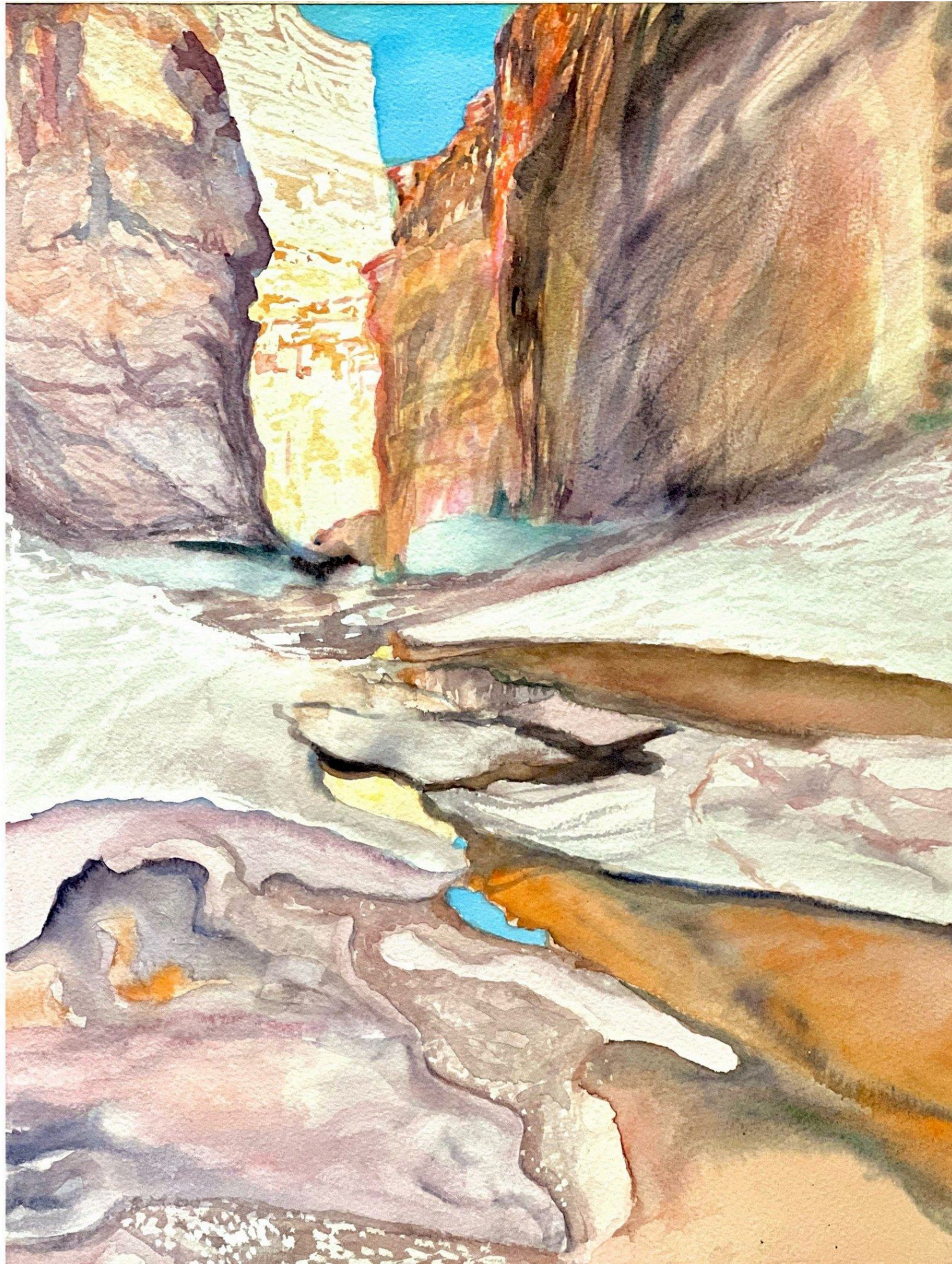
August 25, 2023 · Watercolor on paper, 12 × 16 in

Canyon Frog

*A staircase leads to walls with faces red
with rocks and fallen column boulders, come
this way, the canyon calls to us. I'm led
to wandering to where water flows down
between tall red-rock cliffs we squeeze inwards
to dimming light in water falling flecks
when by a pool of water there's a breeze.
A frog appears and eyes us with some vex-
ation. It crouches but we don't go near
lest we disturb the frog that jumps too soon.
Disastrous would be our fate for here
all may be good on this fair day in June.
But is anyone wondering who will
kiss this frog prince while we are standing still.*

j.b.hermannsson mmxxiii.vii.xxv (July 25, 2023)





North Canyon Wash II

January 26, 2024 · Watercolor

*From deep within it's cool cavern of stone
a silent shimmering reflection pools
within from shadows into light and hones
the source of life among slabs' scattered boon
of treasures carved and broken which remain
of some lover's quarrels just the same.*

j.b.hermannsson mmxxiv.i.xxvi (January 26, 2024)

FROM THE LETTER

I'm back onto the 'Grand Canyon Suite Series' with many miles of canyon yet to go. This painting will conclude our first side canyon exploration before we jump back into our dory and head into straight into our first serious rapid on the Colorado River.

Vasey's Paradise

February 21, 2024 · Watercolor on paper, 12 × 16 in

*The river cuts deep no need to row
Overlapping the dark with light reflect-
Ing on the waves the ghostly shadows grow
An Odyssey that drifts on whatever's next.*

FROM THE LETTER

As we continue down river, we go deeper into the rock strata with cliffs rising higher above us. There is less sunlight reaching us with each passing day. Afternoon shadows appear large on the cliffs.





To Hajisho

April 4, 2024 · Watercolor on paper, 12 × 16 in

*I'll sing to you to this soft lute
and shew you all alive
The world when every particle
of dust breathes forth its joy.*

William Blake

FROM THE LETTER

Names of places and slot canyons in the Grand Canyon are often obvious but occasionally mysterious names such as 'To Hajisho' appear on the river map. Nevertheless, I feel the name is right for this painting at that place and time.

Saddle Canyon

April 26, 2024 · Watercolor on paper, 12 × 16 in

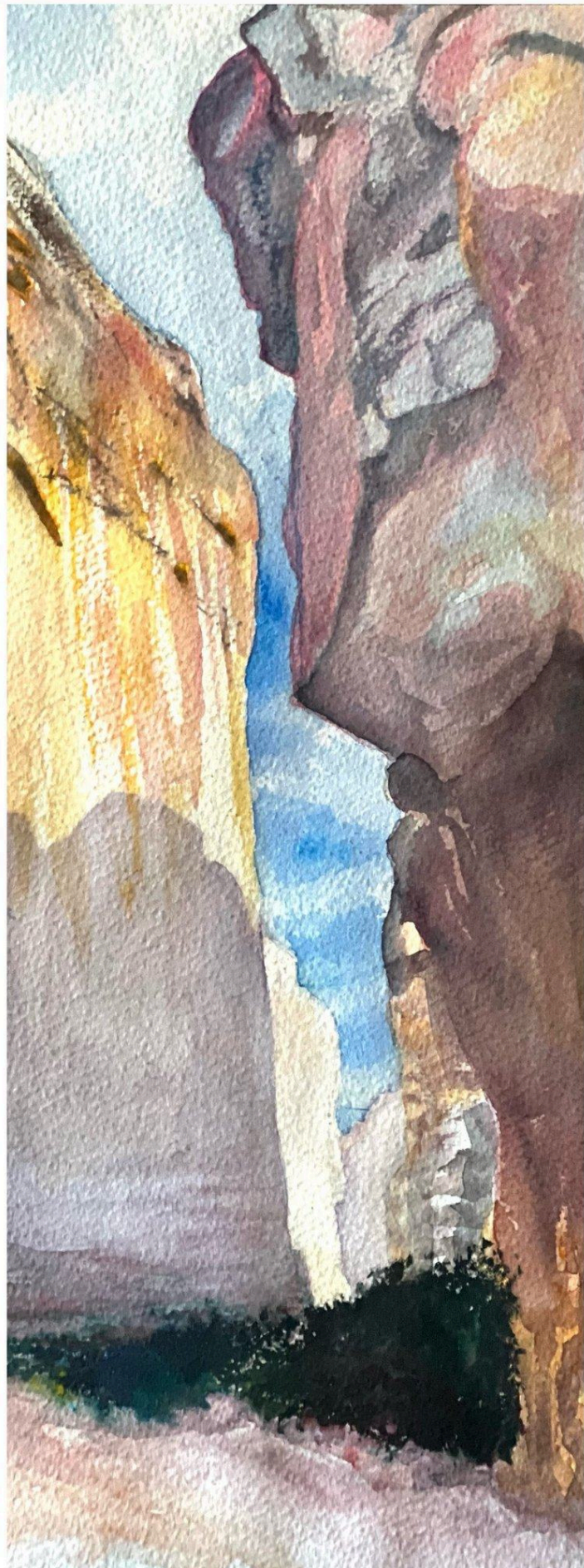
*shadows on stone dripping sipping water
and crunching of rock chips under my foot
I stand silent momentarily there
then crunch my way back in the river’s rut.*

-jh

FROM THE LETTER

Our dory trip put an emphasis on hiking and exploring the tributary canyons of the Grand Canyon because each one is unique. Our second hike is into Saddle Canyon.





Saddle Canyon II

September 28, 2024 · Watercolor on paper, 6 × 16 in

*Among Giants I walk towering high
Around me afternoon shadows close ranks
I follow the narrowing silent sky
And to an alter of some sorts say thanks.*

FROM THE LETTER

Our float trip must go on! My next painting on our journey down the Colorado river through the Grand Canyon is from a tributary canyon called Saddle Canyon.

Garden of Earthly Delights

November 13, 2024 · Watercolor on paper, 12 × 16 in

*Between shadowy canyon walls we float
Around a bend to where the river widens and
Sunlight on cliffs like sirens calling boats
To gardens of earthly delights on sand.*

FROM THE LETTER

For those of you who may be looking for some place to escape to for two or three weeks, I highly recommend a float trip down the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon. It’s out of this world.

The attached painting is of an area along the river named ‘Dinosaur’, however this can be misleading because no dinosaur fossils appear in the canyon area. All the rock formations in the Grand Canyon were formed before the time of the dinosaurs, which is why I am tipping my hat to Hieronymus Bosch and calling it the ‘Garden of Earthly Delights’.





Granaries of Nankoweap

November 21, 2024 · Watercolor on paper, 8 × 16 in

*Like eyes of spiders watching the river
The granaries high on the cliff's face wit-
-nessed the Ancients' civilization store
Its seed for millennia now they sit.*

FROM THE LETTER

It's a short two mile drift down river in a dory from Dinosaur to Nankoweap, the site of an old Indian settlement. Only a few traces of stone foundations remain of the dwellings (located in the center of the painting) with granaries high in the cliff for the storage of grains (upper right). Their crops would have been planted at the mouth of the tributary Nankoweap Canyon (lower left) where an alluvial delta forms from soil that is washed down canyon seasonally. A mile long hike up the cliff on a narrow trail with acute switch-backs brings us to the granaries (upper right).

There remains an unsolved mystery as to why the Indian settlements in the Grand Canyon were suddenly abandoned in the mid-thirteenth century. Some speculate that it may have been due to a sudden change in the weather. Nevertheless, the Indians didn't leave gradually, but suddenly because they left behind a treasure trove of artifacts including tools and pottery that would have typically travelled with them.

Lava Canyon

November 28, 2024 · Watercolor on paper, 12 × 16 in

*Clouds strip cliffs of color revealing naked
muscle hard rock glistening in rain
light strikes and parts the clouds restoring color to the camouflage here
to maintain.*

FROM THE LETTER

After five days of drifting, we have come 66 miles down river. It's our first overcast and rainy day, but that's not to say that even overcast days in the Grand Canyon aren't epic. This painting shows the sky at around 12 noon. We are just downstream from where the Little Colorado empties into the Colorado River, which instantly changed our water clarity from clear to muddy due to the enormous volume of sediment brought into the river by the Little Colorado.

We pass through a gateway of dark massive cliffs cast in muted grays beneath a turbulent sky with some hint of a brighter day beyond.





Zoroaster Camp Nightfall

December 6, 2024 · Watercolor on paper, 12 × 16 in

*Night grows from cracks up canyon walls and day-
-light climbs clinging to rim rock dancing on
water before the mistress of night lays
her pale white light upon a dark stillness.*

FROM THE LETTER

The days have started to get noticeably shorter at an increasing rate because we are around one mile down camping in a steep v-shaped canyon where sunlight arrives late and leaves early. Major Powell recorded his observations in this area of the canyon on his first trip through, on August 14, 1869, as follows:

“The gorge is black and narrow below, red and gray and flaring above, with crags and angular projections on the walls. Down in these grand gloomy depths we glide, ever listening, ever watching.”

It was similar for us as it was for the Powell Expedition, gloomy depths that are grand.

Above Eighty-three Mile Rapids

December 26, 2024 · Watercolor on paper, 12 × 16 in

*In the right light a castle can be seen
Carved by erosion from the canyon's rim-
-rock but before retiring the queen
Will call the night before her light will dim.*

FROM THE LETTER

We are continuing to float through the v-shaped canyon, but besides the grand gloominess of it all, which Major Powell reported in 1869, we are also noticing some unique and spectacular rock formations in the canyon walls, which Major Powell does not mention in his report. At this point in their journey, his expedition had lost boats and supplies and the men were on the verge of mutiny. Their gloomy condition may have influenced Major Powell's reporting to the extent that beautiful features of the canyon were overlooked, such as the mid-afternoon view from 83-mile Rapids that is captured in my attached painting.





Cremation Creek

January 4, 2025 · Watercolor on paper, 12 × 16 in

*Could faces on the canyon wall of rock
Be looking at us wondering if we
Are looking back at them while we take stock
Of UFO's wherever they may be.*

FROM THE LETTER

We are continuing to float through the v-shaped canyon. In his report, Major Powell mentions crags on the canyon walls but does not elaborate on them. I found the crags intriguing and have attached a painting of one of them.

Garnet Canyon

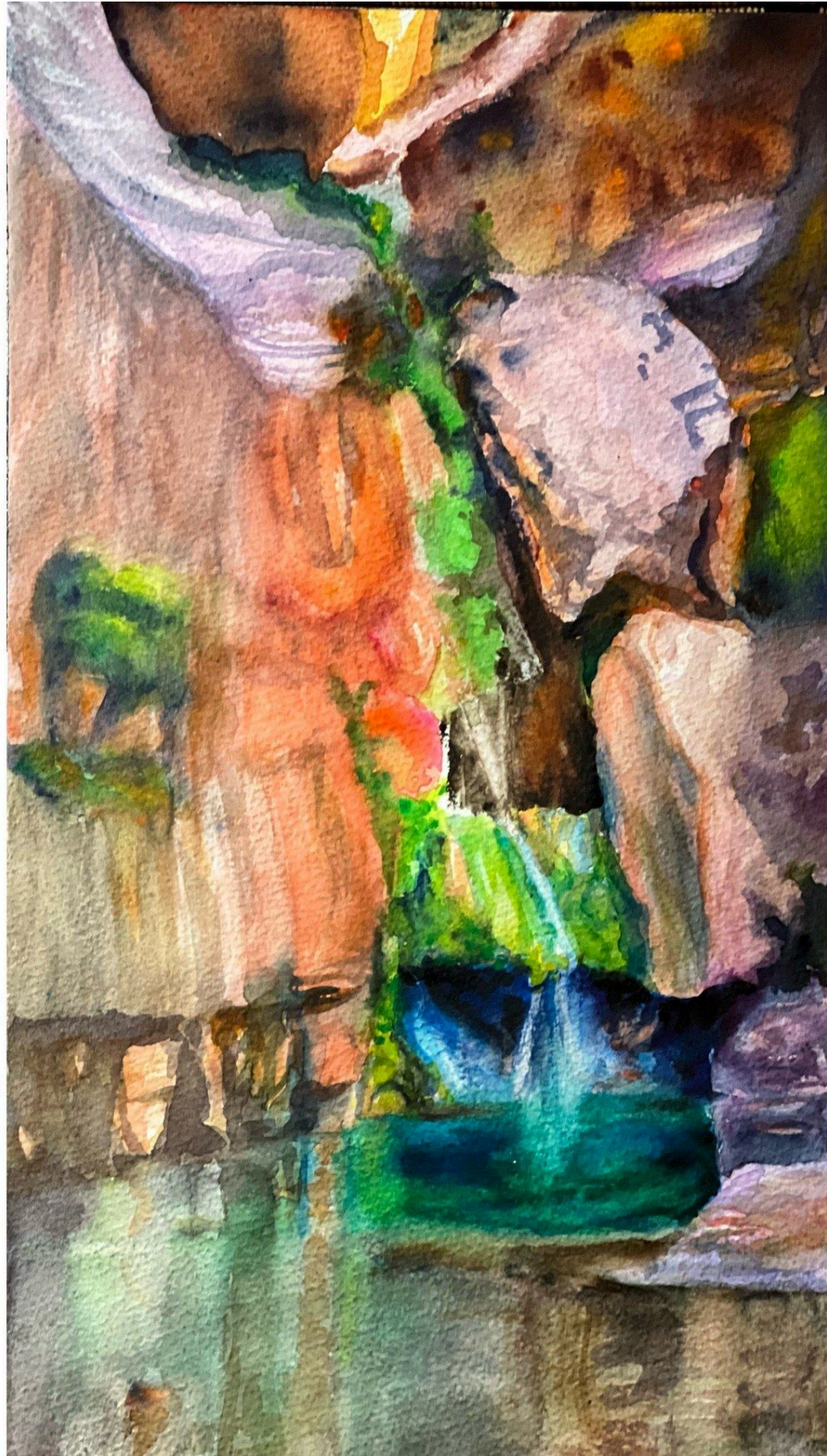
January 20, 2025 · Watercolor on paper, 12 × 16 in

*Adrift upon the river I pass half-
a billion year old cliffs like old cracked skin
stigmatic fissures long before the calf
of gold and countless wounds a sacred whim.*

FROM THE LETTER

I prefer the watercolor medium for landscape paintings because it comes closest to mimicking the process of creation that takes place in what is seen in nature. For example, most of what you see in the attached painting is nature's use of water to deposit thin layers of color over a substrate similar to a watercolor. However, the difference is that calcium carbonate has been dissolved from limestone by slightly acidic groundwater and deposited in thin layers over 525 million year old rust colored sandstone to create a thin veneer of luminous travertine. This painting pays homage to nature's landscape creations using water.





Elves Chasm

August 5, 2025 · Watercolor on paper, 9¼ × 16 in

*We are the hidden people here within
The rocks peering out from the shadows by
Daylight and dancing in the moonlight in
Behind the waterfalls you may see our eyes.*

FROM THE LETTER

After a six month hiatus, we are continuing our virtual float down the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon. As we drift deeper into the canyon's rock strata the side canyons appear taller and narrower, and more dramatic spatially. Jewel like, Elves Chasm is a short hike from the Colorado River and a beautiful swimming hole with crystal clear cold water for escaping the heat of the day.

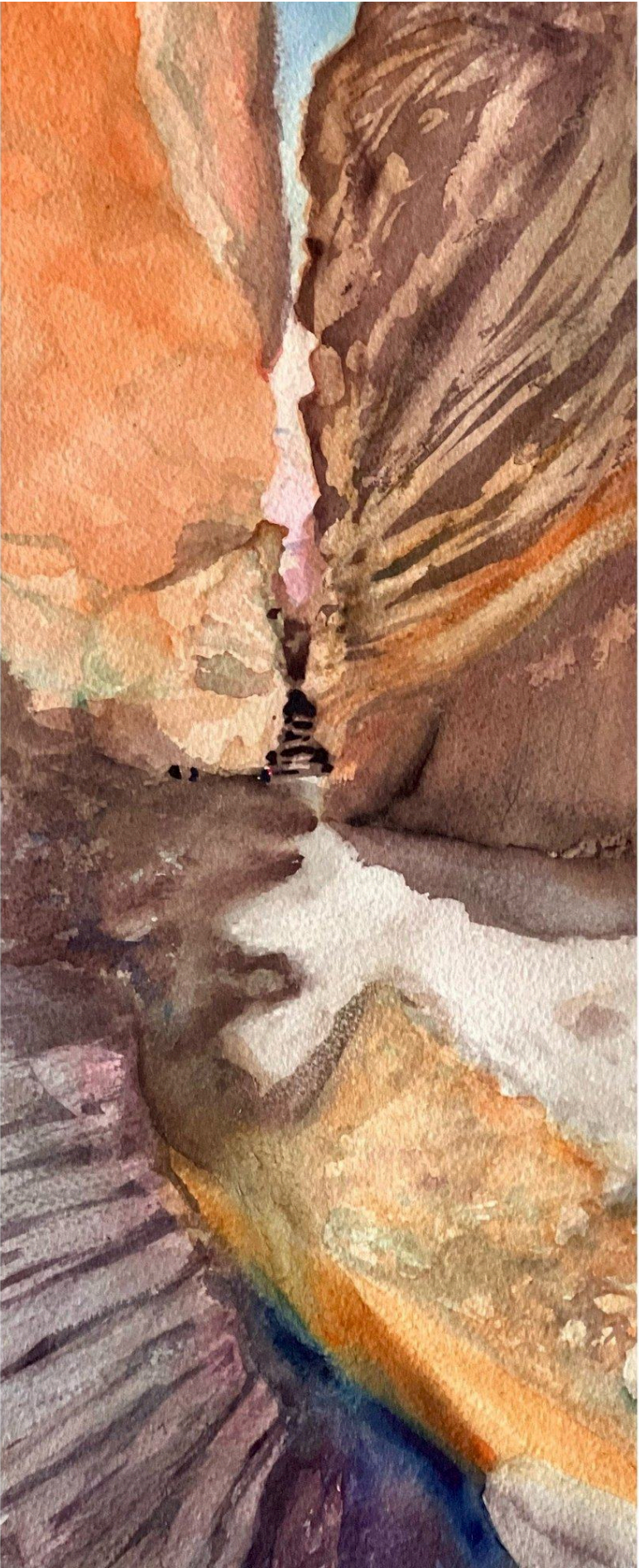
Blacktail Canyon

August 28, 2025 · Watercolor on paper, 6¾ × 16 in

*The journey starts at 2 billion years
Each step travels one hundred million less
46 steps brings us to where we’re here
Stooping I clip the tip off my toenail
The whole of human existence entailed.*

FROM THE LETTER

We’ve travelled 120 miles down the Colorado river through the Grand Canyon from Lees Ferry and have arrived at the enigmatic Blacktail Canyon that envelops us in serene splendor. Our guide strums a guitar and sings in a space well known for its acoustics. We mill around looking at two billion year old rock in silent humility like opening day at an art exhibit.





Below 133 Mile Creek

October 28, 2025 · Watercolor on paper, 16 × 6½ in

*Dark rock that swallows light surrounded by
The efflorescence of glorious dust
Creations life and pulse where beauty lies
Within the beast and eyes see but the crust*

FROM THE LETTER

As strife and tension continue to mount among surface dwelling Homo sapiens, let's escape to one mile below all that surface tension to vicariously continue drifting with the Colorado river through the glorious and peaceful Grand Canyon. We have now covered 133 river miles, and have entered the realm of the Vishnu Basement Rock, a hard metamorphic schist, the oldest rock in the canyon at 1,800,000,000 years old, or 40% of the age of the earth.

Granite Narrows

November 23, 2025 · Watercolor on paper, 16 × 12 in

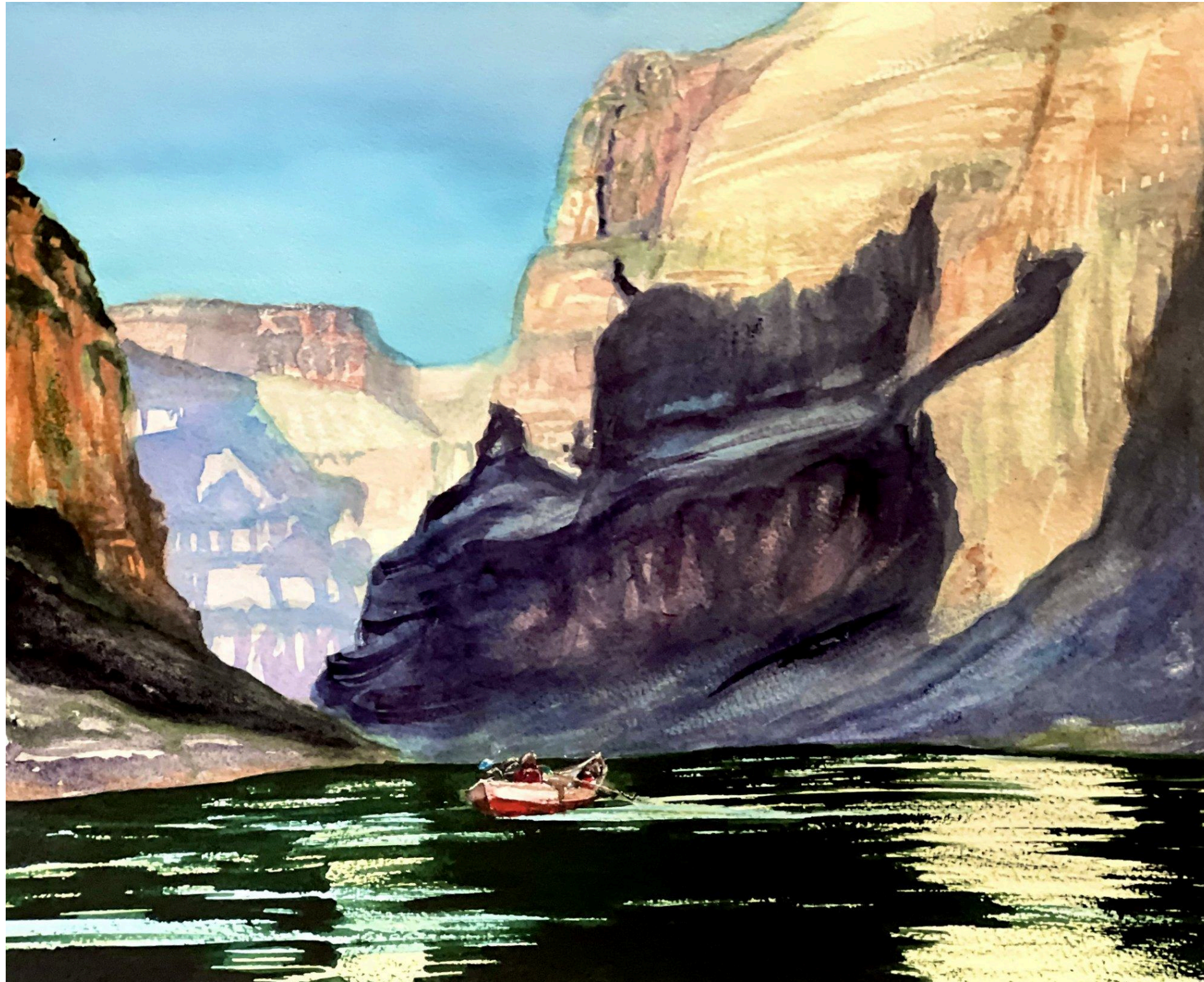
*As an event horizon captures light
So Vishnu cliffs capture the river's arch
Compressed into a channel, currents fight
The maelstrom's sucking decent into the dark.*

FROM THE LETTER

The Vishnu Basement rock squeezes the Colorado River down through a steep vee-shaped canyon into its narrowest channel that measures 3 or 4 dory lengths between the canyon walls depending upon the water level. Moreover, in the latter half of October, it becomes cold in this area of constant shadows cast by the cliffs. Ghost like, the currents are known for shifting suddenly here in strange and unpredictable ways.

By now, I had been on several extended guided river trips in the West, and it had always amazed me how they had self- organize into efficient tribes with each individual filling several niches where they could contribute to the whole. This trip was very similar. However, it was during COVID, so we all spent the first 2 days masked. When no one showed any symptoms, the masks came off, and we went about forming our COVID bubble tribe. Since, no one brought their paints and brushes, I graciously filled the dual niches of tribal painter and poet leading impromptu watercolor painting classes by day and writing poetry for the campfire at night. Life was good, if only the river could have been longer.





Above Mohawk Creek

January 3, 2026 · Watercolor on paper, 12 × 14¾ in

*Some breakaway shadows shapeshift to life
Off of their canyon walls that even Great
Ulysses would doubt his eyes running rife
Without sleep would wonder about his fate.*

FROM THE LETTER

Among my New Year's resolutions is to complete my Grand Canyon Series of watercolor paintings. Therefore, I am beginning 2026 with my first offering of the new year, 'Above Mohawk Creek'. This watercolor features a natural phenomenon I believe none of the explorers in history would consider to qualify as a legitimate discovery and would certainly not want to be remembered by it. Even Homer would undoubtedly have omitted it from the 'Iliad and the Odyssey' although it would certainly have been much more believable than the creatures Homer has Ulysses encounter on his voyage. However, as an artist I am not saddled with the burden of an explorer trying to make it into a history book but free to document my journey through life as I see it unfold. Have a look through my eyes,

Deer Creek Narrows

April 2, 2026 · Watercolor on paper, 12 × 16 in

The Narrows

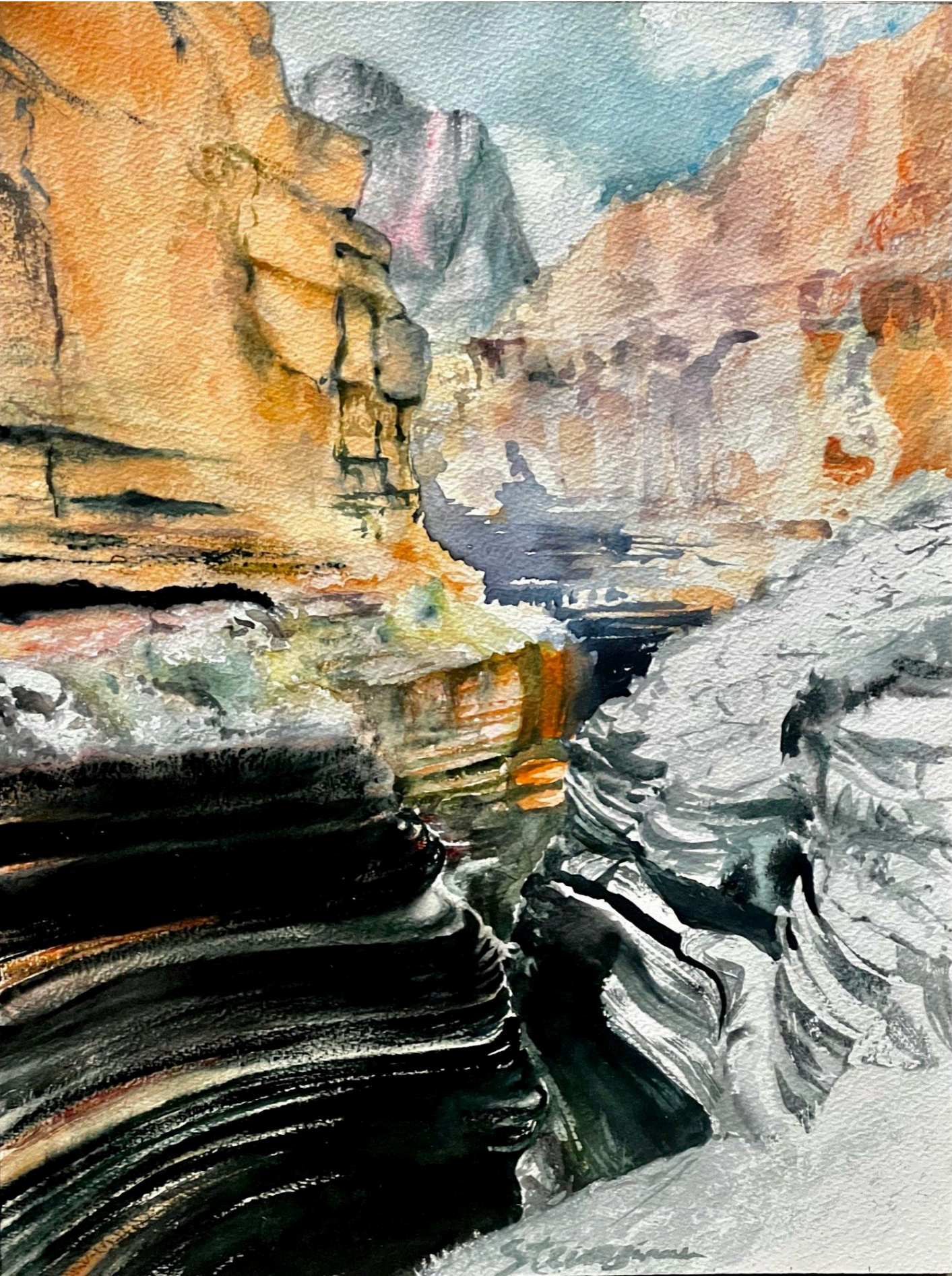
*Would you believe me if I told you here
Is where the ancients came from? You might say
Well, that may be, but before this here place Deer
Creek, Eden was where they all lost their way.*

FROM THE LETTER

We are back in the Grand Canyon 136 miles down river from Lee’s Ferry. We are preparing to enter a slot canyon sacred to four of the six major tribes that occupied the Grand Canyon. Moreover, two of those tribes believe the Narrows to be a spiritual gateway through which the spirits of their ancestors journey and leads to where their people came from.

