

Abstracture: The Abstraction of Architecture and Space
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1

If a room or space can alter how we feel, if our feelings are affected by the color of the walls, the shape of a door, the design of the wallpaper, what will happen to us in places we experience or inhabit? This sense of space interests me more than the representational aspect of architecture. The Russian Constructivist movement and Deconstructivist Architecture influence my research and paintings. The "truth" of the materials that was employed by Constructivists allows me to expose the materials I am using and asserts the "objectness" of my panels and acrylic paint to exist as they are. In my paintings I use simple methods to fragment, arrange, construct, and abstract architectural space. I use transitional shifts to evoke ambiguity within the spaces. I create the illusion of continuously changing environments using lines, geometric forms, and a quirky color palette.

2

Interest in constructing and deconstructing space has led me to explore building materials as an aspect my paintings. I build cradled wood panels using nail guns, spackle, wood glue, table saws, drop saws, and sanding belts. Encompassing construction as part of the creative process fits with the idea of constructing space in a literal and figurative sense. Painting with latex house paint, acrylic paint with gloss, semi-gloss, and matte

finishes, painter's tape, and joint compound has contributed to aesthetics of materiality associated with interiors and exteriors. I build up the surface of the painting, taking advantage of the viscosity of the acrylic paint by using a variety of acrylic mediums. My painting dimensions are thirty-six inches wide by forty-eight inches high with a depth of three inches. This scale engages the viewer to interact on a one to one ratio. The depth, double that of the average painting on canvas, creates an "object hood" for the panel.

I aim to upset, confirm, or deny familiar sensations that may surface for the viewer by providing information that skews or warps space. The scale of my work encourages my viewers to stand a few feet back from the painting. The small details and subtle shifts of color or form call the viewer to move closer and examine the surface on a more intimate level. The materiality of the paint and surface texture appears as the viewer moves closer. Subtle peaks of paint or texture of the brush stroke are retained to comment on the materiality and the process of painting. I sometimes hang work in close proximity as diptychs, or triptychs, or above and below eye level to intensify the spatial complexity and call attention to how the viewers locate themselves in relation to the object.

3

Even though I refer to intersections of walls, floors, and ceilings, I am intrigued by the expressive power of color, gesture of forms versus that which is concrete, and creating multiple points of environmental experiences. I create a window to evoke a notion of space. My efforts to flatten forms suggest a three dimensional composition on a two dimensional plane. The shift into new territory allows me to explore the unexpected formal elements or happy mistakes that happen when using acrylic paint. I introduce texture, subtractive methods, and organic forms in my process. Inventing my own spaces, in a way, allows me to warp perspective, create my own sensations of movement and light, and employ a sense of ambiguity and tension that activates the two dimensional surface. I enjoy when the viewer questions "how they enter into my space, move through my space, make sense of my space, feel in my space and exit the space. When this is achieved, the work is successful".

4

Looking at architecture allows me to break the structure down into geometric forms and shapes. These elements inspire me to see the world in a simplified manner and to reflect on sensations within myself. I view the building or structure as a composition that I translate into painting. I use modern

architectonic forms and visual information observed throughout each day as references.

The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses by Juhani Pallasmaa helped me understand the human relationship to architecture. Pallasmaa explores our senses and the visual paradigm in relation to architectural forms. Sensations also interest me and inform how I construct spatial elements in my work... Weightlessness, floatation, and themes of presence or lack thereof are present in my paintings. Pallasmaa stated, "When experiencing a work of art, a curious exchange takes place; the work projects its aura, and we project our own emotions and percepts into the work" (Pallasmaa, 74). When I make these paintings, I create spaces that reflect my emotions or understandings of environments or buildings I inhabit. I have also consulted the book, *The Architecture of Happiness* by Alain de Botton for an introduction to architecture. The literature has provided a theoretical framework for my research. Within my practice any small detail within architecture or spaces may serve as inspiration as well as buildings or spaces I've encountered on previous occasions. I can construct an entire composition by studying the slant to a threshold, or the color of the paint on the wall. These tiny moments aid in my painting process. Alain de Botton describes these moments: "So attentive

are our eyes and our brains that the tiniest detail can unleash memories" (Botton, 94).

