

Walks to nowhere

A Thesis Presented  
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Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment  
Of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

May 2013

University of Massachusetts Amherst  
Department of Art, Architecture, and Art History

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my Mom for handling many stressed late night phone calls, to the most well adjusted guy I know for keeping me sane, my meowza for being a purrball, and all of my committee members for dealing with my madness. I could not have succeed without ya'lls support system.

ABSTRACT  
Walks to nowhere

MAY 2013

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This essay is an academic justification for a means of producing images explained  
mainly through ideas of experiential memory.

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## **PREAMBLE - DISORIENTATION**

Throughout this thesis, I pull apart memories as I would in my studio. Memories provide the basis for starting a painting. They are not explicit in the painting, but they create a way for me to conjure new information so that I do not create the same painting repeatedly. They are the key to how I think about landscape because without memories I would have no filter through which to view the world. I create new avenues of thought by remembering past mistakes and fortunes. New approaches to working come together through layering different experiences.

Painting has always been a way for me to reconfigure memory. The past few years I've learned how to not only talk about my work in a way that makes sense, but to develop it in a direction I am proud of. I have struggled to figure out what painting means to me, and I know this will be a life-long struggle.

Where my practice has become quieter and more lucid, my work has become more extroverted, loud, and oversightful. My brain abuses language. It has taken me awhile to realize that my words have power just as anyone else's. In weaving together others' language with my ideas, I have endowed my thoughts with their power. The past is scaffolding. The present is where all of the dust, mortar, and bricks become something for the future to pick apart and destroy.

I am easily disoriented in the natural world; these moments become a microcosmic experience. When I allow myself to wander, my mind can pick apart

details that I otherwise would not notice or allow myself to care about. In giving myself time to pick apart aspects of nature that I have no control over, I can take the moment to allay myself of problems that only time can solve. It separates me from the task at hand, whether it be going for a Sunday drive or going for a random walk to nowhere.

I call these things a microcosmic experience because suddenly the world I exist in shrinks into something even smaller. These experiences can last anywhere between a moment and many hours. Space has a natural way of warping when put under the microscope for me. Things bend to become a terrifying and unique. When I return to the studio and remember that experience, I do not think about color, texture, or shape even; instead, I think about space combusting in strange ways. I want the paintings to emulate the eroding of space, not so much the replication of that space. Trees, roads, and streams do not matter in the context of my work.

There is a point at Roaring Falls in Leverett where water drops ten feet, but the cliffs pull together. My brain has to tell the eyes to either look at the water pulling away or rock face coming together. The waterfall is not the important moment in the experience. The way my eyes are forced to pick a plane is the carrot. That push/pull is something I play with in my paintings because I want the viewer to make that decision. That choice also determines the rest of the painting.

In my process, abstraction exists where memory fails; where memory fails improvisation succeeds. Memory is volatile. To make up for hazy recollection,

abstraction comes to the fore. Improvisation helps me to create coherent spaces in paintings. It acts as a way for me to connect different layers of memories in one canvas. My painting lives in the dark matter between what dwells in the landscape and hovers in the mind. Mark Rothko in “The Romantics were prompted...” commented on his process that “Ideas and plans that existed in the mind at the start were simply the doorway through which one left the world in which they occur.” I cannot complete the experience of walking through the woods in the snow for the viewer. I do not want to. My place is to merge the vertigo and fear of a place into the existence of paint and canvas. For me, that occurs in the rolling, current-like aspects of some of my work as well as the size of my work.<sup>1</sup> I want my work to feel as if it is overtaking the viewer.

I could never make a painting the size of the horizon when I have my feet in the Atlantic, but I can create work that knocks a hole into a white wall to look out into the distance, metaphorically speaking. My goal is to look through a painting, not at it. The painting still exists, but the idea of the image changes. It is not just a flat surface with pigment smeared across the plane. I create craggy cliffs in my paintings and they overpower me simply through existing. It’s a pretty common idea that modernist painters made large work as a show of ego and inflated self importance. Making large work reminds me to shut up and listen, to

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<sup>1</sup> Fear does not only exist in the outdoors. When I first moved to Massachusetts, I bought an 8 foot tall A-frame ladder. It took me 2 months to get to the top. I am terrified of heights. When I approach a cliff or height, generally more than 3 feet off the ground, my legs start to tingle and shake, then I start to hyperventilate. It is not the most pleasant experience, but it is a thing I try to experience regularly in order to feel alive. I try to compress that moment of terror into a painting.

think before saying something. I can fit my ego through the door because I cannot always fit my paintings through the door.