The mouth of Deer Creek is a 150 foot waterfall that plunges directly into the river. The hike into the Narrows begins on a stone trail of switchbacks ascending to a protruding shelf that follows a sedimentary layer starting about 50 feet above the creek. Hiking at creek level is forbidden, reserved for the spirits. Nevertheless, we will be paralleling the journey of the spirits from above to reach their origin.

Unfortunately, I regret leaving you at this cliff hanger. Deer Creek Narrows is a spiritual journey that needs more than a single painting. This miniseries will continue with two additional painting installments before we reach the origin of creation. So, ... stay tuned.





Handprints in Stone

May 8, 2026 · Watercolor on paper, 12 × 16 in

*Beyond the handprints that say hi
I see a universe in sparkling dust
Appear within the rock with hands that vie
To touch the spirits of us passers-by.*

FROM THE LETTER

We are on a ledge that serves as the trail to hike into the Deer Creek Narrows where the location of the origin story starts for two of the main tribes that occupied the Grand Canyon. Along the trail on the rock wall beneath an overhanging rock ledge just above eye level are handprints estimated to be 1200 years old. They are petrographs in the form of inverted handprints made by spraying a mouth full of minerals across a hand placed on the rock.

I have a fascination for Stone Age art because of its age, simplicity, and what it says about the artist and the tribe. I painted the handprints on the rock wall to feel what the artist may have felt when creating it. In the process, I noticed how significant the cracks in the rock around the three handprints are to the composition. The artist positioned the last knuckle of each index finger of each of the handprints directly on a crack that runs through them all. In this way, the artist guides the viewer's eyes counterclockwise along the cracks in the rock from a partial handprint to a complete but flat one to one that feels like it is emerging from the rock wall evoking a sense of the third dimension.

Deer Creek Patio

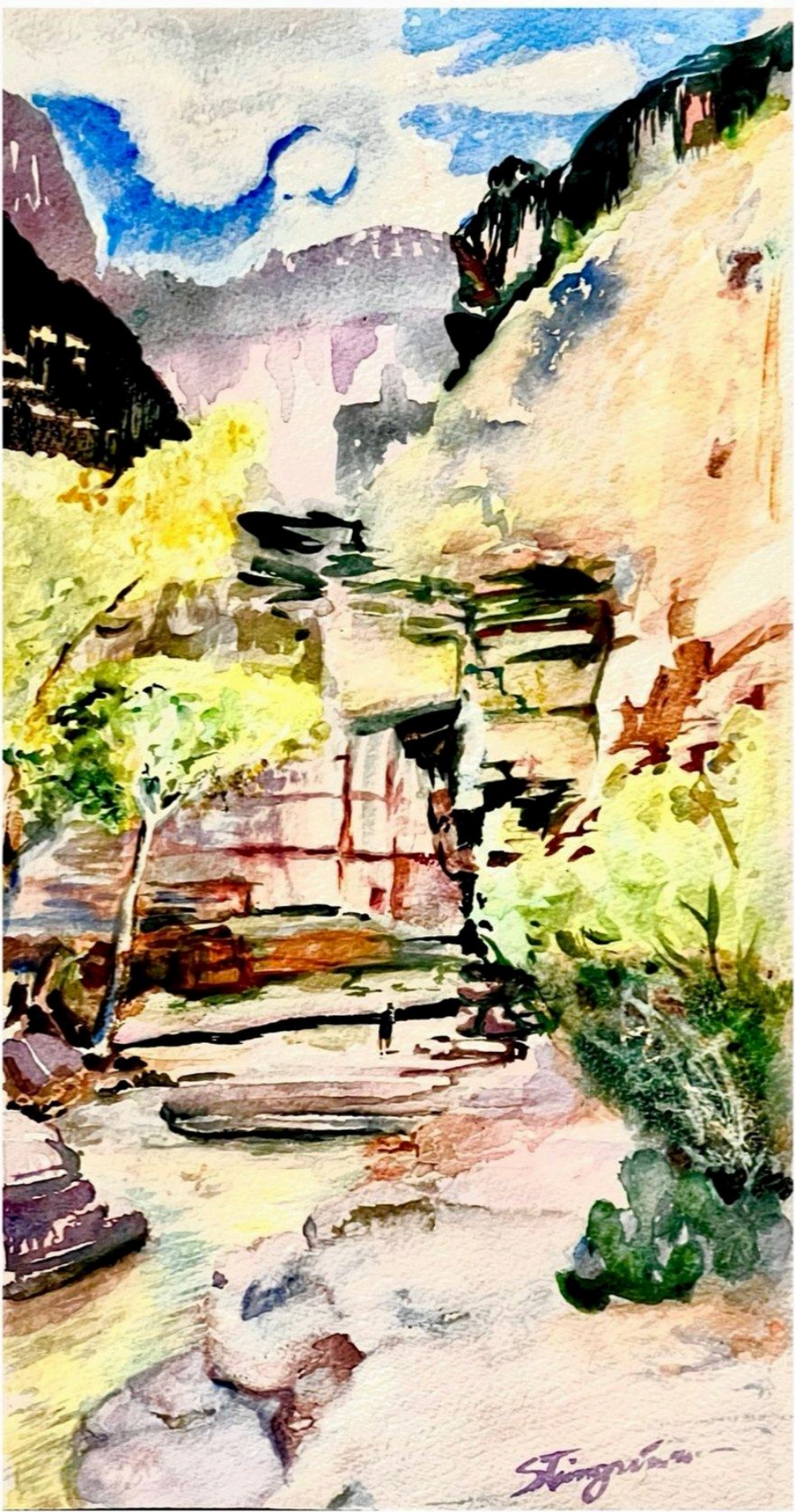
September 28, 2026 · Watercolor

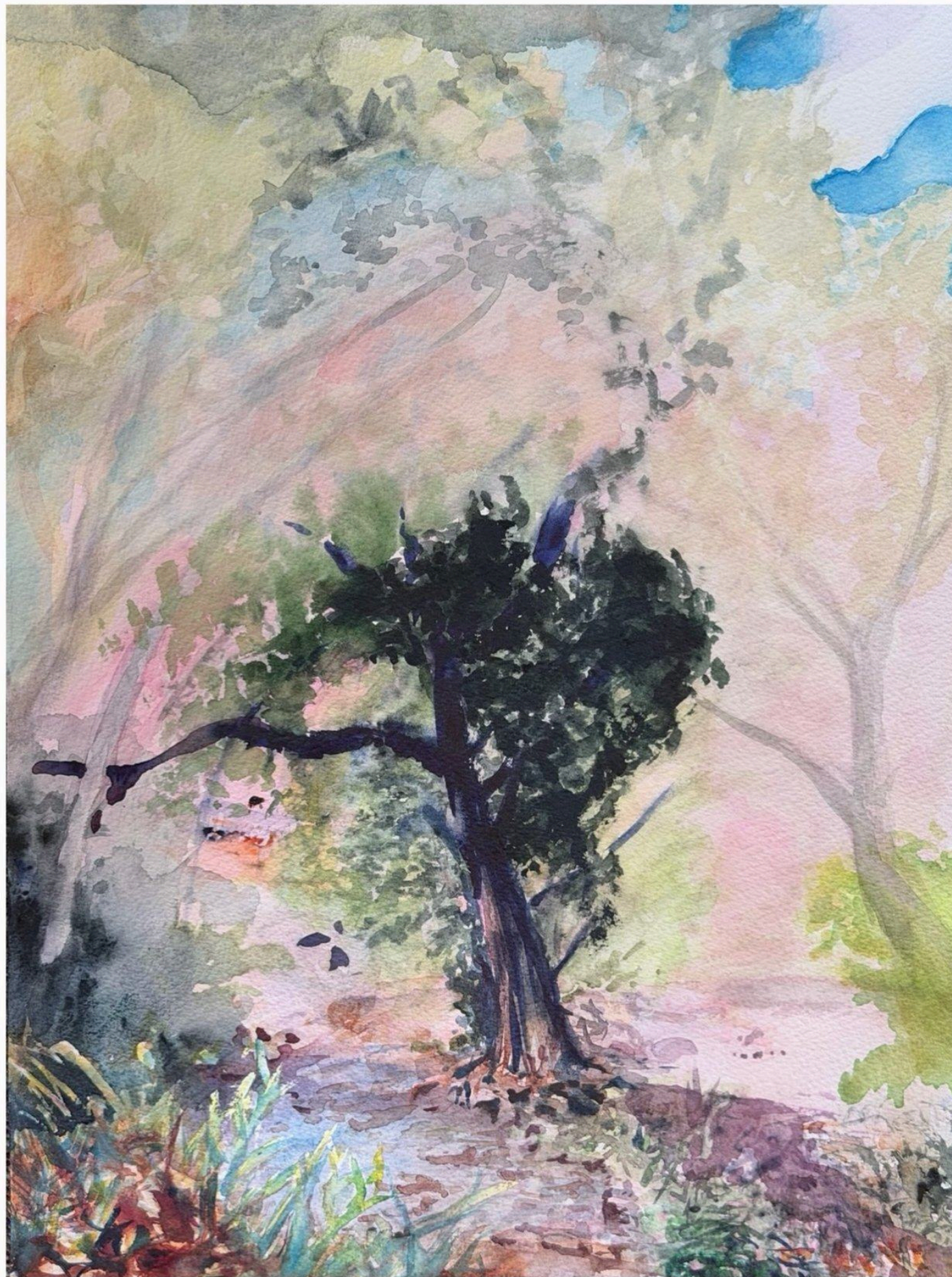
FROM THE LETTER

I would like to catch up after my summer hiatus from my Grand Canyon Suite of paintings with two new paints: Deer Creek Patio, and Tree of Life, which are included with this email.

The Deer Creek trail ends in a beautiful oasis known as the Patio with a stream that meanders through its center and cascades down into the realm of the ancestral spirits located below the level of the Patio, which is sacred for those two tribes whose origin stories begin here. I continued to follow the stream past a couple of small waterfalls up into a wild garden with pink earth and springs that were the source of water for the stream. I sat beside a tree and dipped my paintbrush into the spring at its base to paint the view of where I had come from. I have also included a painting of the tree.

I have included all the Deer Creek Narrows paints here since they are a series that should be views together along with a verse.





Tree of Life

September 28, 2026 · Watercolor

Sonnet 260927

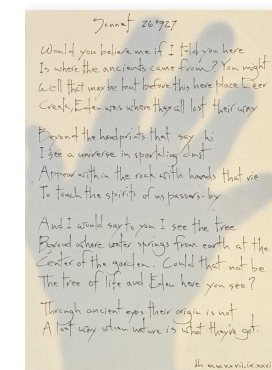
*Would you believe me if I told you here
Is where the ancients came from? You might say
Well that may be but before this here place Deer
Creek, Eden was where they all lost their way*

*Beyond the handprints that say hi
I see a universe in sparkling dust
Appear within the rock with hands that vie
To touch the spirits of us passers-by*

*And I would say to you I see the tree
Beyond where water springs from earth at the
Center of the garden. Could that not be
The tree of life and Eden here you see?*

*Through ancient eyes their origin is not
A lost way when nature is what they've got.*

jh mmxxvi.ix.xxvii (September 27, 2026)



The sonnet as John wrote it out.

II

Fagradalsfjall Volcano

*Hikes to the eruption on Iceland's Reykjanes
peninsula: the crater under the midnight
sun, fissures still glowing beneath a
sharkskin crust, and the trolls the sunlight
turned to stone.*

28 WORKS



Fagradalsfjall Volcano

August 13, 2021 · Watercolor

*The efflorescence of glorious dust,
Creation's life and pulse where beauty lies
Within the beast and eyes see what they must
I linger here for you, creation's guise. -jh*

Fagradalsfjall
Volcano II

August 29, 2021 · Watercolor, 10 × 14 in





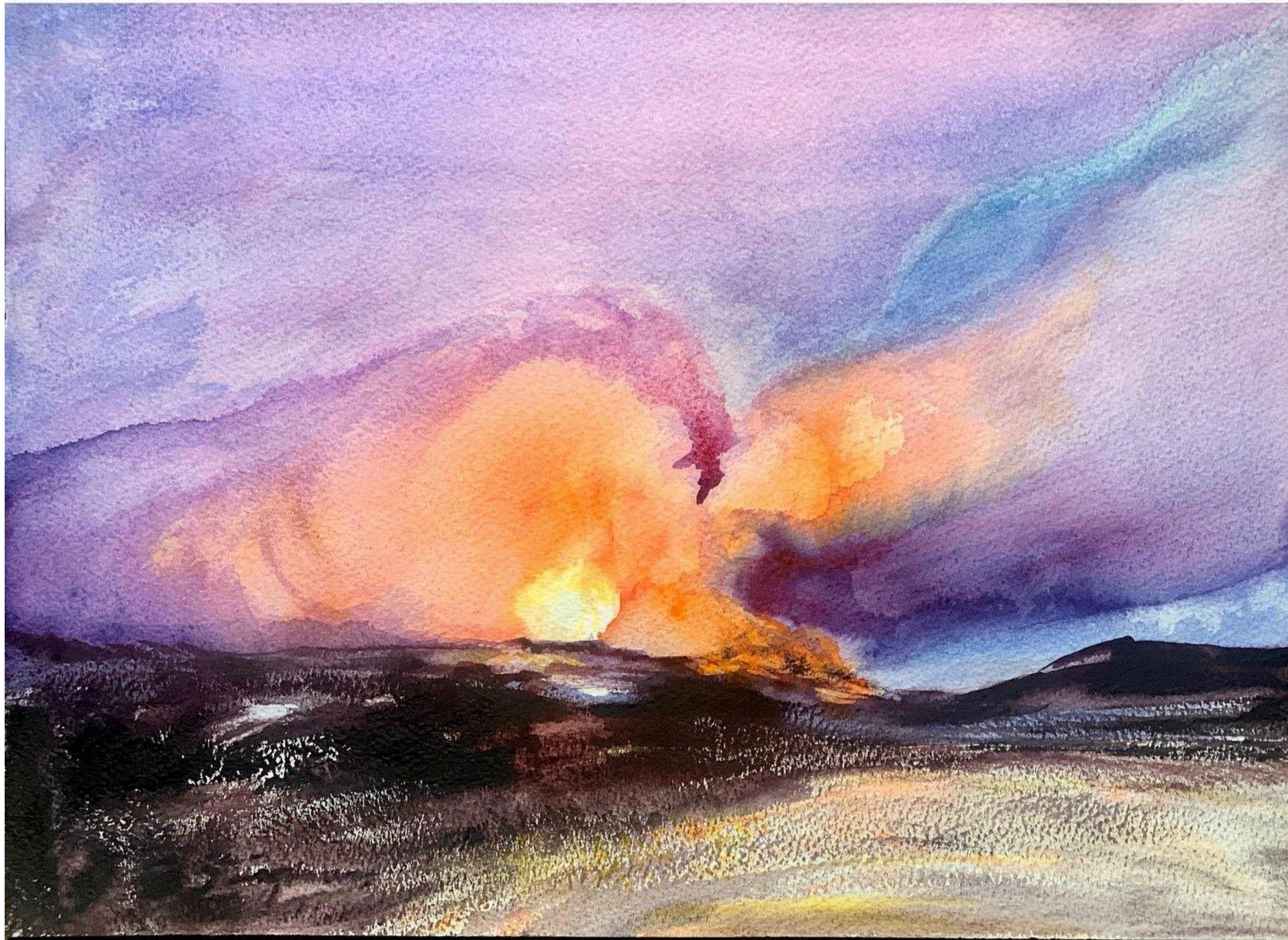
Fagradalsfjall Volcano III

September 17, 2021 · Watercolor on paper,
25 × 35 cm

Fagradalsfjall
Volcano IV

September 25, 2021 · Watercolor





Fagradalsfjall Volcano V

October 2, 2021 · Watercolor

Fagradalsfjall
Volcano VI

October 14, 2021 · Watercolor





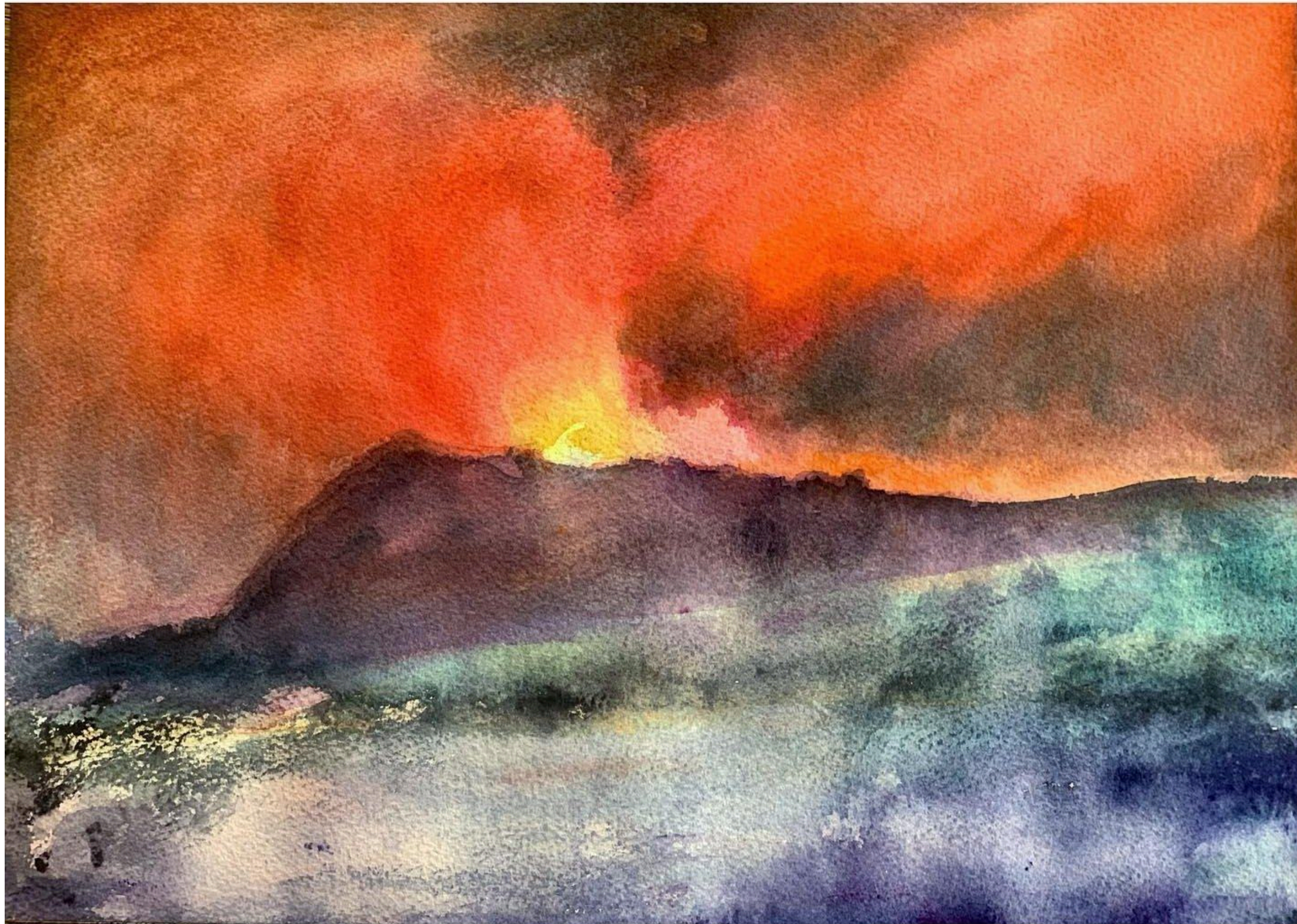
Fagradalsfjall Volcano VII

October 20, 2021 · Watercolor

Fagradalsfjall
Volcano VIII

October 25, 2021 · Watercolor





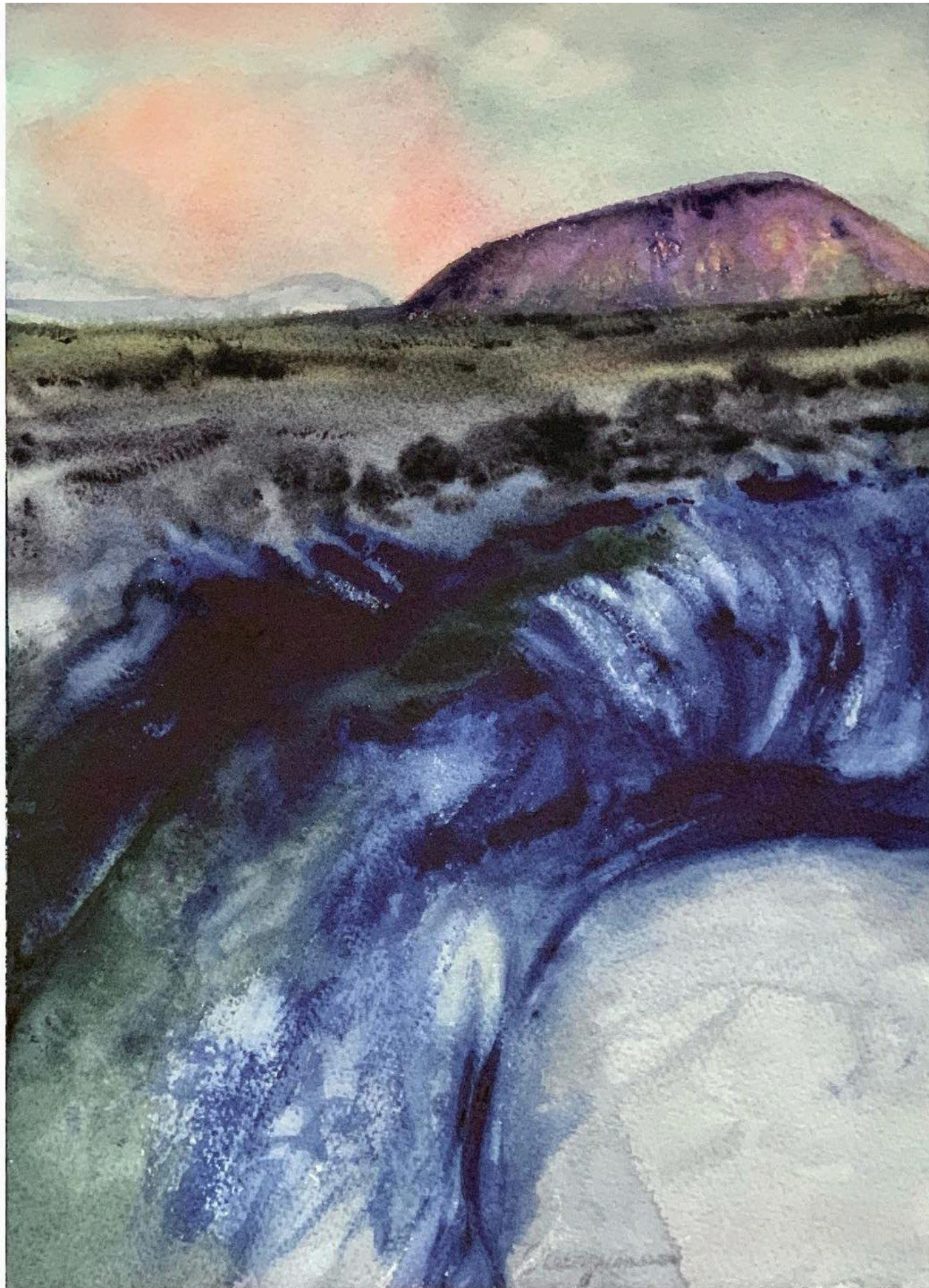
Fagradalsfjall
Volcano IX

October 31, 2021 · Watercolor

Fagradalsfjall
Volcano X

November 16, 2021 · Watercolor





Fagradalsfjall Volcano XI

November 28, 2021 · Watercolor

Fagradalsfjall Volcano XII

December 1, 2021 · Watercolor on paper, 25 × 35 cm

Fire and Ice

*Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say ice,
From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire,
But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To know that for destruction ice
Is also great,
And would suffice.*

Robert Frost, 1920





Fagradalsfjall Volcano XIII, New Earth

December 7, 2021 · Watercolor on paper, 25 × 35 cm

*...living where life was never yet dreamed of, nor hinted at
here, in the other world, still terrestrial
myself, the same as before, yet unaccountably new.*

D. H. Lawrence, "New Heaven and Earth," 1917

Fagradalsfjall Volcano XIV, Midnight Sun

December 18, 2021 · Watercolor on paper, 25 × 35 cm

FROM THE LETTER

When I hiked three out of four times to the Fagradalsfjall volcano that was not erupting, I became aware of a subtle beauty unfolding before me. July is a time of the midnight sun in Iceland. It's eternal sunset crouches on the horizon like a fat cat with nowhere to go. Claw-like shadows rake the earth and a glaring yellow-orange cat eye like sun renders time motionless. ' Fagradalsfjall Volcano XIV, Midnight Sun ' is one of those beautiful motionless moments under the midnight sun in Iceland.





Fagradalsfjall Volcano XV, Midnight Sun

January 6, 2022 · Watercolor

FROM THE LETTER

Dark Icelandic winters are not only a time of holiday merriment and the welcoming of the New Year, but also a time when trolls descend from caves in the highlands down to populated areas to indulge in their own kind of merriment, which includes harassing and playing tricks on people. This is because according to Icelandic folklore, trolls flourish in the darkness, but turn to stone in sunlight. For more than two weeks, Iceland has been tilting towards the sun and emerging from the darkness into the light of longer days, and of course, the ultimate antidote against troublesome trolls is the glorious midnight sun.

Can you see the troll rock in the foreground? The head of the troll became a stone when it was exposed to sunlight. An expression of forlorn surprise bears witness to the moment when the troll saw the light.

Fagradalsfjall Volcano XVI, Midnight Sun

January 16, 2022 · Watercolor on paper, 25 × 35 cm

FROM THE LETTER

Icelandic trolls are mischievous and can be quite clever, but according to folklore, they are not very smart. In the painting, a female troll is turned to stone when a youngster lured his mother into sunlight as a prank with his false calls for help. The troll boy can be seen crouching in the shadow of a rock on the left. To his surprise, the all seeing eye of the midnight sun, on its circumnavigational path, eventually found him and also turned him to stone.





Fagradalsfjall Volcano XVII, New Earth

February 12, 2022 · Watercolor

FROM THE LETTER

A gaseous malaise would have completely smothered us in toxic gases if we were not careful to approach the volcano from upwind. We landed in Keplavik in the morning and were hiking to the volcano by late afternoon. As it turned out, we were smothered in fresh air in the form of a heavy fog that swept in from the ocean and caught us ascending a ridge about half-way to the volcano. But spirits were high. One of us strummed on a ukulele and sang a song in the fog and howling wind. We hiked back to our vehicles to return a few days later.

Fagradalsfjall Volcano XVIII, Receding Fog

February 18, 2022 · Watercolor

FROM THE LETTER

A receding fog unveils a masterwork in progress. After being repelled by fog on our first attempt, we made it to the volcano on our second attempt and stood in awe before the eruption. Soon after that, the eruption stopped. It would be our last hike to the volcano as a group. I continued to hike to the volcano and made two solo trips up through the valley to ascend the ridge and follow the midnight sun's rays through fog and rising gases to the birthplace of new earth.





Fagradalsfjall Volcano XIX, Crater

March 14, 2022 · Watercolor

FROM THE LETTER

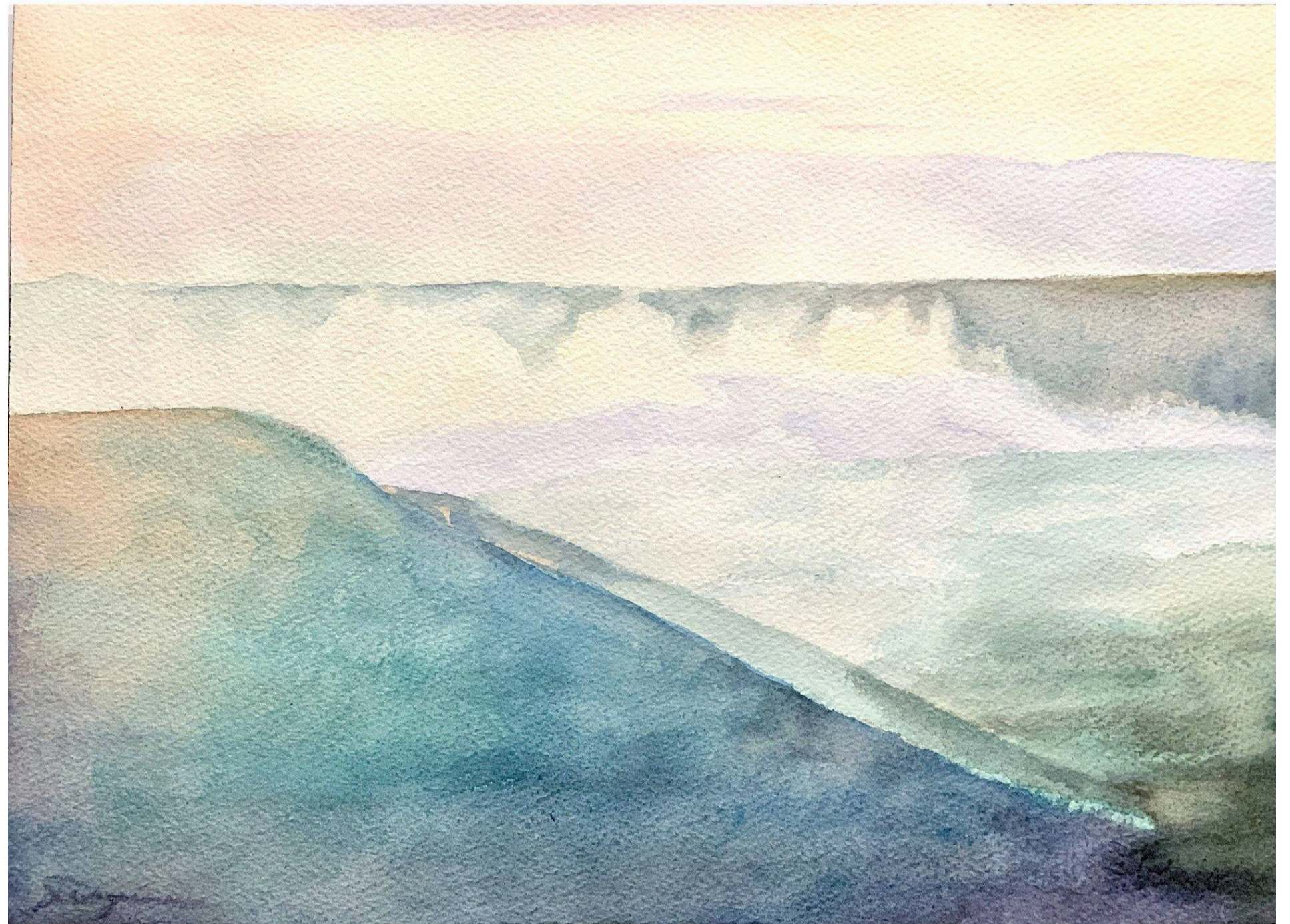
Deity like, the volcano's crater languishes in a postpartum blues of toxic gases while basking in a halo of radiant glory under the midnight sun. The volcano had stopped erupting. My last two hikes were made solo to see what I may have missed while my attention was focused on the spectacle of an eruption. It was on these solo hikes that I saw more clearly to the beauty of stark landscape compositions of light, space, and earth.

