

LOG TO LUMBER

oil on panel, 12"x18", 2009

This painting shows Stephen Taylor working his portable sawmill on a clear April day. Behind him are Mount Abraham and the barn his grandfather built. He says "I like being in the woods, I like diversity, I like the creativity it demands...My operation is vertically integrated. I can do logging, I can do sawing, I can do drying and I can do finer work in the woodshop. Most of my projects involve two of those components if not more." When I ask him how this relates to the future of forest products he says it's about "figuring out how to make a go of it in local value added across processes, by finding a niche market and applying creativity. My little operation explores how to maintain that connection (to the original tree) in an industry where there is traditionally so much specialization."

Taylor cares deeply about trees and the forest. When I ask him what he hopes for the future of Vermont's woods he says "While I hope that forest practices continue to evolve as they have been, I also hope that zoning and planning and new, creative approaches can meet the larger challenge of development and forest fragmentation. I think the forest is remarkably resilient by itself, but fragmentation is a huge risk. I hope we can find ways to preserve the integrity of the broader forest."