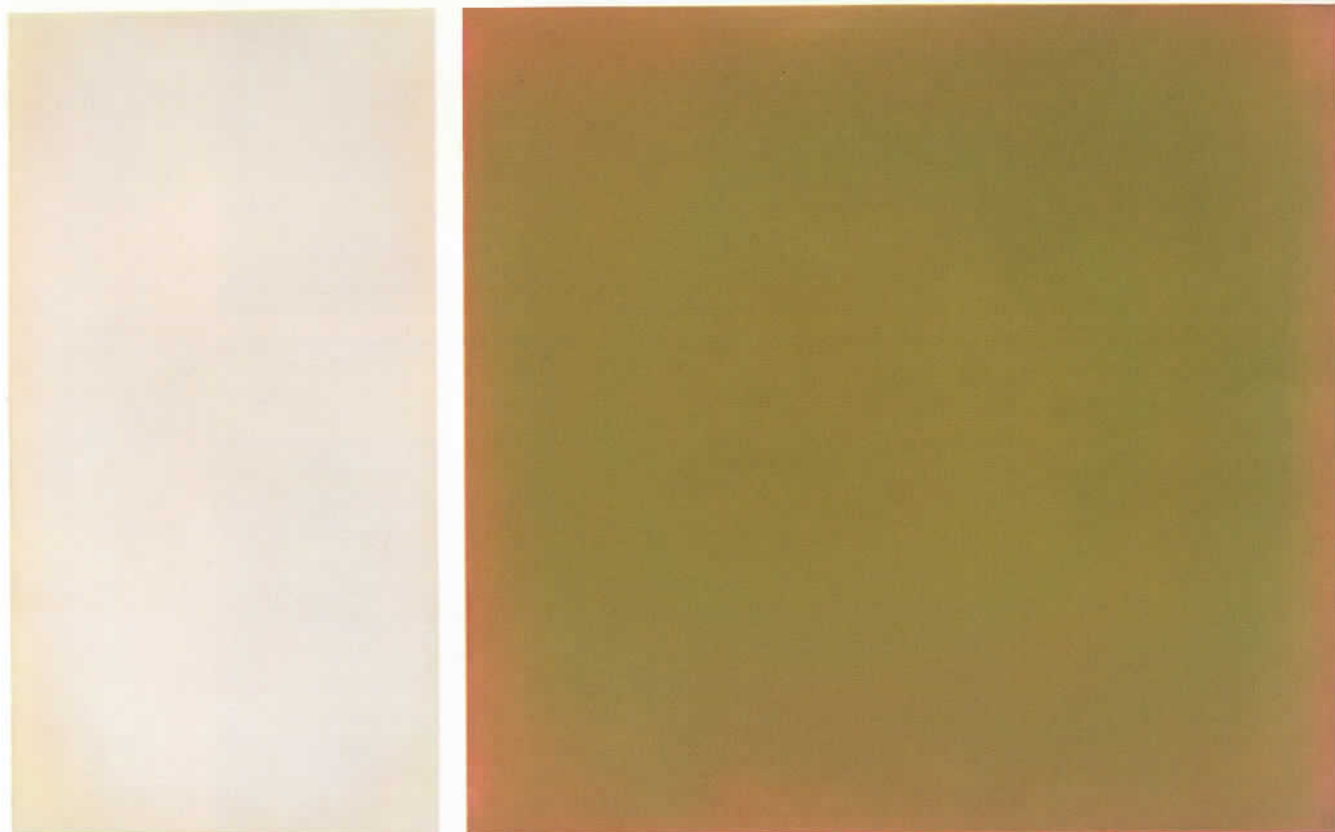


Overview



Anne Appleby, *Jasmine*, 2000. Color aquatint with burnishing. Paper size: 28-1/2 x 38"; image size: 16 x 26"; edition 35. Printed by Dena Schuckit.

Anne Appleby

My paintings aren't about the other world. They're about our place in this world. What nourishes the soul is the experience of being in the body. —Anne Appleby, 1998

The porch of Anne Appleby's house in Montana faces Prickly Pear Creek. On the ridge behind it are alders and willows. Behind are pines, green and dense, and then the Elkhorn Mountains, rising to about 10,000 feet. Nearer the house, with their roots moistened by the creek, are aspens, Appleby's favorites. "They are my calendar," she says. "When they turn gold, it's definitely autumn. When they lose their leaves, for sure it's winter. When they begin to bud out, you know spring is here. And they are very green in summer."

