Peg Harrigan

Billy Parker's time as a visiting scholar at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, was my introduction to him as an educator. Fondly, I remember his hilarious hand-coloring demonstrations and his insightful lecture on the topic of "Manifest Destiny and the Rape of the American Landscape." Ten years passed before I began graduate studies at the University of Connecticut, Storrs with Bill in the second M.F.A. cohort of the Department of Fine Arts.

Upon graduation, Bill gave me a book by Rainer Maria Rilke, Letters to a Young Poet. He acknowledged our mutual "search for the light" with an inscription inside that instructed me to substitute the word "photographer" for poet while reading the book. I was soon to read the suggestion of our mutual predisposition to light arising from the depth of time spent in solitude and in pursuit of both inward and outward consciousness. Bill encouraged looking well at the world and within ourselves to find one's truth. Inwardly, at the time, I was struggling with bringing to light my own non-binary and queer self. In the 1970's and 1980's, Bill's acceptance of queer people was a joyful exception to the more binary, heteronormative thinking and behavior of the times. He was a good friend as well as a teacher.

Three decades ago, my work was informed by issues of duality and difference as I combined or collaged photographs to extend meaning beyond the reading a single photograph. Composited or combined imagery still interest me as I tend to create more singular works that challenge the notion of the photograph as exactingly repeatable. Composited, abraded and/or painted, these hybrid landscapes contain iridescent oil pastels, interference and iridescent acrylic inks to suggest mixed media that combines photography and painting. The painted work in particular may appear differently depending on the ambient lighting conditions, the viewer's stance and any movement by the viewer from right to left. Therefore the images are not well adapted to digital screen time viewing or wide distribution. The works demand the viewers' physical presence and engagement with the details of the composited images, the abraded surfaces, metal paints, or joy dust, additions.

How natural and/or industrial elements of the landscape coexist interests me as a testament to how humans interact with the environment. To my mind, environmental engagement may be respectfully appreciative and in a state of harmony with the world or it may be destructively selfish and possessive as a function of greed and control. The images exist in a middle ground or in-between state of change not unlike our human relationship with the environment. The iridescent metal colors are intended to invoke a return to the allure of a beautiful landscape and its intrinsic value, as well as a way to enhance an aura that queers the landscape with an increased luminescence and sparkle.