



Hidden Lessons

by Lee Munsell

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"The external appearance of this our dwelling place...is fraught with lessons of high and holy meaning, only surpassed by the light of Revelation"

~Asher B. Durand 1855

*"A person should hear a little music,
read a little poetry,
and see a fine picture
every day
in order that
worldly cares
may not obliterate
the sense of the
beautiful which God has
implanted
in the human soul."
~ Goethe*

A LANDSCAPE OF BEAUTY AND MEANING

"When the seas are running high, as they so often do at Point Lobos, the huge waves, with their heaving, burst and drag, grip the attention and rouse the emotions. This spectacular impact upon shore forms of extraordinary variety stirs the mind to some appreciation of the vast power and dramatic quality of the forces here at work.

But on every hand, and in every kind of weather, other phases of the same great drama become apparent, more and more impressive as one's understanding grows.

The functional adaptation of a richly varied vegetation, marine and littoral, is directly traceable to the impact of waves and currents, of ocean winds, and windborne spray and spume and fog — from the lithe seaweed up through the tapestries of rock plants to the gnarled cypresses and the wind-molded pines.

The cypresses tell a poignant story of survival in a battle against great odds, twisting and buttressing themselves against the thrust of wind and pull of gravity, extracting vigor from the driving sea fogs and adapting themselves to drenching sprays of salt that sometimes crust the soil with white and rout the advance of other trees.

Whole communities of living things are shaped in every vital detail to play their strenuous parts in the everlasting drama of the sea and shore visibly so shaped, not only in response to these pervasive forces of sea and land but also in response to conditions of soil and rock which are themselves the outcome of the same unending reaction of sea and land.

Rocks now crumble visibly before the eyes, grain after grain; rocks plainly formed in long-past ages out of pebbles on beaches, not unlike the present, then buried deep until a new uplifting of the continent enabled the sea to cut those other less ancient beaches which we see on the present hillsides, terrace below terrace— until finally the ocean again reached and hammered into the same old beach conglomerate, rattling its veteran pebbles back and forth, and with them battering out new clefts, chasms and caves where planes of weakness had been formed by continental heaving's.

Infinite are the variations of meaning relating to this single dominant theme, immensely inspiring in their significance, and expressed in forms of exceptional sensual beauty.

One sensitive to beauty and meaning in landscape, and disposed to analyze its appeal in terms of pattern, form and color, finds in Point Lobos Reserve and surrounding country a great variety of types. An attempt to classify them would reveal as worthy of specialized appreciation such types as: The seaward margins of the cypress grove; the cypress forest interiors; glades and meadows on the cypress

forest landward margins; Big Dome cliffs; open points jutting into the sea; the littoral areas and sea caves; open saddles; open hilltops; high chaparral areas; broad, sweeping meadows bounded by varying combinations of pine forest, chaparral and the sea and pine forest interiors. It should be admitted that no satisfactory explanation can be given for any esthetic experience, so far as the landscape is concerned. It should also be recognized that the appeal of Point Lobos is too many senses, and is composite in its nature. To each beholder some one phase or feature has a special meaning.

The most dramatic landscape effect – in fact the supreme effect of the entire Reserve – is found on the outer ends of the cypress-covered points... one has the sense of being on a battleground of natural forces where man is a negligible factor. Here, where the cypress clings to the very edge of the continent, one feels the power of the elements in rolling surf churning against jagged rocks, in the outlines of these rock formations sloping upward and away from the sea, in this same slope repeated by the surfaces of wind sheared cypress foliage, and carried back to the crest of the forest, beyond which there is comparative shelter. If, when the wind blows, there be driving fog to trace its course, this effect is intensified; for the fog drifts up along these same lines, flowing over the sloping rocks and smoothed foliage, and through the bleached and naked limbs of any tree that has dared to raise itself above this general slope. The tree trunks leaning from the wind, foliage clinging in dense masses on the sheltered side of branches, buttress formations to the lee supporting trunks and limbs, and anchor roots to the windward holding fast in crevasses of the granite, even on quiet days, tell a story of frequent high winds and flying spume.

