

The iPhone Landscape Series:

This series of prints began after several conversations with my daughter, Emma, about the role of “instant information” in a post-modern era. The advent of the digital era along with easy access to technology has resulted in a photo (over)abundance in our lives. The accelerated rhythm of western culture leaves so much unseen and consequently so much unexperienced. Today’s so-called “smart phones” contain such sophisticated digital cameras, that almost everyone has the ability to instantly capture their surrounding with exceptional detail, yet we seem to be polluted with an ever-growing archive of mundane photos.

For the last 7 months I have been renovating a 1938 one-room school house, located in Innisfil Township, just south of Barrie, Ontario. During my daily commute to this new studio, I traverse many rural landscapes and I am constantly amazed by how they changes with each passing day. I realize that in my haste, much of this beauty is going unseen and unappreciated. In an attempt to document these unseen sights, I started shooting unplanned images out of my car window using my newly purchased iphone. It did not take long before I had amassed thousands of randomly composed jpegs on my computer as witness to my daily journey.

Each mono-types in this series has it’s genesis in one of these digital photos. I begin my work by quickly viewing these images until one “speaks” to me. Whether it is colour, composition, or subject matter, something grabs my attention. At this point I have the jpeg printed so that I can take time to digest the now-tangible paper photograph. If this image continues to hold my interest I take it to my studio and begin turning the once digital representation of the landscape into a mono-type print.

The first step in my process is to transfer the pigment from the photograph onto translucent Japanese tissue. By passing the photograph, the tissue and solution-soaked newsprint through my etching press, the essence of the photograph becomes visible when the pigments that make up the paper photograph are impregnated into the delicate tissue. Next, I add washes of colour by staining the tissue with diluted printing inks, responding directly to the “ghost image” of the landscape. All the while, I have been imagining what kind of veil or filter had prevented me from experiencing this landscape at the moment the photo was taken. It is from this daydreaming that I construct an other image by etching a metal plate that will eventually be printed on top of the ink-stained photo tissue. Sometimes it takes many printed plates and several stainings before I am happy with the results. The final step in this process is to paste the tissue print onto a backing paper with the aid of archival wheat paste and the printing press. This final pass through the press lays down the last layer of ink - at the same time permanently adhering the tissue, with all it’s layered imagery, onto the the support paper.

This process affords me the opportunity to combine my appreciation of photography, an exploration of painterly issues and of course, the delicacy of the printed mark.