

FIRE+WORDS: THE GEOGRAPHY OF DEPRESSION

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Abstract

The topics of violence, feminism and depression are discussed as they all have an integral part in the artists practice as an abstract painter. A portfolio of my art practice has been included to exemplify and to support the idea that fragmentation is both a result and a consequence of living in a world that is no longer solid but liquid, as per the thoughts of sociologist Zigmund Bauman. Some key points of Gestalt psychotherapy are used to describe and explain the experience of depression in conjunction with the creative practice of feminist collage work, abstract painting and other creative practices such as poetry. Some causes of depression are discussed using the landscape of the art world to a woman's inner and outer world's experience. Ultimately, the thesis invites us to choose to engage mental health issues not by using the subtle code of discretion of Slavoj Žižek, that is language and alienation but by re-inhabiting the geography of our existence, re-sensitizing the body with the presence of the other person and with great anticipation.

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Fire + Words

The Geography of Depression



Esther Catherine Gauthier

Fire + Words

There is no coming to consciousness without pain. People will do anything, no matter how absurd, in order to avoid facing their own Soul. One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious.

C.G. Jung

Where other therapeutic approaches posit the psyche as the fundamental paradigm, Gestalt therapy posits contact. All human experience is first and foremost contact with the world, and the psyche is only a crystallized and secondary form of this. Contact is the primary experience. The therapist's patients, however, are more prone to see their suffering as located in the psyche than in contact. [...] Human beings are contact. Gestalt therapy has developed the concept of "contact boundary" to refer to experience.

Jean-Marie Robine

Prelude

One could say that I am writing this paper because I can't seem to connect with the intellect. Or at least, I am trying to, or giving it my best shot. And perhaps we both seem to have a long history of tumultuous relationships and irreconcilable differences. This paper will attempt at making links between violence, feminism and depression as they all have an integral part in my practice as a visual artist. In one way or another I am attempting to create a portrait of intuition and emotion. On second thought, I am an abstract painter. My links are usually blurred and not so direct. The obvious makes me cringe. One would hope that this might become a beautiful portrait. It might also end up being an angry manifesto of the challenges of the intellect over experience and affect. One can never tell what one will encounter "down the rabbit hole".

I have stumbled upon this interesting thought from Jean-Marie Robine while researching and can relate to the pull of the one (intellect) and the other (practice):

Practice is grounded in theory but there is a gap. Theory is grounded in practice but there is a distance. Practice demonstrates theory, implicitly and explicitly, and theory is an attempt to give form to experience lived in practice. And something always escapes through the crack between them. And we search, and I search, endlessly, to shrink this gap because of my need for greater coherence, no doubt deriving from some vestigial fantasy of omnipotence. But this irreducible lack of coherence also gives rise to movement. Perfect coherence is closure, the end of a process, the finished gestaltung, death. And yet . . . "The form exists the ground" as Maldiney wrote. (Robine 2012)

As a means of easing into this artist statement, I propose a conversation with a renowned psychotherapist. I will be taking the position of the artist in this discussion though I must reveal that I have received training in the discipline of psychotherapy as well. Here is the beginning of a conversation with Jay Tropianskaia. She is the Director of Training at the Gestalt Institute of Toronto.

From the Shore; A Conversation echoes

(Esther starting the conversation, Jay will refer to her as Cathie)

- Well that is a fun surprise Jay.

- I am reading this book called Violence by Slavoj Žižek. There is a chapter titled "Tolerance as an Ideological Category". It is a long text and I stumbled upon this quote that is very interesting to me.

The formula of revolutionary solidarity is not "let us tolerate our differences, it is not a pact of civilisations, but a pact of struggles which cut across civilisations, a pact between what, in each civilisation, undermines its identity from within, fights against its oppressive kernel. What unites us is the same struggle. A better formula would thus be: in spite of our differences, we can identify the basic antagonism or antagonistic struggle in which we are both caught; so let us share our intolerance, and join forces in the same struggle. In other words, in the emancipatory struggle, it is not the cultures in their identity which join hands, it is the repressed, the exploited and suffering, the "parts of no-part" of every culture which come together in a shared struggle. (Žižek, 2008)

- I wonder how this compares with Social Change Begins with Two of Jean Marie Robine. What do you think?

- I do believe that in my art practice I strive to display my struggles especially around the place of feeling in our social structures, the body and my sense of exclusion and inclusion from my own experiences.

- A teacher looking at my work said the following:

To me, the different references about dance would be a good place to develop analogies with the vocabulary of your painting, for instance. Rhythm, movement and motion, colors and texture, the body of painting in other words.

Knowing that you listen to music while you are painting, you could describe how the rhythm of music is a metaphor for describing your work. Sound, wave, melody and rhythm.....

The fluidity of paint, the transparency of your colors, the clashes of your transferred elements in relation to drips and various paint gestures, are all interesting elements to discuss. After all, they are the things that you paint and that we see and we can relate to.

The palette is also a place in painting through which meaning can emerge if you give attention to the referential aspect of colour.

Think of your painting as both a body and a vocabulary that can offer an experience of the world through its sensorial experience and lastly, think about how the components mingle on the surface, interfere with each other and sometime mutate.

- My initial reaction to their interpretation is a feeling of shame. How does that happen? Is this my phobic layer kicking in? Do I have a judgement about myself around “you should know about this” already? I feel nothing when I read this interpretation. Like my heart is not in it.

- I believe I have been repressing the loneliness I feel around making work that feels very vulnerable. I also have the impression that the act of showing my paintings feels a little violent. A sort of: Here you Go! Take it or leave it! A sort of hit and run. A kind of "this is how living in this society feel like to me". "I depress and shrink". " I repress and fall silent". How does violence keep showing up in my personal life? Is it that there is a certain silencing that happens if I don't paint?

- And I also connect with a certain helplessness around the fact that I feel the need to say "take it or leave it". Does it become a take it or leave me? Or a choose me or leave me? That feels very painful.

- This feels like my starting point. Looking forward to hearing of your experience Jay.

Cathie (Esther)

----- (Jay answering)

- Hi Cathie,

- When I read your teacher's words my Gestalt mind cries out to them in your voice: “Is this what you feel with my work? Do you dance with my work? And what transforms in you through the process?” The missing piece in academic dialog is the response of the other. Your teacher is writing as a critic not as an artist. As an artist and a Gestalt therapist you face the same challenge – if we do not retrain our own embodiment we cannot respond to the other from an embodied place and there is no deep dialog. Violence elicits a response if we have not become desensitized. Desensitization is a social concern – we have no container other than art and psychotherapy in which to transform violence into something procreative. Violence has become normal and expected in the tv and the media, while children all over the world are cutting, overdosing and suiciding – and the message coming to us from these most important speakers is misunderstood because we deny our own bodies. As Gestalt psychotherapists we are trained to open our humanness to these aspects – including our own lack of sensitivity and our own cruelty and violence. To me violence is part of each of us, even the mildest of us have violent thoughts, and most of us have killed to live or accepted the violent deaths of others so that we

could be safe. Because we disown our violence, we have no way to identify “violence with whom?” - who is the “other” inside the world’s rape and genocide? Out of not knowing who is the other, that we take on shame – we take responsibility for the shamer. This is the importance of thinkers like Slavoj Zizec (I am also in the middle of one of beautifully written Living in End Times) – they keep trying to put our attention onto the shamer. When the shamer will not show shame we somehow protect them and take it on ourselves. This is an interesting thing to study as a part of our natural empathy.

- How much does an artist have to do to reach the other? Tear the page? Die on the cross as a work of art? It is contact that is the missing and the healing part of the engagement which is why we call ourselves artists as Gestalt therapists. Jean- Marie Robine writes beautifully that until I recognize that we are one fabric, that we are in one canoe, with all life on the planet, that I can react with alarm at the violence done to you.

- When I read your final words, I add the missing piece: Lonely with whom? Helpless with whom? That is the starting point – to tell this to your teacher would be the start of a dialog. When I read your words, I feel lonely with you, I feel helpless with you. I doubt this is the response the “helpful” expect to hear and that is the context out of which your loneliness springs. Gestalt gives you the most important tool – there is always an other, there is no internal self who has a lack. I often wonder about the loneliness of the artist, in deep contact with the medium, with color and with their visions and memories, but no way to know the response of the others as they engage with what I birth or produce. An artist is like a shaman whose work is always beyond the social awareness and is a ceremony for healing of the planet. One can never know the impact only have faith that every act of creation does go out into the stream of life. As a therapist I always have the presence of the other to mutually transform one another, immediate feedback in body, gesture, sound. It is less lonely and, in the end, just as lonely. For both it is essential to keep learning what Jean Marie writes – that what we pay attention to matters.

- When I read your words, I felt a squeezing around my heart and a yearning to scream. I think despite all of my words above this is where the dialog begins.

