

ARTIST STATEMENT

KAREN CHASE

I grew up in a household where making art was as natural as climbing a tree or setting the table. My mother was an abstract painter and both of my Russian-Jewish immigrant grandmothers were art makers. One worked in the garment district as a seamstress, and painted canvas after canvas of semi-realistic scenes of New York City. The other sewed intricate costumes for dolls which would get donated to hospitals. Making art has run in my familial blood for generations.

When I was four years old, every Saturday my mother took me to New York City on the train to take art lessons in the basement of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Looking out the window at the water as the train crossed the Harlem River was thrilling. It meant we were getting close. I have been making art since then.

In high school, I spent two summers at the Art Students League in New York City. While there, I started a painting of the water and rocks at a seaside park near where I lived. I found a coffee can on a shelf, mixed some blue paint with water, put my hand in the can and kept flinging the blue watery mixture at the canvas. Charles Alston, my renown teacher, came over. "What are you doing?" "I'm the water," I said. "Alchemy," he said and smiling, walked away. I was getting physical via the blue water, leaving behind my self as art led the way, took its own course.

My paintings are characterized by motion, the result, I believe, of my paralyzing childhood polio. I start with a large canvas on the floor and walk around it and begin. Nothing in mind - I don't want anything in mind. Often it takes months for a painting to be done.