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ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
The College of Imaging Arts and Sciences
School of Art
In Candidacy for the Degree of
MASTER OF FINE ARTS – Fine Arts Studio

MEDITATIONS

by

Jillian C. Miyagi

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Thesis Approval

Thesis Title: Meditations

Thesis Author: Jillian C. Miyagi

Chief Advisor: Dr. Thomas R. Lightfoot

Associate Advisor: Zerbe Sodervick

Department Chairperson: Glen Hintz

ABSTRACT

My early work was very much influenced by the energetic and emotional qualities found in Louise Fishman's and Joan Mitchell's paintings. I wanted my work to draw the viewer into the depths of the painting; however the sudden deaths of my grandfather and father within months of each other had an extremely profound effect on me and my artwork. I was no longer able to invite the viewer beyond the surface of my work, because I was too afraid to delve deeper into my own emotions. While pursuing my MFA at Rochester Institute of Technology, I was able to refine and simplify my work through influences from Process Art, Minimalism, and Abstract Expressionism. A final body of work developed, which employed the use of multiple canvases in each piece with a monochromatic color palette and undulating lines that wound across and over their edges, suggesting connectedness between parts. The final body of work became therapeutic and representative of artifacts and maps, which allowed me to examine both my past and places where I had been while also suggesting pathways into the future. For me, the practice of making art became a form of meditation, a way for me to free myself from disruptive thoughts, hesitation, and emotion. It allowed me to tap into my intuition, and let the composition of the work develop without premeditation. By focusing on the meditative qualities of producing a final body of work, I was able to become a more complete and healthy version of myself.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis project explores the formal elements of art and design in conjunction with the artist's use of meditation as a form of art practice.

For me, painting is a form of meditation. It is a way for me to free myself from disruptive thoughts, hesitation, and emotion. It is a way for me to tap into my intuition, and let the composition of the painting develop without premeditation.

Each painting is started in a similar fashion: colors are chosen from the *Principals of Color Design: Designing with Electronic Color* by Wucius Wong, or interpreted from the color palettes of other design-based artists. A ground color wash is applied to the primed canvas and then linear elements are painted on with a filbert brush. The number of elements within the work is minimized in order to simplify the composition of the painting. The repetitiveness of the flowing lines and the speed at which they are applied, helps to put my mind into a meditative state.

All work was done using acrylic paint with a focus on the formal elements of design, such as texture, line work, and composition. The colors are neutral for the project, to bring focus to the other design elements. The work itself does not have an outward appearance of meditation, but through this written component, the creative intent and journey of the artist is revealed. The work was intended to be open to interpretation upon viewing.

For the past nine years, I have been trying to deal with the death of my father. It triggered a series of aftershocks that changed me both personally and artistically. With my undergraduate work, I saw my paintings as a physical representation of my alter ego. The brush marks were aggressive and bold, the composition was complicated and chaotic, and the color palette was, to a certain extent, ugly. I strove for them to be complete opposites of what I am in real life: shy, quiet, modest, and afraid. I saw painting as the only real way of freeing myself from the burdens of a socially anxious personality.

I thought that I needed to fight against the stereotypes of how a woman should act, how a Japanese woman should act, how a woman should paint, and how a Japanese woman should paint. I wanted my work to be tough and ugly; I wanted it to stand up to a painting made by a man, and I wanted it to be in your face. I wanted to make paintings that instilled a sort of visceral response in the viewer, work that really made the viewer react - both physically and emotionally. I wanted to make work that drew them into the canvas to explore the world that lay in front of them (Fig. 1 and 2).

I wanted my work to be free of gender and cultural stereotypes; strong enough to hold its own in the art world and in the realm of abstract painting, like the work of Louise Fishman and Joan Mitchell. Fishman's paintings drew me in because of their rough gestural marks, which create a sense of energy and emotion; the texture of the oil paint, which is layered thick in some areas and thinner in other areas; the color palette, which is mostly neutral with pops of bright color; the loose grids, which are scraped out, helping to portray the physical sensation of scrapping the canvas; and the drippy washes of color, which play off the thick layers of gestural brush marks. All of these painting techniques are evident in her 2011 painting titled, *A Simple*



Fig. 1. *tdm*, 2007



Fig. 2. *Untitled*, 2007

Pulsation. Her work is definitely not aesthetically beautiful in a conventional sense; it is tough, but the intensity and application of the brushstrokes work together to draw you into the canvas.