Jay

Jay Tropianskaia



The Kiss, Brancusi

 ----- (Esther
 answering back)

- I find myself hesitating to put my yearning to scream into this dialog. It feels forceful to me; a violence displaced. And yet, there is a recognizance of the potential impact this could have on an other. I just saw the small statue from Brancusi called "The

Kiss" (I've included an image of it). The man and woman have this immediate feedback of "I kiss you and you kiss me" whereas this scream is a lonely scream; a scream without an audience. I picture myself at the shore of Lake Ontario. Faced with the physicality of having my feet in the sand and my face in the wind. I fear this scream the same way I fear violence done onto someone in my neighborhood. I fear that a scream is staying silent. As if my voice carrying over the water would not return to me in an echo. I ask myself who is my echo? And who echoes for the violence experienced through micro- aggressions of being shoved in the public transit or the loaded questions of the likes of "You aren't from around here are you?"

- I have yet to hear of the impact of my work onto others. I wonder if the tree really makes noise when it falls in the woods and no one is present. I wonder if this could be considered violence done onto oneself. A friend wrote to me recently that "*the moon is always in relationship and connected to the earth. Whether you are there or here; you are always a part of things, belonging, impactful, irreplaceable. There is much solidarity for you and me out there*". It is sad to notice that although I understand these words; I do not believe them yet. I do not know how this virus has attached itself onto me. I have read of Jean-Michel Robine talking about the fact that he has seen therapists asking clients to get in touch with their emotions during a session. As if emotions are never a part of an individual and the client will inevitably need the therapist to figure what they are. It also seems to suggest that a person live much disruption between their emotions and experience. It is so interesting to note that my main topic of investigation at York "Emotional Geography/Feminism" still has distinctions like "Emotion and the City"; "Emotion and Home". How does this not reinforce my own experience of exclusion of affect in some way or another?

- Thank you for your kind ear and warm heart,

Cathie (Esther)

----- Jay's reply

- I am surrounded by trees, and such heavy rain and high winds that it is difficult to separate tree from wind. Tree tops swirl like dervishes and some trees will fall over. If I pay enough attention to the vibrations in my body, particularly my buttocks, there is no separation of my body from this energetic swirl. When a tree falls it impacts the entire forest – because they are all connected by an incredible root system. Each tree that falls imperils the whole forest as it is an essential piece of the whole body of the forest. There is ongoing balance and regulation. I learned this when we built this cabin – choosing a space to build that required minimum trees to cut down, only a few, compared to other builders who cut down many. Then a tree person stopped by to check the impact on the forest here of the trees cut down, and asked us to watch carefully whether the other trees nearby got ill, leaves brown, because their root system was impacted. In time it became clear that the other trees were not hurt, they healed the spaces, but the experience was a worry for me. How brave if we could feel that about the human race, certainly about the planet as a whole and we a part of everything. But here so close to nature – which is why I spend time here – I can pay attention to the impact of the atmosphere as a whole on my own movements and desires. If I pay attention to my resonance to the Kiss, I feel a violence of merging – which helps me to see violence as a desire for the other, to be recognized without being swallowed. You are intuitive in your choices and your art speaks more clearly to me than your words which are lovely. Emotion is a part of the Gestalt Cycle by the way – it arises at the place where we move out of self-focus into awareness of the other, then emotion shows us we are facing otherness. Because there are so few words for these feelings arising, we don't stay with them long enough to track their movement into desire. I admire your determination to bridge the intellectual with the whole body. Feminism and City and Home and University and Geography provide a wealth of emotions – part of the anthropology of our here and now. Deeper dialog would follow the emotion to the truth. How can I support you better?

Jay

_____ (The conversation close / the reader is called back to sounds of the City)

Fragility and Violence

Losing a house, losing your mind, losing a job or losing a spouse? Perhaps some people think that certainty would allow us to feel our feelings better. I believe the quest for certainty and labelling of our stories constricts our ability to experience life and feel joy, depression, anger, etc. In our desire to have certainty we fall apart and we become immovable agents. We are stuck in a meticulous world where it is no longer important to interact with one another and in our own unique ways. Systems are put in place; vocabulary is established; rules and conventions prevail.

Is certainty the latest addiction we have come up with? Gestalt therapy warns us of the cost of certainty: "Unless individuals become aware of their own possibilities of relating to the world and themselves, authentic existence is impossible." (Rosner, 1990) As artist and psychotherapist George Rosner shared in his book 1990 book, Peeling the Onion, I can only move me, live me, feel me. I cannot move you or make you think, feel, do or be anything. This is what we call the ability to respond or "Response-ability"; to be aware of our own existence and choices we also have to be present and not out there.

Another strong statement that Rosner also made in his book is that "*Experiencing life in the here and now is what gives it meaning and grace*". This idea appeals to me. The American dancer Gabrielle Roth mentions that although she has put together a system of 5 different styles of dance to articulate the experience of going through different aspects of our own inner landscape. The ultimate result of dancing the Flowing, Staccato, Chaos, Lyrical and Stillness styles are completely dependent on the individual's willingness to be one with the process. She has put the meaning back into the dancer's hands. The ultimate experience of dancing the ecstatic dance is in my body, in this moment, in this city. Or If you would, a lively amalgamation of the physical, emotional and of the geography of our experience.

Knowing that it was possible to dance not only to be in a state of joyful beingness but coming from a desire for what is, was liberating to me. Being on even ground with what is real and true gives me the license to create work in my own practice. Reading on the subject of violence, I have looked closely into ways in which violence is both present and absent in my own work. A question that is both shocking and necessary; a reflection that I have resisted for the past months for fear of being one agent of a complex practice of doing harm to others in unsuspected ways.

In Strangers to Ourselves, feminist author Kristeva advances the claim that the desire to close the gates on the foreigner arises from the anxiety of facing one's own difference. I remember

when faced with the work of David Lynch in a class (as we watched Part 8 of the miniseries Twin Peaks the Return), I had to ask myself the question how am I different from the cinematographer David Lynch. His episode called 'Gotta Light' is one of those episodes that has a reputation amongst people who have watched David Lynch's work. It is debatable to say that any creation of the American creator could go under the radar of culture though when I saw the words "*the theatre of cruelty*" in Zizèk's book Violence, I knew he was talking about David Lynch's work in general and in the particular.

My work as an abstract painter talks about the felt experience, affect and body sensations. And I wonder how these human experiences are lived as both a means of inclusion and exclusion for women? I am deeply interested in looking into emotion and the intellect but not one at the expense of the other.

Any contact implies a bringing together of otherness, of the two. It would perhaps be better to say: lived like two. When some therapists suggest to their clients 'to get in touch with their emotions', this shows that these therapists, in their anthropology or their 'weltanschauung', consider that the emotions are to be posed as something separate and distinct from oneself. , and thus they implicitly transmit their design to their client. Paradox for anyone who claims to help unify experience into a Gestalt! (Translated from the French text, Robine, 2012)

It reminded me of this thought in psychotherapy around the I-It and I-Thou and the importance of the between. The I-It is that function of the self that is focused on accomplishing of tasks. Very far from relating. The I-Thou is the other part where one has a goal of reaching someone else; there is a "We". It is also an awareness of people and a willingness to connect with them in my own artistic practice.

It is also important to stress out that we need both to do (i-It) and we need to be (I-Thou) in order to survive as human beings. And so, the between is this fertile intangible environment where beings meet and establish connection. It is a sort of process by which the reality of one individual and the reality of the second individual encounter this third realm. This is not automatic and is not guaranteed. Though when it happens, a dance of body and mind into a third actuality is far more encompassing and vaster than the sum of those two people's realities.

What lurks in the between for the "enfant terrible" of painting Albert Oehlen? While showing his last series of large paintings at Gagosian Gallery in New York in 2016, the painter delivered an artist talk about his process and said:

I don't know that I am responsible for what people see. What I am doing is kinda of actions and people interest me and that's how I see art. There is a word for it...



Untitled - Baum 46 (2015), Albert Oehlen

its indexicality. You see the way it had been done. I like to see the process backwards. See a result and think that it's done and of course by that person and that time and situation. And that is what he wanted to do. And that's what he did. And this is why and this is why. (2016 interview with Glenn Brown)

In this particular artist talk, Oehlen discusses with fellow painter Glenn Brown his new work and his ideas on the topic of Surrealism. Starting from the idea of the tree, Oehlen proceeded to use computer software, spray paint and a limited palette of black, white and magenta to transport his viewers to another world that is both figurative and abstract at the same time. Shown here is "Untitled-Baum 46 (2015)". Armed with his

friendliest sense of humor, he shared how his process is that of experimentation; getting in trouble on the canvas and then getting into safety again. I can absolutely relate to this practice of the unplanned, the experiment, the tying and untying of knots of representation, emotion and intellect. Though it is difficult for me to identify with Oehlen's detachment when it comes to what the viewer experiences. I get sincerely worried when I hear of the method removed from the artist. Intuitively speaking, it is hard to imagine one without the other. It feels as though one has to make a simulacrum of one and just as soon trip the other.

