

KEITH WILSON

from Empathy to Abstraction

SEPT 15 - OCT 27, 2019



LOWERED HORIZONS - oil on linen 2019



**ARTREACH GALLERY
& ARTS LIBRARY**
at First Congregational UCC
1126 Park Ave, Portland, OR

KEITH WILSON: AN INTERVIEW

Sheldon Hurst: How did you get interested in creating these delightful creations of what seem like Italian cities?

Keith Wilson: The topic of my Architectural master's thesis was Ornament in Architecture :Paul Klee + Memory. I conducted reading based research and then illustrated the concepts with loose drawings that I painted with watercolors. My thesis advisor, Charles Moore told me quite bluntly that anyone could copy information from books and portfolios but only I could make these unique drawings and watercolors. It was suggested that I continue in that mode and my thesis consisted of more than 100 paintings which over the succeeding decades became hundreds more.

The UC Berkeley campus provided an excellent visual and spatial education so that when I toured Europe it had a distinct familiarity which was augmented by the cultural and architectural authority of the visited cities and sights. The majority of my architectural images are inventions based on memories, research and responses to spatial sequences.

They became icons to an architecture that is no longer designed or constructed.

SH: Piero della Francesca created some amazing scenes so precisely made to give illusion of Renaissance Space. But your spaces are so different. They are playful and invite an imaginative play.

KW- I carefully studied the Ideal Cities paintings, the background buildings in icons and medieval paintings and the literature of celestial cities. There was always an embedded message or directed narrative. The Renaissance painters, employing the newly discovered rules for representing perspective to represent space and depth, and the architects of the period were interested in proposing a clear alternative to the crowded, convoluted medieval city that was largely unplanned and created by defensive concerns. My work did take on a more holistic perspective which was more dynamic and experiential sometimes showing the roof and the floor at the same time. Since the human figure is absent from my paintings and there are few signs of occupancy or even temporal events such as shade or shadow the viewer is invited to become the sole occupant and envision exclusive ownership of the pictorial space. The size of the watercolors were intentionally limited to the dimensions of a human head and the intricate detail demanded intimate viewing;



INTER/SECTION – watercolor 1982-

establishing an immersive experience free from external distractions. The tall buildings were part of a series of "The Skyscraper Artistically Considered" paintings and reflect on my time in the Building Design section of SOM Architects, SF mid-1980's. They were a reaction against sterile colorless uniformly impersonal buildings and were a subversive attempt from the inside to suggest a humanistic way forward

SH: You know the work of Paul Klee. How has he influenced you?

KW: Paul Klee is my artistic father in Heaven. I was given a book on Klee when I was 14 by an art teacher who thought my drawings looked somewhat like his and since then I have carefully and thoroughly studied his work. The notebooks and paintings have been my primary formal source of discovery and inspiration over the decades. A young visitor to my studio counted 45 books on Paul Klee on the book shelves, I did not tell him that I have many more in my home library. Klee gave me artistic guidance and painterly permission but the primary lesson I received from him is to work from my internal, self-direction and personal experience; documenting my unique visions of a unique world that would not exist if I failed to paint it. Although my current work in oil is larger and bolder with less line structure, minimal subject or narrative form, I still maintain the sense of joy and refreshing use of color that Paul Klee revealed through his paintings and extensive writings. Although his paintings were often written off as light, comical or decorative in reality his sharp use of wit, irony and caricature both of the human condition and artistic tradition imbedded his work with a universal truth and was a documentation of his creative genius.