- Frederick Law Olmsted and George B. Vaughan.

Excerpt from State of California publication

“Point Lobos Reserve”

Edited by Aubrey Drury, 1954

“The greatest meeting of land and water in the world.”

~Francis McComas, on Point Lobos

“Botanists say that trees need the powerful March winds to flex their trunks and main branches, so that the sap is drawn up to nourish the budding leaves. Perhaps we need the gales of life in the same way, though we dislike enduring them. A blustery period in our fortunes is often the prelude to a new spring of life and health, success and happiness, when we keep steadfast in faith and look to the good in spite of appearances.”

-Jane Truax



"In Quietness and Trust"

36" x 36"

Oil on Canvas

The Old Veteran Cypress

Point Lobos, CA

*“At the equinox when the earth was veiled in a late rain,
wreathed with wet poppies,
waiting spring,
The Ocean swelled for a far storm and beat its boundary,
the ground-swell shook the beds of granite.
I gazing at the boundaries of granite and spray,
the established sea-marks,
felt behind me Mountain and plain,
the immense breadth of the continent,
before me the mass and double stretch of water.”*

~Robinson Jeffers

*“When you hike Point Lobos there are several choices to make,
and it seems around every bend is a new discovery.
Big Dome is a granite out crop that is constantly being pounded
by strong winter swells from the Aleutian Islands and North Pacific.
This day you could hear the rock bottom rumble with each surge.
The morning winter sun highlights the eroded crevices,
and just barely above the waterline,
Monterey Cypress cling to seemingly impossible roosts.”*

~Lee Munsell



“At Lands’ End”
20” x 60”
Oil on Canvas

Cypress Cove
Point Lobos, CA

“It is impossible to contemplate with right-minded, reverent feeling, its inexpressible beauty and grandeur, for ever assuming new forms of impressiveness under the varying phases of cloud and sunshine, time and season, without arriving at the conviction, “That all of which we behold is full of blessings,” that the Great Designer of these glorious pictures has placed them before us as types of the Divine attributes, and we were insensibly, as it were, in our daily contemplations, “To the beautiful order of His works learn to conform the order of our lives.”

~Asher B. Durand
Letters on Landscape Painting, 1855

*“I always want to go north.
North up the coast, the destination doesn’t matter...
What matters is the chilly air and ocean light,
the promise of the unknown steadily uncoiling
as you skim the edge of the continent.”*
~April Smith



“Reaching for You”

15” x 60”

Oil on Canvas

Punta De Los Lobos Marinos

“These rocks are full of texts and teaching...these cliffs are tables of stone, graven with laws and commandments. I read everywhere mysterious ciphers and hieroglyphics; every changing season offers to me a new palimpsest.”