In the catalogue for Fishman's 2012 solo exhibition at Cheim & Read in New York, Judith E. Stein noted that Fishman was influenced by Franz Kline, Jackson Pollock, and Willem de Kooning - many of the same artists that I admire and have been influenced by as well. Joan Mitchell also influenced Fishman, which I think is part of the reason why I am inspired by both of their work. The highly energetic brushstrokes in Mitchell's paintings are particularly notable. For example, in her *Untitled* (1952) paintings (78 7/8" x 73 3/4" and 65" x 60 3/4"), the brushwork is very gestural and suggests a sense of movement - helping the viewer's eye to move around the canvas - like a dance or piece of music.

When I look at Fishman's and Mitchell's work, I cannot visually distinguish whether they were made by a man or a woman, and that was something that I wanted to strive for in my own work. The male/female stereotypes, I believe, were of my own making, but they were still something that I felt I needed to fight against. I didn't want to be seen as just a woman painter or just a cute Japanese girl, even though I fall victim to both of those generalizations. I didn't want to follow the rules of what was expected of me, and I didn't want to get trapped or categorized, even though it is hard not to. I just wanted to mess with people's expectations of me.

I also wanted my paintings to comment on retail culture, not from a critical point of view, but more of an acknowledgement of its existence and its effect on my life. I am surrounded by it, not only because it is part of popular culture, but it is also my work environment. At this time, my artwork employed the use of the color palettes from both Victoria's Secret and Banana Republic packaging designs. My work was also connected to the elements found in Pop Art, concerning itself more within the framework of Andy Warhol's paintings and his connection to

retail culture as a fashion illustrator and commercial artist. Similar to Warhol's beginning as a commercial artist, my creative background includes a degree in graphic design, which has influenced the way my paintings are composed. The sense of design in my paintings, through the choice of color palettes that grab the viewer's attention, create a sense of organized chaos with their compositional layouts. Even though I was influenced by design and retail culture, I didn't want my work to solely focus on that influence. I didn't want to show a direct connection to it like Warhol's work. I wanted my work to reference it, but be able to stand on its own without the immediate knowledge or connection to it (Fig. 3 and 4).

Up until December 2006, I had a solid idea of what I was trying to achieve with my work. There were personal stereotypes that I wanted to address and there was meaning behind my color palette and mark making techniques. There was a sense of art history that I was referencing and there was a sense of my own personal history that was included in that. But then everything started to change when I lost my grandfather. The day I found out, I was in my studio painting. Everything just seemed to drain out of me. I didn't know what I was doing anymore. The artistic language that I used in my work became muddled and unclear. Everything I painted seemed so vacant. I was no longer a part of the process - the artist removed.

In March 2007, I lost my father.

It has been a struggle every day to try and find myself again. My paintings became a jumbled mess and my father's sudden passing changed the way I looked at life. The stereotypes that I tried to address were no longer part of my artistic language because my role had changed. I was confronted with the responsibilities of being the oldest daughter, having to help make arrangements for his funeral. This made me take on a more traditional Japanese role - something



Fig. 3. *Untitled*, 2007



Fig. 4. *Untitled*, 2007

I was not used to. It made me question the issue I had brought up with my undergraduate thesis: why was I making a big deal about being a Japanese female artist?

I was no longer able to fight the self-imposed stereotypes of being a well-behaved Japanese woman, due to the circumstances surrounding my father's death. In the process of making work, I started to distance myself from going in too deep, because I was afraid of what I might find there. I was not ready to face the issues my work was concerned with earlier, and feelings of disinterest, loss, and confusion started to come to light in my work.

Consciously, I wanted my work to have a surface that would bring people in closer; something that could be interacted with, from both an emotional and physical standpoint, and something that would invite the viewer to look past the immediate surface of the canvas and drag them deeper into the history of the painting itself. I found, however, that I could no longer do this. I was more reluctant to explore the depths of things. The more I tried and the harder I worked, the more disconnected I seemed to become. The interaction stopped at the surface. The viewer was no longer invited in to explore the depths of the painting, essentially because there was nothing beyond the surface of the canvas. The painting became more about the process rather than the content.