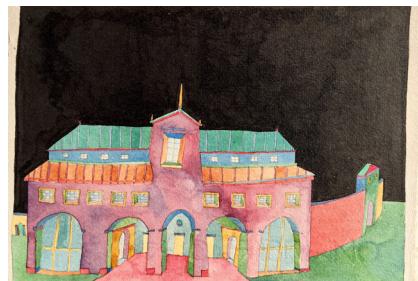


GENIS LOCI
watercolor/india ink/gold leaf 1988

*SH: The title of this show is from Empathy to Abstraction. We get these words from the German Wilhelm Worringer whose seminal work was *Abstraktion und Einfühlung* in 1908. There is such a dynamic relationship of these ideas in your work. Worringer wrote some very thoughtful comments that continue to ring true, such as: "Whereas the precondition for the urge to empathy is a happy pantheistic relationship of confidence between man and the phenomena of the external world, the urge to abstraction is the outcome of a great inner unrest inspired in man by the phenomena of the outside world" (15). How do you see your work in the context of these urges?*

KW: The earlier architectural watercolors documented my unbridled enthusiasm for learning about the constructed world in distant lands and invited the viewer to recall a real or imagined empathetic response to ancient far off places and buildings no longer being created. The current paintings through the use of similar shapes and colors abstract that experience and internalized knowledge and establish a consistent visual relationship that is open to personal interpretations beyond architecture, form or analog association in the actual world. In creating a nonobjective, non-associative pictorial space, the painting itself becomes the subject: real, genuine and an end in itself. This is an intended distraction from the persistent digital or artificial environment that seeks to predominate our current mental and physical existence and define taste; further eroding our individuality.

The architectural inspired watercolors (1979-2006) exhibited in The Chapel Gallery often produce a familiar response that is empathic; recalling positive memories of visited Mediterranean buildings or villages. As the creator of the works, the essence is a very abstract color/ shape dialog based on mindfully mixing colors and filling in the cells established through the intersection of lightly drawn pencil lines. The architectural image produces the subject/object. Inspired by traditional stained glass windows where the intersecting lead matrix contains an abstract network of cells which are then filled with colored and shaded glass which tell the story. (The original comic book!) It is exciting to show these works in The Chapel Gallery of a historically significant European inspired sacred building with the wonderful stain glass windows to illustrate the connection. I strongly feel that Abstraction without empathy is just painting and vice-versa. The large oil paintings (2012-2019) in The Main Gallery are pure abstractions with a very reserved amount of empathetic generating material. They are a continuation of the architectural watercolors in that an implied organizing matrix is often present but a clear object/subject definition is recessive the way in which the plan of a building is not foremost in the experience of visiting a building but the plan maintains the order, sequence and functional essence. The paintings have become the object. The empathetic response in the oil paintings is limited to the blocks of color and their inter-relationships and hopefully connect to unclassified or objectified memories or associations.

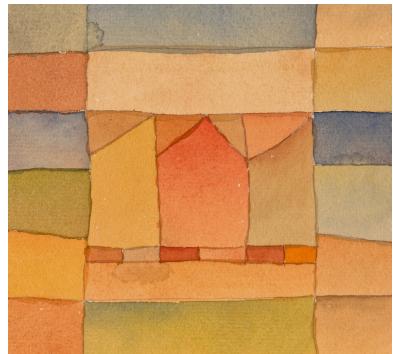


THE HOUSE FOR ALL SEASONS
—watercolor/india ink 1987

SH: The play of color, shape and line and are so significant in your work. Each of these becomes so dynamic in your recent compositions. I would like to you reflect on the creative process you experience in these works. Maybe you could choose two for some specific comments.

KW: The early Architectural Inventions (watercolors) owe their form to a loose matrix of intersecting pencil or ink lines. A grid with a few triangular shapes established roofs and rectangular shapes that represented doors and windows became identified as buildings.

