Jodi Ruffner

“Fickle Focus”

I am a Pennsylvania native and moved to Southern Illinois over 20 years ago. After spending many years raising a family and working in elementary education, I returned to college and am currently an MFA student in painting here at SIU, graduating this May.

In my work, I am interested in using a visual friction between the natural world and that which is man-made as a metaphor for that which gets in our way of witnessing the extraordinary coexisting alongside the mundane all around us. I often strive to depict a sense of radiant light and color that surfaces above a dull greyness as a way of suggesting the power these moments of recognition can have in breaking through the weariness of the day to day or those shadows of hopelessness. I am drawn to include some allusion to a pathway, doorway, or a portal…some entry point for the viewer to see that there are other mysterious and liminal spaces they could travel to.

In this painting “Fickle Focus”, I was thinking about the structures and parameters that reduce and confine our perception of our surroundings. As we look out into the world, what we focus on is constantly shifting dependent on innumerous factors. Our ability to be witness to moments of wonder and awe is constantly challenged by the mundanity, busyness, and stresses that loom over our daily lives, constraining our vision.