When I entered RIT in 2008, my work was still in a transitional period. Instead of using many different elements in the painting, such as loose grids, geometric forms, drips, texture, lines, and shading, I had narrowed it down to a flat ground color and undulating lines. My paintings still employed the use of bright colors, but they were mainly concerned with design elements, such as form and color, rather than trying to convey an emotional or significantly deeper meaning within the art. Limiting my focus challenged the idea that bright colors convey perceptions of energy and positive emotion. The undulating lines were not uniform in size, as I

used different styles and sizes of brushes. In addition, some of the colors that I used were based on my memory, and interpretation of the color palette from a specific fabric design or outfit combination (Fig. 5 - 7).

By narrowing the number of elements to undulating lines and a ground color, I simplified my paintings. Considering my ethnic heritage, the line is like Asian calligraphy, which is both simplistic and expressive at the same time, making a connection to the work of Mark Tobey, Brice Marden, and Franz Kline. In *Art of the 20th Century*, Ruhrberg writes about Tobey's work and his influences:

The experience of Chinese and Japanese art...revealed to Tobey the expressive potentials of line, as an autonomous force independent of, and indeed opposed to, the element of volume. (Ruhrberg 2000, 287)

Brice Marden attributes his interest in calligraphy to viewing an exhibition in 1984 showcasing 8th-19th century Japanese calligraphy masters (Costello 2013, 80). Even though Kline was reluctant to admit his work's connection to Asian calligraphy (Lucie-Smith 2001, 31), his gestural brush strokes emit that same kind of simplistic, yet very expressive line quality.

In the fall of 2007, I was able to see the exhibition, "Birth of the Cool: California Art, Design, and Culture at Midcentury" at the Orange County Museum of Art in Newport Beach, CA. The artists included in the painting portion of the show were Hard-Edge painters of California during the 1950s: Karl Benjamin, Frederick Hammersley, and Lorser Feitelson. In the accompanying exhibition book, Elizabeth Armstrong explained that their work could be seen as "closely connected to the dynamic forms of midcentury modernist architecture and design, which permeate the physical and cultural landscape of Southern California." Inspired by the work I



Fig. 5. *Penguin*, 2007



Fig. 6. *pillow talk*, 2007



Fig. 7. *mjm#1*, 2009

saw in the show, I started to rely heavily on my interpretation of those artist's color palettes in my paintings, as a sort of homage to their work and the midcentury design era (Fig. 8 - 10).

In 2008, I started to experiment with multiple compositions in my individual artworks. Examples of this format were my untitled acrylic paintings on paper (Fig. 11 and 12). Instead of only using one canvas (or paper substrate), I was inspired by Mary Heilmann's unconventional approach that morphed two canvases into one. Her works *Miramar* (1994) and *Sea of Joy* (2006) expanded the surface of her work, without utilizing a larger scale canvas or substrate. Instead of emulating Heilmann's canvases exactly, I chose to work with multiple canvases, which gave me the option to play with the space in-between, creating the illusion that the lines continued off of the canvas or paper with no specific end in sight.

In 2009, I was officially diagnosed with chronic depression, Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD), and social anxiety. I began a regimen of medication and therapy sessions to help me deal with my condition, as well as my past issues with personal loss. This is when I started to see art making as potentially therapeutic. The lines became representative of my life's path and, in painting them out onto the canvas, I was attempting to find a clear way to a happier, more fulfilling path to my future. They became an exercise in trying to visually externalize what I felt I was experiencing. In a journal note from July 2009, I wrote the following:

By trying to remove emotion from my work, I am desperately trying to free myself - because emotions weigh heavy on my mind...they cause panic/anxiety...distraction...pain...doubt. But I keep getting pulled back into the thick of things...a twisted, tangled beautiful mess...and I can't find my way out. Even in a state of meditation, my subconscious weaves its way back into the driving force that will



