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Abstract

hide places the viewer in a state of distraction, removed from reality and situated in a newly created in-between space. Surrounded by constant interruption and infinite misguiding, the tangling of painterly gestures and sporadic mark-making brings forward feelings of being overwhelmed. Seemingly confident, the scale and visual forms simultaneously intimidate and draws the viewer closer. I employ abstraction as an avoidance strategy to deflect from my great fear of drawing attention to myself by making quick and irrational compositional and material decisions out of wavering anxiety. Finding humor in what feels like a ridiculous fear, I lean into the embodiment of an idealized, fearless self. Integrating loud colour palettes, awkward-yet-intentional linework, and moody titles like *Bite me*, I look to derail any signs of weakness. My issues with attention are only engulfed in flames and activated in public spaces.

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Introduction

"Bouquet" is the title of an early work from my undergraduate degree that I painted to visually depict my great fear of attention. This painting on canvas in thick impasto represents a colourful floral bouquet held by a subject who positioned the arrangement in a way that fully blocked their identity. This painting device obstructs the subject, thus dissuades the viewer from deducing that the painting subject is the bouquet of flowers. The threshold of exploring this tactic expanded as I soon took an interest in abstraction. This painting movement allows freedom from representation. In abstraction, I can give more attention to forms and gestures that make up a composition. Simultaneously, I can figure out how to encapsulate feelings of intensity and complication. I often lean on deflection as a tactic to escape and avoid social interactions that require dialogue. I transpose the same tactic to my work. Through painting I create a new safer, intermediary space that can be revised, reimagined, and repeated.

Confidence, fearlessness, and spontaneity are traits with which I struggle to identify. However, my final works, through their colour, intensity, mark making and scale, seem to exude these qualities. My imagery and methods in painting follow a vicious cycle that spins out every time I see a sliver of clarity, much like my experience in trying to decode what it means to be Queer.

As part of the LGBTQIA2S+ community, I find alternative ways to approach the historically charged medium of oil painting. My searching pushes me to investigate new spaces to harness power in urgency instead of panic. Influenced by people like American New York-based visual artist Amy Sillman and American abstract painter Joan Mitchell (1925-1992), I reference their work and their ability to fly by instinct and appetite. By doing so I put myself in an accelerated spiral.

Writing out the process of my studio-based practice captures my behaviours, obsessions, fears, and attitudes in painting. The seemingly confident and decisive colours, lines and compositions draw in viewers. Presenting bold, visceral, and dominant paintings in abstraction is my response defence mechanism for survival in public spaces.



Figure 1 "Bouquet", Oil on Canvas, 30 x 36 inches, 2016.

Drawing & Thinking

The integration of drawing in my paintings and prints encapsulates a combination of gesture and structure. The accumulation of gestural lines forms a structure and pulls together various moving pieces that only become alive when activated in the same space, on the same surface. The panes of colour rely heavily on the articulation of lines in the work. Without the integration of linework in colours, it is as if I am leading the painting blind. The line is like my safety net, creating confidence in my doubtful headspace. I use the line as an anticipatory tool for discovering the painting's main structural component. At the same time, I push against the natural tendencies for the line to dominate and constrain. This tool references a mind map, a diagram used to visually organize information through brainstorming. While the linework bears the weight of my early stages in painting, it progressively morphs as layers thicken and shape. Morphing can be subtle or abrupt, fast or slow – displaying a gradual change in appearance through colour, opacity and mark. The line acts as a dynamic visual element, intersecting, bending, and separating. It begins to respond and resist the surface as it transforms through connections, disconnections, and reconnections. Engaging in the conscious addition of painted forms and linework, breakage begins to occur. Disconnections are then caused by adjusting the colour palette, changing the tools used, or even a shift in my mood. The weightless curiosity the line evokes is one that both confines and leads, a bizarre pairing of control and freedom.

My use of line and mark-marking is consistent across my work. Reflecting on these recurring tactics, I notice visual differences in the drawn motifs. The sensation of a pencil dragging across paper or canvas remains familiar. The way in which a pencil or graphite stick is used for drawing is identical each time. Nonetheless, the lines that emerge create differing depictions. Whether I am writing or drawing, I pick up a pencil and hold it the same way. I know

how to manipulate the tool and I accept its limitations. I am mindful that my work appears to be very consistent, even though I am reluctant to repeat a drawn motion or form from a previous painting. Like musicians, "When players feel too secure about their approaches, the experimentation risks turning into Mannerism" (Mattin 32). Mannerisms suggest predictability, not only to yourself but also to others. As artists, painters, or those who work exclusively in abstraction, we naturally want to resist predictability. When I am stuck or trapped in an unbreakable loop, I go to the studio to find a sketchbook or loose sheet of paper to begin drawing. Working randomly, sometimes with my eyes closed, I draw the familiar that results in the unexpected. This preliminary, exploratory exercise pushes against my lack of confidence. Lightly wisping a pencil on paper, barely leaving a mark, I look down at the sheet after forcefully holding my gaze at the ceiling. Pushing back against my hesitations, I pick up a soft 4B pencil and begin outlining the oddly drawn lines, watching for a surge to form. Feeling comfortable with muscle memory is something I learned not to steer away from. I use it as a tool to manipulate growth and expansion. "De-skilling is like shedding an old skin, a kind of alienation that calls everything in question. But then you need to re-skill." (von Heyl 121).