Through her article on "Collage and Feminism", Raasberg acknowledge the influential thoughts and reflections of the American artist Miriam Schapiro:

In a revised 1989 essay entitled "Femmage;" Schapiro presents it as a strategy by which contemporary women can gather together out of the fragments of their cultural past an artistic tradition, a heritage and a technical procedure in literary, musical, and plastic arts that feminists may draw upon for "aesthetic direction" (315). Femmage thus refers backward to the heritage of women's traditional art activities and forward to contemporary feminist artists who are reclaiming this legacy, asserting its value, and finding in it a sense of continuity. Schapiro names among contemporary femmagists, Betye Saar, Mimi Smith, Harmony Hammond, Faith Ringgold, Marybeth Edelson, and herself, artists who "reshape artifacts from women's culture and give them new voice" (296)

As Richard Hycner, psychotherapist and author said in his book Between Person and Person “as we create more and more sophisticated ways of keeping our distance we split not only between persons, not only in our relationship with nature, but also within our own psyches.” (Hycner, 1993) And perhaps there is a silent violence in this practice. The same way one can sever the medium and the work from the emotional impact? Perhaps unless one is prepared to be labelled as unsophisticated who will risk asking the question “how do you feel when you see this work”? Keeping in mind the artist creating it and the viewer receiving it, is this not the silent scream of which I was writing about in my correspondence with psychotherapist Jay Tropianskaia? Armed with the same sneaky curiosity of an Albert Oehlen, I wonder if the art world grants you a certain amount of airtime; a latitude in sharing ideas that some others don't have. And are some artists more privileged than others in their roles of technicians of freedom.

Fluorescent Profanities

"So above all, guard the affections of your heart, for they affect all that you are. Pay attention to the welfare of your innermost being, for from there flows the wellspring of life." (Proverbs 4:23 (The Passion Translation)

Emotional Geography is a fairly new discipline that is interested in examining emotional reflexivity and responsiveness in interactions with people and environments. Solidly attached to previous theoretical frameworks of feminism, scholars of the field are interested in applying non-linear presentation techniques to join in spaces of health and well-being with that of human experience.

As a visual artist, I find this an exciting proposition. I am curious to know how depression would be encompassed into this new discipline of study. How would these experiences be looked into and made sense of? I am reminded of Jean-Michel Robine, a French psychotherapist, who has spent most of his life teaching on social engagement and is very much an existentialist:

Experience may remain unformulated as long as its author is not confronted with the necessity to communicate it to someone else. It is upon being said that this experience will articulate and organize itself, take on representations and receive a syntax. At this moment, it will take shape as symbols that have a similar meaning for a given social group. More precisely, the words used to verbally express the previously unformulated experience will be words produced by the field- in other words, contact and situation- before belonging to this or that speaker. (Robine, 2015)

But how do we get to Žižek confiding that he thinks society currently lack spirit? A big claim when our day to day human interactions are full of posts, pictures and positions. As a feminist artist, I feel the push to talk about language as a code of distance; a code of objectification of the Other. And perhaps a vehicle for depression in art.

In the book *The Absence is the Bridge between us*, Spagnuolo Lobb writes that the increase in depression-related sufferings that many have expressed in the last few years is related to certain aspects of our global society and also the condition in which we are immersed individually. She explains that: *Today's rampant depression is related to this inability of being in one's life and body.* (Spagnuolo Lobb, 2015)

The lack of the other has become the constitutive experience of our times. Liquidity as an icon, as formulated by Bauman (2000) describes well this experience of lack of containment and self-definition. [...] We might compare this to the experience of not having a form, of being able to spread out over the entire universe, of not having a wall able to contain, or against a wall to crash. I believe that liquidity is the result of two phenomena: the globalization of communications and the lack of protective, caring relationships. (Spagnuolo Lobb, 2015)

When one discusses the topic of depression one cannot divorce the inner world without talking of the outer world. One impacts the other. And with the idea of “liquidity”, or what Z. Bauman called the “2nd Modernity”, my heart can't contain the loads of questions that present themselves before feeling what it is like to not know who is the container or let alone what is the container in one's life. I feel the hopelessness of having to look but not knowing where. I feel the sadness of not having the experience of a physical presence; of a person to talk to. I feel the anger of not being at ease with my body or my thoughts and wanting to glue or stitch them back together to feel once again that sense of quiet acceptance and eyes to see reality.

And after all of this suffering, what's left of the mental realm? There is this sense of presence as a sign of absence. It is like a sort of void. The void is felt not with the mind but with affect and in the body. Gestalt psychotherapy believe that it is both in situation to and in relation with the other (in relation). Depression becomes the landscape of a person. It is all encompassing; A snow storm of tension. A DE-pressing of our normal ways of being with ourselves and others. A geography of the internal and external, of the inside and outside. And the mapping out of the person situated in this site of anguish is the place of holding it in and screaming it out simultaneously. *“The depressive figure takes the form of a stupor, a state of inaccessibility in which the energy of the self appears as “suspended” [...]”* (Spagnuolo Lobb, 2015) And it is in this site of DE-pressing and DE-ferral that the person requires a response; this is where the absence

becomes the bridge to the 'US'. And in order to experience this [...] *it is necessary to play along with the music that is created in the encounter between [...]. The cure consists in creating a new harmony within the same music, as well as an experiential code that is more relaxed and confident as regards contact.* (Spagnuolo Lobb, 2015).

So, in describing depression as the state of living with a feeling of void it must not be considered as a vacuum of experience. There is this yearning for the other but also a renunciation for the contact with the other. Just as in the children's book The Secret Garden, we become these untended gardens where we fall silent and dormant. We become motionless and dazed to all body and mind involvement and to our immediate external geography. "*Thus, the depressive experience becomes co-created matter, which originates a depressive experiential field. Any clinical intervention must necessarily consider that both the contact and the experiential field are co-created: the change starts with two*". (Robine, 2011)

This "depressive emptiness, [...] a sort of bubble without air, [...] an apnea which is lived as transient or, in the most serious cases, as lack of the other, and thus depression" (Spagnuolo Lobb, 2015) is what my painting called "Brother" and subsequently the painting "In the Field" have been sign posts to. My art practice speaks to that atramentous experience; it represents the necessity of reclaiming the spiritual and the relational (with the other) as a potential antidote to depression. In fact, my explorations throughout my training have been an experience into "*The re-sensitization of the body {that} must necessarily happen through meaningful relationships*—" (Spagnuolo Lobb, 2015).

How does one RE-inhabit the geography of existence? How does one RE-sensitize the body? With presence, with sensitivity, with intentionality, with engagement and with anticipation.

[...] by letting the other look right through us and acknowledge our existence, and by grasping the intentional gesture of the other.[...]The treatment involves "wasting time" to be with the useless other, the relational engagement of being there beyond all expectations, a pure being-with, which is the basis of the vital sense of self. (Spagnuolo Lobb, 2015).

A good number of my works include photography and collage as part of my process. I have observed that a number of viewers have been interested and intrigued as to why my abstract paintings include this process. I feel deeply the pull on the one side of abstract painting and its tradition of color, texture, geometric forms and perhaps a certain masculine representation of the

act of painting in this style. Big canvases, big galleries and so much color theory to back up all of that! But in all honesty, how does one Canadian female painter as myself insert herself into this highly codified discourse? Like the Piet Mondrian, Jean-Paul Riopelle, Pablo Picasso; the Helen Frankenthaler or Joan Mitchells of the art world?

This violence operates at multiple levels. Language simplifies the designated thing, reducing it to a single feature. It dismembers the thing, destroying its organic unity, treating its parts and properties as autonomous. It inserts the thing into a field of meaning which is ultimately external to it. (Žižek, 2008)

My work is disarticulated and fragmented in some ways or another as to reflect this separation amid language and affect. Between the emotion, the experience of living, the city, this time and the meaning-making machine of the intellect:

[..] language, not primitive egotistic interest, is the first and greatest divider, it is because of language that we and our neighbours (can) 'live in different worlds' even when we live on the same street. What this means is that verbal violence is not secondary distortion, but the ultimate resort of every specifically human violence. (Žižek,2008)

Thus, the difficulty in speaking of my work. I have yet to experience being asked how I come up with the embodiment of my experience into paint. It is interesting to me that so much psychoanalysis has been focused on explaining why. As for one example, Frida Kahlo continuously decided to paint herself as both the image of the saint of Mexican traditions, flowers, fauna while it did seem her interest was in claiming back the power and the sovereignty of womanhood with the ideas of Marx and Engel.

As a feminist artist, I am more interested in her relationship to the art world of her time and how she was unacknowledged as a commanding figure of Symbolist Art until long after she was gone. Not so much the tragic fate of a Van Gogh but the discourse of the time was interested in the story of the male artist as powerful agent of free will while female artists were psychoanalyzed and put in that "Othering" corner; that of emotion, intuition and sexuality. As for it was and still is with the works of Georgia O'Keeffe:

Directly addressing the clichés of her work, notably the erotic and feminist readings most commonly associated with her up-close and personal depictions of velvety flowers, the room's didactic includes a quote from O'Keeffe: "When people read erotic symbols into my paintings, they're really talking about their own affairs." Instead of perpetuating the clichés, the room attempts to redirect the focus from the typical erotic readings to O'Keeffe's interest with synesthesia and her work's connection to music. O'Keeffe, who was a musician in addition to an artist, was interested in the language of colour and how music could translate on the canvas, and it's nice to see this highlighted over the supposed eroticism of the imagery. (Graff, 2016)

It feels very much intolerable for me to have the impression of having to choose a very dramatic and extremist way of seeing the world. Either an artist produces a work that is fundamentally a work of the mind, a strategy, a discussion or one produces a work that has to do with emotion and intuition and let go of all intellectual concerns.

