

# DENNIS LIBERTY

LANDSCAPES OF THE AMERICAN WEST

## WATER TOUCHING STONE SERIES

Headwaters of The  
McKenzie River, Oregon

- 54 X 66
- OIL ON CANVAS
- \$18,000



### Patterns the water made and the boldheartedness of the stones in its path...

Existence is a dance between chaos and order. Regarding the headwaters of the McKenzie River in Oregon, the “order” of stone is ever so slowly giving way to the “chaos” of the water.

I tried to explain to a friend how I saw the turbulence in that water working. He is deep into mathematics and wanted to give me two equations for fluid dynamics that he said would explain how the fundamental things worked. I showed him this painting where I had grappled with the surface and the substrata, the eddies and subductions, each part in conflict with the other and the whole moving at a constant high speed. At that point my friend said, “My two equations will explain a miniscule part of what goes on here. If anyone understood all the forces and elements involved in this single instant, then he would be a god.”

The McKenzie is a spring fed river flowing west out of the Cascade Mountains. In 2006 I had the opportunity to visit in on my annual “get out of Dodge and see the world” road trip.

At its origin, the McKenzie rushes and gushes over boulders with tremendous force. I was fascinated by the patterns the water made and

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the boldheartedness of the stones in its path. In the midst of the surge, I found myself focused on one igneous boulder bejewelled with moss and covered with the finest silken sheet of water which in its great patience is helping that boulder to become sand.

I spent a good long time looking at this one small part of the Universe, taking color notes and observing the interplay of forces in constant motion. I photographed this stalwart boulder from several angles and distances, knowing I would have to make a painting.

When it came time to do the work, I chose a very close view wanting to focus on the point in both time and space where what appears to be order interacts with what appears to be chaos and the exchanges that go on between the two.

In taking this focus, the painting taught me the depth and meaning of color and what is created in its interplay. I'm not asking my viewers to don saffron robes and chant but I do want them to slow down, to pause and look closely, to see, among other things, how the merest waft of orange in the foam against the bluegray water describes a unique place in the world.

At the headwaters of the McKenzie, and while working on this painting, I was truly enthralled by image, color, texture, form, and time. Morphology, hydrology, and quantum uncertainty were frosting on the cake.

