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## Paintings of Home

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Paintings of Home

by

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Art Practices

Thesis Adviser

Tia Factor

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2015

During my childhood years, our family relocated to three countries, passing through seven homes along the way. Establishing a space that provided comfort and emotional safety

was always a top priority as we nestled into each location. Regardless of the place we were residing, the walls of the living room were recognizable as nothing other than the living room walls by the Zion National Park poster hung near a window, the wooden bowls situated on an unfamiliar coffee table, the rug rooting our new couch, all in the company of many other trinkets and hangings: emblems of home. The walls of my personal space transformed as I aged, reflecting music preferences or celebrity idols, and eventually displaying a collected box of treasures which could be unpacked and thoughtfully scattered to make any new space my own. Now living in Portland for university, I have found myself sharing a house and thus a home space with groups of other young people, allowing each of us to live within the comforts of a neighborhood without breaking our very small bank accounts.

These group homes have proved to be a sort of obvious phenomenon where a jumble of people from very distinct upbringings converge within the confines of one kitchen, one living room, a couple of bathrooms and a number of bedrooms, the last of which are our only true personal spaces. Each housemate contributes decor and utilitarian objects to the common spaces, creating a semi recognizable 'living area' for everyone, while simultaneously allowing for too many jumbled goods and too many contrasting personalities to create true comfortable space for anyone. Our bedrooms become super-saturated areas of personal display, not only our personalities but the nuanced comforts of our childhood home desperately and territorially exhibited. With all this in mind, my project set out to learn about personality through the specific space that we create for ourselves.

Since this embarkment, two years have passed. Life circumstances have forced this project to far extend its originally intended deadline, and as is the story with most journeys, I have noticed my intention and discovery change. The initial idea was to explore and unpack the making of a comfortable personal space, a bedroom, when it is the only personal space belonging to its inhabitant. I sourced reference material from friends, acquaintances, students and community members.

Becoming increasingly submerged in this project both emotionally and formally, I sought research about specific artists whose methods and ideas I could include and develop upon in my own work. Quickly I became obsessed with the Austrian artist Egon Schiele, his work spanning



the first decade and a half of the 20th century.

House with Drying Laundry, Egon Schiele, 1917

Schiele's gouache sketches of landscape and architecture are heavily influenced by the line-work of his under-drawings, the paintings themselves being a series of washes and tight thin layers. I enjoyed the puzzle-like way in which he often shattered his paintings, filling each shape with a color and piling these atop one another in a vertical manner within the canvas whilst maintaining the perspective of a wide depth of space. A student of Gustav Klimt, Schiele

implemented pattern somewhat rebelliously, the time during which he worked discounted such embellishments as gaudy and tacky. Whether using oil or gouache, Schiele allowed his paint to build upon itself over the course of many layers, maintaining much of the painting as the initial wash through the work's finish. I latched onto this and found techniques with which I could maintain the softness and fragility of underworked surface amongst heavy color, contour, and at times, thick layers. Using thinned paint, I began my works with an under-wash. Sometimes these washes initiated the blocks which would become formal elements, and sometimes they solely provided a hue from which I could build volume and develop space. Maintaining windows framing the under-space, whether it be an old painting or simply the lightness of untarnished gesso, allowed for dynamic play between the layers, keeping the viewer's eye rotating between the spaces cyclically, rather than washing off the surface.

Recognizing a similarity or a discourse between Schiele and the contemporary Swedish artist Karin Mamma Andersson in their dry and thin treatment of surface, my research began to shift. Andersson's works subjecting interior spaces, her textural play, and the ambiguity with which she renders recognizable objects resonated with me. I found liberation in her choice of color, her palate more adventurous and color-dissonant than I was familiar with. Contrasting flat, loud shapes against solid spaces, Andersson works inside of shapes, filling them by letting paint describe itself through techniques such as the dropping of wet paint into a pre-wetted shape or repeating thin translucent layers over prior forms. Andersson, like Schiele, integrated visual push and pull into her work. Investigating this looseness allowed my work to step away

Tick Tock, Karin Mamma Andersson, 2011

from a place of anxiety and organization. I felt freer to push the boundary between representational and abstract form, attempting to end with abstract forms which could be recognized when interpreted in a designated context. Andersson also uses a mixed black color more freely than I had ever seen before. She boldly blacks out large portions of her paintings, sometimes up to fifty percent. Having been taught by a lifetime of instructors to be sparing and intentional with my use of black paint, her liberal use of the color with such success instigated a need in my own practice to employ black without fear. I took a cue from Andersson in blacking out large portions of my paintings, a method I had relied on with other colors in the past. This technique allowed my paintings to have moments of breath, resetting places for a viewer's eye amongst so many movements.