Fig. 8. *FH#1*, 2009



Fig. 9. *LF#1*, 2009

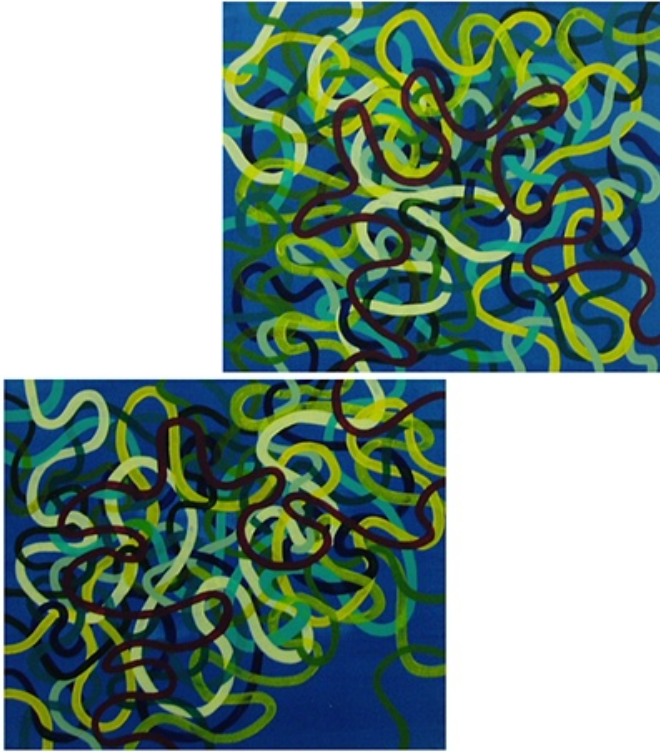


Fig. 10. *KB#1*, 2009

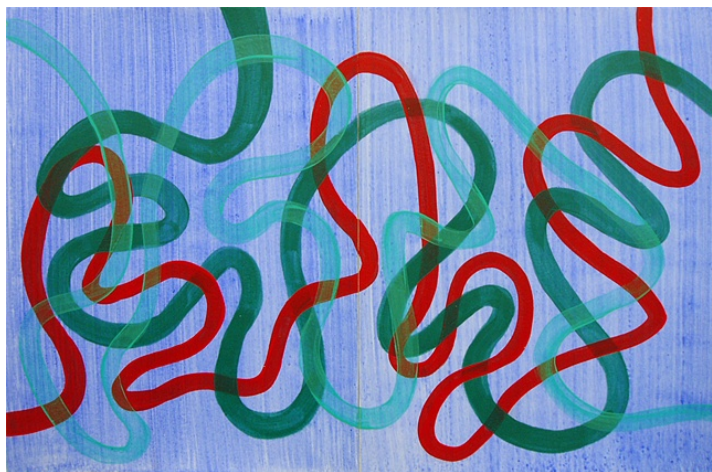


Fig. 11. *Untitled*, 2008



Fig. 12. *Untitled*, 2008

forever connect me to humanity. I paint to lose myself...to become something other than this human shell that I inhabit. But in the end...I am always drawn back to mankind and the endless search for a significant and meaningful connection.

The final body of work is the culmination and simplification of my artistic process. The work itself is a combination of Process, Formalism, Minimalism, and Abstract Expressionism. It has become more about the act and process of making work, rather than the outcome or meaning of the work itself.

The Guggenheim Museum website states that, “Process art emphasizes the ‘process’ of making art (rather than any predetermined composition or plan) and the concepts of change and transience” (Guggenheim 2015, *Process Art*). My work can be connected to Process art in the sense that it is mainly a process-based act of making art. I consider everything to be part of the making of the final work, including the act of stretching and priming the canvas, mixing paint, and finally the application of the paint itself.

My work has a definite connection to the ideas found in Formalism, because it is concerned with the design elements and compositional layout of the painting itself. According to *The Art Story Foundation*, Formalism is defined as:

...a particular mode of art criticism and theory according to which all visual art has an intrinsic value. This value is determined by the artist's ability to achieve an aesthetic order and balance of certain elemental truths within a painting. These elemental truths are the painting's use of color, line, composition and texture. No matter how

much artistic style and taste may change over time, formalism holds that these truths are constant. (The Art Story 2015, website)

I think my background in graphic design influences my interest and subsequent usage of formalist ideas in my paintings. I see it as part of the act of simplifying my work by bringing the viewer's focus to the design elements found in the work, rather than trying to convey a specific message. In *Abstract Art in the Late Twentieth Century*, Frances Colpitt states that "...formalism aspires to objectivity by accounting for characteristics available to anyone's eyes." (Colpitt 2002, 159). By doing this, I believe that the work becomes more accessible to a wider audience, because it focuses on the basic elements that make up a work of art.

