

**Don Stinson***The Anvil and Other Works*

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As a young artist living in Boston I loved the gestural touch of Fairfield Porter and abstract simplifications of Milton Avery. I also loved Barbara Novak's writing on the Luminist tradition and Gaston Bachelard's ideas about the meta-physics of space. When I began to reacquaint myself with the wide open spaces of the West after returning home to Colorado, Bachelard's thoughts about the intimacy of immensity had a particular resonance. One of my favorite haunts in New England was the Cape Ann Historical Society in Gloucester. There I could study the shimmering planes of light in Fitz Hugh Lanes paintings near the coves and the harbors he was depicting. Barbara Novak thought Fitz saw god in those details of harbors and sailing ships, becalmed and caressed by a uniquely American light. I was looking for those planes of light when I found the drive-in movie screens in the West; beautifully erect picture planes ready to make our collective imagination visible.

After my move from Boston back to the West in the early nineties I told a writer friend in New York about my interest in Gaston Bachelard. He suggested reading John Brinkerhoff Jackson's *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape* (1984). I took his advice and became fascinated by his writing. Eventually I began a correspondence with Jackson, which culminated in a long lunch with him at his place near Santa Fe just two weeks before he died in 1997. Even late in life he was not interested in nostalgia or mourning what was lost in the landscape. Rather, he was thoughtfully concerned with understanding our cultural geography and the cycles of change sweeping across the landscape.

The shimmering screens of the drive-in movie theaters in my paintings are most significant as structural harbingers of what became the Information Age. Over time, my artistic practice came to reflect a mode of investigation and discovery. The details of place I labored to depict revealed meaning and provided a purpose beyond style and aesthetics of the moment. This topographical approach led me to study a group of photographers working in the nineteen seventies, particularly the Colorado work of Robert Adams. When I look at an Adams photograph I see the track housing, suburban dystopias, and environmental compromises of my Colorado youth- inscribed by rigor, searching for clarity of form.

Since moving to Iowa a year and a half ago, mark-making and the variability of light have become increasingly important to me. I also have developed an openness in my brushwork which seeks to embrace the uncertainties of life and sometimes leaves my images feeling less resolved. This brings me back to my love of the gestural touch of Fairfield Porter's New England paintings and the "open to interpretation" qualities of Milton Avery's lyric abstractions. I have always intentionally left my paint a little rough, wrestled into submission only by the sheer quantity of observable details represented. Now the search for and my understanding of the specifics of place seems less certain.

Unruly storms, big bank buildings, even bigger insurance buildings, and spectacular sculpture parks are all a part of an incredibly resilient agricultural landscape here in Iowa. I am learning about the tensions present in this new landscape as I paint. As a way to stay open to unexpected resolutions, I now feel most comfortable leaving my touch more open and my brushwork less definitive. At this moment, an open, civil dialogue between the rural and the urban is more necessary than ever. My evolving perception of this dialogue manifests in the hope that these paintings elevate the difficulties and beauty in this struggle.

**About Don Stinson**

Don Stinson is an acclaimed artist with works in numerous public and private collections, including the Denver Art Museum, The Phoenix Art Museum, Tucson Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum of Western American Art, the Autry Museum of the American West, and the art in Embassies Program in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, among others. He is the recipient of numerous grants and rewards including the Colorado Council on the Arts Director's Grant, and Best of Show at the Coors Art Exhibit at the National Western Stock Show. His work has appeared in numerous solo and group exhibitions, with prominent showings at the Denver Art Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Denver, Colorado, The Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska and Artist Space, New York. Stinson received a BFA from Colorado State University and an MFA from The School of the Museum of Fine Arts Boston and Tufts University. Stinson was born in Amarillo, Texas and currently divides his time between his studio in Evergreen, Colorado and Mainframe Studios in Des Moines, Iowa. Stinson is represented by David B. Smith Gallery in Denver and Gerald Peters Contemporary in Santa Fe and New York.