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Throwing Confetti into Black Holes

by

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MASTER OF FINE ARTS

THROWING CONFETTI INTO BLACK HOLES

by

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Introduction: Artist Statement and Recent History of my Practice

The mysterious relationship between consciousness and the physical world, and the cognitive processes we employ in order to comprehend experience, are the subjects I explore in my recent work. In a creative process like painting, the artist becomes a conduit for a causal flow which is constantly reversing direction; thoughts give rise to visual forms, which give rise to thoughts, and so on. Within a painting, meaning is arrived at through a complicated combination of image, symbol, text, color, shape, material, texture, relationships between parts, and effects of process and time. Because of the ambiguity and multiplicity in the way information may be communicated through visual language, painting is an ideal medium through which to investigate the slippery substances that make up conscious thought, and I explore it using a combination of elements from a wide range of areas and subjects. I look at the systems within language, mathematics, digital simulations, games, diagrams, and data graphics, for similarities between them, and for ways of viewing the creative process itself, that may reveal some of the obscure mental operations used in cognition. It is the flawed nature of these systems that we use to organize and classify the world around us, and the paradoxes that arise when they are stretched to their limits which interest me most.

In my work I create visual models that embody the impossibility to fully understand reality using only our limited perceptual equipment and the systems for communicating and ordering information. Guided equally by intuition and intention, I arrange representational

imagery and abstract gestural elements to form visual jokes, puns, and paradoxes, encouraging viewers to consider the often absurd and mysterious ways we make sense of experience.

The shape and focus of my current practice have evolved dramatically during my time at UGA. Upon entering the program I was making mostly representational paintings and the interests, methods, and processes that informed my practice were inconsistent and lacked focus. Experimentation dominated my studio work during the first two years and this time spent was incredibly valuable to my practice, eventually helping me to focus my ideas and develop more consistency in my methods. While some of the paintings I made in my first two years in the program don't relate much to the topics I've outlined here, a number of subjects and themes emerged as fixed constants in my work.

The summer following my first year at UGA, while reading the *Blaue Reiter Almanac* as part of Janice Simon's *Spirituality in Modern Art* course, some of the ideas Kandinsky argues in *On the Question of Form* helping trigger a realization of abstraction's potential to better convey ideas in my work. In the essay, Kandinsky writes about the way a viewer encounters a letter on a page, simultaneously as form and symbol, each effect having no connection with the other.(6) This description also played a part in shifting the ways I was thinking about how information could be encoded within form. Around this time I began to make images that contained mixtures of both abstract and representational imagery and even works without any recognizable imagery at all.

Another experience that changed the course of my studio practice was an electronic music composition course I took in my second year. The class was based around the use of 70's

era modular synthesizers, and the logic of the signal processing required in their operation motivated an interest in systems used in communication.

Concepts within texts that I was reading at the time proved influential, and help focus my artistic interests around the systems and structures of communication: Marshall McLuhan's theories on how media effect the messages they carry summed up in the famous phrase "The medium is the message", the relativism and non-linearity of the post-structuralist views of language and meaning, with their unfixed and unending chains of associations, Rachael Hayles' brilliant arguments exposing the conception of a simulation as a misinterpretation of a relationship between different systems that might better be described in terms of patterns which spread from one entity to another, and Richard Dawkins' and Susan Blackmore's theories on memes.

Part One: Analogy

In *Surfaces and Essences: Analogy as the Fuel and Fire of Thinking* coauthored by Emmanuel Sanders, Douglas Hofstadter asserts that the ability to reason using analogies is at the core of human cognition. These functions of human thought, which are anything but logical, are what give such superior power to human cognition and set us apart from other species, allowing us to recognize the similarities in one situation or relationship and translate that into knowledge of another. In a shorter essay in which he discusses his research in analogical thinking, Hofstadter alleges that "analogical thought involves the perception of important but often hidden commonalities between two mental structures, one already existing in our brain, representing some aspect of our past experience stored in an organized fashion, and the other one freshly

constructed, representing a new circumstance in our lives. In essence, an apt analogy allows a person to treat something new as if it were familiar. If one is willing to let go of surface attributes and to focus on shared properties, one can take advantage of past knowledge to deal with things never seen before.” (4)

