

PLACE, TIME AND IDENTITY **by Patrick Vincent**

Place, time, and identity overlap for all of us. The physical integration with place creates a desire for “home” — a grounded sense of familiarity and belonging. As an artist born and raised in Minneapolis, Minnesota my impression of home is in the pale-blue light and array of smells connected to the wintery north. When I moved to southern Arizona for graduate school, I took my Mid-Western sensibilities with me, while absorbing the desert. My time away allowed me to reimagine this sense of homestead, as well as mythologize and abstract my original understanding of it. In returning to Minnesota after years away, I am presented with the dual feelings of being a part of this regional culture and at the same time an outsider looking in on a familiar scene. The works gathered for the *Minnesota: Inside and Out* exhibition have a similar effect; making one feel like a voyeur, as well as being welcome.

The articulation of place and culture in *Minnesota: Inside and Out* is presented through individual vignettes — making the place knowable by reducing its scale. Both the abstract gestural paintings and the pastoral watercolors suggest an intimate knowledge and an affect of the northern plains. Most often we think of landscapes and portraits as separate — culture belongs to humans and nature is defined against humans' presence. I argue that people define place just as much as the ancient glaciers that carved out the lakes and rivers. The people presented in the drawings and photographs here are responsible for manipulating the land, of course, but they also define how we view it, its pace, and what is precious. Whether landscape or portrait, the closeness and empathy in these images allow us to feel like acquaintances of the people and land known by the artist. We, in turn, are asked to know these people but always from the removed position of the observer. What we see is a candid expression of the artist and his/her moment in time and space.

When fine arts are most directly connected to place, it is hard not to think of the coastal United States; they are intensely represented due to their prominence as art markets. The Mid-Western United States can be overlooked or clumped as “fly-over” territory given the dominance of the New York City and Los Angeles art markets. In our globalized, “Postmodern” age, the market seems more flexible, but what's more significant is the greater emphasis that has been placed on specificity and diversity of place in art. The artist's background is important, not just to present a story of the creative person, but as a way of showing how their local cultures have affected them. Whether a sprawling metropolis or an open plain, we are all peeking through each other's close-perspectives; there we find ourselves always a guest and, hopefully, with some sense of home.

Patrick Vincent is an artist and a professor at Minnesota State University Moorhead.