

## **Paul Bloodgood - Statement**

Guggenheim Statement 2008

My paintings take landscape as their subject and as a conceptual point of departure. I begin with preparatory collages made out of parts and details taken from other landscape painters as well as from photographs and drawings I've made around the Mt. Khatadin region of Maine. Pollock's Black Enamel paintings, Cezanne's late works, and the landscapes of the late-Ming Dynasty painter Tung Ch'i-Ch'ang are a few of the sources I draw from. The collage process allows me to re-orient the foreground, mid-ground, mountain, and sky organization characteristic of landscape painting and re-conceive it as a dynamic that changes at every scale of time and place. Illogical spatial relations, inconsistencies of scale, imbalanced masses, and ambiguous transitions become the organizing principles of the paintings, and they create a structural dissonance that is incompatible with representational depictions of landscape. But as these elements of space change position, a very different perceptual field of vision opens, and human activity takes shape with the wind, trees and rivers.

I've come to the realization that a landscape is part of a larger energetic system; that it is not constant in form, structure or proportion; and that any attempts to capture both the rough topography and the sensorial experience of landscape in painting must include an active human presence. The essential reality of nature is not separating, self-contained, and complete in itself. Rather, nature's unfolding truth emerges only with the active participation of the human mind. I believe that painting's particular calling is to initiate this type of engagement. I also believe that the traditions of abstract painting (such as those developed by the three artists I mention above) are particularly suited to the task. Abstraction's imperative to grant the medium priority over the subject matter allows for an exploration of the expressive capability of line as an embodiment of naturalistic form and of human values.