My work is also connected to Minimalism, because I am "reducing painting and sculpture to [the] essentials" (MOCA 2015, website), which also ties into how I employ the ideas behind process-based art. The act of making the art is pared down to the bare minimum, including the color palette. Also, Minimalism is about the viewer's experience of the artwork (Guggenheim 2015, *Minimalism*), which I think attributes to the notion that the work can be interpreted a number of different ways by each viewer, including the artist. In *Art Since 1960*, Michael Archer wrote:

Minimal art, then, did not represent anything or refer directly to anything else in such a way as to render its own authenticity dependent upon the adequacy of its illustrative likeness to that other thing. It was not metaphorical and it did not offer itself as the symbol of some spiritual or metaphysical truth. This fact also accounts for a vast number of works of art called 'Untitled', since

giving something a name would render it subordinate to whatever it was named after. (Archer 2002, 51)

My work is also very much influenced by the artists in the Abstract Expressionist/Action Painting art movement, because of the gestural brushwork and the idea that a painting can be just a painting; it does not have to have another meaning or represent anything at all. In *Art of the 20th Century*, Karl Ruhrberg writes that:

In Action Painting the gesture and resulting brushstroke express themselves rather than any extraneous meaning; the process of painting represents the content of the picture. (Ruhrberg 2000, 273)

In *Pictures of Nothing: Abstract Art Since Pollock*, Kirk Varnedoe talks about how Pollock treated the painting as “...an object in the world, an extension of the physicality of the world, not a window onto anything else.” (Varnedoe 2006, 99)

The final body of work for my thesis consists of two “spaces.” *Space #1* contains eight canvases that, when shown together, are approximately 10’ x 5.’ I used a combination of white and dark gray acrylic paint and silver spray paint for the main front surfaces of each canvas, while allowing the gray (acrylic) ground wash to drip over the sides. For me, the painting does not stop at the edge of the surface. The edges are just as much a part of the final piece as the front of the canvas. The act of working in this manner, supported the idea of painting as object (Wagner 2007, 308), while it also helped to show the history of the painting process itself (Fig. 13 and 14).

Space #2 contains thirty small canvases and panels, the largest size being 6” x 6.” I used a combination of acrylic paint and gesso for each canvas or panel. These paintings are all white in color; however, some whites are matte, while others are pearlized or glossy. I wanted the



Fig. 13. *Installation shot of Space #1, 2010*



Fig. 14. *Detail shot of paintings in Space #1, 2010*

differences to be very subtle, because I want the viewer to get in close and really study each individual piece on its own. The idea behind the white paintings is to work with the interplay of light and texture, creating a subtlety of form, light, space, and texture. The configuration of the white canvases and panels can be changed for each installation; there is no permanent arrangement (Fig. 15 - 17).

In the process of creating the work, the repetitive movements in preparing the canvas and in applying the paint helped to induce a meditative state, while the monochromatic color palette provided a visually calm environment. This act is very similar to Joan Mitchell's goal when making a painting. What she aspires to "is 'lack of consciousness of self,' total involvement in the act of painting and letting the canvas tell her what to do..." (Bernstock 1997, 33). The idea behind choosing these colors is to go back to basics and to start fresh, much like a beginner's drawing class. It was part of the simplification process, and it also helped to focus on the overall purpose of the painting project.

The negative spaces became an integral part of the piece as well, by taking them into consideration and including them as part of the process and composition. There is a connection to Frank Stella's work in the sense that he was producing objects that generated space outside of themselves and activated the space around them (Varnedoe 2006, 100).

Ultimately, researching and producing this work has been a personal exercise. The process allowed me to find an intimate balance within myself; it was a meditative experience because I used the act of painting as a release. It has been part of my healing process - an experimental exercise of movement (meditation), created by the repetitiveness of the brushstrokes and the calming neutral colors. I have regarded it as part of what I have had to do in order to be myself; to become a better, more complete and healthy version of myself.

