



Weeks 1 and 2

Introduction presentation:

# Kaden Van De Loo

601 Introduction Presentation

## Spring 2023 Developments

- Began with broad interest in non-objective abstraction
- Figure-ground relationships
- "Forms in space" theme
- Edges of surface are edges of the space
- Beginning to develop recurring forms
- Starting to think of the space as ecological



## End of Spring into Summer

- Distinction of forms through material handling and formal choices
- Flat, matte, single-colored ground (amplifies distinct materialities)
- Tension between elements
- Geometric forms
- More unusual use of color

## Summer

- Development of visual language of geometric forms (rectangle/circle/ellipse spectrums)
- Pushing the strangeness of the forms and their relationships
- Considering existence/manifestation of non-objective forms
  - The "life" that they assume (ecology)
  - Are these things simply formal? Are they figurative or narrative? Are they symbolic or metaphorical? ("Somethingness" vs. "un-somethingness")
- Creating rules of a system within which there is variation/freedom
- Thinking about the work's relationship to concepts like structuralism/poststructuralism, the sign
- Using languages from the history of abstraction
- Considering compositional choices more deeply
- Overarching interest/concern (why I am doing these things): How do we construct meaning from something inconclusive? How do familiar and/or repeated elements and structures create pathways to apparent significance, and what can obstruct such pathways?







## Fall 2023 Developments

- Complicating and challenging viewership
- Working within ranges and emphasizing extremes
  - Many forms vs. few forms, small vs. large, intensely worked surfaces vs. immediate paintings, etc.)
- Pulling out individual elements of the system to investigate
- Elimination of illusionism
  - Nothing made to look like something else or to look narrativized—everything is just itself
  - No “I want to make this look like...” statements

### Solidification of Four Rules

1. Limited forms: square/rectangle to circle/ellipse spectrum (more about relationships than their shapes—but how many ways can such simple forms be produced?)
2. Edges of surface are edges of space (every painting is isolated world)
3. Single-colored ground (creates consistent field)
4. Forms do not overlap (distinction, awkwardness)





Jonathan Lasker



Thomas Nozkowski



Untitled (P-59), 2009, oil on paper, 22.25 x 30 in.

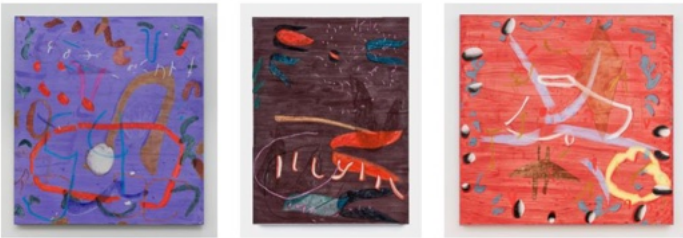


Z56, 1990, oil on paper, 10.25 x 16.5 in.

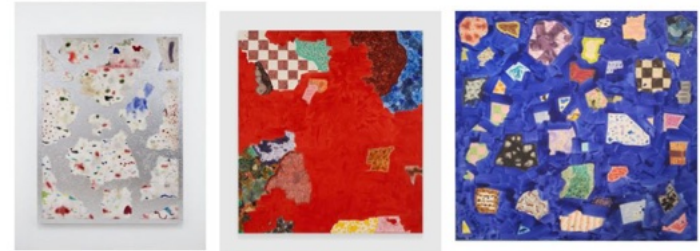
Raoul De Keyser



Clare Grill



Rebecca Morris





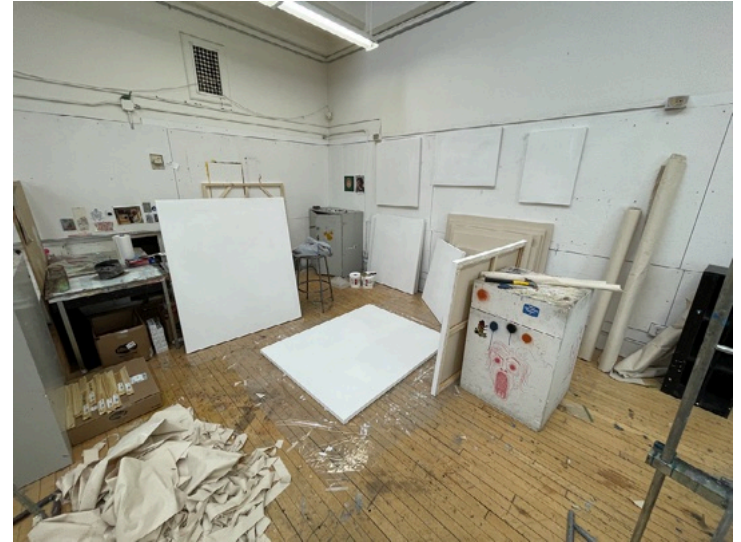
## Questions

For the group/me:

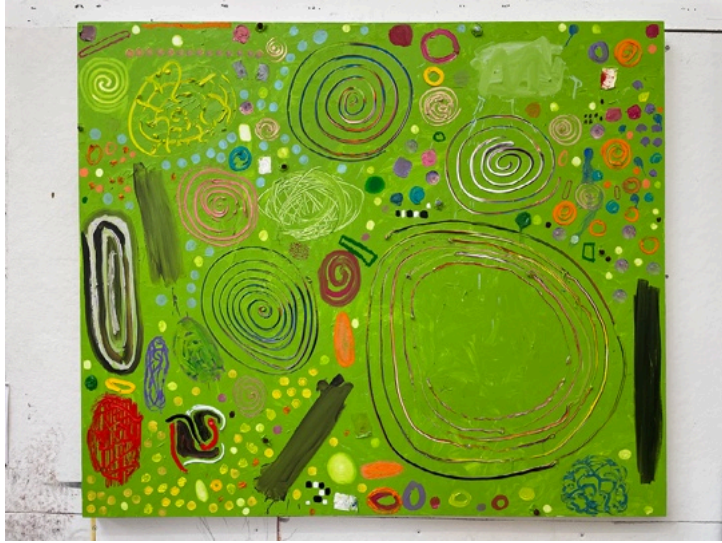
- How are viewers digesting, interpreting, and experiencing the work? (both first impressions and after sitting with it for a while)
- How to think about arranging/ordering for a show
  - In general and for the BFA show specifically
  - How to best represent my work/the system with just a handful of pieces

Mostly for me:

- How will I deal with urges to break or change the system?
  - I have been considering different kinds of forms and/or "forms" that are more painterly moves than shapes
- How do I justify and explain my extremely nerded-out purist formal and abstract ambitions within contemporary painting and theory? ("it is what it is" mentality)
  - How is what I am doing similar to and different from previous historical modes of abstract thinking?

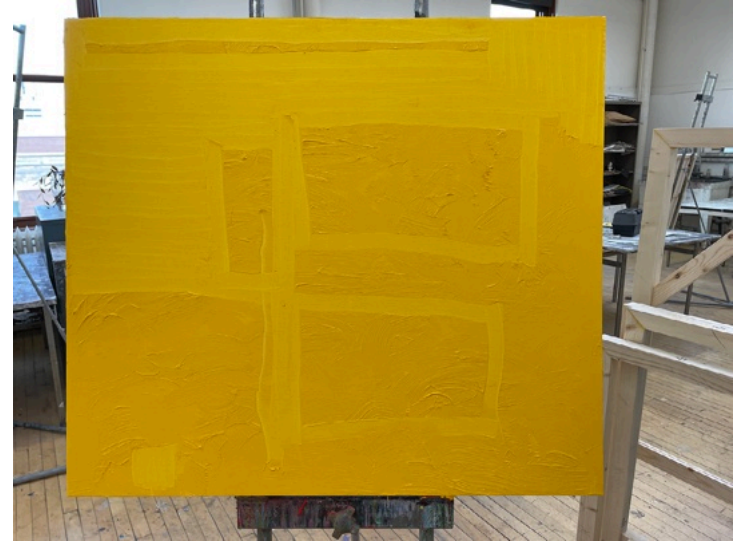
























### Week 3

#### BA/BFA THESIS PROPOSAL

Proposed Series Title: I don't have anything concrete for this yet. I have thought a bit about how I will go about titling this (and other shows). Should I follow the same conventions/system that I use to title paintings (one word, something that "feels right," poetic)? Title a show the title of one of the pieces? Title it something different entirely (which would be what?)?

Abstract- Description of Works for the Installation:

My show will consist of paintings that investigate abstraction and materiality within an arbitrary set of rules. The system consists of the repetition of geometric forms within fields of color, and includes four rules:

1. The bodies of the forms are limited to geometric shapes and they exist on spectrums: square/rectangle to circle/ellipse; rectangle to line
2. The forms exist within a single-colored ground
3. The forms do not push past the edges of the surface and are contained within those bounds
4. The forms do not overlap

Last semester, I more deeply considered the viewer experience in terms of creating familiarity, unfamiliarity, disruption, anomalies,

strangeness, awkwardness, repulsion, etc, and want to continue these viewer interactions in the installation.

**Purpose- ARTIST STATEMENT, Intent of the work:**

My paintings explore formal relationships in abstraction through a visual language. The reappearance of the same geometric forms across paintings allows them to become familiar to the viewer, but their endless material manifestations and relationships means constant reconsideration. Fundamentally, the simplicity of the forms' shapes means minimal attention to their shape and maximal attention to their relationships. But their ability to slide along spectrums makes them malleable despite their fundamental geometry, and the ways that they are painted may mean that their square-dom or circle-dom fall secondary to something else. Still, that underlying geometry remains. Depending on their conditions and the viewer's perspective, they may allude to non-painting things or systems. Yet, they retain their non-objectivity, existing tensely between the tangible and the intangible.

The forms exist in a flexible space that they may sink into, emerge from, or sit on top of. The single-colored ground evens the field that the forms occupy and flattens the picture plane. The space ends at the surface's edges, containing the forms within those bounds and making each painting an isolated ecology that forms can materialize out of and disappear into. Thus, the viewer's perception is restricted to painting internally and not to a continuing image. Formal qualities and material handling amplify or obfuscate the forms' legibility and complicate their presence within the space. Each form assumes an individualized space, distinguished from the next and not overlapping any other. Their placement and relationships to each other and the ground create environments that allow viewers to consider the familiar and the unfamiliar, and ultimately how significance can fabricate out of something inconclusive.

**Methodology- How I plan to create this work:**

I will continue to make a lot of paintings this semester but will also be considering installation options and which pieces or combinations of pieces feel most exciting to include. I have a lot of paintings, meaning that I can play around with different combinations and arrangements while continuing to make new work.

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

The installation is not going to be ideal for my work because I would prefer to have a lot of open space to give each piece breathing room. Because my paintings are fairly large, this means only a handful of pieces. Because the work as a whole becomes more interesting when the viewer experiences its many iterations, variations, and experimentations, something will have to be sacrificed. More paintings means less spacing, which would perhaps feel cramped in a bad way. Including more smaller paintings is not something I want to do because the small pieces tend to feel supplementary to the large ones when they are together (so I would maybe want 0-1 small pieces). The installation also depends on the space itself and whether everything is just on one flat wall or if there is a perpendicular wall like in Julia's space last year.

This idea of challenging and complicating the viewer experience is important to me, and because I have so many pieces, I don't have to make the show simply a collection of the best standalone paintings. I can and should consider them together. If I am thinking about progressions, there are many ways to go about this, some of which were discussed when I did my introduction presentation. Some paintings are perhaps more digestible in certain ways than others, while



other are more “difficult.” I could make a progression that moves from digestible (or perhaps something that feels very systematic) to something that becomes very complex. But viewers will also be walking through the pieces from each direction, so this would mean they could start with the complicated one, which is also interesting. I do think having at least one very “aggressively” colored painting is going to be good. I also think having a painting with a lot of visual information and a painting that is very minimal is a good idea.