~Charles Warren Stoddard

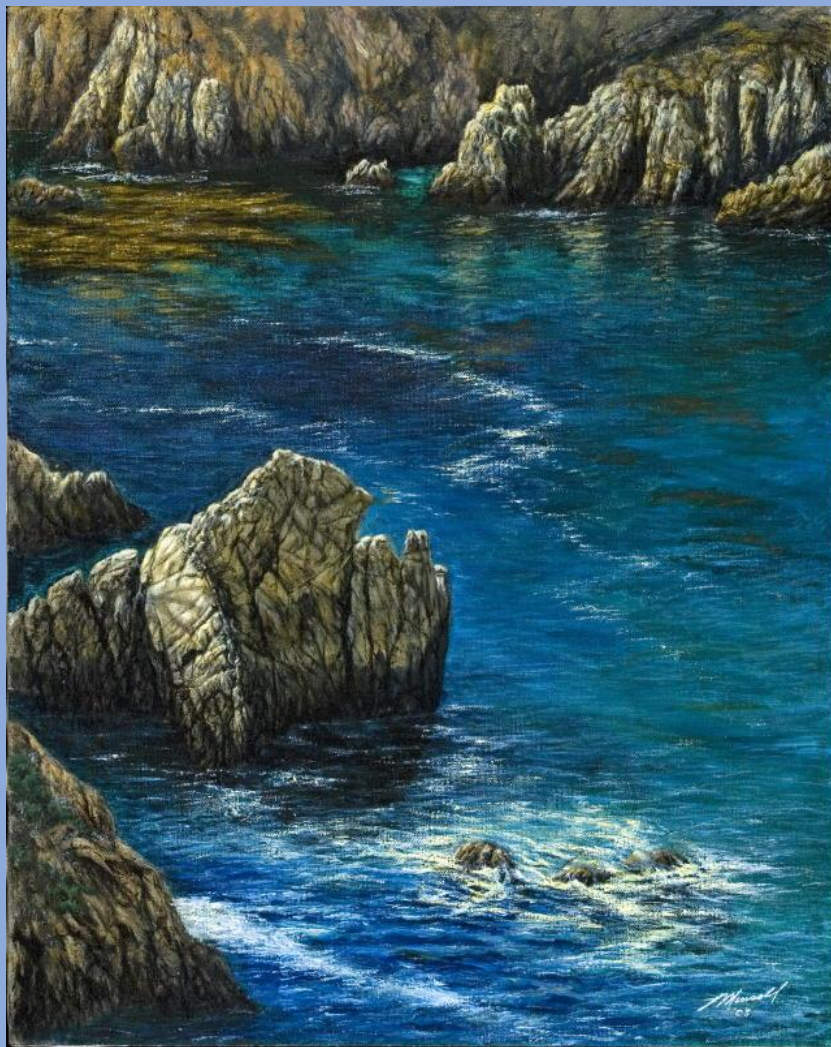


"I Lift my Hands"
28" x 22"
Oil on Canvas

Along Cypress Cove, Point Lobos, CA

“One begins to realize that art... in setting out to express nature with ever growing accuracy, teaches us to look, to perceive, to feel. The stone itself becomes an organic substance, and one can feel it being transformed as one moment in its life succeeds another.”

~Georges Clemenceau



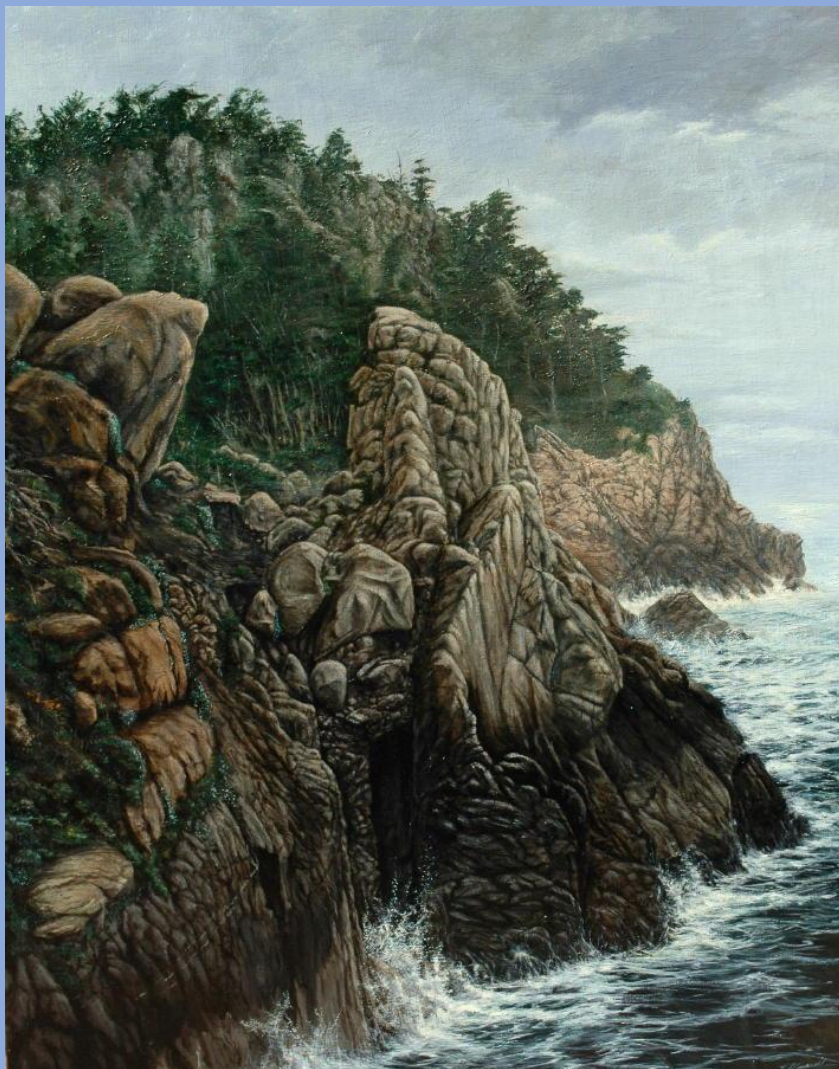
“Deep unto Deep”

