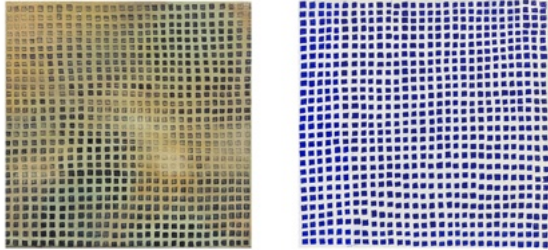




Spring 2024 introduction presentation:



slide one



slide two

EXPLORATION

- I am fascinated by structure: I love the idea of our tendency to cling to and create Systems with effort to understand or improve life.
- Systems can be simple or complex. Core of structure is generally constants and variables
- Work is sectional: A series of planes and their interactions- some spanning entirety of canvas and others not.

slide three

THE SYSTEM

- List of prompts which are randomly chosen in a sequence to help progress paintings.
- Some are challenging to work into a painting.
- I feel this system is a good way for me to make progress technically and materially and continue to find clarity about the ideas that I want to present and how to make them clearer to a viewer.
- It began very strict because I wanted to be forced to try new things, became more intuitive as time progressed.

slide four



slide five



slide six



slide seven



slide eight



slide nine

NEW MOVE TO TUNE UP SYSTEM

- Evolution from 'prompt' or 'move' to plane – refines and flushes out some things that are unnecessary. Allows for more controlled structure within a piece and potential for interaction.
- As mentioned, making moves on my own to contribute to the work and offer another contradiction.

slide ten

SCALES OF FLUIDITY IN SYSTEM

- Size of plane
- Effect of plane: what happens in it? Is it independent or does it influence
- Which brush or vessel to use? or is it subtractive?
- Color or colors
- Intricacy/Time/Attention to each plane
- Wait for planes to dry before making move or keep moving?
- Location of plane
- Where plane sits in relation to other parts: the depth (also includes flatness/textural considerations)

slide eleven

THIS SEMESTER

- Making work to try to continue this investigation
- Work out more kinks in ways that I work.

slide twelve

BA/BFA THESIS PROPOSAL

COURSE SECTION: CAPSTONE, SPRING 2024

NAME: Ellee Spalding

1. Proposed Series Title:

Stuck to Structure

2. Abstract- Description of Works for the Installation:

The exhibition will consist of 5-6 paintings that explore the concepts of systems and structures through planar oriented, colorful works. The paintings will be about 40x40" and will contain a variety of imagery which arises from working in layers, integrating randomness, and retaining a connection to the grid, even if it just in threads.

3. Purpose- ARTIST STATEMENT, Intent of the work:

I create sectional or planar compositions that allude to the abstract concept of retaining order. My process involves integrating conflict into the harmony of a painting by utilizing true randomness as a variable. The paintings embrace rigidity and awkwardness as they fall in and out of a controlled state. Color harmony and chaos fluctuate. My paintings layer over time, and practices like patching, reinforcing, or removing become a vehicle. Rules and restrictions can limit activity in sections, and paintings become map-like. Layering causes planar interaction. Systems erupt within systems.

Despite the unachievable pursuit of a perfect relationship to the grid, the work reaches for rightness through horizontal and vertical marks. Clinging to structure and tendency can be favorable, yet sometimes breaking from them is the most progressive. Painting within a system that challenges my need to retain control offers fruitful opportunities for taking it back. The material exploration of oil paint makes for a range of saturated colors and textures. Sectional relationships in my paintings that derive from patterns or rules express eagerness to create consistency within a plane and potentially compete with activity in other sections or planes. Containment or lack thereof dictates how much of an impact areas or elements will have on a composition.

4. Methodology- How I plan to create this work:

I will continue to work using the processes I have begun to develop which include one or more systems that can guide, challenge, or push the work. I have two paintings that I think belong in the show, and I plan to create the other 3-4 paintings using the first two months of the semester (February and March). I have prepped canvases that are ready to begin, and one painting currently in progress.

I hope to have more paintings than I need for the show in order to allow for some editing room. I understand Installation and location could also make a difference for the choices that I make.

5. Desired outcomes- INSTALLATION DESCRIPTION (feel free to include images/sketches):

I would hope that the installation is representative of this body of work that has been so important to me. I understand my visual language is completely abstract, so I would also hope that the paintings could at least allow the viewer to question their intentions and consider reading about my process. I also hope that the paintings are materially interesting.

Again, I am not completely sure what the installation will be like due to not knowing which space the work will occupy, but I would hope that they could all be hung next to one another or near one another. I know I have hopes to include quite a few, so I understand if works would be close together. Some of the paintings I plan to make this semester may be more simple or visually tame, and so I think it will be nice to have a variety in paintings next to one another, so that the show doesn't feel too visually overwhelming and there is more room for the more chaotic or visually charged paintings to breathe.

6. Questions / Needed support and resources:

I would love advice on if you think the artist statement is clear or is missing any information. It is not completely cleaned up for show, especially with increased word limit. I know that I have sometimes a hard time articulating exactly what the work is because it is so many things, and I find myself getting into tangents about theoretical aspects of the work. I would hope that it is at least somewhat clear and correlates to the visuals. Please advise if this is not the case.

PERSONAL WEEKLY GOALS / WORK TIMELINE

	In-Class Goals	Outside of class Goals
WEEK 1	Introductions, Course Overview	
WEEK 2	Presentations	
WEEK 3	Work on paintings	Work on paintings
WEEK 4	Work on paintings	Work on paintings
WEEK 5	Homework 1	Work on paintings, edit artist statement as needed.