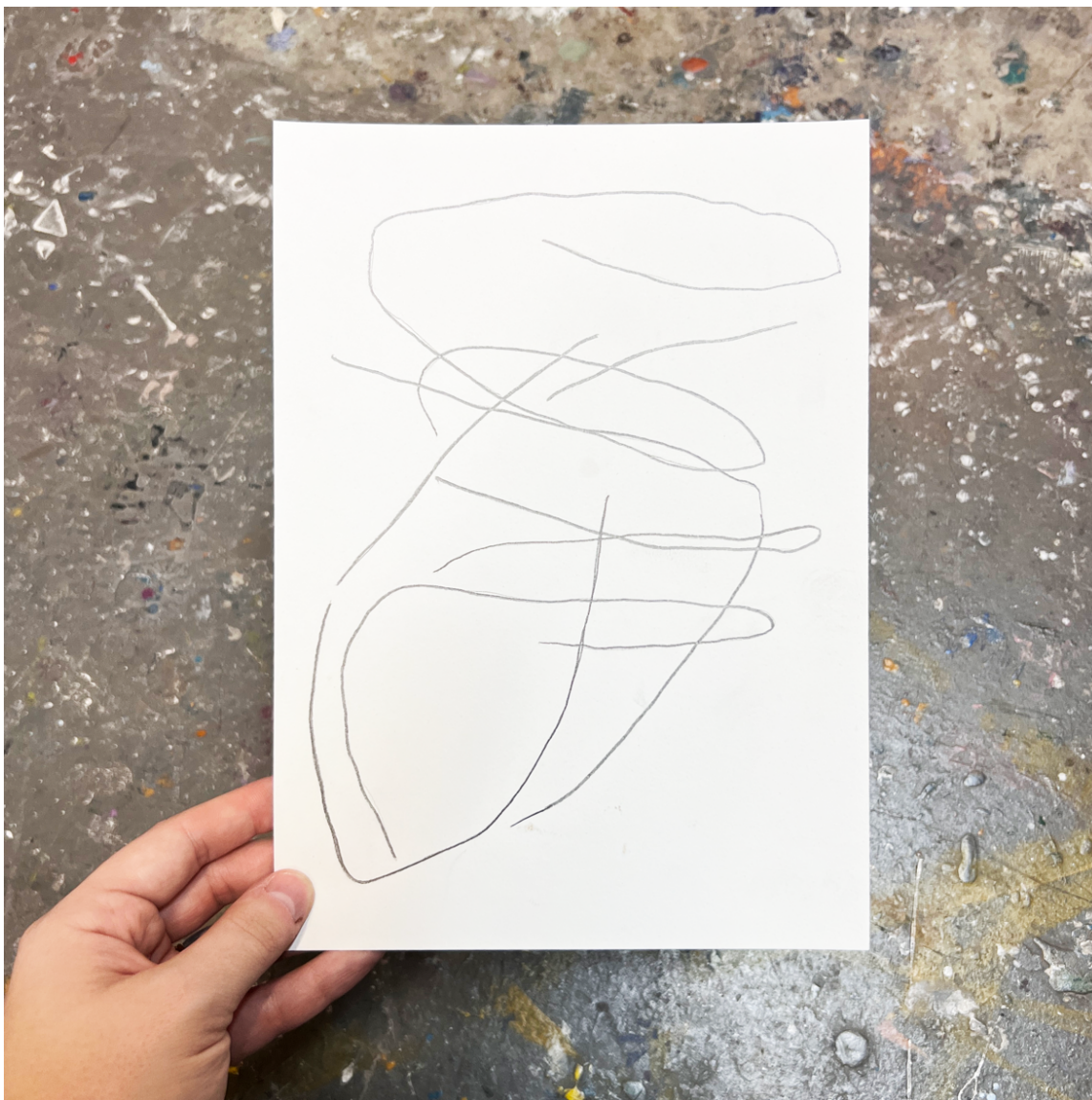


Figure 2 HB Pencil and 4B Pencil on Paper, 2023

"The relationship between following a line and the conditions for the emergence of lines is often ambiguous. Which one comes first?" (Ahmed 554). In my work, following lines comes first, as we are conditioned to do, act, and function in particular ways. With that in mind, muscle memory is a significant mind-body relationship that further empowers visual cues.

In my paintings, drawing with pressure is fundamental. Strength in line insinuates intention, something I look to portray while my internal dialogue screams with hesitation. I use a

sharp pencil to harshly cut through panes of colour when forms begin to blur. In the expanded edition of Amy Sillman's text *Faux Pas: Selected Writings and Drawings*, she recalls that a friend of hers stated "drawing is the thinking of a painting" (86). In my case, paintings are nothing without the line, forcefully dependent on the line. Eventually, painterly gestures and oil stick shapes begin to fight the line's harsh quality, finding alternative ways to create new depictions of what the "line" is as a major component within my practice.

Material Desire through the Queer Lens

In my experience, abstraction means I am chasing for more, resulting in additive working methods that generate accumulations of material on the surface. Material desirability is known to those who work with oil paint, as if it were a secret club. Discussions among painters are often about the extreme feeling of craving, addiction, or manic spells that always seem to foster the most unsettling conclusions that provoke an oscillation of want and wonder. The meticulous attention to detail and skillful management of the material building on the canvas provides a glimpse of understanding from the viewers perspective. The timely detail in the artworks generates a transgression, even though the audience may not be aware of this common sentiment. It's thrilling to experience the height of a painting's emergence, but eventually, the sensation wears off, and I then look for more. Amy Sillman precisely describes the paradigms among drugs and oil paint:

An ounce of cocaine costs about sixty times more than an ounce of oil paint, but it only lasts for an hour, while cadmium red lasts hundreds or thousands of years. So, if you figure it backward, in pleasure hours, a tube of oil paint is equivalent to a hundred million dollars of cocaine. And like a crack addict, I often find myself up late at night with a

razor blade, desperately scraping the last miserable speck out of an exhausted tube of colour because I just need more of that substance – and the store isn't open (59).

As someone who's always anxiously standing on the edge of what comes next, I surround myself with a wide range of media: graphite, oil stick, pastel, and paint. I feel distinct gratification from swapping materials. Instead of getting wrapped up in composition development, I go cross-eyed, following the repetitive scribbles of an oil stick, without any regard for the remnants that fall to the ground, building a waxy pile that gets trekked through the studio. If the painting material is the equivalent of dopamine, why do I feel such doom with satisfaction? Oil paint as an isolated medium never evokes sufficient satisfaction in my mind. I begin to think "Okay.... well, I need more". I often find that greater feelings come from scratching into a pane of colour with a graphite stick, watching the layers underneath quickly decline with disruption.



Figure 3 "Chasing Nothing", Oil, Oil Stick, Pastel, Graphite on Canvas, 78 x 83 inches, 2023.