20” x 16”

Oil on Canvas

Blue Fish Cove, Point Lobos

“It is not the language of painters, but the language of nature which on should listen to.”
~**Vincent Van Gogh**



“The Watchman”

50” x 40”

Oil on Canvas

Cannery Point, Point Lobos, CA

“A true work of art can stand many seeings, revealing anew at each seeing.”
~ **John Marin**



“China Cove”
24” x 18”
Oil on Canvas
Point Lobos

*“There are worlds of experience beyond the world of the aggressive man,
beyond history, and beyond science.
The moods and qualities of nature and the revelations of great art
are equally difficult to define;
we can grasp them only in the depths of our perceptive spirit.”*
~**Ansel Adams**



“Time and Eternity”

24” x 36”

Oil on Canvas

In the East Grove
North Shore Trail, Point Lobos

“The clearest way into the Universe is through a forest wilderness.”

~John Muir



“Awakening”
24” x 30”
Oil on Canvas

Pinnacle Cove, Point Lobos

*“He who hears my word, and believes Him who sent me,
has eternal life, and does not come into judgment,
but has passed out of death into life.”*

~Jesus



“Passage”
16” x 34”
Oil on Canvas

Headland Cove
Point Lobos, CA

*“The whole world is an art gallery when you’re mindful.
There are beautiful things everywhere-and they’re free.”*
~**Charles Tart**



“Where Your Treasure Is There Will Your Heart Be Also”

18” x 36”

Oil on Canvas

Dinosaur Caves, Pismo Beach, CA

*Ages ago what man shall say
How storm or current brought this way
The cypress cone?
Today she stands
An exile on these alien sands.
Apart from all our hopes and fears,
The salt spray round her roots like tears,
A mourner 'neath a foreign dome,
Ancient, remote, she dreams of home.”*
~Grace MacGowan Cooke
“The Cypress Tree”



“Pescadero Point”

18” x 24”

Oil on Canvas

Carmel, Ca

*“And this our life, exempt from public haunt,
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything”*

~William Shakespeare,

“As You Like It”

1599



“Cypress on the Mendocino Headlands”

18” x 24”

Oil on Canvas

*“The Soul is in eternity
As man stands in the landscape He is very small,
But he is apprised that the other is large and being so apprized,
Partakes of its scope”*
~**Ralph Waldo Emerson**



“On Eternity’s Shore”
20” x 60”
Oil on Canvas

Indian Point
Ecola State Park, Oregon

*“As you sit on the hillside
Or lie prone under the trees of the forest,
Or sprawl wet-legged by a mountain stream,
The great door,
That does not look like a door,
Opens.”*

~Stephen Graham
“The Gentle Art of Tramping”



“Come and Walk With Me”

36” x 24”

Oil on Canvas

“I have often had a retrospective vision where everything in my past life seems to fall with significance into logical sequence. Intuition, suspicion, or confidence in new ventures; there is a strange strain within me when advantage is not taken of some situation, the immediacy of recognition of the rightness or wrongness of a mood, a response, a decision - they are so often valid that I am increasingly convinced that we have yet to grasp the reality of existence.”

