

Steve Barbaria
Artist Statement:

Both paintings in the Reimagining History show are from the narrative series: Barriers and Boundaries. I use our beautiful and sometimes harsh natural world to create environments for stories to live. The series uses incongruent landscapes as a framework to explore the challenges of migration, equity and social justice. I add imagery from mythology, history and the human made world to create contrast, context and tension. These elements start as small iPad sketches, then develop into larger compositions, enabling these simple elements to take on additional meaning as metaphors or symbols. Paintings are crafted on wood or canvas with acrylic, oil and pencil, using both traditional art tools and anything that makes interesting textures and marks.

Interpreting news and events as part of a visual story enables me to explore our connectivity with our past, our future and each other. Some of these studies lead to multi-layered paintings while others focus on fewer elements to convey a specific feeling.

Stories from two paintings:

Title: *2070 in memory of 2020*

An urban hiker comes upon the remains of a Stonewall Jackson Civil War memorial statue, overgrown by thistles and time. They recall stories from their grandparents about 2020, when a movement named Black Lives Matter inspired a reckoning with the statues, and many were removed. Why were leaders of slavery celebrated for so long? Did removing these statues have lasting impact? They consider the oppression of white Americans on people of color since the founding of the country and wonder if enough has changed?

Title: *Leto, Goddess of Motherhood at the Southern Border, 2018*

She collapsed at the sight of children separated from their families at the border. Parents have been detained and criminally charged after their fierce journey. Leto is left mourning. The children are alone now as the keepers of their family dreams, still seeking a home on the other side.