Figure 4 Detail Shot of "Chasing Nothing", 2023

There will always be traces of errors, but I embrace and make use of them. I obsessively cover the painting while matching the hues and forms that appeared before my most recent mistakes occurred. Like applying makeup to cover a bruise, I return to the previous elements by piling more on top. These continuous shifts in the work lead the viewer through the composition. Gestures and colours are in a constant state of transition, consequently it is difficult to establish a beginning and an end. To expand, in the book *Rothko to Richter*, Hal Foster describes gesture as a form of artist representation:

Gesture in excess of representation tends to be read as the mark of the artist, not only of his distinctive touch but of that touch at a particular moment. We thus take gesture to be singular, original, authentic, in a word, individual – an indication, perhaps, of the very subjectivity of that artist at that instant in time (29).

As a reflection on my relationship with the work while in the studio, the paintings grab the viewer's attention, prompting the viewer to follow a trail of colour or linework. Colour tends to move from lightness to darkness (and vice versa), while the mark-making brings the viewer to a crossroads. Dark hues, like Mars black and Payne's gray only ever appear as scribbly disasters, suffocating gestures, or solid portal-like holes.

Jennifer Packer is a contemporary American painter based in New York who works with "inflammatory" colours as Amy Sillman describes them. She integrates the use of crimsons, lakes, violets, magentas, and buttercup yellows, all insisting how colour is the primary means for seeing the world through feeling, knowing, and memory (72). As I consider Amy Sillman's colour analysis within my own practice in painting, I notice a corresponding pattern. My palette reflects a sense of vibration, that then becomes activated on the canvas through quick and limitless brushstrokes. The excited colours are applied as pulsating mark-making, unable to rest. The surface becomes a swarm of compacted colour, occupying every square inch. While the body of work remains bright and colourful, the dark palette acts as a grounding solution. Admittingly, I pay much more attention to the use of material, than to my choices of colour. I sometimes think that colour is like a thorn in my side. I worry that it is some type of language in which I am not well-versed. Suzanne Hudson notes in her book *World of Art: Contemporary Painting*, that signifiers appear as obvious notations of text or word, consequently it is really the act of drawing (in this case, word-like scribbles), that are meant to evoke temporal dialogue through the artist's hand. "Like Cy Twombly's asemic scrawl (meaning a wordless open semantic form of writing), in which calligraphic skeins that could be doodles or vines approximate but do not inhabit language" (87).

Making artwork brings everything into a constant state of questioning. In looking for strategies to push past anxiety or lack of confidence in life and painting, I've looked to the work of queer theorists such as Alison Kafer. In Kafer's text, *Feminist, Queer, Crips*, she explores strange temporalities, or more specifically Queer time. This term emerged in the AIDS crisis – a time that forced gay communities to focus on "the here, the present, the now." Queer time identified time as either living and dying – forcing them out of a normative life course and into queer ruminations on urgency and emergence (35). In *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, Jose Esteban Muñoz captures this predicament poetically, "Queerness is that thing that lets us feel that this world is not enough, that indeed something is missing" (1). I believe that my personal struggle around understanding and accepting my identity as a Queer woman directly reflects my material selections in the studio. Refusing to work with isolated materials in painting, I'm intrigued by the refusal of creating something easily coherent. Mixing and revising, consulting the dried-up paint on my glass palette that I've neglected to scrape off, I never start with a clean slate. I go back to where I left off, motivated by the before and compelled to see how my previous decision impacts or complicates the next. Colour is a constant struggle as described by Amy Sillman,

When someone talks about colour as decorative, I just don't know what they are talking about. Try mixing oil paint: ninety-five percent of the time it's hideous. Those beautiful shimmering powders from the paint store turn immediately into pasty slop buckets of sickening green or hemorrhage-y brown tones. This is where the fetishism goes horribly wrong. All painters regularly speak of their colours becoming "mud." The pigment itself is reverse alchemy, a gold that becomes shit in our studios, and our task is to try to turn that shit back into gold (Sillman 61).

Amy Sillman's theories on colour operation metaphorically suggest that the Queer experience inhabits the task of taking what society hands us, in its original and problematic form and resiliently turn it into something that shines. This tactic manipulates systems ("mud") into valuable and equitable experiences ("gold").

Movement & Scale

My commitment to large-scale painting has much to do with my trained and natural connection to mind-body instincts, relating to my former training in dance and the performing arts. Dance never pushed thought and thinking. Instead, dancers work towards muscle memory through repetition and feeling through movement. When I left the dance industry, I lost the relationship I was developing between fixed choreography and integrating improvisation. Nonetheless, I recuperated this connection within the framework of drawing. My drawing practice has become a trusted and reliable component in my paintings. My approach to paint application can be uncertain, and I usually feel unsure of my footing. I never had the opportunity to properly learn or practice improv techniques, so it feels like I am figuring it out through each work in another medium. A painting gets developed off the back of the previous one, but with an intensifying progression that can only be seen once a body of work has been completed. In dance and creative movement, one isolated formation cannot be understood or provoke any feeling from the dancer and the audience. But, when you synchronize the movement, music, and space to view the work as a complete production, the story, the narrative, and consistency in technique begin to appear.