Analogy has always been intrinsically tied to the creation and viewing of art. It is hard to imagine what art making would look like without the use of analogy, let alone how we would be able put thoughts together at all. Unlike logical thinking, analogical thinking is non-linear, our brains are constantly working to spin out threads which allow us to relate and contextualize all that we know by relating and contextualize the abstract properties of one concept to another in a giant web of relational attributes. I’ve always had a particular propensity for thinking in analogical terms, a trait that has been both an advantage also an impediment at times. As evidence of the extremely pivotal role analogy plays in my work, in setting out to organize the idea that had been influential to my practice into chapters contained by broader themes in this report; I could always think of alternate ways to structure the sections that were different but also seemed equally logical. All of these themes-paradox and recursion, systems, mystery and magic-intersect in an enormous multitude of ways and the intersections are what is the most interesting about each of them for me.

My interest in finding similar attributes in disparate sources, and discovering the ways a character or quality manifests in different forms has caused me at times to spread myself too thin. I became more conscious of this predisposition during my time in the program and over the past two years I’ve consciously steered my practice into a more limited territory that still allows

for cross-pollination to satisfy my analogical tendencies without the overwhelming profusion of source material and stylistic depiction that was present in my earlier work.

Analogy is closely linked to the focus on systems in my recent work. This focus is based in a way of viewing the world that is very post-structuralist in nature, characterized by a dynamic multiplicity and complexity in connection between components. In this way of looking at the world, an infinite combination of interlocking systems interact with one another in a multitude of ways that is constantly changing and open to new interpretations of connection between elements; anything can be connected to anything else given a particular set of controls and a few

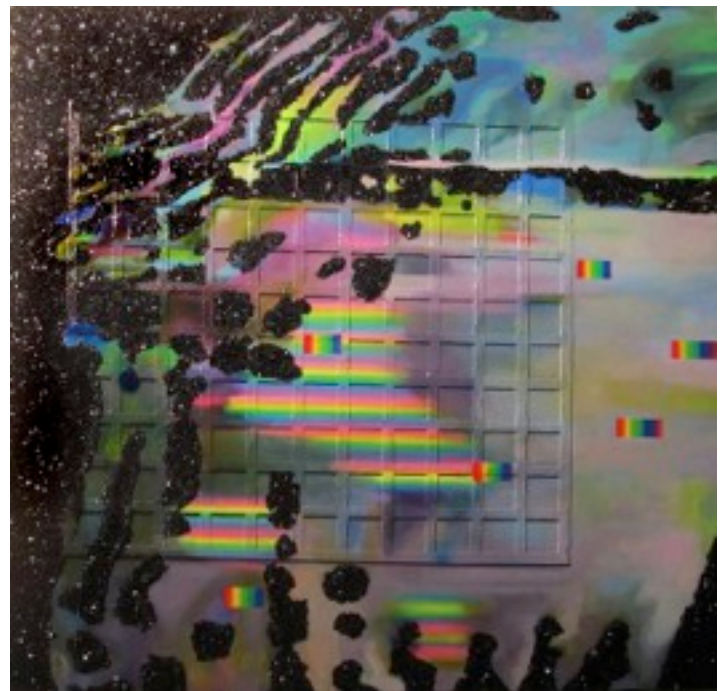


degrees of separation, and nothing is certain or stable.

This way of viewing the world; a game played by isolating attributes from one element and applying them to another, is one I can

trace back to my studio work as an undergraduate. As a junior at Rhode Island School of Design, I made a painting in which a wand-wielding circus clown, seemingly as a part of a theatrical performance, directs a tiger riding on the back of a horse disguised as a zebra. In the painting, the tigers rears up on the horse's back, the stripes are depicted flying off its skin into the space

around, separating from the form of its body. The horse's form, draped in the skin of another animal, is disguised by the pattern of another. The painting, while also a comment on spectacle and melodrama, is primarily an exploration of the way that multiple sets of information may be encoded within a single form. The striped pattern that overlays a tigers skin is envisioned as being like a text written over the topographical maps made of the fur, skin, and muscle that lie underneath the striped pattern on it's surface. This concept of simultaneous, differing sets of information contained in a single system or form is one that is often present in my current work. *Rave Cave* and *Undulating Tabulation*, are both attempts to create works containing multiple



layers of information that can be viewed separately but all add up to the conception of a single entity or phenomenon. In *Rave Cave*, I created the painting in layers each containing a distinct type of mark or gesture. The overlap of these marks resulted in an image that can be viewed as a whole, but can also be viewed as layers containing messages that are distinct from one another.

