Surface, Object, Space

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ABSTRACT

Considered primarily a form of painting, my practice adopts the languages of sculpture and installation to explore abstract constructions of personal and societal hierarchies. In this current body of work, I am crocheting architectural forms that blur the distinctions between surface, object, and space. Whether occupying pictorial space or actual space, simple patterned units coalesce into emergent forms through repetition and accumulation. I am drawn to malleable materials that allow for an indexical registration of the force of my hands and body. Working in a wide range of materials including paper, mylar, fabric, foam, plastic, sheet metal, wire, monofilament, and paint, I create works by pushing these mediums to their material limits. Moving in, around, and through the pieces, the viewer becomes an active participant in relation to spatial elements, where interactions act as propositions for new meaning.

In this thesis, I have chosen to present a collection of handwritten notes taken over the past two years from conversations and musings shared with my professors and peers. I view these notes, much like I view my material selections, as a source that provides an indexical trace of my working process. The exchanges included here point to moments of change in my work as I began to explore the languages of sculpture and installation. The work I produced during my time here at RISD comes in many different shapes and sizes. In retracing the moments in the studio that brought me to where I am, I find that issues pertaining to intersectionality continue to resurface in different forms, to create a more tenuous yet more satisfying web of relations. It is my hope that these writings come together to reflect a studio practice that prefers questions over answers and a process of making that privileges possibilities over certainties.
Conversations with Holly Hughes
Fall 2015
Polly Apfelbaum

What does the grid's iconography mean to me: architecture, window, representation or iconography?

Peter Halley - conduits series

Privacy, green, tells, seeing through - think of other, borders, people, buddhism

Jodie picoult - formal concerns, read as tech related

Mark Bradford - expensive, networks through light

Tina Celesta

Issue on abstraction. How does one read an abstract painting. Real world experience vs. absolute formalism.

If the grid functions as a window, what does it offer access to? Or barrier to?

- David Salle, 2 pieces coming together, half of 2, different states, incongruity
- Whole surface/contain volume
- Plane seems unfinished, implies room to develop
- Let you see individual moments, window

Robert Morgan

Red - is there a way to show that the pencil marks were left intentionally

Gee mony - pretty

Decorative/textile, what does it have in common with it

- Issues of trade, Madras, golfs, relationship to formal

Right + shallow space, scale

Lett & Trill, looking in, 3 dimensions

Sound Machine Age

Moore's law - exponential improvement of technology

Digitization - turning streams into bits (0's & 1's)

- Network effect: the value of a resource for its users increases as the number of users increases

Eller Bullock

Cycle of the way you are interpreted/accepted/engaged (whether correctly or incorrectly)

Dictator the bubble that big data personalization puts you in

The context you are exposed to reinforces your perceived identity, you get the same thing over & over again, no new disruptions, no challenges from the new/different

10/10/2015
This was the first painting I made in graduate school. A common thread running through my paintings, sculptures, and installations is my compulsion for pattern. Drawing from a wide-range of source material including decorative ornamentation, architectural blueprints, modernist abstract geometries, origami paper folds, and woven textiles, I use pattern to examine our cultural, social and spatial topologies. My practice shares an affinity with artists associated with Post-Minimalism who challenged the essentializing and gender-biased narratives associated with Clement Greenberg’s reading of Modernism. More specifically, I am co-opting processes and materials used by these artists to push beyond the insularity of formalist conceptions of medium specificity and the flatness of the picture plane.
Drawing w/ Dennis

Accumulation through time

October 24, 2015

visited during Stuart Lantry’s Midterm crit

Dennis: Structures have a tendency to have ve not look closer.

Assignment: Make a freestanding drawing.