## **A SERIES OF INSIGHTS**

**OR**

## **INSIGHTS ON THE SERIES**

A series of paintings becomes the unfolding of time on the Galapagos islands; my paintings have evolved given time and necessity like the island's different species. Each successive painting falls further from the initial experience of walking in the woods, but that act still exists in the base of each painting by the spaces I try to create. I like to think of my work like Darwin's finches because they "are famous because they are a textbook example of adaptive radiation and impressively illustrate how a variety of different species of birds can evolve from a single lineage." The finches changed to survive. The environment forced the birds to change as time passed in order to better fit into the landscape. My paintings are those finches because I have been working on the same series since I first came to Massachusetts. It has only taken me three years and this paper to realize that each successive painting could not have been made without the one before it.

Like the finches, the evolution of my work from a lumbering brute to almost emptiness to some point between the two happened through necessity at Umass. Painting is a solitary, scary experience for me. My first year of graduate study, I was so terrified to make a mistake that all I ended up doing was creating mistakes. I would think too much and nothing would get done except some wear in my studio chair. I would not think enough and end up creating something akin

to wallpaper that screamed at the viewer. My fears would be amplified by critiques. Did I really belong in grad school? How could I call myself a painter? “There is no formula for abstract painting, but know that it should have a certain amount of rightness to it--and Lauren this is not it.”

The best thing about my first year was that it was over. I did not allow anyone into my studio that summer and held everyone off until mid-semester critiques in the fall. I took the time to screw my head on straight. I knew my work was not going in the way I wanted it to, mainly because I did not want to set foot in the studio. During that summer, I took the time to go through all of the paintings from the previous two years. I wanted to see what connected everything. That summer, the first evolution of my practice took place.

My work became harsh. I emptied every mark from the canvas, and it became colder than it had been previously. Hard edges clashed with neutral tones and fluorescent, synthetic color. I researched space through the planes of geometric perspective.

I did not get the chance to pick up a brush during my second summer. Instead, I went to Nantucket and took more walks. I walked through natural spaces instead of creating work from psychological places. The marshes, bogs, and seascape horizons became my constant companion. I subsisted on watercolor and pastel sketches. My work evolved upon return to the studio. Moments of harshness were softened with organic forms, suppressed by the harsh lines of the perspectival diagram. Colors softened and melded together.

## SPACE

I have never completely taken space out of a painting. I do not want to because space is how I remember and dissect the world. Moving through space is something that can I connect with. It is an intimate connection by virtue of living in it. One of the things that differs for everyone is how we perceive space.

I got my first pair of contacts when I was 13. Before I had 20/20 vision, I did not realize anything was wrong. I thought I was a super hero, zooming around on my bike with the ability to turn on or off my super seeing with the squint of an eye. The first time I walked out of the optometrist's office, I turned to my mom and said, "I can see the tree branches." At 13, one moment completely changed my perception of space.

I get distracted easily. I believe in taking long walks to nowhere in particular because my brain will have to focus on making my feet move, my eyes compute, and simultaneously figure out where I am in the process. I get lost easily because space is an interesting conundrum for me. It does things that I think it should not be able to. It pushes and pulls at the same object at the same instant.

All of my memories are rooted in interactions with spaces. As a child, my family used to take vacations to Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. My Dad used to stick me in the water at a point where the Atlantic and Cape Hatteras Sound met. The crash of those waves are terrifying at high tide. Millions of gallons of water

fight for space while simultaneously being shoved this and that way by the currents.

Seventy percent of the Earth is covered by water. Early explorers thought the Earth's horizon was a cliff's edge in which no ship could return<sup>2</sup>. It is no surprise when seeing the seam that holds the water and sky together. There is no real way to experience that distance, to catalogue the amount of water, the creatures, or the dangers in that horizon. The sight is humbling.

