Artist’s Statement

Victoria Deneroff

**Turtles and Waves**

The painting was started before I knew what it was going to be, out of a kind of dogged determination. I just needed to start anything. During that time I visited a lake and saw a dozen or so turtles approach. I’m guessing they wanted to see if I was going to feed them. It then occurred to me that the painting was about turtles. Back at the studio, I poured some house paint into approximately turtle-shaped blobs. Hmm, I realized I needed to look at turtles better than this.

I went back to the lake to take photos. I don’t usually like to work from photos. There’s something lost. But in this case the best I could do was to take the photos myself, and at least pay attention to my feelings and thoughts. I became fascinated by the way the turtles appeared to be walking, not swimming in the water. I took a few seconds of video of them walking through the water. I thought I had enough photos to be able to complete the painting.

But, watching the video over and over, I was mesmerized by the little ripples the turtles created as they walked. By some chance the video composition turned out well. I now looked at the painting knowing how the turtles moved. And then the video itself seemed compelling: the sun, the two directions of the ripples, the way the turtles moved. Knowing I was going to Akumal, Mexico in a couple weeks, I decided that I would get more video there, and create an artist’s video. I was able to finish the painting to my satisfaction, well as satisfied as I ever get, and at the same time realizing I knew something about the turtles from the video that could only be conveyed there.

Akumal, by the way, or at least I was told, means something like “turtle place.” I had to hire Jorge to take me snorkeling in the bay, and he took videos. After being out on the water, I was not that much interested in the turtles, but in the eye level view of the waves. The turtles seemed to fly through the water, beautiful, but I was looking for relationship to the turtles in the painting. I’m sure Jorge thought I was crazy. I kept asking him to take pictures of the floats moving up and down with the waves, something I had been taking video of from the shore for several days. It felt the relationship was the water and the waves.

Taking the video, putting it into some sort of order, and trying to figure out what words it needed led to my understanding the painting better. The painting and the video, as well as its written text, are a record of my continuing explorations of consciousness as a vast and ultimately unknowable ocean.