Undulating Tablulation, and *Rave Cave*, although outwardly dissimilar, both are experiments in layering information in this way. *Undulating Tablulation* combined a grid inflicted on the panel's surface as a raised relief with organic mottled forms shaped in black glitter, and multiple articulations of a chromatic spectrum. This work was an experiment in how aesthetically different the layers within the work, how distinctly they could operate from one another, but could also function together as parts of a whole. Each of these works, while not altogether successful on their own, were productive in helping me develop better models with which to carry this idea.

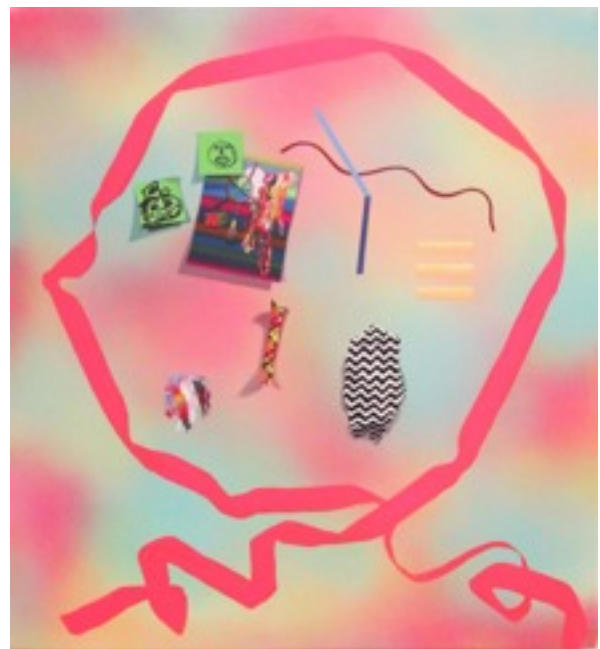
Part Two: Paradox and Recursion

"I am interested in the violated perception that forces the mind into a state of wonder." (10 p.82)

Paradox, statements or situations which seem to contradict or oppose common sense but may possibly be true, often expose the limits and inabilities of a system to express or represent reality in certain situations. Often this breakdown of accepted logic involves some kind of self-referential action. A simple linguistic example is "This statement is false", which shows the logical limits of language in expressing a situation when the subject of the statement is the statement itself. In mathematical logic, similar paradoxes occur when recursive systems are applied to themselves. These paradoxes show the inherent limitations in the systems, essentially proving that for any such system there will always be statements that are true but that are unprovable using the system. Paradoxes have become an important theme in my work,

particularly because of their ability to challenge the legitimacy of the accepted methods we use to order and understand experience.

Since the beginning of modernism, self-consciousness and self-referencing in the art world have been common themes. In contemporary art the continual referencing, copying, modifying, and repositioning images and ideas from art history have become not only accepted but expected moves in the art game. Many would even argue that the only real subject of art now is art itself. In a way, paradoxes are good metaphors for art itself; whenever there is an attempt to treat art like a formal system like language or math, defining it, attaching to it a set of



principles and rules, it finds a way to paradoxically elude it's definitions and break free from the rules it's been assigned.