The first painting I experimented with dealt with that point of infinity, but also with rain.<sup>3</sup> Rain changes how I understand the space I inhabit because it acts as another object filling the space. Water bends light. The eye understands space through how light interacts with objects. It is one of the ways that space warps.

I pushed that idea of warping in *Through the Wind and Rain*, and used a perspectival diagram to do so. It was a rudimentary way to understand, and therefore develop, space. A perspectival diagram is a simplified way to draw space. The horizon line is marked by two diagonal lines that intersect on the horizon to

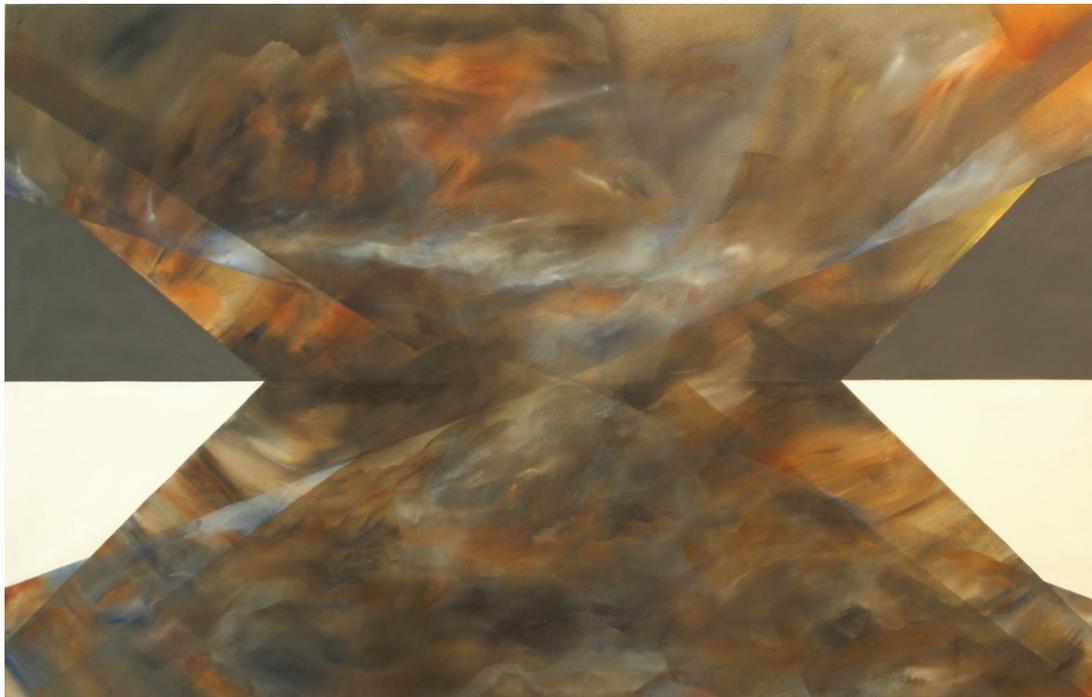
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<sup>2</sup> horizon- noun. a *thin*, distinctive stratum useful for stratigraphic correlation.

The horizon is an ever-receding point. It exists exactly because it is a non-existent place. I learned this when working through ideas with the perspectival diagram. I wanted to touch something infinite. I wanted to see it. There is a point where the eye can no longer process distance. We know things continue to move through *a posteriori* knowledge. It is in the logic of taking a flight or using google maps, but there is no visceral experience of getting to that point.

<sup>3</sup> My family used to take the ferry to Ocracoke Island. When the rain becomes thick enough on the water, there is no telling where the sky begins and the ocean ends. It becomes even stranger when the rain has not touched your face yet. At dusk, it is a wall of gray smoke waiting to be penetrated, but in the light, it looks as if the ocean will swallow you whole.

Figure 1 Through the Wind and Rain by Lauren Pleveich



demonstrate where objects eventually disappear on at a vanishing point. It is a way for the brain to understand distance.

Perspective creates the strangest problems for me. While the concept is pretty simple for me to understand, when I turn my head and squint, things change. Details of little importance bulge, recede, or drift away. They become another reality.

