I want people to be drawn into the landscape, but to have an uneasy feeling about the choices I've made.

Echoing other contemporary naturalists, Carey mused that “when we affect the climate, there is no more untouched wilderness.” This resonates strongly in the Arctic, yet it is the absence—of permafrost or substantial ice caps, for example—that makes these spaces undeniably altered by humanity; that idea is a striking one. “I found that so strange,” Carey continued, “that an area could be two things at once—the very definition of human intervention and also virgin wilderness. It occupies both in our minds and that’s complicated.”

Where there is a felt absence in Carey’s paintings, Scott Greene approaches the topic differently, explicitly incorporating man-made detritus into his compositions. “I see artificial constructs everywhere and try to include a vestige of what’s natural,” Greene stated of his works in Bewilderness.

Both painters use landscape to explore a complex topic, incorporating abstraction and metaphor into their respective pieces to foster reflection and discussion. “I try to get people to look a little below the surface,” Carey said, “to examine the space—how we look at it, how it moves us around, how it is shaped and owned and used … rather than present data. Maybe the role of the arts is to present information in a different way to affect change.” Greene, who also believes that art in its many manifestations is a useful avenue toward a shift in our collective and personal policies and actions, declared, “Art is about communication and sharing, and I can’t think of anything more worthwhile than to engage with others and exchange ideas about beauty, humor and tragedy.”

I asked Greene why these topics are pressing on a personal level, he replied emphatically, “I’m not alone, these topics are urgent and important for everyone.” Just as Carey suggested in our conversation, the thought is conjured again, this time more powerfully—when we change the climate, we change the whole world and life as we know it. On the grandest scale possible, we’re in caustic motion toward a frightening future. As Greene said near the end of our exchange, “We are probably now witnessing the tipping point for all life on this planet. So, better get out there and say what you’re going to say.” The more voices added to the chorus, the better.

Carey and Greene’s works will be on display at 516 Arts through January 9.