



# Stew Henderson

## *Common Allegories*

June 27 - July 27, 2025

**OPENING RECEPTION**

**Friday, JUNE 27, 4-6PM**

### CALDBECK GALLERY

12 Elm Street Rockland Maine 04841 (207)594-5935  
email: [info@caldbeck.com](mailto:info@caldbeck.com) • [www.caldbeck.com](http://www.caldbeck.com)

image: JACK RABBIT SUITE 2023 aerosol and acrylic on wood 40 x 48 inches

From there to here

Four years ago a long-forgotten wooden sketch prompted me to see if I could expand on a very simple idea. I imagined trying to find a way to connect minimal architectural references to describe a place. The earlier paintings in this series were abstract. I would use color sparingly and focus on surface details to define a real place where I had been or one I had imagined. Some of the pieces were derived from my childhood memories.

As this body of work grew I began to include specific details that would make a place recognizable to anyone. This approach came about after visiting our son Chris and his partner Kendra in their home in the high desert town of Joshua Tree, California. As an artist from the northeast, visiting the desert for the first time was mind blowing. The expansive views, earthy pallet, and scrubby textures held a beauty that I had never experienced. Hours spent exploring different areas of the desert revealed plants and animals that required patient observation. The area had a funky and sometimes humorous vibe, but there was also evidence of a history of a place and time when the American Dream was lost. Driving along sandy roads, I noticed small communities of trailers and campers and several abandoned buildings that I later learned are called jackrabbit homesteads. From the late 1930s up to the mid-1970s, the Bureau of Land Management tried to populate this harsh environment by giving anybody who applied a five acre plot of land. If they remained living on that piece of land after three years, the government gave them the property. Desert living can be uncompromising, though, and without reliable water sources and with the intense heat, most of the homesteaders didn't make it. These structures stood out to me and made me consider the possibility of representing what a place means and not just how it looks.

Immediately following the desert paintings I chose to find content closer to home and did a painting of the toolbox in my studio. This is a familiar object in most artists' studios and I realized that I could use this commonality to describe a place by portraying the objects that have a function and purpose in our culture. That was when the idea of painting still lives took shape. I decided to paint things that are readily available in public places, starting by taking photographs with my phone in supermarkets, hardware stores, and Goodwill--among other locations. The still life genre has always highlighted different aspects of society. In my case, I chose to present a personal view of consumerism. My imagery isn't necessarily meant to be critical of how we spend our money, but rather to provoke thought on why we buy the things we do. My paintings are colorful and show the abundance of products available for consumption. I depict objects that we feel we need: common allegories that tell a story about who we are.

Stew Henderson  
April 2025

A printed cataloge with an essay by Ken Greenleaf is available from the Gallery.