Fagradalsfjall Volcano XX, Crater

April 3, 2022 · Watercolor

FROM THE LETTER

With the air refracting the midnight sun a gaseous mist rises from the volcano's crater and swirls about in an effulgence of eruptive and glowing light that spreads and mixes in the wind. It becomes an air painting.





Fagradalsfjall Volcano XXI, Crater

April 10, 2022 · Watercolor

FROM THE LETTER

After 6,000 years, roused from the depths of slumber on a fiery couch, Gaia takes leave to rest within a toxic veil of hot gases – perhaps for another 6,000 years.

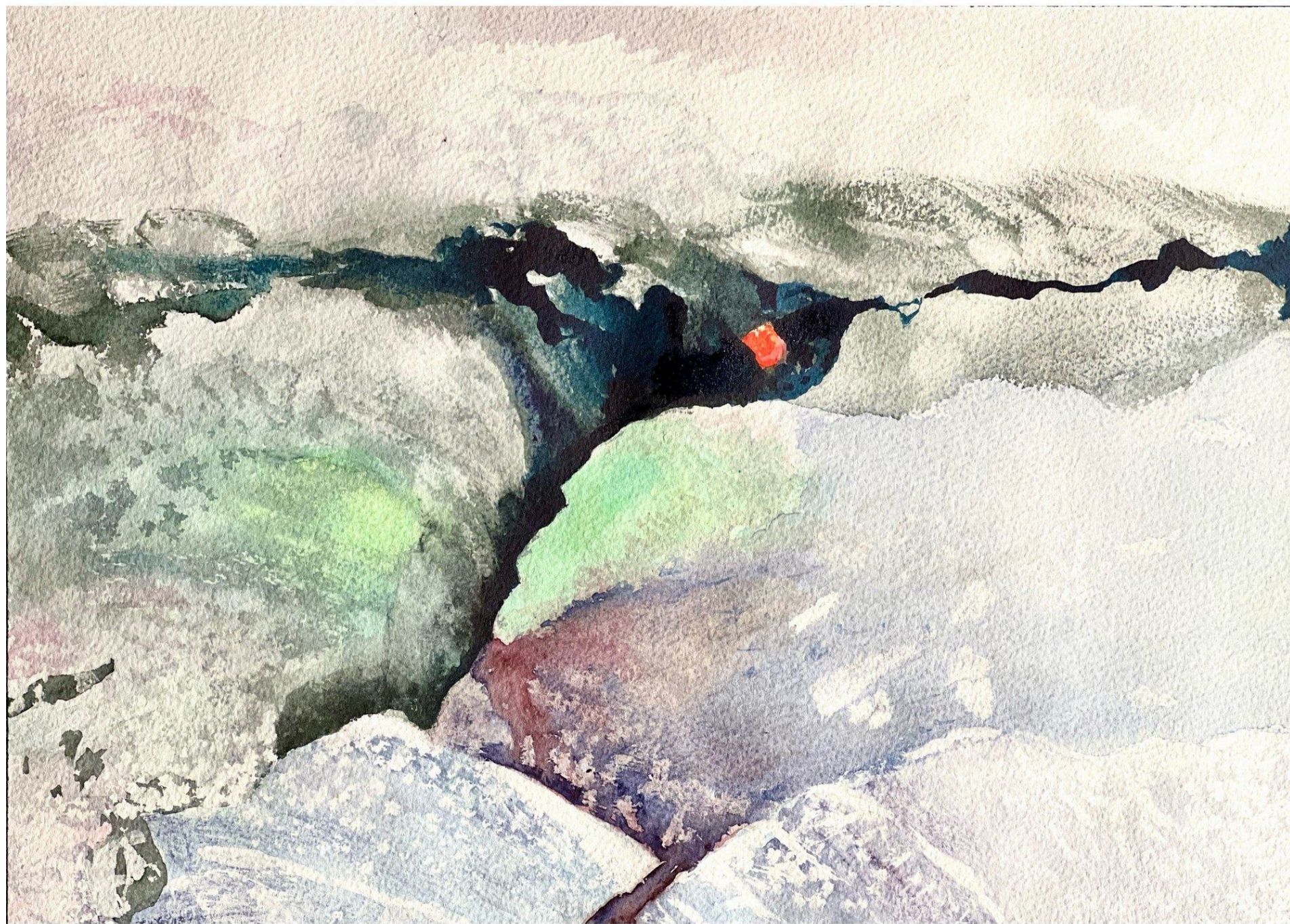
Fagradalsfjall Volcano XXII

May 28, 2022 · Watercolor

FROM THE LETTER

Overlooking the crater after the eruption has ceased, a troll dog and his troll master are immortalized in stone as they stare north for eternity into the midnight sun at midnight. At this moment, people are on top enjoying the view.





Fagradalsfjall Volcano XXIII, Fissure

June 21, 2022 · Watercolor

FROM THE LETTER

I felt that I made an intimate connection with the Earth when I stepped onto a field of lava that had recently formed a sharkskin crust covering molten rock two feet down. Flowing like blood through an artery, an intense heat pushed up through my clothes where I lay peering down into a fissure at a bright red spot that looked back at me like a wild animal.

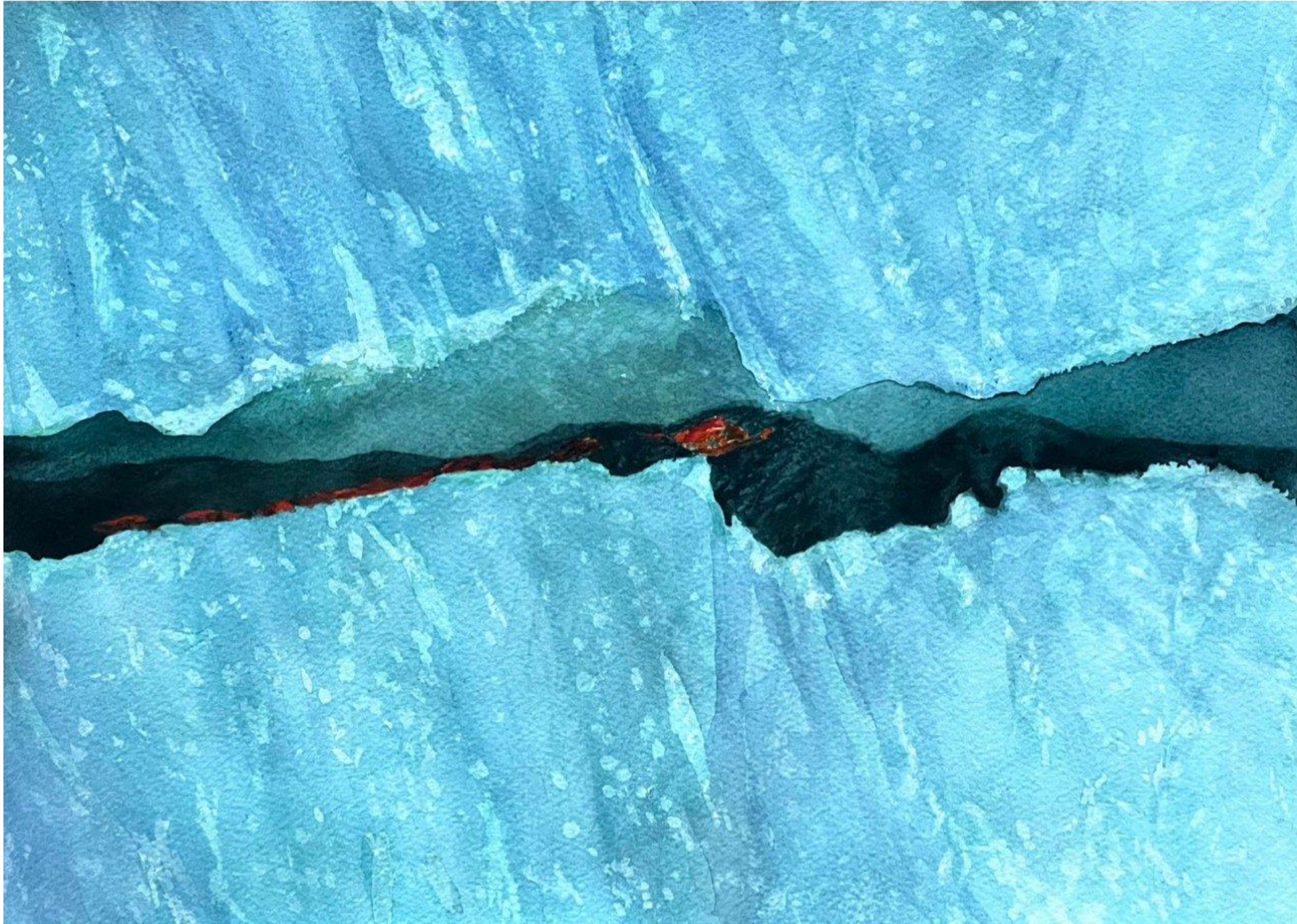
Fagradalsfjall Volcano XXIV, Fissure

July 7, 2022 · Watercolor

FROM THE LETTER

Fissures are like doors left cracked open just enough to tantalize our curious minds to spy upon our neighbors. The world of Hidden People described in Icelandic folk tales are elves that live within rocks in a parallel world to ours only revealing themselves at will. I dropped a marshmallow into this fissure. It burst into flames and briefly illuminated the underworld of the Hidden People, but no elves chose to reveal themselves to me on that day.





Fagradalsfjall Volcano XXV, Fissure

August 2, 2022 · Watercolor

FROM THE LETTER

Rock Dwellers have been know to speak to people in poetry from deep within the earth as in the 14th century Icelandic saga 'The Tale of the Rock Dweller'. The saga is mostly a verse that describes a volcanic eruption that is imminent.

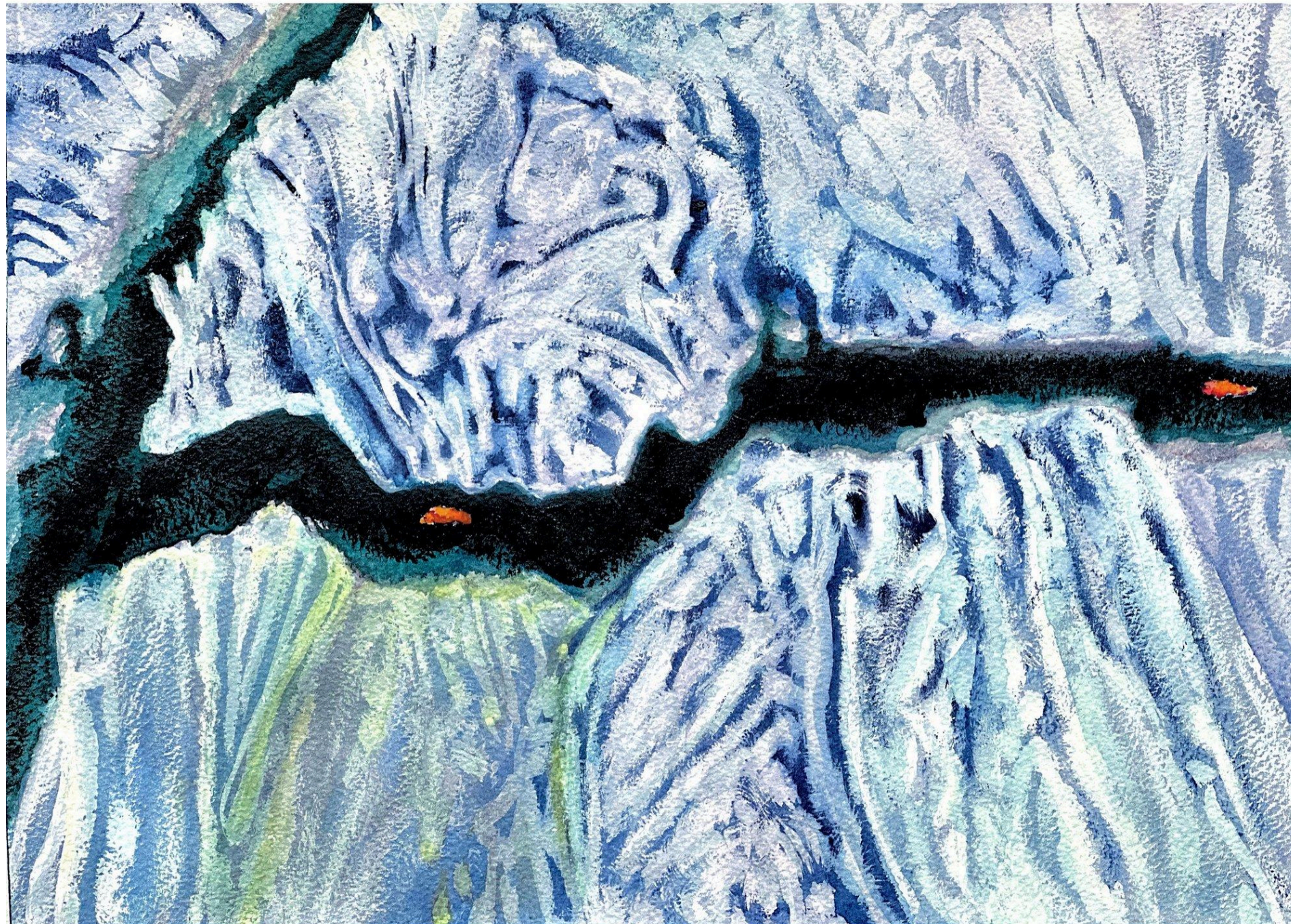
Fagradalsfjall Volcano XXVI, Fissure

August 27, 2022 · Watercolor

FROM THE LETTER

Just in case you don't already know, a new volcanic eruption has taken place, in Iceland, northeast of the Fagradalsfjall volcano. The new eruption has been a spectacular display of red molten lava fountains flowing out to quickly cover the surrounding landscape. But, as suddenly as it started, it stopped. Volcanologists say it is sleeping, which could be for a few days or a few centuries. What is time to a volcano that lives on a geological time scale? In the meantime, I continue to reflect on and paint volcanic fissures. I hope you are finding them as fascinating as I do.





Fagradalsfjall Volcano XXVII, Fissure

September 19, 2022 · Watercolor

FROM THE LETTER

Lava came up from the Earth. The ice cap burst and melted. Water flooded the land. The sky filled with ash, and darkness reigned like the end of time. The Age of Ice had come to an end. Land was born from the elements of creation. This was when the island of Thule was conceived, consecrated, and brought forth by the will of Gaia, to rise from the sea on the crest of a volcano.

—from “Time Frames”, John Hermannsson

Fagradalsfjall Volcano XXVIII, Fissure

December 24, 2022 · Watercolor on paper, 10 × 14 in

FROM THE LETTER

Greetings from the trailing edge of an arctic cold air blast that has just left us mercifully with rising temperatures and cast us into sunshine reflecting on a brilliant white snow covered landscape.

After a two month hiatus, I have attached the last of my Fagradalsfjall Volcano Series paintings to this email, plus two photos, ‘Winter Solstice’ and ‘White Christmas’.

For the new year, I will take you on a very different journey as I turn my attention to the Grand Canyon Suite series of paintings , which will be based on my sketches, photos, and memories of my 2-1/2 weeks in a dory running the rapids of the Colorado river through the Grand Canyon in October.



III

Oregon

*Home ground in Central Oregon: the
Deschutes River canyon through the seasons,
winter on the high desert, and fall at Waldo
Lake.*

31 WORKS



Winter in the High Desert

February 19, 2019 · Watercolor



Winter in the High
Desert, No. 2

March 7, 2019 · Watercolor



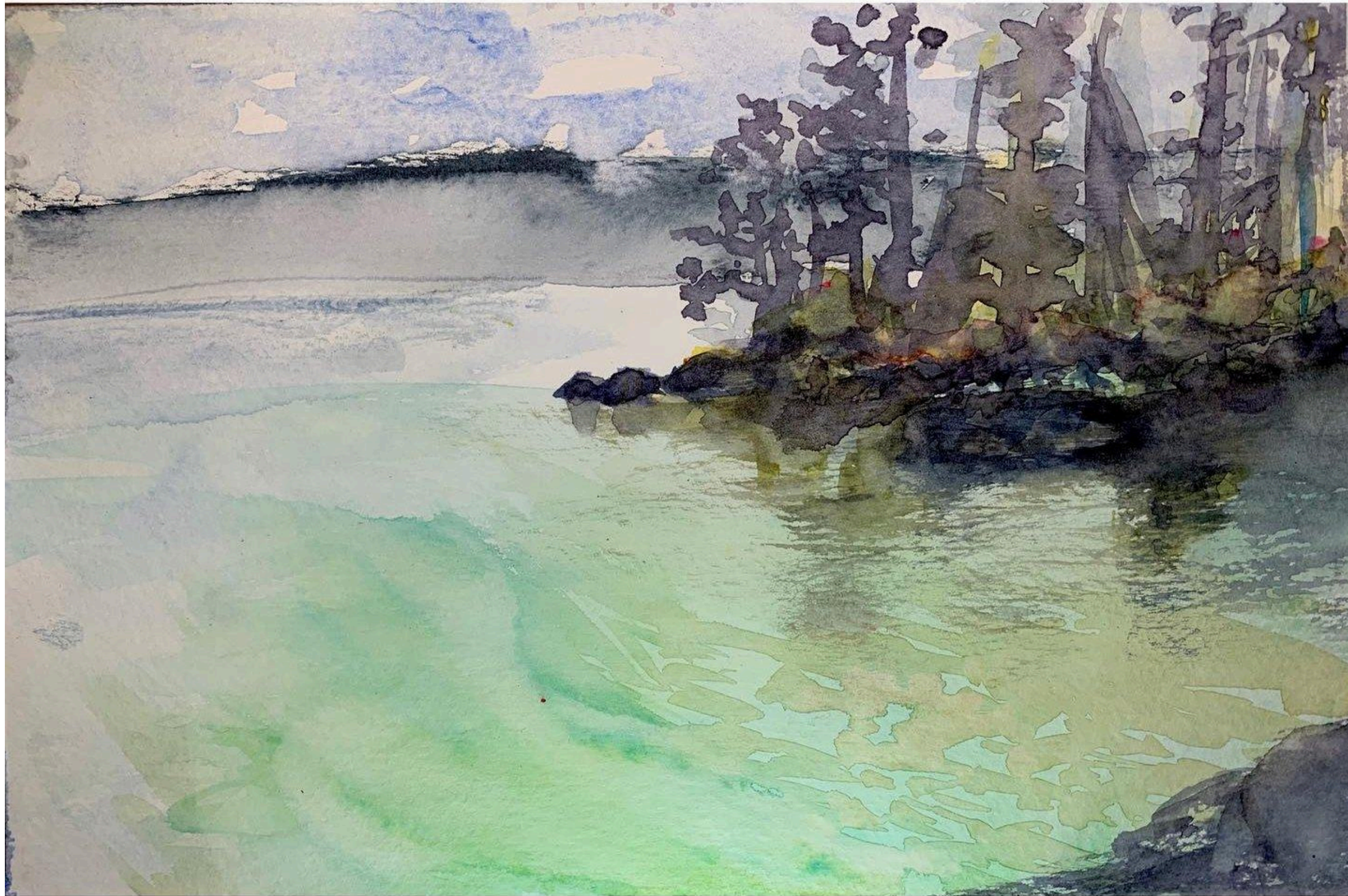
Spring

March 24, 2019 · Watercolor

Spring II

April 8, 2019 · Watercolor





Fall at Waldo Lake I

November 27, 2019 · Watercolor



Fall at Waldo Lake
II

November 27, 2019 · Watercolor



Fall

December 19, 2019 · Watercolor

On the Approach of
Winter

January 15, 2020 · Watercolor





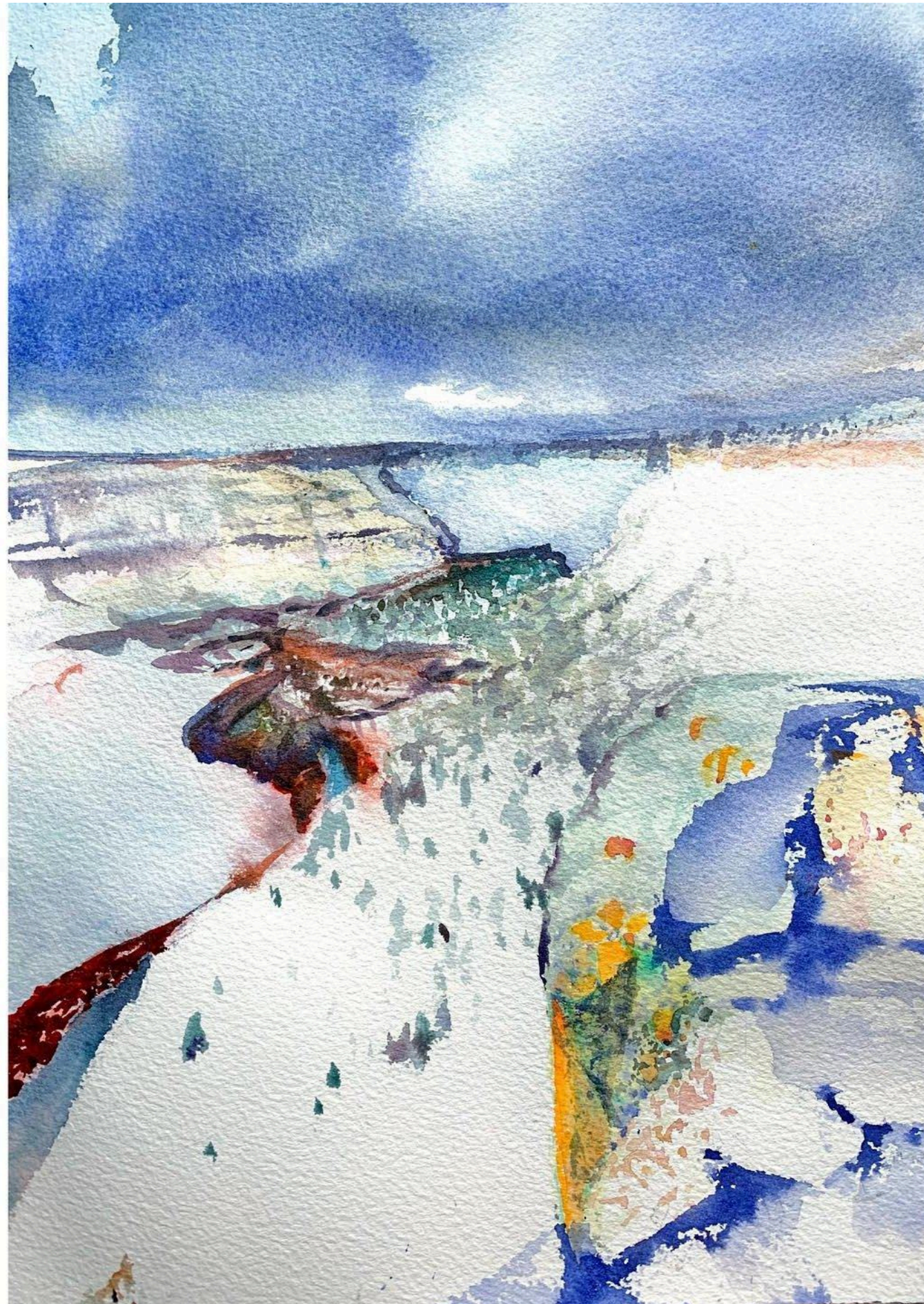
Winter Solstice

January 28, 2020 · Watercolor



Winter on the High
Desert III

February 7, 2020 · Watercolor

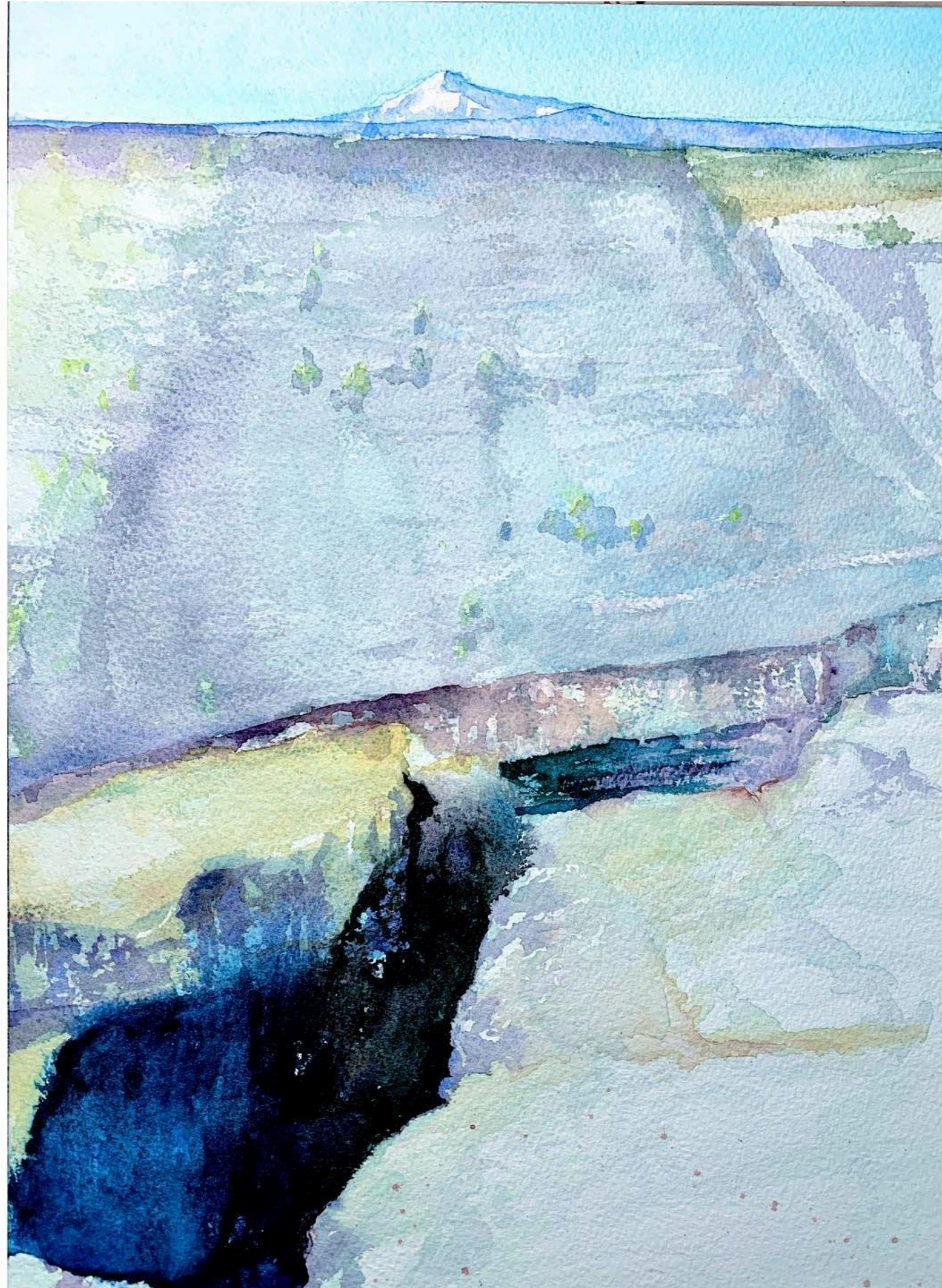


Winter on the High Desert IV

February 20, 2020 · Watercolor

Winter on the High Desert V

March 4, 2020 · Watercolor





Passage

April 6, 2020 · Watercolor

This Side of Spring

April 18, 2020 · Watercolor





Earth Day

April 28, 2020 · Watercolor

Earth Day

*If you would ask I'd say Earth Day was as
Callooh callay a Jabberwock like day
Because I saw it through the looking glass
A Bandersnatch! and painted it that way*

*I took my brush in hand and rested by
The Junjun tree and sat awhile cadooked
Then as in beauformish vanderment high
The Jabberwock with big bright eyes padooked
And flooked on by chasing a Jubjub bird*

*But 'twas the regal Bandersnatch that made
My day appearing in frumious clouds
Cavorting mimsy gimble in the wabe.
The call of the Jubjub bird echoed loud.*

*'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves did wabe:
All mimsy were the borogroves outgrabe.*

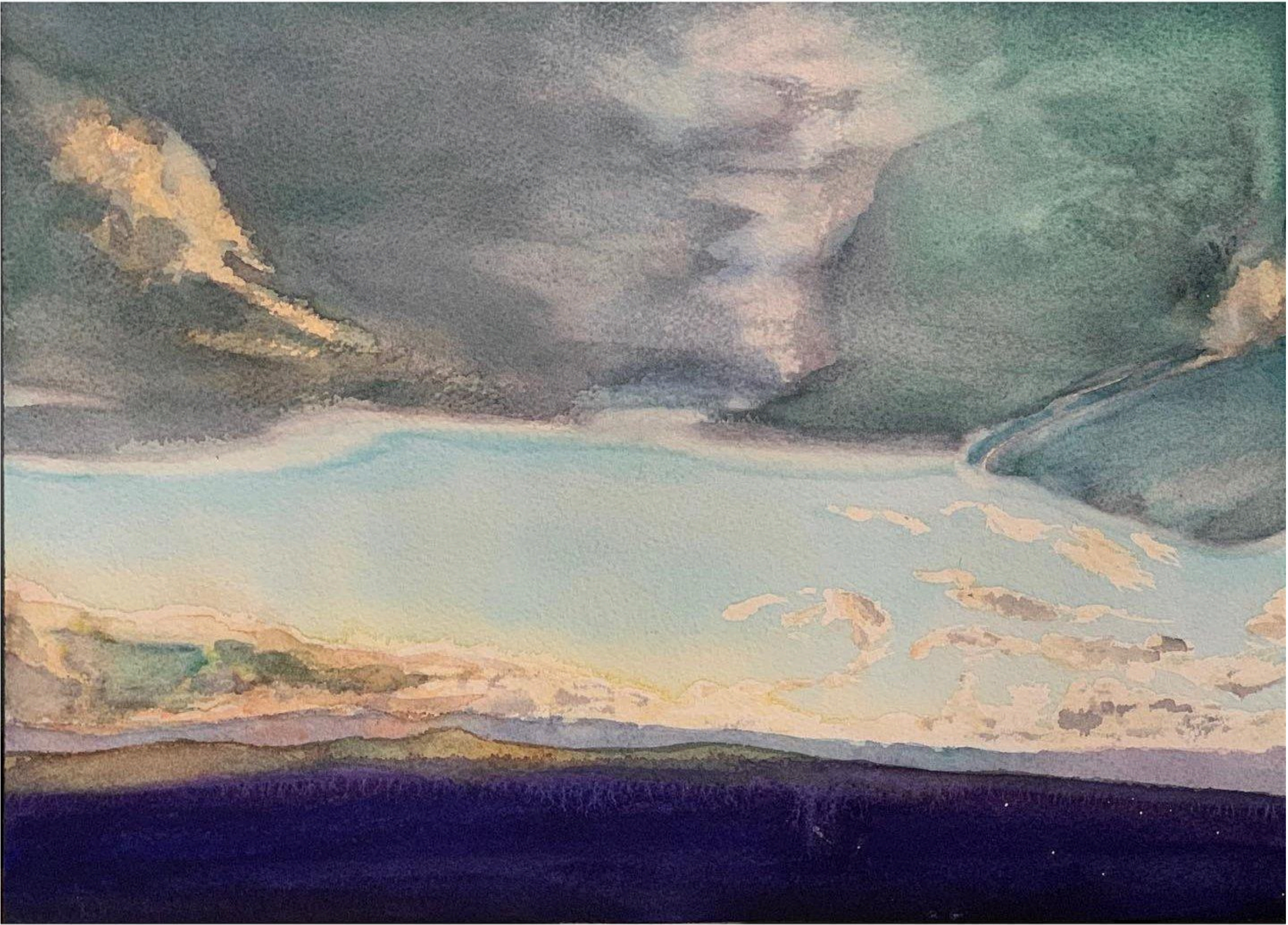
j.b.hermannsson mmxx iv xxii (April 22, 2020) · after "Jabberwocky" by Lewis Carroll

An Early Spring

May 30, 2020 · Watercolor

FROM THE LETTER

Work in progress.





