

Luminous Journeys

A DANCE OF INTIMACY

BY DONNA CEDAR-SOUTHWORTH

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Katie Cassidy

"Untethered," oil on canvas, 48" x 60"

Katie Cassidy's abstracts are ethereal, luminous journeys into land-, sky- or seascapes that are defined only by the viewer's own imagination. Katie conveys the emotional essence of a place—either a place where she has traveled or a place to which the painting has taken her—and invites the viewer to share the journey.

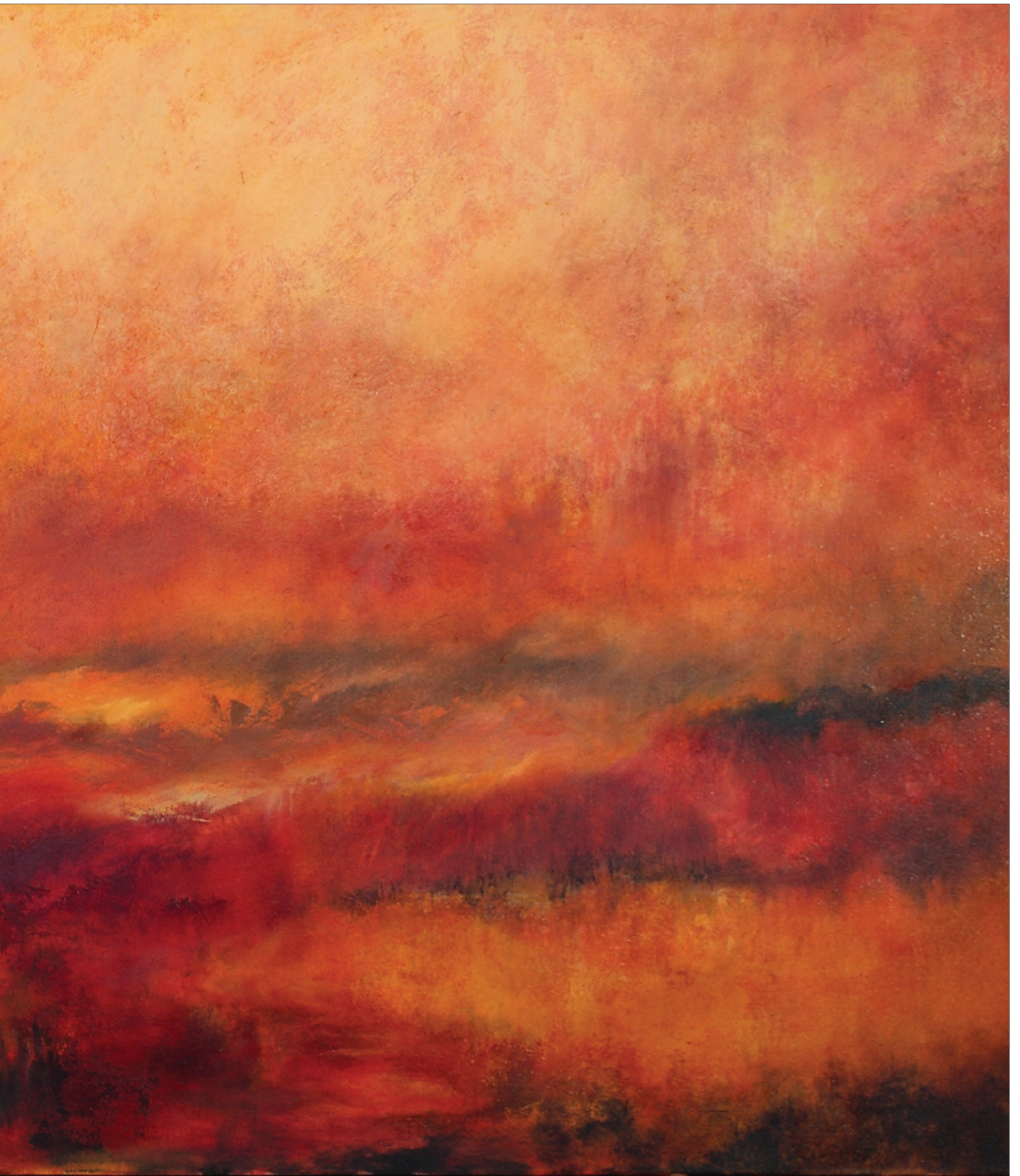
Inspired by nature, Katie strives to convey the emotional experience she once felt, or "continues to feel," in a place rather than details of a specific place. These feelings can be connected to a range of elements, "anywhere from the temperature, the emotional or spiritual feeling...the stillness, the calm, or the dynamics or color," she says.