**Questions / Needed support and resources:**

Nothing right now

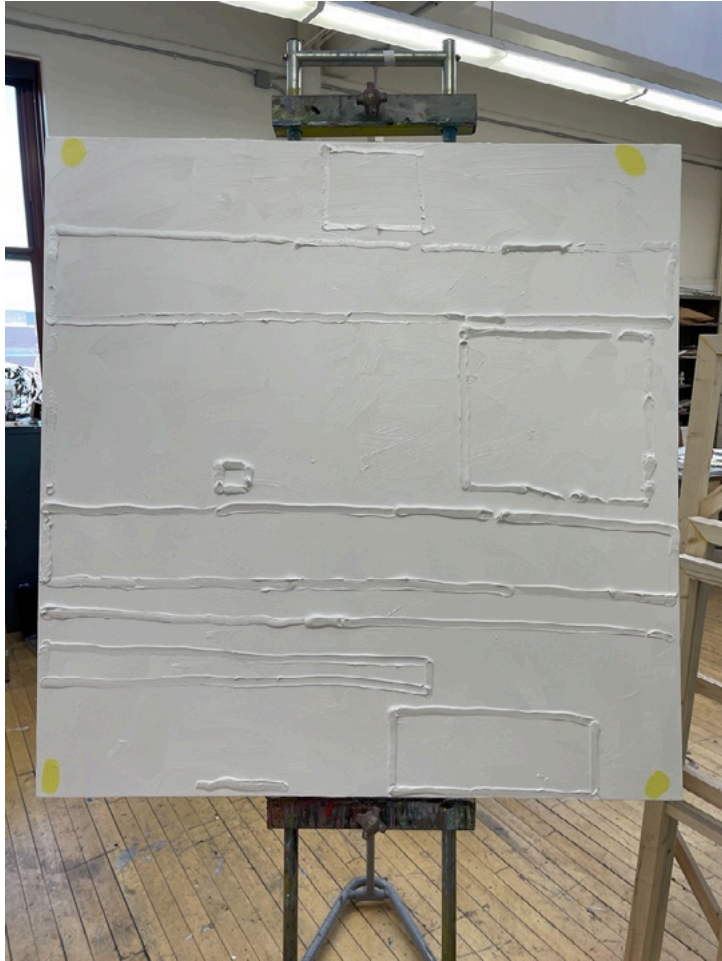
**PERSONAL WEEKLY GOALS / WORK TIMELINE**

	In-Class Goals	Outside of class Goals
WEEK 1	Introductions, Course Overview	
WEEK 2	Presentations	
WEEK 3		Studio visit(s)?
WEEK 4		Start compiling many mockups for arranging pieces Hal Rammel studio visit Chad Hallblade studio visit
WEEK 5	Homework 1	Leslie Vansen studio visit Chris Regner studio visit
WEEK 6	Critiques Information Doc + Headshot due	Have a number of plausible mockups/ideas for arrangement; certain paintings in mind that feel like the strongest and most likely to include in the show Studio visit(s)?
WEEK 7	Promo Image due	Studio visit(s)?
WEEK 8	Homework 2	Studio visit(s)?
WEEK 9	BFA Install Info Session	Studio visit(s)?
WEEK 10	MIDTERM ASSESSMENTS	A few solid tentative arrangement options to present and get feedback on
WEEK 11	Critiques	Studio visit(s)?
WEEK 12	FINAL Artist Statement due Holiday	Studio visit(s)?
WEEK 13		Final pieces and arrangement selected Studio visit(s)?
WEEK 14	INSTALL Thesis Show	
WEEK 15	5 Images, Image List due	
WEEK 16	Final Critiques	
FINALS WEEK	All work due, FINAL ASSESSMENTS	









## Week 4

### Studio visit with Jason Yi reflection:

On Sunday, February 11, I had a studio visit with Jason Yi. The main point of emphasis in our conversation revolved around ways to talk about my work. He talked about the difficulty of talking about abstraction, and that what I told him at the start—things about systems, structures, repetition—were a "foundation" and "starting point" but that he wanted me to give him more to hold onto in order to "get into" the paintings more. He said he really enjoys the paintings, the kinds of moves that I am making, and the "instincts," and that he can feel the energy and discipline in the work. So, he wanted me to have more of this energy with critical self-reflection in the work itself. From my opening statements, he really latched onto how I described how the grounds function in the pieces and how the forms can emerge out of them or submerge into them. To him, this was something more about the painting itself (the process), and not simply a general statement on what the work is "about." He made the distinction between talking about the work in terms of "what you *did*" and talking about the work in an a kind of present-tense: giving the viewer an idea of why I made certain moves and what kinds of "meanings," for lack of a better term, (maybe "effects") those moves might have. In other words, *why* I did certain things. He told me he saw system, repetition, extreme contrasts between certain elements—and that there was no need to dwell on those things. He told me to tell him things that he didn't see—which I think is really great advice. I think I absolutely have the ability to talk about why I made certain moves or the ways that they are functioning for me, but it's a matter of situational awareness: when to do this, how much to do this, why I would do it and why I would avoid it, and exactly *how* I would go about it.

I brought up how it can feel risky to explain certain things, as I don't want to over-explain, force the viewer into an interpretive box, or inhibit the viewer's ability to discover some of those things through close looking. So, we talked about how to talk specifically about specific things while opening up the viewer's interpretive possibilities or their ability to make connections. Jason brought up the examples of Michelle Grabner and Rebecca Morris as two artists working within abstraction who have refined a way of talking about their work, but in very different ways. Grabner's speak is external, relating the work and its elements to other fields and areas of research, along with art history and contemporary art. Morris' is more internal, concerning systems, but in a way that goes more in-depth and proposes ways that the work could be considered. Because I have very limited exposure to hearing Rebecca Morris talk about her work and have never heard Michelle Grabner talk, it is a good idea for me to listen to them to see what he was talking about. He also mentioned that people are going to interpret the work the way they are going to interpret the work, so even when things are explained more in depth to them, if they don't see it that way, then it's not going to matter. So perhaps the fear of over-explaining is at least partially irrational.

While we talked mainly about how to talk about the work, he also discussed the work itself for a bit. He said he really enjoys the instinctive painterly moves that I am making, but that they feel a bit different stylistically. This spurred a conversation on cohesivity, or, as he referred to it, as the "common visual thread." He said he saw that thread in the paintings I had in the Portrait Society show, but that he wasn't quite seeing it here. This was not necessarily surprising to me, as I am very aware that the paintings in my studio right now have a lot of differences from one to the next. Before the visit, I debated whether I should curate a more cohesive set of work and hang them up in a different room or just to have in my studio with the stuff that's up right



now, considering there is enough space for now. While the consciously curated set is definitely usually the better option, I decided against it for a few reasons: 1. Because I was fairly sure that Jason had seen my work before, so 2. I wanted to show him new work, and 3. I wanted him to see my studio space itself, because if I am going to be in the running for the Plum Blossom Initiative, it felt valuable to have him see my space, the setup, the materials, the stack of unprimed canvases (which he pointed out). I wanted him to see my *studio*, not just a body of work. Still, his comment prompted an interesting discussion about how I can play with extremities in the work while not losing that "common visual thread." I think a lot of it, honestly, comes down to curation: which pieces to display for a show and which not to display, and then how to arrange them.

We also talked about the rules in the work. He had some interested things to say, some of which I don't fully agree with, or at least feel unsure about. He said I can modify the rules as I see fit. He also said that he thinks I need to give myself "some leeway at some point soon." For me, abiding by the rules are what is driving the work forward and I am learning a lot from it and the work keeps improving. This is not to say that he is wrong or that loosening the rules would not be fruitful. But I do feel like that moment will come when it comes, and there is no need to force it when the work keeps feeling refreshed within those rules. While I have been having more ideas for things that are a bit different from the exact system that I am working within now recently, I think it is important to note that I have had absolutely no urge to break the system while I have been painting in these first weeks of the semester. For me, the system is going strong, and when it feels right to break it or loosen it, I will. But not now.

Overall, he really enjoyed the work and said he can sense the energy and discipline in it. This was a great studio visit to have so early on in the semester, both in terms of Plum Blossom and because we talked

mostly about how to talk about my work, which will be very valuable for me going into the next couple months of rapid-fire studio visits.

Additionally, I will have to think a lot about how I want to set up for all these studio visits. A more curated set of work is probably better, but there is also value in seeing the studio, works in progress, and just everything that's going on at one time. Will I make different choices for what to show depending on who is visiting, or will I want to streamline it a bit more to be more curated and consistent?





Arrangement for studio visits

Week 5

### Homework 1



Figure-ground relationships are inherent to painting: the very practice is based upon the application of a substance to a surface. Even the flattest, most consistent monochromes cannot escape this essentialism. In the 1960s, it was exactly this that prompted Clement Greenberg, the giant of twentieth century art criticism, to retreat on his previous statements that painting had to adhere to pure flatness and a consistent field. Greenberg flipped his formalist position to favor painting that relied on optics: manifesting a space that only the eye can maneuver through. While his statements were associated with a turn to anti-avant-gardism in the wake of Pop Art, they expanded a formalist vision of painting to more adequately include explorations of figure-ground relationships—and therefore non-illusionistic depth—in painting.

The artists in *Play Ground* work with optical spaces by using a single base color as a foundation. For these artists, the ground color is not an afterthought or a colored backdrop but an active participant. Through application to or removal from that ground, forms and spaces emerge—ones that can only be experienced by the eye.

Using palette knives to scrape and remove paint from the canvas, Michael Brennan introduces a simple yet sublime interruption to a would-be evenness, carving the surface to create sharp yet subtle compositions through layered degrees of presence and absence. Rebecca Morris employs multiple methods of ground application in her body of work, but the paintings selected for this exhibition feature her signature thick, sumptuous brushwork that, in a process opposite of Brennan's, covers large portions of the canvas while leaving other areas untouched, both enveloping and differentiating forms of patterned surface that only upon a certain close distance reveal themselves as being beneath the ground. In a related sensibility for paint application, John Zinsser places rich, gloopy, loosely-grid-bound brushstrokes over a solid, even ground color. The reduction of his

palette to a single ground color and single “figure” color forces the ground to assume a force that both encapsulates the gridded mesh of brushwork and creeps into it intermittently, interrupting the thick paint in such a way that sometimes flips the ground into the figurative position. Clare Grill’s paint is thin but no less assertive, the ground color creating an undeniable moody and unique presence to each painting. As opposed to the rigidity of Zinsser’s spaces or the jaggedness of Brennan’s, Grill’s are magically airy, sometimes aqueous, sometimes parched. Kaden Van De Loo’s grounds are flexible, allowing forms to emerge out of it and sink into it—a generative gel holding together the sometimes jarring juxtapositions of forms that are at once geometric and eccentric.

For Brennan, the ground is a carvable shell; for Morris, a substantive and defining spatial arbiter; for Zinsser, a fixed and immutable wall; for Grill, a delicate atmosphere; for Van De Loo, a malleable gel. Whether these grounds are the first or last addition to the surface, all five of these artists use the ground to play: with form, with optical space, and with paint.

Michael Brennan is a painter living in Brooklyn and is represented by Minus Space in New York City, a gallery specializing in minimalist art. He presented his solo show, *Floating Weeds*, there in 2023.

Clare Grill is a painter working in New York City, where she is represented by Derek Eller Gallery. Grill’s 2023 solo show at Derek Eller, *At the Soft Stages*, saw widespread acclaim.

Rebecca Morris works in Los Angeles and is represented by Corbett vs. Dempsey in Chicago and Bortolami Gallery in New York City. The Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago recently presented *Rebecca Morris: 2001-2022*, a comprehensive look at her work over two decades.

Kaden Van De Loo is a painter from Milwaukee and a recent graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

John Zinsser is from Brooklyn and is also represented by Minus Space.



Clare Grill, *Jot*, 2022, oil on linen, 46"x42"



Kaden Van De Loo, *Skate*, 2023, oil on canvas, 45x44 in.



Rebecca Morris, *Untitled (#15-22)*, 2022, oil and spray paint on canvas, 90"x95"



John Zinsser, *Common Prayer*, 2018, oil and enamel on canvas, 18x18 in.





Michael Brennan, *You See Me Laughing*, 2017, oil on canvas, 16x12 in.