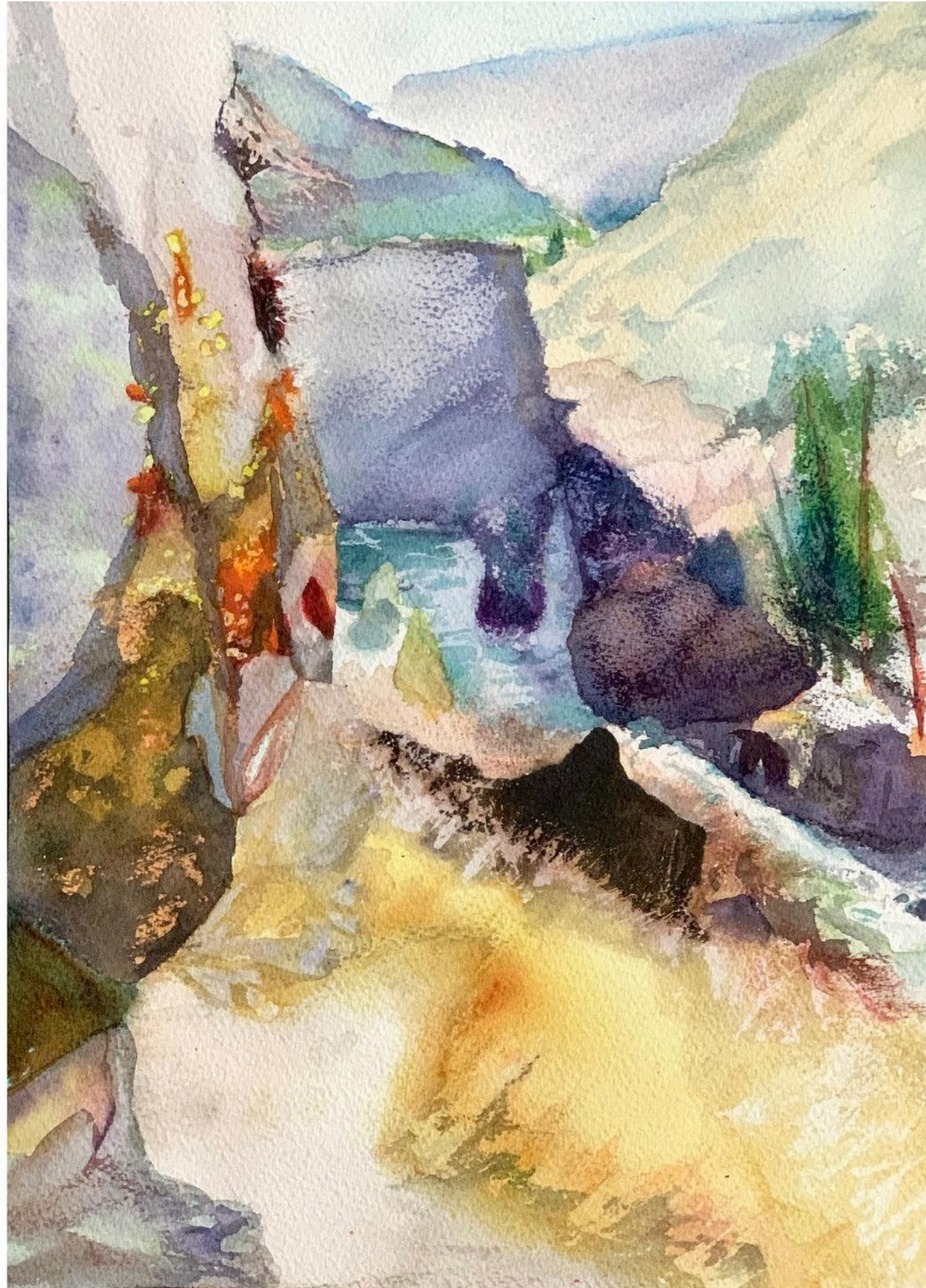
Thanksgiving Fall

November 26, 2020 · Watercolor

Deschutes Canyon Fall

December 4, 2020 · Watercolor





Mouth of Whychus Creek

December 21, 2020 · Watercolor

Deschutes River

January 16, 2021 · Watercolor





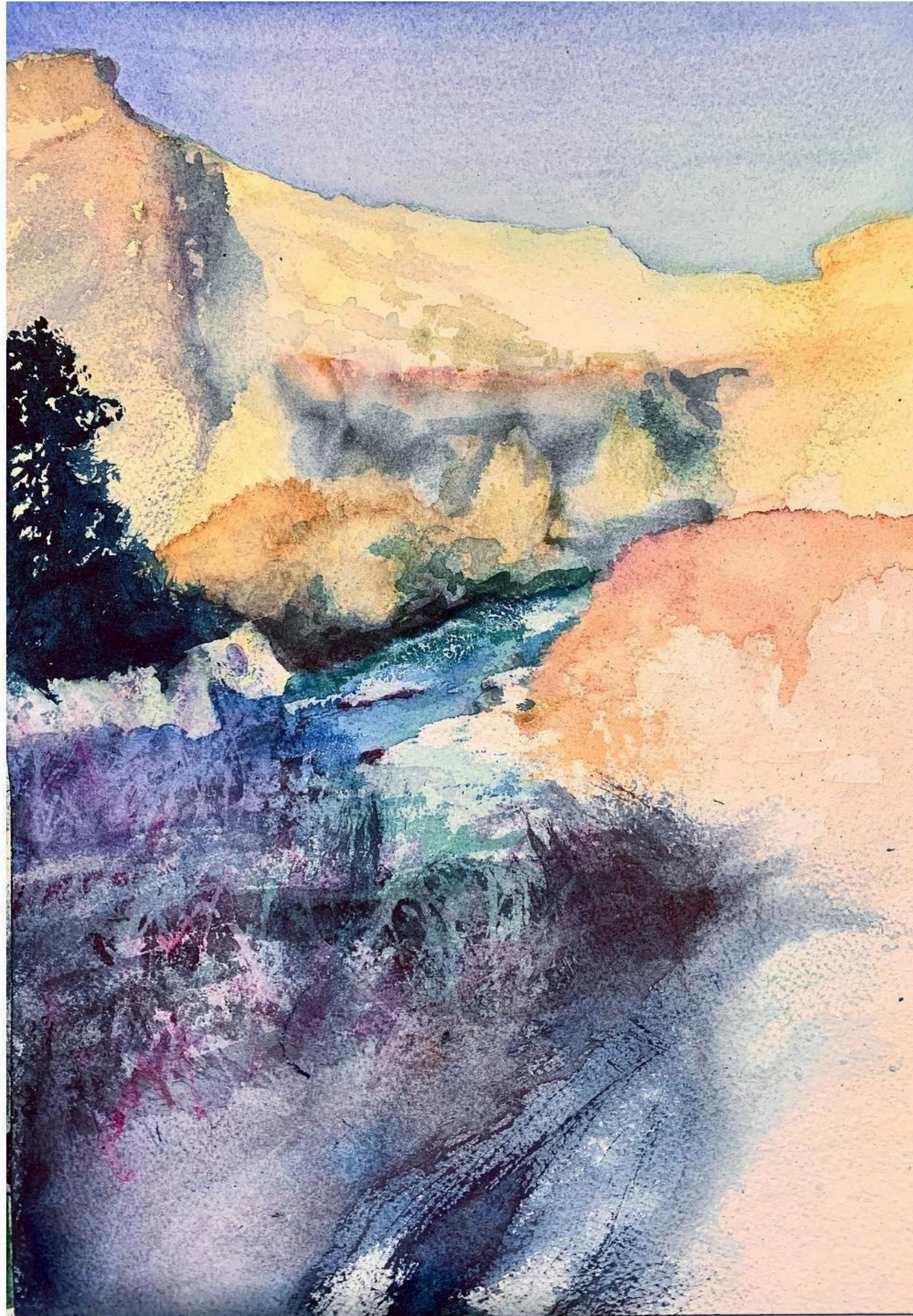
Deschutes River II

January 19, 2021 · Watercolor

Deschutes River III

January 24, 2021 · Watercolor



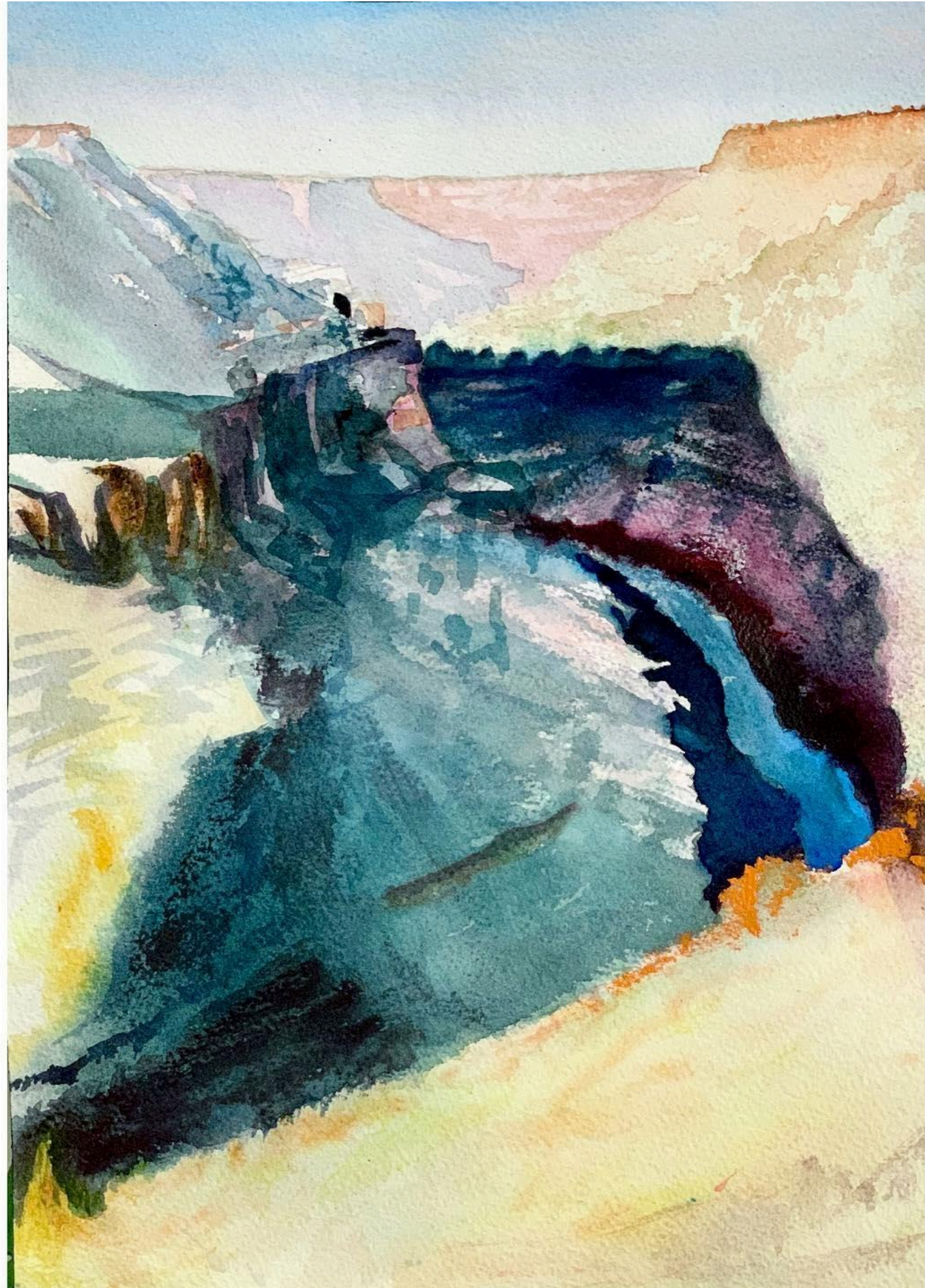


Deschutes River IV

February 6, 2021 · Watercolor

Deschutes River V

February 19, 2021 · Watercolor



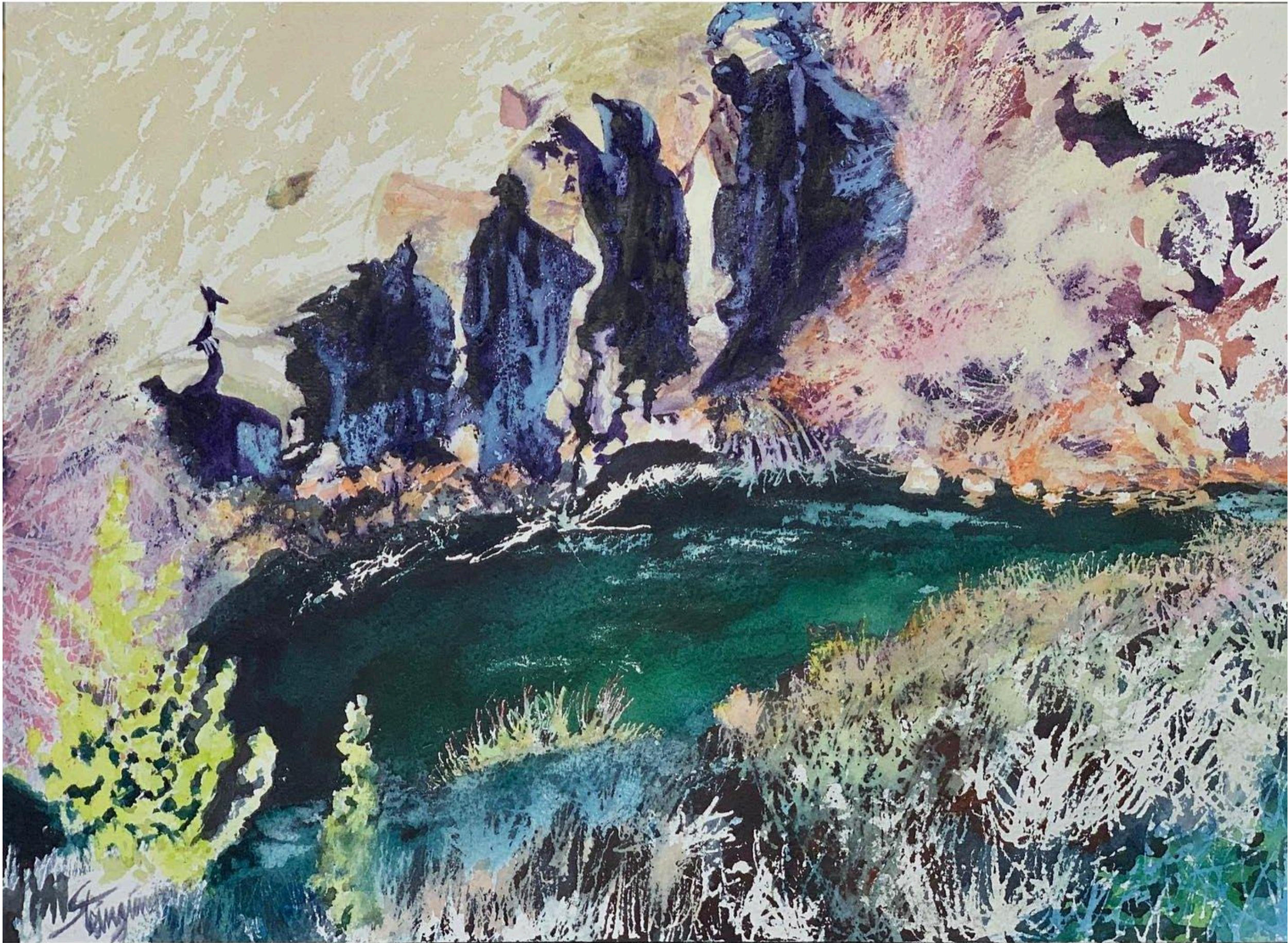


Deschutes River VI

March 4, 2021 · Watercolor

Deschutes River
VII, Spirit Pool

March 15, 2021 · Watercolor





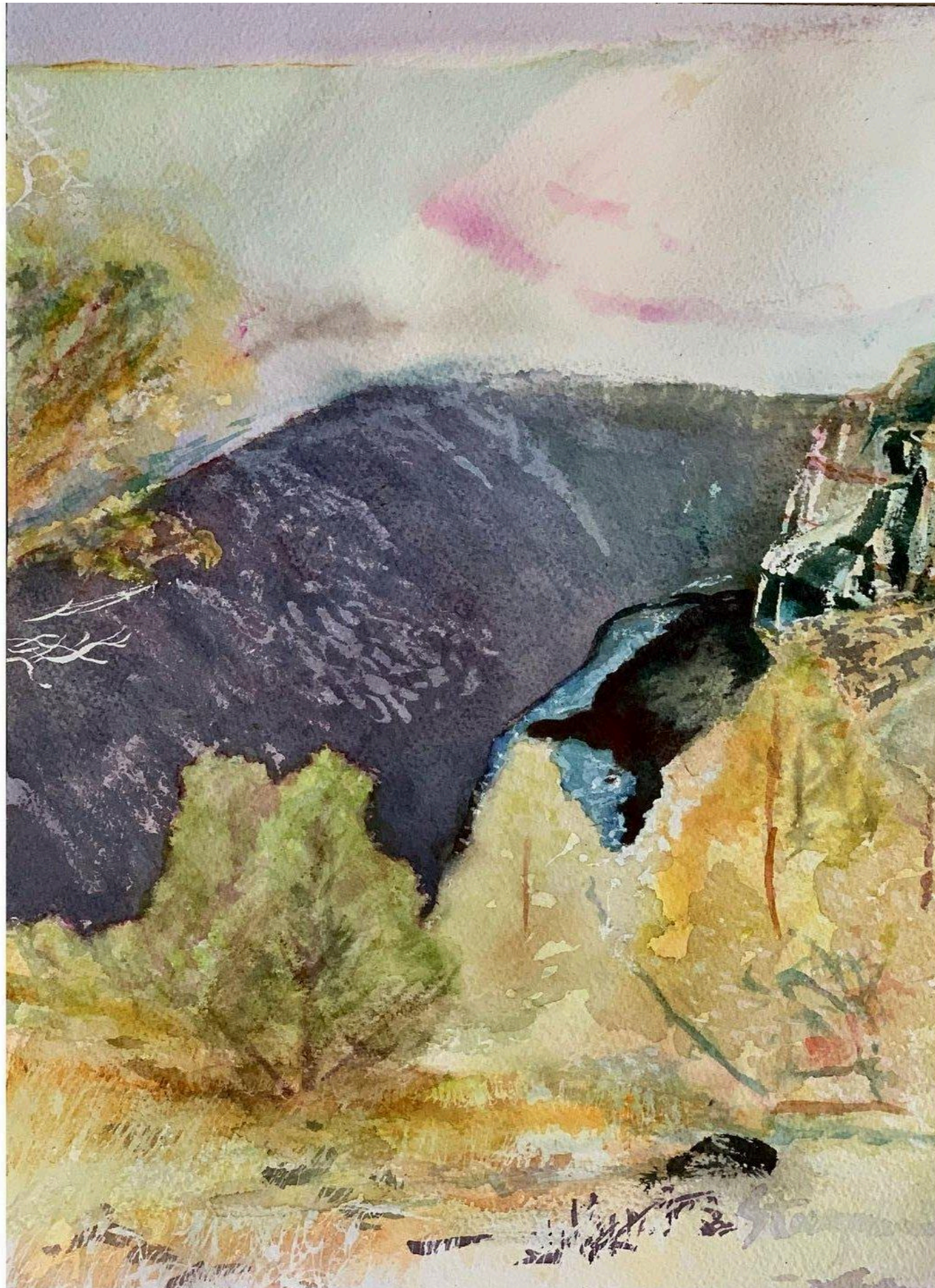
Deschutes River VIII

April 13, 2021 · Watercolor

Deschutes River IX,
Rim Rock

May 6, 2021 · Watercolor



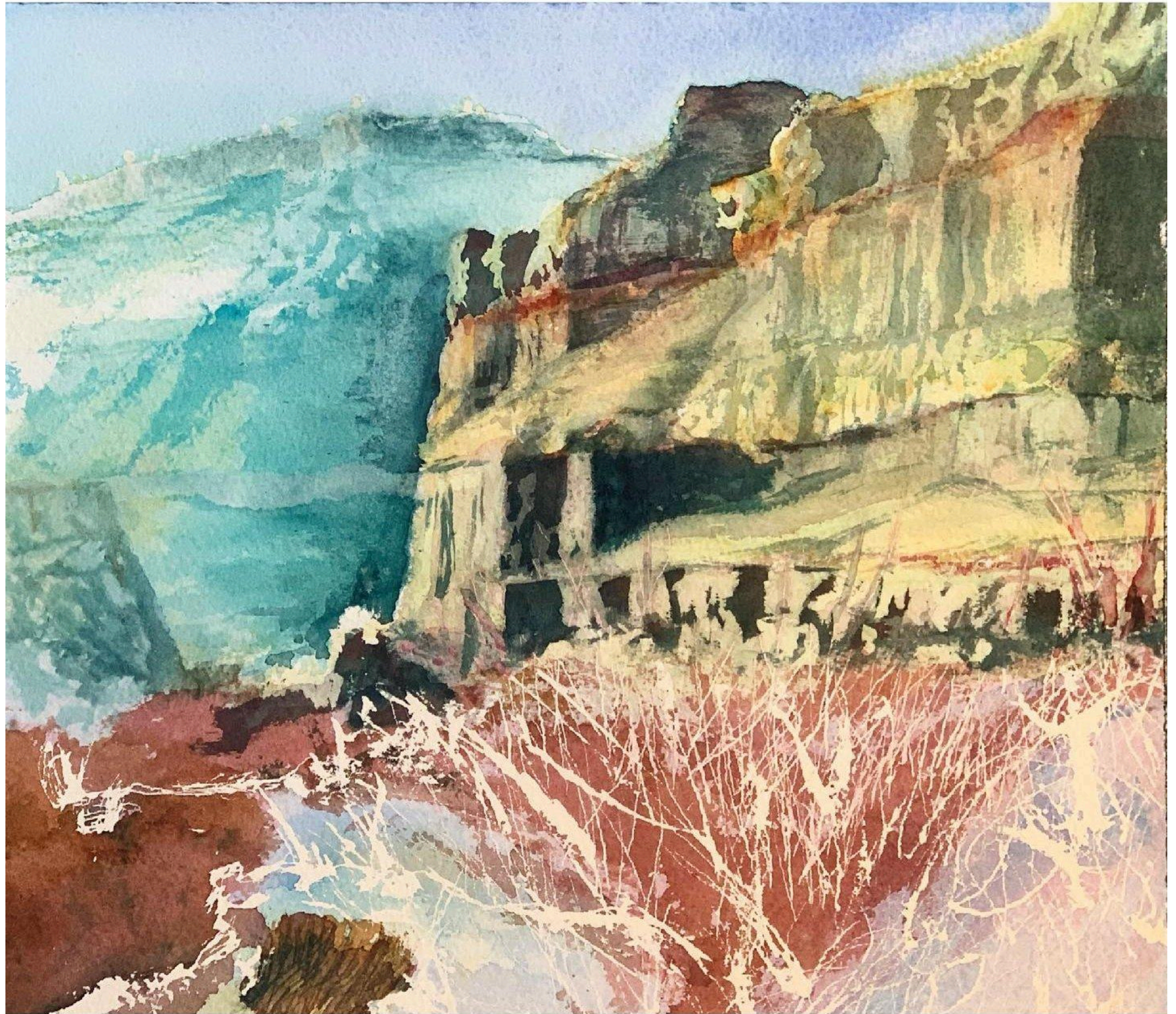


Deschutes River X, Receding Fog

May 13, 2021 · Watercolor

Deschutes River XI, Necropolis

May 29, 2021 · Watercolor





Deschutes River
XII, Rim Rock
Dweller

July 2, 2021 · Watercolor

IV

River Journeys

*Sketchbooks from the oars: Desolation
Canyon and the Green River in Utah, the
Rogue in Oregon, and the Main Salmon in
Idaho.*

24 WORKS



The Main Salmon I

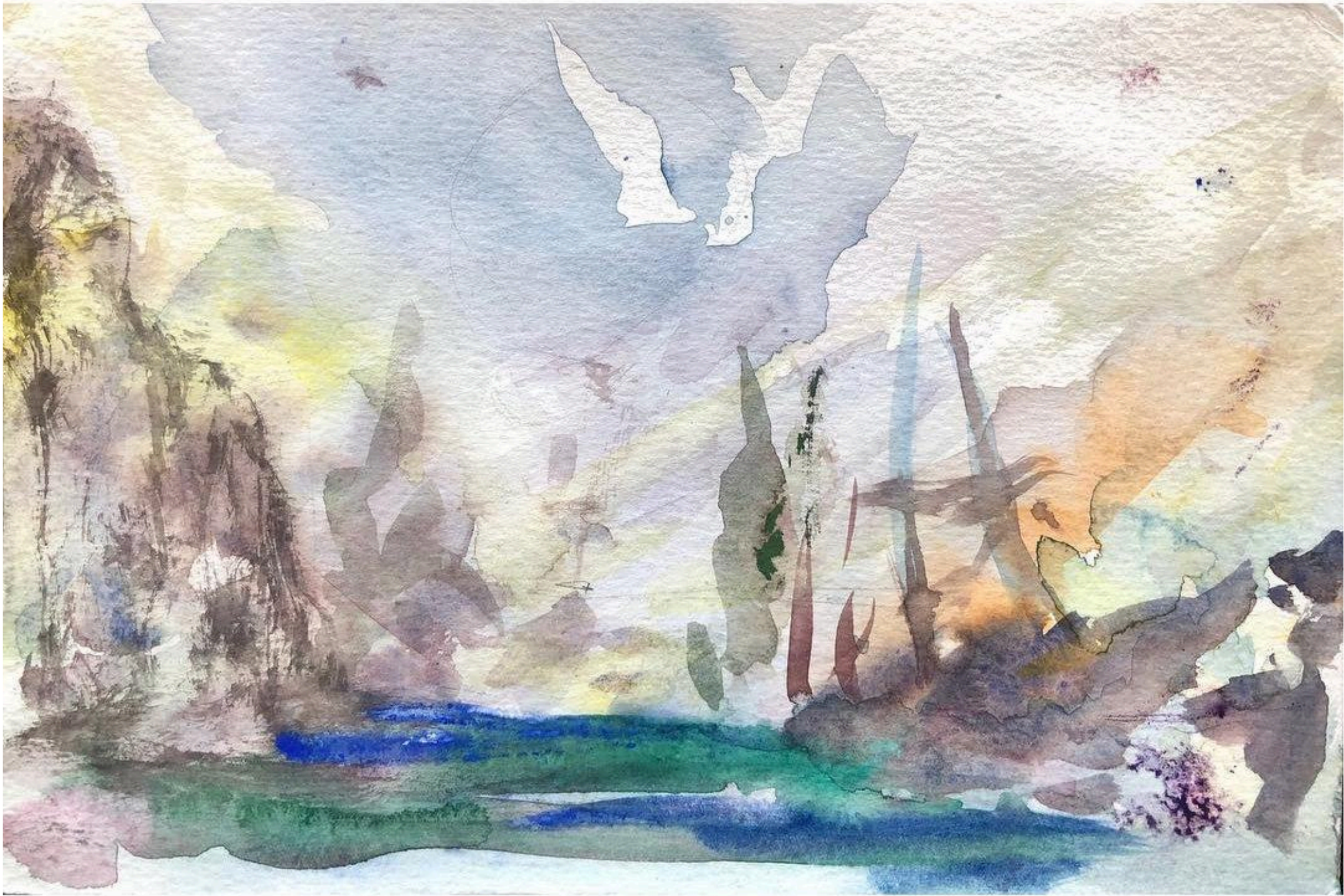
September 12, 2018 · Watercolor

FROM THE LETTER

Watercolors of the Main Salmon.

