

Artist Statement: The Global Warming Series. David J Emerson Young

The point of departure-- the inception of the Global Warming Series was a trip to Mount Baker in the Snoqualmie National Forest in Washington State, where I hiked up to the basin of the Coleman-Deming Glacier and gazed upon this dense, turquoise blue glass-like body of ice with deep crevasses, being slowly deformed under the stress of its weight. In places, waterfalls were rapidly flowing over the glacier, intensifying its melting process. It was so beautiful it took my breath away, and yet, I was witnessing the sinister demise of a glacier-- the purest form of water, the source of all life on Earth.

This experience was the inspiration for the first painting in this series entitled "Melting Glacier".

Human activities are at the root of this phenomenon. Since the industrial revolution, carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions have raised temperatures, and as a result, glaciers are rapidly melting, calving off and crashing into the sea, or retreating on land, forming new bodies of water.

The Global Warming Series is an education-driven painting exhibition that emphasizes scientific accuracy, while also focusing on the psychological aspects of Global Warming and Climate Change, including human anxiety and fear over potential catastrophic events, and potential end of life.

Art has the capacity to change the way we perceive an event or a phenomenon, and, through shifts in attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors, it can inspire collective, creative actions that address the perils of the Earth, and seek to heal. *"Art has a unique place from which to build a different world, having the capacity to build a whole of mind experience of understanding, compassion, reasoning, and hope".* [1]

This painting series addresses three specific topics of global warming—the causes, the effects on nature, and the after effects on humans. Each of the eighteen painting subjects in the Global Warming Series were reviewed, edited and approved by Andrew J. Weaver who was a lead author in the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change – the group that, with Al Gore, won the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize.

The paintings are intended to provoke awareness of the threats of global warming, and aim to inform viewers, and to inspire action. Each of the three categories are represented by six paintings:

Causes: “Corporate Oil”; “Clear Cutting Forests”; “Methane from Landfills”; “Electric Asia”; “Highway Nations”; “Suburban Carcinoma”.

Effects on Nature: “Seawater Warming”; “Drenched Crops”; “Drowning Frog”; “Evaporation”; “Melting Glacier”; “Methane Rising From Shallow Shelves”.

After Effects on Humans: “Drained Aquifers”; “Village Flood”; “Texas Snow, Bad Karma”; “Hurricane City”; “Sand Dunes Over Wheat Fields”; “Future Cities”.

For each painting in this series, I began by creating a color drawing that served as an architectural rendering for the painting. My process involves examining each subject, whether it is the clear cutting of forests or seawater warming, and exploring what I call the complexity of emotional opposition—how a viewer can simultaneously behold both the beauty of nature and the devastation that is occurring. Dr. Marc Gopin eloquently describes such emotional opposition:

“A human being in community with others must be able to face with her mind the dark dangers that may lurk ahead, along the bright beauty of possibility. This aligns with what we commonly refer to as the heart and the mind, or the body and the soul.”^[1]

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The Global Warming Series was a partnership between the FAR Center for Contemporary Art and the Heartland Community Reconciliation Center, a nonprofit organization with a mission that includes exploring connections between environmental degradation, climate change, and social conflict, and the role of the arts in compassionate reasoning and social change.

Painter David J. Emerson Young is an Indiana native and Bloomington resident. His collection of paintings that form the Global Warming Series serve as a unique expression of the role that the arts can play in environmental awareness and compassionate reasoning.

^[1] Marc Gopin, *Compassionate Reasoning: Changing the Mind to Change the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming)