



**BARBARA LAUBE**



Barbara Laube

*First Beach*

September 6 - October 1, 2016

**THE PAINTING CENTER**

547 West 27th Street, Suite 500, New York, NY 10001

Tuesday - Saturday, 11- 6 pm, [www.thepaintingcenter.org](http://www.thepaintingcenter.org)



*When we have passed a certain age, the soul of the child we were and the souls of the dead from whom we have sprung come to lavish on us their riches and their spells.*

- Marcel Proust, *The Captive*

## The Paintings of Barbara Laube

According to Wassily Kandinsky, an artist must open their eyes to painting and stop thinking. He says, "Just ask yourself whether the work has enabled you to "walk about" into a hitherto unknown world. If the answer is yes, what more do you want?" \*

Barbara Laube opened her eyes to the unknown world of James Island, the Pacific Ocean and the Olympic Rainforest. She took in all she had experienced from these places and her ancestors and put it to canvas. This journey has allowed her to "walk about" and explore her emotional ties and connections to nature. Her brush strokes and intuitive approach combine to create a rare beauty and authenticity; a personal look into the last few years that reconnected her to the people and places she loves.

The works in *First Beach* document this journey, unearthing hidden information into this world that has surrounded her since childhood. These works speak as much to visceral sensation as they do to vision and intuitive creation. Radiant color intimates the inner light in *James Island* and *James Island Gems*, tracing the start of her exploration into these transcendental locales.

As a visual presentation of emotional vulnerability; these paintings convey a spiritual force grounded in nature. The work seems to know that everything is in flux, that nothing is definite, that the search is infinite. This can be seen in *A Breath Away* and *Reaching for the Invisible*, whose color and light hold on to territory, only to be overshadowed by dabs of white or some other ephemeral color. The longer we look at these alluring paintings, the more they let us know about our own complicated emotional reactions.

Laube's memory is fluid and labile, as are her paintings, informed by experience and the history and legacy of the underlying layers. With *Matriarchal Magic*, the work transforms nature and light into an introspective look at the death of her mother. Similarly, the fresco-like surface of *Emeralds for Eveline*, explores the external world and its parallel in the memory, thought and emotion of her grandmother. The contours of these paintings change when revisited, altered by the past and present and by the very act of remembering.

Her work investigates elusive states of being through multi-layered depictions of form. This is evident in *Calling all Angels*, as a luminous light peeks through the impastoed layers of paint. With *Stars Fell on Seattle*, the thick surface allows for marks and fragments of color to crystallize, seemingly on the brink of dissolving. This deep engagement with the material and the visual possibilities of painting, build a visceral connection with place. The manipulation of paint and the act of seeing are simultaneous and inseparable.

Barbara Laube seeks to evoke the power of nature and its connection with human emotion. This "walk about" is boundless, constantly revealing her hidden truths. Her quest continues to tie in a memory, experience, time or emotion. This perspective examines the unknown in its most raw and unedited form and deeply informs her work.

Shazzi Thomas, 2016

\*Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*

*Stars Fell on Seattle*, 2014-16, Oil on canvas, silver leaf, 44 x 30 in.





*James Island*, 2014-16, Oil on canvas, mixed media, 30 x 40 in.

*The sacred island where the Quileute tribe bury their dead in canoes in the treetops.*

