



## Where Landscapes Meet II

*24 x 36, oil on canvas, 2002*

I probably would have never painted any cows if it were not from passing comments by my dad in the mid 1980s. At the time I was painting these large and very weird creatures in a series that were ambitiously psychedelic, metaphysical, fictional and experimental.

<http://dean-gustafson.com/genevo.html>

Great fun for me, as a 21 year old art college kid who was beginning to paint with some skills, and eager to push creativity to the edge. My dad would be always supportive but not say much about my work. One evening I showed him some of these crazy detailed DNA creature paintings, and his brief response was "to me a good painting is of cows in a meadow." (probably reflecting mom's paintings of that subject that she made in the 1940s) I will never really know his true thoughts about my direction at the time, but I suspect that it may have been along

the lines of "great, the kid has to be one of those misguided Jiminy Leary\* followers."

So I thought to later surprise him with my own painting version of cows in a meadow ; primitive, colourful, with stern bovine expressions. This was a hit, and we had good laughs over this exchange! [no photo right now.]

In 1988 I took the class by Ralph Reed entitled "History of Painting", when in my second year at the Academy of Art in San Francisco. This was a combination of a lecture and studio projects class, brilliantly taught by Ralph, who was also the director of fine arts there at the time.

One of the assignments was to paint two different kinds of landscapes. This was generally expected to be on two separate canvases, but I had the idea to blend them into one.

Recently my brother Brian and I were out in Calaverous County to check out our parents property. The area was very dry during what was classified as a California drought year. I then saw a weather beaten bluff with a dried up crack in the ground, or a dry creek bed, with stray amount of cattle milling about under the oppressive sun.

I thought of the opposite of this parched western scene, and that was a verdant, ordered British hedge maze.

This became my dual landscapes inspiration.

<http://dean-gustafson.com/wherelan.html>

The cows were an afterthought, and truly made this work as a compelling favourite by everyone at the Academy. This first version of " Where Landscapes Meet" went on display in the

Academy's Sutter Street window to good response! Several friends wanted to buy it for years afterwards, as it hung on the kitchen wall.

The scenario suggested questions for the viewer : Would the cows want to enter the maze? Where does the maze lead? Do cows even have the ability to think of such concepts?

Eventually it was purchased by Larry Harvey of Burning Man fame, in 2002 when the Burning Man organisation was finally starting to recoup their losses with some profit.

Instantly, the traditional kitchen cows painting was missed ; things just didn't seem right without it there. So I started an updated version, with more anatomically correct cows, and cleaner palette. The result is this painting, that also became a popular favourite, getting exhibited a number of shows over the next several years.

This piece is now owned by great longtime friend Jamie Rosenberg and his wife Althea, who live in Wisconsin. An appropriate state for cow themed art, and Jamie is a fellow anglophile who even gets to work in Britain. Such are the themes here being in the perfect home!

Dean Gustafson, - January 2021

\*dad would often mince popular names on purpose, while feigning ignorance, just for his amusement. "so you like that drummer Bingo Starr, huh?"]

