

Master of Fine Arts Thesis

In Through The Out Door

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In Through The Out Door

Preface

I am using installation in painting to develop narratives and abstract storylines about the tangibility and or misinterpretation of presence. Speaking to the temporality of people and place, I am highlighting the overlooked to confuse or disturb the comfortability of repetition, challenging perspective and posing questions to the expected. Through a commercialized vocabulary of color and pattern, I create overly decorated interior and exterior spaces that seem like a fraud or mask for reality, hiding behind a “sugar-coated” veil of false presentation. Taking kitsch by the horns, the work addresses childhood, family dynamics, the distorted sense of home, and time. The paintings obtain a certain object-hood, both in the physicality of the paint and through installation, that becomes like a posed reality or “living still-life”. Wrapped in gold, but empty enough that you could blow it over. Padded and packaged, enticing and tantalizing, they offer an interaction with the viewer, seeking a concrete presence to challenge their own. Relationships, moments, and memories somehow fade into obliteration, with only subtle footprints to remind us that it even happened. What do you grab on to and what do you choose to be present for? The people that come and go out of your life are the supporting actors, while the stained rim of the coffee cup, or the flannel that you left swung over the chair after you got home are just the marks that you hit before the director yells “END SCENE”. The paintings act as anecdotes or evidence of time. Toying with the past, present, and future, they feel still, like something just happened or is about to. They confront the unsettling fragmentation of time and place, the lonely, the waiting, and the forgotten. Like a set design, the work stands in place, waiting to be read back to front, side to side, or up and down. What happens when the linear path instead trickles in like raindrops, shifting and staggering down the dotted yellow line.

The Porch Light's On

Overwhelming, obnoxious, uninviting

Like a gnat to sweaty skin, or a moth to a porch light.

A cheap motel screaming "VACANCY"

Luring you in... for better or for worse. Honestly, what does that even mean?

There's a bad taste in my mouth. Maybe its the citronella

It's like a game of cat and mouse, but who's chasing who?

Catch me if you can, Road Runner.

Call me Tweety. Call me Tweety. Call me Tweety.

To talk about what?

Empty openings. Open endings.

Where are you, seriously where are you?

Look what you made me do. But thank you for making me do it.

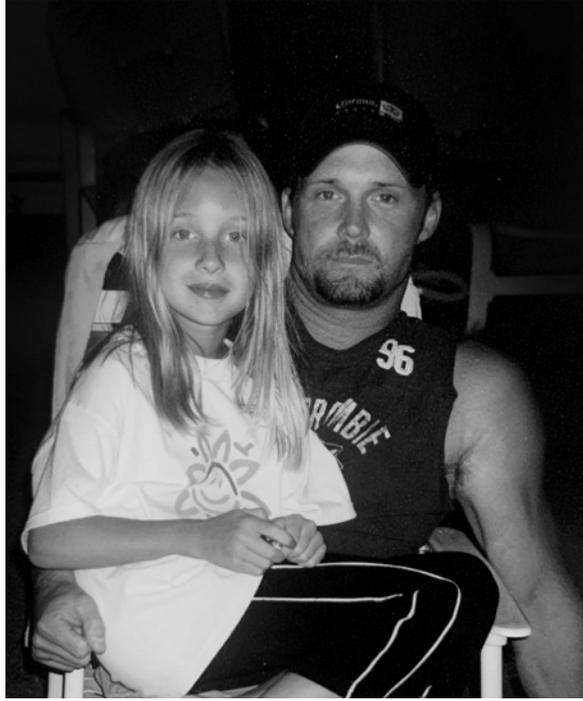
I do it because of you, not for you. Read that again.

Look at me, please, I'm begging you.

Desperate fuck. Wait, am I talking about me or you.

They say misery loves company, so hurry up, the porch light's on.

Presence and the Absence of Presence



Presents for Presence

Presence is a very ambiguous term. It's a term that is very confusing to me and something that has really driven my practice over the past two years. The meaning of presence changes every so often for me. I think there's four main factors that could signify presence. That being the lack of presence from a living person, the loss of presence due to a death, the presence of someone or something in a physical place, and the presence of someone or something as an energy. An ever-changing term that is very much *present* in my mind.