I spent an entire semester of graduate studies adjusting and researching my discomforts in working at a smaller scale in my pursuit for the perfect small painting. I was eager to figure out my problem, analysing my methods in painting and applying them to smaller surfaces. I was

continuously hit with the same feeling, restless and discontent with the results. I replicated everything that brings me success on larger surfaces: mark-making materials like jumbo graphite sticks, oil sticks, a sizeable range of paint brushes, and paint. But even then, everything seemed too planned, like I was trying to make something work that would never succeed. My large-scale works and gestures stem from seemingly spontaneous moments and sequences that my small work lacks. I cannot jump to reach a weird, inaccessible spot, I cannot draw a line for what feels like forever, and I can't use my body the way I'm used to. So instead, I tried working on the ground, fixing my body in a position that doesn't allow for much movement. I am aware that as I attempt to work within tiny parameters of a painting, I am also physically bound to the parameters of my studio floor. It was not until this point that I began focusing on the small square canvas, surrounded by materials all within my reach. There was no pacing back and forth to my palette cart. There was no usable way to intuitively use the reach of my wingspan to connect drawings and forms from one side of a painting to the other. None of that was required or called for. I sized down my jumbo graphite stick to a sharp 4B pencil, only allowing the drawn line to be produced by the gestural limits of my wrist. This was one of a few experiments conducted. As I neared the end of my pursuit, I felt more resolved in the 'how-to' aspect of achieving compositional balance. I titled the work "I thought it was a joke" because creating small-scale pieces genuinely felt like a far-fetched, impossibly distant thought. I found it humorous that such little paintings can cause such incredible turbulence. After further reflection, I realized my dislike for producing smaller paintings might have more to do with my anxieties. Lingering and intrusive thoughts convince me that less surface area means more attention to the limited details. There are more opportunities to narrow down flaws or ask answerless questions. There is less to figure out, not much to follow; they aren't large enough to distract the attention

away from myself. If these paintings are the "performance", I like to think that I am the anonymous technician who draws the curtains.



Figure 5 "I thought it was a joke", 12 x 12 inches, Oil, Oil Stick, Pastel, Graphite on Canvas, 2023

Verge (of tears)

Verge (of tears) is a multi-piece painting that supported me through a time of stress when I frequently questioned my ability to create imagery. This work allowed me to understand that it is not a specific form, shape, or focal point that I seek. It is the consistent manipulation, morphing, and revising of relationships that interest me. Spending approximately four months making this work, I encountered immense feelings of both care and discouragement. Naturally, I think care becomes a top-of-mind characteristic based on the time I have spent coexisting with the canvas. Like a good friend. I ate lunch with the painting, tripped over the painting, backed into, and fell over multiple chairs while looking at the painting. I also grappled with growing pains throughout the duration and development of the work. Growing pains can be described as physical aches, as I would become sore or exhausted after extensive days in the studio.

In painting, growing pains take the form of the various layers (or lives) it takes to get a work to its finished state. A conversation about the works of Joan Mitchell between Berlin-based author, Isabelle Graw and German artist and musician, Jutta Koether touches on a similar thought:

What's interesting about Mitchell is how this myth of the subject-like "living" painting takes on the character of an experimental setup. The process can be traced in the paintings themselves – the way the artist-subject backs off, pauses, considers, and deliberately attempts to eliminate itself, permitting the painting to become subject-like.

The painter becomes the catalyst for this mythical experiment (Graw 77).

My imagery is evolving, and pressure points are developing. But in between are the visual and material aches and annoyances that sneak up on me as time progresses. Hypothetically, on a single canvas, there could have been four to five completed versions of a painting. The middle

stages or layers of a painting are crucial; they are moments that only I will see and remember. After having taken a distance from the work, sometimes I return confused due to my memory of a previous state. In the studio, there is a point of no return. For me, I feel that the drive comes from the repetitive practice of painting. I go back to painting every day to engage in activity that both energizes and challenges, “An ode to the banality of living, it optimistically proposes that as long as there is another day, there is always another surface, another support onto which more paint can be applied, and another painting to be made” (Hudson 277). At the start of this painting project, I worked on all five pieces interchangeably as much as possible. Three pieces were stapled to the wall, and two were placed flat on the floor. It is not simple to find fifteen feet of usable wall space to create a dynamic path across the work. Because of this challenge, I eventually became more aware of the disconnections between each panel and how they are uncomfortable, yet interesting. As I became fatigued by spreading my energy thinly across all the panels, I became frustrated, and accepted defeat. Then I directed my undivided attention to each panel individually and obsessively.

Much of my daily practice relies on the workspace I set up for myself that day. I start with a selection of four to six mixed colours and carry on that palette by adding or diluting, constantly revising the material in my hand. My decision to modify instead of starting over is woven into how I draw and paint. These five paintings share common elements: Kama oil sticks in “Flesh Tone” periodically appear, often positioned adjacent to or scribbled through the “Mars Black” oil stick in the first four works (left to right). The creation of this work resembled a collage, except that the cut and paste components were derived from memory, sensation, second guesses, and hesitations incessantly searching for forms that feel right. As Amy Sillman relates,

The awkwardness I'm trying to describe is not a style, but could be one result of a dialectic. I would rather call it a metabolism: the intimate and discomforting process of things changing as they go awry, look uncomfortable, have to be confronted, repaired, or risked, i.e., the process of trying to figure something out while doing it. I don't know if that's abstraction, but I know its awkward. Finding a form is building these feelings (in this case, dissatisfaction, embarrassment, and doubt) into a substance (Sillman 169).



Figure 6 Work in progress: *Verge (of tears)* July 20th, 2023, 3:34pm

Verge (of tears) asks the viewer to walk alongside the work, starting from the first canvas on the far left. The size of the painting, 180 inches wide by 72 inches high, invites the viewer to stand as far away as possible to consider the overall composition and then to stand near to get caught up in the subtle chaos of detail and depth. My gaze often becomes locked in places where lines, washes, and layers get wrangled and cramped, and suddenly, the outside environment becomes nothing but white noise. The painting stands taller than the height of an average person, and so provokes a confrontation. The scale alone can be intimidating, a feeling I am still attempting to decode.

The titles of my paintings jump between sarcastic attitudes and deep thought, suggesting a simultaneous play on jokes, humour, and pain. Perhaps this painting is like a point of exposure, repeated and revised frustration dancing across the panels.



Figure 7 Verge (of tears), Oil, Oil Stick, Pastel, Graphite on Canvas, 180 x 72 inches, 2023.