Rebecca Morris, *Untitled (#12-22)*, 2023, oil and spray paint on canvas, 68"x70"



Kaden Van De Loo, *Husk*, 2023, oil on canvas, 29.5x35.5 in.



Clare Grill, *Rasp*, 2022, oil on linen, 58x44 in.



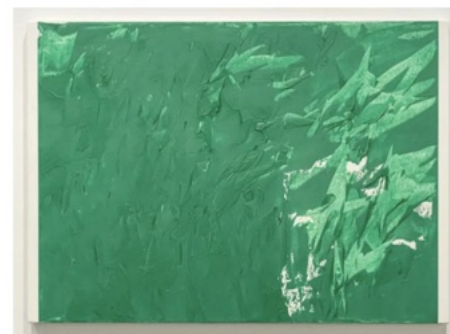
Michael Brennan, *The Hawk is Dying*, 2016, oil on canvas, 12x12 in.



Clare Grill, *Drum*, 2022, oil on linen, 55x56 in.



John Zinsser, *Western Vision*, 2018, oil and enamel on canvas, 20x20 in.



Michael Brennan, *Floating Weeds*, 2022, oil on canvas, 20"x28"





Clare Grill, *Bead*, 2022, oil on linen, 54x32 in.



John Zinsser, *Nation State*, 2016, oil and enamel on canvas, 60x72 in.



Michael Brennan, *Untitled*, 2015, oil on canvas, 20x16 in.



Rebecca Morris, *Untitled (#10-20)*, 2020, oil on canvas, 90"x95"



Kaden Van De Loo, *Apollo*, 2024, oil on canvas, 59"x47.5"



Kaden Van De Loo, *Spree*, 2023, oil on canvas, 42x40



Rebecca Morris, *Untitled* (#14-23), 2023, oil on canvas, 90"x96"

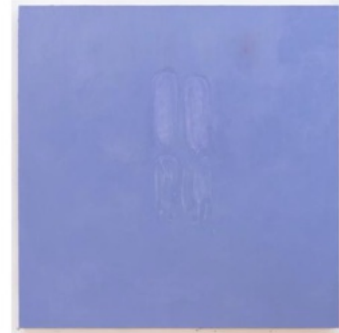


Rebecca Morris, *Untitled* (#03-18), 2017, oil on canvas, 101"x92"





Clare Grill, *Burl*, 2022, oil on linen, 58x44 in.



Kaden Van De Loo, *Elide*, 2024, oil on canvas, 40"x40"

## Hal Rammel Studio Visit Reflection

On Friday, February 16, I had a studio visit with Hal Rammel. Hal is an experimental improvisational musician, instrument maker, and visual artist. He is friends with John Corbett and Jim Dempsey, owners of Corbett vs. Dempsey in Chicago, who also represent his wife, Gina Litherland.

The visit was much more of a casual conversation than a "studio visit," which is what I was expecting. Hal talked a lot about what he does and what he thinks about in his work, and this was his way of connecting with what I was talking about.

We talked a lot about language (and "vocabulary," as Hal repeatedly used). We talked about the process of creating things and the extent to which they are planned and where they come from. He talked about his gravitation toward the square aspect ratio, as it neutralizes the corners to have equal weight, which is something that he is drawn to in his visual art.

As someone who does many different things—musical performance, instrument construction, alternative process photography, paper cutting, drawing—Hal had some interesting thoughts on diversity of practice. He said he has found it incredibly useful to "look at everything," because you never know what might come up and influence you in some way. We talked about the potential downsides, risks, and challenges of doing different things like this, as people might lobby the "hobbyist" accusation. His response to this is that it essentially doesn't matter—if something feels valuable to you and worth doing, then it is worth doing. It doesn't have to completely gel with other things you do or even feel related. But, then again, doing these different things can open up interesting connections between similarly unrelated practices. Having

worked on numerous occasions with my dad, Hal knew me as a child, and is aware of my musical upbringing. So, he was saying that you never know when you might want to go back to certain things. We talked about how, even within a specific practice like painting, it is fascinating to see artists' work and how it changes over the course of decades: what kinds of languages and techniques and skills they build, and then how things evolve, what things fall away, what things emerge, what things come back.

He talked about the drawings of fish that his daughter would do when she was very young: a simple loopy line to create the body and implied tail, and then a dot for the eye. He said that that little dot enlivens the entire form, and he thinks about this when doing some of his visual art. How can something activate the space?

He brought Max Ernst's idea of "forced inspiration" and the analogy of a grain of sand in an oyster: it is an irritant, but it is what the pearl forms around. He brought this up in relation to how different elements of the painting influence each other in the process and how this kind of work involves setting up situations in which the end result will be something new and interesting. Essentially, he was talking about how the paintings and the process deal with disruption.

We also discussed talking about abstract and formal concepts to different kinds of people. Hal was a surgical nurse for decades, doing his experimental stuff alongside his money-making job. He said he usually stayed away from talking about his music and art to people, as he would just get blank stares in response. He told a story about how someone he worked with said to him, "I hear you're on the radio!" Hal had a show on WSME for over twenty years—Sunday nights, six to nine. He would tell them this, and then they would never say anything about it the next Monday morning. The show featured extremely experimental music, and these people had simply never heard anything like it before

—it was completely alien, and they had no idea how to even begin to process what they were hearing. While I think the most "abstract" music tends to create more visceral reactions than the most abstract art, which can certainly conjure confusion or contempt but often does garner the same kind of reactions, I still think about how to talk about my kind of work to different people. It would be interesting to talk to people with little or no knowledge of art history, who I have never met before, about the work.

He said that the question, "What are these about?" is a "deadly" question, and that whenever he is asked that, he diverts it into something else. If you can say what it is about, why do it?

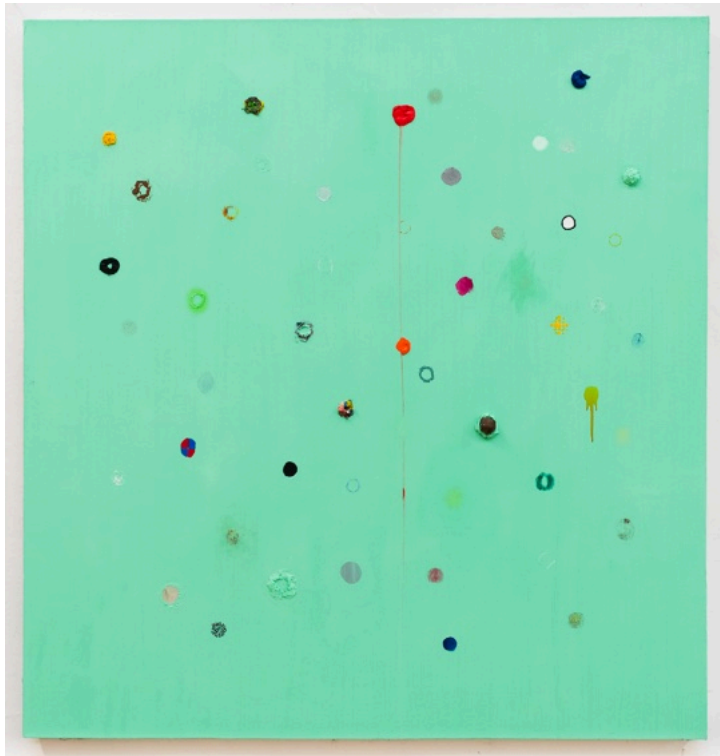
He also talked about "insulation" in the sense that, while it is important to know what others think of you and your work, that it is important that you keep your head down and keep doing what you want to do.

While the conversation was often tangential and not about the paintings specifically, Hal also had really keen observations when we did talk specifics. He is a good mind for my kind of work, and he has a good eye.

### **Chad Hallblade Studio Visit Reflection**

On Sunday, February 18, I had a studio visit with Chad Hallblade. He noticed pretty quickly that the work felt different than the work in the Portrait Society show, especially compositionally. He said that initially (before the visit), he thought of my work as disrupted minimalism, in which there was something or things that disturbed otherwise minimalist sensibilities. I thought this was an interesting observation. It's certainly something that I think about a lot—both minimalism and disruption—but it's not what the work is "about."

We talked about rules and systems, which he originally said he got "shudders" when I mentioned "rules," but that upon thinking about it more, he understood it better and realized that, yes, we all need rules, and we all have rules.



Speaking on the above painting, Chad said that the forms' different relationships to the ground, as well as their seemingly different relationships to time or movement (one thing feeling like it is just forming vs. another that has been around for a while) reminded him of quantum physics and particle jumping. I thought this was a really interesting connection. Although I bristle at people wanting objective "things" to see in the work, I love when viewers connect things, and abstraction in general, to other fields. Even for me, as someone who is very firmly a formalist-positioned painter, I still "see things" in non-objective abstraction and connect them to things that are outside of themselves and other paintings.

Chad mentioned how the grounds feel minimal from a distance but are quite active up close, which spurred a conversation about how the grounds are applied in different ways and how this might affect the paintings and reads of them.

He pointed out the sides of my paintings, which I leave dirty. I asked him his thoughts, and he said he likes it because it shows the process and that these are objects that have gone through something. The "dirty sides" are something that people have differing opinions on, and while I am committed to them, it is always interesting to hear what people have to say about it.

Chad also wanted to see my studio (as I had set up in Room 312), and he enjoyed seeing the setup. He pointed at the green painting and, laughing, said, "What the fuck's goin' on there?" So, we talked about this issue of ranges and extremities in the work that I have been thinking a lot about lately, and how to get these extremities to coexist without losing the "thread" (that Jason talked about).



## Week 6

### Studio Visit with Leslie Vansen Reflection

On Friday, February 23, I had a studio visit with Leslie Vansen. The most notable takeaway that Leslie got from my work (and that I got of her response to it) was how diverse the individual paintings were without losing cohesion. Overall, she was impressed with the her and my commitment to a certain way of working (system) so early on. She also acknowledged that it felt difficult to give recommendation to "someone already moving so clearly." After our visit, she emailed me with more thoughts and had some interesting comments on "urgency": "Not only did those paintings not look similar to each other, they seem to have quite different levels of urgency within each one as compared to the others around them. Of course, now you might want to define what I might mean by urgency in the context of your paintings and then whether that comment is important to you or not." I do think I know what she means by urgency: it's a good word to sum up a mishmash of speed, spontaneity, resolution, and (lack of) fussiness. I like her putting that word to it. It's something that I like having a variety of: some paintings feeling much more "urgent" than others.

She also had an interesting take on reference. She said that, because of the way she works, she never assumes that people have literal references in their work. But her observation of my paintings was that the forms/combinations/arrangements had been "seen" somehow before. She didn't mean this in a super literal way, but she was essentially saying that it seems like certain tangible things I see make their ways into the paintings, even if unintentionally or subconsciously.

She said she didn't see any of the paintings as being the "core" of the group, but she said that the red painting seemed to have a nice

collection of different moves and aspects to the language, which made it feel different from the rest, which I agree with.

We talked a bit about how to talk about the work. She made an interesting comment about how she always feels like talking about her work is insufficient and that the words feel like they are "around" the paintings as opposed to "about" them. It is really important to talk about the work well, of course, and to use speech and writing to add interest to the work. But all that stuff is just not the same as the work itself, and at a certain point there is just a wall.

We talked about process (preliminary work/ideation as well as how things develop over time), both in terms of the painted-ness/compositions and rules.

It was a good discussion and she was very observant about a lot of small details. It was reassuring to hear that the paintings felt cohesive despite being so different.