I didn't start thinking about "presence" until I was around maybe six years old, and I'll tell you why. Long story short, from the moment I was born, I had a very unusual relationship with my father. He and my mother never married but were in a relationship up until my mom found out she was pregnant with me. He grew up in the town right next to mine, but his mother lived in Florida so he moved there sometime before I was born. My early childhood felt completely normal, though I lived in a house with only my mother since my parents did not share custody. My dad would come visit (what felt like)

monthly, maybe every other, but it seemed fairly often. Often enough not to raise any suspicion with me. He taught me about art, how to draw and paint, he taught me about music and how to play the piano. I held on to every minute spent with him. It wasn't until I was between the ages of six and nine that I started realizing some things were off with my family dynamics in comparison to the other families I was growing up with. My dad started coming to town much less than what I had gotten use to. It started as rescheduling, eventually turning into no shows and excuses on top of excuses. I remember, even at such a young age, always trying to be sympathetic to the fact that "life happened" and things came up.

I was nine years old. Let me break down for you, the emotional development of a nine year old.

- recognize basic social norms and appropriate behavior
- have gained a strong sense of empathy, which is understanding and being sensitive to the feelings of others
- have a growing independence but still seek emotional reassurance from their parents ¹

It is a very formative and important year. I was nine when I saw my dad for the last time. He made his final visit when I was in fourth grade. I don't think there are any words to describe the amount of confusion and feeling of neglect that I experienced as a little girl. And trying to describe that to someone else? Forget it. You question your worth, you question if it was your fault, you question what you did or what you could have done to change things. At nine years old, I decided that I would change my outlook on life and start to be more present in everything I did, because I knew how it felt to be the unfinished drawing. Though my dad wasn't visiting anymore, he still sent packages and presents for a few more years on birthdays or holidays, as if a new game or electronic device could make up for him not being there. "Presents in place of presence". No matter how heavy the boxes, they always came up empty because no physical object could fill that void. The voicemails continued for a few more years after the gifts stopped coming, but they'd soon end as well.

Don't get me wrong, I have so much love for this man, and I will forever be thankful that he gave me the gift of creativity, which has seemed to make up for all the empty boxes. The story between my dad and I didn't end when I was nine. It started. I came to understand who I was and who I wanted to be because of his absence and *that* was the most formative thing that could have happened to me. The most present feeling in my life is from the absence of someone else.

¹ "Milestones for 9-Year-Olds." Milestones for 9-Year-Olds | CS Mott Children's Hospital | Michigan Medicine. C.S. Mott Children's Hospital, August 21, 2019.



Empty Box, 22x30 in., Oil and Spray Paint on Paper. 2019

Accessibility:
A Harmony Of Contradictions

The conversation of accessibility always comes to mind when thinking about how I want my work to be viewed. I like to think of it as an accessibility to the inaccessible, or an inaccessibility to the accessible. If you haven't noticed by now, I like opposites. At first it comes from formal aspects of the work, which then lead to the sudden exposure of the conceptual. There are many artists that take advantage of the specific ideas behind psychology, philosophy, science, and the relatability of universal thoughts, ideas, and understandings through the means of fine art. Among those artists, I am mostly attracted to those who precisely organize a path of distraction and delusion by pulling on commonly understood signifiers. Humans share different versions of the same story. Similar paths, understandings, fears, desires, and needs.

There are ways to expose and make yourself vulnerable, while still protecting your truths only under more digestible terms. For me, the work has to contain humor. This has a lot to do with who I am as a person. I paint my paintings the way I paint my face and dress myself. Exuberant and loud. To be seen and heard long enough to be listened to. The longer you sit with the loudness, the quicker it becomes a whisper, and the longer you ignore a whisper, the quicker it becomes loud. I like the idea of onset in the work. Slow onset, heavy onset, fast onset. How quickly I can capture your attention but lose your interest and vice versa. Alex Da Corte is a prime example of someone who manipulates his audience by using an arrangement of playfully deceiving objects and narratives. As a painter, sculpture, and installation and video artist, Da Corte finds poetry in the consumer culture by intersecting the visual with the psychological. He creates narratives about innocence and the overpowering of consumerism and mass production. Using objects and materials that are detached from their original function, he gives them new potential both symbolically and formally. He thinks of these objects as tracing an action, never being static or still, but alive with a story. These objects can sometimes even be stand-ins for people or places. His interests lie in how high-aesthetics can contain a sense of humor.² While everything is over-the-top decorated in his fun-house-like installations, you can't help but notice the subtle shift to the morbid undertones. Working mainly around the parameters of loss, heartbreak, death, disengagement, and consumption, Alex Da Corte orchestrates a body of formal contradictions. He is an artist who truly attacks those inner demons through more approachable and desirable mechanisms. Again, it is all about

² Corte, Alex Da, Susan Cross, Annie Godfrey Larmon, and William Pym. *Alex Da Corte - Free Roses*. Munich ; London ; New York: DelMonico Books, Prestel, 2016.

temporality, both physically and metaphorically. You can draw people in through tactics used in the commercial world, but give subtle hints at those welled up eyes and trembling chins.