In my work paradox and recursion manifest visibly in a variety of ways. In works like *Heavenly Bodies*, *Safety Circle*, and *Flowchart of Leftover Objects*, mixed visual metaphors are illustrated through the grouping of objects or other elements using obscure rules or seemingly



arbitrary or incongruous connections. Similarly, the use of elements that function as components of two separate sets or systems- imagery that can be read as either symbol or image-as in (*Bananas*), is another favored approach. In (*Bananas*), the bananas depicted function both as the parentheses as well as what is contained by them. *Flowchart #1*, or *How to Stay Positive when*



Everything is Falling Apart, have parts that operate similarly. I intend for the icon-like imagery seemingly floating on the surface of the works to be viewed as objects while also alluding to specific symbols as are commonly used in diagramming systems like flow charts or block diagrams. In *Protect all Openings* the inverted stained glass rainbow is a small but intentional move meant to confuse the imagery's original meaning: A rainbow, universally regarded as a



symbol of luck and happiness also resembles a frown. Does inverting it so that it resemble a



smile make it more happy and lucky or does it negate it's original meaning?

Discrepancies in sources of light or shadow, alluding to impossible or ambiguous contexts and unclear figure ground relationship, are also strategies I commonly employ. In *If You Build it They Will Come*, and *Welcome to the Jungle* these inconsistencies serve to create

ambiguous contexts and allude to vague boundaries between fact and fiction, suggesting contrived and artificial spaces like stage sets or models.

Zero Gravity Donut is an example of the kind of recursive *Mise en Abyme* structures I often build into my paintings, where an image contains a smaller version of itself, often repeating and getting progressively smaller into infinity. Other variations of picture-within-a-picture and painting-of-a-painting themes can be seen in *Safety Circle*, which contains painted depictions of other paintings or drawings, and *Welcome to the Jungle*, in which I've painted in the source photographs used in creating the background image as trompe l'oeil effects. My intent in these works was both to illustrate the way that ideas can be contained within other ideas, and the way

that the process and the production of an artwork often becomes the subject of the work itself.

Paradox also emerges through the coexistence of abstract gesture and representational imagery contained in my work. This fragmented mixture of varying and overlapping style, gesture, imagery, and processes, echo the complexity, fluidity, and abstraction of cognitive processes in which thoughts may appear in strange combinations of fully formed ideas, vague impressions, fleeting associations, and concrete mental objects.

Part Three: Humor and the Absurdity of Art-making

I've always been drawn to art forms that use ambiguous, absurd and often comical or slightly obscene scenarios or narratives. Humor has always been a part of my general



approach toward life but prior to grad school humor wasn't a consistent part of my practice,



although humorous elements occasionally turned up in my work. Over the past three years humor and absurdity have become consistent ingredients in my work, their influence appearing as recognizable visual puns and analogies, as well as within less obvious relationships inspired by the linguistic structures of jokes. In addition to a personal belief that the world overall is better viewed through a humorous lens, I became attracted to using jokes as artistic subject matter because of the way many jokes operate on paradox and analogy and are useful in understanding the workings and the limits of language.

Jokes are a special form of language because they often highlight ambiguities in language structure or function of which we are normally unaware, or propose an unlikely analogy between disparate elements of language or context. Jokes like puns often hinge on syntactical glitches

and exploit multiple possibilities in meaning and translation, often operating on reflexive mechanisms that reveal the imperfect and flexible nature of language. Obscenity and taboo, common underlying mechanisms in humor, are deeply rooted in our inability to reconcile the duality of our corporeal and cognitive existence.

In my paintings humor surfaces in the form of ridiculous titles, and in combinations of representational imagery and abstract gestural elements arranged to form absurd visual riddles, puns, and paradoxes.

In works like *Rainbowmaker*, *Jelly Bean Accelerator*, or *Keep Your Nuclear Weiners Out of My Backyard*, ridiculous scenarios describe difficult concepts that are beyond my comprehension. In *Rainbowmaker*, the formal elements are arranged around the idea that a rainbow, as a subjective and experiential phenomenon, depends on the mind of an observer in order to exist. The work illustrates an indescribable mental process, using the analogy of a machine to imagine the human brain as a rainbow-making factory. Likewise, *Keep Your Nuclear Wieners Out of My Backyard*, is based around the baffling possibility of the existence of alternate dimensions of space-time favored by string theorists. The work proposes an elegant solution to the earthly problem of waste disposal: an inter-dimensional trash chute!