The Main Salmon II

September 12, 2018 · Watercolor





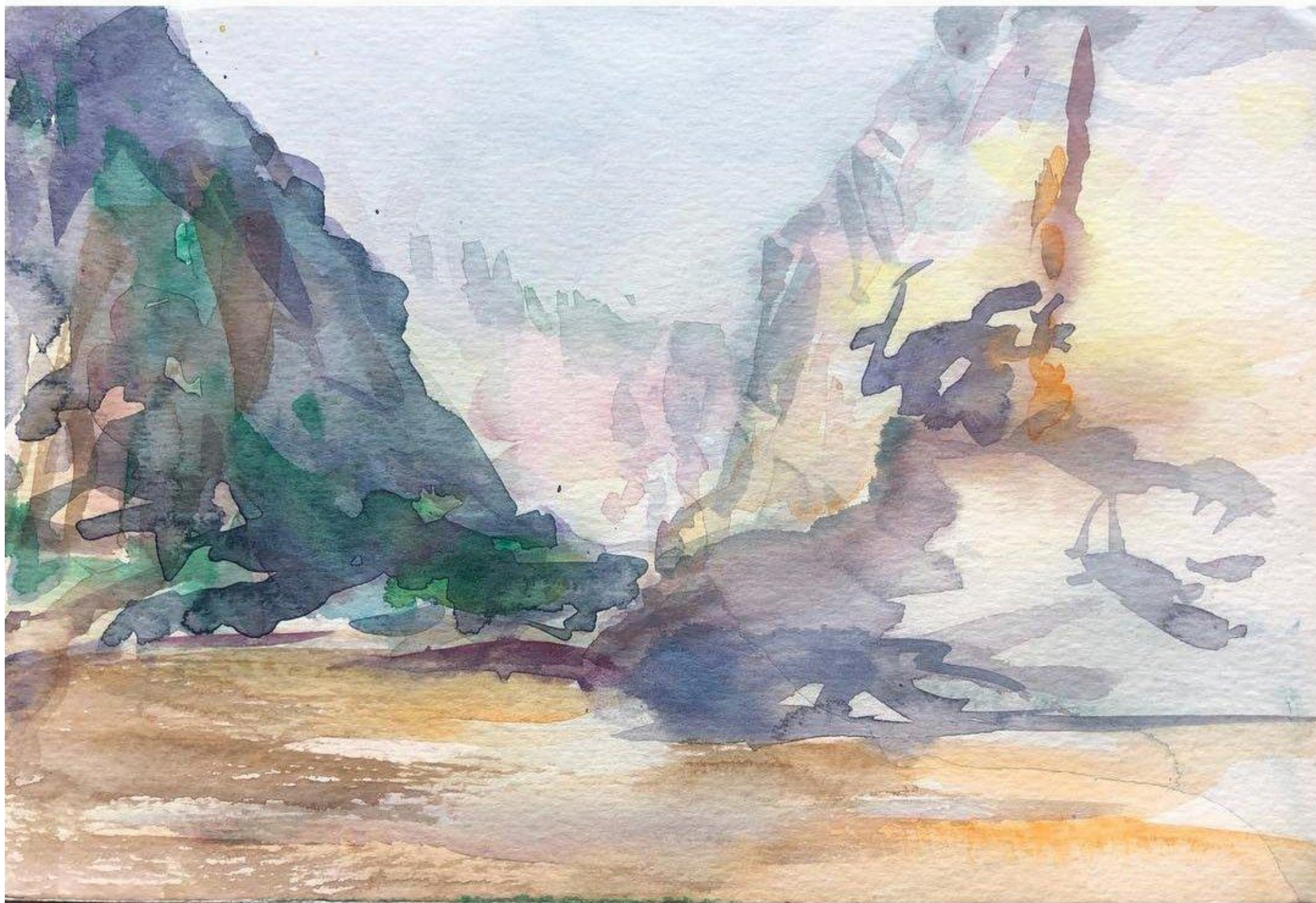
The Main Salmon III

September 12, 2018 · Watercolor

The Main Salmon
IV

September 12, 2018 · Watercolor





The Main Salmon V

September 12, 2018 · Watercolor

Desolation Canyon I

September 17, 2019 · Watercolor

FROM THE LETTER

Desolation Canyon series, Green River,
Utah.





Desolation Canyon II

September 17, 2019 · Watercolor

Desolation Canyon
III

September 17, 2019 · Watercolor





Desolation Canyon IV

September 17, 2019 · Watercolor

Desolation Canyon V

September 17, 2019 · Watercolor





Desolation Canyon VI

September 17, 2019 · Watercolor



Desolation Canyon
VII

September 17, 2019 · Watercolor



Desolation Canyon VIII

September 17, 2019 · Watercolor

Desolation Canyon

September 19, 2019 · Watercolor

Desolation Canyon

Why not paint trees electric green? Why not
Paint clouds like cliffs and cliffs like sunburned skin?
Why not put on a purple wig? It's hot
As hell just give me my leopard skin thing.
I'll dance that jig with red red oars and sway
The pea green soup into a witches brew
Beneath a deep blue sky and cast away
To feel the current's pull beckoning through
And through as if to say why not this way?
It's beautiful mysterious and yours
Today meandering ahead I lay.
Come to my light, it is my place to lure
You here – where even outlaws have no fear.
Why not? utopia prefers nowhere.

j.b.hermannsson mmxix ix xvii (September 17, 2019)

Desolation Canyon
Why not paint trees electric green? Why not
Paint clouds like cliffs and cliffs like sunburned skin?
Why not put on a purple wig? It's hot
As hell just give me my leopard skin thing.
I'll dance that jig with red red oars and sway
The pea green soup into a witches brew
Beneath a deep blue sky and cast away
To feel the current's pull beckoning through
And through as if to say why not this way?
It's beautiful mysterious and yours
Today meandering ahead I lay.
Come to my light, it is my place to lure
You here – where even outlaws have no fear.
Why not? utopia prefers nowhere.

j.b.hermannsson mmxix ix xvii

The sonnet as John wrote it out.





Gunnison Butte

September 22, 2019 · Watercolor

FROM THE LETTER

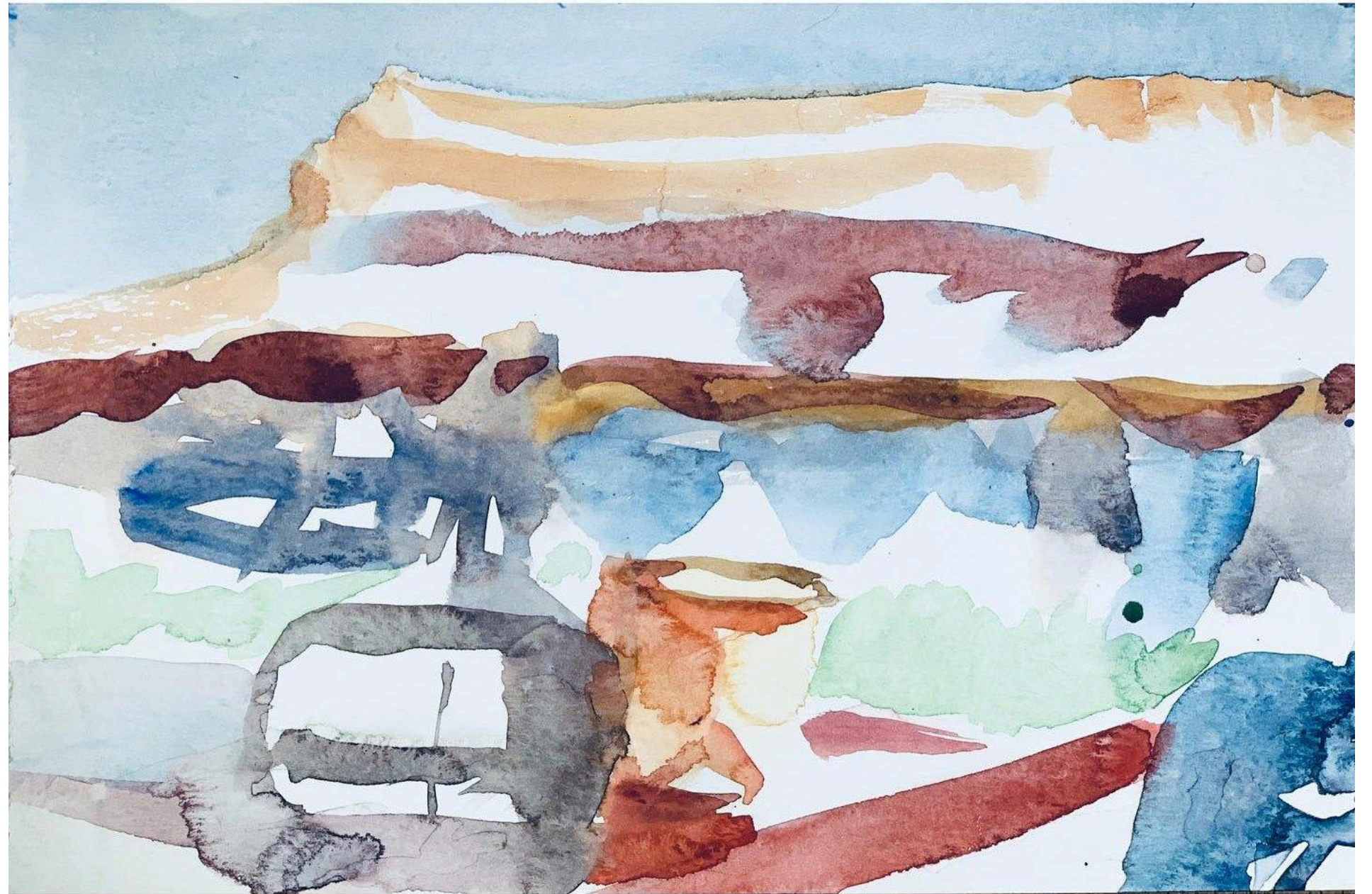
Green River series.

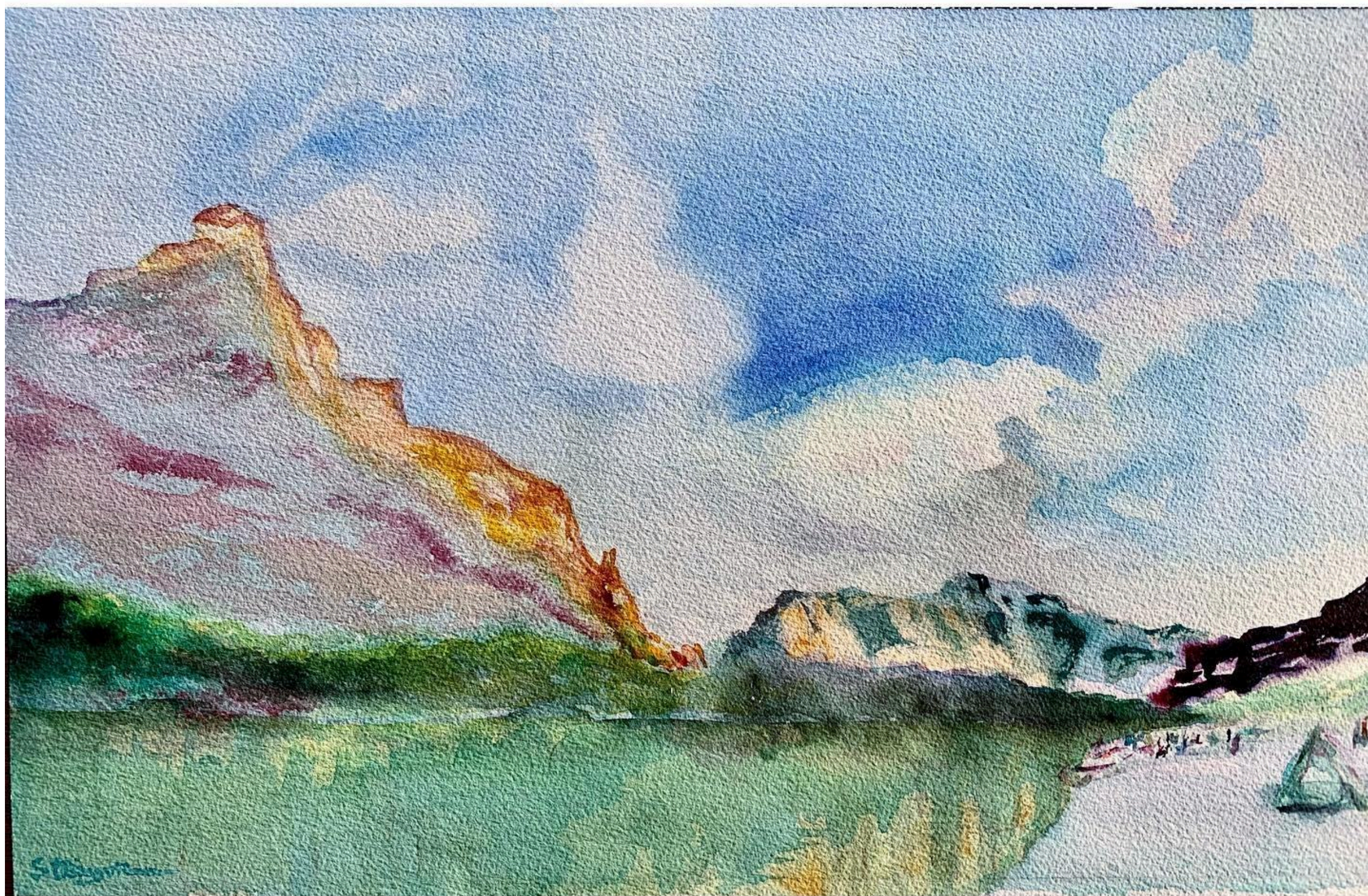
Oar Boats on the Beach

September 22, 2019 · Watercolor

Green River Limerick

*There once was a gal from Green River
Who barehanded oars without slivers.
I photographed her
When she said, "Yes, sir!"
But snapped both her red oars to smithers.*





Flat Canyon Afternoon

October 4, 2019 · Watercolor

FROM THE LETTER

Desolation Canyon series.

Below Jack's Rock

October 15, 2019 · Watercolor





Above Three Fords Rapid

November 4, 2019 · Watercolor

Rogue River Suite I

October 11, 2020 · Watercolor





Rogue River Suite II

October 11, 2020 · Watercolor

Rogue River Suite
III

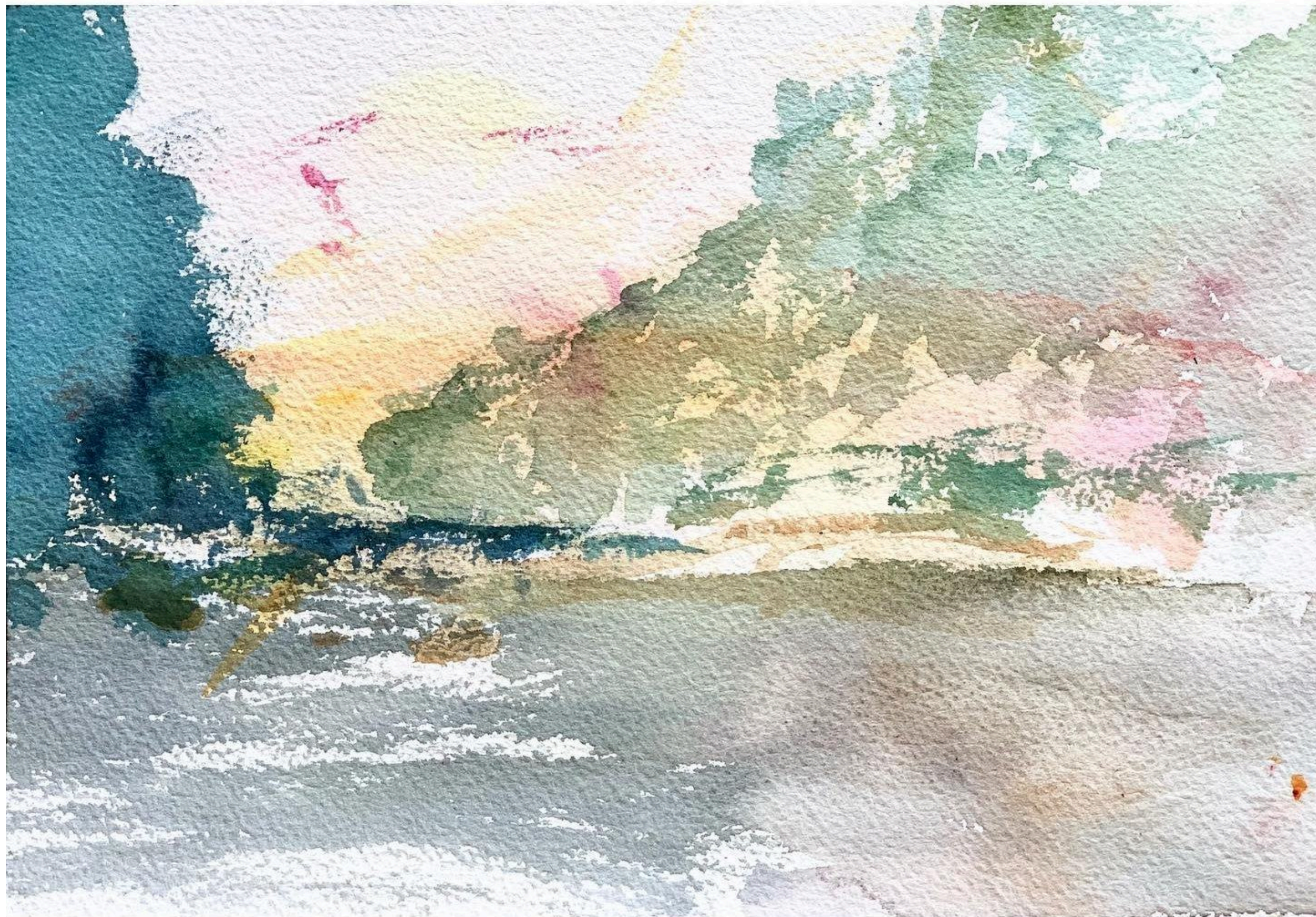
October 11, 2020 · Watercolor





Rogue River Suite IV

October 11, 2020 · Watercolor



Rogue River Suite
V

October 11, 2020 · Watercolor

V

Travels

*Plein air sketches from the road: Japan, Bali
and Java, Manila, Scotland, Florida, the
Galapagos, Greenland, Tanzania, Maui and
more.*

38 WORKS

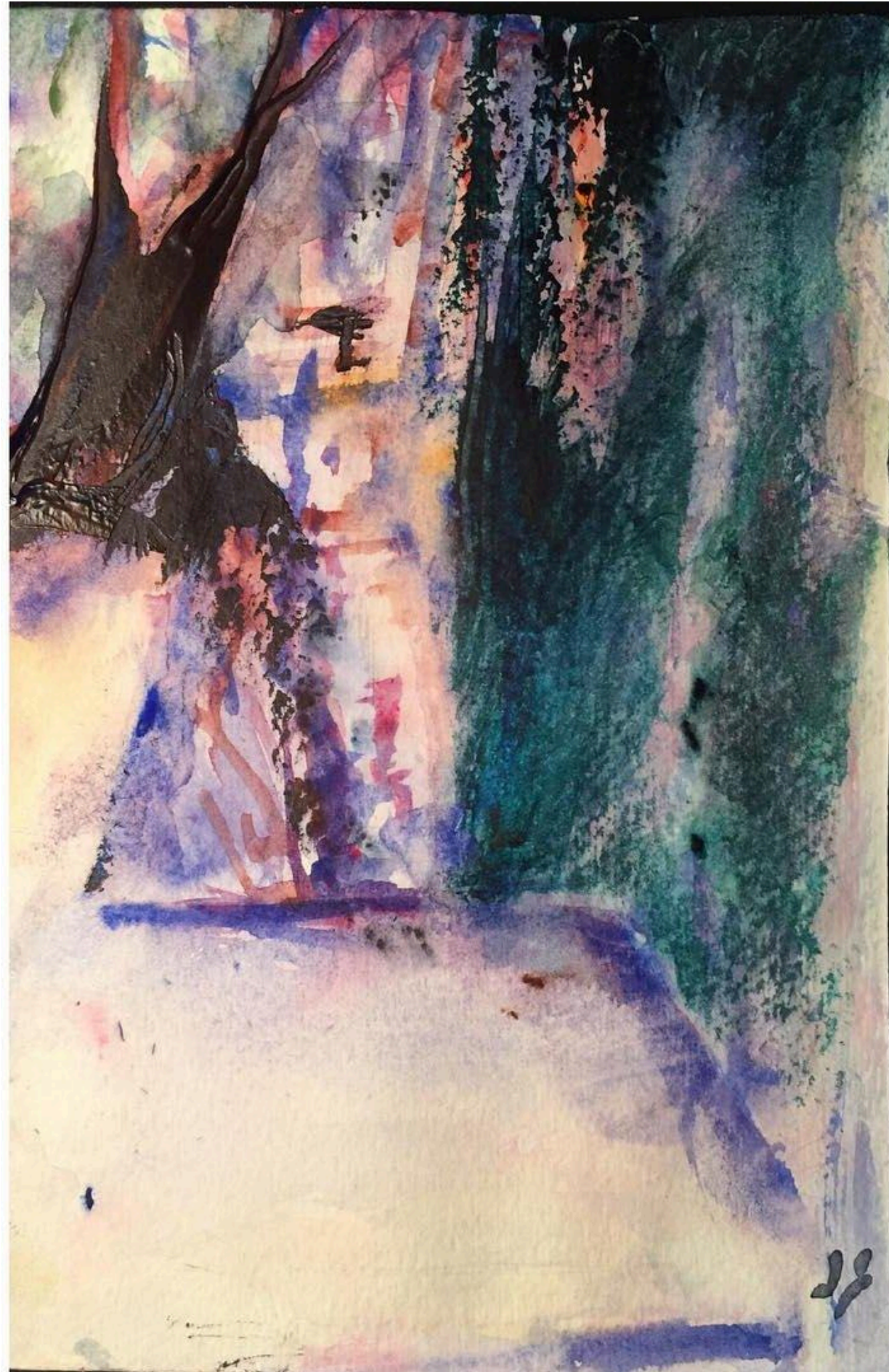


Costa Rica Beach at Iguana Lodge

January 18, 2005 · Watercolor

Landwehr Canal, Berlin

October 16, 2017 · Watercolor





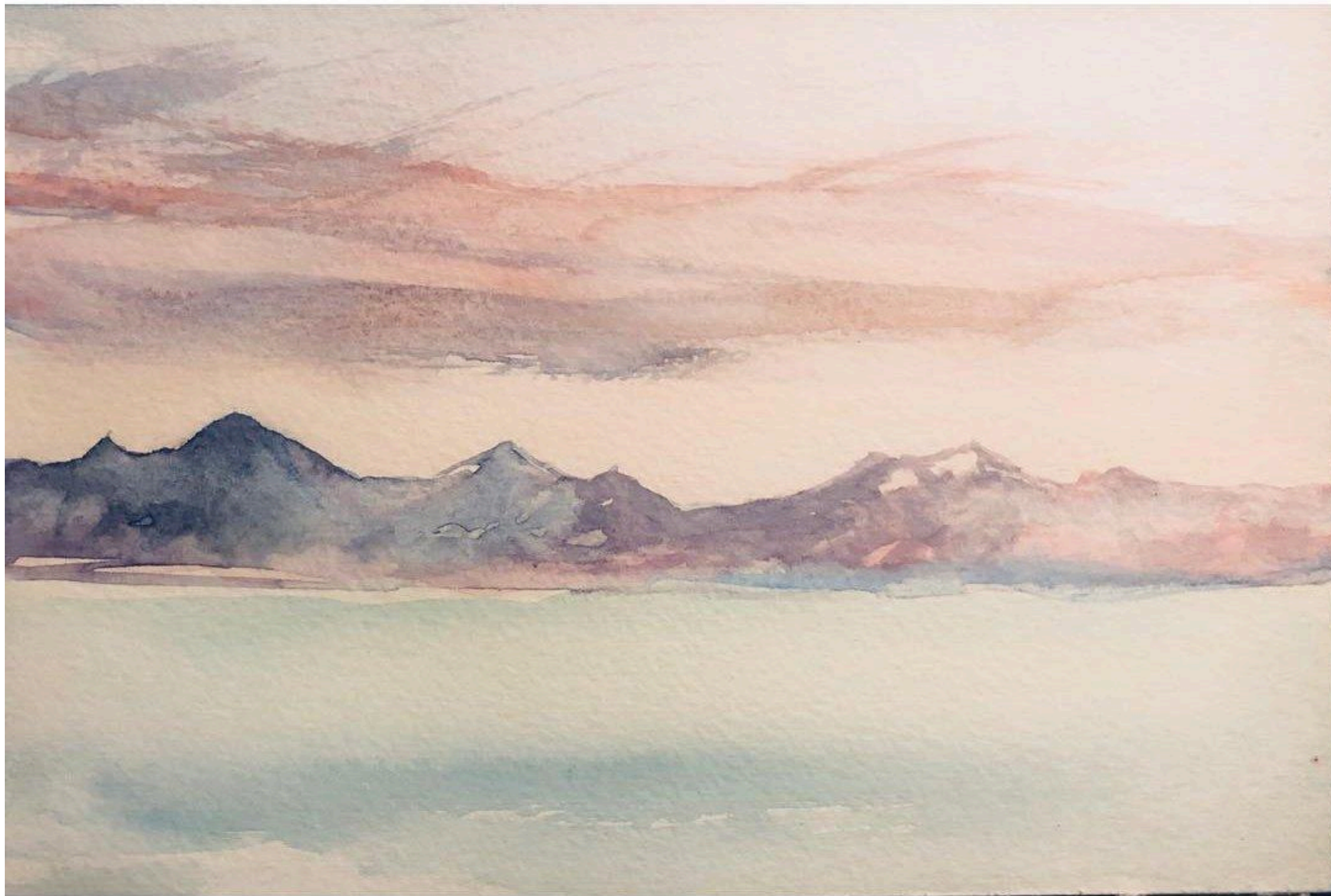
Nasca Boobies,
Espanola Island,
Galapagos

March 16, 2018 · Watercolor

Galapagos Marine
Iguana, Floreana
Island

March 19, 2018 · Watercolor





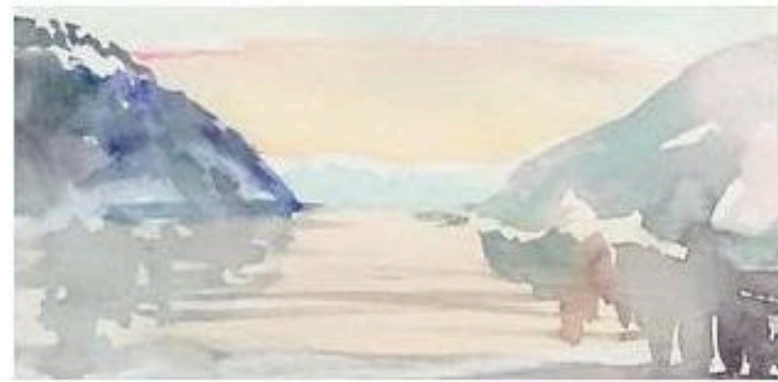
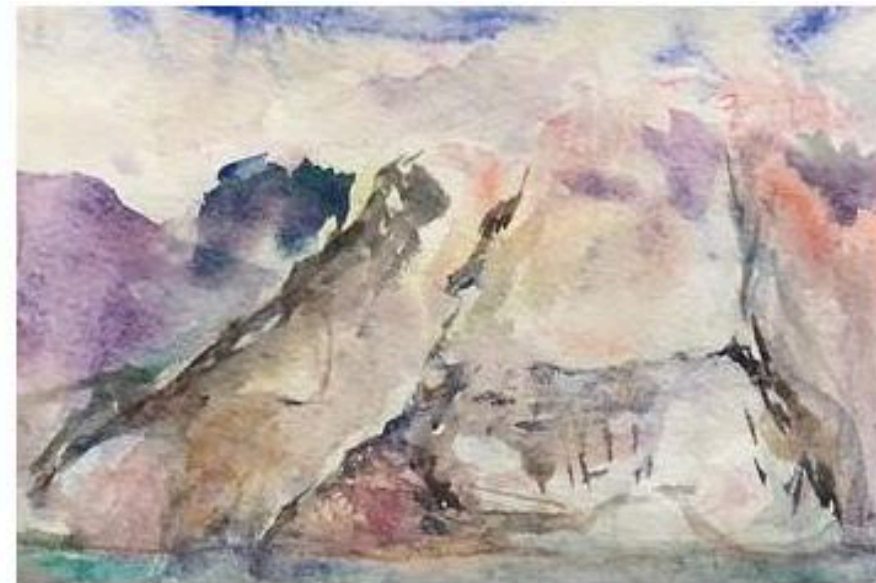
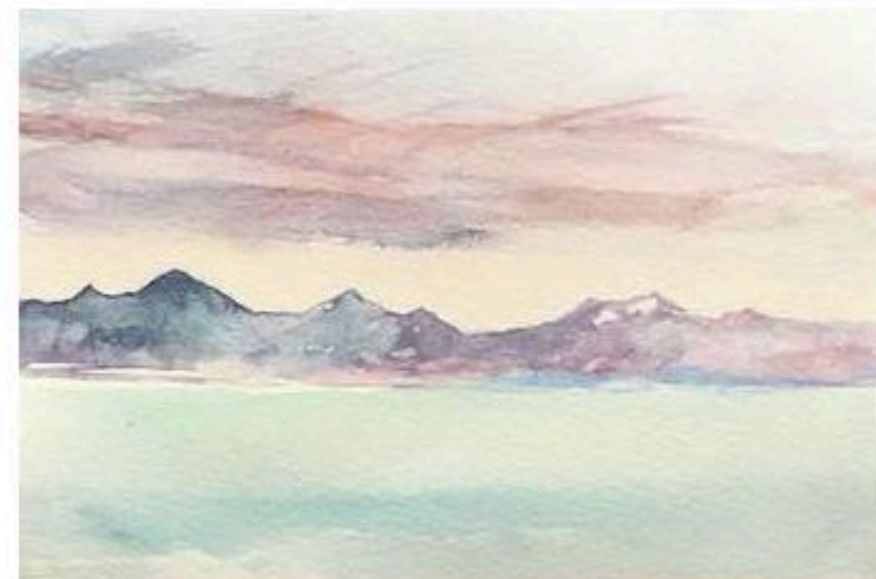
Greenland