The Domestic and the Familiar: Time and the Temporary

The domestic space holds a lot of attachments to object-hood in a more sentimental way. Objects, furniture, dressers, lamps, and doors become oddly more personal based on the relationships they had with their owners and people around them. I think home is the only thing that can have one million different meanings, lives, and stories. Everyone has a different sense of home. And everyone's sense of home has different chapters. The term becomes so broad. Sometimes it doesn't even have a distinct place, it's just a feeling. Home can be a foundation for pockets of time and chunks of memories that we return to both physically and mentally to hold on to relationships and moments. I think of home, presence, and time, as three harmonious forces intertwining and cross-referencing each other. All relative to one another, as essential components to understanding growth, regression, connection, neglect, victory, loss, familiarity, false hope and expectations. "Home" is the stomach of the tenses of time, moving and changing like clockwork but always somehow seeming familiar due to imprint and memory.

No I'm not just talking about the place made up of dry wall, brick, hardwood, house paint, stained carpet, and tacky decorations that you grew up in and only visit for holidays or when you need your laundry done, I'm talking about the idea or feeling of familiarity in people and in place. When we are young, our thoughts are easier and innocently ignorant. Our ideas of time are based solely on the last few minutes of sunset in the backyard before mom calls us in for dinner. Everything is very short-term and immediate in a way. Life is simply surface level for a moment. Real life doesn't really set in until time grabs ahold of it. Suddenly the past is more than just an hour ago. It holds conversations had, smells, tastes, sounds, and feelings, while the present feels like something you can never truly catch up with. It's like counting how long the thunder hits after the lightning strikes. While life feels repetitive, every moment comes unexpectedly. Like an itch needing to be scratched, there's an unsatisfied sense of waiting that comes with the present that never feels taken care of. It seems intangible and unattainable. It's simultaneously expected yet questioned.

People, place, and experiences are temporary, but what has permanence is memory. Art can have a similar affect as all of these factors. It's a completely temporary experience that can still stain our mind.

Installation in Painting

Start to finish

Painting as a sentence

Painting as an object

Painting as a marker of time

Overlapping, connecting and stumbling on punctuation like a run on sentence, the paintings travel through space to form fractured narratives. One painting drops an image off where the other will pick it up. Mirroring, referencing, and connecting with one another. Like a physical still-life, the work expands on the parameters of the spacial constructions of foreground, middle ground, and background. Through a controlled, illusionistic space, the paintings confront the physical environment.

Installation to me, is how painting can become a physical experience. The traditional approach to painting has been a bit of a hard pill to swallow for me. Working within the frame of a square, to be seen in the sterile environment of the “white cube” has never interested me. Instead, it has motivated me to question and break down the barriers of the traditions of painting. Painting, in my opinion, is image-making in the broadest sense, and can be pretty much limitless. Image-making to me is anything that can fit in the “frame” of our eyes. Painting is a tool to create an image or idea, just as ceramics or glass might do the same. I think that painting is still very much alive because it is so universal and can be the most interdisciplinary medium of all. I believe I approach my work from more of a sculptural, three-dimensional mind. The surface of the painting, the painting as an object, and the space around the painting, all have the same level of importance to me, and should be considered all at the same time.

There is an ephemerality to my installations that matches the concepts of temporality within the work. I think we spend so much of our lives expecting the next moment and overlooking what is right in front of us, like it will last forever. There isn't the same appreciation toward anything because everything is so expected. We've become so spoiled with time.