5

Russian artists identified with the Constructivist movement such as El Lissitzky, Kazimir Malevich, and Lyubov Popova give me insight into the flat imagery of intersecting geometric forms. I find a satisfying attraction to such forms and explore their interaction on the surface of my paintings. Hard edged abstraction from the 1960's and 70's has also been a source of reference. I am particularly interested in the investigation of color and form that artists such as Donald Judd, Robert Ryman, and Frank Stella explored in their practice, as well as color field painters Ellsworth Kelly and Mark Rothko.

6

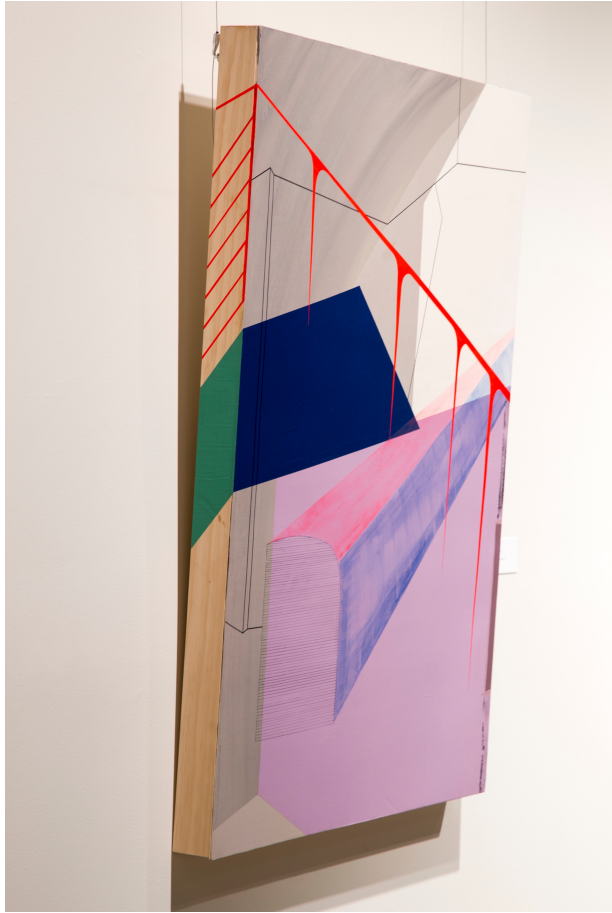
To give the paintings in my thesis show breathing room and provide enough rest for the viewer in between pieces, I evenly spaced them with three feet between paintings. I hung the work at the standard museum height of sixty inches so the viewer could become immersed in the spaces and the architectonic experience. The repetition, scale, and saturation captivate one to walk from the entrance of the museum to the opposing wall-- (see image 1). In addition to the front surfaces of the paintings,



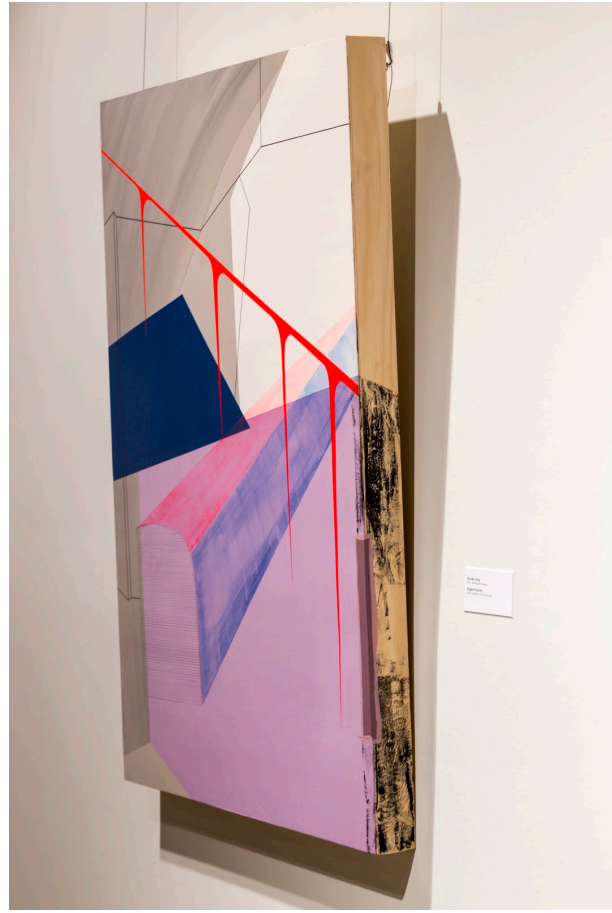
(Image 1)