Further additions of decorative elements or cultural signifiers elevated the buildings to architecture. The grouping of buildings in a setting became a townscape or urban environment. In a completely distinct and separate effort the cells created by the intersection of lines were uniquely filled with bright, transparent watercolor similar to stained glass windows. The unifying message of the watercolors was hope and beauty through celebrating the architecture of the past in an era of dismal and destructive modern or post-modern architecture as practiced in the 1970/80's that had lost its courage and purpose being largely corrupted by commercial expediency. My current work in oil paint isolates the play of color, shapes and color by dispensing with the determinate linear grid, greatly enlarging the scale, and removing the architectural narrative or references. The blocks of color establish a grid or matrix as a result of the painting effort. The edges and implied relationships between the blocks coupled with repeated similar color distribution around the composition establishes a dynamic balance that is intended to always be in subtle motion and not static. I feel strongly that looking at non identified forms can establish a refreshed attitude towards life and individual empowerment since a personal judgment and identity can be established through the work (and as a format to encourage independent visual assessments elsewhere) and a new pure memory is formed without prejudice or outside influence (style, fashion, or popular acceptance). The titles of my paintings hopefully give insight into the painterly expression without limiting the viewer's full imagination to derive a personal relationship or ownership. I find that painting daily builds a positive personal foundation and the mental clarity to cope with issues of our collective social/environmental failures and dysfunctional governance. Sometimes the only way out is through. I paint therefore I exist!



ROW HOUSES -watercolor 1978

KEITH WILSON BIOGRAPHY

I received a BA and MArch in Architecture from UC Berkeley and practiced Architecture for over 30 years. Concurrently, I maintained a steady production of watercolor paintings and drawings which paralleled and inspired architectural interests. When I discontinued the architectural practice in 2001 I began painting abstract landscapes in sumi-ink/ watercolor and studied natural systems, Chinese Painting, Buddhism and Daoist Thought.

In 2010 I started working in oil on linen and discovered a stronger and more direct way of painting. The paintings are constructed as they are being painted and not designed or pre-conceived. I feel I have entered into a vibrant period of painting which has advanced my connection to pure art having been informed by my previous years of creating watercolors and architecture mixed with periods of travel and research. I am drifting into significant understanding of the meaning of real through a steady, directed and measured mixing and application of paint.



GREENDAY –oil on linen 2019

Developing A STRUCTURE OF COLOR is the dominate investigative force in my current paintings. The focus is on abstract organically placed extended squares which employ color as a primary means of expression and as the subject and the object..

This exhibit at ARTREACH pairs watercolors from 1978-2005 with recent oil painting. A shared vocabulary of palette selection and application methodology unite the work. While the watercolors yield to my architectural interests of the past the recent oil paintings are narrative neutral and free from allusion

or association. This is an effort to allow pure paintings to emerge that possess an auric presence or object-ness; a structure of pure color. Additional paintings and writings can be explored at

www.KeithWilsonArt.com

EDUCATION

1976 BA Environmental Design, U.C. Berkeley

1979 Master of Architecture, U.C. Berkeley MA Thesis "Paul Klee + Memory: An approach to Architectural Ornament"

2012-14 College of Marin - Oil painting study - Instructor: Chester Arnold

SELECTED JURIED EXHIBITIONS

- 2019 NEW CURRENCIES - GPG@TheBank, Jennifer Perlmutter,
Lafayette, CA
- 2018 ARTISTS SPRING - Sofie Contemporary Arts, Calistoga, CA
- 2018 stARTup Fair - Hotel Del Sol room 203 - San Francisco, CA
- 2017 BLUETS - GEARBOX GALLERY- Oakland - Juror: Jack Fischer
- 2017 Contemporary Landscape Exhibition - Marin MOCA - Juror : Chester Arnold
- 2017 FALKIRK FALL OPEN JURIED EXHIBITION - San Rafael - Juror:
Dorallen Davis
- 2017 stARTup Fair - Hotel Del Sol room 223 - San Francisco, CA
- 2016 SUMMER NATIONAL PAINTING EXHIBITION - Marin MOCA -
Juror: Brian Gross
- 2016 ARCHITECTURE SHOW - Artworks Downtown, San Rafael - Juror:
Erick Moreau
- 2015 FALL NATIONAL DRAWING EXHIBITION - Marin MOCA - Juror:
Jack Fischer
- 2015 MICROCOSMOS SHOW - Gallery 621, Benicia - Juror: Chester Arnold
- 2015 BOLD - O'Hanlon Arts Center - Juror: Robert Green
- 2015 THE HOME SHOW - Gualala Arts Center
- 2015 COMPOSING CHAOS - O'Hanlon Arts Center - Juror: Chester Arnold
- 2015 ABSTRACTIONS - Pacific Art League, Palo Alto - Juror: Robert Polack
- 2012 BORDERS AND BOUNDARIES - Sebastopol Center for the Arts-
juried show
- 2011 SHATTERED - Marin MOCA - Juror: Kenneth Baker
- 2011 BLACK & WHITE - O'Hanlon Arts Center - Juror: Richard Whittaker
- 2011 NATURE'S PALETTE - Marin Arts Gallery, San Rafael
- 2010 WEST COAST BIENNIAL - Redding (Juror's Award) - Juror: Bob Nugent
- 2010 THE MAY SHOW - Gualala Arts Center(1stPrize) - Juror: Lucinda
Barnes, Chief Curator BAM
- 2009 CIVIC CENTER - Juried Art Exhibit - Berkeley City Hall