In my most recent works, residual by-products of the painting process-used tape, source photographs, process-related notes written to myself -appear within the finished works. These are small jokes about the nature of artistic creation itself, castaway clues, the evidence of a passing party boat left as rubbish swirling in the wake.

These leftover traces in *Welcome to the Jungle* also reference the confusion, disorientation, and other abnormal mental functions that can be brought on by art making. In

effect the tape is saying “What was this painting about again? While I was busy painting I must have gotten lost... but here are some pieces that I dropped along the way, maybe I can use them to find my way back!” The jungle imagery references the idiom “Can’t see the forest through the trees”, which seems to me a perfect metaphor for painting, an activity in which it’s possible to become so absorbed as to lose all perspective of a larger whole.

Amid the schizophrenic succession of conflicting mental processes and bouts of self-criticism, doubt, and cynicism plaguing my studio practice, these small jokes are also a kind of coping mechanism, protecting against the danger of taking oneself and one’s work too seriously.

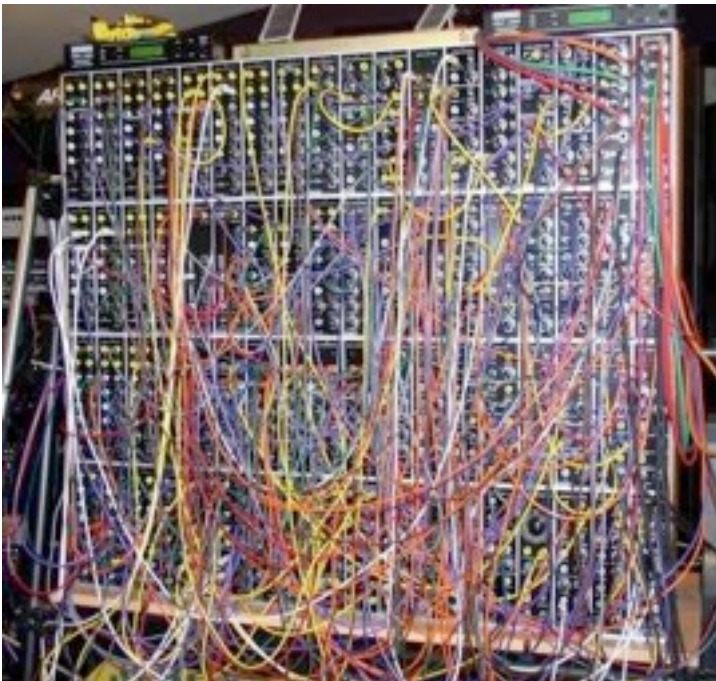
Part Four: Systems and the Sublime Ritual of Creating

In his essay *The Awesome, or the Metamodern Sublime*, Karl Karthaus reports on the new breed of sublimity within contemporary art. Characterizing the sublime as that which cannot be framed, “a signpost pointing to an abyss”, he describes how new models offered by post-structuralism and the infinite non-linear labyrinth of cyberspace replaced a world view that assumed the existence of absolute truth and unity with a postmodern view in which “there is no “correct,” “logical,” or “most meaningful” way to proceed, no authorial will to uncover, and no “master” text to refer to for guidance”. In the essay Karthaus quotes Raoul Eshelman’s description of this new world view:

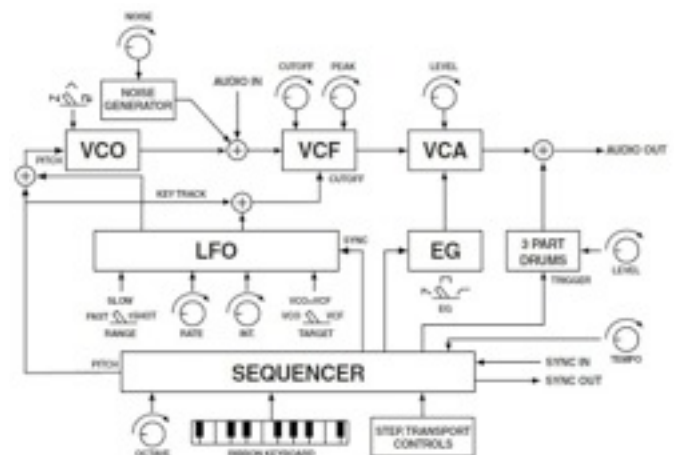
“For the subject, postmodernism presents a mighty, seemingly inescapable trap. Any attempt it makes to find itself through a search for meaning is bound to go awry, for every sign promising some sort of originary knowledge is embedded in further contexts whose explication requires the setting of even more signs. Attempting to find itself through meaning, the subject drowns in a flood of ever expanding cross-