Printmaking, Pausing, Processing

In painting, I work up close, near the canvas, reluctantly forcing myself to occasionally step back. A moment for a pause is not something that I ever thought was required in the studio, but it is an integral part of the process. Pausing is something that printmaking taught me. Learning the various techniques in print media, I found instant enjoyment in creating hybrid editions by combining screen printing and plexiglass monotype techniques. Reducing the indecision of my painting practice, where I have abundant materials at my fingertips, printmaking pressurized my habits by compartmentalizing systems in painting into systems in print. Gestural, inky forms appear on the surface of the plexiglass, awaiting my approval to finally get printed. I am more careful in this space. I cannot revise the printed image. Monotypes result from a printmaking method that makes precisely one print instead of a complete identical edition. A thrill comes out of this type of risk in artmaking, which is why I take such a liking to it. A leading difference between painting and print is that I build a short-lived relationship with the surface. There is not enough time to allow for an attachment to form. I quickly move on to making another print. This process produces a snapshot, a pause in time, or a moment in painting. It harmoniously mirrors my painting practice in a way that captures quickness and simplicity, opposite to the suffocating quality of the dense build-up of paint material on canvas.

A distinctive result of my printed editions is the use of negative space; intentional or not. Viewers often notice this difference when they experience in the same space both my works on canvas and on paper. Why do the paintings have such a suffocating quality, eliminating all base layer evidence of white gesso, while the prints on paper appear more weightless? I always write about my spiraling tendencies. This leads me to think about how my prints portray a sort of temporary disaster, affecting only a select portion of the paper, like a tornado. Erratically

blasting through the terrain, or in this case, the incredibly costly and delicate printing paper, I select an unknown, unpredictable path. When I get through the initial marks, the following decisions tend to revolve around the same area, leaving areas of the white paper entirely untouched. Another aspect to consider is the material differences between oil paint and the relief or intaglio printmaking inks.



Figure 8 Work in progress: Pulling a monotype print from a plexiglass plate, Dec 21st, 2023, 3:24pm

Printmaking inks are usually much stiffer to work with and do not become more workable without a loosening agent. The rigid quality of the inks, combined with the traditional use of a flat-bed printmaking press, produces a static, frozen, or blurry emergence of line and colour that gets pressed and fused to the paper. In contrast, I work on my paintings vertically, constantly fighting gravitational qualities that pull on the wet paint, creating drips and melting forms. I approach connecting the painterly monotypes through the repetition of screen-printing techniques. Previously, I mentioned how colour tends to lay on the structure of the line, the line being the initial ground. However, in printmaking, everything is a complete reversal of that order.

The inky layer is printed first, and the screen-printed linework follows. I like to think that the opaque, harsh quality of the screen-printed line helps stabilize the printed monotype's initial composition. Thinking directly in the context of this edition, I feel the line did not necessarily stabilize, but instead matched, the energy of the gestures on the base layer. The stabilization is noticed and relevant when viewing the edition as a collective series. I notice differences and shifts in the base layer by anticipating the consistency of the duplication of screen-printed images that sits at the surface. Trust and promise are established in repetition.

The scribbly dark form attempts to tame the dwelling chaos underneath, trying to confine or control, yet ultimately failing. My works on paper feel like ghost prints. This type of print formally refers to a paler version of the original work, sometimes even a misprint. However, these prints are not pale or a direct replica of my paintings. Instead, they are condensed versions of my fluctuating mark-making on canvas, a variation of a painting's lasting impression.



Figure 9 "I'd rather be invisible" 3/8 Varied Edition, Monotype and Screen-print on Fabriano Paper, 2023

Stretched or Unstretched

Typically, I work unstretched. This means I roll out the raw canvas, cut it to the desired size, staple it to the studio wall, and begin the priming process. The weight of the canvas becomes familiar to me, as the dimensions of my paintings are so large that I must crumple them down to an odd, deformed shape and carry them over my head back to the studio. After the canvas is secured to the wall, the surface receives two to three layers of gesso, allowing the painting process to begin. I work unstretched so that I have a hard surface to press onto without compromising the flexible surface of the canvas. Oil sticks are challenging to work with if they are not pressed into a solid wall or wood panel. This method prompts me in a way that triggers secure feelings, ensuring that the stapled surface mimics aspects of a sounding board.

When a painting is done, I need to remove it from the wall. After digging out each staple from the canvas and drywall, I handle an extensive amount of material with just my two hands. I hold and suspend the heavy canvas on a ladder from above. Most of my works are too large to gracefully bring them to the ground, so this step usually results in me unskillfully dropping the work and watching it slouch over. The overworked layers of multiple mediums cause the canvas to be stiff and heavy, reminding me of a weighted blanket, but less soft and plush. Providing insight on the physicality of handling an unstretched painting, the appearance of the paintings should have the same quality; grounded, yet substantial in their presence.

I prefer to stretch my canvases when they are complete and going to be exhibited. Parallel to my tendency to present myself in a way that will not provoke questions, I take many of the same considerations when displaying my paintings for an audience— stretched as opposed to unstretched is the common method of display for large-scale paintings in a commercial gallery. As a person, I look to blend in, and in that way my method of display also works to blend in with

conventional gallery practices. Although the content of my work presents itself at the opposite to that desire, the works fearlessly demonstrate identity, depicted through my habits in painting and mark making. The imagery on the surface shows vulnerability, while the choice to stretch the works infuses assurance and credibility. Perfectly folded corners, painted edges, and fixed materials without transfer produce a springy and stretched result. Working in an oversized scale helps me develop a strong sense of control and autonomy, something that my younger self desperately chased.

A group known as “Support/Surfaces” was a French artistic movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s that worked to deconstruct material components of painting by recontextualizing the elements. This group established a working method that rejected traditional painting in hopes of sourcing renewed vitality in the medium’s boundless capability. This movement opened infinite paths for artists working in painting and other mediums. I realize that my decision to work with large-scale, unstretched material combined with developing non-representational imagery meant that I do not fit within the bounds of a box. I am creating tactile paintings that would otherwise not exist if I chose to work on a stretched surface.



Figure 10 "Bite me", Oil, Oil Stick, Pastel, Graphite on Canvas, 78 x 108 inches, 2023.