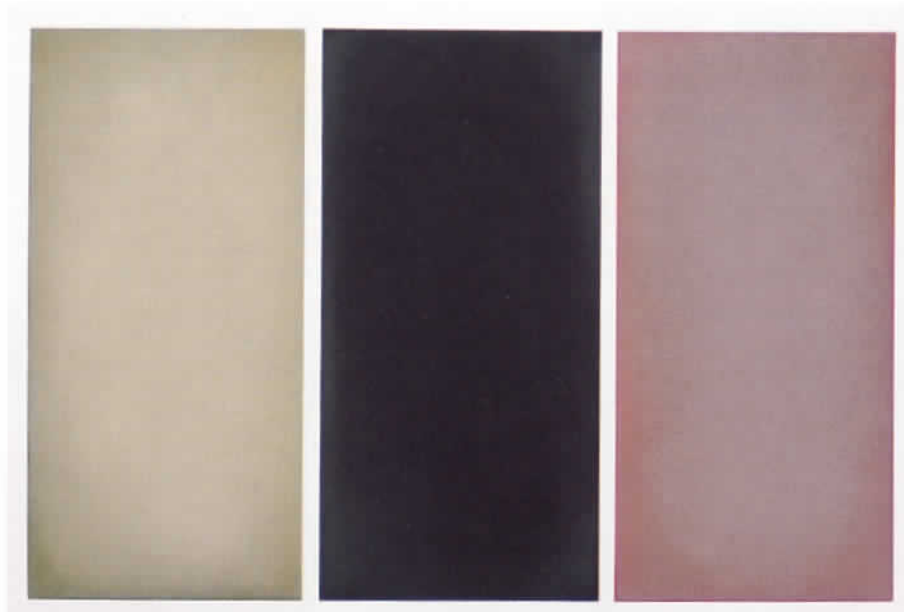
The four seasons have provided a recurring and beloved theme for painters over the centuries, a theme that Appleby has used in her most recent prints. To her, the seasons are made concrete by

recording layers of colors she has observed in the aspens as they pass through their yearly cycle.

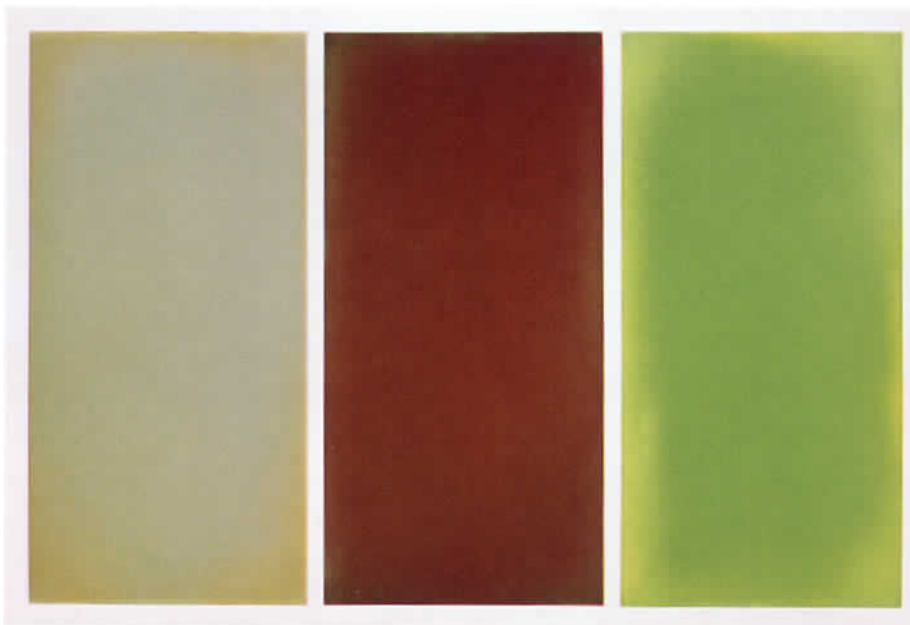
"As I work, I develop an inner dialogue about the meaning of what I'm doing," Appleby says. "It's very specific. But I can't paint that. I can't even speak it. It's denser than my activity." Then, thinking for a minute, she adds, "If I could paint it—if I did—my paintings would be narrative. But they're not."

Appleby was born in 1954 in Pennsylvania. She was the eldest of four girls in the family. When it came time for college, she chose the University of Montana simply because its art department had a good rating.