### Studio Visit with Chris Regner Reflection

On Sunday, February 25, I had a studio visit with Chris Regner, who was the first figurative artist I have had in the studio this semester. He acknowledged that abstraction is not his wheelhouse and so it raises certain questions for him. Pretty early on in the discussion, he asked a lot of questions about viewership. He asked if narrative interpretations are okay with me, to which I said that I don't want the paintings to have narrative, but if people see a narrative, that's fine. This is always a bit of a tough question because I can find it a bit—for lack of a better word—annoying when people see certain narratives or nameable things in my paintings. But the emphasis is on "certain," as I actually find certain nameable references really awesome (like Chad's thoughts about quantum physics). I think when it starts to become problematic is when

people want there to only be a single narrative. But everyone relates formal elements to external things, even formally-minded people like myself. So ultimately, I don't have a problem with narrative interpretations, because the work is just what it is once it's out in the world and I know people are going to look at it in very different ways. Chris also asked if people seeing it in a really dummed-down formal way (interest in colors, shapes, etc.) was okay, without any kind of deeper or more conceptual understanding. He asked if there were certain things that I absolutely wanted viewers to get from the painters, as well as if there were certain things that I would definitely not want to be interpreted in some way. Although I have thought about all of these things before, him asking all of these probing questions was good for me to answer and think about. He also asked about what I meant by the forms becoming "familiar" through their repetition—whether I meant that they become something nameable or if they were simply something formally consistent. His ultimate question was whether the responsibility for deciphering meaning was on me or the viewer.

Before knowing the title, he said my Painting *Spree* reminded him of the Chewy Spree candy. This was a crazy coincidence and weird connection that got me thinking about a few different things. One is that it maybe suggests a certain vibe of that word that relates to the visual aesthetics in both the candy/its branding and my painting. It's like how people across cultures and languages consistently think of certain words/sounds as round and others as sharp. Although I title my paintings poetically and not literally, I sometimes go back and think, "Did I name this painting that because of that?" as if there was something subconsciously influencing that inclination. And this is actually where Chris' questions about what I do or do not want viewers to get from the paintings comes into play. If someone were to look at *Spree* and think it looked like Spree candies, and then look at the title, and think, "Oh, that's funny. It's like Spree candies but made into an abstraction," that would be disastrous. And maybe that will happen with

this painting, now that I know that. But titles run the risk of creating too obvious of a connection to something nameable. Chris did say that he thinks titles are "vitally important," even for work like mine, and that he doesn't like when people leave their work untitled or name it something basic or inventory-like.

He pointed out certain aspects of the work he enjoyed, like color usage and the varying degrees of resolve across the paintings. He asked about ideation and preliminary work and also about how/when the paintings feel complete. He also seemed intrigued by the space (ground) in the paintings. After I spoke about the work at the beginning of the visit, he said he hadn't realized that all the paintings had that solid ground color. He referred to it as a kind of "pool" or a "petri dish of liquid." I thought the petri dish comparison was especially interesting.

I had said something about having a "minimalist sensibility" and he found that interesting, saying that I avoid the "trap" of it being "cold" like some minimalism where (to him) there just isn't really much happening.

He asked about scale and we talked about much larger scale (something aspirational) and much smaller scale (something I do and I talked to him about but didn't have on the walls). He said that small paintings can be really nice in context with large paintings as a kind of palate cleanser or as a form of punctuation in the gallery.

He gave the example of Julie Mehretu's recent work and how it is so formally incredible that he doesn't feel any necessity to apply narrative or anything non-formal to it: it is purely sufficient as an experience itself. So he said that I could consider really pushing my formal moves to become so awesome that they just completely hold their own. I thought this was an interesting comment. It also got me thinking, is pure formalism what I'm going for? It's more than that, I think, semiotically. But although I have developed some interesting formal moves recently, it is

interesting to think about how things could develop over the course of years and what kind of inventiveness will arise over that time.

And lastly, he was impressed by the variety and the "curiosity" in the work. He said that it's important to still be in a place of experimentation while in school and that you don't want to get too locked down too soon. I thought this was an interesting comment after what Leslie had said. In some ways, their comments are opposites: Leslie said she was impressed with me finding something so secure and set so early, and Chris was recognizing the wide range of work I was making. But the comments actually aren't conflicting, and really they are both getting at the same thing, which is the essence of this system itself. The rules I have set up for myself are both very secure but also allow for a lot of experimentation. If I were to give those four rules to any other painter, the work would be very different (which would be fascinating to see). I am creating my own language within the language. And experimentation is always going to be a part of my practice. It is likely that my studio habits will slow down eventually and the work might become more consistent, and because I am young and figuring things out and improving quickly, the amount of experimentation is higher than it might be later, but experimentation will never not be part of the work. I never want to feel like I am just producing. Always searching for the next thing is what makes painting so addicting. I am never satisfied; even when I feel satisfied with individual paintings for what they are, my work as a whole never feels like it is "there." There is always something to get and I always feel like I am working for something just out of reach—and then when I get "there," it feels no different. I know that that is probably how it is going to feel for the rest of my life. And that is exciting because that's what drives the work forward and prevents it from becoming stagnant.

### **First Critique Notes and Reflection**

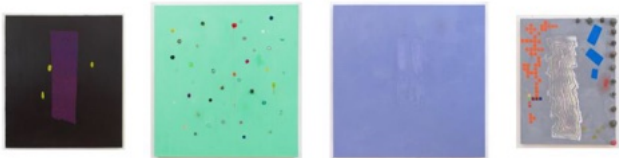
Red painting: Feels very grounding within different setups, works well in the middle or could be good as its own separated piece in the case of a corner space

White painting: might be tricky to fit into a cramped setup (needs space around it to really work)

*Skate* is similar to the red painting in that it is a nice standalone piece. It works well next to the red one as well.

Green painting and yellow/white painting are maybe too "out there"? Depends on what kind of visual experience I want

*Purr* and new gray painting have a nice visual relationship, work well as bookends



People responded positively to the above arrangement (bookended by those two pieces I just mentioned, and two paintings in the middle that are a bit more minimal). I like this setup as well, although it feels like it's missing a punch.



People also responded positively toward this one. Of all the setups, I think this is my favorite. The color is really grabbing, and that feels important. The two central pieces work really well together, and the purple painting is nice in that it is more minimal but a similar size to the red painting. The gray painting continues certain formal elements in other paintings and is a bit busier in certain ways, but it feels really cohesive





We also talked about these two paintings next to each other. I don't think I would use these for the BFA show, but these two go together really well. As Angie said, these two next to each other on a wall of their own would function nicely. They are both near monochromes and their colors are really attractive together, they are each quite minimal, and they each have one very small, isolated, monochrome-disrupting moment that makes them feel connected and in conversation with each other.

I will continue to play around with these combinations as I make new work. My final selection is also going to depend on whether I am selected for the TMA Contemporary and which piece gets selected for that (red, gray, or *Spree*). Because the date that we find out about that show is so close to install, it will be good for me to have different options that would cover any of those three pieces being selected.

## Week 7

### Studio Visit with Victoria Roth Reflection

My studio visit with Victoria Roth was fantastic. She was so good at looking at my work and picking it apart and observing things, which was really refreshing. She talked a lot about "play" in my work and how that is functioning under the system. She talked about "touch" and "immediacy" as being crucial to the work. She noticed the histories that I was quoting from abstraction, and she could see which artists I look at. She talked about humor in the work. She talked about how there is something maybe "diagrammatic" about the work (she related certain aspects to mapping), and that I sometimes propose a way to read the work but then I am constantly forcing the viewer to reorient themselves. With my painting *Spree*, she talked about how the different figure-ground relationships with the similarly-sized forms opens up a lot of

space and creates an interesting spatial feeling. I hadn't exactly thought about the forms in this sense because I am always so focused on figure-ground. She was essentially saying that certain forms look farther back, meaning they would be larger than other forms that are on the surface. She talked about how each form feels like a little abstract painting, with many of them being reference-packed. Additionally, she talked about how that painting reminded her of sunspots or like things coming in and out of vision before fainting, and also like fog. Ultimately, she said that it felt to her that the painting was about vision and how vision is experienced in the body.

We talked about rules and systems and how they beg to be broken and bent. After we talked in room 312, I showed her my studio. When looking at this new mauve painting that was on my easel, she thought that I had broken my rule of containment and started talking about that, but then realized that I actually hadn't broken that rule. I thought this was awesome, as it showed that I am sometimes really pushing those rules to the point where they become questionable, potentially even subjective, but never dismantled. She brought up the risk or danger of a system in that it can become too programmatic and slip into design (which she said maybe happens with Jonathan Lasker), so she encouraged my improvisation and play.

She was enjoying the diversity of the work and said that despite the vast differences, the paintings felt like they were all from the same brain.

Probably the most interesting point of discussion was how she talked about this idea of a "key." This was something that she had spoke on during her talk with the small piece in her recent solo show. With my work, she pointed at the forms near the edge that often feel like a sort of key to the rest of the painting. In a related sense, she said that the black and white circles at the top of the big red painting feel kind of like

measurement units. She also mentioned that—especially for more minimal pieces—the paint on the profiles behaves in a similar way for her (as in the key). Although she was talking about things that I have deeply considered, her angle on it and the way she worded it (the word "key" being a great example) opened up some different ways of thinking about some of these things for me.

Her talk about the profiles led to a discussion on leaving those dirty, which is always an interesting conversation to have. She was a fan of them, saying that they relate to this sense of touch in my work and that they show the process in a really exciting way. She said that she wouldn't want them to become too programmatic, which would be gimmicky, and that they feel genuine. Reading them, though, she said that the edge of my gray painting enhanced the feeling that she got from the piece that it had been "wrestled with" more than the others. She said that I could consider the profiles as another element of the work to play with, and that maybe some paintings could have clean edges. I found this interesting to mull over, but my initial reaction is to push against it. I want the edges to be part of the work by default and not because of any sort of intention (other than the choice to leave them dirty). If I tape off some paintings but not others, it puts those edges into the conversation in a way that I don't think I want, and I also think I would be a lot more self-conscious about the dirty edges. Having all the paintings dirty makes them a kind of dialog not only on the creation of making specific paintings but on the studio in general.

She was drawn to elements that were simultaneously unsettling/ugly/gross/grotesque and beautiful/appealing/attractive. I thought that this was interesting in connection with her work and that she was recently in the show "Getting to Lck" at Hesse Flatow, which focused on this exact idea.

In my studio, she was very intrigued by the green painting, which again connected to this push and pull of pleasure and disgust. She talked about the gaudiness of that painting and its conversation with kitsch.

The conversation felt incredibly fast, even though my slot got stretched closer to 45 minutes. There was so much to talk about and it felt like we could have talked for five hours and never lost steam. Like I said before, it was just incredibly refreshing to talk to someone who really gets what I am doing and knows how to look at it. It is a boost of confidence for me that she was so excited by the work.

### **Studio Visit with Mariah Ferrari and Cal Krawczyk Reflection**

On Sunday, March 3, I had a studio visit with Mariah Ferrari and Cal Krawczyk. It was interesting to have a studio visit with two people, as it often made things feel very conversational. Having a third person broke the back-and-forth that happens with two-person conversations, which was nice in a lot of ways.

Cal said that *Spree* reminds him of a flower, and then he said that it also reminds him of an eye test or colorblind test. I found this particularly interesting in connection with what Victoria Roth had said about the painting feeling like it was about vision. Also, I am noticing that this painting conjures up sensations and relations for people much more than other paintings.

Mariah asked if I have ever consider painting on the profiles of the canvases, which led into a conversation about the containment rule, and of course, leaving the profiles dirty. They both said that that choice depends a lot on the type of work and whether you are okay with something being potentially distracting or maybe even appearing happenstance or unintentional for the sake of revealing the process of

creating the object. Mariah said that she tends to prefer clean edges in general, so she fell more on that side of the debate.

I asked about how cohesive the paintings felt together. Mariah said that the three more minimal pieces felt like a set and that the two busier paintings felt like they went together. She said that the bluish-purple painting and the red one might be hard to say were made by the same person (if they were only presented together). It's always interesting to hear people's responses to this, because everyone has a slightly different take.

Cal recommended playing with making fast marks looks slow or slow marks look fast.

Mariah recommended trying to make a painting that says "everything that you want to say" as much as possible. I'll have to think about what this might look like. Some paintings feel like they already close to that. Although this is a super interesting idea to think about and consider more going forward, what makes it essentially impossible is that certain moves rely on the lack of other moves to be recognizable or truly effective.

Mariah also brought up the value of the ground color and that (in the set I showed) they were in a similar range. She said that having a much darker painting might be something to consider. The colors of the paintings are an interesting element to consider with arrangement. I would never want to arrange a show simply based on color, but it absolutely has an important effect on the visual impact of pieces conversing with each other.

