



An Ear is a Word is a Doorway is a Keyhole is a Labyrinth

48 x 68 inches

Acrylic and oil on aluminum panel

Brent J. Rowley

Bio

Brent J. Rowley was born and raised in Arkansas. He holds a BA in philosophy from Hendrix College and an MA in teaching English to speakers of other languages from Arkansas Tech University. He traveled the world as an English language instructor for nearly a decade, living and working in the countries of Georgia, Russia, and Japan. While traveling throughout Europe and Asia, he created small-scale watercolor paintings of the places he visited: ancient fortresses in the mountains of Svaneti, zen gardens in Kyoto, poetry readings in Mayakovsky Square. A turning point in his creative journey came in 2021 during a two month stay at the Sarasvati Creative Space in Hohenwald, TN. Here, his paintings expanded into large-scale mixed media works that incorporated the array of experiences, philosophies, and artistic influences he had amassed from his travels and studies. The breakthrough at Sarasvati led to an outpouring of creativity that continues to inspire his present work. Brent currently lives and works in Russellville, Arkansas, where he devotes many long hours to painting. While still considering himself a watercolorist at heart, his new work employs an ever-expanding range of media, including acrylic, wax pastel, charcoal, india ink, alcohol ink, and various natural and synthetic substrates. His work has been included in the Mid-Southern Watercolorists 51st Annual Exhibition, and he won Juror's Choice at Neighbors, an Art Show in Conway, AR. He has exhibited throughout the state of Arkansas and nationally. He is represented by Boswell Mouroi Fine Art in Little Rock, AR.

Artist Statement

A plethora of plagiarism, of exploded archaeology, pervades art history—Picasso borrows a motif from Manet, who steals a composition from Raphael, who in turn takes figures from Greco-Roman sarcophagi. My own work excavates the tropes, compositions, and images of the past in order to repurpose them into multi-referential creations. Through this process, I explore how the past shapes our vision of the present, and, in turn, how the present precludes an objective view of the past. My technique involves building up and scraping away multiple layers of paint. I see these layers as analogous to the layers of history and interpretation that bias us, rendering an objective viewpoint impossible. The layering does not end with the visual—as I work, lines from a poem or other literary work will meld in my mind with the source material. These literary fragments inform my painting process and, by becoming the titles of the pieces, lend yet another layer of meaning to the finished painting. Through this excavation and recombination—visual, physical, literary, and historical—I hope to emerge with paintings that might feel familiar to the viewer, yet are ultimately filled with strange, new visual sensations and meanings.

