

Lynn Sures Artist Statement:  
Montserrat and Portraits of the Anthropocene Pulp Paintings

Travel to new places has always generated imagery for me. Two recent pulp painting series, Montserrat and Portraits of the Anthropocene, were each born in countries completely new to me. The lack of a familiar anchor heightens every sense and creates an urgency to understand. At times, visual and sensory impressions emerge spontaneously as pulp paintings. In Spain I pulp painted in the studio directly upon experiencing Montserrat. By contrast, drawing allows me focused study, analysis, and connection, as my experience in Kenya dictated. Only later does pulp painting release the emotionally driven responses dominating my studio encounter.

Montserrat is a gigantic, imposing, animated presence. I was unprepared for the happenstance of driving by it with my host. A thing to be reckoned with, I stared without speaking so it could live in my head when I reached the studio. So I began my intense relationship with this mountain representing Catalonia. I made large pulp paintings imbued with the sensibility of the mountain. When I finished the first series of five large works, I walked some of the mountain paths. From this deepening acquaintance I was able to carry the mountain out of Catalonia with me and continue working on smaller, embossed pulp paintings in Italy. The readiness to work had begun at home in the US, preparing my pulp colors to ship to Europe. But the passion to work came from a chance exposure to an entity that made powerful sense to me.

In Kenya for my Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship project, I looked for points of convergence between our early ancestors' traits, capacities, and habitat. I made drawings of human and animal fossils at the National Museums of Kenya in Nairobi. I camped with scientists at the Smithsonian Institution's field research site at Olorgesailie, drawing the excavation sites and coming to know the vivid, harsh, physical site itself, infused with evidence of early human presence. Returning to Maryland, using the technique I started to develop in the Montserrat series, I have been working on pulp painted, embossed paper works rooted in my Smithsonian research. This allows me to merge collagraph techniques and freehand drawing with pulp painting. The potent bond of landscapes, habitats, and living creatures permeates my practice: what does the art of human origins look like in my own hand?