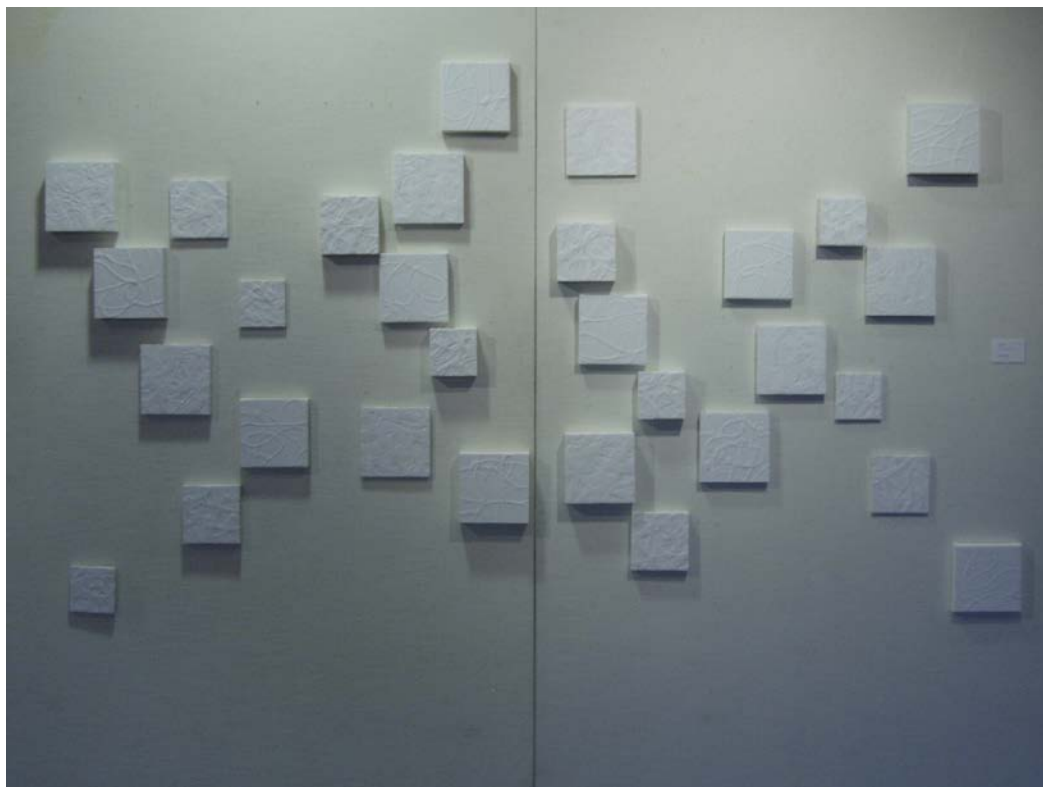


Fig. 15. *Installation shot of Space #2, 2010*



Fig. 16. *#1 Detail shot of painting in Space #2, 2010*

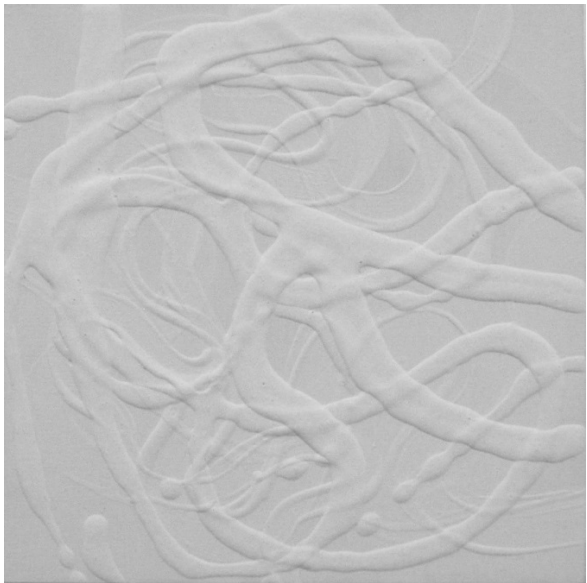


Fig. 17. *#2 Detail shot of painting in Space #2, 2010*

The work is intended to be interpreted differently by each viewer; however, there are a few different connections that can be made.

In viewing the white pieces, there was one idea that the work can infer a connection to archaeology. The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines archaeology as “the scientific study of material remains (as fossil relics, artifacts, and monuments) of past human life and activities” (Merriam-Webster 2015, website). This ties into the textures made by the medium used on the pieces themselves. Some of them were sanded down, which is reminiscent of how land might erode over time. This leaves once hidden areas now newly exposed; they could also be viewed as a type of fossil remain.

