OLIVIA KOVACEVSKI

Painting Parallels
Master of Fine Arts Thesis Exhibition
5/9/14-5/13/14

Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art
State University of New York at New Paltz

Alice and Horace Chandler & North Galleries
1 Hawk Drive, New Paltz, New York 12561
Museum info: 845-257-3844
www.newpaltz.edu/museum

Opening Reception:
Friday, May 9th, 2014
5:00-7:00pm
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Exhibition Hours: Friday-Tuesday, 11am to 5pm
Artist Statement

My work is a kind of internal dialogue I carry on with myself. The artwork originates in the freedom of play and retains an intuitive, child-like quality that I nurture through the sheer joy of making. I use a flexible abstract vocabulary of simple lines and forms, and emphasize subtle color shifts. I embrace an alternate reality of the imagination, where I cut and collage my drawings to locate parallels of meaning. I trust in the directness of mark making and deploy a formal vocabulary to reveal the structure of my thoughts.
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Painting Parallels:

*A correspondence between the artist’s mind and artwork*

I. Introduction

My mind is in flux, the time passes quickly and seconds disintegrate. This is how I identify with the world. My thesis work focuses on the mind as an intimate and vulnerable space of uncertainty. I do so through a formal language of abstraction, a condensing of simple lines and shapes. My interest is to uncover relationships or dualities that reveal certain metaphors about the mind, such as: protection/seclusion, privacy/intrusion, and anxiety/contentment. These ideas pertaining to mental space can be realized through various formal and polar opposite elements of thought: big/small, light/dark, and geometric/organic, which must operate on parallel planes to be meaningful.

My thoughts and feelings can be projected into space through the imagination as a way to locate meaning. The mind is always present in space, but not made physical. I define *abstract space* as somewhere imagined; taken from our human psyche, of the places we’ve been in our waking-life or in our dreams. I am intrigued by the art-making process, where my mind becomes visible and my thoughts and feelings are made concrete. The two-dimensional surface of a canvas or blank piece of paper is very inviting where, without judging, I aim to draw, cut, and collage layers to locate a language of universal meaning.

Abstraction as a mode of representation makes sense to me and my work because of the nature of thought and feeling. Today we live in an information age and our intake of visual stimuli and text becomes fragmented. Working in this vein, I embrace the incomplete and the distracting: a third-element of surprise often arrives through this method of making. An “ah-ha” moment is exciting and random—it can never be planned, nor is it always achieved. I’ve found
that an isolated smaller portion or section of my drawings is the thing I am most interested in. By cutting up my works on paper, I am able to think about the root of their cause, to find an important relationship that motivated the making. Above all, I work with my intuition which helps me to trust my own instincts. It is my mind that becomes the source material for inspiration, which is the place where my muses live, as Agnes Martin confirmed… “Before it’s represented on paper it exists in the mind” (130).

II. Drawing as Information

Statistician Edward R. Tufte states that, “The world is complex, dynamic, multidimensional: the paper is static, flat. How are we to represent a rich visual world of experience and measurement on mere flatland?” (9). This too is a concern for my drawings, which I see as a record of thought, a kind of map structure of shape, line, and mark as evidence of human existence. In Tufte’s book, Envisioning Information, it is evident that as humans “we thrive on information” (50). After examining Tufte’s ideas, I had come to the conclusion that through my own research, visual information is not stationary or static, it is layered and multidimensional. As an artist I aim to create a visual language that speaks through the coded tongue of abstraction to create free verse. By utilizing Tufte’s notes on systems of organization, I try to make my work more accessible to my viewer. My focus is to organize visual information in a cohesive manner by highlighting, classifying, or isolating my drawings in an effort to understand their inherent meaning.

In drawing I establish a regimented system in order to locate parallels of meaning in the work. These works came about from desperately needing a time to just be, where I can notice the joy of little things, away from the everyday tasks and internet information that bombard my mind. For me, a drawing a day became a moment of solitude to locate my existence.
In *Drawing Connections*, I organize small multiple works on paper to illustrate a system or logic in order to reveal parallels of a working process or structure (see fig. 1). This display arranges and collages my drawings as a single layered work, forcing the viewer to make comparisons by noticing visual differences in formal abstract terms.

*Drawing Connections* is an idea board or thinking map which seizes the fleeting moments and images I subconsciously take in. I see my drawings as data, tinged with my own feelings about life. To me they speak of an awareness of human sensitivity and reflect a deeper desire for harmony. Ultimately I want to make sense of life, or to understand life through drawing terms. Drawing is the backbone of my creative process, a foundation of inspiration sourced from universal feelings of what it is to be human.

