



BRYAN SABOL

artist's statement

Nature has always presented itself to me as something inherently mysterious, a far more complex subject than what one might register at first glance. Those wild places which resonate deeply within us reflect our primeval relationship with the environment—even in modern times when we think we've evolved beyond nature.

But that separation of people from the natural world isn't just artificial, it's a fallacy. The more we have become urbanized, the greater we feel the urge to connect to nature in ways both physical and contemplative: We take picnics in the park, go on hikes, camp far away in the wilds, or simply pitch a tent in the backyard. We take photographs, we paint landscapes... we even create stories wherein lands untouched by human hands are rife with magic, danger, opportunity, romance, or adventure.

I believe that we all have the power to reconnect with wilderness; the challenge is *how*. Many don't have the wherewithal to leave the trappings and distractions of daily life behind and venture into the wild. And in those rare, brief moments when we do have the opportunity to consider a landscape, any sense of profundity is lost in the race to grab an Instagram selfie before hurrying on to the next iconic spot. With such a mindset, we can only experience the world in rapid clips and at a superficial level: a tree is a tree; stone is stone; an abandoned building in the desert is nothing more than its crumbling walls.

My work offers the magic and mystery that we long to find in nature. I combine emotive landscape photography with fanciful narratives, encouraging viewers to consider layers of meaning by stimulating our most powerful sense—the imagination. This synergy of image and word prompts the viewer to contemplate our relationship with the land in a more creative light: a tree becomes a wooden monster that stalks a lake, a rock is the broken heart of a mountain, a doorway in some ruins forms a threshold that transports you to the time of the ancients, and more.

My process begins with the photograph, looking for an unexpected compositional element that transforms the ordinary into something remarkable. I then take inspiration from the tone of the scene to compose a narrative that elicits an emotional response from the viewer, reigniting the sense of wonder and possibility that nature can offer. Ultimately, my work is designed to blur the boundaries between what is human and what is wild. We are no longer modern-day spectators examining the landscape from afar; our ancient bond with nature that has long lain dormant inside us is re-kindled. Now we are in nature, and nature is in us.