Due: November 10

Studio Visit

November 24, 2015

In reference to web diagram of spatial structures:

- Chaos Theory, inaccuracy of weather predictions
- Loved the organic structuring of information

→ Make drawings that don’t set a limit to the outer edge, allow it to grow & form itself

→ web of information that doesn’t have a clear logic

→ he foresees the Z-axis being useful for me
MIDTERM CRITIQUE - FALL 2015

with Holly Hughes, Angela Dufresne, Dennis Congdon, Kevin Zucker, David Frazer, Jackie Gendel, Craig Taylor; notes taken by Elizabeth King

K: NEW PIE MORE INTERESTING & BETTER LOOKING
C: IN OLD, ONLY WORKING TO GET READER TO OPEN
5 WANT TO SEE DIFFERENT TO ORANGE
- OTHER MENTS TO PEACH END
K: YOU COLD MAKE COLORS OF PIGMENT 5
MILL IN IN PIGMNT
A: TAKE MECHANICS AWAY & WALK HIGHER
K: WHAT IF YOU ONLY HAD A GUIDE
- DEVELOPING A WAY OF DRAWING FOR WORK - Missing in room
- NOT MARK MAKING.
C: DAVID EW? /CAUTIONARY -
BEAUTIFUL LOOKING, WHEN NOT IN
WHITE CUBE & WRT EwM
J: CO LIVING - TAKE SOMETHING SIMPLE
MERENCE MAKE IT HARD TO SEE
- LIMIT PALETTE
- BUTING 2 PAINTINGS TOGETHER COMES
FO EAT - COULD WORK IT OUT
DEN: TEMPLE - ANNE ALBERS

H: MY MOVEMENT ACTIVATES IT
NOTHING I DO CAN CHANGE THAT.

WHAT WOULD YOUR DRAWINGS BE
- TRAVEL EVERYTHING
DENNIS SAYS: "STEP MUSCULUS"

YOU GO EXPRESS DELPHIC PLEASURE PRODUCTION

A: DAN WAGH - bud museum
STAN WHITNEY: (BEAU HULINER
KIND OF MATRIX I PATTERN)

3 or 4 FORMS OF PRODUCE
MIND PRINT / LITHO, SILKSCREEN

K: LET'S TALK ABOUT TOOLS
"SKY BIRD" I HOPPED
NON-ART THING YOU SHOULD LOOK TO
& NON-ART TOOLS TOO

PLOTTER - BARNES DIGITAL /
- NEED TO BE CUSTOMIZED IN SOMETHING
DIFFERENCE BETWEEN INTERESTED IN
SYSTEMS IN SYSTEM.

M: NO TRACTION AGAINST SOMETHING
IN EACH SYSTEM.

K: RESPONSIBILITY IS SOMETHING -
THEN YOU GET UNPREDICTABLE RESULT

DAY: LIKES ORIENTATION VERTICAL
NO SINGLE MOMENT BECOMES PUNCHING

DONT LIKE WHEN ONE CONDITION
BECOMES COOPER & SOLVE

PROBLEM VISUALLY

& PREDICTABILITY MARRIED TO UNPREDICTABILITY

- YOU'RE BETTER WHEN YOU MOLD LINE
WIN PRINTING

K: TRYING TO BE INTERESTING IS
MATTER -
BETTER WHEN TEXTURE VARIETY IN 2
BUMPED UP SQUARE.

H: YELLOW BANDS BLACK INTERESTING PINK

TALKING ABOUT CRITERIA (UNHAPPY)

OH: DIFFERENT DEGREES OF VERSATILITY

EQUAL PARTS IN STRENGTH (WEIGHT)
CREATE DIFFERENCES & THEN MAKE EACH NECESSARY FOR EACH OTHER.

DEN: YOU BRING GOOD TASTE - YOU SHOULD STEP BACK & LOOK FOR THE UGLIEST PART.

A: PUT BODY IN TO TRAJECTORY W/ PROBLEM GET IN OVER YOUR HEAD.

DEN: UNTEACHABLE ASPECTS OF EXPERIENCE

C: THINK WHAT KEVIN SAID, BECOME MORE KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT THE ISSUE

PL HELP THINK HOW SYSTEMS DIAGRAMMATICALLY IN SPACE - NOT JUST ACROSS EYES/OPINIONS BAD ASS/ UGH.

R: ORIGINE WAY OF DOING WHAT?

A: IS TOO EARLY TO CHOOSE/TRY BOTH

A: PERFECTION IS GREAT UNTHINKABLE SCROLL.