August 17, 2018 · Watercolor

Greenland
Midnight

August 17, 2018 · Watercolor



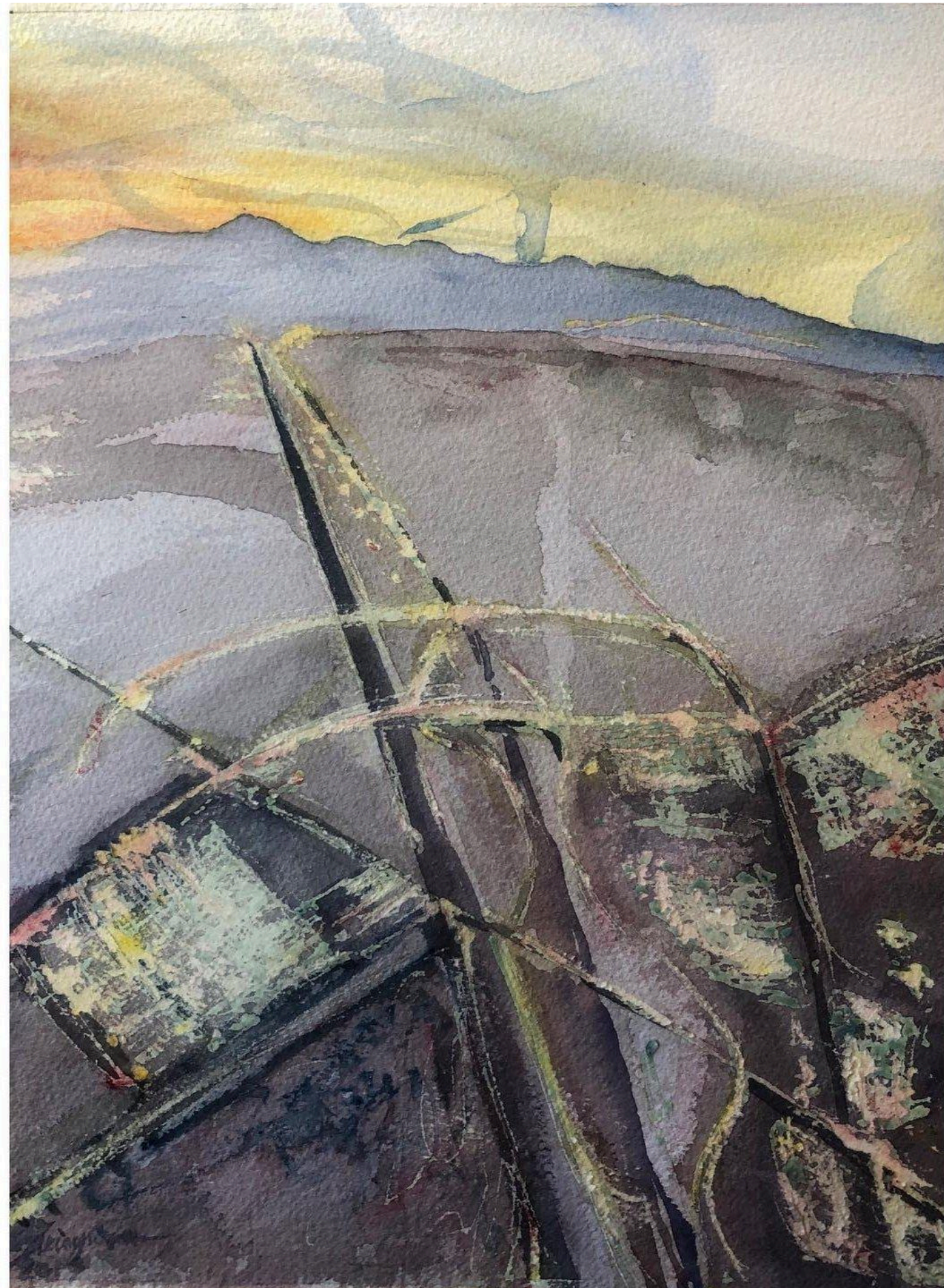


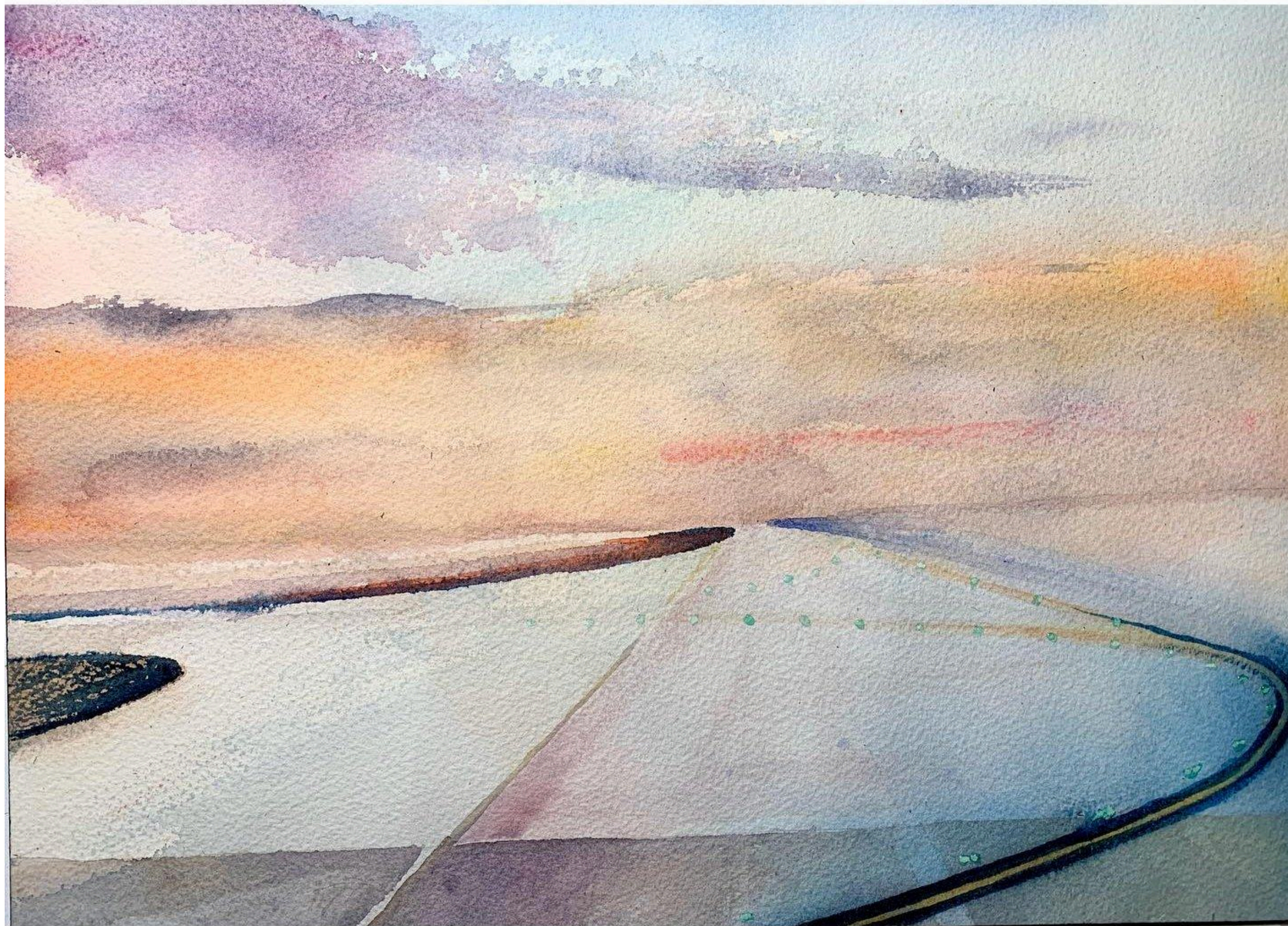
The Great Thaw: Greenland Journal

March 25, 2019 · Watercolor

On the Approach to Palm Springs

July 28, 2019 · Watercolor





Connecting Flight

March 27, 2020 · Watercolor

Journey into the
Ngorongoro
Caldera

September 16, 2020 · Watercolor





Journey into the
Ngorongoro
Caldera II

October 22, 2020 · Watercolor

Journey Into the Haleakala Crater

November 10, 2020 · Watercolor



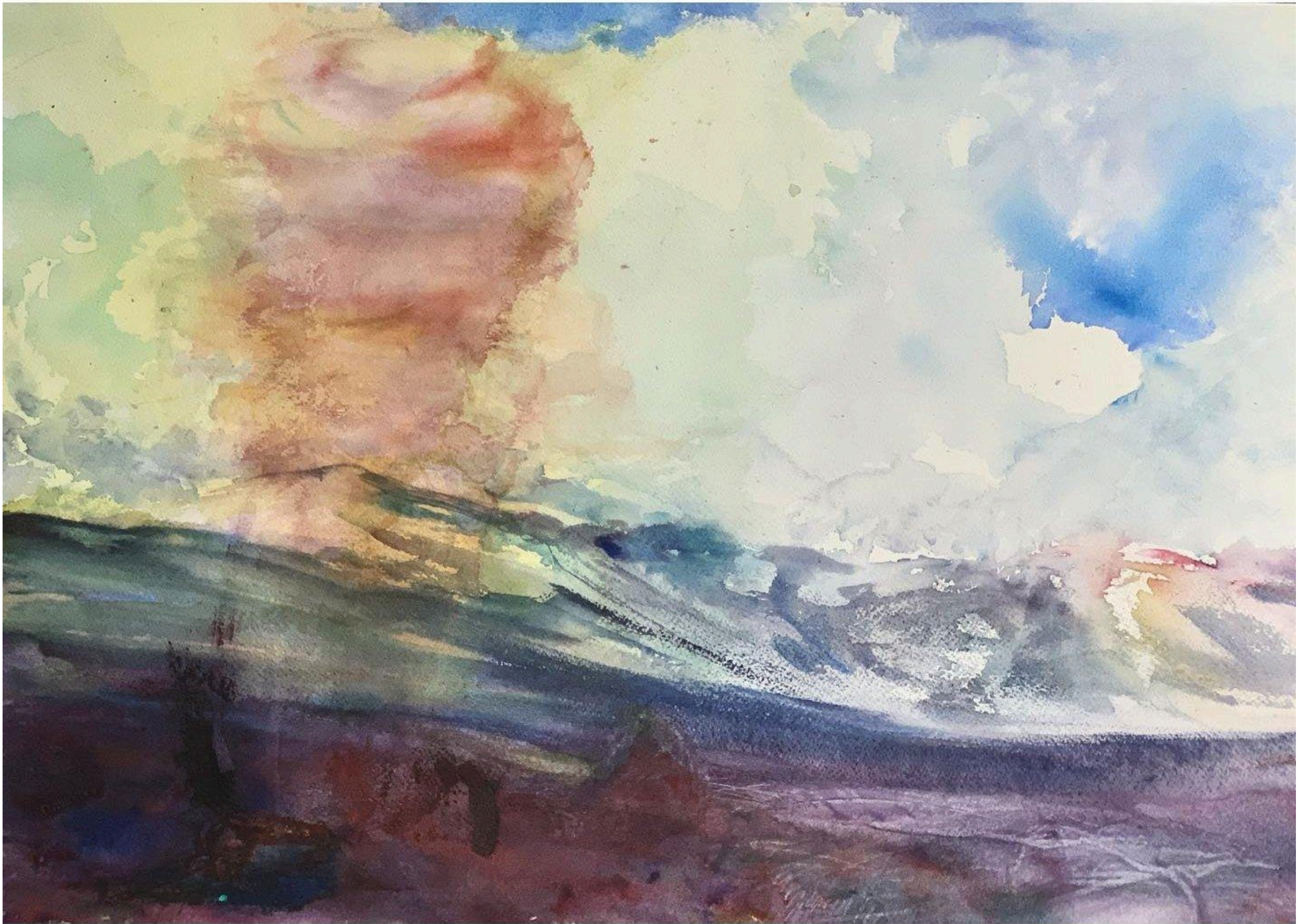


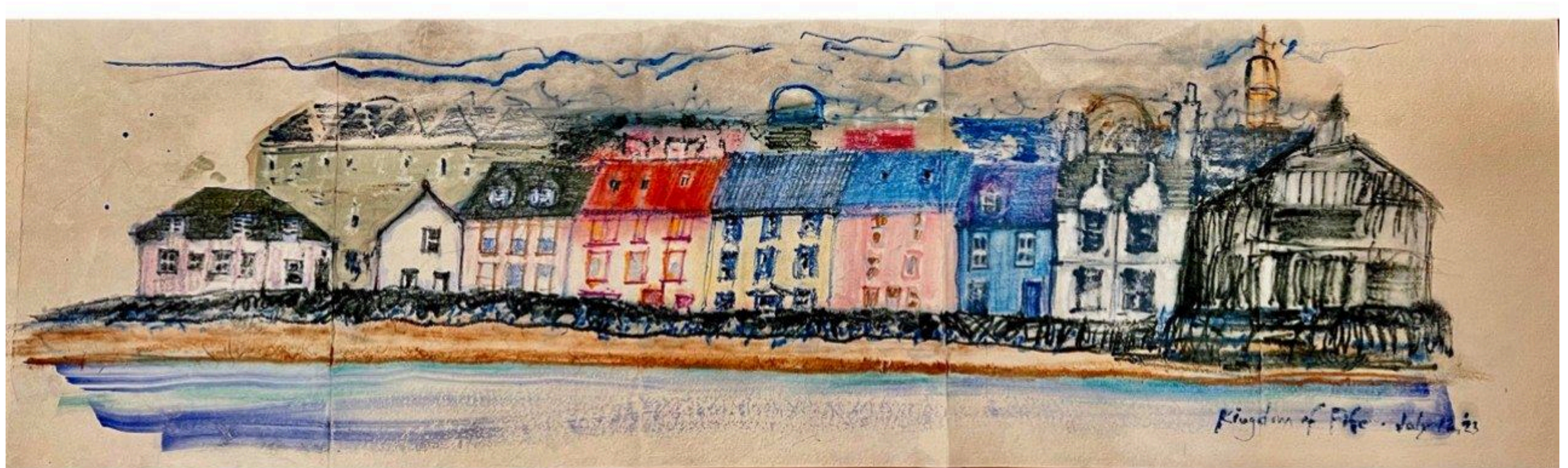
Journey Into the Haleakalā Crater II

November 13, 2020 · Watercolor

Dust Devil in the
Haleakala Crater

December 18, 2020 · Watercolor





Kingdom of Fife

July 14, 2023 · Watercolor & colored pencil on rice paper, 8 × 30 in

FROM THE LETTER

I am experimenting with combining the medium of watercolor with colored pencil for my travels in Scotland because the continuous rain and elevated humidity slows down the drying time significantly of a watercolor painting by itself.

On the road from Edinburgh to St. Andrews is a small fishing village know as the Kingdom of Fife. I strolled out onto the harbor's breakwater to view this curious village with a pompous name better at a distance from the ocean side and created the attached travel sketch.

How this village earned its name was by being the place from where Scotland was ruled by a Celtic tribe known as the Picts for a thousand years after the Romans left in the 5th century. In addition, after ruling Scotland, the Kingdom of Fife supplied Britain with most of its kings and queens.

Pastures in Sunshine Between Showers

August 11, 2023 · Watercolor on paper, 7 ×
10¼ in

FROM THE LETTER

I started this watercolor, 'Pastures in
Sunshine Between Showers', in Scotland
just before I caught COVID and finished
it in Oregon in my studio today.





View of Mt. Fuji
from Shimizu
Harbor

February 16, 2025 · Watercolor

Mt. Kaimon, Kagoshima

February 22, 2025 · Watercolor





By the South China Sea

February 28, 2025 · Watercolor

Motorcycle Rider

March 4, 2025 · Watercolor





Jungle, Power Poles, and Rice Paddies

March 6, 2025 · Watercolor

FROM THE LETTER

Java, Indonesia.

Sun Rising Over
Bawang Harbor,
Bali

March 6, 2025 · Watercolor





Preparing Temple Offerings, Bali

March 8, 2025 · Watercolor

Relic

March 12, 2025 · Watercolor on paper, 6 × 9 in

FROM THE LETTER

I'm back after traveling for a month in Southeast Asia. While away, I posted eight paintings to my IG account only, due to poor connectivity, which you can view via the following link:





Gardeners by Lake Ikeda

March 14, 2025 · Watercolor on paper, 5 × 6¼ in

FROM THE LETTER

Although spring is remains a week away for us, it already arrived last month for southern Japan with an army of gardeners descending upon Lake Ikeda in Nakahama, Japan, to plant flowers along its shores.

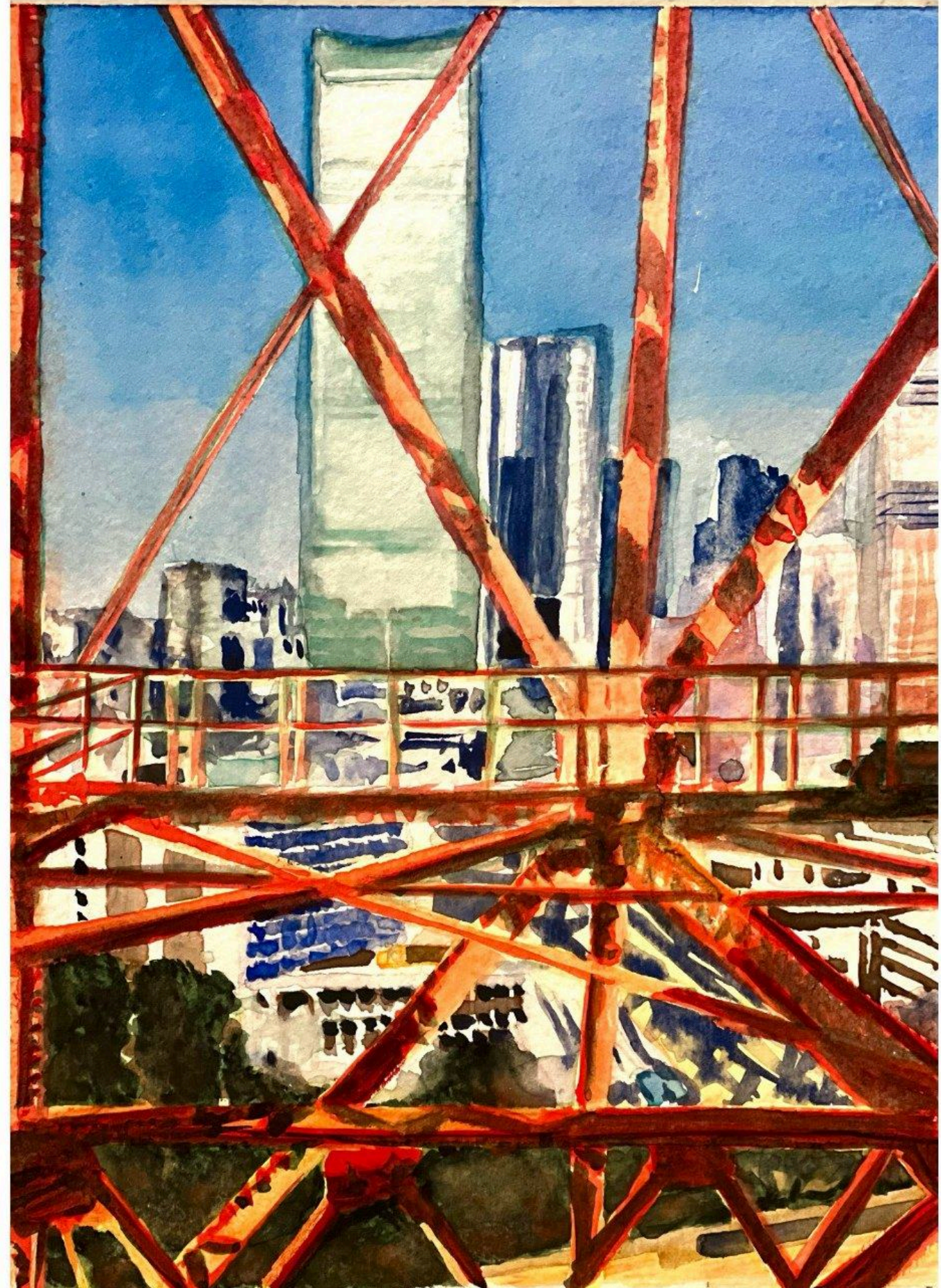
View of Tokyo from the Tokyo Tower

March 18, 2025 · Watercolor on paper, 6 × 8 in

FROM THE LETTER

With 37.4 million people, Tokyo is not only the largest city in the world, it is also a very clean functioning metropolis that is impressively livable with an enviable modern public transportation system that includes a subway network that serves the entire city plus a connection to a high speed bullet train for swiftly and efficiently leaving and entering Tokyo at 150 mph rather than creeping along in stop and go traffic that can average 35 mph.

The attached painting is a view of Tokyo from about half way up the Tokyo Tower, which is a copy of the Eiffel Tower. It also captures a view of Japan's tallest building, Azubudai Hills Mori JP Tower. Nevertheless, at 1,068 feet, it is relatively short compared to, for example, the Empire State Building at 1,454 feet. However, this is to Tokyo's credit because the streets are bathed in sunlight rather than kept in perpetual shadows, which contributes to the livability of its urban space.





Church of St. Augustine, Manila

April 4, 2025 · Watercolor & ink on paper, 6 × 8 in

FROM THE LETTER

In 1572 Spanish conquistadors arrived with missionaries to lay claim to the Philippines for Spain. Remarkably in Manila, the monks took what was jungle and built the Church of Saint Augustine in 20 years with little funding, mostly unskilled labor and poor access to materials. Nevertheless, the church was completed in 1607 and has survived 9 earthquakes and the Battle of Manila during WWII. I have attached a painting showing its brilliant baroque style interior space featuring a dramatic barrel vaulted nave that leads up to a sanctuary and alter.

The Church of Saint Augustine brought the concept of the existence of a remote divine celestial space that imposed a new social order and requirements on a local people that lived by religions that were mostly nature based. Fast forward 400 years, and that remote divine celestial space is being challenged by roads and wires with their own imposed social order and requirements. To quote John Steinbeck, "Civilization follows the roads and electricity." I have attached two paintings that reflect upon the course of civilization in Manila.

Manila Street
Sketch I

April 4, 2025 · Watercolor & ink on paper,
6 × 8 in





Manila Street Sketch II

April 4, 2025 · Watercolor & ink on paper,
6 × 8 in

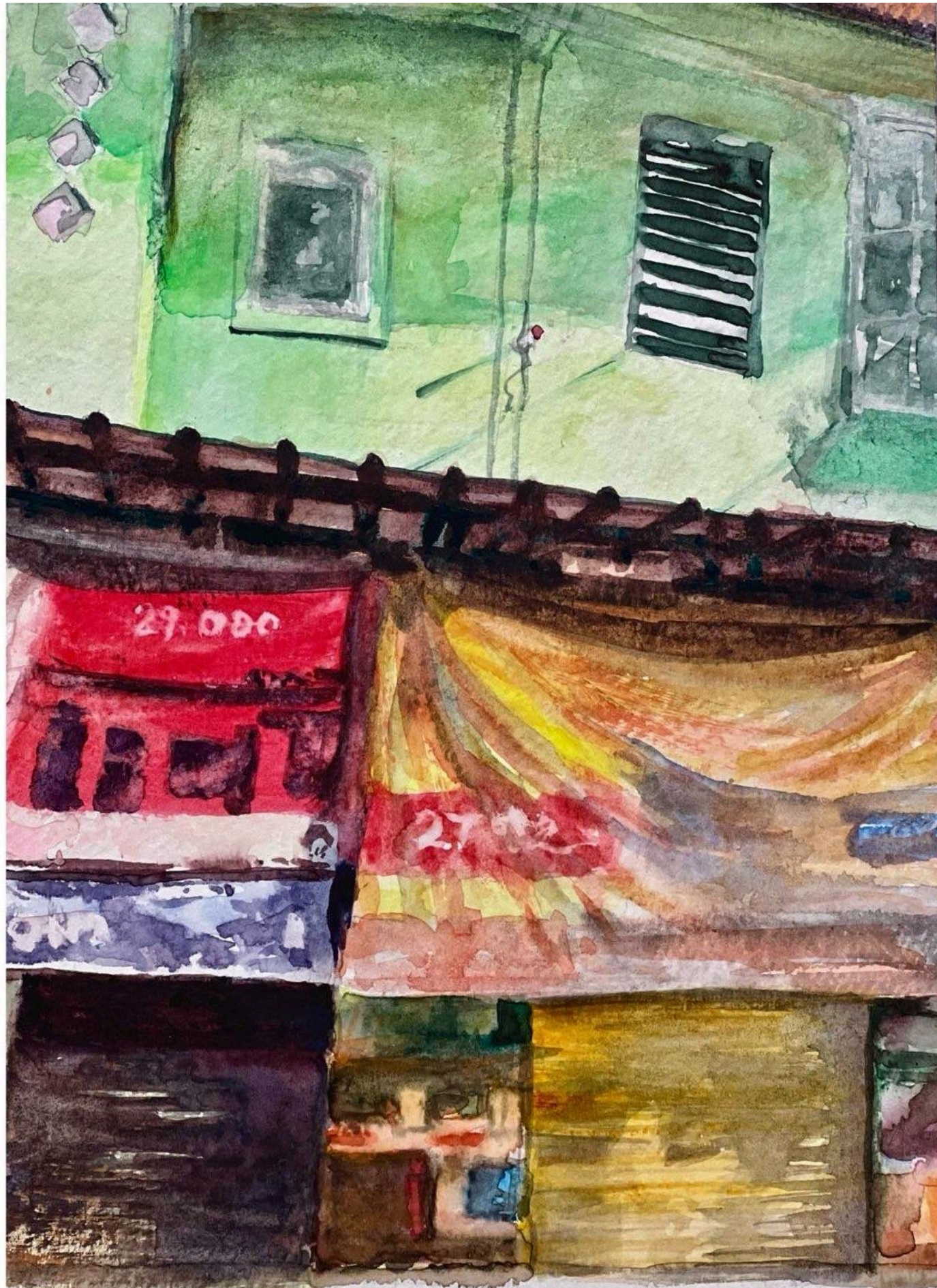
Mausoleum Cats

April 13, 2025 · Watercolor on paper, 6 × 9 in

FROM THE LETTER

I was on a tour bus that dropped me off at the Chinese Cemetery in Manila. The guide mentioned that the Chinese were not allowed to be buried in Christian cemeteries (at least the ones who weren't Christians) so they created their own cemetery located directly adjacent to the Chinese Hospital. He also mentioned that families build the mausoleums not as a place for someone to be entombed and forgotten, but rather a place for family members to gather to play games, such as mah-jongg, while the entombed family members participate in spirit. He added that after they visited a mausoleum, it is a tradition to not go directly home but stop somewhere along the way to make sure that the spirit does not follow them home. It truly is a city for the entombed and the fact that they continue to participate in family life, in spirit, is heartening and comforting to the living I'm sure. I stepped into one mausoleum and was greeted by curious cats. There was also an unoccupied seat there. It wasn't obvious to me if the seat was for the living or the spirits of the dead, but the space was bright and pleasant with a garden view of a large tree surrounded by plants and a courtyard. It was peaceful and a good place to rest in peace.





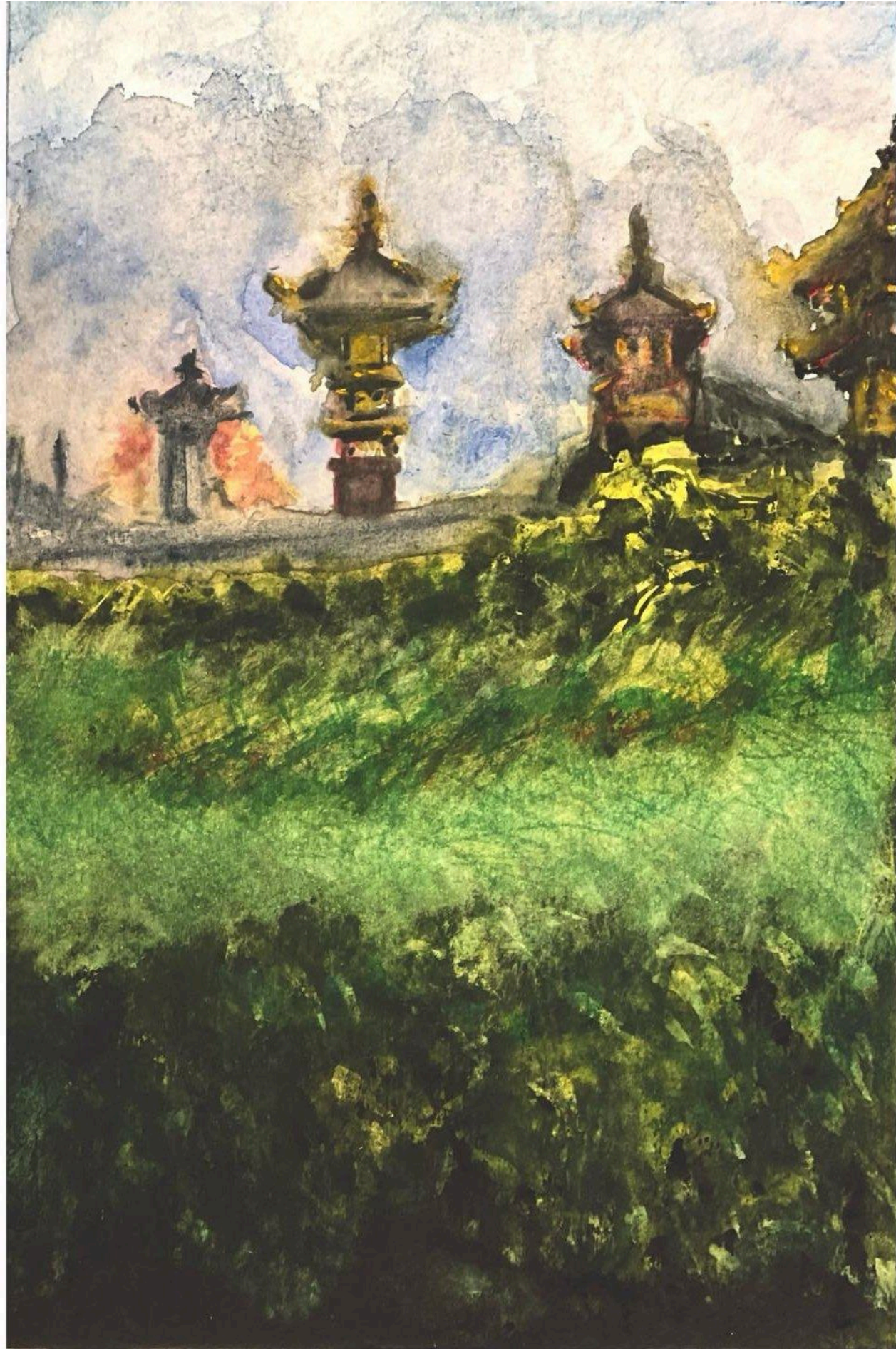
The Yellow Canvas, Semarang

April 24, 2025 · Watercolor

The White Tanks,
Semarang

May 3, 2025 · Watercolor & ink





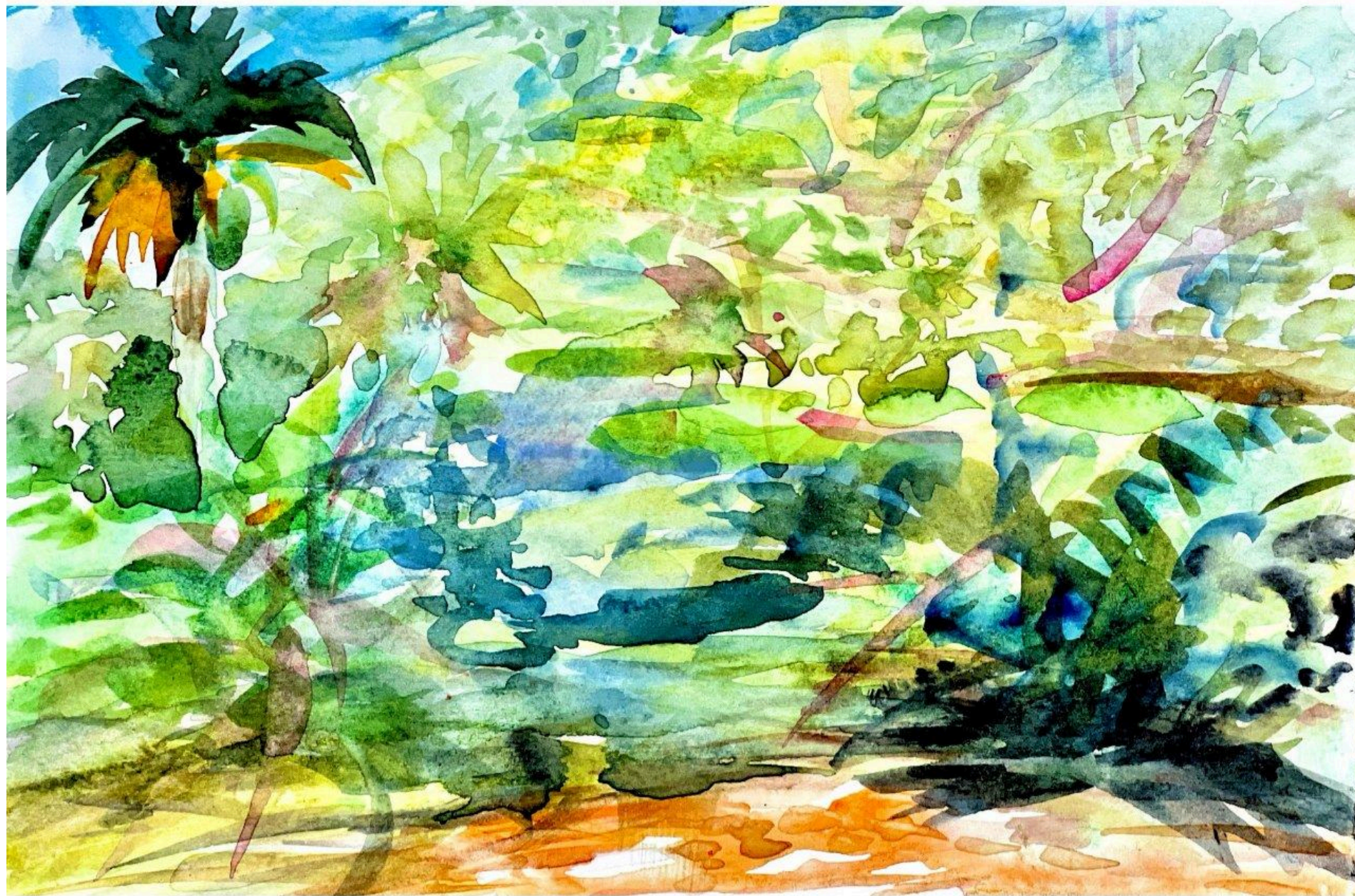
Outside the Temple Wall, Bali

May 8, 2025 · Watercolor

Overpass

May 29, 2025 · Watercolor





Florida Postcard I

May 1, 2026 · Watercolor

FROM THE LETTER

Here are a few digital post cards from Southwest Florida: 'Sunset on the Caloosahatchie' (river), Gulf of Mexico from Oat Key, and Estuary Pond on the Imperial River, Bonita Springs, Florida. The first and last paintings were completed onsite, plein air. The second painting was based on my plein air painting of the same subject that someone acquired.