We also talked for a while about post-school life and the difficulties and rollercoaster of maintaining a career in painting while having other things going on (and, of course, dealing with the art market). Mariah

said that she thinks most people don't really care what you say about your work—it's just that if it look good, then it is good. Although I'm not sure how true this is or how much I agree, it's definitely relevant to the art market. It also shows the importance of maintaining a palpable dedication to a certain practice.

Some recent images from the studio:











Evolution of new glazed painting so far:















I got the idea for this painting while working on a large, multi-layered glazed rectangle in another painting. Although I vary the ways my ground colors are applied, they tend to be opaque, are often matte, and are usually fairly thick/substantive. While working on that rectangle, I got the idea to do a painting in which the ground is glazed, a much more methodically layered approach that builds the surface over time, pushes forms back, and literally suspends pigment within transparent layers. This feels like a fruitful method that could result in a lot of interesting variations. It's interesting to have a painting that is so shiny, and it creates an intriguing viewer experience as well. The surface is very minimal, subtle, and requiring of close inspection, but its extreme sheen also makes it quite difficult to see these things. I have no idea how this painting would be properly documented.

The way that I apply and manipulate the grounds is something that I continue to think about. As this painting demonstrates, it can radically change the vibe of the painting and alter the perception of a body of works.

## Week 8

### Victoria Roth Talk Reflection

#### 1) Describe Vic Roth's body of work.

Victoria Roth's work is abstraction infused with never-quite-nameable references. Thinking a lot about dichotomies and juxtapositions, her paintings pair fleshy, muscular forms next to flatly-colored ones and ambiguous spaces. Despite often only containing a few discrete spatial layers, the compositions are quite maximal and all-over, placing the viewer in an intriguingly confusing space in which figure-ground relationships sometimes flip-flop. Materiality is crucial, as certain areas are painted with thicker, more luscious paint, contrasted with areas of extremely sanded-down removal. Displaying her pieces in galleries, she works primarily at a large scale.

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

Roth's work continues commentaries on histories of abstraction and abstract painting while placing it into a contemporary context. She used the term "queer resistance" a few times, using abstraction as a means to communicate the complex and broad term of "queerness." Her work challenges viewers in that her forms always feel familiar, substantive, and *like* something knowable, but they never become that thing. A form might look *like* a muscle or a fleshy limb, but that is where it ends; they remain abstract despite their familiarity, painted and material despite their relationships to external things, and flat and non-spatial despite their modeling (this last quality embodied in her contouring of the forms).

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

Roth's paintings are very experiential. She leads the viewer into the work and excludes them from it or parts of it at the same time. She talked about incorporating certain small moments within the pieces that open up the space. A bit of a background color penetrating multiple layers of heavy, substantive matter gives the viewer small visual respites to breathe. Although she didn't talk super extensively on queerness, it seemed that her thoughts on this relate in many ways to those of Edie Fake, in which abstraction is seen as an appropriate and suitable vessel for engaging with abstraction because of both concepts' ambiguity, subjectivity, and broadness. When I asked Edie Fake about queerness and abstraction, they said it had to do with strangeness and just "knowing" when something "felt" queer (from their perspective). Roth's paintings feel similar in many senses, utilizing strange forms, compositions, and spaces to speak "of the body," which she specifically said is a phrase that is relevant to her work. She also thinks a lot about the "feeling" of the work, demonstrated by her titles (like "Velvet Nerve") and certain descriptors (like "tickle"). This, again, relates back to the body and certain sensations that are at once pleasurable and uncomfortable.



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

She spoke about how she was a figurative painter in undergrad and then began experimenting with abstraction between undergrad and grad school. Although she didn't go into detail as to why she made this shift, I got the sense that this was a new, previously unexplored world for her, something less literal, more ambiguous, perhaps more emotive, and more exciting. The few paintings that she showed that she made shortly before the start of grad school show her developing interests in figure-ground relationships, layering, working the surface, and placing different forms or elements within one composition. More recently, some of her paintings have become more sparse, more atmospheric, and both more mechanical and more "oceanic," as she described the space. In these newer works, the references to the body have become less literal or obvious, and to me the spaces that the forms occupy feel oddly digital, which makes them familiar but also alienating at the same time.

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

I think her work is incredible. From the detail shots that she showed, I can see that her material handling is remarkable and the pictures do not do it justice. Her paintings are large, confrontational, and experiential. They are both inviting and repelling. The way that she carefully places these opposing forms and moves within a composition interests me. I related a lot of what she was talking about to my own thought processes on juxtapositions, disruption, and nameability. She also enjoys the uncomfortable middle ground between attraction and repulsion, which manifests in a variety of ways, and this is something that I also think about a lot in my work. I enjoyed seeing the references and influences that she brought into the presentation, as they were all visually extremely clear in their relationships to her work, but in different ways. I appreciate her thoughts about the work and the variety of angles and interpretations that viewers can take away from it. Her work and her practice have a richness that is created by the combination of subject matter selection, materiality and formal qualities, historical awareness, and themes/content.

## Studio Visit with Michael Davidson Reflection

On Friday, March 8, I had a studio visit with Michael Davidson. With all of these studios, it is interesting to see how people (and I) respond to the conversation organically, as well as how different people's viewpoints and interests become apparent in how they talk about the work. With Michael, there were a number of things that were obvious about him because of how he engage with my work: he is interested in abstraction and materiality in a similar sense to me, he is incredibly well-read on painting and looks at a ton of painting, and he gravitates toward paintings that are minimal, quiet, and evocative. It has been interesting to see how people interact with the work when they walk in: how long do they look at first, how quickly do they ask a question, do they start talking first or do they want me to talk first...Michael jumped straight in with what he was observing without me talking about anything, and except for a few brief comments here and there, I basically didn't talk for probably about 45 minutes. This was actually pretty awesome, as he continued to look at things and contemplate, and to bring up new points of discussion. I talked more in the last 20-30 minutes of our discussion, but I enjoyed all of his comments.

The main takeaway from everything was his separation between the two paintings that were on the right of the setup (gray and red) vs. the three on the left (the more minimal paintings). Although he enjoyed all the paintings, he much preferred the three on the left. There were many points that arose that distinguished these two groups. Most importantly, the two right paintings are busier, more information-packed, and (particularly in the red one) have more easily-identifiable paintings references. In this sense, they function in a more encyclopedic sense, demonstrating different aspects of my visual language and moves that I make across the body of work. He also mentioned that these two felt more in line with what I showed at Portrait Society. The other three

isolate something more specifically. Michael said that these felt like "clear and confident statements," as opposed to the ones that felt more wrestled with. So, he was much more interested in the paintings as they functioned in relation to other paintings, as opposed to those that packed more of what I want to say into individual surfaces. He said he likes a "long look" and for things to develop in the viewer's mind with close inspection. The two paintings on the right demonstrated my "ego," as a kind of showcase of what I do and can do, while he said the others resulted in my being more of a viewer of my own work like anyone else.

I asked him how the context of the two on the right alters the experience of the left two, and how taking them away would change the experience of the others. He said it was hard to say, but that those three might lose something without the busier paintings—but maybe this would be interesting and cool, too.

Another related angle to all of this was his perception of how the paintings were immediately functioning. With the three on the left, he said that he was not questioning the scale, color, materiality, etc. (formal decisions/moves) specifically because they were done well. Referring to scale, he said that those three paintings occupy their spaces and feel right. With the two on the right, he said that there were moments of questioning with these formal choices (the "pitfalls of boring critique," as he said) that suggest that something about those paintings is not functioning "right." Pointing at the blue rectangles in the gray painting, he said that when he looks at good painting he "hears a bell ring," but wasn't getting that with those forms. I totally understand what he is saying, but he's also pointing out something that is there to create a certain uncomfortable feeling from the viewer. Essentially, he's confirming that the painting is having its intended effect. Now, whether the viewer enjoys that or not depends on them. For a painting to completely hit the viewer all at once and leave them with no thoughts of "boring critique," and no formal questioning is, I think, rare. But

paintings that disturb the viewer in some way and don't have this immediate and persisting feeling of satisfaction are also something that I play with in my work.

We talked about what it means for a painting to be "challenging." These two on the right are challenging in the sense that there is a lot of information and noise to digest, but perhaps less challenging in that they include more recognizable references and include a lot more of my language moves. In an opposite sense, the more minimal paintings are challenging in the sense that they may leave the viewer with a "That's it?" question and require more inspection to "get," but are also more digestible in the sense that there is less noise to parse through. Michael said that the more minimal paintings are more challenging but more easily engage the questions that are at the core of my work. He talked about "finesse" in the sense that these more minimal paintings had clear and confident material decisions that give them credibility. Simple painting, specific execution.

Regarding containment, he recognized that there was a clear interest in the frame/boundaries with all the paintings, that it was much more "mature" in the more minimal paintings.

He observed the profiles and their dirtiness, to which he said, "I'm honestly not sure." He had some great insights into how the paint on the sides was functioning in different paintings (in some, it plays more of a role in the experience of the painting, or is more distracting/eye-catching). To him, the sides were not part of the "argument of the painting," so it then triggers questions—is this something I want people to experience? If it's not part of the argument of the painting, does it become an unnecessary distraction? But then again, he said that he wasn't sure if it would be better if they were taped and clean. We discussed the possibility of doing different things to the sides (either before or after painting), but that this would also risk self-

consciousness. I remain confident and set in my reasoning for leaving the sides dirty, but it's super interesting to get lots of different people's opinions on it and how it functions for them in their experience of the work.

He brought up a couple of good quotes. One was from Robert Storr, who taught him in grad school and told him: "Paint questions, not answers." Michael said this in reference to this kind of work in which the questions are the driving force. He said that painting questions in a committed way will also lead to the viewer asking questions in a committed way, and that answers are boring and just lead to a "talent show." The other quote was from Ed Ruscha: "Bad painting is 'wow!...huh?' and good painting is 'huh?...wow.'" He said some artists' work is beautiful but can be "figured out" quickly, which he doesn't like, as opposed to work that is initially confusing but unfolds with close, extended inspection.

Michael is a great example of someone who is highly attuned to painting and abstraction and a good representative of that crowd. The way he talked about things was extremely different from how Chris Regner approached the work, for example. The kinds of comments that Michael gave, even if I do not necessarily feel the same about every one of them, continue to push me to consider why I am making the choices I am. Ultimately, creative practices get to a point in which the ability for the maker to justify what they are doing and then to fully commit themselves to that practice is the most important thing, and even if viewers don't like something, they will hopefully be able to recognize that commitment and dedication in the work.

### **Studio Visit with Alyssa Krause Reflection**

On Sunday, March 10, I had a studio visit with Alyssa Krause. Although I have seen her around a fair amount of times, I had not spoken with her

before, so this was the first studio visit I have had in which I had had no prior conversations with the other person (other than Victoria Roth). This visit started a bit unexpectedly because, like usual, I had set up my work in room 312, but there were a couple students working in there, so we had to start in my actual studio. I quickly arranged things to make the space as suitable as possible for talking about the work, but obviously going into the space with that number of pieces all around you is a very different experience than only seeing five curated pieces hung. When we eventually looked at the work in the other room, she said that my painting language was much more clear. This was good to hear, as it suggests that some curation/arrangement consideration, as well as the neatness of a more gallery-like space, positively affects the viewer's ability to engage with that language.

She was very interested in the rules of my system and how they function because she also works with certain rules. Here are a few other observations that she made:

Color usage, despite diversity and radical differences, feels confident and all like one person

Large scale works better with my work overall and what I am trying to say with it, but small pieces can also be effective in a show

Wet-on-wet paintings vs. those that are more applied on dry grounds: those two methods create a very different spatial feeling

Enjoyed the dirty sides

Interested in reductive moments because the paintings tend to be very additive. She encouraged me to push this more.