Remnant Paintings & In Between (Conclusion)

As a large-scale painter, I often work close to the surface and reluctantly force myself to step back. One would think that this procedure would work better the other way around, but I never managed to conduct my practice from a logical place. Looking and analysing my paintings help me to further understand overworked zones, my drawing habits for that day, the palette I have decided to work with, and what areas I am subconsciously neglecting or avoiding. Tracking my daily studio practice is an important procedure. I do this by placing a sketchbook or scrap paper nearby as a catch-all for excess paint, tool testing, and scribbling; all that would otherwise be blotted away with a painter rag. These scrap remnant paintings and drawings are evidence of a day in the studio, the traces of a painting in progress. The little scrap works usually do not look or reference anything relatively close to the painting, but instead offers insight to a fleeting moment, like a code or access point. I find interest in bridging the gap between notation and memory, like short-lived thoughts scratched into a notebook or an artist proof in printmaking, to keep something for yourself. I closely hold on to the unseen middle stages of a large painting, stamped in my mind. I take visual notes, not of the actual painting, but based on what my hand picked up while working on that piece. The paintings themselves have hidden layers. The viewer will never know of the multiple lives or almost finished points the work had endured. The paintings could have gone through immense struggle, or drastically changed direction, leaving the viewer to only speculate on the possible iterations.



Figure 11 Studio Image: View of sketchbook remnant painting, 2022.

I sometimes humour myself as I am occasionally convinced that I exclusively work with my intuition. However, the reality is that I engage in the practice of following various personal habits or rules that I have developed over time. I know that the painting will begin with energetic line work, followed by painting in blocky base layers. The base layers carefully follow the established path. Subsequently, I use an oil stick or pastel when the composition shifts from the initial direction. This process epitomizes the “in-between” moments that make up my painting practice. I like to think that I infuse my compositions with energy, spoken through gestures,

scribbles, and drips. I am not painting a picture for a viewer to find an answer but to enjoy the energy that my visual vocabulary offers. I am at play with developing visual problems and confronting them simultaneously.

My practice always seems to loop back to questions around public versus private, thinking again about my issues with attention, an anxiety that is exacerbated in public spaces. Abstraction, in my mind, creates confusion and reorients how we associate narratives with visual imagery. Abstraction is a tool to separate and distract, taking a distance from depictions of reality. It is used to explore a space beyond here and now, pulling me out of dark rabbit holes and focusing on things that do not explicitly revolve around the paralyzing ruminations of real life. How far can I push the use of a single pencil? How much can I revisit its material limitations and search for more ways to represent and alter simple characteristics of the drawn line? I challenge thoughts of reaching the end, trying to back-pedal, and keeping resolution at an arm's length.

To maintain this distance and to allay my fear of closure, I will end on an open note – and introduce a work in progress. I expect this body of work to multiply and grow as I find it troublesome to anticipate “the end”. My painting, drawing and printmaking practices will remain ongoing, restlessly reflecting my personal discourse and new-found material fixations. I may not always need to position a floral arrangement in front of my face or mentally escape reality through a dark portal in my paintings. But as a creature of habit both in painting and life, I am sure I will find another way to hide.

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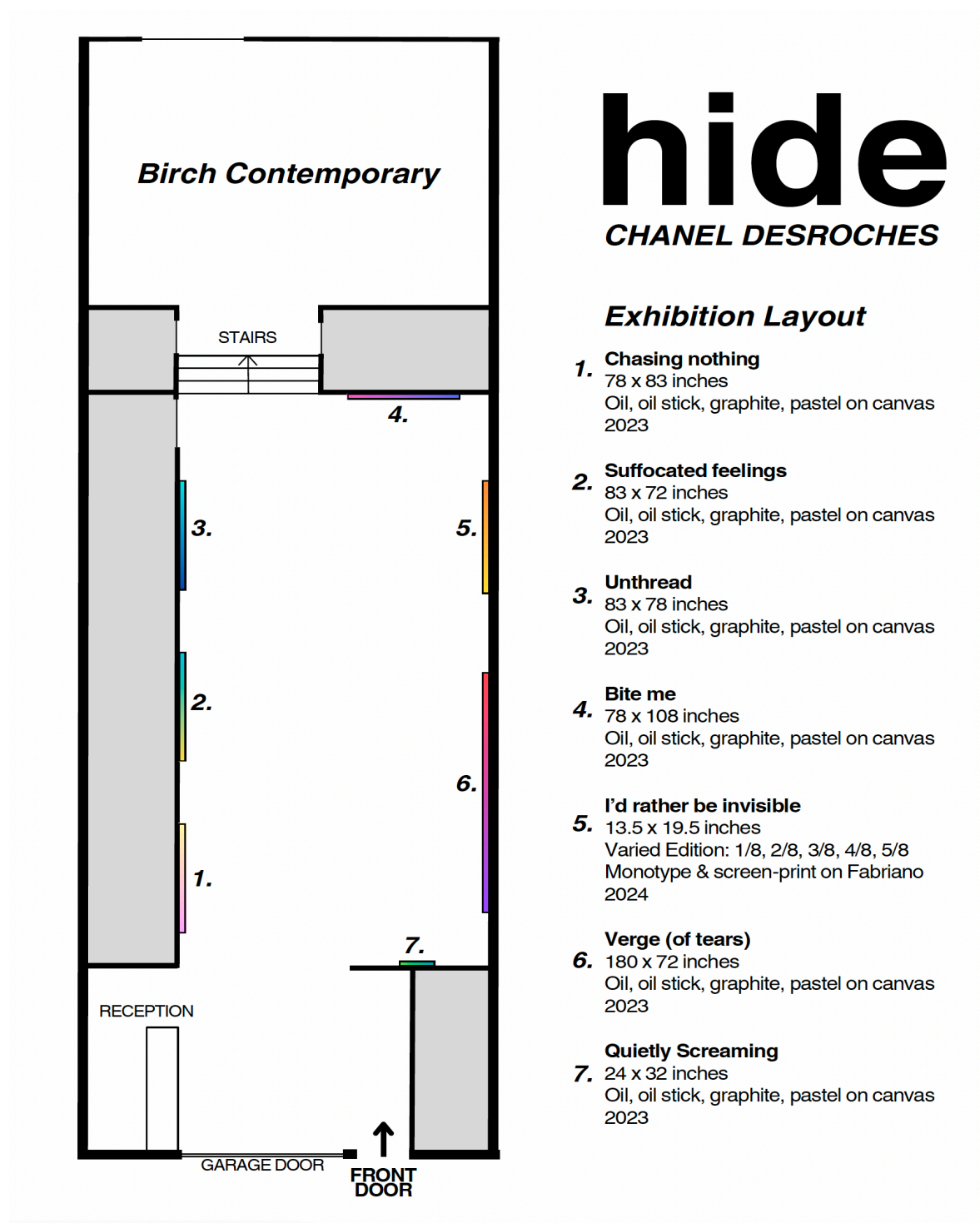