How does one justify to not consider the in-between? Is it not shown in blinding neon lights bright enough? How much does the artist have to leave their own blood on the altar of art to be considered a worthy dance of mind, body and affect? Or Is it perhaps “[...] *the attitude of “understanding- each-other” has to be supplemented by the attitude of getting -out-of-each-others’-way”, by maintaining an appropriate distance, by implementing a new “code of discretion”.* (Žižek, 2008). It is quite ironic that Žižek makes reference to this code of discretion as a means and a solution to alienation in social situations. I see how keeping our distances might seem like a nonviolent position to adopt for some aspects of the whole experience. Or perhaps, it is a way to uncouple from feeling and experiencing what is real and true?

Plastic Dreams // Toward Reality

Distance though a comfortable method by which we are made able to ignore the Other's experience in its fullness because we are not face to face with the obvious has been the lot of colonization, war and abuse. The Other is obligated to expose their vulnerabilities as a means of educating the world. This has got to stop. One has got to start believing that we are all intrinsically linked together through our humanity. A fundamental violence exists in this “essencing’ ability of language: our world is given a partial twist, it loses its balanced innocence, one partial colour gives the tone of the whole. (Žižek, 2008)

How can I change my mind about the “code of discretion” without feeling like I need to explain depression? One does not have to go to polarities in order to meet with and experience my work. Silence and overexposure are polarities that create real distance in visual arts. I do not need more words but more experiencing of my pieces. I often feel like I see people waiting at the shore, hands crossed in front of their bodies, a partial politeness, waiting for an invitation to get onto a boat, whereas my work is partially about discussing whats and hows instead of whys when it comes to depression and violence. And one has got to keep an awareness to affect in order to experience it.

Whereas the psychiatric model believes that the individual suffers from uncontrollable negative mood. It does not, however, take into consideration how the landscape of the individual (the environment) also impacts the person who has received the diagnosis of depression. *In the book “Absence Is the Bridge Between Us”, several Gestalt psychotherapy specialists try to establish:*

[...] an original attempt to reformulate depression in terms of experience of contact with the environment, and therefore presents depression as the lack of a sense of connection with

the environment [..], and [..] there is a disturbance of the betweenness, of the experience of being-with the other, which, as regards depression, turns into unreachability[.] –“ (Spagnuolo Lobb, 2015).

This is a placeholder for the movement toward tension in my art practice. As mentioned in the quote of the first page, contact with my work is the primary experience that I have with you. [...] *Contact is the primary experience. [...] Human beings are contact.* (Robine, 2011)

In some ways, I am contacting you and you me. It is an attempt toward possibilities; and perhaps I am challenging you from a sense of postmodernist angst toward hope with my experience of mental health. Art-making becomes a regaining of ground; of my own internal geography; from unreachability to dialog; from a personal DE-Pression to approaching aliveness. *“The experience of depression is very unsettling for the whole of mankind, because it seems to lack a typically human feature, namely hope. [...] Hope is born in the space of the between, where the loving curiosity of the other meets our intentional movement toward him/ her.* (Spagnuolo Lobb, 2015)

Perhaps in an attempt to bridge my experience of depression with the intellectual discipline of art criticism, I should finish with a song. Maybe it is better to write upon the walls of my city. It is where I end and you begin. A fertile boundary. A relaxing of control for something altogether poetic and full of the present moment. The place where I stand and you stand. A place of authenticity. A moment where I say that I have a need for the other; and them meeting me with sameness and their full difference. Because they have an experience of me and I have an experience of them. And one cannot stand without a You.

DE-Pression Tags

I lost the Language of my Grocery shopping legs
/I am looking for
The feeling of every day low prices

Coarse Steel greys,
Primary Yellows,
Washed up Fire-Engine Reds,
I tried to “Kiss-Off” Blue stains; they remain!

Shopping mall binges
Sounds, speed, I want it all!
Of a vacancy sign///
The coffee at?

Plush attics- Fiber glass pink

Numb Numb Numb
Loved? Liked? Amour?
I guess I'm mostly all right

Playful eating___Playful playing
Where did the safe people gone to?
Orange plastic banquettes.

Atramentous Blue+ Dreams + + Toward a Conclusion

God, I invite your searching gaze into my heart. Examine me through and through; find out everything that may be hidden within me. Put me to the test and sift through all my anxious cares. See if there is any path of pain I'm walking on, and lead me back to your glorious, everlasting ways—the path that brings me back to you (Psalm 139, The Passion Translation)

Going through a Dollar Store one afternoon, aisle after aisle, not sure what I came in to find, I felt vividly the idea of carrying a dream was like shopping for that gift you want to give to that person you don't know that well. Fritz Perls, the co-founder of Gestalt Psychotherapy used to say that working with a client's dream was the “*royal road to integration*” (Perls, 1969). The idea of the dreamer dreaming of various parts of himself is quite fertile idea for my art practice. Perls believed that dreaming was the most spontaneous and creative act that us humans do.

How is it possible that we can work with dreams when there is no evidence that can explain the meaning of dreams? And there is the most astonishing fact that almost all dreams are without words. Perls suggested a sort of hierarchical and disorderly organization of unfinished business in our psyche. We basically remember more what is unfinished than what is completed.

Going back to my Dollar Store undertaking, I recall the text from B. M. Stafford “*Impossible Will: Unconscious Organizations, Conscious Focus*” and a very meaningful question that has an almost existential phenomenological texture to it:

Why should anyone struggle to see things as they, in fact, are? If the human brain models the world for each individual, why confront experience at all to test one's perceptions? As in Keatsian negative capability, why not just linger among too many possibilities or too many unconstrained alternatives? (Stafford, 2006)

That none of this would have shown up in this thesis unless it was an incomplete event in my day feels a little bit like it was meant to be. The sad and funny piece of this thought bubble is that I never managed to remember what I came for at the Dollar Store. Which makes me believe that dreams have a potential, a possibility, in and of themselves. And perhaps in their most existential

sense to show their dreamer a path amongst the many different sensations, emotions, thoughts; conscious and unconscious ways of being; to threading a more authentic choice in the here and now.

How does one conclude a marathon? How does one retell the experience of running 42 kilometres? Perhaps one could draw a graph; paint a mountain, spray-paint our marks? Or write a song on the story of the defeat of the overt and violent; or of the victory of the person to person interactions over the scripted and the explained self-help dictates.

There is a challenge in wanting to include emotion into the whole of experience of art. It is even harder for me to touch upon the topics of violence, depression and feminism when one has the spiritual practice of do no harm as Martin Luther King did. For once, I believe that my work touches upon those topics as a way to denounce the ways in which we are still a society excluding and distancing ourselves from the impact of considering solely the intellect as the solution to current psychological, social and cultural issues we are facing with the rise of this 2nd modernity or liquidity as Z Bauman explained in his book Liquid Modernity.

In the Gestalt psychotherapy tradition, one is encouraged to formulate a statement based on affect and sensations of the body, a sort of snapshot of the here and now when one is inclined to asking a question. With this practice, it is believed, just as with unfinished bits of dreams, that our entire being participate in a novel and integrated solution to our environment. So then, I invite you to reframe this reflection with a statement. What would Paul Valery say of his own words:

Interruption, incoherence, surprise are the ordinary conditions of our life. They have even become real needs for many people, whose minds are no longer fed... by anything but sudden changes and constantly renewed stimuli... We can no longer bear anything that lasts. We no longer know how to make boredom bear fruit.

So the whole question comes down to this: can the human mind master what the human mind has made.

My statement remains the same as when I started this thesis. I have researched and I have sung; I have not screamed but I have painted and drawn. It is my hope that we will soon see a pivotal moment where we are fully invested into wellness and love of all beings.

Language bringing things into their essence, language "moving us" so that things matter to us in a particular kind of way, so that paths are made within which we can move among entities, and so that entities can bear on each other as the entities they are... We share an originary language when the world is articulated in the same style for us, when we "listen to language" when "let it say its saying to us." (Wrathall, 2005)

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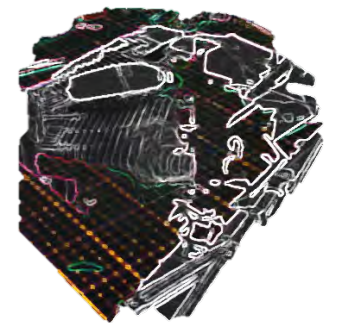
FRESH FIRE+ WORDS