WEEK 6	Critiques Information Doc + Headshot due	Work on paintings
WEEK 7	Promo Image due work on paintings	Work on paintings and homework 2
WEEK 8	Homework 2	Work on paintings, studio visits
WEEK 9	BFA Install Info Session Edit out paintings, have a better grasp on which paintings and in what order.	Peer review / review of artists statement from instructors, friends, and other professionals.
WEEK 10	MIDTERM ASSESSMENTS	Work on paintings
WEEK 11	Critiques	Final touchups on paintings, finalize artist statement
WEEK 12	FINAL Artist Statement due Holiday	Final touchups on paintings
WEEK 13	Final touchups on paintings	Final touchups on paintings
WEEK 14	INSTALL Thesis Show	Work on images and image list
WEEK 15	5 Images, Image List due	Prep any other professional material for show, update website, etc.
WEEK 16	Final Critiques	
FINALS WEEK	All work due, FINAL ASSESSMENTS	

Work weeks:



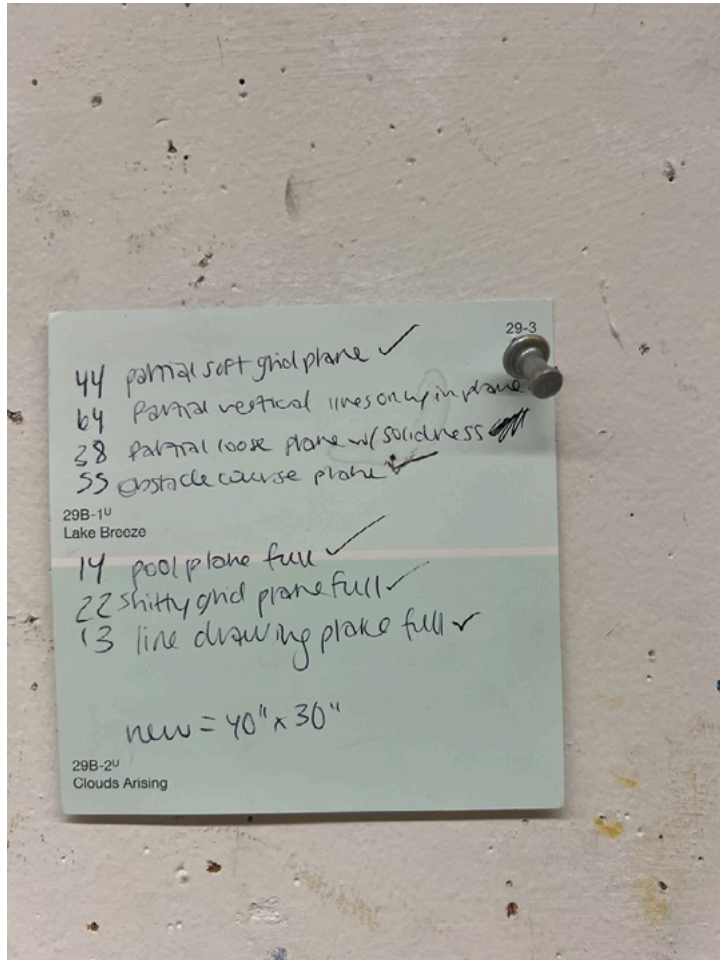
Painting started over break

I started this painting (above) over break in a new way by randomly generating coordinates, connecting the points, and then creating some sections based off of this 'random' line. I then used some prompts but also just intuitive processes to complete this. This method was interesting and productive, I know I could start other paintings like this, but I wanted to find some other methods for utilizing the system in the best possible, most productive, and creative ways.



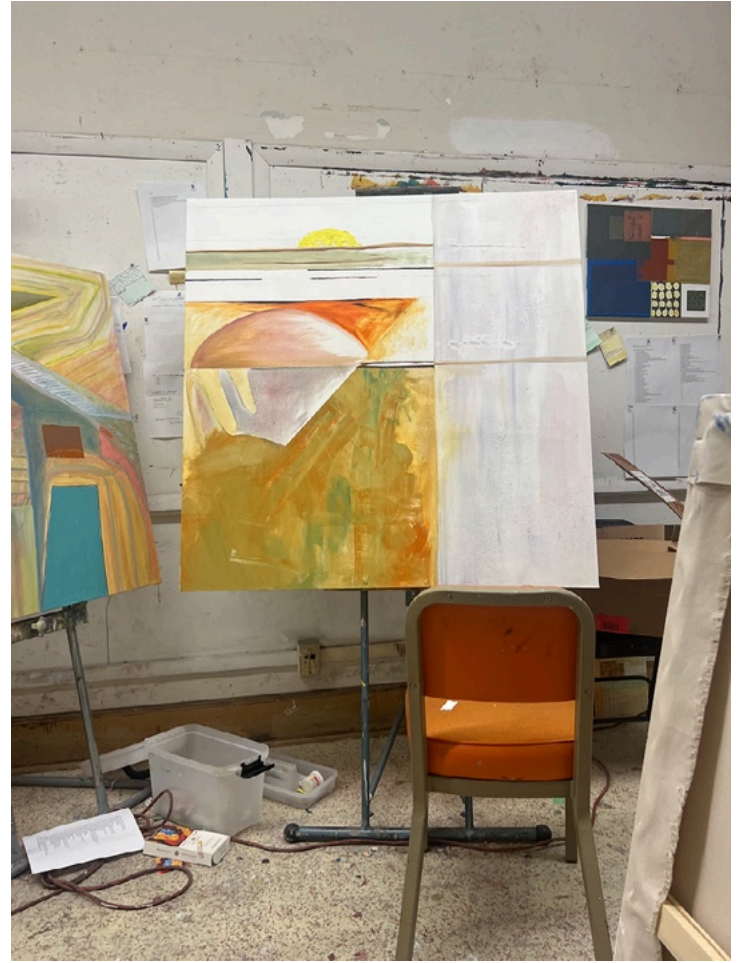
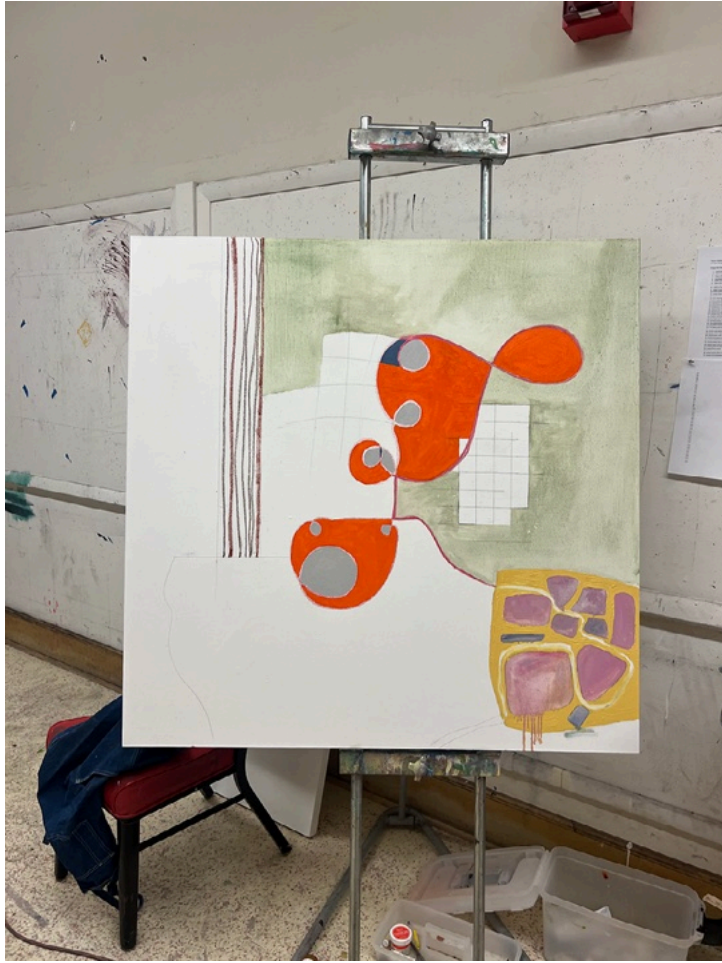
Here is it completed. The orientation changed due to gravity while painting and visual weight.