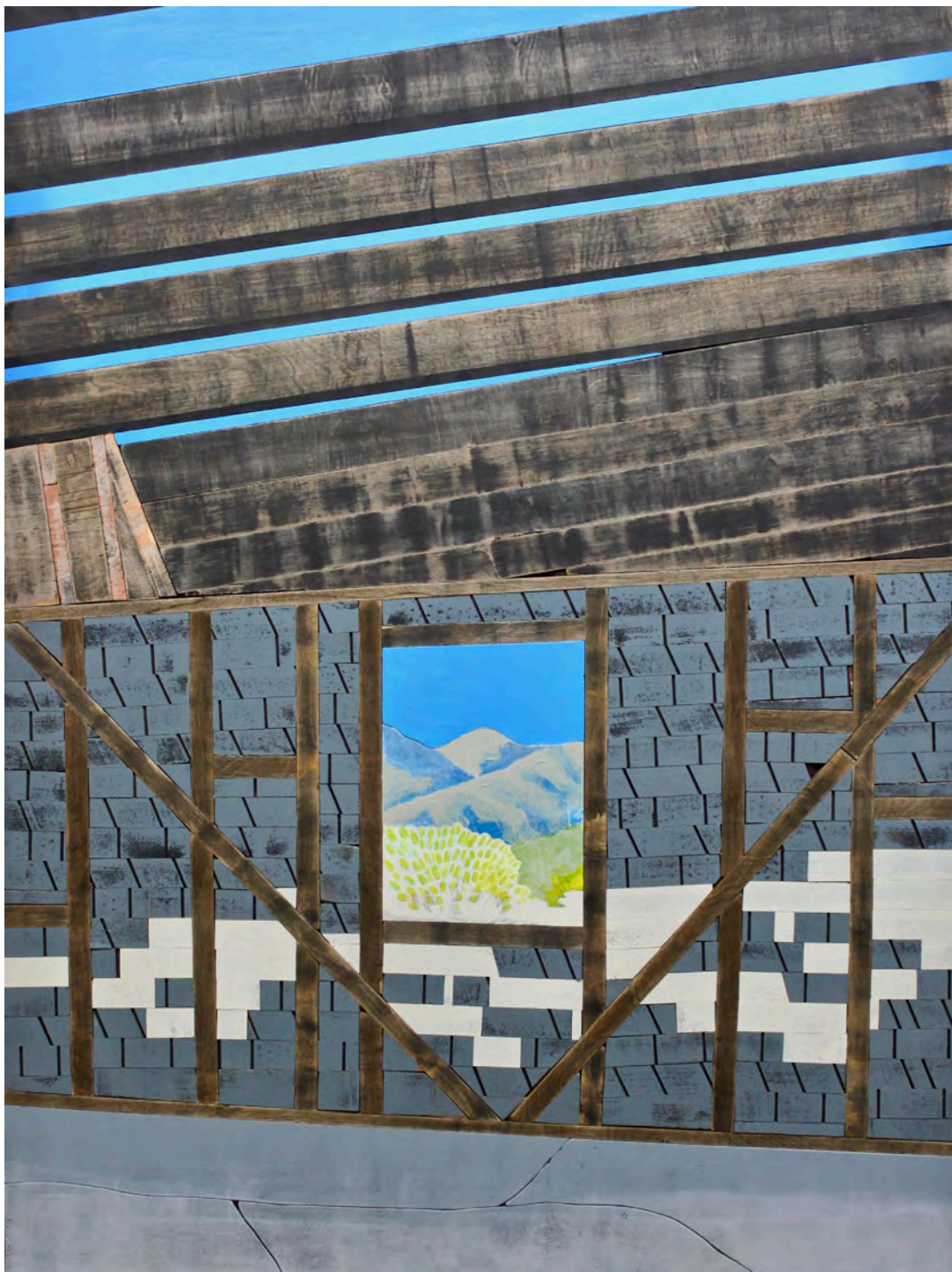


STILL LIFE WITH BEER 2023  
acrylic on wood 48 x 36 inches





STILL LIFE AT THE 5 & 10 2024  
acrylic on wood  
36 x 42 inches



DESERT INTERIOR 2023  
acrylic and aerosol color on wood  
48 x 36 inches





STILL LIFE WITH SCULPTURE:  
NOAH PURIFOYS'S HOMAGE TO FRANK GEHRY 2024  
acrylic on wood  
27 3/4 x 24 inches



STILL LIFE WITH AMMO  
aerosol and acrylic on wood  
48 x 60 inches inches



DISH TOWELS 2024  
acrylic and aerosol on wood  
19 x 38 inches





STILL LIFE WITH NECK TIES 2024  
acrylic on wood  
36 x 29 3/4 inches



WONDER VALLEY 2022  
acrylic and aerosol on wood  
40 x 40 inches





RUG STACK 2024  
acrylic on wood  
36 x 36 inches





AT THE LIBRARY 2024  
acrylic on wood  
29 x 27 inches



MOJAVE HOMESTEAD 2023  
acrylic and aerosol on wood  
36 x 48 inches





LIME KILN  
acrylic and aerosol on wood  
57 1/2 x 44 1/4 inches