K: FIGURE WHY YOU'RE DRAWN TO WHAT YOU'RE DRAWN TO.

BE GOOD TASTE & "GOOD TASTE"
LITTLE APPLIED W/ WAS & NUK OUT WHATS REASLY: GOOD

DEN: WHAT AGAINST IT?

J: "TASTE IS ALL MAPPED OUT" & HAPPENS TO STUDENTS - PREDICTABLE

K: BECOME AN ARTIST TO BECOME AN ARTIST

J: KNOWING ABILITY TO CAPTURE AMBITION, IDEA OF GOOD TASTE IS CONTEXTUAL

A: ABILITY TO STEP OUTSIDE IT.

ALSO LOOK AT MARY HILDEBRAND'S ELIZABETH MURRAY UCIDS SILLY)

TRAIN EYE TO KNOW STUFF YOU DON'T LIKE - THAT YOU COULD PUT TOGETHER THAT YOU PUT SCRIPT.

K: FABRIC SCRAPS.

J: SOPRA KUROI? SHE Perfect
H: TAKE ME THIS & FORMULATE OUT'S
TECHNOLOGY = TECHNOLOGY MEDITATED RESULT.
PLAY BOTH SIDES TO LEARN.

B: DIVERSIFY.

K: CONVO IS ABOUT TRUE, /PERPECT
INTERESTING IS LONG AS ITS SUBJECT

H: YOU CANT HAVE A DEEP MINING OF
PAST = PER HISTOPY. /CONTEXT, NEED IT.

DEN: BE HELD

A: NOT EVEN TIED TO ABSTRACTION -
THAT HOW CANZ IT CAN BE.

K: DATA COME OUT OF INVESTIGATION -
HOW YOU GIFT IT

J: DATA URED & CULTED NOW -
PROVE IT. INFO TOTALLY WRONG -
WHICH BECOME MEANINGFUL

S: PRIVACY: SEEN IN TO SPACE

K: THATS A METHOD/ AVOID THESE -
SEEMS REDUAL
EYAT INSTEAD OF DESCRIBE.
My sculptural work investigates spatial constructs through the layering of tessellating patterns. Through repetition and accumulation, simple patterned units coalesce into emergent forms. These forms are created using single continuous surfaces and manipulated through folds and knots. Each fold or vertex acts as a link or a node within a network of interconnected planes that contributes to the dynamic tension across the entire surface. I work with malleable materials ranging from paper, mylar, fabric, and yarn to foam, rope, and sheet metal. These folded forms are further complicated with video projection mapping or painted imagery that blurs the distinctions between surface, object, and space. It is my intention to question pre-existing realms of fiction that we associate with space through manipulating the surface of these structures, the architecture surrounding it.
Pushing geometry

Emergent form = theory of emergence (science)

Pushing "regular" is "dumb" not w/ chance but quantity

(Cortical vs. organic + intelligent

Islamic art = no longer existential Islam is content, cultural identities

No longer only about Sanction. Critical grid

Richard Neutra

Peter Eisenman = building & drawings

John Cayle

Asian American

Cultural export: She thinks it would be very interesting to glue into the Asian American stigma, associated with organic
Hi Susan,

The theoretical activity of upending and blurring binary, oppositional structures has an analogue in poetics, and maybe this would be useful (because, after all, your work aims to create a kind of visual poetry rather than a theoretical argument). I thought of our conversation while reading this recent article in *Hyperallergic*, especially the passage that reads:

Lax's poetic reliance on seemingly incompatible oppositions evokes William Blake's contention that "without contraries is no progression," as well as Walt Whitman's notorious comfort with poetic contradiction: "Do I contradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself / (I am large; I contain multitudes)."

The article's writer, however, speaks about Blake's dictum as if it's structurally identical to the strategies of the other two poets, & it's not. "Without contraries is no progression" means that you need the binary opposition, & to have the elements in conflict with each other. Whitman, a century later and in the U.S., takes contradictions out of conflict by giving them all more space, under a wider umbrella of inclusiveness (see American multiculturalism, in contrast to the U.K.'s "island culture") of practices of creating lighter restrictions on national boundaries). And then the poet Robert Lax, writing yet another century later, in an America recently bathed in Buddhism (starting in the 1960s, with lectures at Columbia U. by D. T. Suzuki, though a little research shows that Lax was most heavily influenced by the writings and meditation practices of B. Raman). Lax's writing, contradictions and shows how each end of the spectrum is actually interfaced with its "opposite," or how the 2 opposites can create musical rhythms together, or engage in many other kinds of unexpected relationships.