Simple things can create complexity. By tripling and mirroring the image, I create something new. The restraint of the image structure also allowed me to focus on what happens inside the image. In creating a predefined structure, I could focus on experimentation with paint. I could play with translucency and solid shapes because the structure had been created in advance. In defining a problem, I allowed myself to take advantage of problems created by the material.

I learned restraint from a Mark Rothko painting. It hit me in the face as I rounded a corner in the Museum of Modern Art. The structure of this work allowed him to play with space. It was about breathing and the natural world without any of the signs.<sup>4</sup> He changed space by walling off most of the image. The foreshortened frontal planes he created through this painting mostly covered



Figure 2 No.10 by Mark Rothko

the picture plane. He allowed deep space to trickle around and through the edges of these walls to create dynamism. He created an immediate foreground while simultaneously creating an ever-receding background. His painting contradicts space. I am repelled by the foreground while getting lost in his fields of color.

His work lives in my headspace. I strive to create the voids and walls that are endemic of his work. Instead of vying for two

spaces, that of the very shallow and it's

opposition, I work to create a spectrum of space

I want to complicate the illusionistic space by playing with Rothko's flatness, his deep space, and then the curve ball of everything in-between. By

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<sup>4</sup> "The sublime was to be abstract, devoid of all signifiers, so that which is signified will appear in all its decorum: that is, by stating its not being there it will have the appropriate *Parousia*, the manifestation of hidden essence" (Harten 73 Sublime).

Figure 3 Brimstone by Lauren Pleveich



activating space in such a way, I hope to complicate the viewer's idea of where they stand in relationship to the painting.

From viewing Rothko's work, I have realized that flat space is very much an active space. His use of the brush stroke makes his paintings vibrate. A Rothko painting on the wall can feel electric or as still as stone. Because of Rothko's spatial aesthetics and way of separating the canvas, the vibrations throughout the painting enhance the viewing experience instead of creating an over stimulating experience. Without that simplicity, the work would lose its ability to hypnotize. I wanted to play with those vibrations in a different way. I started using metallic paints because I wanted a contrast to my matte finishes. Flatness is exacerbated by juxtaposition with the high gloss material. Color vibration not only happens through its contrast with matte materials, but also interactions with

light. Shiny surfaces simulate a glare as well as quick changes in environmental light. It allows for change. Nature and memories are always shifting, however minutely, through plates shifting, desertification or something as simple as the sun setting. It is important for the work to reflect this in a small way.

I use this 'vibrational idea' tempered with solid walls of color because solids with vibrations. Walls act as a place for figure/ground reversal in space because of their dual nature whereas vibrational spaces fit into an either/or scenario depending on the painting.

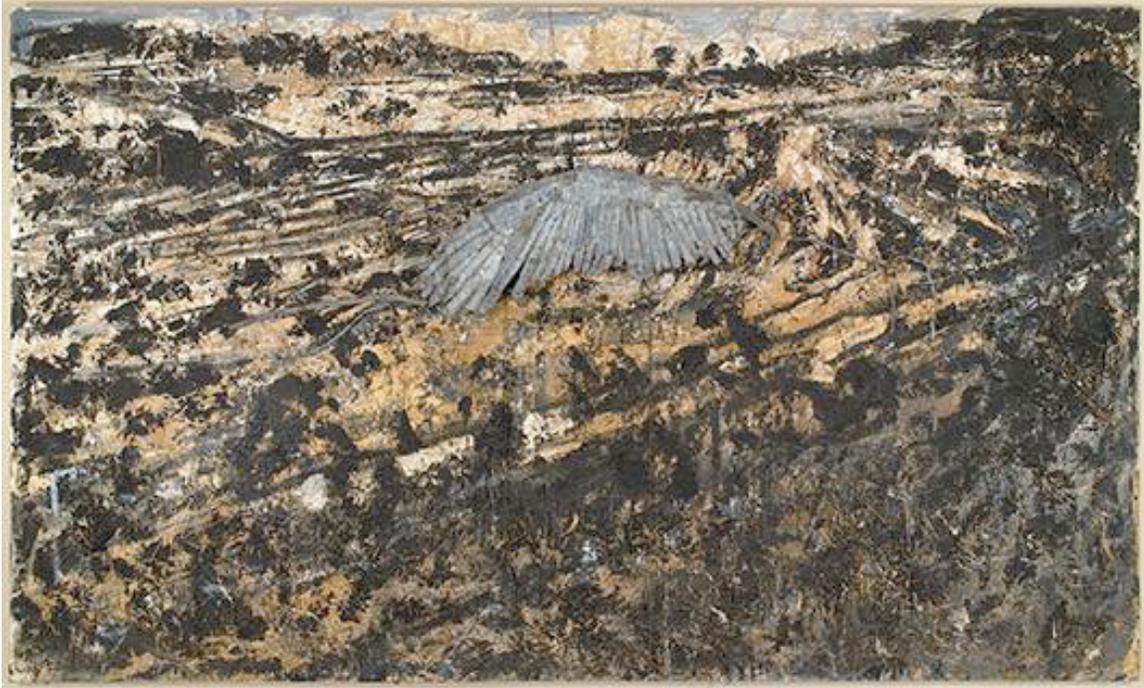
Color creates space and forces questions on whether areas are parts of the foreground or background. In creating the image, I want them to do both. While there are some obvious areas where a shape rests on top of others, I do believe in ambiguity; otherwise, the painting will never change from the viewer's first encounter.<sup>5</sup>