I decided that a lot of the work I have been making has also been very visually loud or chaotic, which is fine, but I was hoping to have a few calmer or more simple paintings that could exist in the same body of work. For the next two paintings I started this semester, I started with 5-8 number generations or prompts, and then sat with all of them to begin creating sections/ a composition. This way was satisfying as it felt as if I was solving a problem: ie: how can I integrate these things together? or how can both of these things work in a painting. It was also easier in the sense that I could do a little more integration of sections earlier on versus having to create new sections or move after parts were more complete, which happened when I worked in sequence (ie: complete a move or prompt, then move on)

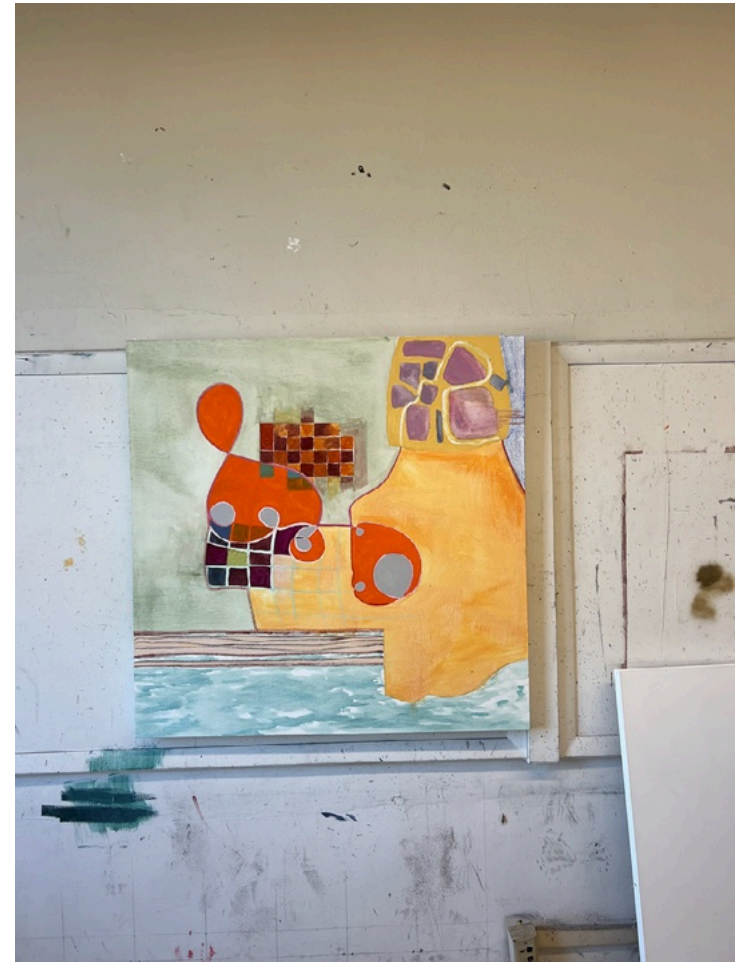


Example of this new way of generation: prompts are all laid out before painting starts, and then I work intuitively from all of this information.

It provided a lot of new and interesting ways of working: I added about ten more prompts that were ideated just during my process of making these elements or prompts work together in a work.



I felt more in tune with these paintings : to be able to plan a bit more allowed me to feel more devoted or patient with them to allow them to come out the way I wanted them. Because I had less control in the previous paintings, I was more inclined to make faster, sloppier moves. I didn't mind the challenge of working new things in, but this way feels more compositionally harmonious or less 'painting suicidal' if that makes sense? that way of working allowed me to learn what letting loose was like, but I needed to know when to tune into that and when to be able to tighten back up and be more intentional. I like when the work has a balance of those things.



This painting is close to being complete.



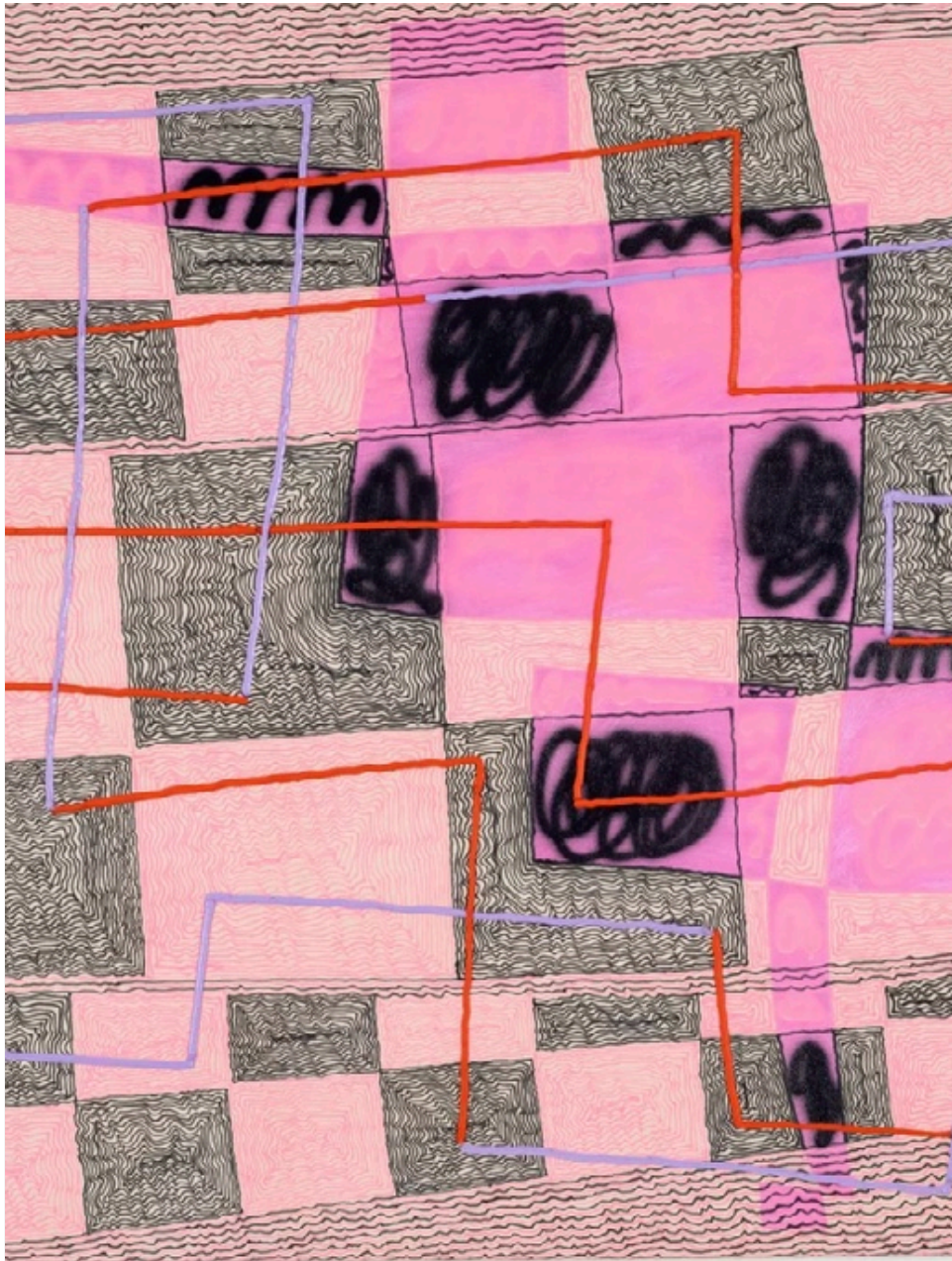
This painting still needs one or two more of the prompts addressed, but it is making progress.

