

Liminal Space

Up until a few years ago, I viewed my approach to almost every painting as trying to achieve a “quiet stillness” in my work to invoke a peaceful zone. A place where one could stop and slow down in our overstimulating environment just to ponder the surrounding environment around us. I sought out isolated spaces void of human existence but still be able to sense the evidence of their presence in a comforting way.

This concept was turned on its head when COVID restrictions took hold for our own survival. We had to isolate now. The idea of a celebrating solitude started to become more of a tense, uneasy event and not exactly something to aspire to. As a painter, my quiet and alone time in the studio was a sacred space to be, but suddenly I felt uneasy about the isolation and was not so sure how I felt about it now. To me, the work I had been spending 25+ years exploring began to take on a different feeling.

This sudden shift in society seriously caused me anxiety. I worried my work would become viewed as depressing or lonely. My 21 year old Sophie came into my studio one day to check in and we had this discussion about the new era we have found ourselves in. Having grown up around my work and probably understanding my vision, Sophie made an observation about how my work has always had a “Liminal Quality”. I was not that familiar with the term so we started conversing about the engaging qualities of the Liminal Space. There was a discussion about how our society seems to be in one big transition on so many levels due to technology, climate changes, the pandemic and our aging parents handing the torch to the younger generation but we are not so sure what we are going to do with this newly acquired control in our culture. This inevitable transition causes an uneasy feeling in us and we sometimes grasp for the past through Nostalgia to try to make sense of the future by looking to the past.

My newer work focuses on these “Liminal” moments in our environment and what they mean to us. Transitional spaces such as airports, sidewalks, public spaces and many others offers us a glimpse into our human condition. I believe it is worth a closer look.

Gabe Fernandez, 2024