

Curtis Hale, originally from Saint Johnsbury, Vermont, is the fourth generation in a family of painters. As a landscape artist, he paints with oils, working primarily from life. While celebrating the environment and painting as ritual, his work often reflects how the civilized world has impacted the natural world. His paintings, which are broadly painted without excessive detail, aim to establish a visual mood. After traveling extensively throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia, at 30 years old, he has finally settled in Danville, Vermont, with his wife and their baby.

ARTIST STATEMENT:

The work I made for the ART OF ACTION project is, in part, homage to the civil engineers and construction workers whose craft we so easily overlook as merely being functional. Vermont's bridges have provided workers with a livelihood, as well as with a creative outlet. A visit to the Vilas Bridge in Bellows Falls reveals a concrete span with beauty built into it. I think of how the designers of this bridge must have felt when they first saw it completed or how one of the concrete workers must have felt the first time crossing it, in 1931. Today, due to deferred maintenance, the bridge has been closed, indefinitely.

Each time infrastructure is repaired or replaced there is an opportunity, not only to improve its functionality, but to do so with consideration for its overall appearance within the natural landscape. I would like to influence a future aesthetic in our changing state. Painting and drawing may not have the same effect as legislative policy, but it can influence our awareness of the interplay between the natural and culturally-constructed landscape, in our lives. As historically-preserved infrastructure distinguishes our state now (e.g., covered bridges and well-groomed, dirt roads through the hills), Vermont's future image will depend on how we view the infrastructure we build, today.

As we inevitably move forward in today's changing economic conditions, I hope to affect viewers' sense of responsibility toward infrastructure, in order to engage a recollection of the history, behind our bridges, and inspire an ambitious, collective vision for the future. By maintaining a heightened aesthetic awareness, Vermont can continue to distinguish itself, with new infrastructure adding to the growing inventory of historical structures in which we find value and identity.