Humidity made me a painter. I was born and raised in the mind-numbing heat of coastal South Carolina. My first art lessons were wandering the banks of ancient rivers like the Waccamaw, feeling warm pluff mud squirt between my toes as I ambled from one vantage point to another, desperate to contain the view for as long as possible. Most of the 624 Saturdays of my childhood were spent near water. Long before I knew what an artist was, I’d scoop up fistfuls of marsh mud, splat them on the dock under the savage Carolina sun, and carefully arrange torn bits of colored paper across the muck, followed by another handful of mud. The frond-lipped tip of an oyster shell was an ideal tool for skimming the translucent slime to reveal jeweled flashes of color of varying intensity. I did it again and again. Everything I needed was under my feet. It took decades to recognize how much the directness and simplicity of those experiences taught me about the way a painting comes into being. Paintings aren’t created; they’re made. Oil paint is crushed rock mixed with liquefied fat and smeared on cloth. All of the content sits on the tip of the brush because there isn’t room there for anything else. Painting enacts place. This is not an instructional book, but a collection of thoughts, opinions, techniques, anecdotes, and personal observations spanning my days in the Lowcountry of South Carolina to my life as a full-time painter in New York City. I’ve also included a few trade secrets and bits of career advice because, as a magician friend once told me, if you want to keep something a secret, publish it. Let’s begin with the single most important thing you need to be a painter: a locked door. Creativity thrives on solitude. Locking your door achieves two essential goals at once—it tells the world to stay out, and it confines you to a place where self-awareness, the enemy of art, can be rinsed away; it’s easier to fall in love with the sound of your voice while no one’s listening. The worst thing a painter can do is edit while working. Spill everything out behind your locked door and fix it later. The time will come when you can unlock it, but for now, paint for an audience of one. Remember, you’re not only the painting’s maker, but also its first looker. This book will go into detail about what to expect on both sides of your door. I’ll cover techniques to help you expand your vocabulary while it’s locked and give you an honest idea of what to expect when you open it to the world. The art world is a business, and, like any business, it thrives on consumption, crass as that sounds. However, our product is antispeed. We offer a world obsessed with velocity the gift of slow seeing and slow thinking, perhaps the most sublime gift one human being can offer another. We are dreamers. Our job is to glow in the dark, and the world needs more people who glow.