Andersson's liberation left me wanting for more abstraction. Seeking women artists who worked in this vein, I arrived upon Helen Frankenthaler. An American artist mostly active from



Interior Landscape, Helen Frankenthaler, 1964

the 1950's onwards, Frankenthaler worked largely with the post-expressionist movement. Working too with thin stains and blocks of color, Frankenthaler implemented a soft touch to her held shapes and played with non-representational spaces, a method which allows her paintings to evoke strong emotions. Her delicacy pushed against other second wave abstract expressionists, who were largely defined by thick paint, fast movement and buttery colors .

Placing slide representations of her work next to those of Philip Guston, I was able to glean power and inspiration from their explorations away from the representational, finding personal accomplishment in a middle-ground between the two artists.

Repeatedly covering my surfaces to begin fresh or push through an idea fully, I studied the American, New York based, second-wave abstractionist Philip Guston. Guston's work can be categorized into distinct periods, some more representational, others purely abstract. I focused on Guston's work from the late 1950's, in which his warm, thick, brush marks compound on



Oasis, Philip Guston, 1957

each other to unrest the viewer. I began to work with more pure paint, observing the soft, revealing edges on completely abstracted forms. Guston's work almost seemed to utilize an active oil pastel, the strength of the marks requiring a constant flow of medium onto the surface



without repeated application. Though I know that Guston used a brush attached to a stem in order to achieve these marks, I reached for oil pastels, grabbing both my most commonly used mixing color of burnt umber and my latest obsession of pale gold, the former a nod to classic painting and the latter to the modern.

Searching for artists situated within fields akin to those of Guston, Andersson and Frankenthaler, the work of Richard Diebenkorn arose. Also working in the field of post-expressionism, Diebenkorn was a west coast based artist, spending the mid 1950's to the mid 1960's in the San Francisco Bay Area. Like Guston, Diebenkorn left clear artifacts of his



Albuquerque # 4, Richard Diebenkorn, 1951

process, palimpsests in which he revealed dry, vulnerable, charcoal line work, intimacy of purposeful (whether this be intuitive or conscious) decision. I too had begun to reveal my linework to the viewer, a process that disarms a work and thus makes it approachable to a wider audience. I drew connection between my own journey and Diebenkorn's return to,

reintroduction and reclaiming of content against a backdrop of first wave expressionism, and mine against the starting point of my two year thesis project.

With the October 2014 opening of the Matisse cut-outs exhibit at MOMA in New York,



The Parakeet and the Mermaid, Henri Matisse, 1952

the art world revealed, yet again, in the work of a beloved master, and his motifs breathed new

life. At this time I happened to be turning the pages of the contemporary English artist David Hockney's *A Bigger Picture*, reading about the quilters of Gee's Bend in Alabama, and



The Arrival of Spring in Yorkshire, David Hockney, 2011

interviewing my Mennonite Grandmother about her ancestral quilting practices. Pattern loudly demanded its way into my work. My practice saw pattern quickly become elevated from research panels secondary to serious work and an organized collection of textiles and printed material to a way of asserting rhythmic intuition into painting. I employed pattern both in a thick textural sense, the application of paint *onto* a surface, as well as in the sense of repetition of idea, shape, and texture (texture being a description of surface, not only in the third dimension) — the application of paint *into* a surface. Here, my interest in both fabrics and specific palate took off. Quoting ideas from the Gee's Bend Quilters, I created surfaces of textile collage which became both the texture and color skeleton for the work upon it. Nodding to Sigmar Polke, I began to stretch found fabrics, such as old sheets, curtains, parts of blankets, over panels, a practice I found cadence in as I realized that my work was no longer about certain personalities within bedrooms, but rather the common textures and shapes found within said spaces which had been

chosen by someone in order to ensure emotional and physical comfort. These textures and shapes so often came from fabrics, bedrooms being full of them.

My discovery included a transformation in my relationship to the act of painting, and an awakening to the textile and fabrics that surround us daily, especially in our home spaces. Working more loosely and intuitively with paint, I plan to focus on observations of American textiles in my future projects, using them to realize aspects of American culture. In the wake of Edward Hopper's statements about our nation's cultural landscape through his work that would later be classified as American Regionalism (Schmied), I continue to strive to gather cultural data that can be pictorially observed and assessed. This project is representative of interior spaces of people in Portland, noting that what we choose to surround ourselves with for the purpose of comfort, both physically and emotionally, can be assessed as a material observation about our culture (Reed). My paintings simply seek to explore personal space in the home. What can be said about culture at large based on these representations will be left to the observer.