The floor piece can be seen as a topographical map and the artist as map-maker. In *You Are Here: Personal Geographies and Other Maps of the Imagination* (ed. by Katharine Harmon), Stephen S. Hall talks about life’s experiences in relation to maps and geography in his piece, “I, Mercator.” He writes:

As we navigate on the trip that Dante called ‘our life’s way,’ we are all creating our private maps. Like [Gerardus] Mercator [16th century cartographer], we are not discovering entirely new worlds; rather, we are laying a new set of lines down on a known but changing world, arranging and rearranging metaphysical rhumbs that we associate with successful navigation. (Hall 2003, 15)

My work could also be seen as representative of life’s journey. The line becomes a path, creating a journey that the viewer takes with their eyes. It’s about the process; it’s about life and what you go through; it’s about the journey (of making the work and of life itself) and the events that shape what I do. It is also about control and the lack of control; how life can get in the way

and disrupt things. It's about the past and how it has affected me, but it is also about how I work towards the future. Hall explains it best, when he writes:

...I have roamed across state lines and oceans and continents,
backwards in time, each thought colored according to a personal
legend corresponding to the elevation and depressions of my private
humors: pride, wonder, sadness, remorse. (Hall 2003, 15)

The work itself has been simplified, the colors stripped down to the bare minimum (neutrals), in order to help bring the focus onto the process of making the work. And in making the work, it acted as a release, very similar to a therapy session with a psychologist or counselor. I have let go of things that were bottled up inside of me - like life experiences - and I put them onto the canvas. It's easier for me to express myself through the act of making a painting, even though I'm not entirely sure what it is I'm expressing. The paintings are like cryptic releases of memory, in the form of a painted line but, I don't know what it is exactly that I'm releasing.

Clement Greenberg describes it best, when he wrote:

But then we always come back to the fact that we don't know what
goes on inside us when we make art or experience art. We can
recognize it but we don't know verbally. And discussions of art
come around to that again and again. The impenetrability of
discursive reason of art by analytical, intellectual reasons, intellect,
and so forth. (Greenberg 2000, 114)

When I'm painting, the paintbrush becomes an extension of my body. I'm breathing, and in doing so, I let my brush flow to places I had been to before and to places that I hoped to explore in the future. My journey was not a literal visual depiction, but an abstract one. It's

showing the viewer a path; where that path may lead, no one knows yet. It treats the viewer as a “map-reader,” where they can interpret the painting their own way. Hall writes:

When it comes to orientating, the mood of the map-reader colors the map itself. The ability to conjure, the willingness to fill in the blanks, the urgency with which one needs to know - all contribute to what the map becomes in the hands of the inspired imaginer...

(Hall 2003, 16)

For myself, I think the notion of the line as a journey or path, is literally tied to taking road trips and growing up in Southern California. I've traveled the freeway system my whole life. It stretches all over the state, intertwining with other highways and interstates. I feel like the curve of the concrete interchanges and the way the highway winds through downtown L.A., or the way tar is used to temporarily cover up the cracks in the streets subconsciously influenced my work. It seems to always come back to the journey, of going places, of trying to get from one place to the next, of moving forward.

Archaeology and cartography are only examples of what the viewer may see when looking at my thesis exhibition pieces. The work is the end result of trying to find myself within the framework of my past, my culture, my history, and art history in general.

The exhibition of my graduate thesis work turned out well; however, there were some installation issues that were specific to the gallery space. The walls, on which the white paintings (*Space #2*) were displayed, were textured and off-white in color, and had scuff marks. There was also a seam running down through the middle of the piece, as these were free-standing walls/panels that could be grouped together to form larger sections of walls or split apart as necessary. Ideally, the white paintings should be exhibited on a flat, seamless white wall,

preferably the same color as the paintings themselves. The paintings should become part of the wall itself, making it seem like they are connected. The configuration of the canvases and panels are not permanent and can be shown in different combinations each time. I would like to explore the idea of having the audience participate in the way that the canvases and panels are shown, making the piece interactive and always impermanent. If the pieces were to be shown this way, I would need to take into consideration the spacing and implementation of wall hardware for the canvases and panels to be hung on, how the audience will handle the pieces (i.e., provide gloves), and the implementation of written guidelines on how to view and interact with the piece. The one criticism that I have, regarding the art itself, is that there could have been more variation in terms of canvas and panel sizes with the white paintings, because the limited sizes made it feel a little constrained.