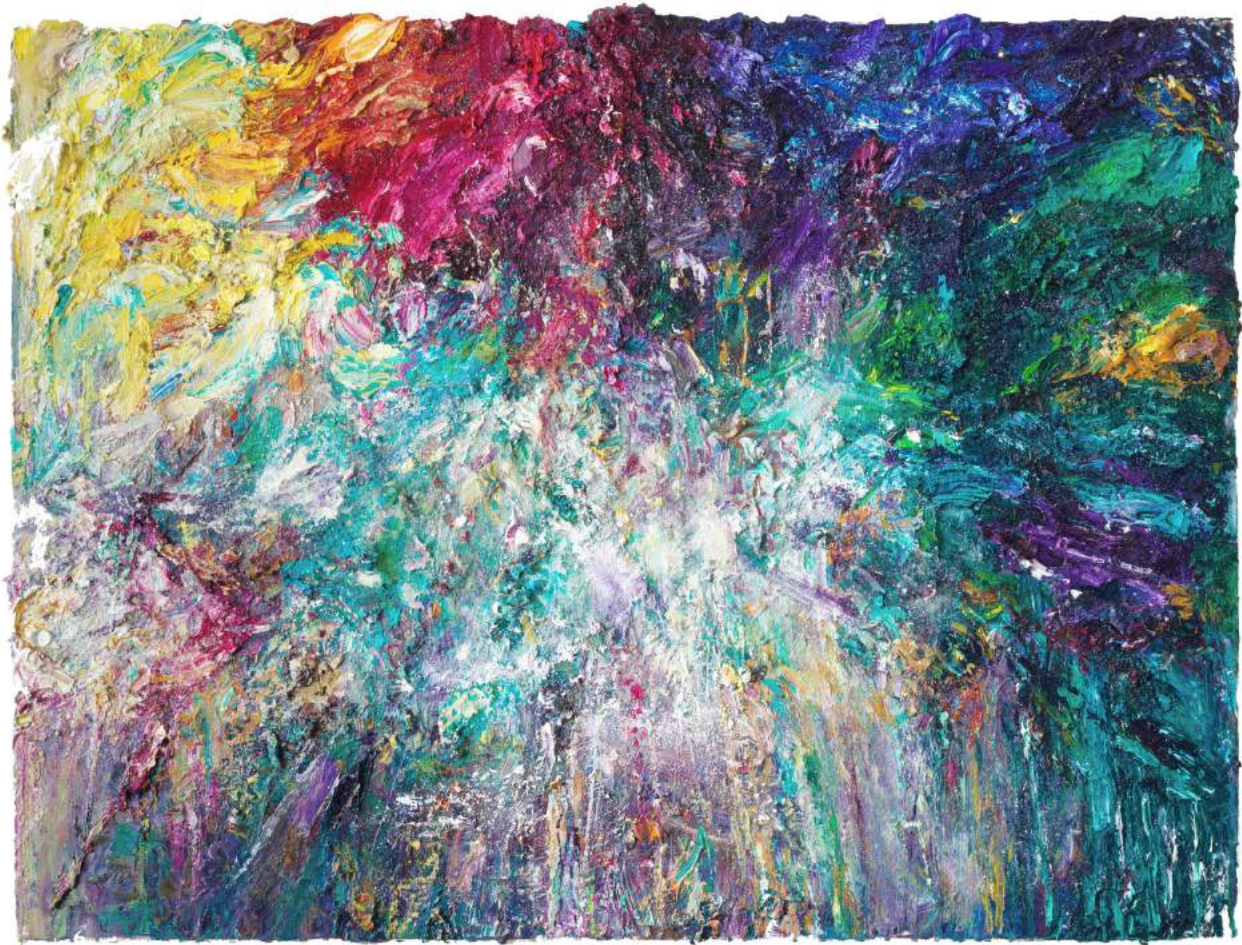


*Rosewater Wish*, 2016, Oil on canvas, 30 x 48 in.



*First Beach Palette*, 2016, Oil on canvas, mixed media, 30 x 40 in.

*A replication of my palette.*



*Homesick Angels*, 2015, Marbles, mixed media and oil on canvas, 9 x 12 in.





*Reaching for the Invisible*, 2015-2016, Oil on canvas, 44 x 30 in.

*We released orange paper lanterns up to the sky in memory of my mother. My brother turned to me and said, "Homesick Angels."*