Florida Postcard II

May 1, 2026 · Watercolor





Florida Postcard III

May 1, 2026 · Watercolor



Sunset on Vargas Island

September 23, 2026 · Watercolor on paper, 16½ × 5¼ in

FROM THE LETTER

Here’s a plein air watercolor addendum that should have been included in my previous email to you, a Vargas Island sunset painting in my watercolor kayaking sketchbook.

VI

Flowers

Bouquets and still lifes.

16 WORKS



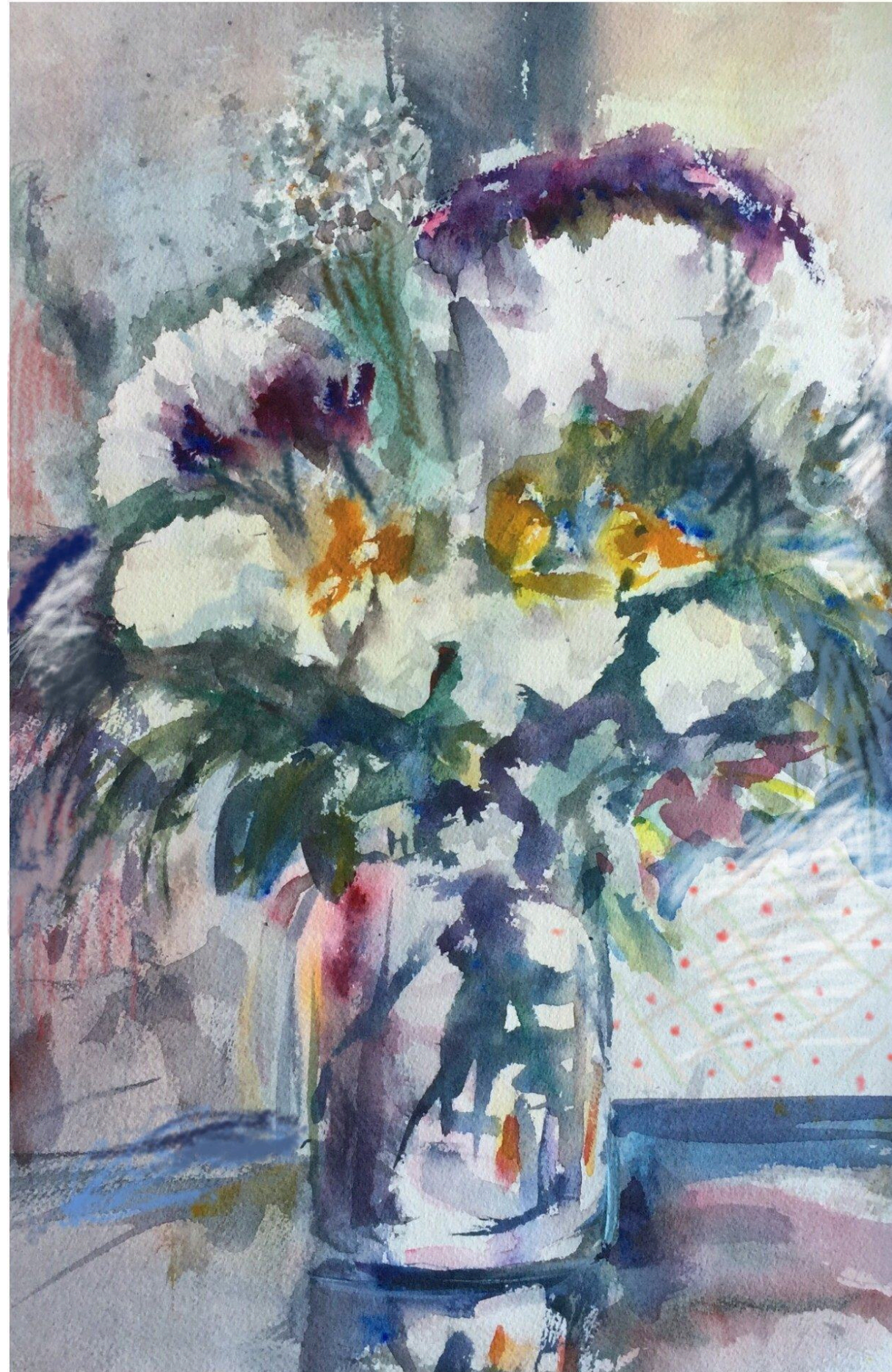
Bouquet for Spring

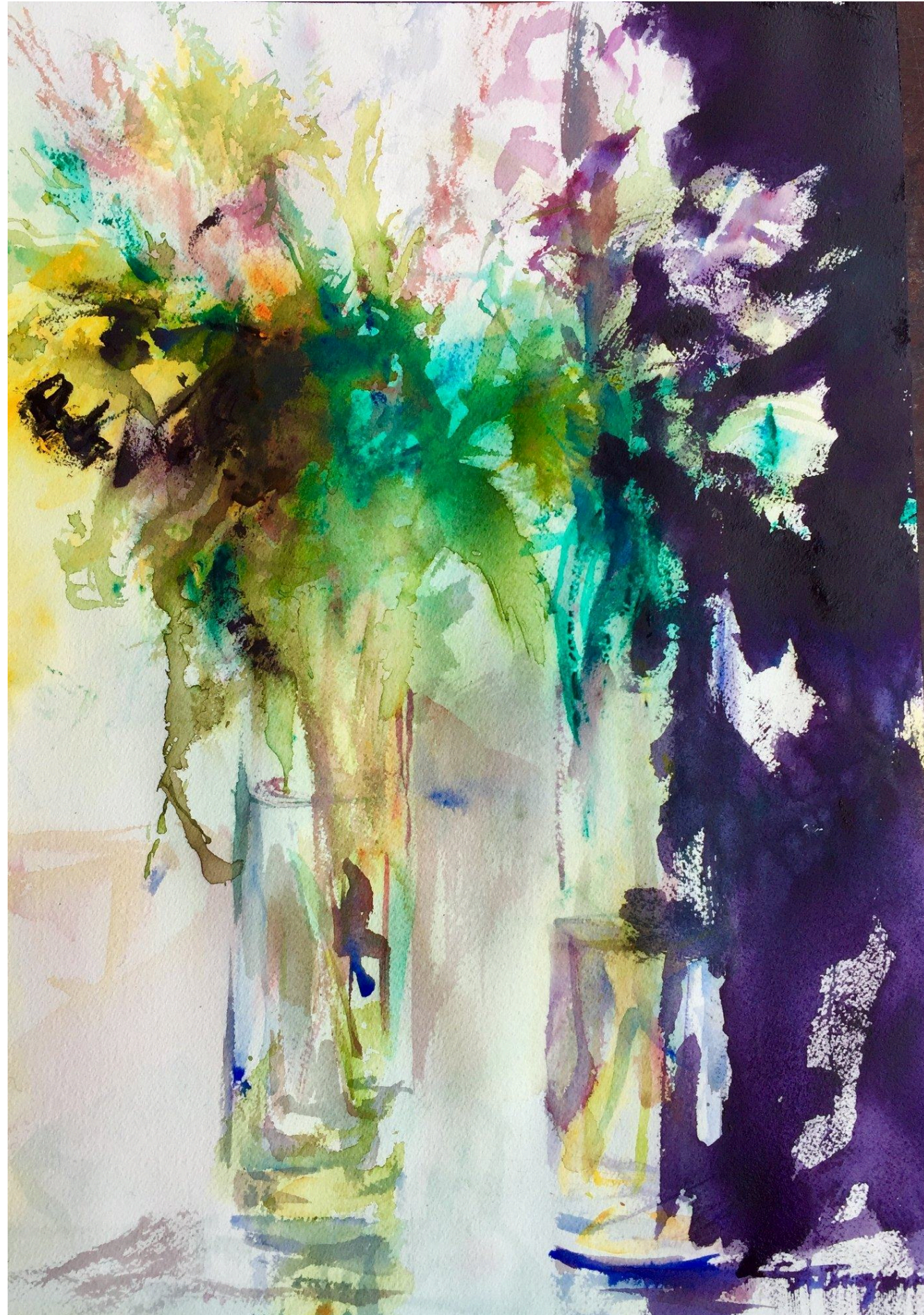
March 26, 2016 · Watercolor

*hurray
for the arrival
of spring
I
dedicate this
bouquet
in
San Francisco
by the bay*

Christmas Bouquet

December 25, 2016 · Watercolor



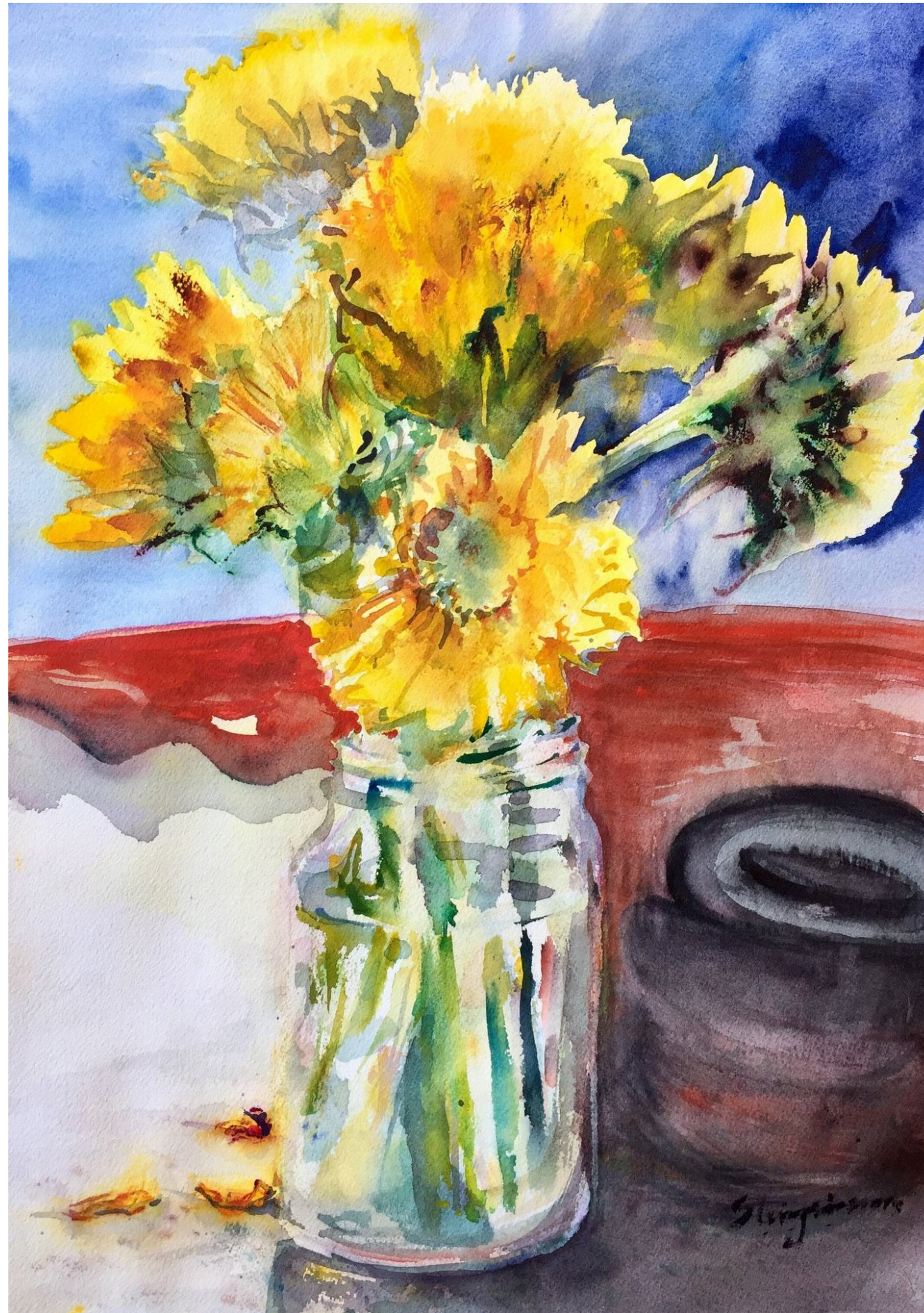


Flowers and the Dragon

June 9, 2017 · Watercolor

Sunflowers

June 24, 2017 · Watercolor





Irises

July 9, 2017 · Watercolor

Sunflowers II

August 26, 2017 · Watercolor





Four Sunflowers in a Vase

December 18, 2017 · Watercolor

Two Bouquets

April 24, 2018 · Watercolor



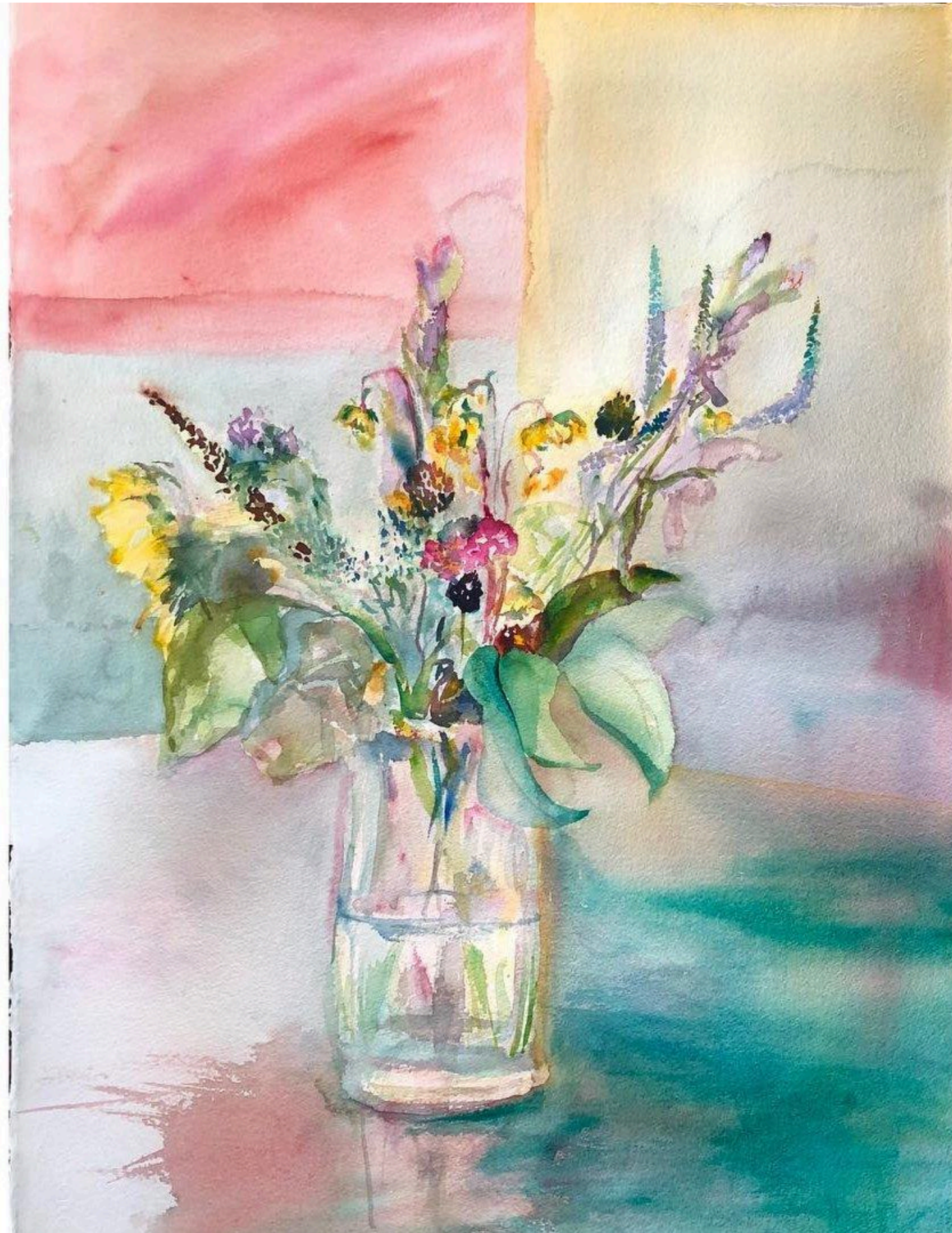


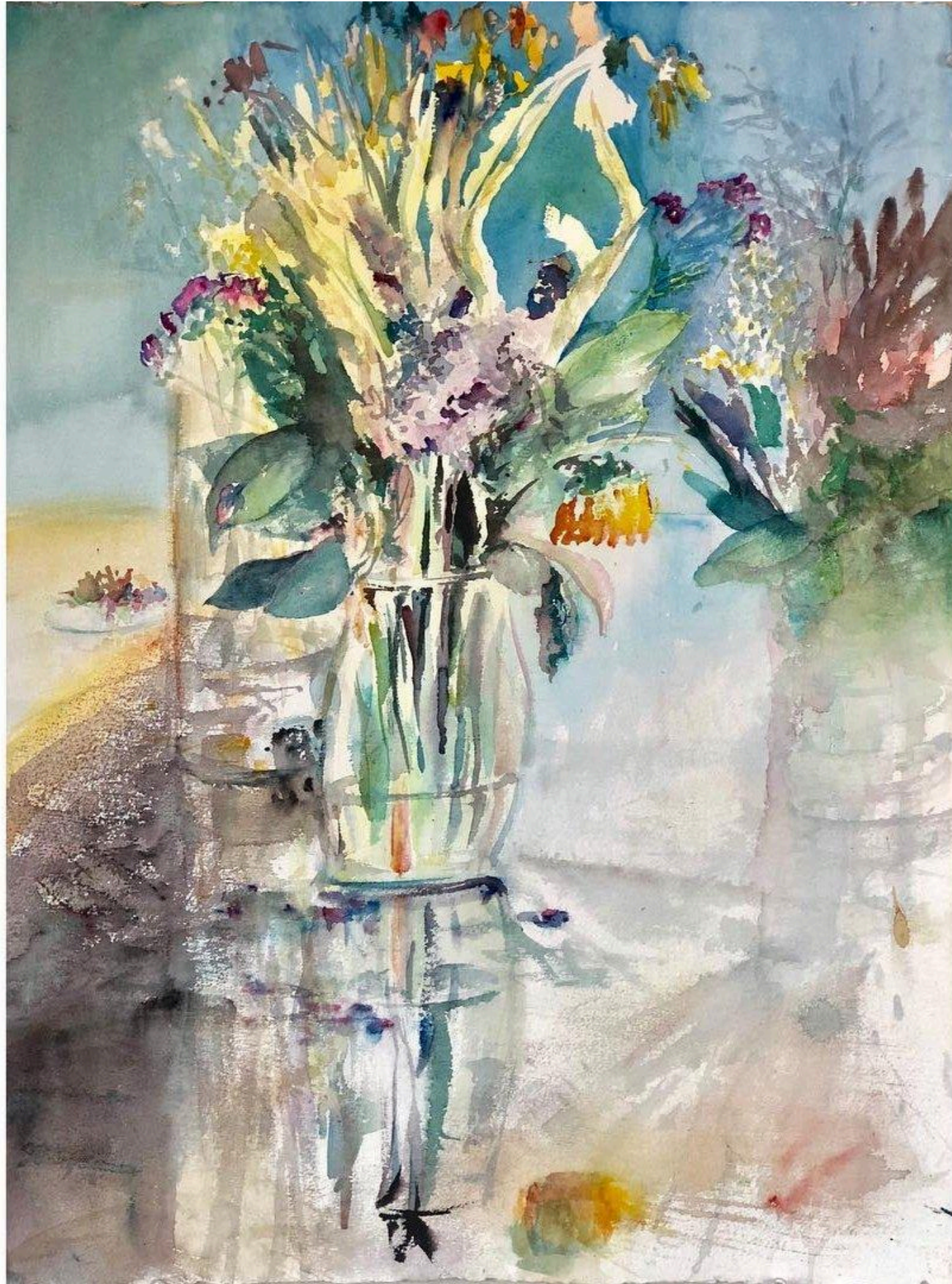
Bouquet and
Canyon of the
Deschutes in Winter

May 23, 2018 · Watercolor

Bouquet in Red, Yellow & Green

August 26, 2018 · Watercolor





Four Bouquets

October 22, 2018 · Watercolor

Tulips

November 13, 2018 · Watercolor





Peony Capriccio

December 30, 2018 · Watercolor

FROM THE LETTER

Best wishes to everyone for a new year
of peace, joy, and love.

Red Lily Bouquet

January 16, 2019 · Watercolor





Tomorrow

February 10, 2019 · Watercolor

Winter Light

February 17, 2019 · Watercolor



VII

Portraits

*Portraits in watercolor and oil: John's
granddaughters, a museum guard he met at
SFMOMA, a Maasai girl in a red shuka, a
Paso Fino horse named Ballerina, an
orangutan, and one self-portrait.*

9 WORKS



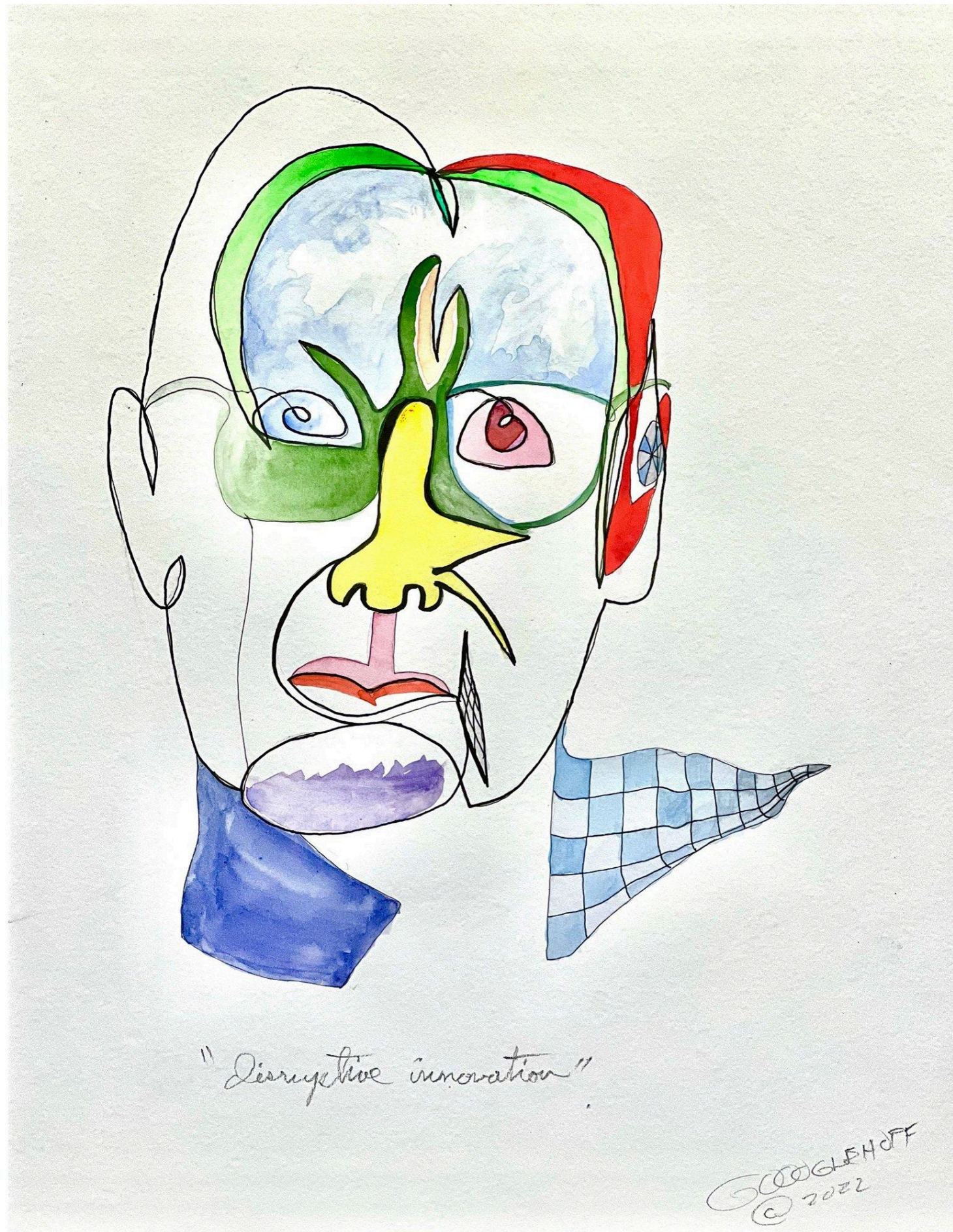
Ballerina

May 15, 2019 · Watercolor, a Paso Fino
horse

Girl with a Red Shuka

August 29, 2020 · Watercolor





Disruptive Innovation

September 13, 2022 · Self portrait

FROM THE LETTER

Did I mention that I was going to venture into portraiture? I decided to jump start the effort with a self portrait.

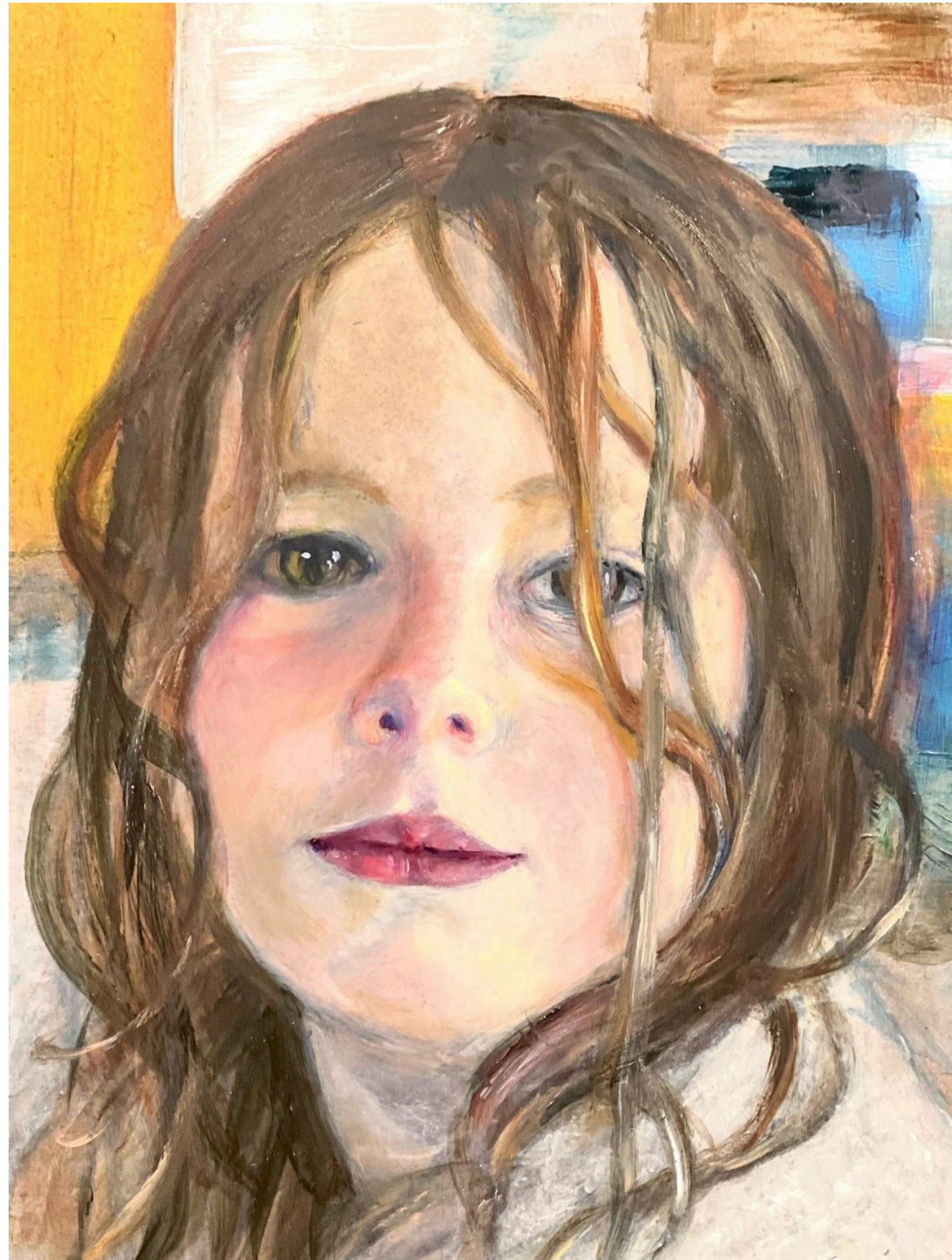
Loa

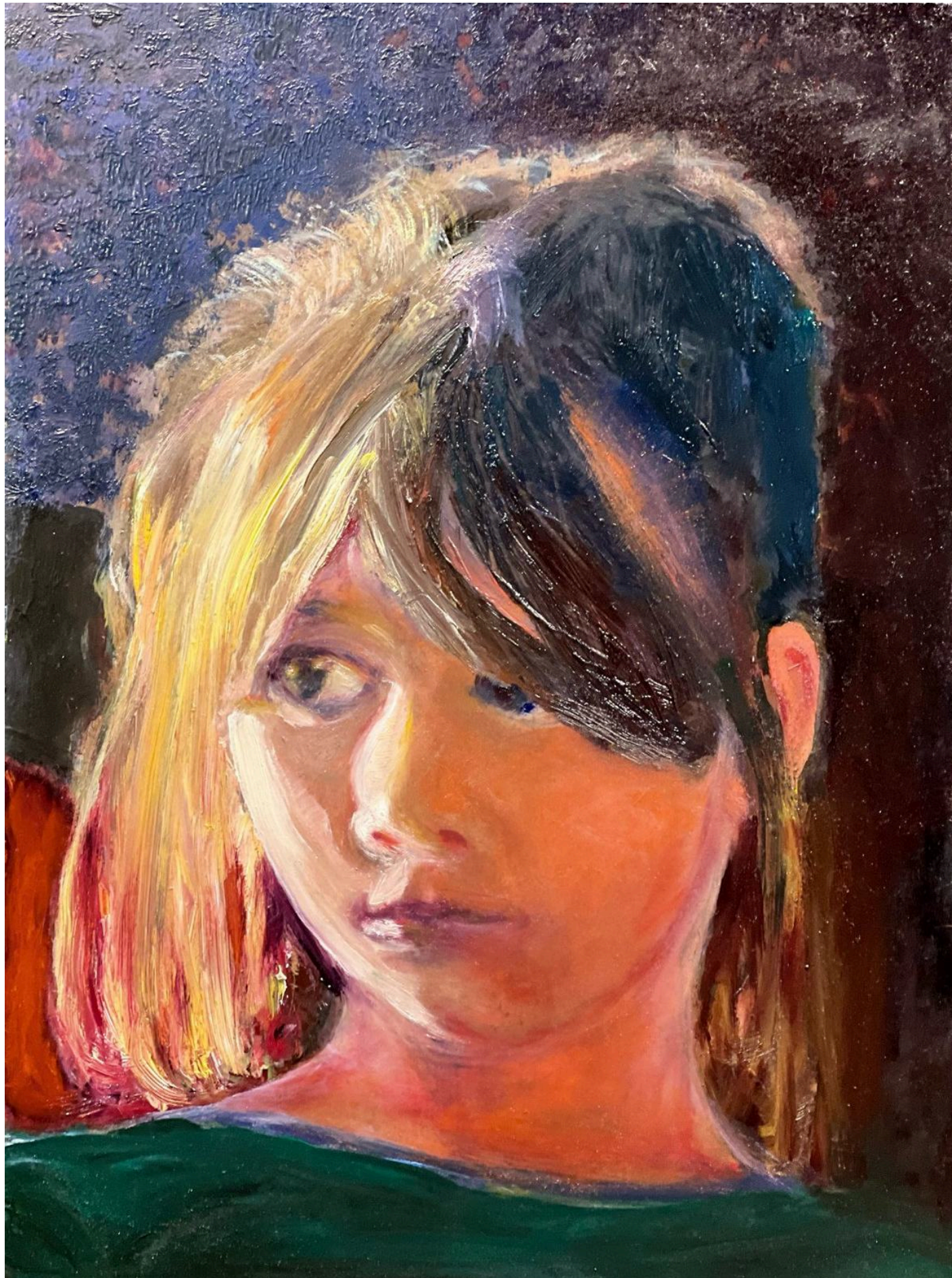
January 7, 2024 · Oil painting on
hardboard, 9 × 12 in

FROM THE LETTER

This oil portrait launches the new year
for me, 'Loa', granddaughter age 6.