~Ansel Adams



“When You Search for Me”

24” x 36”

Oil on Canvas

Sea Lion Rocks

Ecola Point, Ecola State Park, Oregon

*“We may learn anew what compassion and beauty are
and pause to listen to the Earth’s music.
We may see that progress is neither the accelerating speed
with which we multiply and subdue the Earth,
nor the growing number of things we possess and cling to.
Is a way along which to search for truth,
to find serenity and love and reverence for life,
to be part of an enduring harmony,
trying hard not to sing out of tune.*

~David Brower



“Serenity’s Call”
24” x 36”
Oil on Canvas
Hug Point, Oregon

*“I never saw a discontented tree.
They grip the ground as though they liked it,
and though fast rooted they travel about as far as we do.
They go wandering forth in all directions with every wind,
going and coming like ourselves,
traveling with us around the sun two million miles a day,
and through space,
heaven knows how fast and far!”*

~John Muir



“Ancient of Days”

60” x 144”

Oil on Canvas

*“Do you want to know a truth,
That in the momentous challenges of our modern world
Will be at once a quest to inspire you,
An anchor to hold you fast,
A rich fare to nourish you,
And a relationship you will prize above all others?
Listen to Jesus of Nazareth; answer his call.”*
~Os Guinness



“Le-Mont-San-Michael”

24” x 48”

Oil on Canvas

*“The winds are far away;
The sea alone hath speech
The killdeers play
In little hollows of the kelp-strewn beach.
Beyond, a wisp of fog has come to rest
Upon the mountain’s breast
Here from a western steep
I watch the sea-gull soar;
Below the deep
Darts a white chord along the curving shore
And brims the day with thunder.
At my feet
The unshaken dews are sweet.
The hour is full of peace
Too tenderly profound
To fail or cease
At any call of lark, or ocean-sound
Where lonely waters meet a loner sky
The winds of morning die.”
~George Sterling*



“From the Ages
18” x 36”
Oil on Canvas

“Water is the driving force of all nature.”
~Leonardo Da Vinci



“He Brought Forth the Seas”

37” x 48”

Oil on Canvas

*“God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.”*
~**William Cowper**



"The Pipeline"
36" x 42"
Oil on Canvas
North Shore, Oahu

*“Even in its gentlest moods the salt sea travails,
moaning among the weeds or lisping on the sand;
but that vast fog-ocean lay in a trance of silence,
nor did the sweet air of the morning tremble with a sound.”*

~Robert Louis Stevenson



“He Set the Boundary of the Seas II”

24” x 36”

Oil on Canvas

*“If we are always arriving and departing,
it is also true that we are eternally anchored.
One’s destination is never a place
but rather a new way of looking at things.”*

~Henry Miller



“He Speaks”
16” x 20”
Oil on Canvas

*“Earth and sky,
Woods and fields,
Lakes and rivers,
The mountain and the sea,
Are excellent schoolmasters,
And teach some of us more
Than we can ever learn from books.”*
~John Lubbock



“Let There Be Light”
20” x 24”
Oil on Canvas
Waimea Shore Break
Oahu, Hawaii

*“There is a way that nature speaks, that land speaks.
Most of the time we are simply not patient enough,
Quiet enough to pay attention to the story.”*
~**Linda Hogan**



“Val d'Orcnia”

24” x 30”

Oil on Canvas

Tuscany, Italy

*“None know how often the hand of God is seen in a wilderness
but them that rove it for a man's life.”*
~Thomas Cole



“The Hiding Place”

24” x 48”

Oil on Canvas

Broad River
North Carolina

*“Look deep into nature,
and then you will
understand everything better.”
~Albert Einstein*



“There is a Way”

18” x 36”

Oil on Canvas

Ruby Beach

Olympic peninsula, WA

*“To know that which before us lies in daily life
Is the prime wisdom.”*
~**John Milton**



“Be Still and Know”
24”x 48”
Oil on Canvas
Sunset at Dana Point, Ca

My Story

Some might ask, "Why do you entitle your pictures with a theme related to God and His creation?"