Curatorial Project

"Planes of influence"

How are we to indulge in section-based paintings without yearning for pattern, signifiers, or fluidity across containment. These four artists give a life to their work as systems, by allowing planar diversions, interactions, or influences to occur using lines or other modes of separation to signify change within a work. While working purely abstract, they are able to maintain relationships between planes through visual tools like implied continuation, color changes, and evidence of layering. Each inspired by different parts of life and drawn to certain aesthetics, each artist uses cues to distinguish sections. All artists use bright colors, and not minimally. Regardless of if sections are perfect or polished, or if true pattern emerges, each individual artist provides a spin on purely abstract and layered planes that disrupt or change outcomes.

Trudy Benson (b. 1985)



Trudy creates work greatly inspired by digital aesthetics. She utilizes planes of depth to allow her brightly colored layers to emerge from one another. Each high contrast layer creates planar interactions which challenge viewer illusions about depth. Her work also focuses on the contradictions of human and computer, and allows her hand to play into her process.

Sarah Morris



Her clean cut abstract works use simplified, geometric shapes to demonstrate planar relationships. She draws a lot of inspiration from urban environments and architecture. Her consistently colored lines allow for a digestible sectional reads. She also often creates screen prints in addition to oil paintings.

Jackie Meier



The washy sections of paintings are separated by seemingly continuous lines with triggers of on's and off's. Transparency shows evidence of previous layers of depth. Opaque sections dominate the visual spaces, and help to distinguish where layers sit. She is drawn to imperfections in pattern, where moments go off or something does not match up. She works mostly intuitively but occasionally plays with chance in her work. Meier is New York Based.

Ellee Spalding

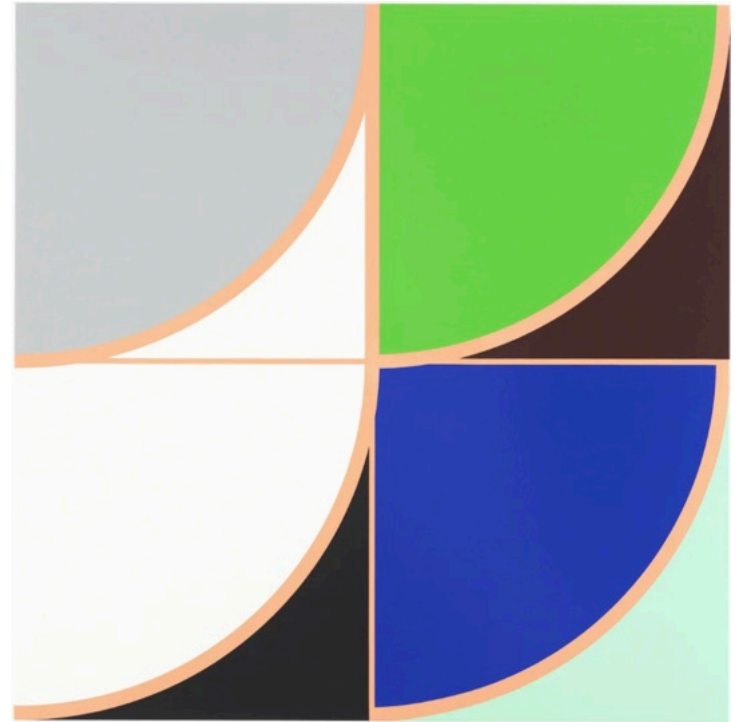


Ellee uses planes to communicate rules and sectional interactions. Her work is primarily about systems and adherence to structure, and how randomness can challenge that. She is drawn to a colorful palette and often references the grid in her work.