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITS

- 2019 Studio Discovery Tour, 39295 Pacific Reach, The Sea Ranch
LABOR DAY WEEKEND
- 2018 Sofie Contemporary Arts, Calistoga - Forgotten Cities ... 80
-watercolors from 1987-2000
- 2018 Studio Discovery Tour, 39295 Pacific Reach, The Sea Ranch
LABOR DAY WEEKEND
- 2016 Placewares Gallery, Gualala - The Building Plan Artistically
Considered - Sept 3-Nov 20

2015 Art By The Sea - The Sea Ranch open studio tour
2014 Placewares Gallery - Black & Gold in Color
2013 Placewares Gallery, Gualala - A Structure of Color
2013 Art By The Sea - The Sea Ranch open studio
2012 BraytonHughes Design Studio-The invention of an Architectural World -SF
2012 Art By The Sea - The Sea Ranch Open Studio
2011 Marin Arts Open Studio- San Rafael
2010 ProArts East Bay Open Studio, Berkeley
2009 Artist Studio Tour, 118 Horizon Reach, The Sea Ranch
2009 Placewares Gallery, Gualala (Sea Ranch)
2007 Placewares Gallery, Gualala (Sea Ranch)

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2018 Sofie Contemporary Arts, Calistoga, CA - "So Far..."
2018 Spindrift Gallery, Gualala, CA - "FIFTEENTH ANNIVERSARY EXHIBIT"
2018 Sofie Contemporary Arts, Calistoga, CA - "Artist Spring: The Fire and the Rose are One"
2017 Spindrift Gallery, Gualala, CA - "ART.LIGHT.JOY"
2010 Placewares Gallery, Gualala, Ca

PAINTING COMMISSION 1982-84

"THE ATHENS OF THE WEST" A seven panel egg tempera and burnished gold leaf on gesso panel painting Inspired by the historic architectural design of the UC Berkeley Campus.
Location: Lobby, Intramural Sports Facility.

PUBLICATION OF WORK

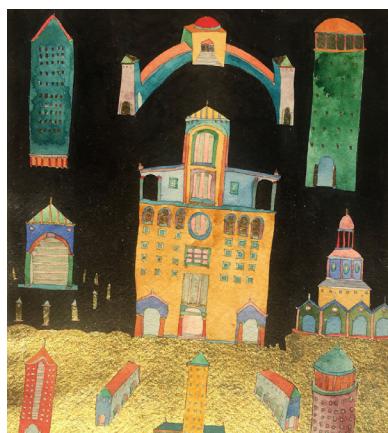
2018 THE COVE.com - Artists Respond to Fire
2017 The Sea Ranch SOUNDINGS - article on Keith Wilson's work and inspiration
2016 MFA NEVER, Catalog published by Root Division San Francisco
2015 The Placewares+LyndonDesign Gallery: The First Ten Years in Gualala
2011 Drawing on front & back cover and 5 interior pages of Awareness, The Feldenkrais Journal, # 23 "Aesthetics".
2007 Drawing on front & back cover of Awareness, The Feldenkrais Journal, # 20.
2005 Painting published in fall 205 issue of Inquiring Mind , entitled "Earth Dharma"
1980 Keith Wilson Catalog. Printed by Yolla Bolla Press

