

ARTIST'S STATEMENT
2016
JOHN E. ROBERTS

For the past thirty years, my work as a printmaker and painter has focused on the environment as its starting point. A significant aspect of this has been the industrial landscape and its visual impact on its surroundings. My early work emphasized the abstraction and other formal attributes of the industrial environment both in New England and the Midwest where I attended graduate school and in the Chicago area where I previously taught. These structures dominated the landscape through their imposing and complex architecture. Upon moving to New Hampshire, I continued my interest in the industrial landscape but I also started a new series of prints and paintings based on the more intimate spatial aspects of the natural environment.

Over the past 15 years, I began exploring industrial subjects once again. Much of the work from this period has focused on the use of found objects and images of construction debris. I became intrigued with the inherent abstraction and texture found in these objects – mostly corroded, flattened metal parts that have fallen from cars due to the use of road salt and harsh winter conditions in New Hampshire. I have been able to actually print some of these objects in conjunction with both monotype and photo-etching processes, but in most cases, I have used them as the source of images for my work.

Most recently, I have been working on a new series of paintings and prints that focus on the industrial environment with a more painterly approach. Much of this work has come from industrial sites in the Bethlehem, Pennsylvania area including the Bethlehem Steel mill that is still standing.

My approach to these images focuses both on the dramatic visual structure of these forms in conjunction with dynamic underlying abstraction. I have combined the complexity of these structures with a more contemporary physical approach in both painting and printmaking. Through the use of heightened realism and digital imagery, I have been utilizing both traditional intaglio processes and Solarplate photo-etching in my recent prints. In both my paintings and prints, I have emphasized the contrast between the extreme representational elements, painterly process, and the dramatic visual atmosphere of these sites.