

## CHARLES BENEKE ARTIST

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### Artist's Statement

#### ***For What Is, But Will No Longer Be, 2006***

Through knowledge of death, we come closer to comprehending life. The experience of happiness would not be as luminous, if we did not recognize that pleasure exists in transitory moments. Much of the joy of life is toned with the understanding that loss is the constant, quiet companion of living.

In the fall of 2005 I visited the Al-Azhar Mosque in Cairo, Egypt. The beauty of the space, of the glowing, amber light that streamed through the windows was stunning. It was for me a moment of exhilaration, awe, and peace. Yet, for the many people around me it was a part of the meter of everyday life, like the precise repetition of the ornamentation that surrounded me. I was thrilled by the moment I was living, but saddened that it was not universal and that it would soon be lost and in the past.

This longing is the subject of Arvo Pärt's music for piano and orchestra, *Lamentate*. In this lamento, the piano moves through the constant of life with quiet progressions and strident leaps of joy. Always; however, the cadence of life is toned with an undercurrent of unsatisfied desire, a yearning for the shattering of what Part describes as the "boundary between time and timelessness."

*For What Is, But Will No Longer Be* is a response to experiences like mine in Cairo and is inspired by Pärt's music. The varied pulse of life is made tangible with the rhythmic presentation of amber-toned lithographs. This meter is punctuated by moments of idealized peace as represented by captured landscapes organically reaching for permanence where there is no solid grasp.

Pärt states "Death and suffering are the themes that concern every person born into this world. The way in which the individual comes to terms with these issues (or fails to do so) determines his attitude towards life—whether consciously or unconsciously." With *For What Is, But Will No Longer Be*, I honor the relationship between living and loss.

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