both 3 inch sides of the wood panels are painted with flat shapes that reflect forms or colors that appear in the front image. This creates a continuation of the piece past the traditional constraints of a two dimensional painting surface as seen in *Elegant Facility*--(see image 2 and 3). The scale of this work is meant to engage the viewer to question or reflect on the spatial dynamics of the compositions and follow the painting off the surface onto the sides of the panel, and perhaps continuing off onto the wall with the use of their imagination to extend the line. When arranging the pieces of my installation, I wanted the viewer to easily move in and out of

each piece and freely move from one piece to the next. *Rule,*



(Image 2)



(Image 3)

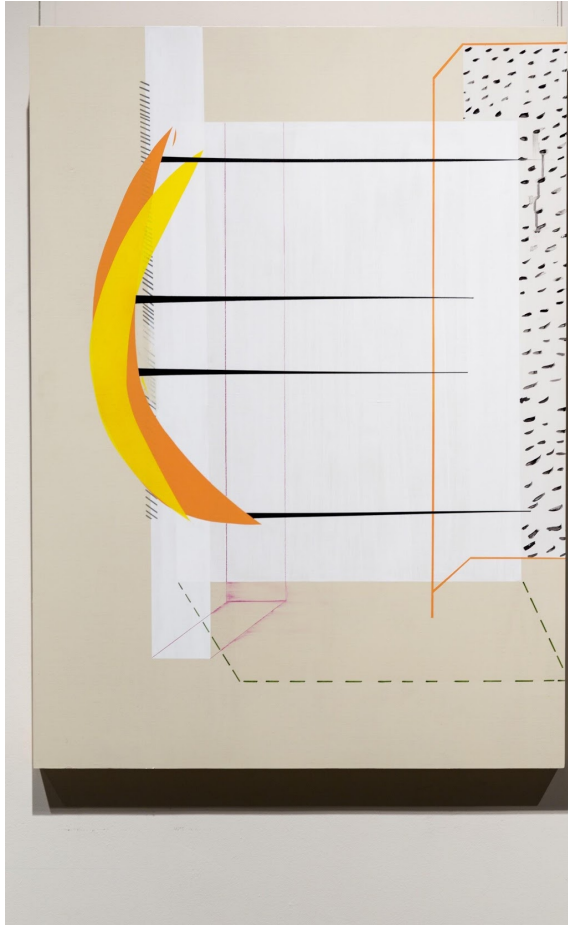


(Image 4)



(Image 5)

System, Grid was the center painting because of the strong, solid, and fixed characteristics of the composition--(see image 4). I placed two paintings on the right and left of this piece because more movement was present in those compositions. The movement in *Blocking Planes, Loose, Flat*, and *Illusive Shift* create momentum to move through the rest of the pieces--(see image 5,6,7).



(Image 6)



(Image 7)

7

The spaces I invent are a reflection of moods and memories associated with places I have experienced. I agree with Alain de Botton in that, "It seems reasonable to suppose that people will possess some of the qualities of the buildings they are drawn to" (Botton,18).

Bibliography

Botton, Alain De. *The Architecture of Happiness*. New York: Pantheon, 2006. Print.

Pallasmaa, Juhani. *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*. Chichester: Wiley-Academy, 2005. Print.