

FROELICK GALLERY

ARTIST STATEMENT

TERRELL JAMES

Story, 2023

Paintings and drawings tell stories, something I've worked on for decades.

The idea for this exhibition began with a work I completed long ago, in 2000, called *Story*. Although it's a small painting, not more than sixteen inches across, it expresses feelings at another scale. Since *Story*, my practice has extended to a much larger scale and embraced worlds I could not have imagined twenty-three years ago. Yet, in a way, they're all the same size, the size of a story. Certainly, each of the works shown here tells one – isn't that how we understand paintings and drawings, and each other?

While the works of this show dating from before 2023 may seem familiar for their focus on qualities of paint and abstraction, often atmospheric, my newer works have a greater emphasis on specific shape. For instance, *Fortress* seems to illustrate the stolidity of old stone walls and specifically suggest two trees. *Interlocutor (Orange Cloud)* suggests a mesa with stones and hills below the conversant orange floating form. There's a conversation between what seems "sky" and what seems "land." *Origin Stories* shows my current pre-occupations with Milton Avery and Matthew Wong. Also, I have been looking at works by Marsden Hartley, Fairfield Porter, and motifs of Pacific Northwest Native American art. The latter interest can be seen in the forms of *Red Shards for a Bird's Eye*.

Earlier paintings, such as *You Are Receding*, *Boundless*, and *Captive*, unfolded through my application of veils of transparent and translucent color to suggest surrounding mist and clouds. Perhaps you can find echoes in your experience of my sensations of things released, breaking away within the image. *Velocity* and *Thousand Year Old Town* overlay this language with hard lines that give structure to their implied narratives.

The shapes of *Story* remind me of the terraced, stacked pueblos of New Mexico, and the histories of storytelling that seem to me embedded in them. They suggest history, poetry and the persistence of the peoples' traditions. Three pieces on unprimed linen, *Dada's Baroness*, *Seeds*, and *Hans Castorp's Table* predate the 2023 "shape pieces" by a full year; I now see how they predicted my new emphasis on making form through figure-ground relations. Their continuity with the full span of my practice is exemplified in the two monoprints, *Roundabout 1*, and *Roundabout 9*, which span nearly twenty years. They were first shown as completed works in 2001 and 2006, but then revised and reworked in 2020. Looking at them, and looking and thinking across time about my works, I find it remarkable how consistent is the hand that, together, they reveal. But I'm not surprised, for these are the stories I've come to tell.