COLLECTIONS

GATX Leasing Co. Embarcadero Four - San Francisco Pacific Bell Headquarters - San Ramon, California
Mahoney Corp. - San Francisco
Jewish Community Museum - San Francisco
Kala Institute - Berkeley, California
Bramalea Pacific - Oakland, California
Skidmore Owings and Merrill - San Francisco, California
Paul Anka - Carmel, California
University of California, Berkeley
Standard Oil Company - San Francisco
Raychem Corporation - Tokyo, Japan and Shanghai, China
Kaiser Permanente Hospitals
United States Embassy, Tunisia

TEACHING AND LECTURES

Gallery Talk: "Deserted Cities of the Heart"- Sofie Contemporary Art, Calistoga Ca, 2018
Gallery Talk: "The Building Plan Artistically Considered"- Placewares Gallery, Gualala - 2016
Adjunct Professor, California College of Arts And Crafts: Interior Design Program 1988- 1993
Lecturer, U.C. Berkeley Extension: Interior Design Studio II, Fall 1987
Teaching Associate, U.C.
Berkeley, Department of Architecture: Architectural Drawing 1978 and 1979
Teaching Assistant, U.C. Berkeley, Department of Art: Etching Studio, Winter 1978
Western Addition Lecture: "Painted Houses" San Francisco Art Institute, 1980



THE ASCENT OF ARCHITECTURE
watercolor/gold leaf 1985

EXHIBITION CHECK LIST

01. SPACE ODDITY left side (homage David Bowie) - 2019
oil on linen, diptych 40"x60"
02. SPACE ODDITY right side (homage David Bowie) - 2019
oil on linen, diptych 40"x60"
03. TALES OF HOFMANN (Hans) - 2018, oil on linen, 40"x30"
04. SUPPORT NETWORK - 2018, oil on linen, 40"x30"
05. RED/Shift - 2012, oil on linen, 40"x30"
06. Internal Affairs: HARA - 2016, oil on linen, 40"x30"
07. DIS-PLACEMENT - 2018, oil on linen, 40"x30"
08. INFLECTION POINT - 2019, oil on linen, 40"x30"
09. THE SHAPE OF GREENS TO COME - 2019, oil on linen, 40"x30"
10. SUMMERTIME BLUES - 2019, oil on linen, 30"x24"
11. GREENSPACE - 2019, oil on linen, 30"x24"
12. DARK FORCES - 2019, oil on linen, 30"x24"
13. EMERALD FORCAST - 2019, oil on linen, 30"x24"
14. GREENDAY - 2019, oil on linen, 24"x20"
15. DARK CORNERS - 2019, oil on linen, 20"x16".
16. LONG GRAY CORRIDOR - 2016, oil on linen, 20"x16"
17. LOWERED HORIZONS - 2019, oil on linen, 20"x16"
18. FLOATING ROOMS - 2016, oil on linen, 20"x16"
19. DRIPLINE - 2019, oil on linen, 20"x16"
20. COURT AND SPARK - 2019, oil on linen, 20"x16"
21. SHIFTED AXIS - 2019, oil on linen, 20"x16"
22. LINEAR EQUATION - 2019, oil on linen w/gaffers tape, 20"x16
23. THE BARGE - 2004, watercolor, image 7.25"x10.5"
24. IMPLIED NARRATIVE - 2004, watercolor, image 10"x7"
25. THE DARK GARDEN Kent, England - 2000
watercolor, image 9"x9.25"
26. MODERN CITY WALLS - 2003, watercolor, image 10.5"x7.25"
27. OBSERVING THE PAST - 2004, watercolor, image 7"x5"
28. COLOR/SHIFT - 2006, watercolor, image 6.25"x4.75"
29. OBSERVING THE OLD CITY BELOW - 2000
watercolor, image 11"x8"
30. THE JETTY MUSEUM - 2004, watercolor, image 6.5"x6"
31. ARCHITECTURE AT THE CROSSROADS - 1985
watercolor, image 5.5"x7.5"
32. CONCISE TOWNSCAPE/right - 1985, watercolor, image 7.25"x4.5"
33. CONCISE TOWNSCAPE/right - 1985, watercolor, image 7.25"x4.5"
34. THE HOUSE FOR ALL SEASONS - 1987, watercolor, image 5.5"x7.25"
35. SPANISH WALLS - 2008, watercolor, image 7"x5"

