

# JOHN BARKLEY

COVER ART: IT ALL CHANGES, OIL ON CANVAS, 152 X 183 CM, 2012

PHOTOGRAPHS OF ARTWORKS BY ARTIST

**ARTIST AND SCHOLAR JOHN BARKLEY** (Canadian, born 1964) began painting and drawing as a boy. He was encouraged by his artist-father with whom he went on painting trips in the Ottawa valley. Today, Barkley creates dense, layered paintings inspired by his studies in philosophy, psychology and religion. A practicing professional artist since 1996, Barkley experiments with thick paint application and varied brushstrokes to create abstract landscapes that simultaneously evoke both a quiet contemplation of nature but also its chaotic excess and mystery.

Barkley also paints purely abstract works filled with organic shapes, bright colors and dark voids, which he relates to the psychic terrain of human consciousness. Whether from nature or the human mind, these works depict landscapes that belie the artist's intense interest in human existence—its place within the greater scheme of life, but also how our views about our place in the world impact our relationship with the surrounding environment.

Barkley's work connects to a range of Canadian artistic traditions and predecessors. Critics have discussed him as a contemporary descendant of the Canadian landscape artist Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven that formed shortly after Thomson's death in 1917. However, Barkley's paintings also relate to those of Paul-Émile Borduas and Jean-Paul Riopelle, who formed the group Les Automatistes in the mid-1940s with fellow Québécois artists interested in Surrealism and its methods of automatism. According to the artist, he is most influenced by the introspective approach he learned while studying at the University of Ottawa with Catherine Everett and Roland Poulin.

TEXT BY NICOLE SMITH



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