The first time I thought of space in painting was when I sat in front of a painted field. Anselm Kiefer's "Landscape with wing" does not inspire joy. It swallows you whole without leaving a moment to breath before going under. Everything about it seems to indicate remorse, but more so, stillness. The event has passed. The outcome lies in the fields for as far as the eye can see. Despite his use of

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<sup>5</sup> There is a waterfall on Mount Toby that I visit fairly often. I go because it is a reason for me to challenge my fear of heights. There is a point going up the ravine where the edges come together so closely that my eyes are forced to choose the image, either the rushing water or the rock face.

Figure 4 Landscape with Wing by Anselm Kiefer



materials like hay and tar, it is his use of deep space that held me longest. He does not show you an acre. He shows miles of cataclysm. Kiefer's paintings talk about the power of knowing through showing as far as the eye can see. He implicates the guilt and shame of a nation through his material, marks, and color. In working this way, he shows that knowing is terror.

While deep space imitates the space in which we live, flat space forces the focus onto other things. Its one dimensionality requires me to take a step outside of the comfort zone of daily life and recognize other aspects of the painting. It is the difference between looking at or through a painting.

Memories and empirical experience are source material for my paintings. Peter Saul once said "there is nothing new in art. The only thing original is the artist's baggage." That is the *modus operandi* behind my work. I exploit the things that I have run across that seem the most interesting, whether they be color,

shape, or weird experiences of space because I want to see what happens when they have to deal with one another on the same plane. The push and pull of divergent elements excite me. When I look at the vibrations of Joseph Albers' color studies, for example, it is just so strange that it just might work.

The surface of my work becomes a leash to lead the viewer around. It needs to be decisive to stand up to the flashiness of some of my color decisions. I also wanted the mark to feel larger than life. Those strokes act as another counterbalance to hypercolor areas. A mark has to be able to hold up to strong color decisions in order to create a push-pull throughout the painting. When the painting is unbalanced, it leaves a feeling of being unfinished for me. In the painting below, I used large scratch-like marks to hold the yellow in place. Without those marks the yellow would have taken over the composition.



Figure 5 Rain is Coming by Lauren Pleveich

I wanted to make the space feel as if the marks were slowly decomposing and sinking into the yellow space, mimicking how fog gradually supersedes landscape and distorts clarity.

Franz Kline's suggestions of imagery are created through his use of scale and brush stroke. His magnificent paintings suggest his renderings of space prior to the 1940s where he worked in plein air describing city skylines and other urban territories. His work through the 50s acts as a catalyst between the man made environment and that of the abstract by fusing signs from each end of those spectrums.

Kline controls the space of his image absolutely. His adherence to the black and white palette throughout the 1940s and 1950s creates dynamic contrasts and stark representations of power. Warm and cool whites writhe where blacks have departed the 'scene.'

His magic stems from the instant where representation and abstraction mesh. Franz Kline warps the reality he sees in the New York skyline into something that can be experienced from a distance. Speed, action, and noise are implicated in his work.