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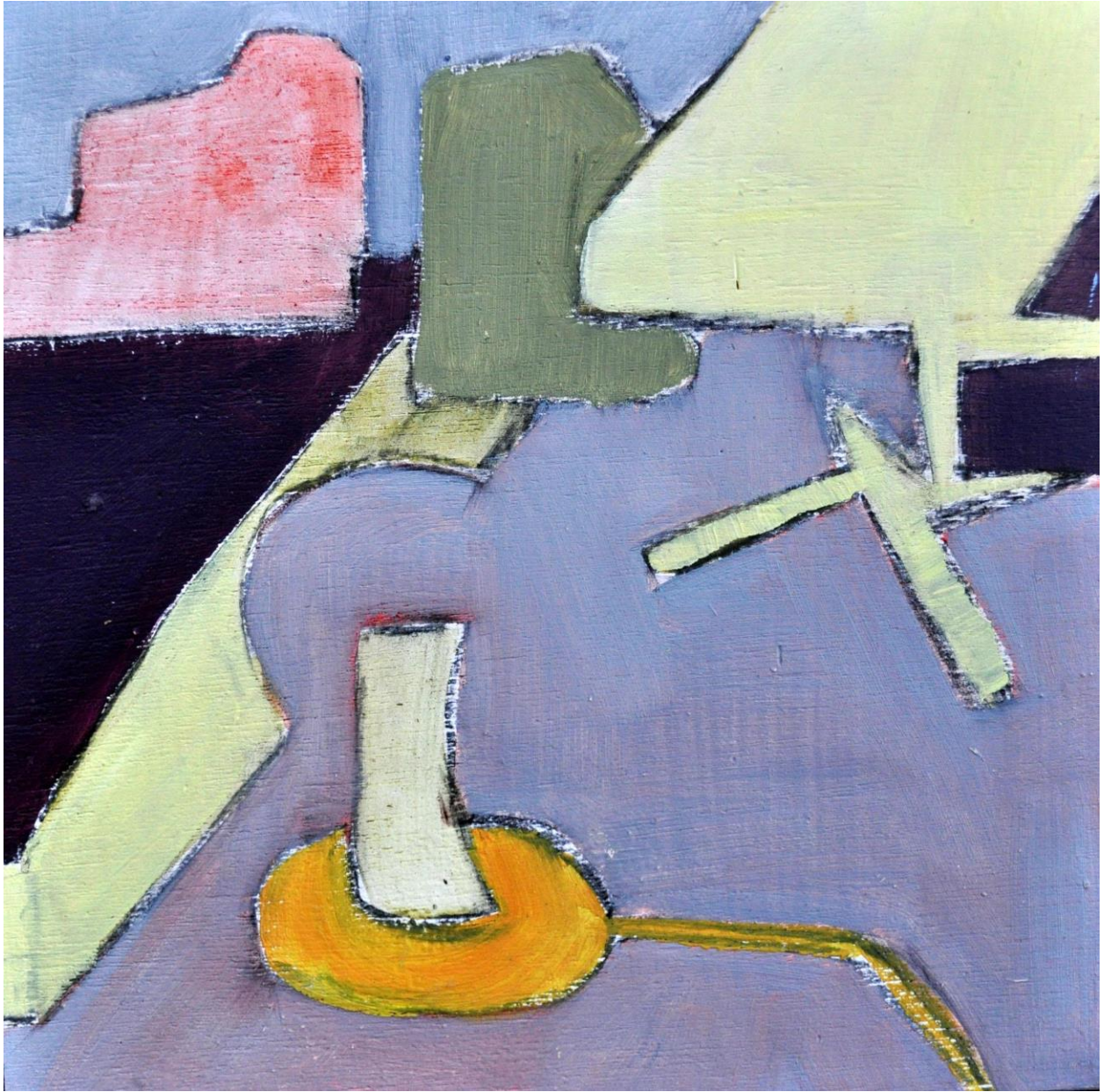




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Catalogue

1. Welcome Home House #1. 7" x 10.5". Gouache on paper.
2. Welcome Home House #2. 7" x 10.5". Gouache on paper.



3. Welcome Home House #3. 7" x 10.5". Gouache on paper.
4. Welcome Home House #4. 7" x 10.5". Gouache on paper.
5. Welcome Home House #5. 7" x 10.5". Gouache on paper.
6. Untitled #1. 8" x 8". Oil and charcoal on board.
7. Untitled #2. 8" x 8". Oil and charcoal on board.
8. Untitled #3. 8" x 10". Oil on board.
9. Studio #1. 16" x 20" Oil on board.
10. Studio #2. 16" x 20" Oil on board.
11. Stranger #1. 27" x 36". Oil on canvas.
12. Stranger #2. 27" x 36". Oil on canvas.
13. Stranger #3. 27" x 36". Oil on canvas.
14. Stranger #4. 27" x 36". Oil on canvas.
15. Stranger #5. 16" x 20". Oil on board.
16. Nelle #1. 20" x 24". Oil on board.
17. Pile. 16" x 20". Oil on board.
18. Nelle #2. 18" x 30". Oil on board.
19. Kiks. 23" x 47". Oil on found textile over board.
20. Boyfriend. 35" x 48". Oil on dyed textile over board.

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