After she received her B.F.A. in painting in 1977, she got a job painting murals for the Montana Women's Community Project, and about a year later this led to a part-time project working with teenagers under the auspices of the Helena Indian Alliance. In 1979, Ed Barbeau, an Ojibwe elder who was president of the Alliance, asked her to become his apprentice. She accepted. "I was



Anne Appleby, *Winter Aspen*, 2000. Color aquatint with burnishing. Paper size: 25-1/2 x 32"; image size: 13-3/4 x 21", edition 35. Printed by Dena Schuckit.



Anne Appleby, *Spring Aspen*, 2000. Color aquatint with burnishing. Paper size: 25-1/2 x 32"; image size: 13-3/4 x 21", edition 35. Printed by Dena Schuckit.

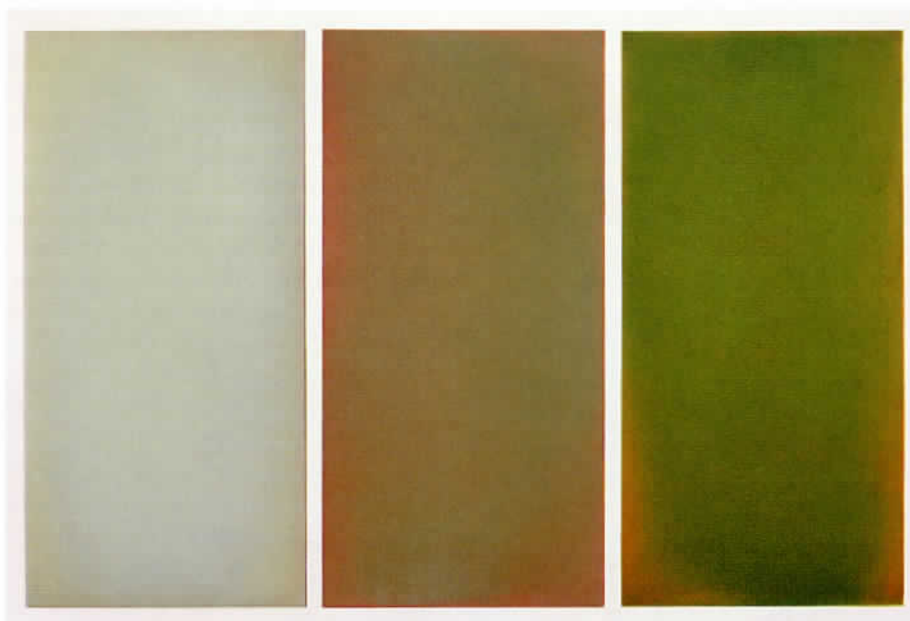
raised Presbyterian," she explains. "My mother's family came over on the Mayflower, and the Appleby's got here in 1630." Her paternal great-grandmother, however, was Ojibwe.

Appleby worked with Barbeau for fifteen years, and supported herself with part-time jobs as a house painter and as cook in various local restaurants. Barbeau made his own rawhide, then fashioned it into drums, travel bags, and ceremonial objects, all of which needed to be painted and decorated.

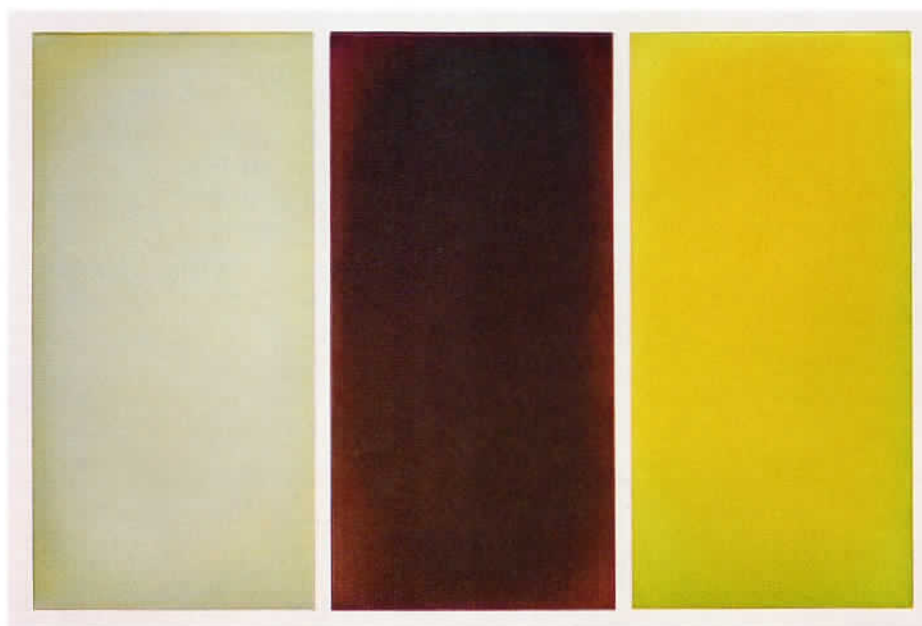
She remembers her first painting effort for him, a picture of a wolf on a shield. Her college art training had included traditional drawing skills, and she had thought the wolf she made was quite