Figure 12 Exhibition Layout, Birch Contemporary, 2024

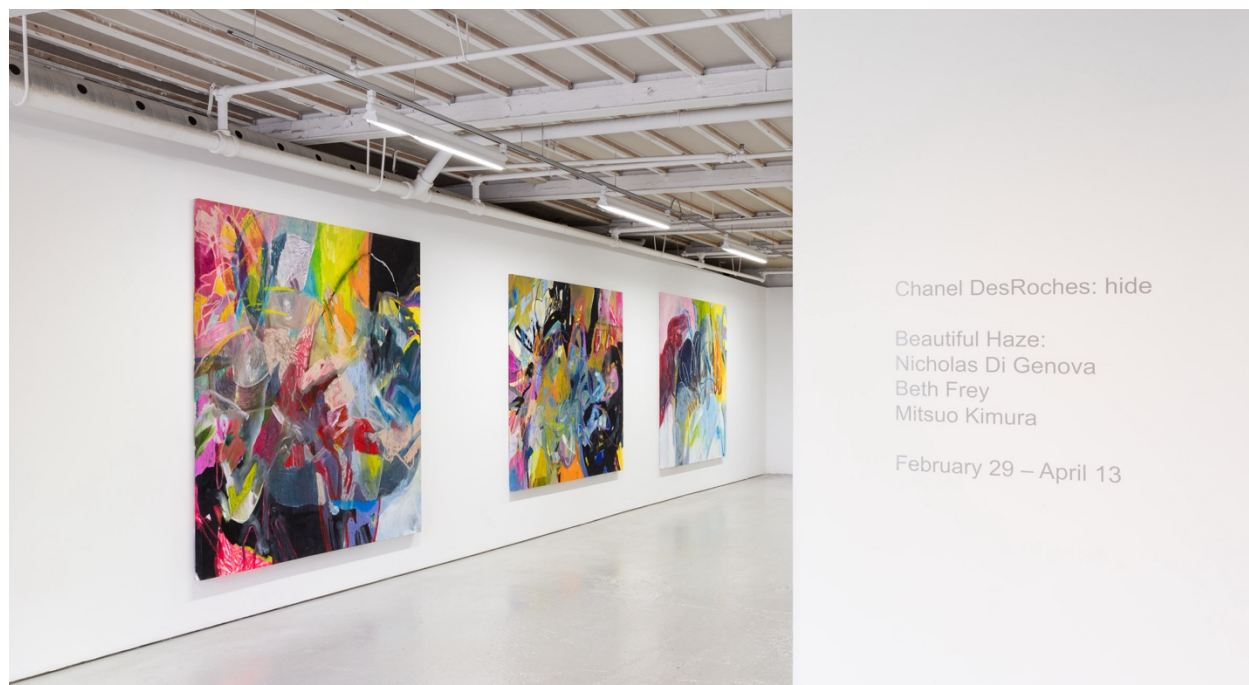


Figure 13 Installation shot of "hide", 2024.



Figure 14 Installation shot of "hide", 2024. Chasing Nothing (left), Suffocated Feelings (middle), Unthread (right).



Figure 16 Chasing Nothing, Oil, Oil Stick, Graphite, Pastel on Canvas, 78 x 83 inches, 2023.



Figure 17 Suffocated Feelings, Oil, Oil Stick, Graphite, Pastel on Canvas, 83 x 72 inches, 2023.



Figure 18 Unthread, Oil, Oil Stick, Graphite, Pastel on Canvas, 83 x 78 inches, 2023.



Figure 19 Installation shot of "hide", 2024.



Figure 20 Installation shot of "hide", 2024.



Figure 21 Installation shot of "hide", 2024.



Figure 22 Installation shot of "hide", 2024. Bite me (left), I'd rather be invisible (right)



Figure 23 Installation shot of "hide", 2024. Bite me (left), I'd rather be invisible (right).



Figure 24 Bite me, Oil, Oil Stick, Pastel, Graphite on Canvas, 78 x 108 inches, 2023.



Figure 25 Installation shot of "I'd rather be invisible", monotype and screen-print on Fabriano paper, 2024.

Varied Editions 1/8, 2/8, 3/8, 4/8, 5/8.



Figure 26 Installation shot of "hide", 2024.



Figure 27 Installation shot of "hide", 2024.



Figure 28 Installation shot of "hide", 2024. *I'd rather be invisible* (left), *Verge (of tears)* (right).



Figure 29 Installation shot of "hide", 2024. *Verge (of tears)* (left), *Quietly Screaming* (right).



Figure 30 Verge (of tears), Oil, Oil Stick, Pastel, Graphite on Canvas, 180 x 72 inches, 2023.