III. Layering and Separation

My drawings utilize a layering of information: primitive marks and playful cut-out shapes that create combinations of contrast and contradiction, as well as harmony. I primarily work from intuition and try not to stand in the way. Ideally the work should flow uninterruptedly. I try to avoid fussing over the work, and found that it is most important to have fun when making.

According to Tufte, “Information consists of differences that make a difference” and in this way, my analysis of the work must be made apparent to my viewer through composition (65). This is because I see my drawings as fragments, which only make sense based on their organization or juxtaposition as multiples that creates a kind of visual alphabet. By differentiating information, I separate and recombine shape and line to illustrate a formal language of comparison so as to share the creative thought-process with my viewer. Abstract painting is not impulsive; there is a logic or system at work. This logic exists as a string of events that occur through layering.
IV. Painting Parallels

Some of my drawings can transform into paintings. I paint parallels taken from my drawings. To me, a parallel is best defined as a connection made in the mind. It is ambiguous and fluid, where drawing and painting operate on familiar planes. For a visual parallel to be made evident, a subtle difference between at least one or two outcomes must exist. There must be present a visual hierarchy, identified through a separation of line, shape, color, or form as part of the overall composition (Tufte 60). It is the repetition of a color, shape or gesture which can be expressed as a metaphorical property to evoke a feeling, whereby the painting or drawing is the materialization of a thought.

My abstract paintings rely on the color and shape relationships found in my drawings. I apply paint on traditional linen or canvas using a brush, roller, and spoon in a careful, but direct manner. My paintings exist as separate but are relative to my drawings. It is in the realm of the abstraction that, “…lets paint be paint and not try to substitute it for cloth, skin, foliage or armor” or anything else for that matter (“Painting Pros & Cons” 7).

I am not interested in making the same thing twice. What I am interested in is working towards a system of examination, to strive for clarity and to be liberated from clutter and confusion. For me there exists a joy in making where, “…a painting resembles a game, where play is possible only if one abides by certain rules” (“Painting Pros & Cons” 6). It is clear though, that a connection occurs through the echo of a particular shape, line, or mark in my paintings that call out to my drawings. These are the only ideas I abide by. Within this language system I have free rein to explore endless possibilities.

For me, a painting is a sensuous, personal experience made public. I try to highlight or single out some of my most coherent thoughts in painting. These paintings can stand alone with confidence, and do not necessarily need any additional context clues. The painting, Similitude
refers to this confidence and is about a state of being: two triangles intersect each other-- where the idea of sameness and/or difference work together or against one another (see fig. 3).

My paintings allow for greater intonations than in my smaller works in the application of paint, color, and scale. My paintings stress the subtlety and elegance found in my drawings but are chosen for their drama and clarity through the use of line and shape. Mark Rothko’s ideas also speak of the importance of shape in that, “…the[y] [are] […] performers….who are able to move without embarrassment and execute gestures without shame” (3). The shapes that I create have an active and dynamic role in the work, and are indexical to each other. They too exist purely with “…volition and passion for self-assertion,” and are important elements behind the meaning of my work (Rothko 4).

It is now with the end of Postmodernism that we enter into the Metamodern, where I too would like to boldly admit the romantic attitude behind my work. This kind of Neoromanticism can be viewed as “oscillating between opposite poles” drawing upon additional thoughts and feelings in my paintings of:

…unity and multiplicity. It is fidelity to the particular…and also mysterious tantalizing vagueness of outline. It is beauty and ugliness. It is art for art’s sake, and art as [an] instrument of social salvation. It is strength and weakness, individualism and collectivism, purity and corruption, revolution and reaction, peace and war, love of life and love of death (Vermeulen & van den Akker 8).

What do I want from the work? I guess I want to say everything and sometimes nothing. In the two-dimensional spaces I create, I use shape, color, and mark to function as a personal lyric-- like a fragment of a poem or song. I do not claim these symbols as originally mine; the inevitable recycling of such abstract shape and a tried-and-true process of working can still be
deemed personal and thoughtful. Art can and should shamelessly reflect upon the old in order to locate the new. In this way, parallels are also created with history, time, and place.

V. Conclusion

*Painting Parallels* depends on the viewer to make free associations of my drawings, to access the work through a system of abstraction in order to locate meaning. My drawings and paintings speak, complement, and inform each other as in a dialogue. I use formal line and shape to reorganize thoughts to illustrate a cohesive understanding about the human condition which often exists as a vacillating mental state.

In both bodies of work, I try to avoid clutter and confusion. I see both mediums as intrinsic to one another. An intuitive process of drawing allows me to paint with precision and clarity. Ideally, I try to extract something pure from this system of working-- where I anticipate a revelation or surprise, which is always what I hope for.
Images

Fig. 1

Fig. 2
Bibliography


“Painting Pros and Cons. A Conversation between Laurie Fendrich and Peter Plagens.”