references. Yet even if the subject clings to form it fares no better. For postmodernism sees in form not an antidote to meaning, but rather a trace leading back to already existing, semantically loaded contexts. Every fixation of meaning is dispersed through cross-connected forms; every use of form links up with already existing meanings; every approach to an origin leads back to an alien sign. Searching for itself, the subject quickly ends where it began: in the endlessly expanding field of the postmodern (7).

The new sublime, Karthausser argues, is marked by duality; a response to both the idealistic romanticism of the modern era and the irony, pluralism, and deconstruction of the postmodern. It's an acceptance of the impossibility in realizing absolute philosophical truth, and a renewed dedication to keep trying anyway. It's a combination of macro and micro narrative; an appreciation of the uniqueness of experience and finding truth on a smaller day-to-day level, even if truth on the grand scale seems to be an impossibility. The title of this report, "Throwing Confetti into Black Holes", is a tribute to an attitude toward art making that is very aligned with the ethos Karthausser's essay describes.



In an interview, Charlene Von Heyl describes desire as “the driving force



behind being an artist, simple and brutal desire...I want to make something that I want, again and again...it is about desire, not satisfaction” (10. p.85). I identify with this statement completely.

The drive to create and the desire for knowledge, traits that are intricately wound up in what it means to be human, are never more evident than in art and art making. It is from this perspective that I approach the idea of systems. To me they have come to represent these basic human drives,



the absurdity and futility in much of our activities, and the fundamental uniqueness of individual experience.

The term system can be applied to an incredibly wide range of phenomena.

The definitions of system that relate to my research and interest are: a regularly interacting or interdependent group of items working together in a unified way, an organized set of doctrines, ideas, or principles usually intended to explain the arrangement or working of a systematic

whole, an organized or established procedure, or a manner of classifying, symbolizing, or schematizing. The type of systems I am primarily interested in are the man-made systems designed for the purpose of communicating about and understanding the natural systems of the world around us.

My interest in communication systems began to develop when I was introduced to signal processing in Dr. Leonard Ball's course on electronic music composition. The modular synthesizers we used in class are comprised of separate specialized modules which are not hardwired together but are connected together manually, using patch cords or a matrix patching system of switches. Patches are used in directing the pathway the signal takes through the machine, and are documented using block diagrams or other notational systems. Like the meaning of words or images which change drastically within different contexts, electronic frequencies can perform any number of different functions when applied within different modules: Depending on the module in which the electronic signal is applied, the current can act as a source frequency, or as a control signal used to alter the qualities of the source frequency. Learning the basics of signal processing offered a new ways of viewing the way messages travel through the media that carry them, and spurred an interest in communication systems and simulations. Schematic structures inspired by the block diagrams I used to document the routing of the patches I made started to make their way into my work as common compositional architectures. In *Flowchart #1* and *How to Stay Positive when Everything is Falling Apart*, compositional modules and diagrams made up of cryptic signs and symbols patch signals through fantastical modular machines.

Rachael Hayles' essay *Simulated Nature and Natural Simulations: Rethinking the Relation between the Beholder and the World* was a particularly influential text, and the ideas it contains infiltrated my practice in a number of ways. Among the ideas that Hayles argues very convincingly are that it's nearly impossible to define any difference between natural and unnatural, that the physical properties and position of an observer will determine their perceived

experience, and even that one's "physical equipment constitutes our original virtual reality gear...all perception is simulation".(3. p 412) She argues that since a simulation requires the definition of an original behavior or system to imitate, the idea of a simulation is inherently flawed. Also compelling are some of the problems she points out with studying systems-the problematic relationship of the observer to a system being studied. Hayles writes that "An observer's internal organization determines what he sees. Every glance outward turns a window inward. When the outward thrust of representational thinking is redirected back onto the system, reflexivity is the result." (3. p.416)

