

Joseph Patterson Arnold, *Valhalla Canyon*, via interview with Jennifer Mayer and Bryan Ricupero, 10.9.15

Birth Year: 1954

Process

It is a large piece. It was painted largely on the floor, and was based largely on memory, although images from a disposable camera were available. I worked out a design from a smaller study and left certain things open until the painting process. So it was a conceptual, rather than a plein air process. I used the small photograph, because a huge storm moved in and my wife Alison and I were unable to climb as planned. Two canvases were used to make the painting easier to transport and because diptychs are cool. The piece was commissioned by the library and painted during 2010-2011. The color lighting, as well as the metallic blue wall in the front northeast stairwell for the painting's location in the library helped inform some of the color and imagery in the piece. The loose brushwork adds to the movement in the piece, no photograph would have captured it. My wife Alison were going to climb, but a huge storm came in and hi had to make due with a photo I took with a disposable camera.

Content

The image is of Valhalla Canyon at 9700 feet in Grand Teton National Park. The viewer can see the North Face of Grand Peak of the Grand Tetons. A fall snowstorm moved in with high winds, with the sun still out in the early evening. In Joe's book, *Mountaineer's Dawn; an Artist's Ascent of the Teton Range*, and on the wall in Coe Library, the painting is accompanied by an excerpt from British poet Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889). The sky moves from light to dark (top to bottom of the piece) as the sun sets and the moon is out. The two pieces represent two different worlds, the mountains down below and upper part reaches into the heavens. There are two moods--and the transition is there. This sky does not exist in reality, since the upper half of the painting is from my imagination--in that sense it is a different sort of painting.

Inspiration

The painting was inspired by the ruggedness of both the canyon and the experience. This painting is "all about the sky" and the wild, rugged and raw aspects of nature. Diderot said, "All that imprints a feeling of terror leads to the sublime," and this is a good match for this painting. There are no trails to Valhalla Canyon, it is a hanging canyon and very steep. The storm was brushing snow off the peaks and the wind was beating against my tent.

Notes

Which image should get metadata?