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Exhibition Reviews | Visual Arts

# **The Mark of the Artist: Landscapes by Tyler Willmore and Molly O'Mara at Utah Artist Hands**

BY EHREN CLARK ON SEPTEMBER 15, 2015 • ( [LEAVE A COMMENT](#) )



(<http://artistsofutah.org/15Bytes/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Screen-Shot-2015-09-15-at-1.20.31-PM.png>)

Artists Tyler Willmore and Molly O'Mara, who are showing at UTah Artist Hands Gallery for the upcoming Salt Lake Gallery Stroll, both use nature to their advantage. Willmore expands the landscape, wrapping his paintings in written texts that provide metaphorical context for personal exploration, while O'Mara strips down the elements she finds in nature to create hushed poetic expressions.

Willmore is a writer and a philosopher as well as a painter, and uses visual metaphor and the written word to help him map the reality of everyday situations. He uses the relationship between what is seen in the landscape and what is understood with the word to create visual and conceptual metaphors. His work in this series is a product of a yearlong research project at the University of Utah's Rio Mesa Research Center, just outside of Moab. He states that his experience there was an attempt to create images where "landscape becomes symbolic of life's journey and nature becomes representational of greater spiritual influence. It is an attempt to explore the balance

outward and internal contextual perspectives as they pertain to the landscape.”

In this sense a painting like “Lone Hill” is more than just a desert butte beneath a blue sky, it becomes the artist’s way of expressing something quotidian, in this case his personal experience of searching for employment. “Climbing a hill or mountain...has significant benefits,” he writes in a text that accompanies the painting. “Once elevated from the ground, the survivalist can see more of the landscape and possibly discover those things that will save his or her life. It may provide shelter, food, or water that was inaccessible at the ground. Once ascended confidence and hope can be renewed.”



(<http://artistsofutah.org/15Bytes/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/BeaverheadAspenGlow.jpg>)

O'Mara canvases at Utah Artist Hands are coarse, rustic, and austere; they have a natural beauty and express a poetic vision of nature when juxtaposed with alternating rhythms of tranquil color that create, not so much a literal representation, but a natural narrative of proceeding elements. Most of these very muted canvases are composed of squared and linear representations of aspens, with no contour or shape, but simple delineated structure—a frontal, linear, formalist presentation, with raised

relief. Painted in this structural manner, they appear on a single, frontal plane and repeat themselves from one side of the canvas to the next. There is no implied depth-of-field with the aspens, and, as cutouts each tree is singular or crosses into another, but overall remain flat. These very bold—yet very reduced—compositions are washed in gentle hues of green, mauve and crimson that might recede, but in fact, visually become one with the repetitive frontal plane of reduced aspens to unravel a moving rhythm of life.

From nature O'Mara creates reductive, formal dialogues that can be as powerful in their reduced simplicity as Willmore's more conceptual, contextual dialogues are in their expansiveness. Both proceed from natural contexts to create meaning, one an overt narrative meaning, the other, a more subtle meaning found in the relationship of formal elements that creates a synergy, a fundamental articulation of form.

*Tyler Willmore and Molly O'Mara at UTah Artist Hands, 163 E. Broadway (300 South), Salt Lake City, opening reception during Gallery Stroll, Sept. 18, 6 p.m. – 9 p.m. Info: [www.utahands.com](http://www.utahands.com) (<http://www.utahands.com>), 801-355-0206*



### Ehren Clark

Ehren Clark studied art history at both the University of Utah and the University of Reading in the UK. For a decade he lived in Salt Lake City and worked as a professional writer until his untimely death in 2017.