The work:



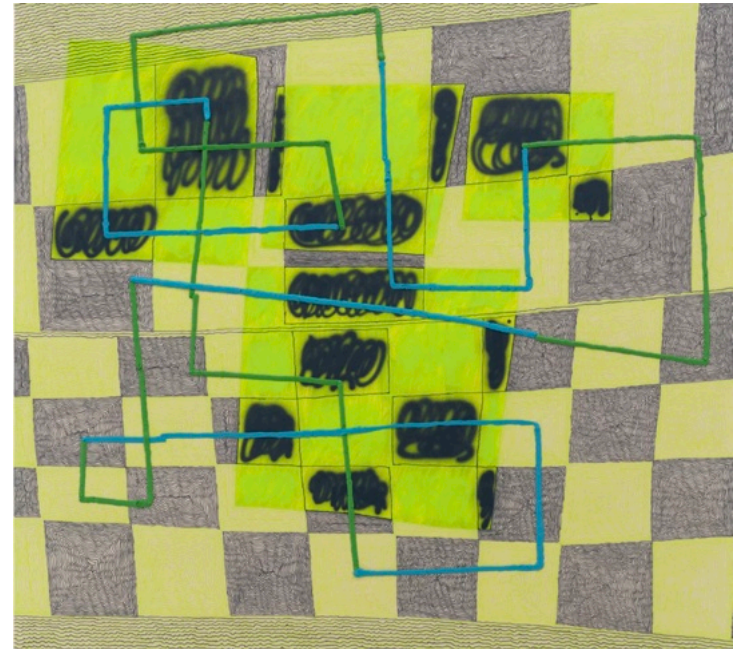
Jackie Meier: *Take Off*, 2023, oil on canvas, 36" x 36"



Sarah Morris: *Posto 8 [Rio]*, 2013, Household gloss paint on canvas, 48" x 48"



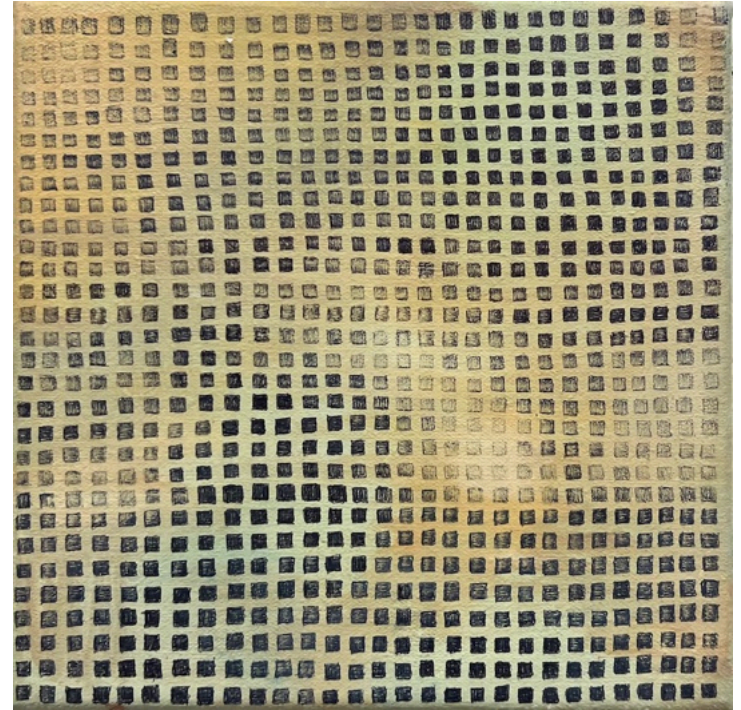
Ellee Spalding: *Retire*, Oil on Canvas, 2023, 40" x 40"



Trudy Benson: *back on earth*, 2023, Acrylic and oil on canvas, 58" x 64"



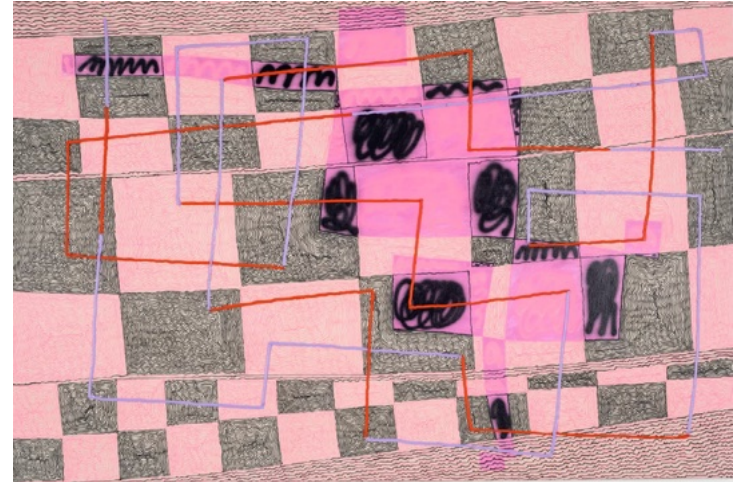
Jackie Meier: *Yellowed Time*, 2023, oil on canvas, 36" x 36"



Ellee Spalding: *Foam*, Pen and Oil on Canvas , 8" x 8"



Sarah Morris: *Hurricane*, 2020, Household gloss paint on canvas, 84 $\frac{3}{10}$ " \times 84 $\frac{3}{10}$ "



Trudy Benson: *LB + JA*, 2023, Acrylic and oil paint on canvas, 39 $\frac{4}{5}$ " \times 59 $\frac{4}{5}$ "



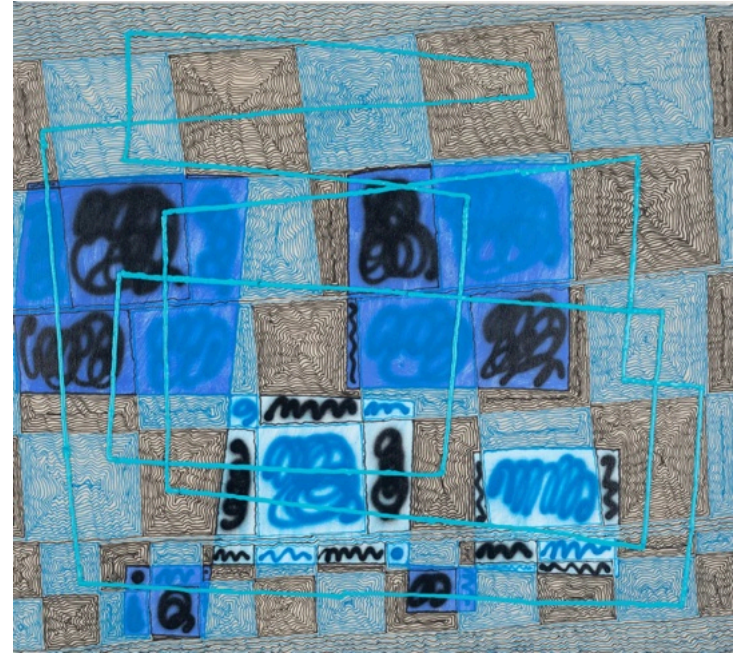
Jackie Meier: *Striped Garden*, 2023, oil on canvas, 24 x 36"



Sarah Morris: *Digits*, 2019, Household gloss on canvas, 48" x 48"



Ellee Spalding: *Dent*, 2023, Oil on Canvas, 40" x 40"



Trudy Benson: *Ping*, 2023, Acrylic and oil paint on canvas, 32 7/10" x 36 3/5"

Sources:

<https://www.artsy.net/artist/sarah-morris> <https://sarahmorris.com>

<https://www.artsy.net/artist/jackie-meier> <https://jackiemeier.com>

<https://www.artsy.net/artwork/trudy-benson-ping>
<https://trudybenson.com>

<https://www.upriseart.com/journal/meet-jackie-meier>

Artist now: Vic Roth

1) Describe Vic Roth's body of work.