PORTFOLIO OF ESTHER CATHERINE GAUTHIER

PORTFOLIO OF RECENT WORKS // 2017-2020 //

THERE IS A REST IN THE BETWEEN

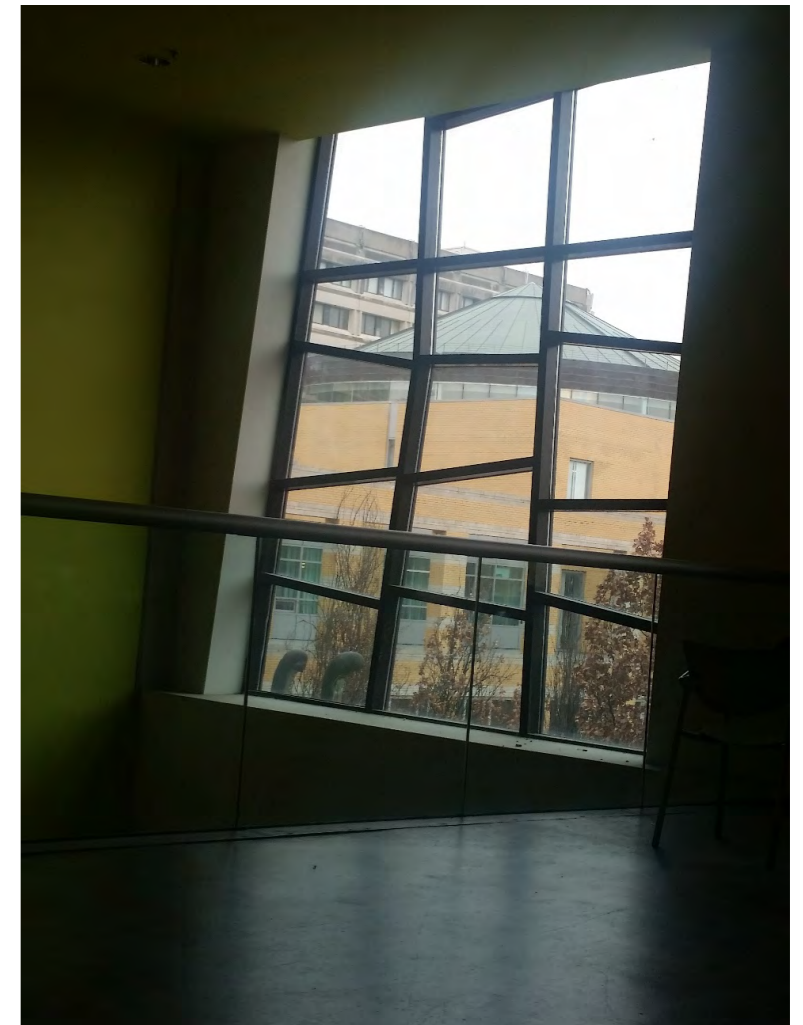
There is a rest between the Bip and the other Bip/A sort of Hold or Pull that my eyes bring to my ears
It is a question that my arms ask for me/ Do I start into action/Do I move toward or away from this
A soft blanket of Bflat on my skin/
466.16 hz feel like a pause onto the tip of my fingers
I notice the sound of an engine starting/I remember the school parking lot/
Its 5:55/The scraping of pebbles under the tires seem so loud/
Sometimes I want to listen to my legs and run// Follow the electrical tension/
I don't know if I feel like I am letting my nerves down
When I decide to sit, to chew, sleep on it/
I'm tired of saying Yes/ When everyone around me is saying No



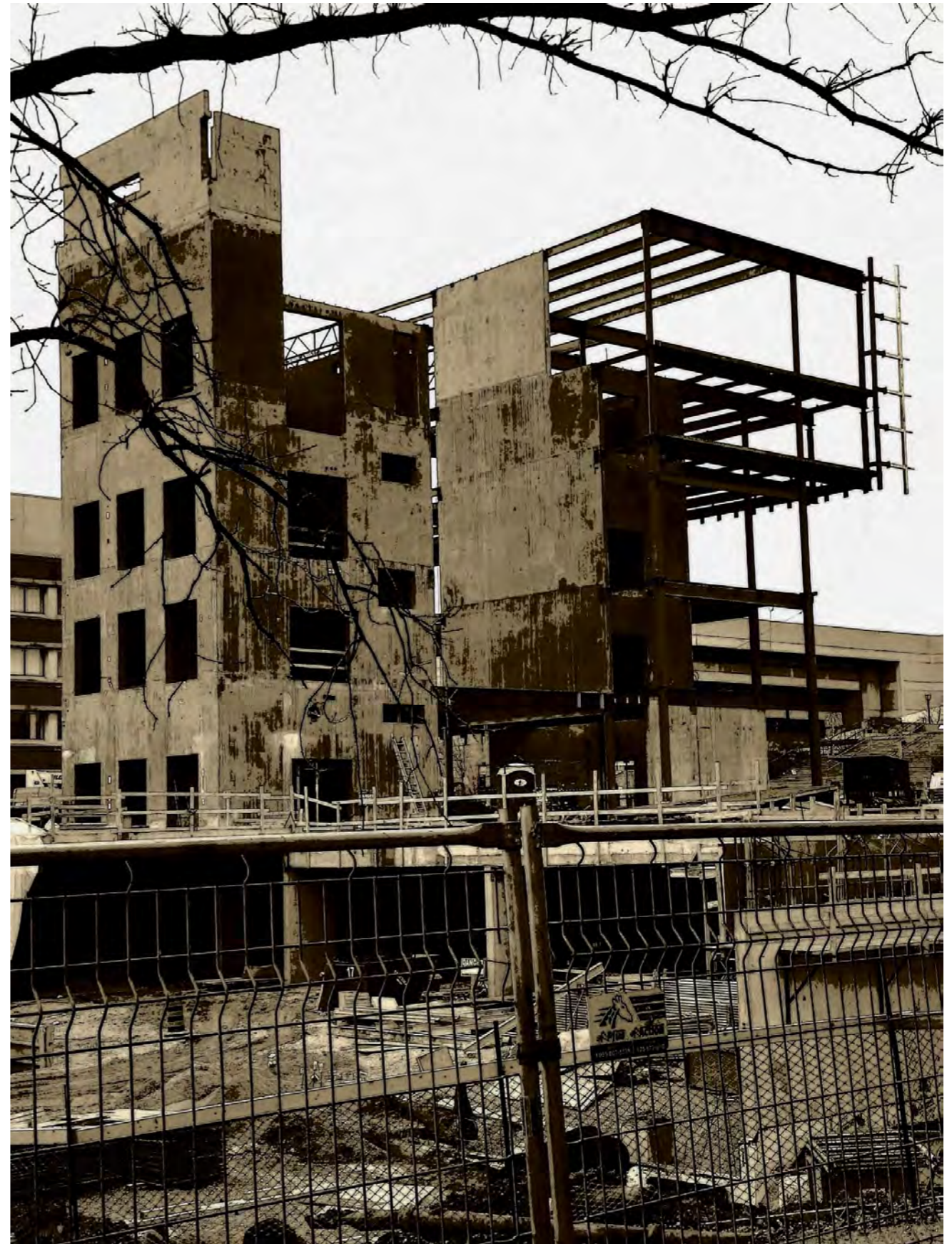
BROTHER (ÉCHO DE L'ÂME)

COMPLETION 2018

From the street to the canvas. The steps to the finish work "Brother" which was completed in Winter 2018. Taking pictures of sites of construction at York University and Downtown Toronto. Sites of shadows and lightness. Ideas of lines and of colors. Some of the pictures here have been transferred to the canvas but have been altered and manipulated for best atmospheric effect. Studies of color effects on the eye put together on paper before put onto canvas.



With dark ink color for background and blue hues on a white gessoed background, the painting needed some highlights to keep it vibrant and grounded at the same time. Not sure at that point what color to use, I went around looking for examples of high intensity colors and transparency. I ended up using Turner Acryl gouache colors in fluorescent pink and also lamé blue sapphire. Other mediums such as Japanese grid paper was applied to the canvas then tinted aqua green.



ENERGY+LIGHT

MOMENTS OF REFLECTION (S)

The final dimensions are 78x 30 inches though at this stage it felt like the painting was going to be vertical and not horizontal.

Addition of the first layer on the 2nd panel adds affect and tone to the already established contrast of the black on white. The morning light adds to the energy and vibration of my work. I often listen to music while painting. For this work, I listened to rap musician Lecrae who is a Christian artist. This felt real and also appropriate. His work touches upon topics of addiction, time, memory, diversity and faith.



Shown at top:

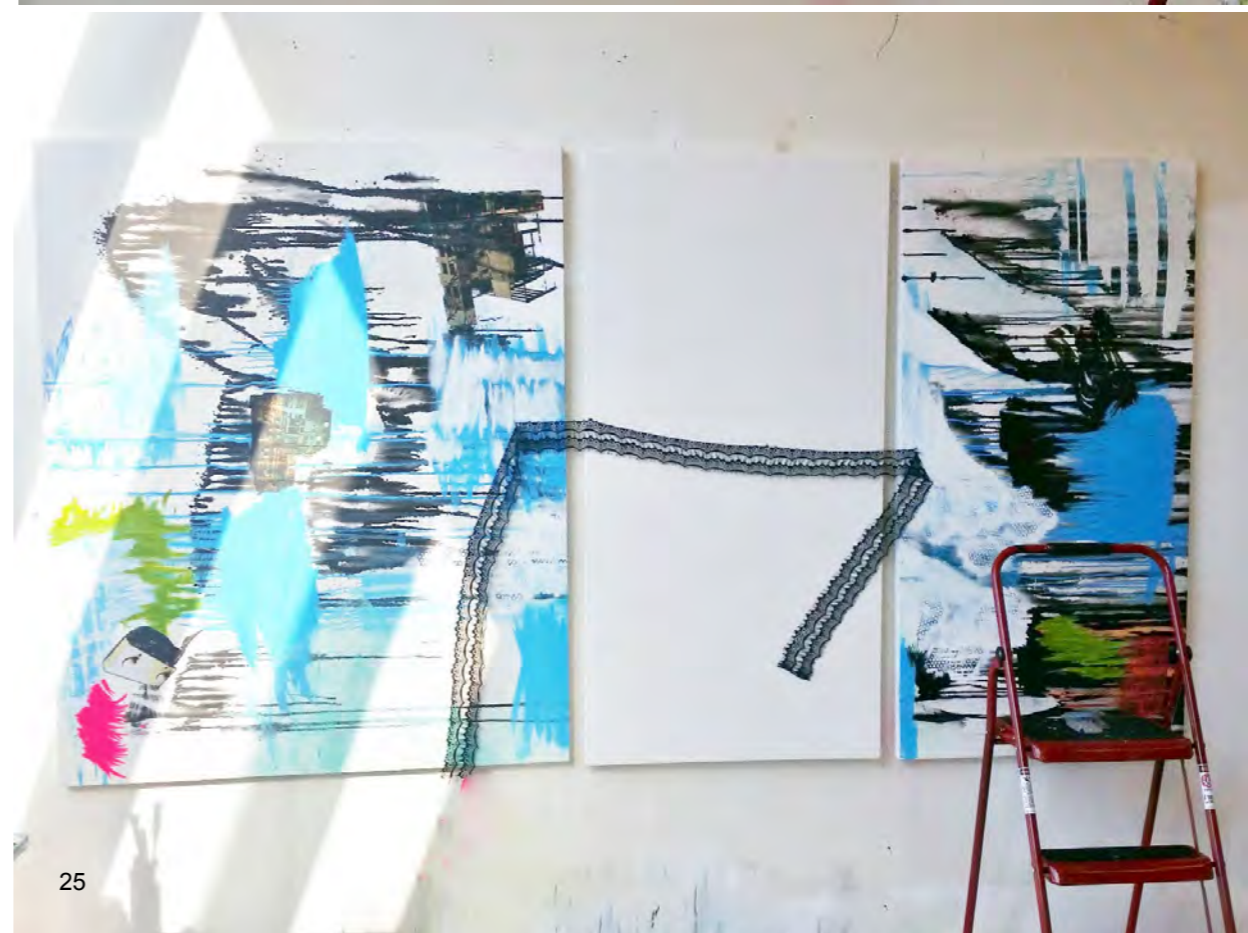
Deciding the position of image transfers. A skyscraper, an engine and an old-fashioned gum dispenser have been placed there.

What I have said of this work is the following: A diptych. An intent of rhythms, polarities and bridges. An integration of paint gestures (drips, thickness and materials) to bring to life my soul desire to reconnect with my sibling who I had been estranged from for the past 15 years. "(..) As he approached the house, he heard the music of celebration and dancing" (Luke 15:25)

The mediums used were acrylic gouache, paint markers, image transfers, Japanese paper, acrylic ink.

After the image transfers were done, I was still debating on the way to integrate the left and right panels. I found some eyelash lace and was playing with the textures. In the end, I worked on balancing better some of the textures seen on the right panel as it is much more intense and rhythmic than the left panel.

The following page shows the final version. The Miles Nadal Management Centre (Schulich School of Business) decided to purchase the painting after having it on display in their downtown gallery. Since March 2019, it is part of their permanent collection.





AFTER THE DANCE COMES A SONG

SUMMER COMES WITH NEW IDEAS AND
COLORS; ENGAGING WITH THE PREVIOUS
PALETTE

During that time I reflect, walk and read. I take pictures of favorite places. I am inspired by the idea of Collage as a means of using different gestures that I may not have before. Drawing but also sewing, cutting, erasing, spray painting. I used the work of the American author and therapist Virginia Satyr to ground myself in the experimenting. I was touched by this as it almost made me think it could be a song:

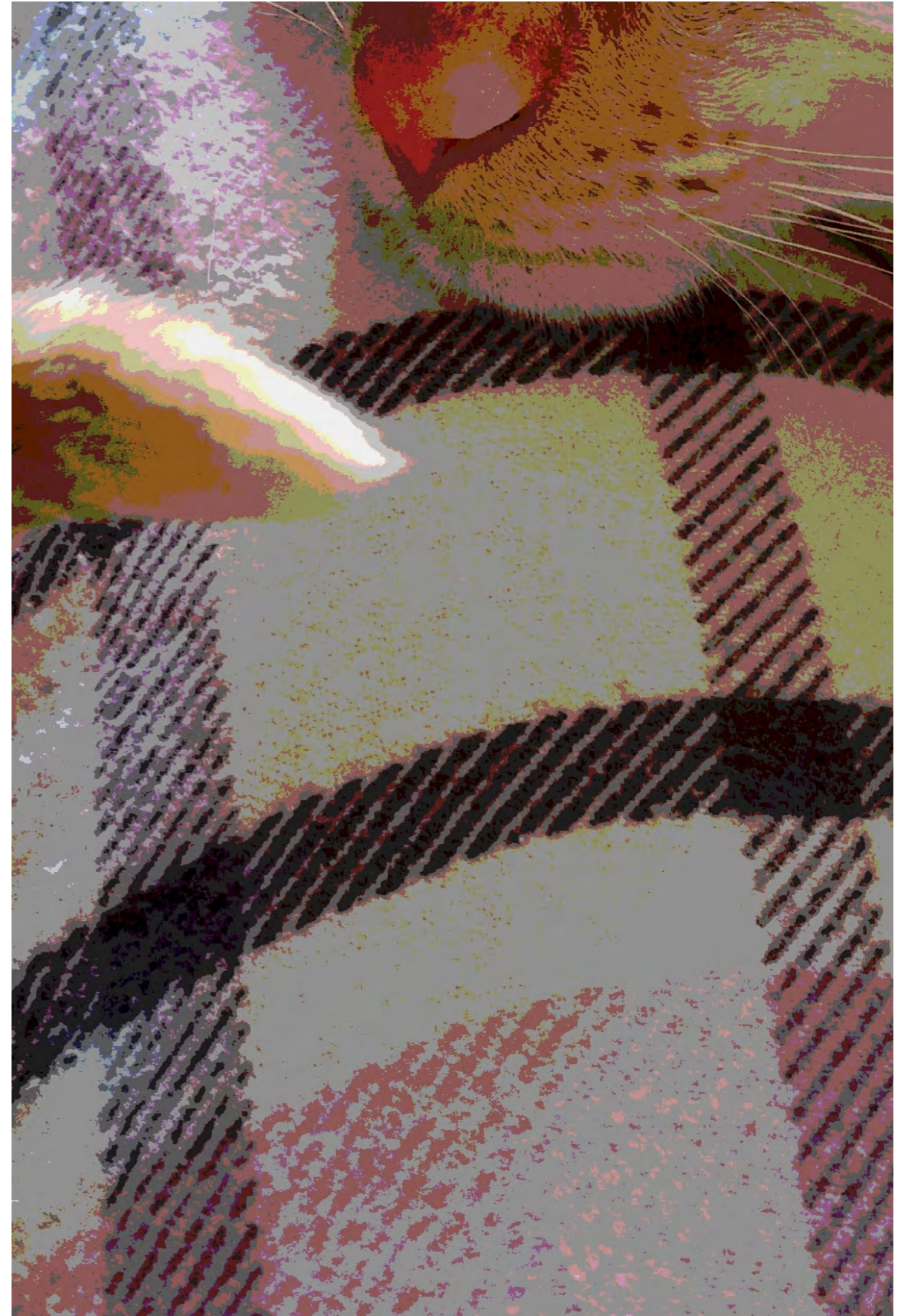
However I look and sound, whatever I say and do, and whatever I think and feel at a given moment in time is authentically me.

Later, if some parts of how i looked, sounded, thought and felt turn out

To be unfitting, I can discard that which is unfitting, keep the rest,

And invent something new for that which I discarded.

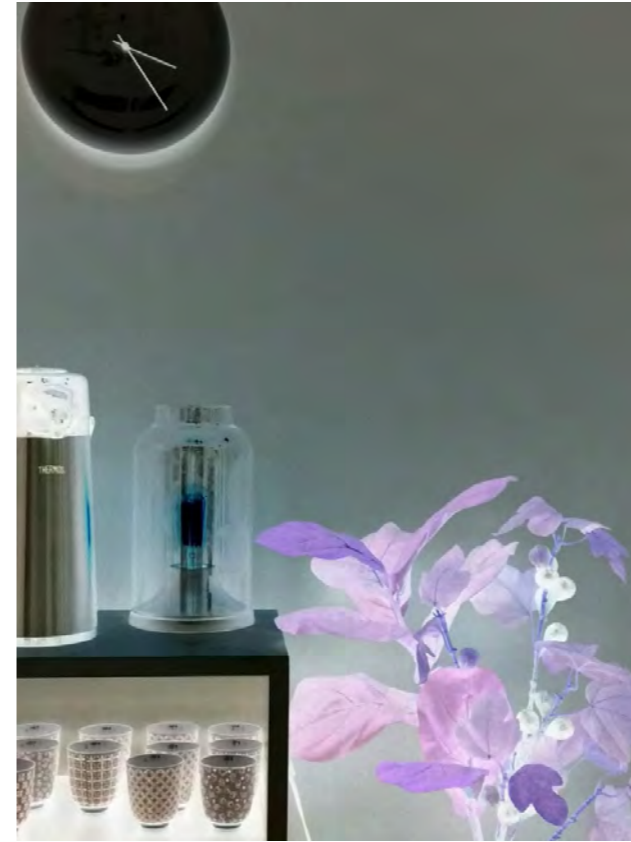
I felt the need to play with images and colors and remembered how a photography teacher once said that he didnt care what we shoot as long as its not your own kids or pets. Well I imagined a way of including my cat as a funny Easter Egg and then thought of going maybe one step removed and using a rabbit; just like in Alice in Wonderland.