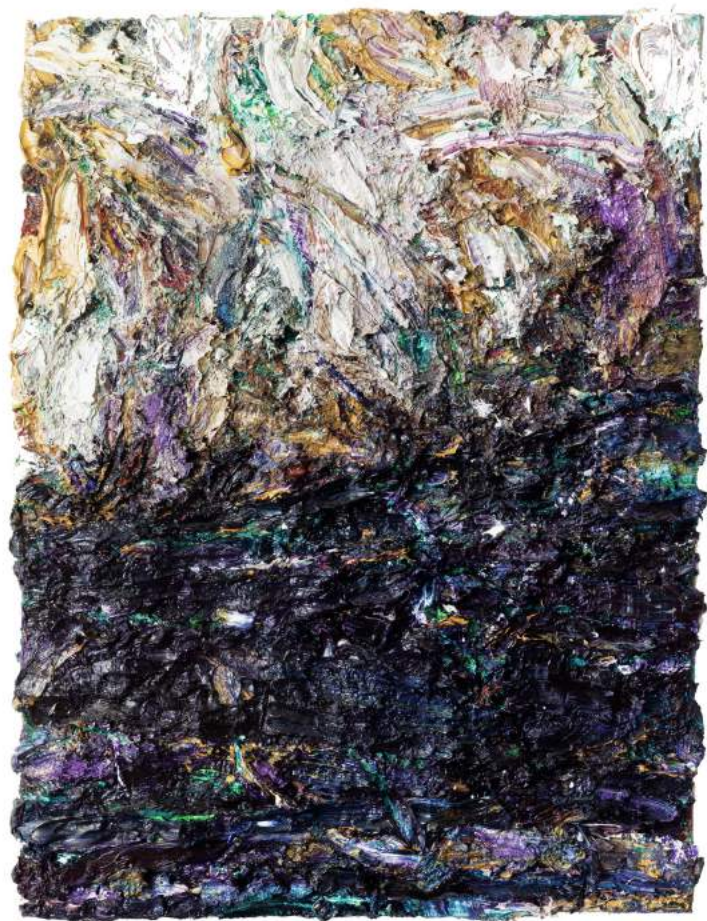
*Emeralds for Eveline, 2016, Oil on canvas, mixed media, 30 x 40 in.*

*The idea and memory of my grandmother rose through the mist.*



*A Breath Away*, 2016, Oil on canvas, 24 x 18 in.

*The higher self is only a breath away.*



*James Island Gems, 2016, Oil on canvas, 14 x 11 in.*

*Seeing through the veils of reality, making visible the invisible.*





*Matriarchal Magic, 2014-16, Oil on canvas, 54 x 34 in.*

*During my mother's memorial in 2014, we placed our sentiments into a green Gallo bottle (her favorite wine), intended for the ocean. It was found a few months later a hundred miles away on Kalaloch Beach by a woman named Dorothy (my mother's name), and she lived on Fairview Avenue in downtown Seattle, where my mother's last residence was. (Mom was showing off her magic.)*



*Calling all Angels*, 2016, Oil on canvas, 56 x 44 in.





The subject of these paintings is James Island, which is the sacred burial ground of the Quileute nation, located on the reservation at First Beach. It is on the Olympic Peninsula in Washington State. As a child, I found it magical, and even today the mists and rain of the Pacific Northwest perpetually inform my work. I return every year to the rainforest for inspiration, and to bear witness.

From the first time I visited First Beach the inspiration for this series has been brewing inside me. When I wasn't coloring and drawing, I was playing in the woods, making tepees. At the age of seven I was transfixed by a Flemish still life at the Henry Art Museum, in Seattle. I remember staring at it and trying to unlock its secrets. Years later, these same interests would influence my work along with the artists Titian, Velasquez, Pierro della Francesco and de Kooning.

As an adult returning to First Beach in 2014, my childhood memories blended with my adulthood inspirations to create a trip laden with vulnerability. James Island where the chiefs were buried in dugout canoes in the treetops released a torrent of emotion and grief inside of me. This became the subject on which to put all that was raging within me. As a result, these paintings are about both my and my ancestors' experiences with mortality and loss. While I worked on this series, there was a slipping of the veil between my life and theirs.

As I painted, an overall theme emerged: surrender. Only when I listened to my brush and canvas would each painting reveal itself. As Jake Berthot once told me, "Trust your hand, it knows more than the mind." His advice became integral to these paintings as I realized that each painting was an ancestor: my grandmother, my mother, my father - speaking to me through color and light. There was a palpable sense of presence, a loving energy from spirit that I could feel and hear.

This awakening in me also enhanced my depiction of light. Light has always been one of my central focuses. But the light in the trees on James Island, in the Pacific Ocean, and in the Olympic Rainforest, was an entirely different kind of light - vast and consummate, as if I were looking at infinity. This is the light that found it's way onto the canvas.

Barbara Laube

Designer: Shazzi Thomas  
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