The work is composed of both flat and receding surfaces, and shapes that are in her quotes, 'at the edge of recognition'. She also addresses sensory and bodily functions and how they relate to tension. Some of the surfaces are flesh like. There is usually some form of compression taking place, and also a clear material interest: a lot of colorful, sanded, and interesting surfaces happening. The work is also planar. She appears to have shown at a lot of different places all over the world though she is New York based now.

2) What are the goals of this artist's work? Why are they making this work?

They describe the work as generative emotive environments, and address having queer references to ambiguity in form. By focusing on the body as 'in becoming' from that standpoint: forms are shown as continually changing. They describe the work as having both kitsche

elements and opulence and what it is like to have the two come together. The artist feels the work is flexible in its state: it is stuck in between. they also describe imposition in their process: the sense of being imposed upon and imposing on. they also described their work at one point having a relationship to language: the process of exploration and excavation.

3) How does the artist seem to be connecting with the audience? How does the artist relate their concerns to the viewer?

Vic can clearly captivate the viewer through her exciting use of color and surface explorations (often visually referencing flesh and bones). I feel the work addresses some of the themes they are thinking about through that development of their visual language: the fleshy qualities of shape allow the viewer to connect to the work, yet none of the work has recognizable elements, which is something they mentioned is important, as the work is meant to present somewhat of a changing state. They use structural elements to weave information also, which I find to be really interesting. The additive and subtractive elements combined with one another also allows for ambiguity in the various surfaces that are presented.

4) How has Vic Roth's work changed over time? Why has it changed?

They mentioned that they used to do portraits and more figurative work from memory when they were in undergrad. And then in grad school, the work grew in size, and the content of the imagery became more to the edge. There was a very erased quality as they became interested in utilizing the removal of paint to create those ghost like surfaces, but they were still beginning to think about abstraction and how it relates to the body or other sensory qualities. This exploration is what eventually led them to their most recent work. I am sure some of this growth came

from just experience with material handling and experimentation, but theme wise the work has been connectable over their career.



Burning Clarity, 2022
oil on canvas, 49" x 50"

5) What in particular about this artist's work resonates (or does not resonate) for you?

I love that the work stands alone visually but the ideas they are working with do become tangible in the visual work once it was explained. I particularly love their mention of utilizing structure in the work, and how they use it to begin paintings, but they become intuitive as they begin working with the material. I appreciate the weaving of information as of course I am interested in planar interactions. I also just enjoy some of the exciting material investigations, especially the subtractive surfaces, like in the screenshot above. I enjoyed seeing the detail shots from some of their more complex paintings: It was like a visual breather in a way. I also loved seeing the painting that didn't particularly resonate with them, because I did enjoy that one a lot- it is surprising to hear about work someone has made that they may not like themselves, but others can see their thinking in it. It also reminded me of that sense of 'polishedness' in some artists' work that resonates with them, but others tend to not be drawn to.

Studio visit with Vic

I had a really pleasant studio visit with Vic. I first asked her if she would give me a cold read on the work without me presenting it. She expressed that the work feels very planar, and something about them reminded her of diebenkorn (oh yeah). She understood the importance of section-based interactions, isolation, and tension between organic versus geometric language. She also mentioned they remind her of playgrounds in some way as they are interactive. It was nice to hear her thoughts as I am working with some of these ideas, and was happy to hear some were tangible without explanation. She gave me some great advice for future paintings and directions, particularly multilayered interactions, and having a more selected or careful color use (not

necessarily just breaking from my palette, but trying to use color as a tool). finally, after explaining my system to her, she was excited to hear about it, but recommended to be innovative with the ways that I could use it. I think this is great advice as I am still navigating different ways to work within it that provide the most fulfilling outcomes. She also recommended I use drawing as a tool in my practice to explore, be brave, and get through ideas quicker. I totally agree that it can be a slow progression working in oil paint, as new discoveries sometimes require drying times, and more bravery. overall, the visit went great and I wished it was longer!

Studio Progress:



there have been a few layers on this painting since the last update. I like the way that this one is maintaining some of its rigidity.



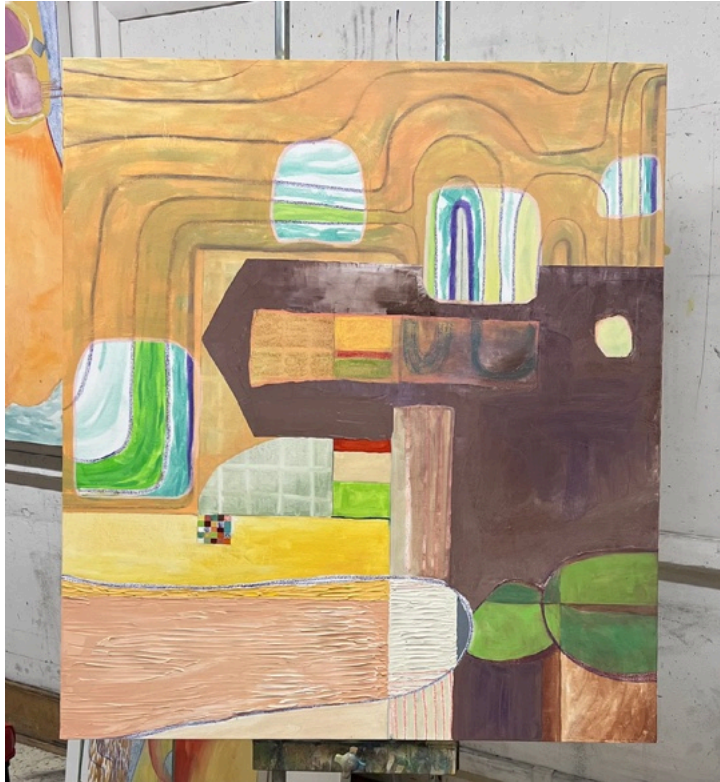
I also started this painting recently.



and finally, this one.