The implementation of the floor piece (*Space #1*) ran into some space issues. I was limited to a smaller amount of space than originally anticipated. The end result felt a little cramped, but the alternating heights of the canvases helped break up the tight spacing, as well as show off the drips on the sides. This floor piece also ran into some exhibition issues when a couple of young children jumped on the canvases, because the area was not roped off. I specifically chose not to rope off the area because I didn't want my work to be regarded as sculpture, and I didn't want to create a barrier between the viewer and the work. Unfortunately, I don't think the piece was successful in terms of how it was displayed. If I were to show this piece again, I would consider placing the canvases on a platform (with a minimum height of eight inches) or placing them on a different color background or backdrop (one that matches the color of the drips, so that it implies that the painting dripped onto the floor) and cordon them off to prevent potentially damaging incidents from happening. The other issue that I had with *Space*

#1, was the black felt background that the canvases were placed on. The felt ended up collecting a lot of dust and dirt from the constant opening and closing of the building doors, which made it difficult to keep clean. To avoid the installation issues of placing the canvases on the floor, they could also be shown traditionally hung on the wall; each canvas individually, or in a number of different combinations. They do not have to be shown the same way each time.

In researching the ideas and influences behind my work, I realized that I could have expanded on a few different areas, including the influence of midcentury modern design, experimenting with shaped canvases, and the possibility of using other types of medium, such as watercolor, oil paint, or non-toxic printmaking techniques, to explore the same issues as my thesis project. However, I think for that time period of my life, the work I made was appropriate for what I was going through and I would only really change the way it was exhibited, not the actual work. I am still interested in using art making as a type of therapy, but now I am experimenting with different methods, such as drawing, and the more craft-based methods of sewing, knitting, and baking. If I stop to think about it, all of these are process-based, and still fall in line with what I was trying to achieve with my paintings.

In going forward, I have already begun to use brighter colors in my newer work, but I am limiting it to varying shades of one color. The process is the same, but I'm not sure if I will be able to achieve the same calming environment that I did with my thesis project if I choose to use bright colors (Fig. 18 and 19). I would be interested in re-incorporating geometric shapes into my paintings, but in doing so, I feel it would be best to start off with neutral colors again, to see if it would have the same meditative effect as my line paintings. I don't think I would ever be able to go back to the style of painting that I started with in my undergraduate paintings, but tough-to-look-at gestural work has always been interesting to me, so I may come back to that in

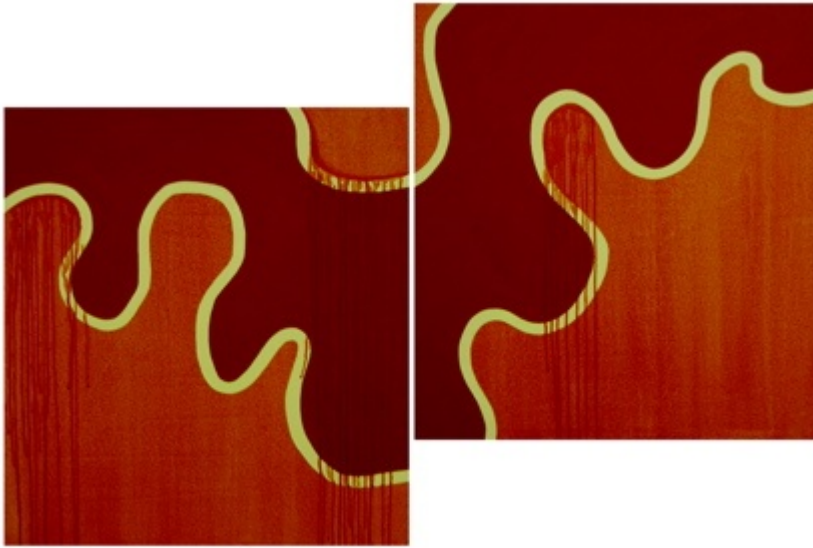


Fig. 18. *#1 and #2*, 2010



Fig. 19. *lakeside*, 2010

the future. I have always liked the fact that I can get lost in it, because it can be whatever I want it to be, and I like the open-endedness that abstract painting offers to the viewer.

This path that I'm on is still ongoing and there is no end in sight, but I will continue to use artistic outlets as therapy. There will always be awkward times when I will have to start over, times when I must find myself again, but I know that this is something that needs to happen. This is what it means to be an artist. And this is what it means to be me.

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