

THOMAS PAQUETTE

# Light's Last Reach



In Thomas Paquette's painting *Light's Last Reach*, the last rays of sunlight illuminate the tops of the clouds and the orange light of sunset reflects off a sign in the lower left. The signpost completes the composition. When asked about the intrusion of a human element and could it not have been a tree, he said that a tree would not reflect the light that he needed to have in that corner of the painting.

"I am an environmentalist, and I see overpopulation as the root for almost all our problems," he continues. "And yet when I paint—when I live—I mean to celebrate the beauty of what I see. I know there are serious problems and trouble in the world that we cause. But without valuing the beauty that still exists in the natural world, what reason is there to correct things? Nature for me is always the primary subject, and human presence—with any improvements and problems—is incidental, because that is what I consider the bigger picture, the deepest view."

Always celebrating light, whether in his dramatic skies or in more subtle paintings such as *The Ironwood Trail*, light animates and reveals. Walking through a shady wood



- 1 *Light's Last Reach*, oil on linen, 14 x 22"
- 2 Thomas Paquette in his studio
- 3 *Recursive*, oil on linen, 20 x 28"
- 4 *Post-Storm Light*, oil on linen, 20 x 30"
- 5 *Allegheny Plateau Vista*, oil on linen, 34 x 60"



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we pass interesting things in shadow but are drawn to those illuminated by a shaft of light through the trees. He says, “I love the play of light later in the day. The filtered light comes through the trees and spotlights things that are supposed to be noticed. It could be anything. The light will be the only way that caused me to notice something. The light makes us perceive where we didn’t perceive at all. When I am excited about a landscape, I want people to find that excitement within the painting.”

Just as the light picks out details in the dark wood a close look at Paquette’s

paintings reveals colors within colors. “The painting opens up as you get closer,” he explains. “The light grabs you from a distance and up close there are microcosms of color within the light.”

To arrive at a finished painting that conveys his experience of a scene, Paquette often paints tiny 3¼-by-5-inch studies. For *Post-Storm Light*, he painted four of what he calls “variations” beginning with a highly saturated image resembling the final painting, then a “more textured and eccentrically colored” piece followed by “a more subdued rendering” and, finally,

an essentially black and white image to establish the values for the final painting.

He says his process “shakes up [his] sensibilities” and revivifies his experience to assure the impact of his paintings on their viewers.

*Thomas Paquette: On Nature* will be shown at Gross McCleaf Gallery in Philadelphia from October 5 to 29, with an opening reception on October 8 from 1 to 4 p.m. ●

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