I hope to bring Kline's deliberateness to my studio practice (Accent Grave 62-68). Every one of his moves is calculated. The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Contemporary Art describe:

"The narrower bars of Kline's canvases seem to have been brushed on in one sweep even though close examination reveals that they have been formed with a number of overlapping strokes...his best works suggest

rapidly developed compositions depending on the vigor of the initial thrust of the artist's gesture for their character, even though it is perfectly clear that he worked back and forth from black bars to white shapes..." (Accent Grave 64).

The seeming spontaneity of his painting is a ruse to insinuate his subject matter. "I paint not the things I see, but the feelings they arouse in me," Kline said in an interview in 1957 (Rodman 105). The moment between his experience and the abstraction of that experience is where his work emerges and departs from the everyday.

Those are the shoes in which I feel most comfortable. My paintings happen in the gray area between the point of experience and the point of painting. I do not work with preparatory images because it would impede the experience of delving into the memories inspiring the painting.

I do not use images from my walks to nowhere because memories have their own interesting ways of warping experiences. Forgetting is a human condition. Holes in a memory create openings for painterly gesture. It is when all of these things come together that the work begins to shine. When I grew up, I always heard the saying that a bit of truth in a lie makes everything all the more believable. My memories are lies even if I believe that some sightings are unforgettable.

Eye witness testimony has come under fire for being one of the most unreliable pieces of evidence to indicate guilt. When someone holds a gun to

your head, it would seem unforgettable, but in reality, DNA evidence has repeatedly proved the innocence of a supposed criminal proven guilty through a lineup (American Psychology Association 2003). It is strange how the mind recreates a crystal clear moment.

## THE POWER OF PRINT

I have a lithography background. I left it behind because I kept wanting to go bigger. I did not want to wait on a press to create an image when I already had one in my head. Having that background created interesting problems for me as a painter. I continue to see paintings as layers, and am still very interested in chunks of flat, rich color.<sup>6</sup> More emphasis is placed on pattern and decorative elements.



Figure 6 Up from Under by Lauren Pleveich

I see pattern as a repetition in mark-making: a means of holding images together. Applying thick strokes with a palette knife, gradient scales with spray paint and large sections of flat latex all provide patterns I use to mimic space.

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<sup>6</sup> I think there is nothing better than lifting a paper off of a stone and seeing a perfect velvety black in the lithography studio at 3am.

Lithographs by Terry Winters, Jessica Stockholder, and Kate Shepard influence how I paint. Terry Winters creates webs of geometry that seem to bounce across the canvas. While these are interesting, the space he creates through atmospheric perspective is more so. The objects emerge from a fog. The emergence of the foreground and smooth depiction of space plays through my work.

Jessica Stockholder's palette in both her prints and sculptures are extraordinary. When I have trouble deciding on color combinations, she is one of the artists I look at. Her color always seems to be balanced by a juxtaposition of the synthetic and naturalistic. There is also a playful pattern to her work that has deeply influenced my paintings.

Kate Shepherd's work mimics interior spaces. When I played with one-point perspective, I thought about how she imposed hard lines onto bright spaces as well as how she used pattern to push the viewer around. In creating these graphic lines, she creates a new, viable space.

## **SPECTRUMS**

I live in a world of binaries. Day/night, female/male, presence/absence, or even like/dislike create contrasts and therefore dialogues. The presence of one creates a conversation about the other. Contrasts are important in my work because they are how I develop meaning and interest. Contrasts create relationships. A flat plane of color is not interesting to me until I see it next to something that is anything but flat. Without an antithesis, the thesis does not ring as affective to me. By playing up contrasts, I allow each component characteristic to be a little louder than it would otherwise. Gold plays off of a flat tan of the same hue in order to force consideration between a changing and permanent surface. Different types of paint when layered on top of one another show material contrast and create surface tension. A daily sight fuels excitement in a new view. The horizon line on the ocean is a sublime memory because I live in the mountains.

Spectrums and contrast create tension. Without a push/pull dynamic, a painting does not feel quite finished to me. I am not as interested. When on a walk in the woods, there are so many things to experience and view. I want part of that eclectic mix to be translated into my paintings through formal decisions like transparency versus solid color, smooth surfaces versus impasto, or neutral color versus fluorescent. Contrasts make different parts of the painting connect to one another by making me compare the two different areas to each other.

