

Monste Ferrer: Artist Statement

Water and oil mixing on the street, the gritty sludge that now seeps into the white snow, a chalk drawing on the pavement; these are all nothing, but when noticed become something. I make art based on the little moments in my environment ranging from small sounds, changes in light, reflections and other sensual encounters. The long winter has inspired me to create a series of paintings based on the physical sensations and visual events that I experience daily. The paintings focus on the optical effects achieved when light and dark pigments are married together on a field of a single color.

These works carry a specific mood in comparison to pieces I have done in other seasons; a mood darkened and dulled by the elements, but brought to life with small moments of light. Each one of my paintings is an exploration of texture and tools, as I vary using toothpicks, knives, syringes and sticks to splatter, pull, puddle and drag my paint across the surface. It is a meditative process, one that is all about the paint, my hands, my tools and the surfaces onto which I embed my images. I see beauty in working on a process where a painting is born from a single gesture or moment that can't be repeated. My marks become maps, water, paths and veins; all residues through my days.

My pigments take flight, jumping, leaping from the canvas only to rest in puddles of muddled grays and pools of mauves and blues. Winter's sullen mood is now dashed with light, harsh and unforgiving on my naked eyes. Silence has been interrupted. Paint streams across my canvas, staining it with streaks of color, fighting for small odds in the dark.

As I embark on my final round of paintings for the semester, I have narrowed my focus down to creating works that are visually interesting and provoking based on the interaction of colors and paint as a material on a flat surface. I have made an artistic connection with painters Jules Olitski, Clyfford Still and Gerhard Richter with whom I share similar goals and techniques. I don't see myself as just an abstract painter, like Olitski and Still who use the effects of color and mark making to create dynamic compositions that fully activate the eye. I am not basing my paintings on just color, but on the forms I see around me everyday, and images and moments that usually go unnoticed, but now become concrete in my work.

I have a great investment in the textural qualities of paint when mixed with other mediums or used alone. The creamy nature of paint and its ability to be applied using various materials captivates me as it can so easily morph and create new visual effects with the flick of a brush, finger or knife. I can feel the visceral qualities of Jules Olitski's stroke and the way he layers paint and roughly scrapes back through it, creating a rugged terrain on the canvas. His use of organic shapes both in his impasto work and color paintings breaks out of the mold of traditional geometric abstraction, and allows for deeper study and interpretation of his works.

My work consists of both paintings with deliberate solitary marks, and pieces that are focused on the blending and bleeding of colors to create an atmosphere. Olitski's work *Drakey* creates an ambiance through the use of cloudy pigments mixed and bled together to form a celestial and moving image that is visually and emotionally stimulating. I relate to Olitski's experiment with color and the watering down of acrylic paints and mediums to vary his visual effects. At times he used raw canvas to allow his pigments to soak in and create a staining effect that was much different than his earlier color paintings using thick lines and color divisions. The soaking in of the paint allowed for a softer appearance to his paintings, and made the transition between hues more fluid and subtle. As a colorist, Olitski triumphs in creating a certain visual energy by using one dominant color paired with smaller samplings of complementary pigments matched aside one another. His

use of one solid color overwhelming the canvas allows for a transient and almost spiritual reading of his paintings, yet the dabs of thick paint on the edge of the frame pull the viewer back in to examine the visual effects. By covering a large portion of picture space in a dark color, he allows space to recede infinitely, which creates a push and pull with the brighter colors that come forward in space.

Clyfford Still is an artist I identify with because of his use of color and the optical effects of his non-representational work. Much of Still's work is based on color and the juxtaposition of lights and darks on a solid colored background, allowing his works to radiate a strong optical energy. The voids between concentrated texture and color and the serenity of a solid colored ground is an element that draws me to Still's work and allows me to see the resemblance to my own. Our paintings reference natural forms and recall images seen in landscapes and biology, though it was not Still's original intent to create anything representational. Clyfford Still was adamant about creating work that solely represents himself, and not the world around him or anything specific. He quotes, "I never wanted color to be color. I never wanted texture to be texture, or images to become shapes. I wanted them all to fuse together into a living spirit."

Though I am invested in the elements of my work "fusing together" into a spiritual experience, I can't say I never thought about color as just color, and texture as just a property of its own. In my work I must think about these things as separate entities that will eventually come together to form something cohesive, but without the extra step in thinking and resolving individual issues, I can't work as well and become as intimately involved with the paint itself.