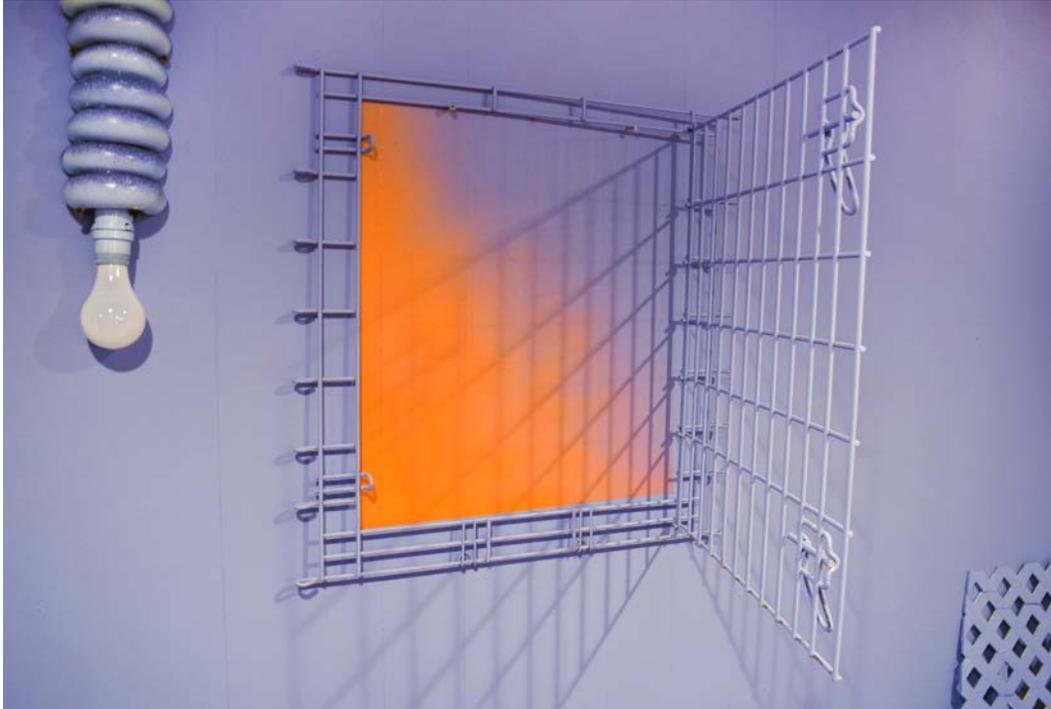
I use to be really precious with my time and my work prior to grad school. I was afraid to make mistakes and even more afraid of letting go of anything. But there's no growth in that mindset. Creating installations that require so much attention and labor, only to be photographed and demolished as little as a day later, has allowed the work and myself to become so much more free from the restrictions that I had given myself for so many years. They can only be seen and experienced for a short time. The ephemerality of these projects has felt so much more in line with how I feel about existence and presence,

and allowing the work to have its own voice in the world, only momentarily. This has engaged a whole new momentum in my practice. There's an immediacy to getting these ideas out into the air before the wind takes them. Just like moments in life, every bit should be accounted for.

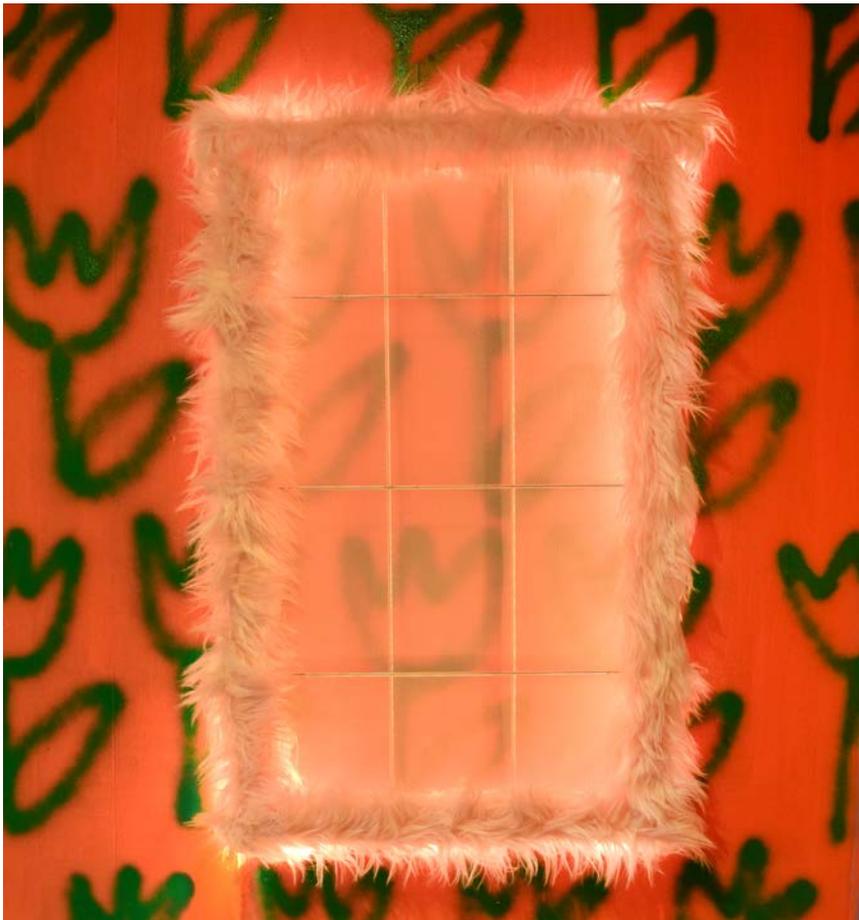
Materiality:

In my work, material has the potential to create its own space amongst the physical and painted space provided. I want the paintings to have their own presence. The flattening and building up of material throughout the painting, allows for certain shifts in understanding the depth and dimensionality of the work. It is important that the work has an intense level of visual tension and friction. This fight between different mediums, textures, and mark making, forces the impression of detachment. I like when parts of the painting or a specific object or form feels like it doesn't fit within the space, like it was collaged on top without any consideration. I think this is why I'm always thinking about my work as staging a still-life, in a sense. Everything is working just so, then all of a sudden something random and out of place is thrown in the mix. Something unsettling and uninvited to the party. I really want there to be a juxtaposition not only between mediums but between the different "hands" in the painting. It's important for me to have a bit of clumsiness in my work. Sometimes I'll ditch the tape and use my shaky caffeine infused hands to make my lines that day, then later come in with a new form that cleans it up. I consider myself a perfectionist when it comes to just about anything, so allowing myself some freedom in the application process is essential to the work, creating a perfect balance.

Material and object choice are essential to each piece. The metaphors that can happen between material, painting, and installation is what feeds the hunger in my work. A dog cage becoming a window, transparent mesh becoming a portal, crinkled acetate as broken glass or water, a bench made out of fencing, wire as a drawing tool, blankets, shower curtains, spray paint, oil, acrylic, nothing is off limits. Clichés and awkward investigations accelerate the tongue-in-cheek behavior of my work. Functionality becomes questionable in the handling of materials and objects. Again, acting as a falsified interpretation of what something should be or should do. A re-purposed reality of sorts.



Porch Light, (Detail)
8x10ft wall, Lightbulb,
ceramic rings, dog
cage, lattice fencing,
spray paint. 2020



Vanity,
3x4 ft., Metal rod
frame, faux fur,
spray paint, LED
lights. 2020

Subverting Rationality

“Cinematic in its staging, the scenes suggest a menacing narrative, but the specifics remain elusive, the visual details hard to reconcile into a single, coherent storyline.”³

Rene Magritte created Surrealist work that was intended to subvert our rational thoughts by freeing the unconscious mind. Questioning the nature of representation and reality, Magritte rendered familiar things into unfamiliar places by changing and manipulating their predictability. He challenged our perception of space by situating us in an uncertain scenario. Addressing painting through symbolism and uncanny juxtapositions, his paintings feel like a puzzle, impossible to navigate yet uncomfortably close to the world as we know it, painted so believably that we are able to sink our teeth right into the confusion that he has set up for us. There is a protection of identity in his paintings as figures are only presented by silhouettes and outlines. The figures, objects, or forms usually exist in a desolate, imaginative landscape. The spaces are quiet and eerie, seeming as though they could be endless, while at the same time, lacking any sort of presence outside of the image within the frame.

I am attracted to artists like Magritte for how he approaches space and perception. He is able to give so much information through a single gradient with a distinct horizon line, or a shadow that can elude to any time of day. The paintings are so relative to time, space, and logic that they become undeniably truthful solely from the way in which they are painted. It has always fascinated me how little information you need in order to read or believe something. Magritte moved in such a way that he could make you believe anything he presented to you. In my work I am trying to be more attentive to the viewer and how they might perceive space. I am interested in how someone can become a bystander or even participate in a story. Are they a passenger or just moving along?

Magritte gave very specific information to everyone and allowed us to do what we pleased with it. There's something about that “on the tip of the tongue” feeling that painting can do for us. Even the most abstract stories can become personal, especially through a domestic and familiar space. We pick up certain things where we drop others. We retain what we can and recycle the rest.

³ Dupêcher, Natalie. “René Magritte.” The Museum of Modern Art. Independent Scholar, 2017.

