

Jo Ford

After painting a lot in 2020, and selling more art than I ever have in one year, I was called away to do full time elder-care for my mother-in-law who is turning 100 years old this year. I was a couple of months on the east coast, planning to stay one more, when, very tragically my oldest son, who was 24, passed away. I came home quickly, passing my care giving to other relatives, and have now gone through all the unimaginable but necessary duties surrounding my son's death.

I have chosen the three works here as all representative of my concerns and my practice, but also because they represent both my current state of mind, and the theme of the show. My son was (of course), handsome, talented and brilliant, but also suffered from intense anxiety and OCD. My son's father and I had been attempting to lift his spirits and show him how much he had to be happy about: a beautiful girl friend, acceptance as transfer student to UC Santa Cruz, outrageous musical talent, a loving family and many friends. However, he suffered, and apparently, neither any existing therapy nor medication could ease his psychological pain. Though his death was an accidental overdose, (he was adamantly against suicide), it was still an overdose of illegal drugs, which he would binge on for days or weeks, when he wasn't engaged with being disciplined about his music and ridiculously healthy and intellectually curious and nature-loving and lighting up the world with his beautiful smile.

Many years ago I thought my art was fundamentally about ideas and then I realized a few years ago I was most passionate about the pure aesthetics of landscapes, then spirit-entities began to emerge from the canvas and I decided I would let them into my work. Now the entities are present whenever I acknowledge them, which is often. What the three works I am submitting here all have in common is that in my process of painting them there was never a question of idea/landscape/spirit; they were three of my son's favorite paintings, and they all represent aspects of this world that make life worth living: play, friendship and sadness.