In other words, there are many ways forward. Having structures doesn't have to be confining. Deliberately generating "irregularity" is only one way to go. It's also possible that you will inevitably create irregularity (the etymology of which means "against the rules"). You could create enough iterations of a thing & get yourself bored.

Ultimately, I'm not sure if your main goal in your work now is to create regularity, or to find your main motivating subject. I think that both of these quests may be ongoing, and that we might make progress on either quest by taking a wider look, at work you've been creating for longer than the past year. As you get to the end of this year, I think that would be a wise course of action anyway, so that you can gather your forces to make an extraordinary thesis exhibition next year.

I wonder what you think of all this, and look forward to talking with you again. I'll be out of the country April 25 - May 11, so I wonder if we might connect on Skype this week, to reflect on the studio visit, etc. After that, e-mail would be best.

Also, I'll be back on campus in mid-May, so we can do a wrap-up studio visit then.

Warmest wishes,
Karen

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I've been thinking about what you said about considering aspects of your identity that are not defined by overcoming hardships. I'm drawn to this idea, not only for its usefulness as a thought exercise, but I can see it as a model to approach some ideas that were and are still concerned with. Though I can completely relate to the article, and I still think of using binaries as a productive tool to begin to understand the relationship between seemingly opposite ideas in order to find that third disruptive element), your suggestion reminds me that I don't need to use the opposite of something to understand it. I can understand it by looking at its relationship to anything around it, and to suggest new relationships between seemingly unrelated ideas could even be more exciting. I think I was working more along the lines of what the article is speaking of in my previous work, and its not that it wasn't a useful method, I am just excited by this new way of approaching a subject.

I really enjoyed our studio visit, by the way. Thank you! Would you want to do a Skype chat this Friday or anytime this weekend before you leave? Talk to you soon.

Susan
INSTALLATION
The theoretical foundation of my practice draws on the work of Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, an American civil rights advocate, who coined the term “intersectionality” to examine the multidimensional aspects of social identities. Crenshaw posits that aspects of one’s identity including race, gender, class, age and religion are not mutually exclusive entities, but instead need to be examined simultaneously as interrelated and co-constitutive in affecting one’s privilege and perception in society. As a Chinese American woman, I exist in these intersectionalities. My bicultural upbringing instilled in me an attraction to the contradictory and a fondness for things that seem out of place. Akin to Connie Butler’s desire to facilitate unexpected interactions between artworks in thematic installations such as WACK!: Art And The Feminist Revolution, my paintings, sculptures and installations share this focus on the moments of encounter or the intersections of disparate elements. My practice as an artist is informed by a complicated relationship to language, one that often assumes both the roles of barrier and access to privilege. In my work, I try to replicate these intersectionalities through combining the languages of painting, sculpture and installation.
Landscape & interaction by just walking through

Staging / performing - manipulative, units that create variable experiences, be able to identify how each unit functions individually

Applied paint > refers to architecture, to create inside / outside

Operative moments where red fox jumped over the... (red yarn)

"If you make a better door than a window" - Grandma standing in front of TV

If grand imitates wood, the red yarn imitates the wood

A clumsy version of what the natural world does (the mental piece as a clumsy version of what red ones are metaphors for, dream worlds? Is it actually referring to something identifiable in the world)

We separated from wall / gravity / unable to pond / have it go

Black ball being going being construction movement

The act looking at the PVC nipples are quiet at being lured / acting looking what is invested in reference / to comment about using monolithic as "being"

The yellow fabric / knitted piece makes him think about sequential processes too much

Didn't like how the black split form wasn't transformed

Like the evidence of materiality, transformation keeps pushing that (like bread), makes someone think "that's not supposed to do that"
References