In the aftermath of the Michael Davidson studio visit, she said that she felt that I needed paintings that were like the two right ones as well as the three more minimal ones

## Week 9

### Midterm Portfolio Assessment

This semester, I have given a lot of consideration to the “why” of the moves that I make and the rules of my system. I have thought about and written about all of these aspects quite extensively. Why geometric forms? Why a single-colored ground? Why contain the forms? Why no overlap? And then, what am I doing with these rules? Why do I do those things? Last semester, I tended to think of the system/rules as the “language.” Now, I am clearly understanding that the “language” is separate from the rules, even if those rules are what allow for the language to develop. Any painter given these same rules would create different work, even radically different work. So, through a continuing practice of making painting after painting, my unique language has become more refined in the sense that I have identified moves that I make as being integral to that language. It is not that I was unaware of these moves before, of course, but just that I have given them deeper consideration and have become more conscious of them and how they function.

Because of the many studio visits that I have been doing this semester and because of the upcoming show, I have had to think a lot about presentation: curation, arrangement, sequence, spacing. I have a slideshow with hundreds of slides of combinations of paintings, and this has been helpful in allowing me to quickly see different presentations. With the paintings I have made this year, there are a multitude of

experiences that I can cultivate from them, which is interesting and exciting.

At this point in the semester, I will continue painting, but my pace will slow as I work through the show. A major part of my studio time in the upcoming weeks will be to play around with combinations in Room 312. Although the digital combinations are great for efficiency, they obviously do not compare to the experience of the physical paintings on the wall. Plus, that room has a nice corner space that is pretty similar to the space that I will have at the show.

I will also continue my trend of two studio visits every weekend throughout April.





## Week 10

### Studio Visit with Santiago Cucullu Reflection

Santiago was a really thoughtful and observant viewer. He was really drawn to the use of different textures and materialities within the pieces. He was especially interested in the dark glazed painting, as he enjoyed the different speeds with which his eye experienced the surface and the way things snuck up on him.

When I talked about the rules of my work, he said something along the lines of: it's good to have those rules and work within them for a bit to see what they do for you, but then you have to move past those rules. I don't really agree with this, especially for where I am at, but we didn't have a lot of time to discuss a lot of the things he was saying. I have been finding it really interesting how different people react to the rules: some see them more clearly, others say they don't seem them (or even a system) and are surprised when I tell them there are rules. This always surprises me. Some people are repulsed by the word, finding it overly constraining; others immediately understand it.

Santiago was also enthusiastically recommending I tape the sides of the paintings. Again, we didn't have a ton of time to talk about it, but he said that he didn't think my justification for leaving them dirty was working in the way that I want it to.

The most interesting thing he talked about was his ideas about installation. He wanted to see certain paintings butted up next to each other, displayed as pairs or perhaps as four-painting checkers. He said that this would create interesting dramas and relationships between the paintings, allowing the viewers to rapidly bounce their eye between them. And it would add a layer of humor, as the isolation of the forms is



one of the rules of the system. It's an intriguing concept but absolutely not something that I would want to do. It would take the work in a direction that is outside what I want it to be doing. This kind of comment also makes sense coming from him and the way he thinks about installation.

### **Studio Visit with Steve Burnham Reflection**

On Friday, March 29, I had a studio visit with Steve Burnham. He asked a lot of questions that I commonly get: asking about the rules and what they do for me, asking about the ideation process and sketches. He said he didn't see the rules/vocabulary at first, but that it makes sense after having it explained to him. He asked about the connection to music, which he likely remembered from what Deb Brehmer said about my work in the Portrait Society show (which I had mixed feelings about), and after I explained the similar sensibility, he said that he saw a connection with my work and the variation within rules to classical music. He commented on how I was playing with "ugliness" sometimes, touching on my interest in things that sit on the edge between attraction and repulsion. Additionally, he was interested in the spatial depth/flatness in the grounds, as well as the connections to the histories of abstraction that he was observing.

### **Studio Visit with Nicholas Perry Reflection**

On Sunday, March 31, I had a studio visit with Nicholas Perry. He was another case that didn't see that there were rules to my paintings until I explained them. Again, I am always surprised by this. It suggests to me that the system and its rules are perhaps things that reveal themselves to viewers over time and with close consideration. But even if the exact rules are not immediately identifiable, I do find it surprising that people are unaware that there are any rules at all. Obviously I know the work and the rules, but to me it seems clear that there is a system being

used here. It doesn't necessarily bother me that people don't immediately see it, because if it wasn't there, they would notice the lack of a system.

He said that his experience with the paintings was one in which his eye was bouncing between all of them. Individually, he said the paintings feel like "case studies." He said, "Aesthetically, this work is quite repetitive in the broader world." Obviously, he was only seeing a small slice of my work, but a lot of what he said during the visit came back to how he thought the work could assert itself better within the larger art world. He said that he wants to see more "nuance" (which I connected to Michael Davidson's use of the word "finesse"). He had a few thoughts on how I could elevate this. One had to do with palette. He felt like the forms that were made with just one color lacked a certain life compared to the ones that had smaller moments of different colors. He talked about how there is an inherent value system that comes with mark-making, depending on how the marks are made and to what they are applied, and that I should be more conscious of this. He kept using the term "flickers" to describe little moments that would amplify the liveliness of the forms. For example, putting a little touch of some color present elsewhere in a painting within another form. In this way, he also talked about "light," not exactly like modeling but in terms of adding, again, "flickers" of color that seem to suggest the objecthood or spatial quality of the forms. The other main idea he had regarding "nuance" had to do with "thinking of subjects." He recommended thinking of subjects (objects, ideas, verbs, anything) while painting, as he says that this somehow makes you make different kinds of choices that make forms feel more "real." Clearly he was drawn to this condition of objecthood in the forms and wanted to see that amplified more, with more intentionality in their making as a way to make them feel more like "things" rather than just paint on a surface. He also said that this would make it more obviously about the forms' relationships as they engage in a space together, and would present the systematic nature of the

work more visibly to viewers. In tandem with the "thinking of subjects" idea, he recommended I purge the idea of "non-objectivity," a term I had used earlier in our conversation, from my brain. He said he doesn't think there is such thing as "non-objective abstraction." I know what he's saying, and I would say I agree with him at a very fundamental level, but also I think the term is still absolutely fitting, being a somewhat arbitrary and definitely imperfect term just like "abstraction" is.

These are all really interesting comments and great things to think about. This issue of "objecthood" is something I think about quite a lot. I do think that there is an inherent anthropomorphization and/or objectification that comes from isolating a form within a space, as it represents a "thing" vs. "non-thing" relationship like that of real objects. Painted forms can assume more of an objecthood through dimensionality, uniqueness, and illusionism. There are a few dangers that I see in these "flickers." One is that it could feel decorative. I have a good sense of when something I am doing feels decorative vs. genuine, and always avoid the decorative. It's more of a feeling than anything descriptive, and it just depends: for example, a move made "on top" of a form might feel decorative or not depending on my mindset and what I want out of it. Adding such "flickers" could feel decorative, but it would depend. There are also the dangers of self-consciousness, overthinking, and over-literalism (in terms of provoking the viewership of relationships) with adding things *to* forms that point to other elements of the painting. In simpler terms, forcing it. And lastly, there is the danger of illusionism. Thinking about "light" is interesting, but I don't want to force modeling or light and shadow onto forms. Any apparent light or space is purely a byproduct of the process.

However, he has a point in terms of the uniqueness of these forms. Although I don't think I would want every form to have the level of complexity that he has in mind, I absolutely agree that there is an unexplored frontier for me in terms of making forms that feel much

more like "things" in terms of their intricacies, and it's something that I will think about going forward.

He asked what I don't like when I look at paintings, to which I said, "dead surfaces." After I talked about that for a bit, he said that he wants to see what I just described—that he sees it in certain works and moments, but not as much in others.

He said he wants to see "longevity"—me making choices that stand out in a larger conversation. And this happens through this "nuance." There are lots of different ways to think about "nuance" (or "finesse") but I do like these words as I move beyond undergrad and work to level up my painting.

### **Critique with Yumin Reflection**

Yumin and I had a really engaged, thoughtful, and lengthy conversation about my work. The main topic was "intentionality," as opposed to "coincidence," or any kind of lack of intention, which feels amateur. In this sense, Yumin wants to see more of a plan and an execution, and it was interesting to see what kinds of things were being observed as "intentional" or "unintentional" (/amateur): things that felt harmonious, balanced, and satisfying were usually equated to "intentional;" those that felt unsatisfying or clashing were deemed "unintentional." We went through each painting and Yumin said if each felt intentional or not. There was a lot of interesting stuff and many small comments on individual paintings and choices, but the crux of this gets at an important issue. Obviously, every viewer will have their opinions, certain paintings they prefer, and an overall opinion on the work, which could be anything. Ultimately, I know some people won't like the work or certain paintings, and there is no way around this. But for someone as observant as Yumin to see things as "unintentional" is intriguing and a bit troublesome. The vast majority of the "unintentional" things were

very much intentional. So, there is a disconnect. This also gets at what "intention" means, exactly, as I could consciously make a choice that doesn't function well or is perhaps still "unintentional." But I do hope that, even if people don't like certain pieces or the work overall, that they can see the intention in it. I'm uncomfortable with the thought of things coming across as unintentional or amateur, but this interpretation is also something that might depend on the viewer. And also, as I said earlier, a lot of Yumin's comments had to do with compositional theory, which I am often actively resisting. In general, this "clashing" is something I am really interested in. Yumin said that I can do things that are clashing or that disturb theoretic rules "as long as it is intentional," but what about when something is intentional but is interpreted as unintentional? There were many moments where the things Yumin were pointing out that were "unintentional" (and therefore amateur) were the very things that had the most intention and that, in my view, make them look more mature. At what point is something my responsibility vs. the responsibility of the viewer? It's all interesting, and definitely something to think about more going forward.

And lastly, something else Yumin talked about was that underneath the playful and potentially happy or joyful energies of the pieces, there is a "depression" or sadness present in every piece. I'm still not quite sure what this means, or if this is even good or bad or neutral, but I start to think of this in terms of the isolation of each form and what that does in creating a certain feeling—but I also don't think that is the only reason for that comment.

## Week 11

### Studio Visit with Michael Ware Reflection

On Friday, April 5, I had a studio visit with Michael Ware. After I explained the rules of the system to him, he said he interprets and

experiences the work differently when he knows the rules. He asked if I would consider my artist statement being simply a list of the rules. The artist statement that I will have for the BFA show is essentially an expanded explanation of the four rules, but Michael was referring to a much more concise, 1-4 listing of them.

He was wanting to see a much larger painting, which is something that I have been wanting to do. He said that the abstract paintings he enjoys the most are ones in which the viewer can be close to the painting and feel fully immersed in it.

He asked about the sides of the painting and had a really interesting take on them. He said that he finds the sides (and the stuff on them) distracting, but that he would find it much more distracting if they were clean white. In this way, he was arguing for more of an elimination of the sides. The size of the profile isn't exactly something I have considered super deeply, but perhaps thinner profiles would work in my favor.

We talked about viewership and audience for a while, as he was saying that he doesn't like when paintings (or any kind of medium/type of art) only reference themselves and their own history. He was saying this generally and not necessarily in direct connection to my work, although my work is quite connected to the niche histories of modern and contemporary painting. However, there are ways for the work to expand beyond this, and a lot of it comes down to how I talk about the work (and knowing who I am talking to).

### Studio Visit with Brennen Steines Reflection

On Sunday, April 7, I had a virtual studio visit with Brennen Steines. Brennen was a really helpful person to talk to because of his knowledge about different conceptions of abstraction and ways of thinking about it.

He said that he didn't initially think there was a set of parameters that I was working within because the paintings are so different from each other—another addition to the interesting ways in which people react to/see/don't see the/a system at the start. After I explained the system, he talked about Peter Halley, who he studied with at Yale, and how his work functions within parameters. He also suggested I reach out to Peter Halley and Molly Zuckerman-Hartung, as he thinks they might be interested in talking to me, so I will definitely keep this in mind.

He was observant of the ways in which the work treads the line between intellect and tactility—in other words, system/structure and the human hand. He was interested in the ways that I could potentially expand ideas of authorship in the work through moments of intervention or the lack of intervention into the surface, as well as in the choices of tools, why I use those tools, and what kinds of effects they have (materially, but also conceptually).

