

From *Nature Remains: Paintings by Mary Kay*, 2003

By Mary Kay

These paintings are a meditative continuum, a place of extended looking. Each object has a history, a story: the water lily pressed between the pages of a sketchbook in a boat on Lake Memesagamasing in Canada, the pelvis of a badger – road kill buried and later dug up in the winter, a tiny bird's wing found one blistering day in the leafy shade of the road. I build the grounds for each Piece through a variety of means – scraping, smearing, dilution, pouring, dripping, brushing and layering – often using my hands and fingers; experiencing the paint's viscosity and its color, reacting from mark to mark, event to event. I have no sense as I build which object will be placed upon or within it. The painted papers lie out on the floor of the studio, and I walk the length of them with an object in my hand – searching for the right one, the one that will trigger and release the recollection, mood, emotion of the object, its life, its conversation, its place. I try to grasp each object's complexity, character and beauty by different means of visual description. Sometimes the object is transformed to become a metaphor or a character or it is reproduced as minutely and as faithfully as possible. At other times the sensate qualities of the object and the paint are combined. When the drawings are placed together as a pair or as a group of 8 or 20 or 100 there develops a conversation between each and all of them. A single piece may be seen as an individual or one of a group. There may be groups within a group. These conversations and connections can work formally, through the language of painting; using material, color, light, mark, line, placement and shape, thus adding to the sensate experiences of the objects. Simultaneously there are subjective conversations of metaphor, type, difference and association. Finally it is my hope that these relationships and conversations grow and change as the ensemble unfurls and the viewer returns, bringing another cast of seeing and experience.