

Ben Steele

### From this, a Mountain

My most recent body of work is a series of oil paintings constructed to faithfully represent installations in my studio. The installations are composed of mundane objects, patterned papers, mirrors, other optical instruments, and projected landscape imagery. I am interested in the feeling of infinity, which comes from the images of idealized landscapes, contrasted with the shallow depth of the actual space represented, further complicated by graphic patterns, painted surfaces, and forms which call attention to the picture plane.

I have become fascinated with visual effects cinematography, or rather techniques employed to create a sense of the impossible before digital technology existed. I have used many of these techniques in my installations, such as rear projection, matt cut out mirrors, as well as scale models and backdrops to create images which feel digitally manipulated and evoke otherworldly associations, while all taking root from the physical world. I see this process as referring to the act of painting. A viewer is made to believe in a scene that does not actually exist.

I aim to create a sense of contrast in the reading of my paintings. A viewer can imagine a place, and what might be happening in that place, while at the same time consciously recognize that they are not looking at what they imagine. The seams are visible. Mirrors are taped up, objects hang from metal wires. There is both a sense of illusion and construction. The paintings offers escape, and call attention to their own construction.