A Vocabulary Of Iconography

Symbols and iconography are used in advertisement to quickly and subconsciously imprint a commercialized vocabulary onto the mind. In my work, these icons present themselves in the form of boxes or gifts, feet, windows, blinds or curtains, silhouetted flowers, etc. The imagery and objects represent their own meaning of presence, whether it be to dilute, falsify, negate, or enhance their own. They can become antagonists, or confrontational obstacles, obstructing the insistency of monotony. Demanding space and acknowledgement for resurrecting the beauty in overcoming inconsistency, failure and aloneness. Windows and doorways are sweet escapes, offering only a glimpse into separated senses of space and time, without the commitment of having to physically be there. They confuse the reality of an actual presence through a transparent veil, containing personal facades and defense mechanisms against life's unpredictability and from whatever's waiting on the other side. Flower silhouettes and tulips, known for new life, claiming worthiness, or sending a message of forgiveness, stand tall in the foreground of their environments.



Decorated Grave, 72x78 in. Flashe and Oil on Canvas, 4ft MDF Tulips, 2020

Formal Aesthetics :

A Commercial Conversation Between Pattern, Color, and Light

In my work, I address the formalities of painting from a commercial standpoint. I want there to be a direct and immediate pull into the work. Whether it be through the contradictions of color, pattern, light, materiality, or object-hood, the work needs to be alluring and tempting, offering a dance with the viewer's patience. The cold and shallow front acts as a barrier to the real bones of the work, allowing for more nuances in its unveiling. This can be done through the same factors used in advertisement. There's something funny about "over-selling" a product or idea. Decorating, embellishing, embroidering, painting, masking, and covering what still comes up flat beneath the polished surface. Materialistic bandages that hide half truths and empty promises. It's like looking at the glass half full but the glass is filled with corked wine. Psychologically speaking, our eyes are programmed to jump to either bold or unsettling color combinations, sharp lines, and clean edges. Our attention is fixed on the closest thing we can pin to reality, and if nothing fits the mold, our eyes wander until the bread crumbs lead to something new.

Pattern:

Whether the rhythm falls into a synchronized, continuous humming or shutters in grouped increments like a ballad poem, pattern takes its seat right next to color in my work. Formula plays a big roll in my practice. The repetition of movement and form manifests itself into an illusionary space through scale, layering, and subtle adjustments to the template. Gaudy animal prints, fur, and woodgrain are only a few of the common denominators in the paintings. Pattern acts as a regularity to the world. In mathematics and science, pattern acts as a structure for logic and an outline for predictions in nature. Similarly in art, pattern is a way of settling on something and trusting that your brain will fill in the rest. In Jude Stewart's creative and illustrative book about pattern called *Patternalia: An Unconventional History of Polka Dots, Stripes, Plaid, Camouflage, and Other Graphic Patterns*, she states that "Patterns are ubiquitous and largely invisible. We often dismiss them as mere decoration"⁴ therefore solidifying the fact that no matter how distracting and overwhelming they can seem, they somehow become a field of static noise that we stop questioning after a few seconds. Something so loud can become so quiet after only a few minutes. Patterns can sit on top of an object like a collaged cut-out, or they can move in and

⁴ Stewart, Jude. *Patternalia: an Unconventional History of Polka Dots, Stripes, Plaid, Camouflage, & Other Graphic Patterns*. New York: Bloomsbury USA, 2015.

out of space. The patterns I use most predominately in my work are those that relate to interior design or fashion. I love framing objects or even saturating forms in flat patterns that seem to drown out any outside information. The pattern somehow carries a voice throughout the painting, acting as filler text, supporting and emphasizing the main characters of the work.

After receiving my BFA from Alfred University in 2017, I worked for an interior design company called Mackenzie-Childs, where everything is hand painted, including kitchenware, furniture, wallpaper, floor tiles, accessories, you name it. The company is known for their trademark black and white check pattern. Who trademarks checks? I had to literally sign a legal contract that restricted me from painting checks outside of the company's grounds. They combine these checks with animal prints, rainbow stripes, polka dots, paisley, and florals. And everything is considered a luxury item. These horrible concoctions of mismatched colors and patterns are viewed as highbrow statement pieces, signifiers of wealth and upperclass. I painted their furniture. Tables, stools, couches, chairs, lamps, etc. So of course, leaving the company to go to grad school a year later, these ideas of decoration, design, domestic space, and facade very quickly developed in my own work. Nothingness coated in layers of paint and fluffy textures. Patterns started to fill the empty spaces of questions, comments, and concerns. They begin and end the same way, like a never ending loop of information. The only consistency with limitless reliability.

