



ELLEN MOERSHEL | Artist Statement

I have often examined a map in the same way that I would an abstract piece. The organic landscape it portrays, combined with the geometric structure of the grid lines, is visually inspiring. I am particularly drawn to maps of river systems. I find it captivating how the shape of the water bends, thickens, thins and diverts into other bodies of water. Maps of highway systems in a metropolis also have a unique beauty despite their functional purposes.

My interest in cartographic design is not the only source of study for these pieces; I am also interested in color progression and abstract renderings of the imaginary. As an artist, this gives me the opportunity to derive imagery from the beautiful and complex visual structure of a map, obscuring the informational elements and coloring it with my own choice of shades to create a fictional macro-terrain. Instead of grid lines, I use an anti-systematic approach to fracture the organic forms. Rejection of linear perspective combined with cleanly defined shapes and a lack of shading renders a topographical plain, as opposed to a grounded abstracted landscape piece.

That being said, it is somewhat irrelevant to describe the subject matter from which my ideas about shapes and colors originate. I think it is more important for a viewer to gather their own unique narrative from my pictures, to have their own relationship with the image, and to feel safe knowing their reaction, whatever it may be, is not a correct or incorrect answer. Though they are based on earthy elements, these paintings are about escapism—they are a fantasy.

My favorite medium currently is gouache on paper. Gouache is known for its bright and matte pigments, which do not fully soak into the paper. The result is intensely saturated color that dries without showing brush strokes. I am drawn to the velvety texture of its finish. I am attracted to the stark quality of paper. Unlike a canvas, whose woven threads can distract the viewer, the texture of paper can be so fine that a sheet appears flawless. Paper is also easier to work on than wood because it absorbs paint with more consistency. I often do not fill in an entire piece because I find bare paper conveys the limitlessness of metaphorical space.