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Honesty

Painting & Drawing

MFA thesis

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The subject of my work is spatial relationships. As an abstract painter, I use marks, symbols, gestures, color, texture, shape, and value to convey situations, context, and emotional states of being. Through my current work, I am expanding and refining my visual vocabulary. When I am creating a painting, I do it as a means of telling my story and releasing my emotions, aiming for catharsis. For my works, I produce a series of paintings that communicate not my specific story, per se, but the tension and sensations I feel, which I believe are essentially common in the human experience. I use an abstract vocabulary to convey sensations and states of beings. I am interested in building a variety of textures in my work to create communication and contrast between areas of the canvas. I commune with the viewer through my work, and I convey specific energy or feeling through my process.

I am interested in the abstract painter Mondrian. His work contains “purely abstract expression,” geometry, constructive elements, and intentional composition (Kuspit. The Rebirth 76). My painting has geometric form, constructive elements and intentional composition. I believe the clarity that he pursues is valuable. I transferred from realistic forms like the sun, moon, sea and land to abstract and geometric forms like circles and rectangles through my work, like he does. He seems to be referring to nonobjectivity and depersonalization. Mondrian wanted to make abstract paintings because he believed science is related to the abstract style of his work (Kuspit 76).

Jose Parla is a contemporary artist living and working in Brooklyn, New York. I was first drawn to his paintings because of their ability to express emotion through color and mark making. Parla’s works feels darker, even though he uses bright colors. The calligraphic lines that define his paintings allow the viewer to imagine the exact movements and gestures he utilizes while in the process of painting. Along with Parla’s color choices, his lines add a great deal of
expression and energy to each piece. In an interview with Angela Ledgerwood for Interview magazine, Parla gives us insight into his art-making process and reasoning. When asked if color is an instinctual or intellectual choice for him, Parla states, “It's both. Sometimes I'm inspired by a certain part of my life—I'm thinking about a place and I'll mix the colors from memory” (Ledgerwood). Likewise, the places in my life relate strongly to the color choices and form I use in many of my paintings. I spent the most time in Seoul, South Korea, so that city has had the biggest influence on my life. I have also been highly influenced by New York City. I often contrast very dark colors and very bright colors, because the cities I've lived in are often dark and confusing; but I still manage to create my own light through hope. I live in New Paltz now, which has made me more interested in nature. I am inspired by this beauty and use natural earth colors and similar tones.

When Parla was asked if he thinks artists should speak about their work or let the art speak for itself he responds by noting, “Sometimes I think I shouldn't explain so much about my work because people will just feel what they feel when they see it. They'll love it or hate it or enjoy it on their own …” (Ledgerwood). This response resonates deeply with my own beliefs about the influence of color and line, and how it can express feelings and emotions.

Methodology (Materials)

I am currently building my visual vocabulary. I am interested in Jonathan Lasker and Gaylen Gerber. I am fascinated by the composition of Jonathan Lasker’s painting. In a book about Lasker’s work, Lasker et al. write, “Lasker points out the elements that will complete the composition—a tri-color grid of impasto strokes, a black abstract glyph framed within a rectangle, and a tangled network of an endlessly scrawled black line” (Lasker, Jonathan and David Moss, Jonathan Lasker, Cheim & Read, New York, 2007, P2). Heavy materiality is a common trait
between his painting and mine. I like Gaylen Gerber’s painting because his painting is minimal and creates the “space” of the canvas. I use acrylic on canvas. I am interested in creating different textures. Acrylic is a good material that I can utilize to make various textures. When I paint with acrylics, I use a variety of gloss and matte mediums, high solid gel medium and molding paste gel to create heavy texture. I mix these mediums selectively and occasionally I use various color paint markers. I use paintbrushes, sponge brushes, knives, forks and chopsticks.

In “The Metro,” which is my first painting, I included tape, which for me is a symbol of connection between human life and our daily life experiences. Everyday materials can be transformed into elements of artwork. I include partly painted tape, which I used to make lines. This means that viewers can see both the process of the work and the finished work simultaneously. “Brooklyn Bridge,” which is my second work, is calm and harmonious. Because of their reference to landscapes, “Blue Dream,” which is my third work, and “Festival,” my fourth painting, are a median between abstract art and realistic art. Viewers can imagine a midnight ocean with moonlight. Even though I use low value color like dark navy, it does not look dark because of the shiny texture of the background. There is an emotional, subtle and calm feeling to this work. In “Festival,” I express the daytime landscape. I chose a light color tone.

I use abstract forms that interact with one another in a unified space to create a cohesive piece. I’m interested in texture, abstract and geometric forms, overlap and color. I aim to find depth, complexity and composition in my artwork as spatial relationships can serve as a form of the culture or the emotion.

I am researching content or reference for inspiration that relates to my work. I am finding articles, artists’ books, magazines and journals that lead me to make better work. Galleries and museums are the best tools where I can receive inspiration, understand visual images, learn art
and have information about the artist. I was fascinated by a book written by Jonathan Lasker (Lasker, Jonathan and David Moss, Jonathan Lasker, Cheim & Read, New York, 2007, ). I am interested in his work that was composed by both extemporary and repeating processes. This could be helpful to create spatial relationship in my works. I can develop better composition at my work as I explore the process of his work.

Although I find this somewhat ironic, my work has links to Zen, European modernism and constructivism. Zen comes from Japan and is related to Buddhism. From China, Chan Buddhism influenced Vietnam, Korea, and Japan. It became known as Japanese Zen. There is a “paradoxical language” in the Zen-tradition. I am not Buddhist. I am trained in western art, but I believe that I was naturally influenced by Eastern culture. I like profound, perplexing, serious, humorous, and beautiful Zen art.

In Zen art, “the circle expresses the totality of our being as a symbol” (Seo 11). This is very impressive for me. Seo believes that the circle makes him calm and is a symbol of completion. Carl Jung referred to the circle as the “archetype of wholeness” (Seo 11) “In art, we highlight an abstract circle’s many natural forms.” Circles are very prevalent in Buddhism. Mandalas, circular representations of the universe, is one example.

I use the circle as a form in some of my paintings, too. The circle of my painting is transferred from a realistic object like the moon or the sun to abstract form or abstract form itself. In Zen paintings, the form is “just a circle painted with one brushstoke, in single breath” (Seo 11). This is the difference from the circle of my painting. I paint the circle with several brushstrokes, at different times in order to create depth and texture within the circle. Even though I use the circle in my painting, my process of art making is different than that of Zen art.
I believe that art is very similar to life. There is no exact answer in understanding both art and life. Professors or artists can give various good pieces of advice to me, but I choose what advice I follow and what I reject. Like life, art is never easy.

I believe that communication is important in artwork. Art has the potential to be the strongest medium to convey ideas. This is because visual images can strongly stimulate people’s senses. Reactions to images are often visceral and immediate because images bypass the logical mind. Artists can convey meaning through their artwork. I will interact with the viewer using a visual language. However, modern art, and conceptual art in particular, are changing the ways that art speaks. Instead of utilizing aesthetics to suggest emotion or narrative, much contemporary art relies heavily on intellectually constructed concepts, and in doing so, it loses its ability to speak on its own. My work stimulates lyrical emotion through the beauty that is composed by geometric forms, colors and textures of the painting for viewers.
Works Cited