Color:

Color has always come as the most intuitive motive behind the force that drives my work. I like to contradict my expectations of color. Filtering reality through complements, I want to challenge color that feels familiar or has a certain purpose, by turning it inside out to its opposite side, choosing the least obvious approach to chromatic interactions. We have specific emotional responses to certain colors. I use this to my advantage. Color can offer a breath, or can stand as an anchor. I like to find a balance within my paintings through these complements and contradictions. The shift can be subtle or stark, fast or slow. Every color counts, as it holds up the next. Color connections and interpretations are crucial to the work. I have always had an obsession with fashion and home advertisements from the 1920's to the 1960's. There is a certain staleness in the combinations of these colors. A muted, almost dull arrangement of colors that were seemingly once bright. Slightly lifeless separately, but when combined, it's like they're glowing in perfect unison, breathing life into one another. Sometimes when these contrasts are too strong and too close, our eyes make waves of different colors. A Bright Orange next to a Lime Green would trick your eyes into seeing bits of Purple. These reactions happen whether we notice them or not, but they of course happen more rapidly in paintings that are utilizing color or form more graphically in comparison to something more fluid or muddy. Speed in color becomes a tool for me to control the viewers response to

the work, whether I want it to happen fast or slow. I go back to Josef Albers for the way he thinks about the combinations of color. He describes color as an illusion, stating that “we do not see colors as they really are; in our perception they alter one another”.⁵ His series *Homage to the Square* is a perfect example of this, as each color is based on its neighbor, either diluted or intensified by the particular sequences. With the relativity of color being at the forefront of my practice, I like the idea that colors are working together, no matter how displaced they seem off the palette.

Light:

Have you ever gone without seeing the sun? I mean, have you ever been in a situation where the only light you're exposed to is from flickering fluorescents for five days out of the week, every week? I drove to work in the dark before sunrise every morning and would walk myself into the windowless cave I called a workspace, in what was ultimately a glorified factory, painting furniture in an assembly-line. When my day was done, I would walk out into the dark. The exact same shade of blueish-black that I saw that morning. Every day, every night.

I never realized how important light and color were until I was denied them. How do you adapt when something so expected goes missing? The falsified presence of light mimicked and copied the real one, but never fully replaced it. It's a trick, an illusion. Something so routine was wiped from my palette. The days blurred into an arrangement of cool blues and stark whites. Being in controlled artificial lighting all week with no sight of the sun, felt like waking up hungover and the only thing you can find to quench your thirst is the spiked fruit punch leftover in the fridge. Light, in my opinion, is something we take for granted. Yes, we recognize the way that light reflects off of a shiny tin teapot, and how the warm hues of an 8:00pm sunset stain the grass and the side of the house, but it isn't considered as much as a secondary source. We respond to the immediate light, whether it's authentic or artificial, and we go with it. We don't question it and we don't challenge it. But what happens when we look at the real affect that light has on *us* before accepting what we see just because it's there? What happens when we use light as a tool of new understanding or seeing, just as we would use any other tool, like color or line? How can we consider light and space just as much as we would anything else in our practice. I return to Olafur Eliasson and his study on our chemical response to color. I am fascinated by the way he uses colored light to manipulate the way we see and experience something. It may only last for a few seconds but it has an everlasting shift on our understandings of what we thought we already knew. Eliasson studies the space between the viewer and the work itself, and the subconscious level of understanding that only happens with a heightened sense of self actualization by utilizing the correct tools to magnify those chemical, biological,

⁵ Albers, Josef. *Interaction of Color*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013.

and psychological responses and reactions.⁶ His work is about capturing or somehow solidifying the ephemeral. The work does not lie within the physical space, it lies within the viewer. Only we are able to see the true work due to our chemical make up. I think this is obviously an intense, psychological way of thinking about projecting and delivering art to the world, but it is also important to understand how much of our knowledge and usual way of thinking can be pushed and questioned just based off of the combinations of a few factors and components.

In my work I like to justify the use of light by considering how much light makes up a space. Space exists because of shadow and light, so I try to push that within my own work. I use faux shadows to enhance and counter the positions of the real light. Objects and figures in the paintings carry onto the physical wall as distorted shadows, and the real projections of shadow are enhanced and decorated. I love the idea of pushing and pulling against the architecture and allowing the work to reside somewhere in the middle.



