

DAVID LIGARE

*River/Mountain/Sea*



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For much of my career as a painter of narrative subjects I have used the extreme diversity and literary character of the landscape of Monterey County as a backdrop for classical Greek and Roman allegories and myths. Much of the county does in fact resemble Greece and Italy, indeed, where we live, Corral de Tierra, the landscape looks remarkably like parts of Tuscany and Umbria. It is, after all, a “Mediterranean climate” that was adopted as the new-world home by adventurers who were brave enough to bear the extreme hardships of their long and dangerous journeys by land and sea.

Several years ago I decided to forego narrative and make three large paintings that would represent the essence of this celebrated land. Each element is carefully chosen and observed but it is also abstracted and standardized by an underlying triangular structure as well as by my preference for the late afternoon light.

Very early on in my career I discovered that many whole systems have been described in tripartite terms; Aristotle’s “beginning, middle and end,” the Chinese “Tao of heaven, Earth and Man,” and Hegel’s “thesis, antithesis and synthesis.” My choice, then, of three basic elements of Monterey County; river, mountain and sea, represents a very conscious and meaningful structure within the compositions and without—visually and philosophically. These paintings attempt to not only depict this landscape but also to represent a manifestation of the *idea* of wholeness and the perfection of this place.

**David Ligare, 2013**

Monterey County contains over three thousand square miles, much of it incomparably beautiful.

The Santa Lucia Range plunges into the Pacific, forming a coastal slope impossibly steep. Seamed granite formations lend purchase to tide pool creatures thriving among the constant churn of the sea, green with sun-charge or grey beneath a hovering coastal fog. Robinson Jeffers lived here because the tension between earth and ocean suggested the incessant motion of timeless cosmic forces.

Against the coastal grandeur, are subtler beauties: sun drenched inland mountains; tree-lined rivers and creeks, sometimes swollen, sometimes nearly dry; and here and there farmscapes and ranches nestled into hillsides or stretching along the horizon of John Steinbeck’s Salinas Valley, sixty miles of some of the richest soil anywhere on earth.

For decades, artists have found subject and setting in Monterey County. These paintings by David Ligare—like Jeffers’ poetry and Steinbeck’s fiction—are faithful to the spirit of this place, almost improbably so as they subtly resolve its wild excesses into classical balance.

**Terry Beers, Santa Clara University, 2013**

*Editor of Unfolding Beauty: Celebrating California’s Landscapes,*  
Santa Clara University Press, 2000

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Inside Panels:

**Mountain**, 2013, oil on canvas, 60 x 90 in. Courtesy, the artist and Winfield Gallery, Carmel

**River**, 2012, oil on canvas, 60 x 90 in. Courtesy, the artist and Winfield Gallery, Carmel

**Sea**, 2013, oil on canvas, 60 x 90 in. Courtesy, the artist and Winfield Gallery, Carmel

Back Cover:

**Salinas River Study**, 1984, oil on canvas, 8 x 10 in.

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