COLLAGE

Including unexpected aspects together as a means of re-creating a monument or perhaps a self-portrait in the moment, I combined different pictures together but was not happy with the initial colors. My research was pushing towards pale and tender colors; perhaps a mirror of my own process of getting to know me and be friendly with me as Satyr would say.



HUMAN AFTER ALL (2018)

FINAL REPRESENTATION

Not much paint but still some. Not much cutting and erasing and still some. The pink background became both an eye-opening experiment and worry set in as I wondered if pink was one of those taboo colors that would not be appropriate for Visual Arts vs Illustration for example. In the end, I found some interesting words of encouragement in a text on feminist collage:

Thus, we find that a number of women artists and writers with different experiences and different perspectives discovered in collage certain strategic possibilities that they developed and put in the service of a feminist oppositional art. Although we cannot conclude that collage is particularly feminist; we may speak of "feminist collage;" mindful that this body of work includes a number of theories and practices in various media arising from different historical and social contexts, which have been guided by and have furthered feminist goals. (Raaberg,1998)



DIGITAL COLLAGE

/UNTITLED #1 (2020)

Using a photography of a construction site on Eglinton and Yonge, I was curious to render the image much darker; with a certain lack of control as I always wondered how does one pour a cement truck. And maybe as an attempt to humanize machinery. I used software to create the effects of stencils and brushstrokes.



COLLAGE

/DOLLAR STORE DREAMS (2020)

A series of found and altered materials from printed advertising combined with lamé acryl gouache and pink spray paint.

This collage was created with the poem "DE-Pression Tags" in mind. This written piece was included in the support paper on pages 15-16.



AUTUMN//DRE

AMS//FRAG

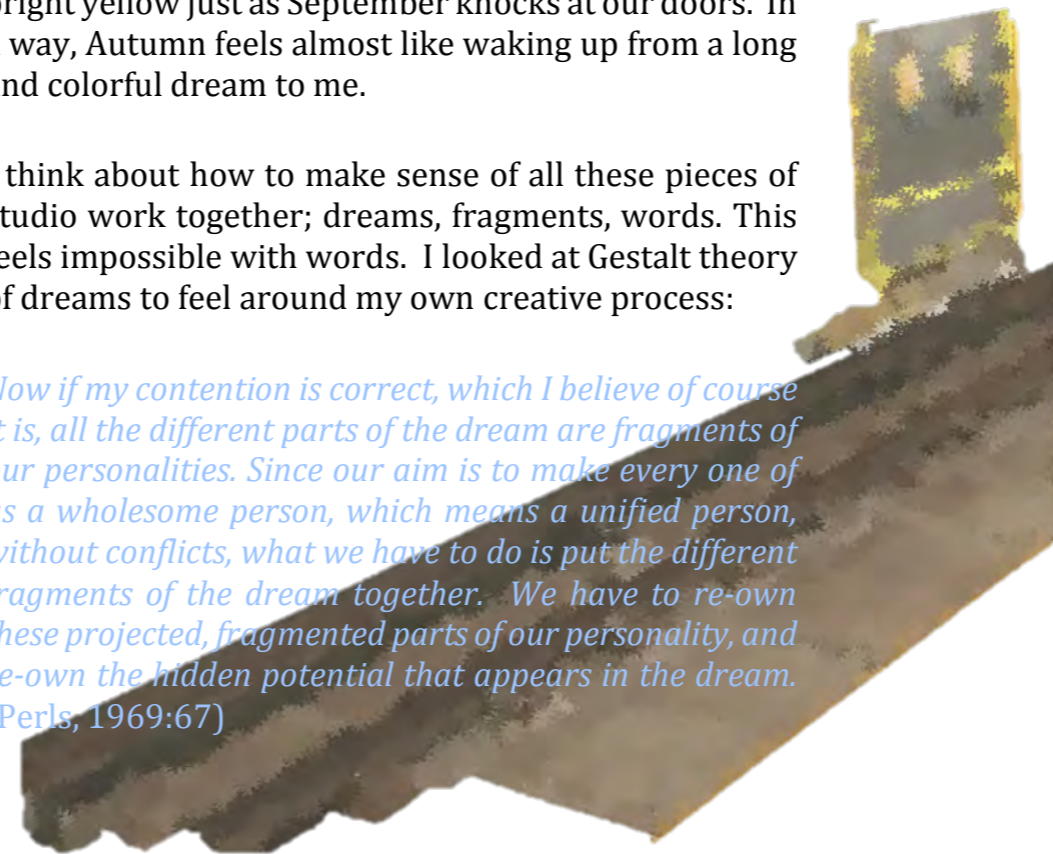
MENTS///

AT OUR DOORS

I feel a sense of energy and curiosity during Fall that I do not experience the rest of the year. I look with anticipation at the Goldenrod to remind me that it is back-to- school again. Its tiny flower-seeds become bright yellow just as September knocks at our doors. In a way, Autumn feels almost like waking up from a long and colorful dream to me.

I think about how to make sense of all these pieces of studio work together; dreams, fragments, words. This feels impossible with words. I looked at Gestalt theory of dreams to feel around my own creative process:

Now if my contention is correct, which I believe of course it is, all the different parts of the dream are fragments of our personalities. Since our aim is to make every one of us a wholesome person, which means a unified person, without conflicts, what we have to do is put the different fragments of the dream together. We have to re-own these projected, fragmented parts of our personality, and re-own the hidden potential that appears in the dream. (Perls, 1969:67)



IN THE FIELD_A BREATH (2018)

PRELIMINARY RESEARCH

Top left and right images are research pictures for colors, affect and general sense of the work I wanted to put together.

The bottom picture shows a 3rd panel had originally been started when I was completing the painting Brother. After reflecting on it, I felt the work would become too heavy and busy and didn't convey the sense of split that 2 panels of different sizes would accomplish.

I ended up looking at machinery of unusual colors, symbols, textures, patterns from Japanese papers and ended up transferring on canvas a picture of old machinery found at Evergreen Brickworks.

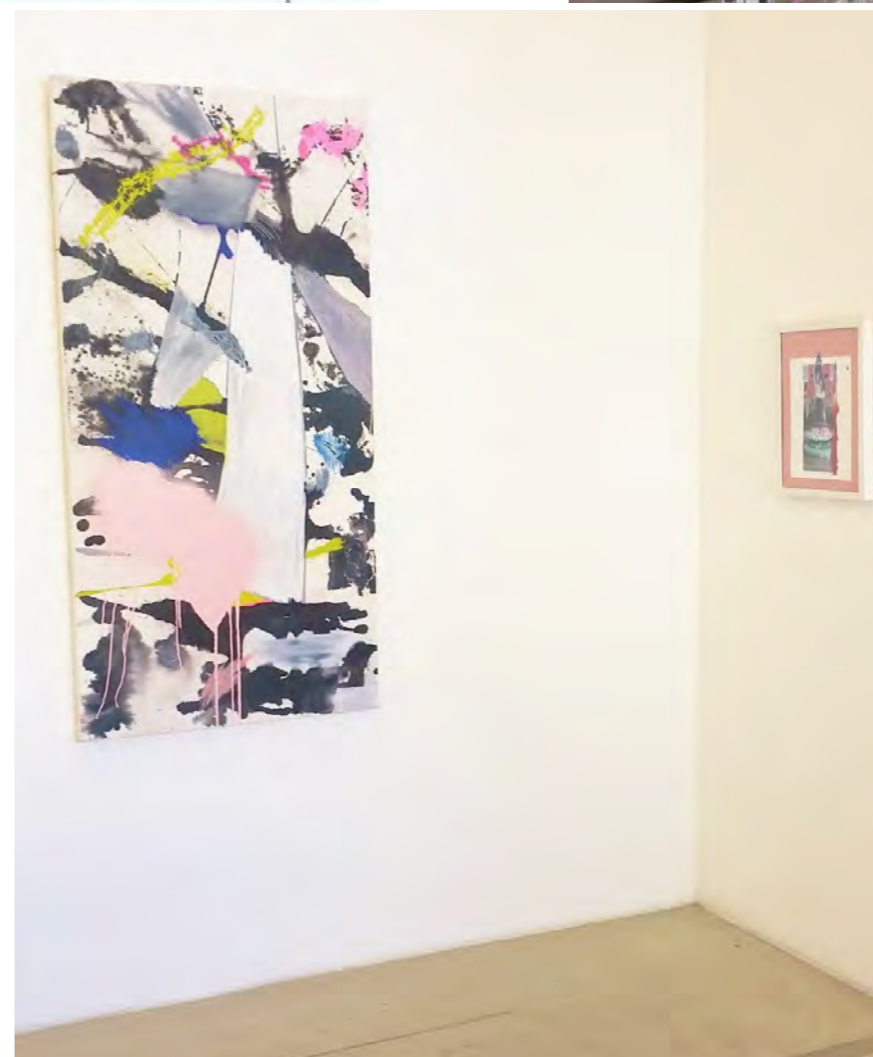


IN THE FIELD_A BREATH

FURTHER REFLECTION

I became interested in the play of light on architecture to the point that buildings became almost one with the background. The research for this painting became a quest into finding the right paint to use in order to produce the effects of forward and receding. I looked into several hues of blue and experimented into spray paint for the 1st time. I was nervous to obtain the right textures and dripping effects since the spray paint medium doesn't allow you start over. The final painting is on stretched canvas and measures 76.2cm x152.4cm /30x60 inches.

