

PROFESSOR JILL GIEGERICH ON SEEING & LOOKING:

Ned Evans was born in 1950. This means that he learned to read using a very particular first book. Dick and Jane was the chosen reading primer of the public school system at that time. The main activities of Dick and Jane were “looking” and “seeing”. How did it happen that the book chosen to teach reading to American children of the Fifties was coincidentally the perfect picture book for the development of optical perception? Perhaps it was no coincidence. After all, western visual tradition since the Renaissance has been concerned with using the eyes to grab and apprehend the world. America of the Fifties shared a similar ambition. It was poised to grab the international political and cultural spotlight from Europe.

See - to perceive something with the eyes. Look - to use the eyes to examine, watch, or find. Ned Evans has spent the last 40 years developing his paintings with a self-reflexive emphasis on the visual faculties most revered by Dick and Jane. He pursues meaning through opticality. A lifetime spent watching the water, skies and mountains of California has built an acute optical sensibility. He “looks” at the glazes of atmosphere that cause the shimmering of west coast light. He “looks” at the way water ripples over and distorts the vision of his surfboard as it moves through the waves. He “looks” into waves to read their design and intent.

He continues this examination in his studio as he mixes skeins of color heavily weighted with water. He works over and over the skeins in thin watery glazes until he finds the moment of theatricality that is possible, some would even say inherent, in abstract painting. He works to find an ephemeral game plan of rich, undulating color and light. His artistic fathers are the fathers of abstraction. But his mothers are the air, land and waters of his home.