## **ANARCHY<sup>7</sup>**

**OR**

**“WELL, YOU CAN LOSE THE FORM MORE EASILY IN THE DARK, CAN'T YOU?<sup>8</sup>”**

Painting began as a way for me to work through conundrums that seemed an almost daily hazard, mostly dealing with relationships and actions that occur between people. Having never been a “people person,”<sup>9</sup> I was confused how seemingly trite actions could cause such an uproar between two people.<sup>10</sup>

I go into situations with preconceptions and expectations of how events should unfold. The act of doing undermines the act of guessing, just as guessing undermines doing<sup>11</sup>. When I first came to Umass, my goal was to act in order to

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<sup>7</sup> "Anarchism, then, really stands for the liberation of the human mind from the dominion of religion; the liberation of the human body from the dominion of property: liberation from the shackles and restraint of government. Anarchism stands for a social order based on the free grouping of individuals for the purpose of producing real social wealth; an order that will guarantee to every human being free access to the earth and full enjoyment of the necessities of life, according to individual desires, tastes, and inclinations" (Goldman 12).

<sup>8</sup> Sylvester 12

<sup>9</sup> One who easily understands social cues and can act appropriately in social situations by using tone, body language, and vocabulary.

<sup>10</sup> I used to run an after school program in an inner city high school. One of the things I noticed is that the conversational language between my students and I, versus the language between students one on one was very different. It was not just the use of eubonics, which still feels like an entirely different language, but it was also the manner in which they interacted with one another. There was a definite hierarchy between students, not dependent on age, but status. Students were more likely to be respected based on their chances to get out of the projects. I was confounded by this realization. My mother was a teacher in Richmond City Schools. When I told her I was going to volunteer at a high school in Richmond, she said “you can go to any of them except George Wythe.” A month into volunteering, I told her that I go to George Wythe three days a week. She wondered how I had not been mugged.

<sup>11</sup> “Both the intelligent man and the ignorant mass judge not from a thorough knowledge of the subject, but either from hearsay or false pretenses” (Goldman 2).

avoid stagnation.<sup>12</sup> I followed this idea through my first year on campus. It quickly became a succession of failures.<sup>13</sup> When I painted, I tried to push everything I could into one painting. I became a robot in the sense that I created by using the same tactics repeatedly without having a solid strategy to connect incongruous ideas.<sup>14</sup> My studio became a microcosm of the Wild West. There were no rules to making the work, and as such, creating paintings became an uphill battle.

I originally started to work in this way because I believed that progress could only be made through freedom.<sup>15</sup> Freedom is a strange beast in that with limitless options, there presents a dependency on memory instead of imagination.<sup>16</sup> As a maker, I depended on moments created in the studio and the

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<sup>12</sup> Not being in the action of painting meant that I was unresolved. Up to this point, my life has been about going from point A to point B to point C. I equated unresolve with failure.

<sup>13</sup> "I think I tend to destroy the better paintings, or those that have been better to a certain extent. I try and take them further, and they lose all of their qualities, and they lose everything. I think I would say I tend to destroy all the better paintings" (Sylvester 17).

<sup>14</sup> "The task of the robot is reproduction or reconstruction with the goal of perfection. That is because the goal of reproduction is a technique for an answer already prepared ahead of time.... " This is a kind of narcissism—the desire to take something depicted in the mind and bring it before one's eyes with as little change as possible. It is the true condition of desire and meaning of reproduction. In this respect, the method of art that best suits modern capitalism may be a mechanical process that is autistic, narcissistic, and excessive. Ironically, the fate of narcissism, after cutting off all relations with otherness, is to end up in a 'sea of ego,' where there is nothing but self on all sides, eventually losing the desire to see" (Myers 64).

<sup>15</sup> "It would be easy, however, to destroy that good conscience by shouting to [the tyrant]: if you want the happiness of the people, let them speak out and tell what kind of happiness they want and don't want! But in truth, the very ones that make use of such alibis know they are lies; they leave to their intellectuals on duty the chore of believing in them and of proving that religion, patriotism, and justice need for their survival the sacrifice of freedom." (Camus 101).

