

PAIGE BERG RIZVI

AERIAL PERSPECTIVES

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

The human experience is deeply tied to *place*, both as a natural environment and as a man-made construct. Cities, towns, neighborhoods—and the navigation between them—inevitably become more than just a geographic condition. As we interact with people, nature, and infrastructure, our memories are recast, our cerebrum wrinkles just-so, and our dreams start traveling further than our bodies can take us.

In *Aerial Perspectives*, I try to capture the mystery that breathes behind these symbolic place-memories, whether real or imagined, universal or personal. Each painting begins from an unlikely source—a paperback AAA Road Atlas, now as foreign to us as the rotary phone. Maps of real-life American towns like Circle City, AZ; Olive Branch, IL; and Pontiac, MI are collaged and embedded within infinite layers of encaustic (pigmented beeswax paint), along with origami paper, oil paint, and representational imagery.

To achieve both visual immediacy and underlying complexity, I have created my own labor-intensive, hide/reveal approach to the encaustic medium resulting in ultra smooth surfaces and an intriguing depth, at times similar to staring into a pool of water. The thick wax envelops some of the images like a fog, blurring them in various ways, as if softened through memory and distance. Conversely, many elements are raised in relief or deeply carved out of the wax surface. Capitalizing on encaustic's unique luminous quality is an essential part of my work. I spend a lot of time treating the surface of each painting so that light bends and bounces in a sublime way.

Starting visually, I approach each map as a drawing object, using roads and rivers as lines; mountains, forests and cities as washes of color. Places that figure prominently in my family history become easy neighbors—Illinois merges with Arizona; Chicago relocates to the border of New Mexico. The title of each painting is born from a symbolic place name existing in the reinvented map. This wordplay is contextualized further through the composition of imagery in each work. Whether birds, houses, planes, or food, I utilize repetition as a thematic reinforcement of the symbolism contained within. Multiples of objects, especially as they re-occur throughout this series, build toward an otherworldly sense of movement. The magical becomes possible within an otherwise hyper-realistic milieu—bing cherries casually levitate in the air, rational birds converse among zeppelins, pragmatic pink houses float above an asparagus stalk, a sober sun lounger crowns the sky, and airplanes dutifully navigate a mutant landscape. These aerial worlds are more kindred to the ancient Roman augur studying a portentous flight of birds than to the modern-day ornithologist behind binoculars.

Considered ambitious by most encaustic standards, many of these works measure over three feet. Both physically and conceptually, each one is a weighty rumination on the parallel navigation between the real and the imagined, the universal and the personal, the man-made world and the natural world, the outside trek and the inner journey.



Scott City, 2014
Encaustic, Oil, Archival Inkjet Prints on Wood Panel
6" x 6"

ARTIST BIO

Born near Chicago, I received a BFA in painting from Tufts University/School of the Museum of Fine Arts. I moved to Easton, PA from Burlington, VT in 2015 and continue to create my work in a beautiful studio space on Ferry Street. Studio visits by appointment are encouraged.

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