

CAROLINE HARMAN

Caroline Harman is a painter out of Newtown, CT. Harman graduated with a BA from Gettysburg College in 1986 before studying drawing and painting at both Western CT State University and New York Studio School. Her paintings have been displayed in a wide variety of exhibitions throughout New England.

Across the globe we are struggling with complex systems teetering on the edge of collapse. Our supply chains, economies, democracies, health care systems and rapidly changing climate are all in flux. The year 2020 began with fires raging out of control in Australia, and as I write, the US is quickly approaching 300,000 deaths from the coronavirus. Rising temperatures are fueling environmental degradation, natural disasters, species and habitat loss, and food and water insecurity. Sea levels are rising, the arctic is melting, coral reefs are dying, oceans are acidifying and forests are burning.

Rather than despair, I make paintings using geometry and color to weave a tapestry of truth about the struggle for survival, the necessity of adaptability and the deep connection and interdependence of every living thing on the planet. My most recent paintings are populated with pollinators and endangered birds from the Red List, because right now all of life hangs in the balance. Every day I fight against the feeling of powerlessness, and enter the studio with the hope of creating something so alive with truth and terrible beauty that it forces the world to wake up.

My process involves a slow, careful buildup of layers to create balance, and the frequent introduction of random disruptors (ink stains, paint pours, sprays and drips) to create imbalance. The two opposing forces work continuously with and against each other over many months, ultimately evolving into a state of equilibrium. I choose not to edit my experience, but rather to allow it all in, creating interference patterns that build up, overlap, and fuse into a form of complexity that feels very truthful to the current moment. These pieces vibrate on the edge of abstraction and realism, chaos and order, life and death. I have always had a deep interest in complex systems that teeter on the edge of chaos, but symmetry has always been the endgame. Lately, however, my paintings are less ordered and stable, tilting toward a tipping point that feels more imminent with each passing day.