My best wishes to you for 2024.





Maddalena

January 14, 2024 · Oil on hardboard panel,
9 × 12 in

FROM THE LETTER

A second oil portrait for the new year.
Loa's big sister, 'Maddalena', age 7.

Orangutan

February 27, 2025 · Watercolor





Portrait of Una

March 22, 2025 · Watercolor, signed Jón Steingrímsson

NOTE

Una, John's granddaughter, born December 19, 2024.

Ari in Bolinas

September 21, 2025 · Watercolor, signed
2023; also printed as a small edition
(artist's proof 1/3)





Museum Guard with Starfish Earrings

September 30, 2025 · Watercolor

FROM THE LETTER

On my first visit to SFMOMA to see 'The Visitors' (I saw it twice), which was created by a fellow Iclander, Ragnar Kjartansson, I discussed the exhibit with a nearby museum guard perched on a stool. She also enjoyed the exhibit, and our conversation inspired my attached watercolor painting of her.

Did anyone else see 'The Visitors' at SFMOMA? I thought it was fantastic.

VIII

Cards

*Illustrated cards John painted for the family:
two birthdays, and Herðubreið with its
climbing poem.*

6 WORKS



Es wackelt spät durch Nacht und Wind,
ein Ferkelchen das lacht und singt.
Es wünscht nur eines das ist klar:
Alles gutes zu deinem Geburtstag im neuen Jahr!
Happy Birthday, Bryan Love, Mom & Dad / 1.27.2018

Ferkelchen, a Birthday Card

January 27, 2018 · Watercolor & ink, a birthday card

*Es wackelt spät durch Nacht und Wind,
ein Ferkelchen das lacht und singt.
Es wünscht nur eines das ist klar:
Alles gutes zu deinem Geburtstag im neuen Jahr!*

Happy Birthday, Bryan — Love, Mom & Dad · 1.27.2018

In English

*Late through night and wind there wobbles
a little piglet, laughing and singing.
It wishes only one thing, that much is clear:
All the best for your birthday in the new year!*

NOTE

A birthday card with a verse in German: a little pig wobbling home late through night and wind, laughing and singing. The background is the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, where Bryan was living at the time.

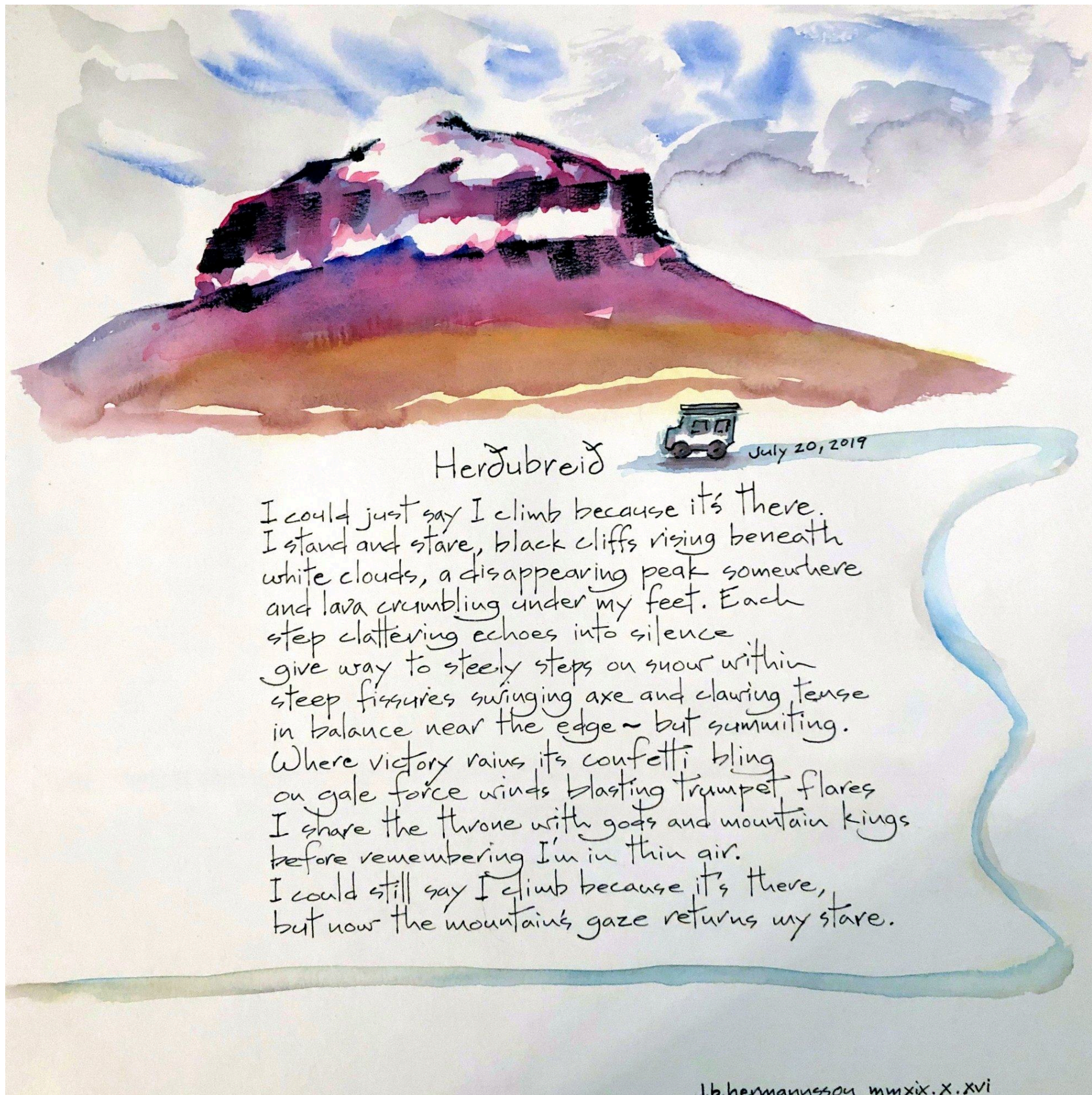
A Birthday Card

January 27, 2019 · Watercolor on paper, a birthday card

NOTE

A birthday card for Bryan: the Berlin city skyline, where he was living at the time.





Herðubreið

October 16, 2019 · Watercolor & ink, the poem handwritten on the painting

Herðubreið

*I could just say I climb because it's there.
I stand and stare, black cliffs rising beneath
white clouds, a disappearing peak somewhere
and lava crumbling under my feet. Each
step clattering echoes into silence
give way to steely steps on snow within
steep fissures swinging axe and clawing tense
in balance near the edge ~ but summiting.
Where victory rains its confetti bling
on gale force winds blasting trumpet, flares
I share the throne with gods and mountain kings
before remembering I'm in thin air.
I could still say I climb because it's there,
but now the mountain's gaze returns my stare.*

j.b.hermannsson mmxix.x.xvi (October 16, 2019)

NOTE

The climb is dated July 20, 2019; the poem is signed October 16, 2019.

A Fortieth Birthday Card

January 27, 2023 · Watercolor & ink, a birthday card

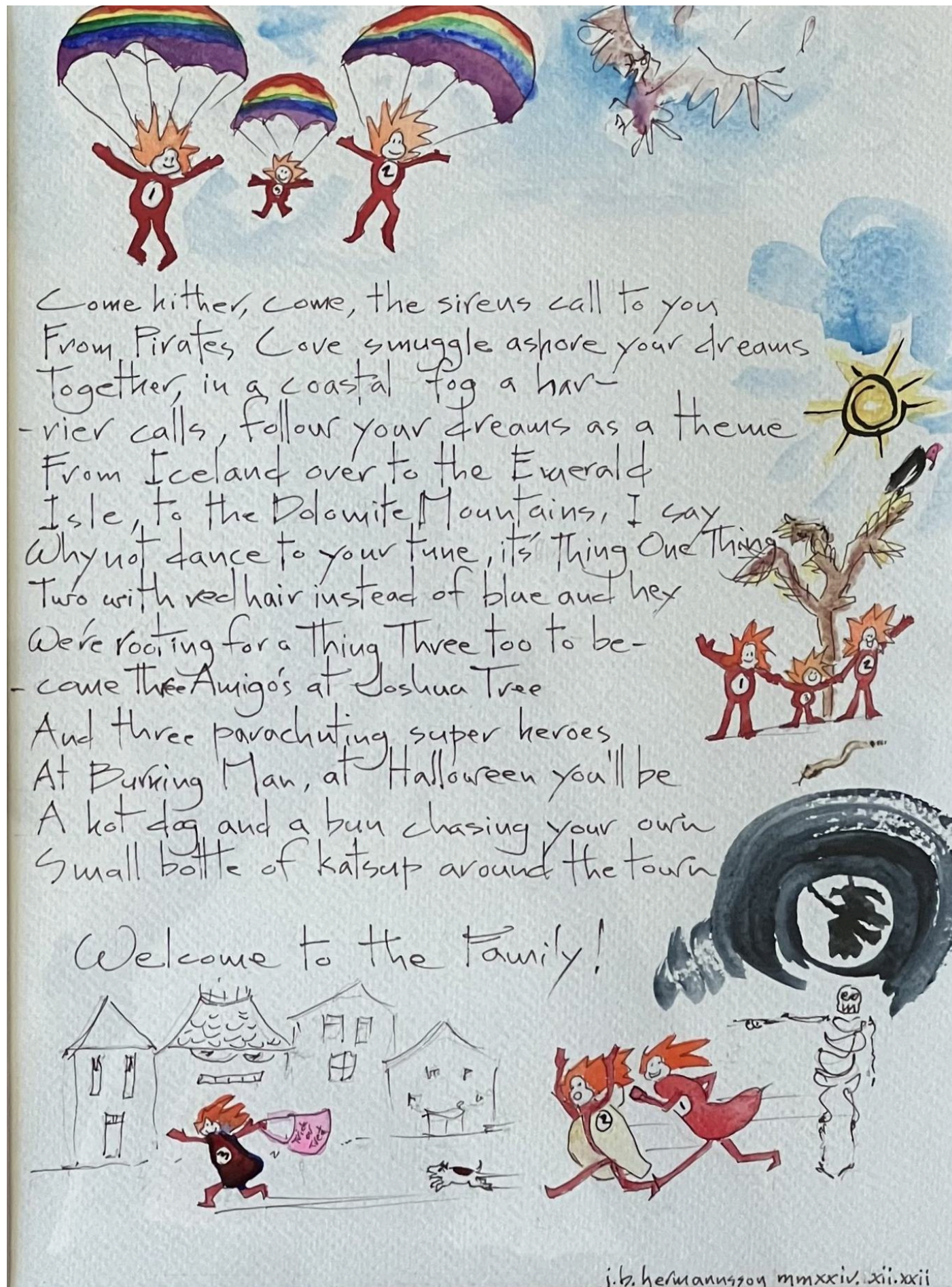
How shall you find the job that suits you now?
A job that has some noteworthy purpose
It all comes down to the what why and how
As in what would be meaningful because

That's who you are. The why is just for fun
A contribution to community
That satisfaction of a job well done
But how remains there hovering you see

Is it the Cheshire Cat smiling at you?
Or Ouroboros swallowing its tail?
Is it a job within a job to do?
Whether it's this or that you can not fail

Like chasing butterflies you run with net
In hand and luck will give you your best bet.





Come hither, come, the sirens call to you
From Pirates Cove smuggle ashore your dreams
Together, in a coastal fog a har-
-rier calls, follow your dreams as a theme
From Iceland over to the Emerald
Isle, to the Dolomite Mountains, I say
Why not dance to your tune, it's Thing One Thing
Two with red hair instead of blue and hey
We're rooting for a Thing Three too to be-
-come three Amigo's at Joshua Tree
And three parachuting super heroes
At Burning Man, at Halloween you'll be
A hot dog and a bun chasing your own
Small bottle of ketchup around the town

Welcome to the Family!

Welcome to the Family

December 22, 2024 · Watercolor & ink, a card

Come hither, come, the sirens call to you
From Pirates Cove smuggle ashore your dreams
Together, in a coastal fog a har-
-rier calls, follow your dreams as a theme
From Iceland over to the Emerald
Isle, to the Dolomite Mountains, I say
Why not dance to your tune, it's Thing One Thing
Two with red hair instead of blue and hey
We're rooting for a Thing Three too to be-
-come three Amigo's at Joshua Tree
And three parachuting super heroes
At Burning Man, at Halloween you'll be
A hot dog and a bun chasing your own
Small bottle of ketchup around the town

Welcome to the Family!

j.b.hermannsson mmxxiv.xii.xxii (December 22, 2024)

NOTE

Dated three days after Una was born: Thing One and Thing Two get their Thing Three.

Wedding Sonnet for Bryan & Trish

September 13, 2025 · Watercolor & ink

Wedding Sonnet for Bryan & Trish

Greetings! glitteratti of fur and gold
Criss-crossing tangles of branches and leaves
Brings us to that not taken road of old
Thought to be in hindsight, but in the trees

Discovered. We celebrate this marriage
Of Trish and Bryan like bee buzzing lovers
Among flowers and friends, a nectar sharing
Red headed pair whose blossom has not on-

-ly bloomed, but has born its first fruit, Una,
A red headed cherub rule breaker, too
We sparkle with joy, sparkle with delight
And wish them blissful happiness like sunlight

Shining with life and beauty gifted through
Our eyes, our smiles, our hugs, and kisses too.

With love, Mom & Dad

NOTE

John read this sonnet at Bryan and Trish's wedding at Hideout, California, on September 13, 2025.

Hideout, California

September 13, 2025

Wedding Sonnet for Bryan & Trish 

Greetings! glitteratti of fur and gold
Criss-crossing tangles of branches and leaves
Brings us to that not taken road of old
Thought to be in hindsight, but in the trees

Discovered. We celebrate this marriage
Of Trish and Bryan like bee buzzing lovers
Among flowers and friends, a nectar sharing
Red headed pair whose blossom has not on-

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A red headed cherub rule breaker, too
We sparkle with joy, sparkle with delight
And wish them blissful happiness like sunlight

Shining with life and beauty gifted through
Our eyes, our smiles, our hugs, and kisses too.

With love,
Mom & Dad



IX

Iceland & More

*Storm light over Iceland, Mývatn and
Þingvallavatn, the inside of a volcano, a
stained-glass study, and a few pieces that fit
nowhere else.*

12 WORKS



Iceland Between Storms

January 22, 2010 · Watercolor

FROM THE LETTER

A watercolor I did during the lull when the passing storm shifted from being a southeasterly to being a southwesterly. In Iceland, southeasterlies have high steady winds while southwesterlies typically result in gusts. The clouds lifted between storms and cast a particularly beautiful light for about 45 minutes.

Wharf of the Matachica

August 18, 2017 · Watercolor

FROM THE LETTER

This painting is dedicated to the memory of Heather Heyer, who was murdered in Charlottesville, Virginia, in the United States of America.



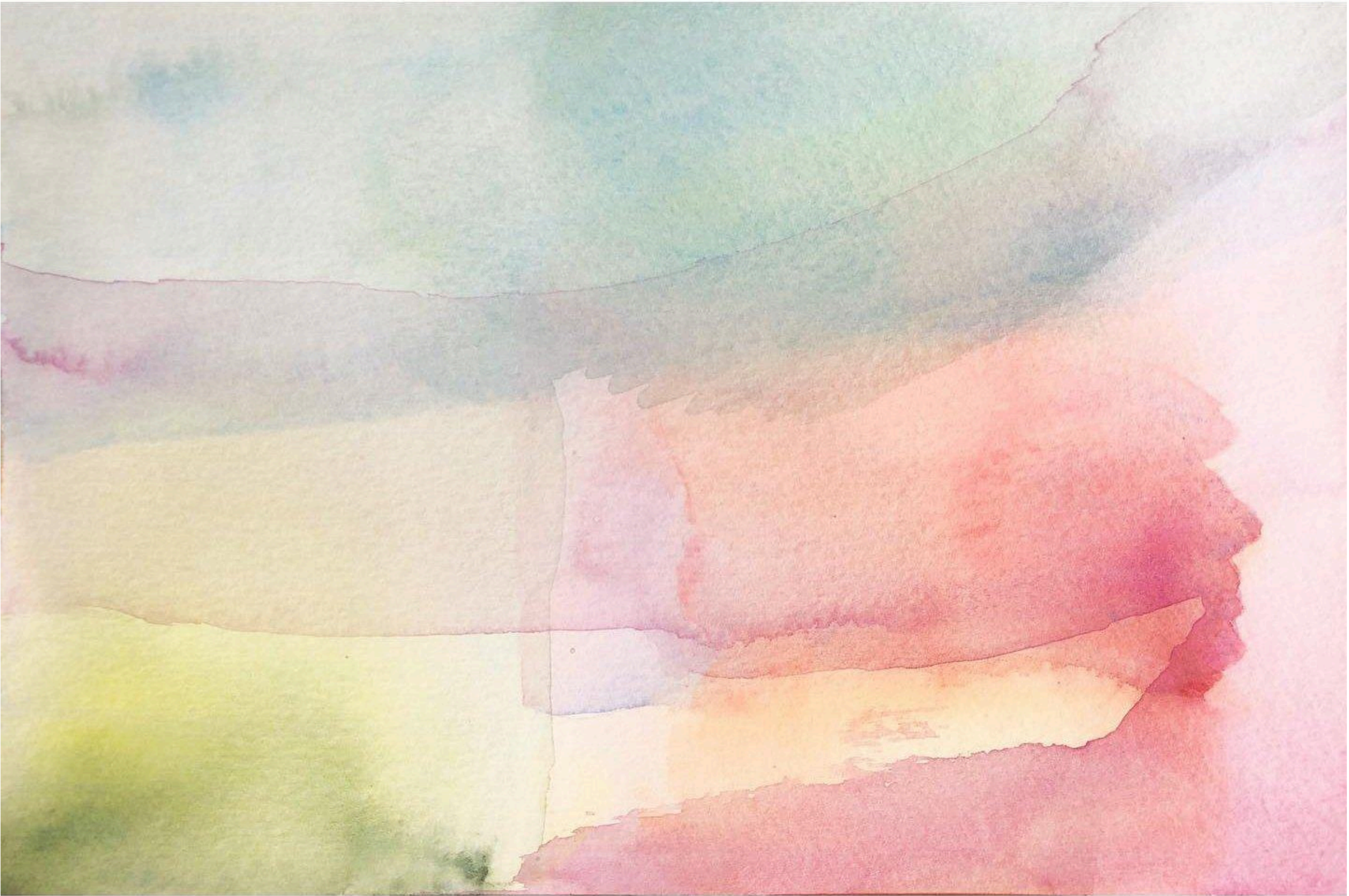


Between Here and There

May 6, 2019 · Watercolor

Time Frames

May 9, 2019 · Watercolor



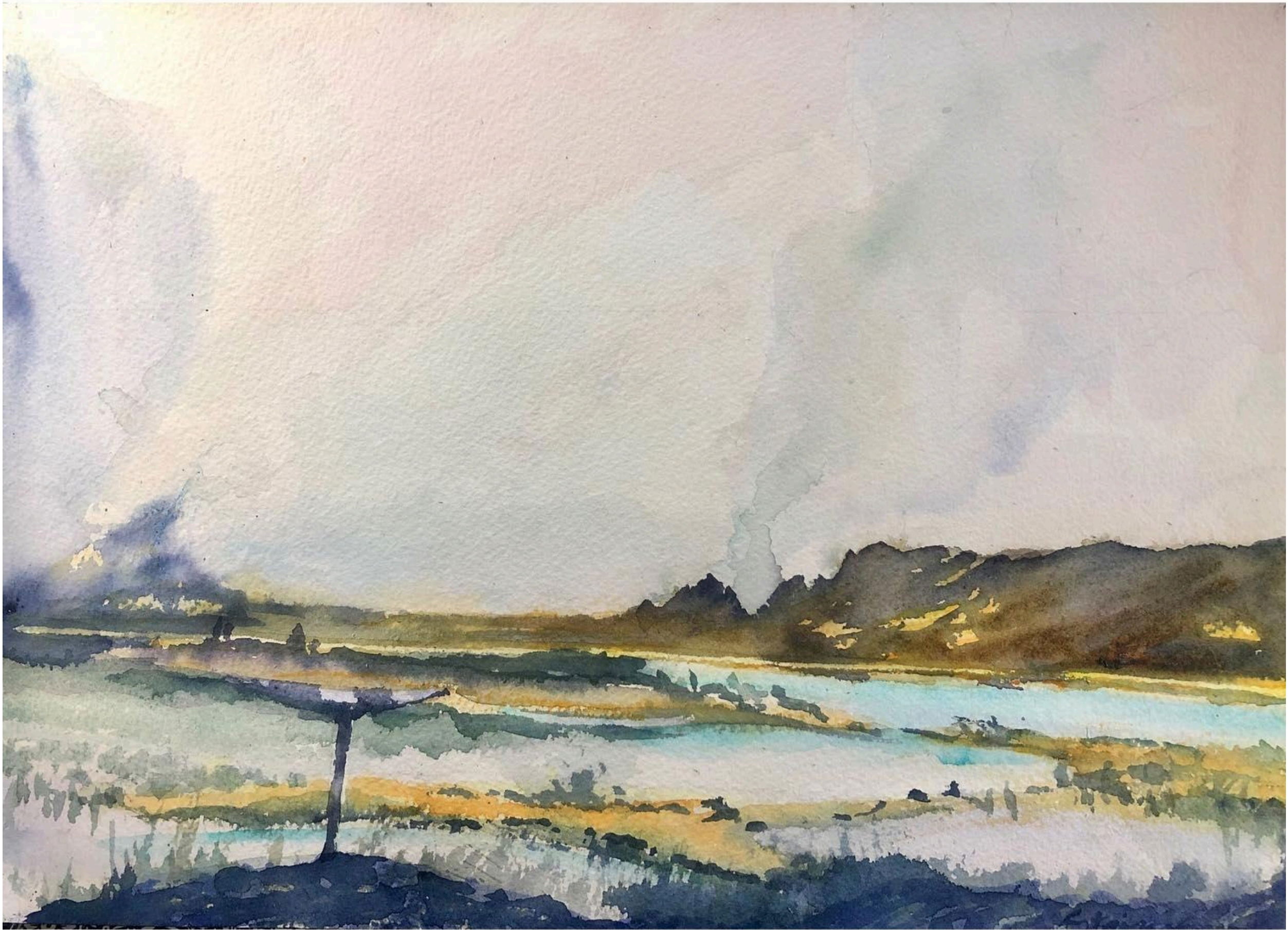


Plastic Fantastic Sea

June 11, 2019 · Watercolor

Mývatn Geothermal
Area

August 3, 2019 · Watercolor





Kaffi Brennsan, Reykjavík

August 16, 2019 · Watercolor, inscribed and
dated 7/7/19

FROM THE LETTER

Inscribed in the corner: "Kaffi Brennsan,
Jh LXXII, 7/7/19 Reykj".

Reykjadalur

August 18, 2019 · Watercolor





Night Fishing at Þingvallavatn

August 25, 2019 · Watercolor

Herðubreið

September 5, 2019 · Watercolor





Study for a Stained Glass Window

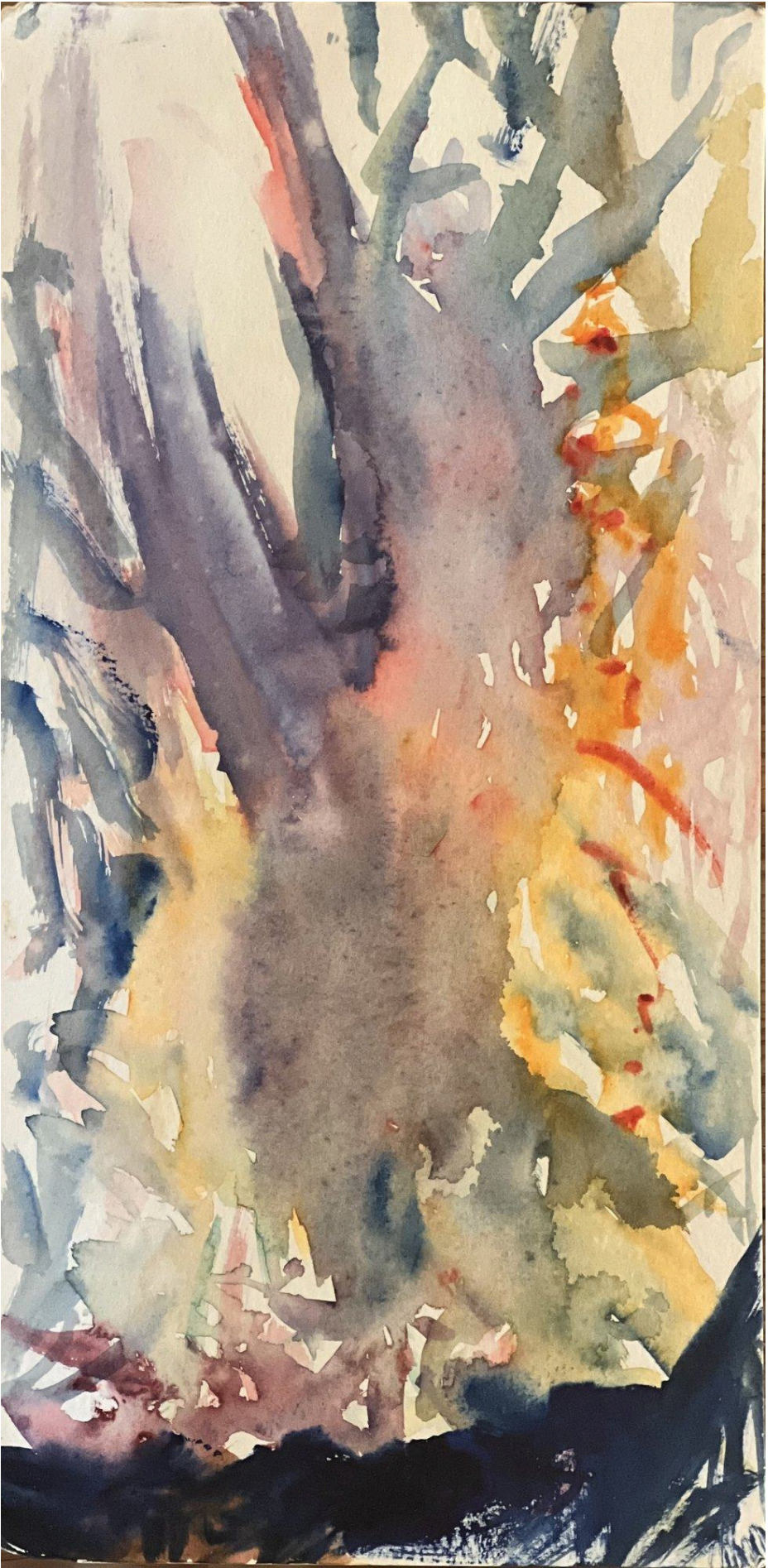
October 6, 2022 · Watercolor

Inside Þríhnúkagígur Volcano

July 12, 2024 · Watercolor

FROM THE LETTER

I am on a hiatus from the Grand Canyon Suite Series while I explore the central highlands of Iceland. Access to the current erupting volcano has been restricted to the press (I'm looking into access for painters.) In the meantime, I have been lowered into a nearby extinct volcano on a window washing apparatus to paint the aftermath of a past eruption from a very different perspective. That is to say, from inside the magma chamber looking up and out the crater. The temperature inside is 38 deg. F. and water drips throughout.



x

Beyond Watercolor

*Oils of Market Street in the rain, Flatey and
the South End Rowing Club, an acrylic
beach, a monoprint, and a stained-glass
window.*

7 WORKS



Market Street, San Francisco

March 15, 2019 · Oil



Tofu Capriccio

January 2, 2021 · Mixed media monoprint
on parchment

FROM THE LETTER

Baked Form Series.



Stained Glass Window

October 6, 2022 · Stained glass, a new interpretation of a watercolor scene



Installed above a hallway door.

Sunset, Flatey

December 4, 2023 · Oil on canvas, 20 × 28 in

FROM THE LETTER

I am expanding my repertoire to include landscape oil paintings. I have been working on bringing my watercolor painting techniques into oil painting to achieve a greater sense of light and transparency with oils to enhance the expression of space. This painting is my most successful attempt at achieving that goal.





South End Rowing Club

Christmas 2023 · Oil, diptych

NOTE

The South End Rowing Club on San Francisco Bay. It is where Trish met Ari, the mutual friend who introduced her to Bryan — in other words, the reason Trish and Bryan met. A Christmas present to Bryan and Trish in 2023.

Morning Light at Bonita Beach

September 2, 2024 · Acrylic on wood panel, 24 × 36 in

*Along the beach in morning light
The Gulf of Mexico becomes a show
Of glittering sequins tangoing white
Ibises to step pause the beat just so.*

-jh

FROM THE LETTER

Let’s take a brief respite from politics, and vicariously enjoy a morning walk on the beach with the following painting and verse.





Water Lilies

2026 · Oil on canvas

NOTE

Painted after John and Bryan visited the Monet exhibition at the de Young Museum in San Francisco, and given to Bryan and Trish in 2026.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

John Hermannsson

John is an architect, painter and poet. He lives in Central Oregon and goes back often to Iceland, where his family comes from.

He paints mostly in watercolor, and often on the spot: beside a spring deep in the Grand Canyon, inside an extinct Icelandic volcano, in a kayaking sketchbook on Vargas Island. For more than twenty years he has sent the results to family and friends by email, usually with a few lines about where he was, and often with a poem.

The Grand Canyon Suite comes from a seventeen-day dory trip down the Colorado River in October 2022. The Fagradalsfjall series comes from his hikes to the eruption in Iceland in 2021.

His poems are signed *j.b.hermannsson*, his portraits *Jón Steingrímsson*, and his political cartoons *GOOOOGLEHOPF*. He posts new work on Instagram at [instagram.com/goooglehopf](https://www.instagram.com/goooglehopf); the cartoons live at pacbrewlab.com/cartoons.



At the oars of a dory on the Colorado River, Grand Canyon, 2022



At the Fagradalsfjall eruption, Iceland, July 2021



Paintings, poems and notes © John Hermannsson. Collected from his emails and his
Instagram account by his son, Bryan Hermannsson, 2026.

Set in Cormorant Garamond and DM Sans. Online at pacbrewlab.com/watercolors.