Vibrations, 8x10 ft wall. MDF, Faux Fur, Acrylic. 2018

⁶ Grynstejn, Madeleine, Eliasson Ólafur, and Mieke Bal. *Take Your Time: Olafur Eliasson*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2007.

Where do you go to get away from yourself?

Keep the windows closed so the ladybugs don't get in. They make the room smell.

I like the way the sun sets sideways down the hill, like someone highlighted the good parts.

It's the only thing that makes me feel like there's more space.

When the sun doesn't come out for a few days, the sky feels too close.

Everything feels too close.

It feels like trying to put on clothes after a hot shower.

I've never craved touch so bad.

Why did I take advantage of it when I had it. What a cliché.

How can anyone breathe right now?

Go back to the window. But keep it closed, remember...

The fifth grade classroom window.

My favorite days were the stormy ones.

The darkest shade of grey saturated the playground's weathered wood.

Leaves rustling through the intermittent breaths of the wind.

The windows tearful, shielding off the darkness of the outside.

They saw both sides at once. Me on one, the storm on the other

Chaos controlled by a single pane of glass.

Some days it feels like I'm on the playground looking in.



April Showers Brought May Mania, 84x84 in. 8x10ft wall, Tulle, MDF. 2020

Unexpected Expectations

Covid-19, Fuckin with my Groove

I think one of the deadliest things to humanity is the unknown. No one has ever learned to deal with it. I mean obviously, because if we knew, it would no longer be the unknown and there wouldn't be anything left to figure out. There wouldn't be anymore growth, invention, or ideas. Although we are the most complex beings on earth, we function pretty simply. We rely on pattern, repetition, and our every day "norms" to operate. We fall into a systematic anchoring of behavioral activity, both psychologically and physically, that develop the burden of expectations.

Expectation is a funny term if you think about it. Are we really so routined that there is such a thing as a concrete expectation? I use to think I knew what to expect out of people and time. The worse thing you can do is get too comfortable. It is kind of ridiculous that we plan things so far in advance... shows, weddings, vacations, parties, when we aren't even fully guaranteed the next few hours. Morbid, I know, but I'm trying to highlight the importance of living in the present and rolling with the punches. Every so often, something comes along and shifts the path which you were walking, changing gears completely. The expected can be contradicted as fast as it was relied on. But you know what? The imbalances and uncertainties are what force and motivate life to progress and develop. My whole life has been defined by loose footing. Learning to accept and move forward in times of hardship has proven itself crucial to my sanity.

Our narratives and stories aren't steady or linear. Steadiness and repetition is contradicted by life's low points, and man are there a lot of them. Periods of disaster have only led to an overshadowing of resilience. The unknown is what triggers unconventional ways of thinking, creativity, and problem solving. I've said it once, i'll say it again.. the Alfred-Düsseldorf first year MFA in Painting program is going down in history in more ways than one!

In Through The Out Door

I struggled to find a fitting title for my thesis body of work. I'm always stepping on my own toes. I'm in a constant struggle with myself and my practice, and I'm my own worst critic. Aren't we all? But like I've said, the victories outweigh the struggles.. tenfold. And this is one of them. My mom suggested I call this body of work *In Through The Out Door*. I've never let her have a voice in my practice because again, I'm a perfectionist, but this one felt right. I've spent my time thinking so much about the misconception of presence and the idea of temporality, that I've overlooked the real permanence that has seen me through on this entire experience. My mom. She is the reason I believe in seeing so much beauty in the present, why I see so much light, color, and energy in the mundane, and why I've developed a love for the bittersweet moments in life. I've projected my wildest dreams so far into the future because of her.

In Through The Out Door (1979), was one of Led Zeppelin's final two LPs, the other being *Presence*. The album received a lot of criticism, but ultimately was born as a result of their personal traumas at the time.⁷ The title felt fitting for my own work. For me, the title became about contradictions in my own life, in time, and in space. It's about working with time not against it. I've found that it's about getting a thousand doors closed on you but somehow being able to find the key to a new one, every single time. Finding unconventional ways of moving forward, against all odds. It's about appreciating the ephemerality of everything. It's about coming and going, but always being present for it. Being present in the absence. Pay attention, and look closer.

⁷ Richardson, Mark. "Led Zeppelin: Presence / In Through the Out Door / Coda." Pitchfork. Pitchfork, July 28, 2015.



In Through The Out Door, 72x78 in., Ink and Oil on Canvas and Wall, 2020

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