<sup>16</sup> "You fantasize a way they are going to be, you try to do everything in your power, and then they're total flops. It's interesting to examine how you could be so wrong" (Fuevre 128).

medium to drive me towards some form of conclusion instead of making experiences for myself outside of the studio to accrue new information.<sup>17</sup>

In this case, a few wrongs will eventually make a right. I found that, in terms of structure, the only thing that mattered was the horizon line. I emptied out my canvas and built my composition around the perspectival diagram. In creating a composition I found interesting, I allowed myself to focus on paint itself.

I have outgrown the perspectival diagram now. It created too many restraints because of the way geometry locks everything together. It made a very severe image to adhere to. The work became weaker when I tried to create interesting instances outside of those structures. It felt like coloring outside the lines in preschool.

I have realized that the severe structure of the horizon line can support organic shapes. The contrasts between the two accompanies by soft and hard edges creates an interesting dialogue for me to work from. Organic shapes also allow me to change the way I start working on a painting. I can think about what I want a particular space to do.

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<sup>17</sup> "The perception of space varies from person to person and depends on experience, and on emotional and refractive state" (Myers 185).

## CONCLUSION - EXPANSIVENESS VS. RESTRAINT

I manage my life by remembering experiences. They provide a base for my action and creation of new experience. Though memory is fallible, it is the only way I have ever understood how to create aesthetic experiences. I have made mistakes, and my hope is that I learn from them and can create something out of them. Forgetting is a human condition. That is why I paint. The sharpest memories are the ones most easily remembered. They are the ones that most affect my behavior, but they are not always the happiest. When I was younger, my Dad and I would sit on the back porch, drink sweet tea, and look out at the gardens we had worked on all day. Those were my happiest moments. I did not realize it at the time, so I don't remember any details. I don't even remember his laugh anymore.

When I paint, I stop the details from fading. They may change a little bit, but that first memory will not disappear. I will not have a memory of having a memory, and that is how I have learned from my experiences.

The horizon line is the memory that connects everything together.<sup>18</sup> It is always present, and seemingly innocuous in its familiarity. It is larger than my

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<sup>18</sup> My Dad died when I was 15. Terminal lung cancer. He was diagnosed in August and gone at the beginning of October. We put his ashes in the Atlantic off of the Cape Hatteras Point. They were in a small buoy that would gradually disintegrate over time. I remember my Mom kept trying to push it passed the surf. A family friend ended up having to pull her back. In November, the water is still warm.

It is hard for me to feel strongly about things now. Large events have a cauterizing effect. The horizon off of the ocean somehow has the ability to bring me back to that moment of a small crowd watching my Mom cry in the water.

life.<sup>19</sup> I do large paintings because I am small. I need to remind myself of that now and then. The size of the plane allows me to use my whole body and my whole brain. I want the work to overpower me. Large work forces people to stand back in order to take in the entire image. As Rothko said “ To paint a small picture is to place yourself outside your experience” (Rothko 26).

The work requires large canvases in order to create the motions and spaces. Without the size, the work becomes bogged down by clutter. I try to force too many things into the canvas. It becomes overwrought and dies.

Space is an empty substance filled up by objects. Painting is the most difficult thing in the world to me because I paint objects to imply space. Each object takes away more and more space with the hope of clarifying the space around the object. Different layers imply that space by how far away they seem to be from one another. My goal is to reach for expansiveness through abstraction.

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<sup>19</sup> During a critique in my second year, Jeanette asked me how something could be breathtaking in North Hadley. I think there are reminders anywhere that I am small. A giant expanse of open space under the right light can do it. It's just about looking for it.

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## INSTALLATION IMAGES



## ARTIST AT WORK



## IMAGE IDENTIFICATION SHEET

1. Rain is coming  
73 inches by 100 inches  
Mixed media  
2013

2. Up from under  
73 inches by 88 inches  
Mixed media  
2013

3. Brimstone  
73 inches by 100 inches  
Mixed media  
2012

4. Escape through the atmosphere  
78 inches by 108 inches  
Mixed media  
2012

5. Through to the last  
45 inches by 46 inches  
Mixed media  
2013