Katie "banks" these feelings and draws upon them later when painting. She often starts out with a loose sketch of a concept such as "energy from the story." The act of saying this phrase to herself and then launching into a sketch is her jumping off point: "It's putting the feeling as well as the sketch down, and then the painting just starts taking on its own [life]. It's a real dance of intimacy. It's a give and take—of release and then holding back—of adding and subtracting... Then it evolves from that and it keeps evolving. The canvas says a whole lot more to me than what I say to the canvas."

That inner monologue and the artist's openness to continuing on the journey of the painting is a huge part of the process and what makes the act of painting so rewarding. "I can be here in my own little world and never feel alone or lonely because I'm having this wonderful interaction," says Katie.

She describes her work as a partnership between herself and the viewer: "I'm traveling my own journey when I'm painting and the viewer has to, if they want to, use their imagination and go on their own personal journey." So her oils on canvas might or might not suggest the sky or water or mountains. "It's really up to the viewer," says Katie. "It doesn't make that much difference to me where you think







Above:
"Symphony at Sea," 48"
x 72"; and "Serenity,"
60" x 48"

Opposite:
"Served Moment II,"
36" x 36"
All are oil on canvas



you're going to go because the whole idea is to share with you a passage so that you can take your own personal journey... and you kind of lose yourself. You daydream your way into a painting; you go for miles and miles, and you just decide where you're going."

Katie creates this journey by investing her entire self into each painting and using her innate artistic talent. After double majoring in art history and fine arts at Kean College and earning a B.A. in interior design from the International Institute of Interior Design, Katie had a long run as a commercial interior designer, painting all the while. Her desire to understand what "makes us tick—good, bad or otherwise" led her to earn her master's degree in clinical social work. But she always wanted to support herself through her painting and now works as a full-time painter.

After treating her top-quality canvas with several layers of primer, Katie lays down "multiple, multiple, multiple layers of paint and combinations of paint and glaze—it's adding and subtracting." Intentionally or not, all of her paintings seem to incorporate bursts of light, which she calls "rays of hope." The images are interspersed with areas of "energy and dynamic happening," along with quiet resting places. "I think that's good," says Katie. "That's what happens in our life journey anyway—we have periods where a lot is going on and then rest."

While Katie works primarily in a large-scale format—48-by-60, 60-by-40 and 40-by-40—she also creates



smaller pieces. Her passion for yoga and meditation brings a sense of peace and calm to her paintings.

The layers of paint and glaze, along with the texture she creates through a range of techniques and tools, combined with the adding and subtracting, the rhythm, the motion and feel, as well as Katie's attention to light and contrast and her use of color and color movement, create an infinite depth, one that invites the viewer to travel through the visual journey.

Katie's travels can influence her work, but a landscape does not have to be especially scenic to inspire her. "I can

be driving...and see an incredible sunset..., and I take in the whole essence of it, internalize it, play with it and 'bank' it in memory. I don't have to go out and travel. I like to, but I'm also traveling when I'm painting, and they are all very different places."

Katie is a resident artist at the Workhouse Arts Center in Lorton, and her work is included in this month's *Poetic Art* group exhibit. In November, she is the featured artist in Building 10 at the Workhouse. é

Katie Cassidy | www.katiecassidyartist.com

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