I started all of these around the same time, working in the same way I have been this semester, by starting with 5-8 prompts, and seeing how I can work them all in. After most of the prompts are in, there are a lot of intuitive based actions that occur, and sometimes a new prompt may be generated if I feel necessary. I may subject the paintings to more layers just because, and in working some of these prompts together, I am building my language. I have really been enjoying using some of these windows in my work to other layers, and trying to give the viewer a more systematized or engaging composition in which rule based interactions are more clear.

I recently had a studio visit with Thom Romero, and he was responding well to the new work and thought it had grown a bit. he still could sense some hesitancy and suggested to be brave, but really appreciated some of the more organic moments in the work - especially those where he could see my hand. It was nice to chat with him a while about the direction of the work as it had been a while since he had seen it.



this painting has grown a bit since the last photo. I have been enjoying the discovery of new planar interactions.

I have found that the more layering I do in more dynamic ways, the more interesting and engaged people seem to be with them. I had max in for a studio visit today (he saw the work before the progress made in photo), and he also agreed more layering could become really interesting than just a few limited layers of interactions, because though the transparency was nice, and he loved the use of it, he could still figure out the paintings pretty quickly. He also encouraged the use of more difficult of 'unwanted' prompts, and trying to see how different processes in different paintings could yield different results: ie: having a painting that has 4 exciting layers, and one layer that is really difficult or distasteful to me or 'unpleasant'- ie: covering something up, etc. , versus a painting that there are layers I feel very engaged with, and then four layers that disrupt the harmony. I like this idea of working in different modes to try to get new and exiting things to happen. He did think my language has grown quite a bit since the last time he saw the work.

I feel I am continuing to grow my 'vocabulary' in this style and theme of working, and I am proud of the progress I have been making. I am going to try to draw more often, and see how I can grow the language even more.

Midterm portfolio assessment



I think that over the course of the semester I have gotten better at articulating certain ideas about the work, and letting my thoughts become more tangible. I also think that my production of the work has been efficient and constant. I consistently have new ideas, methods, and concepts to explore, and as I work the language is growing, and the list of future explorations is also growing. I have become more comfortable with some people immediately dismissing or choosing to not engage with the work as they may not find themselves drawn to or interested in purely abstract work, which is fine. Some people need specific visual cues or tangible references to reality to like a body of work or even be willing to comment or share thoughts about it. That being said, all feedback and engagement from visiting artists as well as instructors, and certain classmates have been really valuable. I understand and value that the work is likely going to have a specific audience. I hope that the work continues to grow as I brush up my artist statement and prepare for the show. I have shared below the two paintings I have made progress on since the last upload.





I like the more spontaneous elements in these that came from just moments of bravery and confidence. I think they comment on a structure or diversion from structure when there is sudden change or adjustment. I plan to continue to work on these, as well as the brown window one below, and start one more. I have a lot of work to potentially include in the show so I don't feel bad continuing to put time in in the studio painting and trying things out. I know this work is something to continually grow from and will not reach full resolution for a long time, but that is something I am excited about as I truly feel I will be able to engage with it for a long time.



Studio visit with Santiago Cucillo

It was nice to chat with Santiago, though it was brief, about the work and get some directional advice. His first piece of advice was to continue doing drawings and pushing myself to be experimental with them. He also mentioned using color inversion in my works to see how that could help or hinder my ideas and harmony or disharmony of a work. I really appreciated both of these ideas. He gave me two artists to check out that the work reminds him of, Giorgio de Chirico's use of space and presentation of potentially abstract spaces, which I have seen much of but could do more digging, and Yoko Ono's instruction paintings. He also mentioned I do some exploration of aboriginal paintings. He felt some of the work was timid and what he described as, "sweet". But it inspired me to make some moves after the visit that were more gutsy and brave, instead of always falling back on ideas of design which of course as mentioned, I cling to. I noticed that being tired yesterday was actually very useful in breaking habits and being brave. I was less attached to work. I know that a back and forth between modes of working yields the best work for me.

CV

Ellee Spalding
elleespalding@gmail.com
www.elleespalding.com

Education

- 2024 BFA (pending) Art, Painting and Drawing and Ceramics, Peck School of the arts, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (expected Spring 2024)
- 2024 BA (pending) Psychology, College of Letters and Science, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (expected Spring 2024)

Professional Experience and Internships

- 2023- Present Gallery Assistant Manager, Real Tinsel, Milwaukee WI.
- 2021 Artist in Residence, ~~East Castle~~ Place, Milwaukee, WI.
Planned, prepared, and held art workshops for independent residents.
Assisted memory care activity coordinators with art programming.
Workshops included a variety of mediums and expressions with goals of community building and cultivating purpose.

Exhibitions

- 2024 **BA/BFA Spring Exhibition**, Kenilworth Square East Gallery, Milwaukee, WI
Planes and Lines: Ellee Spalding, Urban Land Interests Gallery, Madison, WI
- 2023 **In Limbo**, Evil Twins Gallery, Milwaukee, WI
- 2020 **47th Annual Juried Show**, Union Art Gallery, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
First Year Experience, Union Art Gallery, University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee

Awards

- 2022 & 2023 **Patricia H. Weisberg Innovation Scholarship**, UW-Milwaukee
- 2020 **Elsa Ulbricht Scholarship, Art and Design**, UW-Milwaukee

Collections

- 2024 **UWM Special Collections**, Golda Meier Library, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
- Flat Files**, Real Tinsel, Milwaukee, WI

Final Artist Statement:

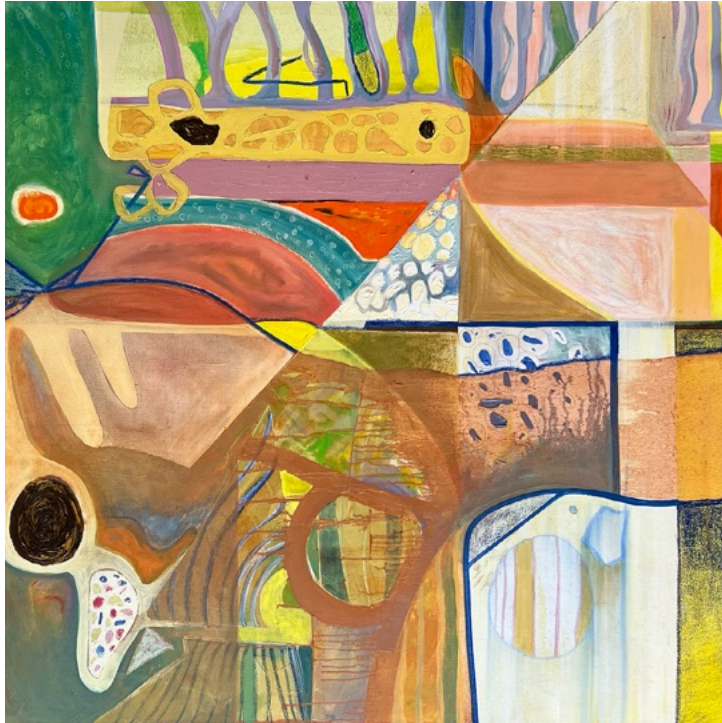
(3 paragraphs but put together here)