For the answer, I must take you back to the summer of 1968.

I was a strong willed, rebellious young man in the early sixties when I broke away from home. I tried yoga, meditation, drugs, Eastern music, and other popular trends of that time. But more than anything else, I surfed. That was my greatest love.

This was all about to change.

One August night in 1968, I went to visit Lyn, a friend I used to work and surf with. That night, Lyn brought up the subject of Jesus and God. He told me that Jesus was more than just a great teacher. "I thought he was one of the great masters that comes along every century or so," I said. "No," Lyn replied. "Jesus was not just a great teacher. He is the Son of God." Then, trying to describe God, he added, "God is so awesome, it would be like holding a little pill bug in your hand. That bug has no way of understanding what is holding it or even that it's being held. God is even further above us than that. Lee, if you really want to know if God is real, just ask." In this manner, we talked late into the night.

Afterwards, driving my '64 VW over the hill to my apartment in Santa Monica, I looked up through the windshield into the night sky. "I really want to know," I said. I was honestly seeking to find out. I had a feeling God would answer. In fact, His answer was coming sooner than I could have dreamed.

Arriving home, I went to the door of my apartment with growing anticipation. There, right at eye level next to the doorbell, was a little gray pill bug - just sitting there. As if waiting just for me. At that moment, I sensed something. God's presence? Deep inside, I knew someone, or something was there and that someone knew all about me and about my earlier conversation with Lyn. It overwhelmed me. He cared enough to arrange for a bug to greet me. It gave me just a sense of how small I really was.

Being a natural skeptic, stubborn and pretentious, I said, "Well that doesn't prove Jesus is your Son." Cautiously, lest I had offended God, I stepped into my apartment. A little later I picked up a book I had been reading, all the while wondering what was going to happen next. The book was entitled "Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch" by Henry Miller. As I began reading, the pages seemed to come alive. I saw Jesus' name in the middle of a sentence and there seemed to be a glow around it. As I read on, the author's contentions began to obliterate any argument I had had about Jesus and who He was. It was as if God was speaking directly to me through Miller's writing. He was saying that whatever flimsy arguments I could possibly come up with had been used before by countless others. For me to repeat them was a waste of time. What argument, I asked myself, is left for me to make?

That following Friday, I went with Lyn to a small home group meeting in the San Fernando Valley in California. Imagine me being into Ravi Shankar, Buffalo Springfield, The Airplane and these folks were singing old gospel songs. For me, it was like stepping back a hundred years in time. I sat there on the edge of my seat waiting to see what God was going to do next. Sometime during the meeting, the leader asked if I would like to pray. I bowed my head and called out to God and said I wanted whatever He had for me. I was ready to do anything He wanted. In my mind, I suddenly saw a picture, or a vision in my mind of the sky filled with clouds. In an instant, something that looked like a fourth of July sparkler came out of the sky and hit me. I physically felt it go into my body, almost like a mild shock. At that moment I was filled with an overwhelming joy and a deep sense of well being and peace.

After more songs and cookies, we stepped outdoors into the cool night air. For the first time in my life, I felt connected to God's creation. I was home. Not realizing it I had stepped through that door that Jesus had spoken of when he said, "I am the door, if anyone enters through me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." I found that place of rest. Nothing else had satisfied that inner restless hunger I had, nothing but Him. After all, He is the designer. Wouldn't He know best what I needed what we all need - and be able to provide it?

Since that experience in 1968, I have come to learn that God has created lessons and messages all around us. Everything in His creation speaks volumes of His wisdom. This is what I try to express in my paintings...
To put on canvas what I sense He is saying to all of us.

Do you want to know the One who is calling you, and the purpose for which you were made?

Listen to Jesus of Nazareth.....then answer His call.

All my best,

Lee Munsell



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