Another problem related to the lack of clear boundary between observer and system is in how it becomes necessary when studying a system for the observer to decide where to draw the boundary between a system and its surrounding environment. Because even closed systems exchange energy or physical material with their environments there are no true boundaries between systems, creating a limited view of the system being studied. In essence, Hayles is saying that a simulation, rather than being an imitation of a real world process or system as it's generally defined, is more accurately understood as the same pattern exhibited within different media, any perception of the 'naturalness' or "realness" of the media is determined only by the observing systems organization.

The outlook expressed in this text, although written more from a scientific standpoint, is entirely post-structuralist in nature. Deleuze and Guattari's description of the orchid and orchid wasp describes a very similar conception of the reciprocal patterns that emerge and are exchanged between relating systems:

“Wasp and orchid, as heterogeneous elements, form a rhizome. It could be said that the orchid imitates the wasp, reproducing it’s image in a signifying fashion (mimesis, mimicry, lure, etc.). But this is only true on the level of the strata-a parallelism between two strata such that a plant organization on one imitates an animal organization on the other. At the same time, something else entirely is going on: not imitation at all but a capture of code, an increase in valence, a veritable becoming, a becoming-wasp of the orchid, and a becoming-orchid of the wasp”. (2. p.10)

Like Hayles, Deleuze and Guatarri’s philosophy describes a world in which causal relationships between elements, rather than being single directional and linear, are numerous and multi-directional. The wasp-like image the orchid has evolved to display in order to attract the insects which assist it’s pollination can be viewed as a simulation. This is not a clear-cut instance of cause and effect, but one where information is exchanged back and forth between the two

species as they evolve together as one system. At a time when digital environments and tools append and replace many of the physical tools and materials previously thought of as indispensable to artists, this outlook offers an interesting lens through which to view artists relationship with their media and how different media relate to one another. Examining the changing modes of thought and



physical process which naturally correspond to different media, and the ways that new media, especially digital technology, are changing the ways that paintings function and how they are viewed, is an endlessly fascinating pursuit.

In addition to being an absurd illustration of a cognitive process, *Rainbowmaker*, is also an investigation of the kind of vestigial traces remaining in certain mediums which have recently supplanted or appended another. Painted from a digital sketch, the effects which resemble chiseled hollows derive from Photoshop's embossing filter. Embossing a surface increases the physicality of the inscribed text or image, pressing the two-dimensional text into three dimensions. Simulated embossing, as in type font or a Photoshop filter designed to simulate the three dimensional effect, contains information describing this process while reversing it, returning it to a two dimensional existence. In physically recreating the virtual effect, the embossing resurfaces again as a material yet (almost) two dimensional form.

In *How to Stay Positive when Everything is Falling Apart*, repetition of specific colors describing objects or gestures in different areas of the work represent the emergence of the same pattern rippling through different media. Likewise, the repetition of the motif in the ribbon-like details and within the triangular shapes correspond to the same idea.

Part Five: Mystery, Magic, and Meaning

Throughout history artist have often been likened to agents of the supernatural- shamans, witches, magi, alchemists, even god. It's an apt comparison-the altered states of consciousness attained during creation, visionary feats of clairvoyance, the embracing of weirdness, the ability

to imbue image and object with mystical powers- and is one that I've long identified with.

Magic and mysticism have long been staple themes in my work, and my relationship with these themes is complex. In one way they represent the balance of intuition and intention that guide my process, and a sincere reverence for the strange causal relationship between thought and form that are activated while creating. In another way, I use these themes jokingly as a critique of the superstition and magical thinking found in religious and spiritual ideologies among other places, and of my own trust in an irrational belief system: art. They express a desire for life to have meaning, purpose, and order, an acceptance that it doesn't, at least in any absolute sense, and a resolve to create meaning, purpose, and order myself if I must. In *Protect all Openings*, *Safety Circle*, *Flowchart of Leftover Objects*, and *Happy, Lucky, Good*, a sort of magical thinking is embedded in the arrangements of objects to imply a special significance and connection between them, but lacking any obvious logic which has drawn them together.