good. "But Eddie didn't think it was good," she recalls. "He said it wasn't a wolf because it didn't have the essence of a wolf. What Eddie did was get to the innerness of things."

Appleby left her apprenticeship with Barbeau in 1986 to enter the M.F.A. program at the San Francisco Art Institute. "I was starting to feel like I was in a vacuum in Montana," she says. "I needed to be with other artists who loved Jackson Pollock." She had seen Pollock's "Lavender Mist" at the National Gallery of Art. "It was like atomic energy," she says. "It made me realize painting is capable of that. It was so confident. I knew I had to try to get to that."



Anne Appleby, *Summer Aspen*, 2000. Color aquatint with burnishing. Paper size: 25-1/2 x 32"; image size: 13-3/4 x 21", edition 35. Printed by Dena Schuckit.



Anne Appleby, *Autumn Aspen*, 2000. Color aquatint with burnishing. Paper size: 25-1/2 x 32"; image size: 13-3/4 x 21", edition 35. Printed by Dena Schuckit.

But the San Francisco Art Institute was a shock to Appleby. The emphasis at the time was on neo-Expressionism. "I began painting messy abstractions, loaded with symbols and Native American concepts," Appleby remembers, wincing. "Whenever something got too obvious, I would paint it out. Then one day, I painted the whole thing out and what was left was a kind of icky green. I recognized it for what it was. A pond. I called it 'Echo' because of the story of Narcissus seeing his own reflection in a pond."

In 1988, a year before her graduation, Appleby was offered a one-person exhibition in the student gallery at the Art Institute.

She filled it with four six-by-nine-foot paintings representing the four directions: north, south, east, and west. Remembering Barbeau's instruction that each direction has its own color, she made these paintings monochrome but layered with other colors underneath. "Like what I do now," she explains, and adds with a smile, "but I'm better at it now."

Probably so, but the Four Directions paintings led to a gallery exhibition, then another, and eventually an invitation to join San Francisco's Gallery Paule Anglim. In 1993, after her first show at Anglim had produced some sales, Appleby and her partner Melissa Kwasny, a poet, purchased the house in Montana where they now

live. In her first summer in the house Appleby began painting abstract portraits of plants, layering the canvases with the colors she observed as the plants grew and changed.

Sage was the first; early in the summer its leaves were pale green, with white at the stem and tiny yellow blossoms. Sage has a prominent seam up its leaf, and she thought of painting on panels, a practice she has since continued. She made the painting called "Sage" in three square panels, finally layering the bluish color of the mature plant over the yellows, greens and whites she had painted earlier.

After that summer, she returned to San Francisco and continued to paint panel paintings. In 1994 she spent a longer time in Montana, from May until January, then returned to San Francisco to teach the January term at the San Francisco Art Institute. The teaching was part-time, however, and its income insufficient, so



Anne Appleby in the Crown Point studio, 2000.

she went back to house painting as well. "I was always so broke all I could do was work and paint," she remembers. "I got tired of juggling. I started wondering what I was doing with my life."

In the summer of 1995 she and Kwasny moved to Montana full-time. A few months later the Italian art collector Count Panza di Biumo came into the Anglim Gallery and bought several of Appleby's paintings, and in 1996 she received an award and an exhibition at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Her first show in New York followed shortly after.

Since then, she has continued to live in Montana. She is now delighted with what she is doing with her life—spending all her time painting. And she no longer feels isolated in Montana, since the world is open to her. This summer, for example, at the invitation of Count Panza, she made a trip to Italy. Under the auspices of the Italian Ministry of Culture, she will make ten paintings for a ducal palace that is being restored in Sassuolo, near Modena. Appleby's career continues to develop, not because of "career moves," but because she was able to find a unique vision, a special sensibility, and she continues to explore it with clear and beautiful paintings and prints.

—Kathan Brown

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