36. ABANDONED MILLTOWN - 2004, watercolor, image 7"x5"
37. THE SPACE BETWEEN - 2008, watercolor, image 7.25"x5"
38. IN FRONT OF THE MOUNTAINS - 2004, watercolor, image 7.25"x5"
39. BRIGHT SPOT IN THE UNIVERSE - 2000
watercolor/gold leaf/ink, image 10"x6"
40. THE SECRET GARDENER - 1988, watercolor, image 7"x10.5"
41. THE STRUCTURE OF COLOR - 2005, watercolor, image 10.5"x6.75"
42. OPEN RELATIONSHIP - 2016, oil on linen, 20"x20"
43. COLOR QUARRY - 2016, oil on linen, 20"x20".
44. COLORSHIFT 2.0 - 2006, oil on linen 20"x20"
45. BLUESTREAK - 2016, oil on prepared paper/mounted, 16"x12"
46. LOFT ACCESS - 2016, oil on prepared paper/mounted, 16"x12"
47. HIDDEN ROOM - 2016, oil on prepared paper/mounted, 16"x12"
48. ROWHOUSES - 2016, oil on prepared paper/mounted, 16"x12"
49. RANDOM HOUSE - 2016, oil on prepared paper/mounted, 16"x12"
50. GOLDEN RECTANGLE - 2016, oil on prepared paper/mounted, 16"x12"
51. POINTER - 2016, oil on prepared paper/mounted, 16"x12"
52. COURT OF MYSTERY - 2004, watercolor w/gold leaf, image 3.5"x6"
53. STABLE ABODE - 2009, watercolor, image 5.25"x4"
54. MONASTERY AND GARDENS - 1980, watercolor/gold leaf, image 5"x4"
55. GENIS LOCI - 1987, watercolor/gold leaf/ink, image 10"x7.5"
56. BLACKGROUND BUILDINGS - 1987, watercolor/gold leaf/ink, image 10"x6"
57. TOWER HOUSE IN ROME - 1981, watercolor/ink, image 4"x5"
58. THE ASCENT OF ARCHITECTURE - 1985
watercolor/gold leaf/ink, image 9.25"x8"
59. TOWER OF COLOR - 1988, watercolor/gold leaf/ink, image 10"x4"
60. NEW BUILDING FOR CHICAGO - 1985, watercolor/gold leaf/ink, image 9"x4"
61. THE REMAINS OF THE DAY - 2005, watercolor, image 12"x9.5"
62. THE BLACK POND - 2004, watercolor/gold leaf/ink, image 11"x8.25"
63. SITE/LINES - 2005, watercolor/gold leaf/ink, image 12"x9"
64. ARCHITECTURAL WORLD - 1991/2019, hand colored copperplate etching
65. A TIMELESS WAY OF BUILDING - 2004, watercolor, image 10"x7.5"
66. EMERGING BUILDING - 2016, oil on prepared paper/mounted, image 12"x12"
67. PURE LAND TEMPLE - 2006, watercolor, image 5.5"x4"
68. ROME - 1981, watercolor, image 5.25"x5.25"
69. THE YELLOW WALL - 1980, watercolor, image 4"x7"
70. BUILDING INSPECTION - 2006, watercolor, image 5"x4"
71. HOUSE AND GARDENS.- 2006, watercolor, image 5.5"x4"
72. FIRST LIGHT – 2019, oil on linen, image 20"x16"
73. AN OVAL TOWER WASHES UP ON THE GOLDEN SHORE - 1984
watercolor/gold leaf ink, image 8"x9"



THE TOWER OF COLOR - 1988 - KEITH WILSON

TOWER OF COLOR -watercolor/india ink 1988