

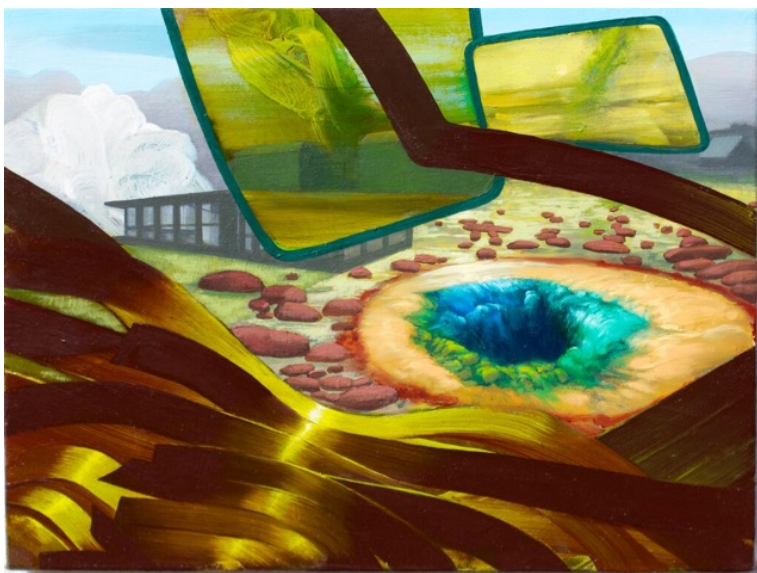
Improvisations Artist's Statement

To a musician or actor, improvisation refers to an unrehearsed or unplanned performance. It relies on experience, spontaneity and interaction to create something new. I've chosen to call my recent group of paintings "Improvisations" because my process mimics theirs. I start each piece by laying down patches of paint. One stroke follows the next, one color suggests the next and one image imagines the next. As a result I end up with an accretion, a layering of painted marks and representational images.

"Rearview" began as a desert landscape. Being dissatisfied with that direction, I began adding still life elements to the foreground. Again, dissatisfied and wanting to "mix things up", I painted in the rearview mirror shapes. Those shapes reminded me of insect wings so I expanded that idea into the next painting, "Blue Wings". Those wings then inspired me to research moth wings which I then interpreted into "Whirl-a-gig" and so on.

Over time some themes have emerged. Most of them refer to my interaction with the urban environment. There are blighted industrial landscapes, still life objects found on the streets or in my basement, geological phenomenon and weather. This imagery acts as a record or evidence of my experience in the world. While the individual images, colors and techniques suggest a solvable puzzle, they are inevitably open to personal interpretation.

James Stephens 2015



Mineral Spring, 2015, oil on canvas, 9" x 12"