My paintings demonstrate the struggle to retain order through systems. Alternately embracing rigidity and awkwardness, layers of planes in each work cause synergized interactions as they fall in and out of a controlled state. I find fascination in structures of all kinds, including those we exist alongside or operate within daily, even sometimes unknowingly. I'm also motivated by my interest in psychology and behavioral tendencies. In working through these ideas, I integrate conflict alongside the structural harmonies of aesthetics by mapping information and true randomness as a variable strategy for material explorations. The work is driven by a randomized series of prompts, as well as randomly generated points and lines. Paintings are layered over time, creating sectional or planar compositions that allude to my systems-driven process. Patching, reinforcing, or removing become a means for revision or reconsideration. Despite the pursuit of a perfect relationship to structure being unachievable through the artist's hand, the body of work feels inclined to reach for it. This juxtaposition shapes a process that is methodical- yet surprisingly collaborative and intuitive. The balance of the two, constantly in flux, continues to drive my work.

Final portfolio for this semester:



"heavy bend"



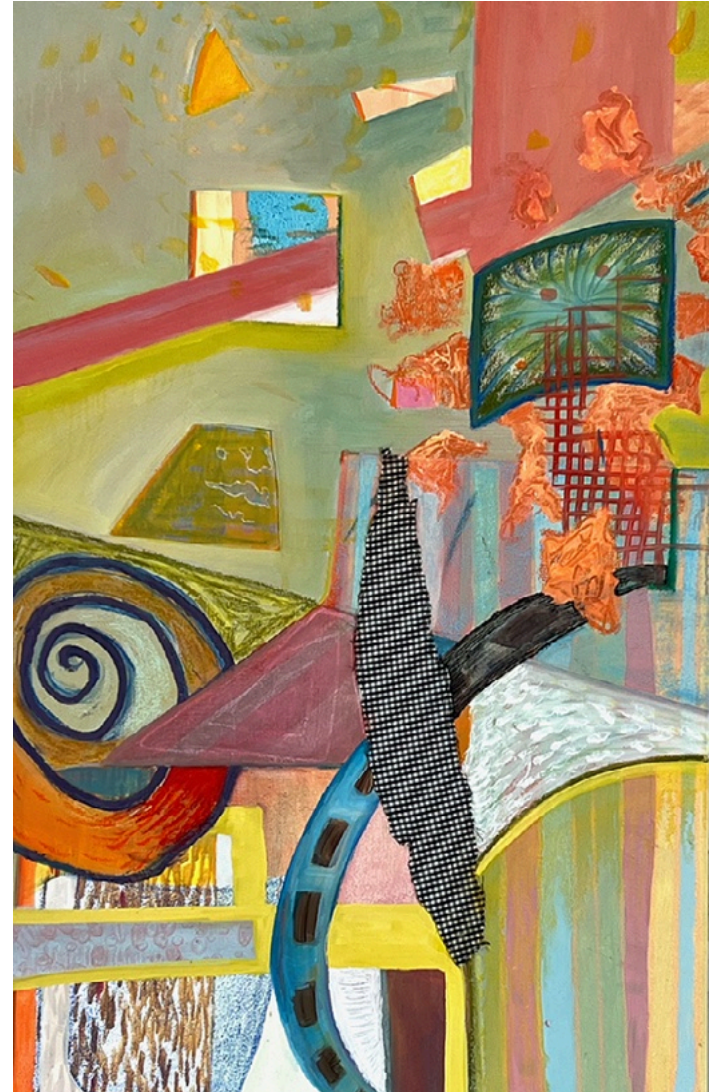
"junie"



"lawn chair"



"banana weave"



"resize"

My goals and view of this body of work have changed a bit this semester. For most of the semester, I was very focused on the show and completing new and exciting works that went along well with some of the pieces from last semester. These new developments allowed me a fruitful selection process for the BFA exhibition. Also in the beginning, my goals were focused on explorations of my systems and processes and the different results that came from different starting points of my process.

Now that the show is complete, I still have many explorations to work through, but I want to try to play around again with limits and see where that takes me. Working through some restraints last semester resulted in some nice developments of visual language that I applied to my work more intuitively this semester. I think that this is something that I can work through well in drawings. I want to continue drawing and doing quicker flash explorations of ideas to see if they are worthwhile pursuing in larger works.

Though it seems to be the opposite of more restraint, I have found that the paintings people seem to respond to the most/ want to spend time with are those that use quite a bit of layering and had a lot of information weaved. I could use some of those more restrictive modes to enforce this, (ie: being forced to add a layer to a specific part of work) and encourage that bravery that comes with what might feel like covering something up. I also think being aware of how much depth and engagement can come from layering certain kinds of information will help me move forward with pushing paintings to new limits.

The last thing I am moving forward with is that I do work well in a large format. Working on large paintings allows for parts of paintings not to be overshadowed by other information or moments near or around. Jason mentioned that he thinks I could be working even bigger than I

am now. I can then allow those more expressive parts of pieces to happen with more space to be absorbed, but it will also open the door for me to get into those more tedious and surprisingly quirky moments in paintings. I have heard the comment quite a bit last year and last semester: "*I wish this section were its own painting*". While I still like the idea of an abundance of information in a work, I think that working larger will allow for some of those specific, maybe once small moments to shine, while still being part of a whole as I intend for them to be.



install shot of my BFA project

Beyond this class - I am very excited to graduate but also a little nervous! I know I want to get into a studio practice and keep making work. I want to try to build up my portfolio! I know losing the school structure may be a challenge, but hope that having my close friends and peers around me to motivate me will contribute to my drive to create new work/ find new creative explorations to feel excited about exploring. I would love to do some residencies and get some experience exhibiting work in a non-institutional setting. And perhaps eventually grad school if I feel ready to take that step. Thank you so much Angie for your guidance and support throughout these few years! I appreciate everything you do for all of your students. You bring a great warmth to the program while still fostering growth for students that want and need it.