It has been valuable to gauge people's thoughts on the paintings that are more minimal or clarified as singular statements versus the ones that include more elements of the system or are busier. Brennen said that, almost paradoxically, he can see my system more clearly in the paintings with less stuff in them. These more busier works feel more like free-for-alls. I have been noticing that people have had similar takes on this distinction.

The biggest critique or suggestion that Brennen had was in his curiosity about how to make the work more unique or specific. He asked about my reasoning for using these extremely basic forms, which he understood, but he said that they are so "open" that they almost become stand-ins for nothing. I think he's right, and this is also why I have been using these forms as I inject them with a certain eccentricity that counteracts their extreme rigidity and geometry. Brennen felt that

some sense of the openness would benefit from closing: either the development of a formal language that includes forms that are outside of the most fundamental geometric shapes, or the development of a way of painting those fundamental geometric shapes in a way that feels specific and immediately recognizable as being mine. I think these are fantastic observations and intriguing ideas to think about, I am just not sure at this point how I feel about them. Like with a lot of things that I have been told recently, I have to give them time.

Another topic of discussion was about process, and specifically chance. This makes sense considering Brennen's way of working, and I think he had some interesting suggestions and ideas. He said that he can see some elements of chance in the work, but that he is curious about how this could be pushed or how it would function if it was done to much more of an extreme. Basically, he was suggesting I do things to the surface that interrupt the system that then force me to wrangle them back into the system *with* the system itself, thus demonstrating the power of the system. This is something that I have considered to a degree, but have not really done. What is really interesting to me is that it relates to the "ethics of the system" that I think about frequently. Do the rules of the system apply to the paintings throughout their making or only to their result? Up to this point, I have always painted the geometric forms, and chances that occur result from the changes made to those forms and shifts in figure-ground relationships. If I were to paint a form or do some sort of chance-based process to the painting, it is an act of breaking the rules. Whether or not I accept this as part of the process of the painting then becomes the question. It really could go either way, it's just what I want. Allowing rule-breaking in the process would make for some super interesting and surprising results, and it would in many ways reinforce the power of the system to override these changes. Like some sort of natural disaster in a natural ecosystem, the ecosystem (usually) recovers over time. If I introduce "disasters" into the work, it would add another element that would add

another layer to the ecological nature of it. And while the results of the paintings would usually adhere to the rules of the system, it would then give me the opportunity to have paintings that do not adhere to those rules because of a chanced process that has occurred to the ecology—which could, in turn, draw more attention to the system overall (which relates directly to the concepts I am considering in the show I am curating for Real Tinsel....).

We also talked about grad school and Yale. He had good things to say about his experience at Yale, saying that it was a less intellectually-driven experience than he was expecting and felt more like a two-year residency. He said that grad school is not for everyone and that their choice of grad school depends on what they want going forward, and he said that he thinks I would benefit from it and flourish in it, and that Yale would be a good fit. He said it would be better for me to not go to grad school than to go to a less-than-ideal one. Right now, I am seeing grad school as something that I think about in a couple years. I want a bit of time to stay in Milwaukee and make work, and then think about somewhere like Yale, which is certainly an option.

### **Final BFA show artist statement**

My paintings explore formal relationships through recurring geometric forms bound to a system of constraints. The reappearance of the same geometric forms across the body of work allows them to become familiar to the viewer, but their endless material manifestations and relationships mean constant reconsideration.

Fundamentally, the simplicity of the forms I utilize means minimal attention paid to their shape and maximal attention paid to their relationships. Their ability to slide along spectrums—circle to square, for example—makes them malleable despite their geometry. While the

ways they are painted may mean that their square-dom or circle-dom fall secondary to something else, that underlying geometry remains.

Forms exist in a flexible space that they may sink into, emerge from, or sit on top of. Single-colored grounds even the field that the forms occupy and flatten the picture plane. Space ends at the surface's edges, containing forms within those bounds and making each painting an isolated ecology within which forms materialize out of and disappear into. Formal qualities and material handling amplify or obfuscate the forms' legibility and complicate their presence within the compositional space.

Each form occupies an individualized locale, distinguished from the next and not overlapping any other. Their placement and relationships to each other (and the ground) create environments that allow viewers to consider the familiar and the unfamiliar, and ultimately how significance can fabricate out of something inconclusive. Depending on these conditions and the viewer's point of view, forms may allude to something external—yet, they retain their non-objectivity, existing tensely between the tangible and the intangible.

### **CV**

## KADEN VAN DE LOO

Milwaukee, WI

### EDUCATION

2024 *Bachelor of Fine Arts, Art (Painting and Drawing)*  
*Art History Minor*  
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

### EXHIBITIONS

2024 *BFA Exhibition, Kenilworth Square East Galleries, Milwaukee, WI*  
*51st Annual Juried Show, UWM Union Art Gallery, Milwaukee, WI*  
2023 *Yes, Yeh, Uh, Oh, Oy, Ai, Portrait Society Gallery, Milwaukee, WI*  
*High Fibers 2023, Jazz Gallery Center for the Arts, Milwaukee, WI*  
*Crossing Over, UWM Union Art Gallery, Milwaukee, WI*  
*Woven Images, Kenilworth Square East Galleries, Milwaukee, WI*  
*Climate of the Mountain, Aylward Gallery, Menasha, WI*  
*In Limbo, Evil Twins Gallery, Milwaukee, WI*  
*50th Annual Juried Show, UWM Union Art Gallery, Milwaukee, WI*  
*Fiber//Form 2023, Kenilworth Square East Galleries, Milwaukee, WI*  
2022 *Crossing Over, UWM Union Art Gallery, Milwaukee, WI*  
*The 602 Club, Appleton, WI (solo)*  
*TMA Contemporary 2022, Trout Museum of Art, Appleton, WI*  
*Sophomore/Junior Scholarship Show, Arts Center Gallery, Milwaukee, WI*  
2021 *Crossing Over, UWM Union Art Gallery, Milwaukee, WI*  
*First Year Experience, UWM Union Art Gallery, Milwaukee, WI*

### AWARDS

2023 *Director's Purchase Award, UWM Union Art Gallery*  
*Frederick R. Layton Scholarship, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*  
*Shannon Rorabeck Memorial Scholarship, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*  
2022 *Director's Purchase Award, UWM Union Art Gallery*  
*Art General Scholarship, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*

2020 *Frederick R. Layton Scholarship, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (2020, 2021)*  
*Peck School of the Arts Provost's Merit Award Scholarship, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (2020, 2021)*

### COLLECTIONS

UWM Union Art Gallery, Milwaukee, WI

### CURATORIAL

2024 *Sword Thumbs, Real Tinsel, Milwaukee, WI*

### EXPERIENCE

2023-pres. *Gallery Assistant, Real Tinsel, Milwaukee, WI*  
2023 *Teaching Assistant, Painting Strategies, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*

### TALKS

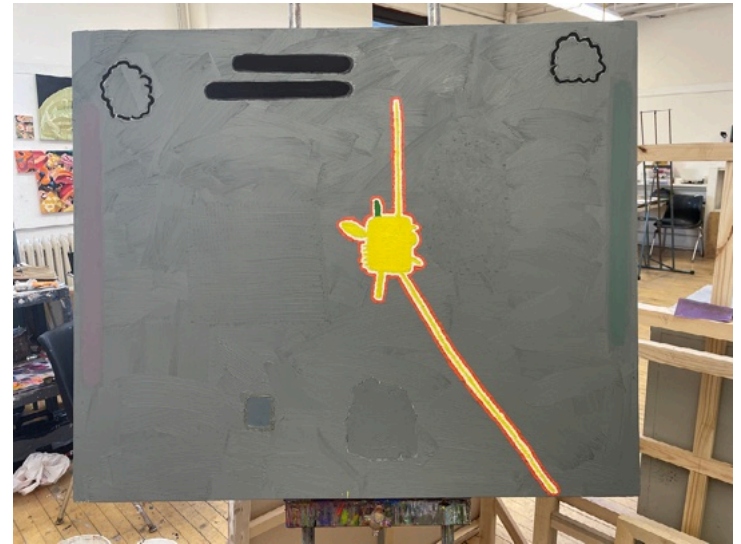
UWM Union Art Gallery, Milwaukee, WI, March 7, 2024  
Jazz Gallery Center for the Arts, Milwaukee, WI, December 14, 2023

### PRESS

Shane McAdams, "On Site" at MAM and 'In Limbo' with UWM Students," *Shepherd Express*, March 14, 2023  
<https://shepherdexpress.com/culture/visual-art/on-site-at-mam-and-in-limbo-with-uwm-students/>



Week 12



This week I found myself working through a potential new expansion of my work that I am excited about. On the heels of my studio visit with Brennen Steines, I was thinking about ways that the geometric forms could be altered, modified, juxtaposed, or added to in order to complicate that geometry. I wasn't feeling like this was necessary, as I use these geometric forms for a reason, but it was something that was in the back of my head. Somewhat randomly, the image of a rectangle with a small "appendage" popped into my head and intrigued me. Soon I was playing around with these "appendages" and all the variations of them, making many sketches and asking questions about their function and what would or would not be allowed. Within less than a week, I have developed what feels like a solid set of rules that these appendages would adhere to, and an idea of why this feels like an interesting next step for the work to take.

In a similar way to the questions I ask about the forms themselves (what is a "form?" When is a form no longer a "form?" etc.), there were many questions and issues that arose from quickly sketching out different options for the appendages. As of right now, I have created a list of seven rules that would govern the appendages' and their functions as I see them fitting into the larger system:

Limited shape: Appendages may exist on spectrums of square/rectangle to circle/ellipse, and rectangle to line.

Separation: Appendages may not overlap other forms or each other. "Base separation" is the clarity with which each appendage is separated from the next at the edge of the body shape.

Containment: Appendages may not continue beyond the edge of the surface.

Appendages can only protrude from the perimeter of the body shape—they cannot exist within the body shape's interior, either fully encapsulated or being partially within the interior and then extending beyond the edge of the exterior.

Appendages may protrude from the body shape at any angle, but must remain at that angle.

Appendages cannot protrude directly from a rectangle's corners nor be flush with a form's edge. The corners and edges must remain well-defined as to clearly demarcate the body shape.

It must remain clear as to what is the appendage and what is the body form.

One of the most interesting things about this has been the degree to which I allow for, encourage, or restrict potential formal differences between body form and appendage. For a bit I had "cohesion" as one of the rules, which meant that the appendages should feel "of the form" as to not be mistaken as being other distinct forms butting up against another. But for now I have rethought this. Already in the paintings, the forms almost never touch (although it has been allowed). I think it would make sense to expand my definition of "separation" (no overlap) to not allowing for the forms to touch, which would then mean that any time two things that may appear to be separate forms touch, it would actually be a form-appendage relationship. It's also something that demonstrates how viewers' awareness of the rules would alter their experience with something. For example, if there is a painting with a bunch of small red squares and then a large blue square with identical red squares attached to it, someone without knowledge of that rule would rightfully assume that the red squares attached to the blue square are the same as all the other forms, while someone with

knowledge of the rules would understand that those attached squares are "part of" the blue form. This particular example would also introduce the issue of a kind of assimilation, whereby smaller forms could be attracted to a larger form and become its appendages, like a stray asteroid becoming a planet's moon. This is something that I could purposefully interrogate/provoke or avoid altogether.

As another example of a "is this breaking the rule" moment concerns contours. Are contours married to the exact component that they outline (body shape or appendage) or can they outline the entire form, which could lead to merging when the contour(s) become too thick to fill in the gap between two appendages (which could then potentially be considered overlapping). In other words, does the separation of appendages apply also to contours or not? Should the outermost contour, when detached from the inner parts and looked at on its own, reflect the distinct placements and number of appendages attached to the form—or does this not matter? It's one of those questions that I could go either way on and it would be justifiable, just with different conceptions of where boundaries are and what constitutes overlap and separation. The corner/edge definition rule is another rule that I have gone back and forth on, and that's another instance of something that could go either way and be justifiable.