In my own work I am looking at forms and moments in my environment to influence my paintings. I use color based on what I literally see, and add darks, lights and contrasting hues to create energy and space. If I am inspired by the edge of a puddle, I first blow up the form using dark colors that create depth, and then add lighter values of colors I pick up in my environment and the things surrounding the image. Colors caught in reflections and in my peripheral vision are all components I add into my interpretation of the moment. The addition of water really changes how my paintings work both compositionally and visually. In my atmospheric paintings I add a lot of water to my pigments and allow them to flow and intertwine with one another. I physically lift and move my surface in order to allow the paint to flow and collect in the ways I see fit.

I strive to make beautiful images from seemingly strange, unnoticeable and ordinary things I come across. I use a controlled color palette based on the effects of light and dark during winter, and create marks based on my gestures and the fluidity of the paint. Artist Gerhard Richter shares similar views in what inspires him to make paintings, and the way he goes about exploring his tools and materials. Unlike Still and Olitski, Richter is not just an abstract painter, much of his work involves realism and simply reacting to what he sees. Like me, he revels in the mundane moments in everyday life, though he looks to media images for influence, whereas I pick up on physical and visual effects I experience. Richter strives to point out moments of color and form my painting over photographs or re painting images he sees in the news and in every day life. He is just vague enough that the viewer can receive multiple meanings from his images, as he sits on the border of realism and abstraction. Gerhard Richter's Abstract Painting is a piece I connect to because of the small changes in value he uses across a limited color palette. Though he only uses purple and gray, colors widely seen in my painting, his vast changes in grays are what allows the piece to have depth and space when paired with the bright whites the jump out at the viewer. His color use and the manor in which he layers and scrapes paint creates random moments of abstraction with moments and shapes that hint to a realistic source. I paint in a similar fashion, allowing my pigments to flow and

form their own shapes so that the viewer can see multiple things and create connections to the outside world within the space.

Until recently, something I did not have in common with any of these artists was the scale of my paintings. I was highly involved in making small marks on small surfaces, because the moments themselves seemed so quiet and minute. I have striven to make larger marks on a larger plane to experience the change between reacting to ordinary moments on a smaller scale and on a grander one. I find when I blow up my marks they become images people must read into and make inferences from. For some time I succumbed to small brushes and sticks, hunched over my work at a desk or on the floor, limiting my movement and the possibilities that could flourish on my surfaces. As I went larger everything changed. I moved my body in sync with my painting, not trying to over control it, and I allowed the paint to drip and puddle into forms I could then work with. These larger works have become records of my own movement and the way my small and subtle subject matter has turned into grand gestures and physical labor that wasn't present before. Going larger changed my paintings completely, taking minute happenings and blowing them up with thick lines and pools of color that were once small specks within a form. When I worked on my largest atmospheric canvas, I was literally surrounded in the moment. Small flecks of white paint suddenly became clouds, air and moments of silence within a moving object. Large swatches of purple and grey robustly move across the plane, sweeping whatever particles they may up in their fury and scattering them in space. Each tiny moment is now something lasting, existing in time and space.

Small Odds. These are the things I paint. The minute forms and moments that never stand a chance in this world, ignored by the naked eye, but existing all the same. I see them and feel them around me, and through color and mark, I make them something concrete. I titled my pieces based on another small odd in my life, someone who was so quiet and unnoticed to most, but was and still is one of the most incredible things in my life. My dearest Patrick, one of the brightest and most peculiar friends I have ever known passed away without warning on February 26 of this year. I took fragments of writing and letters we had passed back and forth to each other over time, and compiled them with a piece I wrote on my paintings. Together they formed a simple poem that I used to title my pieces, based on which phrases spoke to which paintings.

Pigments take flight, jumping, leaping from the ground,
No end in sight.
Melancholy sunsets and hazy skies,
standing on the edge of something that may be great, Like so much noise playing on the borders of
silence's reign.
Silence is interrupted.
Flashes of light dance across my pupils, harsh, unforgiving;
Like pistons firing in my brain.
Winter's sullen mood is dashed with light,
Bulbs buzz in the corner, reminding me of a time when light was not a scarcity, a vague memory of
the past.
The days become longer, drenching my days in memories of you,
fighting for small odds in the dark.