



let it be

Kathryn Milillo
barn paintings



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*Cover and back cover (detail), and frontispiece:
Compassion oil on linen 40x40 inches*



Awakening oil on linen 17x21 inches

The brilliant sparkle of backlit shadows. Quiet colors that resonate and glow. The beautiful decay of a simple old dairy barn. I love the paradox of opposites, like my mother's Irish forebears who set sad lyrics to happy music. Embracing the complexity of life through the lens of aging barns in Vermont and nearby Lake George, I hope to convey the gratitude I feel for the ordinary and the extraordinary that dazzle me, and bring joy to my life.

let it be

Over the past 20 years,
barns have become a
personal gateway to
interpret love and loss.
Squinting at narrow
doorways, light-filled cupolas
and skylit windows, I've
pondered the meaning of
structures touching, almost
touching, or wide apart.
Gradually, I've discovered
a non-verbal language
that feels truthful to my
experience.



Let It Be oil on linen 18x24 inches

reflections



Losing Love oil on linen 14x18 inches

A lonely sentinel on a mountaintop, or a small herd nestled in a valley – barns are powerful structures, filled with memories of nurturing and struggle.

For me these barns are as spiritually beautiful as any cathedral. They abide, mute and unflinching – no longer needed in a mechanized world of plastic-wrapped hay bales.



Abide with Me oil on linen 22x28 inches

compassion

Farmscapes of slowly crumbling buildings challenge our current values. These aging matriarchs and patriarchs sheltered and nourished us in their prime, and I want to honor their dignity in the face of diminished relevance. Turning simple barns into icons of strangers, relatives and friends has brought me a sense of contentment and peace.



Study for Compassion oil on linen 30x30 inches

lovingkindness



Benediction oil on linen 12x24 inches

There is a zen quality that infuses certain barns as they meld form and function with a spare and serene honesty.

I love the sometimes whimsical, and occasionally haunting, balance/imbalance of windows and doorways in simple farm architecture, and the contrasts in scale of farm structures built by hand from local materials.



Lovingkindness oil on linen 18x24 inches

joy

About fifteen years ago, I was introduced to the teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh. Intrigued by the Buddhist concept of the Immeasurable Mind – made up of four aspects: joy, compassion, equanimity and lovingkindness – I've spent hours wandering on quiet country roads, looking for structures that visually express the intent of these evocative words.



Joy oil on linen 24x36 inches

equanimity



Abandonment II oil on canvas 14x18 inches

Karuna (compassion) involves the capacity to relieve the suffering of another person. *Mudita* (joy) is experienced when we can feel joy for others even though we ourselves are suffering. *Upeksha* (equanimity) requires the wisdom to see things as they truly are, without prejudice. *Maitre* (lovingkindness) offers love that is filled with understanding and acceptance. Together, they contribute to the achievement of a transformative happiness. (I hope I get there.)



Equanimity oil on canvas 24x36 inches

mountain solid

Thich Nhat Hanh has a lovely meditation that has helped me when I have faced the loss of a family member or struggled with fear and anxiety. The phrase "mountain solid, water reflecting, space free" has allowed me to navigate some of my life's rockiest byways, reminding me that I can be grounded, thoughtful and clear during a challenging interval.

"Mountain solid: I feel connected to the earth."



Murmuring Deep oil on canvas 24x36 inches

water reflecting



Opening Farewell oil on linen 16x20 inches

The effects of light on water have taken up hours of mesmerizing study. Still water offers an opportunity to look into hidden depths, as well as to see the reality that is reflected onto the water's surface. The tranquility of a single moment, captured over an extended time span, gives me a sense of being both lost to time and immersed in the present.

"Water reflecting: I can see with insight when my mind is still, like calm lake water."



The Urge for Going oil on linen 10x20 inches

space free



High Light oil on linen 12x24 inches

Choosing when to open myself to others or to embrace solitude has been a challenging skill to cultivate. The world can feel too present and demanding, and it can be difficult to create space to think. As I paint images of doorways, vistas, and sightlines through buildings, I am also painting a way towards insight.

"Space free: I am free to be my best self when I breathe deeply and allow myself the space to be just as I am."



Love Heals oil on canvas 24x24 inches

letting go

While I appreciate seeing picturesque old barns punctuate our landscape, I understand that they no longer function in the way they were intended. Farmers are gradually freeing themselves from the grinding physical labor of past generations, and these remarkable old structures are rarely used now to store hay and shelter animals.

I will miss them.



The Urge to Merge oil on linen 20x24 inches

let it be

Playing with light and dark, color complements and negative spaces, I aim to create a visual poem.

Humbled by a sense of the inexorable, I am grateful for the beauty I see in an aging structure. As I scumble and glaze, dab and brush, I truly appreciate the simple blessings of seeing, and being.



Saving Grace oil on canvas 36x48 inches

afterword

Kathryn Milillo begins her art with word thoughts — for example, 'happiness,' 'gratitude,' and 'refuge,' to bring emotional power to her oil paintings. Her barnscapes and landscapes have a simple serene beauty, achieved by skilled composition and muted colors, soft edges and a slow building up of paint. Her barn and house images have a solid, 'forever,' robust quality — total clarity, but as seen through a slightly dense atmosphere, bringing an idyllic resonance to the scenes.

Joan Curtis, Artist
Brandon, Vermont



Study for Awakening oil on linen 18x24 inches

the five remembrances

I am of the nature to grow old.
There is no way to escape growing old.

I am of the nature to have ill health.
There is no way to escape ill health.

I am of the nature to die.
There is no way to escape death.

All that is dear to me and everyone
I love are of the nature to change.
There is no way to escape being
separated from them.

My actions are my only true
belongings. I cannot escape the
consequences of my actions.
My actions are the ground
upon which I stand.



Aleluja oil on linen 18x24 inches



Kathryn Milillo
is an oil painter based
in Proctor, Vermont.

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kathrynmilillo.com
km@kathrynmilillo.com

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In gratitude to Thich Nhat Hanh



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