These paintings are born out of a "journey is the destination" attitude toward art making. They yearn to be appreciated not just for what they are, but for what they've been through and where they are headed. The stories they want to tell are of the insight and discovery attained only through the taking of risks and allowing oneself to get completely lost in the process of making. The magic is in the mystery, exploration, and adventure; the not knowing. For me painting is, among many other things, a means to an end; through which I can sustain an intense engagement excitement, and curiosity about the world around me.

In *Safety Circle* and *Flowchart of Leftover Objects*, the collection of objects pictured are things that were in my studio when I made the work; relics and remnants of the creative process itself. *Safety Circle* is a reference to the magic circles used in pagan ritual or witchcraft whereby

in casting a circle, a practitioner creates a magical protective boundary. *Safety Circle* is a celebration of the ritual of creation; a safe place in which half-baked ideas and everyday doodles can stay secure and protected.

Conclusion

While I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to any of the vaguely discernible movements within the vast and varied field of contemporary painting, some aspects of my practice align me loosely with a few current art world factions or trends. Of the many artists with whom I feel aligned in some way or who have been influential to my practice, many can be grouped loosely into two larger categories. Making up one group are abstract painters like Albert Oehlen, Charlene Von Heyl, and Eric Sall, who's studio methods are indulgent, intuitive, formally based, and driven by the action, and exchange involved in the creative process itself. Other artists who I feel a particular connection with include Tauba Auerbach, Matthew Ritchie, Julie Mehretu, and Simon Evans, who make work that is more data and concept driven in nature. These artists seem to find much of their inspiration in realms outside of the art world and their approach is characterized in part by the personal languages and systems, often governed by regimented sets of rules or guidelines that bring together data from different spheres of experience, offering new ways of viewing reality through their unique intersections.

These two groups of artists I feel particularly connected with corresponded to an approach I described before as a balance of intuition and intention. I am equally inspired to create in ways

that are guided by pure formal relationships of form, texture, color, and also in ways in which the forms that are dictated solely by set concepts and data. I am most satisfied both in my process and results when I am able to incorporate a multitude of working modes and approaches into a single work over a period of time. The temperamental relationship I have with painting serves my practice and other facets of my life in numerous ways. This constant changing of approach and mode that have become a characteristic of my practice is in part a reflection of my own somewhat turbulent disposition. My paintings in this sense act as a type of visual diary, recording constantly shifting thought patterns and moods, and the work becomes an estuary into which many streams of consciousness flow over time. Although my practice involves a high degree of erraticism and variability, the daily ritual of returning to my practice act as a stabilizing force. These regularly scheduled bouts of irrationality and abstract thinking ground me, help me distill my thoughts, and engage more intensely with other areas of my life.

Painting also plays a role in alleviating the escalating pressures of life in twenty-first-century capitalist society, an age of new technologies, rapid change, and an overabundance of information that society that has not yet figured out how to cope with. Nonstop streams of advertisements, news, correspondence, opinion, and other propaganda assault our consciousness through a rapidly proliferating array of media forms, accelerating our perception of time and fostering anxiety in the population. Increasingly I view the intense concentration and slowing down involved in both making and viewing paintings as ways of resisting the frantic pace of contemporary life, of slowing down time.

I am eager to continue expanding this current body of work over the next few years using the personal visual language that has emerged during my time in the program. The refining and

narrowing of focus, process, and technique that I've developed while pursuing my degree have resulted in a level of control and consistency in my work that had previously been absent. In Part Four I described the necessity when studying a system to impose artificial limits, separating the system from its surrounding environment. In a way, this is what I've done in my practice. Limiting certain aspects of my approach has allowed me to isolate and identify new questions and relationships that beg further investigation. I have just begun work on a two new paintings which also use similar formal variations of the organizational structures contained in my recent work. As far as new developments, I can say that I am moving into new territories in terms of scale, the recently begun panels are much larger, and I am currently exploring with a far more muted palette.

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