The addition of appendages is interesting to me for a variety of reasons based on the various effects they would have on forms, their presence, and their relationships:

The biological vs. the mechanical: Certain appendages and arrangements would give forms a certain organismic or plant-like appearance, as the appendages might appear like limbs, digits, stems, wings, antennae. In other instances, they might appear mechanical, like pipes or signal transmitters/receivers. This dichotomy relates to that of

human vs. system/structure, and the biological similarities furthers the idea of the ecology.

Identity: The addition of extraneous parts to an existing form alters their identity. Unique arrangements would suggest a unique "thing" beyond the formal qualities with which the shape has been manifested. The appearance of the same or similar appendages or arrangements of appendages might suggest a certain "type" of "thing," or lead to them functioning more as icons or signs without referents.

"Part of" vs. "attached to" and "component" vs. "abnormality": Like the asteroid-moon issue I mentioned earlier, the way that forms and their appendages are handled would alter the perception of the appendages' relationship to the body form. They may feel part of the form, like an arm to a torso, or they might feel attached to the form. They might feel like a "component" of the larger whole (something that serves a function) or they might feel like an abnormality or disturbance to that whole (like a tumor or a leech). These two dichotomies are related but interchangeable: I can imagine situations in which appendages feel "part of" the form and a component, "part of" and an abnormality, "attached to" and a component, "attached to" and an abnormality.

Function: Relating to these first three points, the appendages add another layer to the system that more directly—but still ambiguously—leads to the suggestion of forms' function beyond mere existence.

Eccentricity: Appendages allow for the forms to take on eccentric shapes while retaining their identities as basic geometric forms, to which I am still attached. I have worked solely with these geometric forms because of their lack of referentiality and because relationships were most key. I do not want to abandon these inclinations, but I think the addition of something that would complicate those forms would just

add another layer of interest in the work. I understand that the eccentricity of the shapes that results from this will detract from the focus on the shapes themselves, but this is just another spectrum to play with. Many forms will continue to be simple squares and circles. Other forms may have hundreds of appendages.

Right now, it's still so early that I have no idea where this will go. I might try it for a while and then decide it's not working and go back on it. But I think it's an interesting and promising idea, so I want to move forward with it. It feels good to have something like this to push the work forward right out of school, too.

## Week 13

### Studio Visit with Tanner MacArthur Reflection

On Friday, April 19, I had a studio visit with Tanner MacArthur. It was interesting to get his read on the work since he has been familiar with it for a while but had never read a statement or heard me talk about it. He was drawn to the different ways that material was being used and was particularly interested in how the space functions (being able to float things, sometimes things are grounded, sometimes they're not...). I brought up the idea of the petri dish that Chris Regner had told me, and Tanner said that that made him think of the individual forms as parts to a whole, like parts of a cell. This is a slightly different way of thinking about the collective function of the forms—are they in conflict? Are they working together? I don't think there is a right or wrong or correct one way or the other with this, but it reinforces the importance of the ground color as something that binds the forms together. Ultimately, whether the forms are "agreeing" or "disagreeing" with each other, they exist in this space together.

While Tanner had many other great comments, he kept bringing up Joan Miro, both because of the similarities between my work and his in certain ways, but also because of Miro's thoughts on painting being like gardening, where there are seeds that are planted that are then nurtured and develop or die over time. For me, this relates not only to the questions that I ask myself about the work itself and how the body of work evolves, but also within the individual paintings and how things react to what has already happened within that space.

### Studio Visit with Guzzo Pinc Reflection

On Sunday, April 21, I had a studio visit with Guzzo Pinc. A question he asked early on that I thought was interesting was whether the rules of my system were more for me or for communicating a specific thing to the viewer (it's both). He was asking how I got into painting, which is a question that quite a few people have asked me this semester, and of course I have to talk about my upbringing within a musical family and how this has influenced my painting sensibilities. It has been fascinating how people react differently to this relationship to music. While everyone can sense it to a certain degree, I have had people tell me my work feels like jazz, that it definitely does not feel like jazz, that it feels free and improvisational, that it feels very much like classical music. Guzzo said it felt like jazz and that he could liken the forms to different sounds. He said he was interpreting the ground color like the tonic of the musical scale or like a drone, to which other elements are in constant relationship to, whether that be a harmonious or dissonant relationship. In this way each painting felt to him like a vamp.

Overall, he had some great comments on how he was experiencing the work, what he preferred, and what he was less drawn to. He talked about how he could sense a certain "ripeness" in paintings where it was clear that I made the painting in an appropriate state of mind to make

the painting how it needed to be made. But he also said that it is good to not only paint when you are "ripe," and that working through a painting or the work overall and struggling through it can be equally interesting and valid. After Tanner bringing up Miro's thoughts on painting being like gardening, I couldn't help but relate Guzzo's comments about "ripeness" to this and the overall ecology of the paintings. It also touches on this issue of satisfaction that comes up frequently—when is "unripe" better than "ripe?"

## Week 14

### Studio Visit with Peter Barrickman Reflection

On Sunday, April 28, I had a studio visit with Peter Barrickman. The most important feedback that he had and what he was most curious about was about the difference between paintings that have more moves/stuff vs. those that feel more like single statements (which is something that has come up with a number of my visits). He was especially drawn to the large orange painting because of the different things to look at, and he said that it got more interesting and engaging as time went on (which I love to hear). But he was also looking at that painting and pointing to elements that might be isolated and/or enlarged and made into their own paintings to more boldly demonstrate my play with the system and certain moves. While I have been doing this to a certain extent, I definitely think there is room to take advantage of this in a more exaggerated, almost confrontational way—which then relates to the viewer experience in the gallery, how the works make sense together, and making an experience that is inviting and engaging while also being challenging and potentially off-putting, uncomfortable, or confusing.

He was interested in the attractive/repulsive dichotomy, and was curious about a painting that only utilized "difficult" forms. He said those

forms become charming in the context of things that are not as difficult (which is its own interesting effect), but again, thinking about pulling individual elements/forms/moves out and isolating them as their own paintings, he was curious about a painting that truly confronted the viewer with just these uncomfortable/weird/gross forms. It's interesting how then those paintings might become "charming" in the space of the gallery with other paintings that are not exclusively of these types of forms. It continues to open up questions about how my shows would function. In a similar way to how a viewer familiarizing themselves with my work (and knowing the rules of the system) enhances their understanding of and experience with the work, the same effect could happen over the course of a career. Even if the work changes, if it is in a similar vein of thinking, artists can use their shows like "works" that then build on each other. While this can decrease intellectual accessibility for first-comers, it also expands intellectual thinking for those who are familiar with the older work (or go through the process of learning about it).

He commented on the aspect ratios, as I showed him only square(ish) paintings. He said he felt the square functions particularly well with the paintings that feel more like an isolated thing/move/statement, but was curious about how different aspect ratios or even differently shaped canvases could energize the busier compositions in different ways. Aspect ratio is definitely something to consider more going forward—I still haven't quite figured out how to effectively utilize more narrow aspect ratios, as I do really enjoy the effect of the square on the compositional space.

Another interesting comment had said had to do with the grounds. He was pointing to different color/surface moments and wondering if they could be expanded into being the ground. While the single color still feels really important, this is the kind of comment that is really intriguing to ponder, and the treatment of the ground could be something in the

future that I expand. My reasons for the single color are mostly consistency and flatness—both of which could remain even with different treatments. Adding more colors could open up more of an atmosphere, which I may or may not like/want, and different ways of creating mark might push the surface into pattern/ornamentation, again which I may or may not like/want.

He encouraged me to think more about what the system is really doing (not just the aesthetic/visual results) and to think about how I can go a level deeper in terms of clarifying the way the system is functioning to myself and to others. I'm not sure I fully understood the details of what he was saying about this, but I got the gist, and I agree that my relationship to the system (input) and the ways in which it functions (output) are always going to be important to continue to think deeply about.

## Week 15

### Post-Studio Visits Reflection

All of these studio visits were super valuable for a variety of reasons. Firstly, they helped my ability to talk about my work immensely, and I feel much more confident and comfortable in doing so. Hearing all of this feedback has forced me to parse through the information, to decide what is useful to me, what is not useful, and what might be useful. Regardless, to get a variety of viewer insight was really interesting in starting to see which observations are common, along with the individual and unique experiences and interpretations people have.

As I have mentioned before, one of the most fascinating parts of having done so many studio visits was seeing how people responded to the system. Some saw "system" right away, others did not. Some squirmed

at the idea of "rules." I definitely noticed how much knowing the rules benefits viewers' experience of the work, which was something that I wasn't quite sure how I wanted to deal with at the beginning of the semester. Having the rules worked into the artist statement has been a good choice.

Here are some of the comments that have stuck with me most:

Petri dish: while this analogy of how the ground functioning equates the space to something real, it's interesting in connection to the ecology of the space. Additionally, while obviously existing in real space, the "pool" in a petri dish is extremely flat, making it as good of a real-life analogy as possible.

Victoria Roth's comments on "keys": I have thought a lot about this since we talked. Thinking about certain arrangements of forms as keys opens up not only compositional opportunities but ways to guide the viewer experience.

Repulsion and attraction: I want to push this even further than I have.

Situations that disrupt the system: this is something I have been pondering. It's not something I want to do right now, but it's an interesting thought going forward.

Scale and aspect ratio: I definitely want to scale some of these paintings up. I will continue to consider how shifts in scale can benefit the work in the gallery. Aspect ratio is another aspect that I think will be good for me to play around with more.

Single-statement paintings vs. those with more moves: this was a major talking point in these discussions. I think there is value in both of these



and that they can be pushed even further when constructing a show for a gallery.

Different ways of applying the ground: I got some ideas about ways to expand my applications of the ground. One I find particularly intriguing is using strips of Galkyd skins collaged on the canvas—something I have started doing a bit with forms. Peter Barrickman's comments about potentially expanding the grounds past the single color is something else I am not ready to do yet, and may never want to do, but that I will keep in the back of my mind.

Pulling out certain moves even more than I am now: Peter Barrickman's studio visit has had me mulling over different paintings that would function particularly well within the context of other paintings in a solo show. It has been fun to go through paintings and think about the different forms and moves in those as extracted and made into independent paintings, and how those types of decisions would energize the overall experience within the gallery.

Complicating the geometric shapes: Brennen Steines' conversation essentially led into my current investigations of these "appendages," which will take a while to test out. I am really excited about the opportunities that those will allow for.

Paint questions: This is really all I am trying to do. Yes, I want to feel confident in what I am doing, but I never want to fully know everything. Art should always be about chasing that next question, and I hope this never ends.

I am feeling really to produce more paintings. With all of this feedback sitting in the back of my mind, I can assume that I am going to produce some pretty interesting work in the next months.

## Week 16

### Artist Statement

My paintings explore formal relationships through recurring geometric forms bound to a system of constraints. The reappearance of the same geometric forms across the body of work allows them to become familiar to the viewer, but their endless material manifestations and relationships mean constant reconsideration.

### Final Reflection Statement

This semester, I focused largely on viewership. In my many studio visits, I was able to get a sense of how my work is functioning (for different viewers), what types of things jump out at a lot of people, what sorts of comments I get most often, and just more individual people's opinions from people that are used to looking at art. Additionally, the BFA show allowed me to test different combinations and arrangements of my work as an introduction into self-curation. Because my work is so reliant on context (others of my paintings), it is really designed for solo shows. While the BFA show was not the ideal environment for truly showcasing the work, it still gave me the opportunity to think more deeply about how paintings function together, both in a literal visual sense but also in terms of keying the viewer in on a larger dialogue.

Going forward, there are two general components to my work that are exciting for me. One pertains to the work itself. This system that I am working within has proven itself to be incredibly self-generating and always leading to new questions to turn into paintings or moves. Of course, I can't say where the work will go, but I know that as long as I am always asking more questions and thinking deeply about what I am doing, I have no need to worry about it. Right now, the new

development of giving the forms “appendages” is intriguing, and that will take some time to play around with. I know that just by making more paintings that they are only going to get better. The other aspect of my work has to do with the gallery space itself. Going forward, I am excited to have more elaborate shows and have more range to curate and arrange my paintings to create interesting, intriguing, engaging, and challenging shows.

### **Final Portfolio**