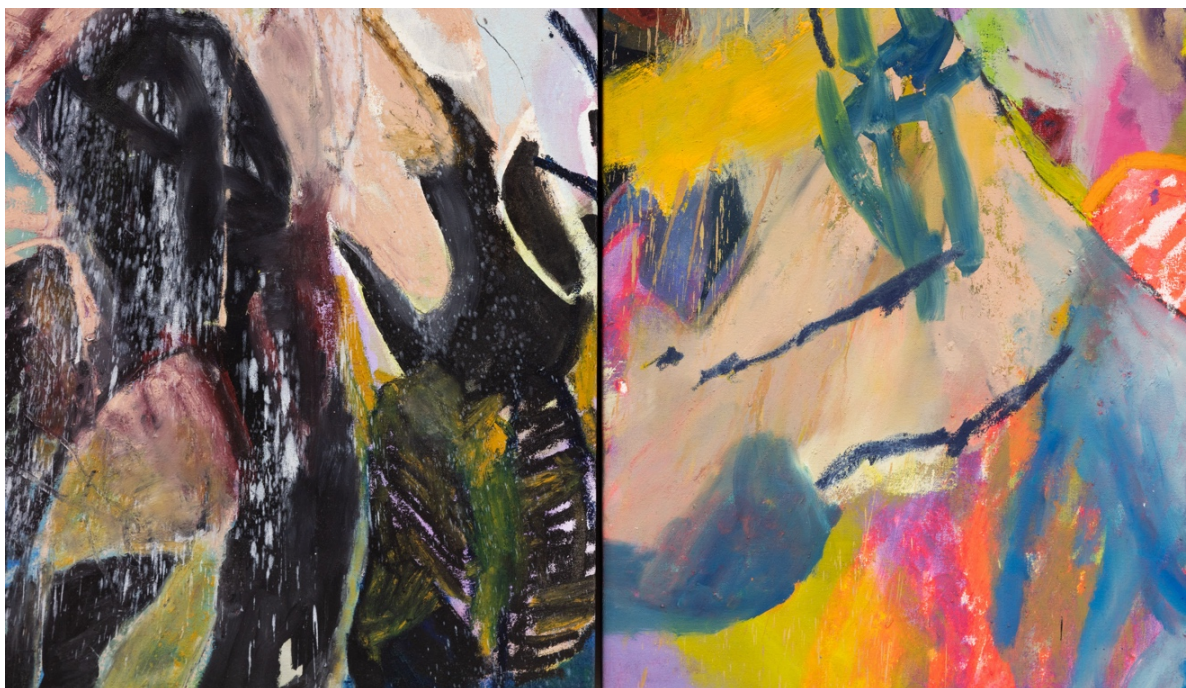


Figure 31 Detail shot of Verge (of tears), 2023.

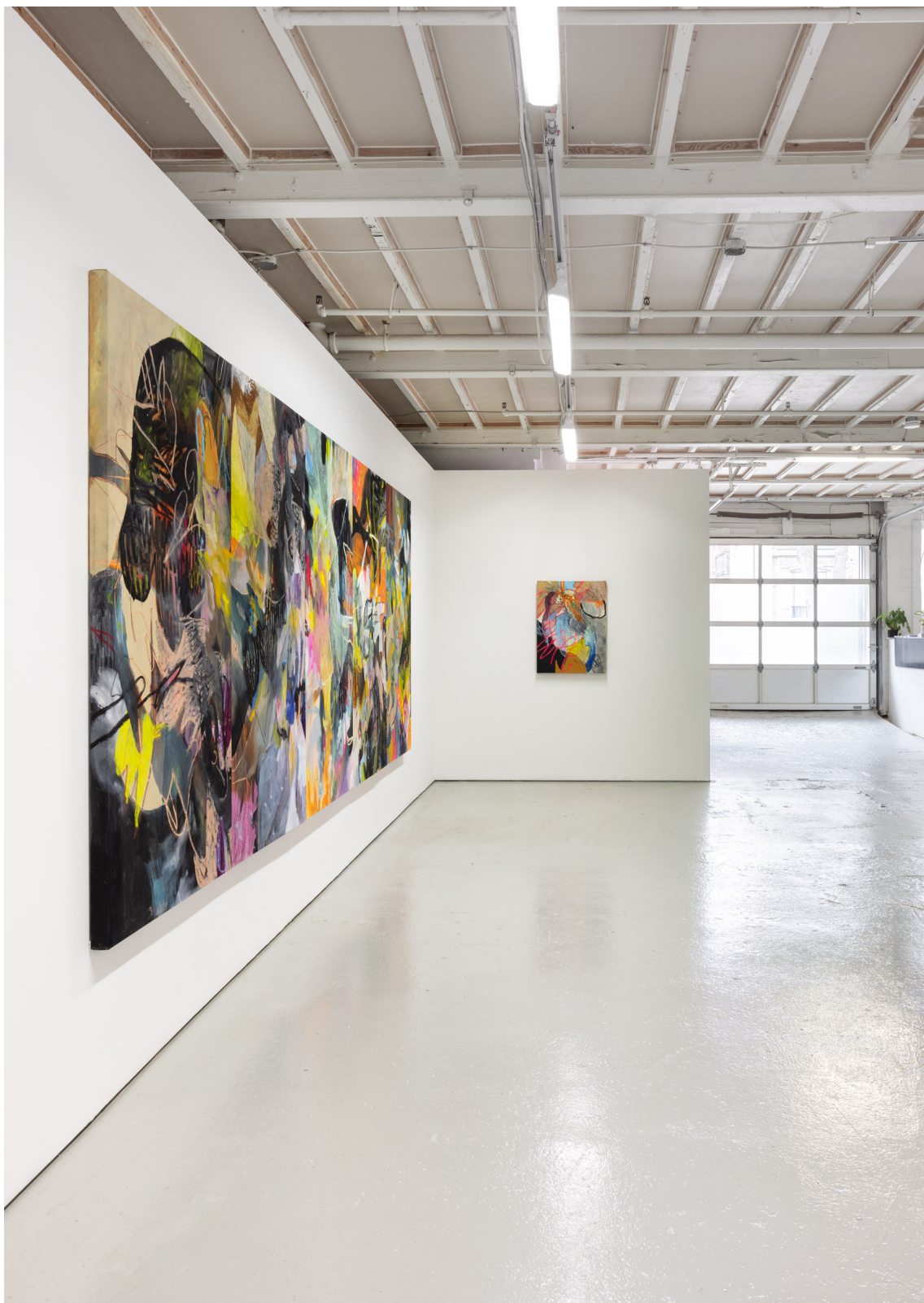


Figure 32 Installation shot of "hide", 2024.



Figure 33 Quietly Screaming, Oil, Oil Stick, Pastel, Graphite on Canvas, 24 x 32 inches, 2023.