Shown below the MFA Graduating Art Show
"Boxed Special".





PIECES (2019)

Material elements for the painting "Pieces". The first picture was used as an image transfer in the actual painting. The color palette was also inspired by the pink spray paint color called "Babyskin" from Montana Gold acrylic cans.



PIECES (2019)

INSPIRED BY A SONG

Inspired by a song from Bethel Music named "Pieces", this work is an exploration of the experience of human connection and disconnection, friendship and the impact of violence on community. *"Love keeps its promises, it keeps its words, it honors what's sacred, 'Cause its vows are good."* (Song excerpt)

Medium: Acryl gouache, spray paint, paint markers, image transfers, on stretched canvas.

Dimensions: 36" x 48"

This is one of the two paintings that I couldn't not access because of the lockdown. A good portion of the painting was done using spray paint; both in the background but also in its finishing touches. It became a stepping stone into making the following painting on unstretched canvas named "Completely Satisfied"



LOOSING AND TYING

COMPLETELY SATISFIED (2019)

After visiting Quebec City during the 2018 holidays, I was thinking about some ideas around pop culture and control, depression and wellbeing, addictions and balance. I had so many questions in mind. I was wondering how much of myself do I let others see. How much others show of themselves? How much of my humor do I leave at the door of the studio because I feel it needs to be serious in order to be considered? I felt my nostalgia for the 80s come back (for better or for worst?!) and missing the dance of spontaneity in my art practice.

I went to purchase unstretched primed canvas. I bought a few more cans of spray paint. I watched some videos on graffiti and mural art. And then armed with my respirator I made some experiments with some colors that I liked in my own studio. It wasn't so successful. I blamed it on the fact that I used canvas paper instead of that big piece of unstretched canvas.

The painting "Completely Satisfied" is a record of my playing with mediums and my reflections on the spiritual matter of happiness.

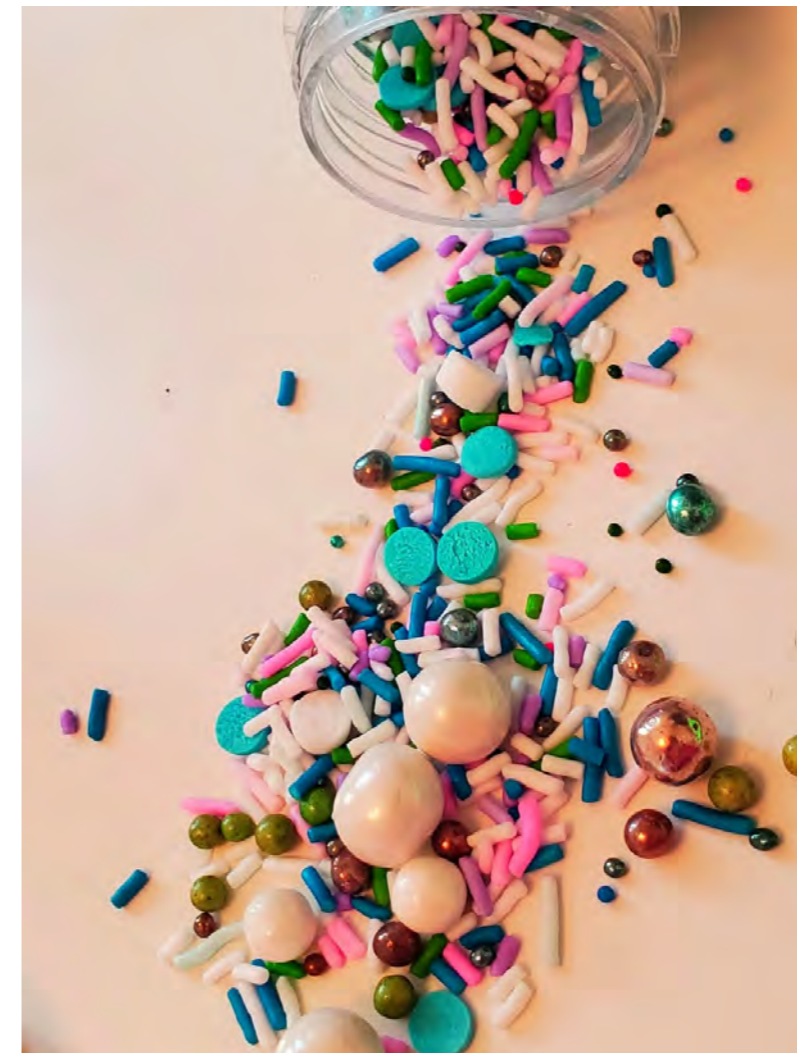




THAT FEELS LIKE R&D

COMPLETELY SATISFIED (2019)

I purchased a pair of red brocade Vans sneakers in early 2019. They were magnificent. I used the color palette from the brocade as a starting point for choosing my colors and cans. I used unconventional tools to make stains on the unstretched canvas. Rags, cardboard, tape and stamps were used. I experimented on ways to actually integrate candy sprinkles onto canvas. No matter what medium I used, it ended up like a big mess-not at all the affect I wanted to convey.



I found myself take pictures of “accidents” in the studio and liked the idea of making mistake and how it could lead to good results. I also reflected on this verse:

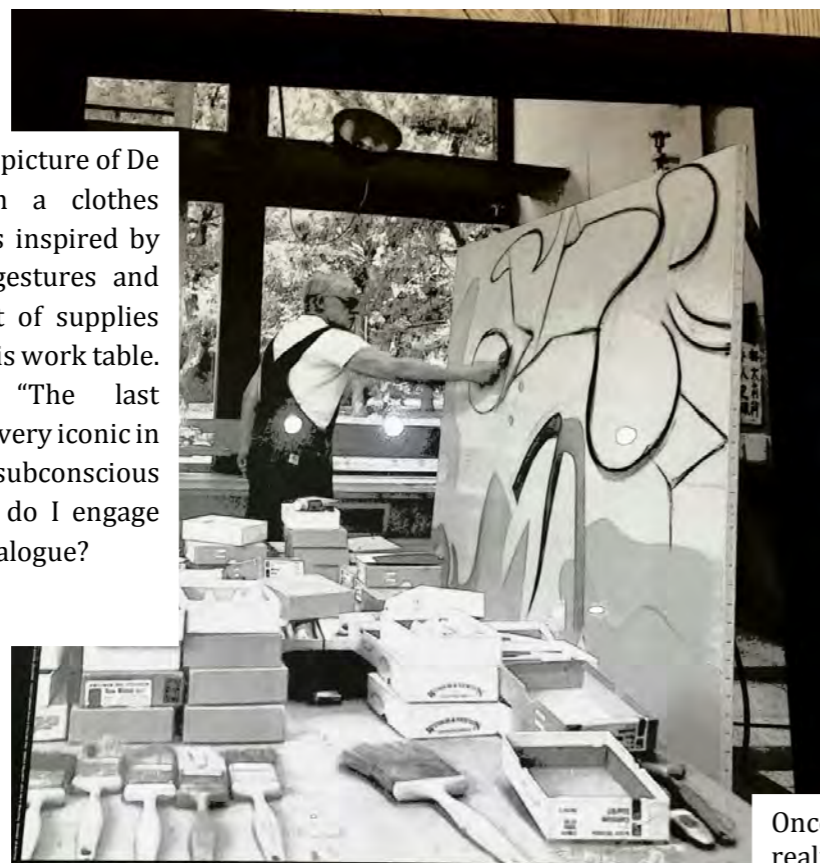
Then he said to me, "They are the ones who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb and have emerged from the midst of great pressure and ordeal. For this reason, they are before the throne of God, ministering to him as priests day and night, within his cloud-filled sanctuary. [...] Their souls will be completely satisfied. And neither the sun nor any scorching heat will affect them. For the Lamb at the center of the throne continuously sheperds them unto life- guiding them to everlasting fountains of the water of life. And God will wipe from their eyes every last tear!"

(Revelation 7:14-17 The Passion Translation)

Orange Japanese paper, vintage heart embroidery and orange swatches from Turner Acrylic, Golden, Montana. I ended up choosing the embroidery and also the Montana color called Scampi.



I found this picture of De Kooning in a clothes store. I was inspired by the loose gestures and the amount of supplies he had on his work table. I found "The last Beginning" very iconic in an almost subconscious way. How do I engage with this dialogue?



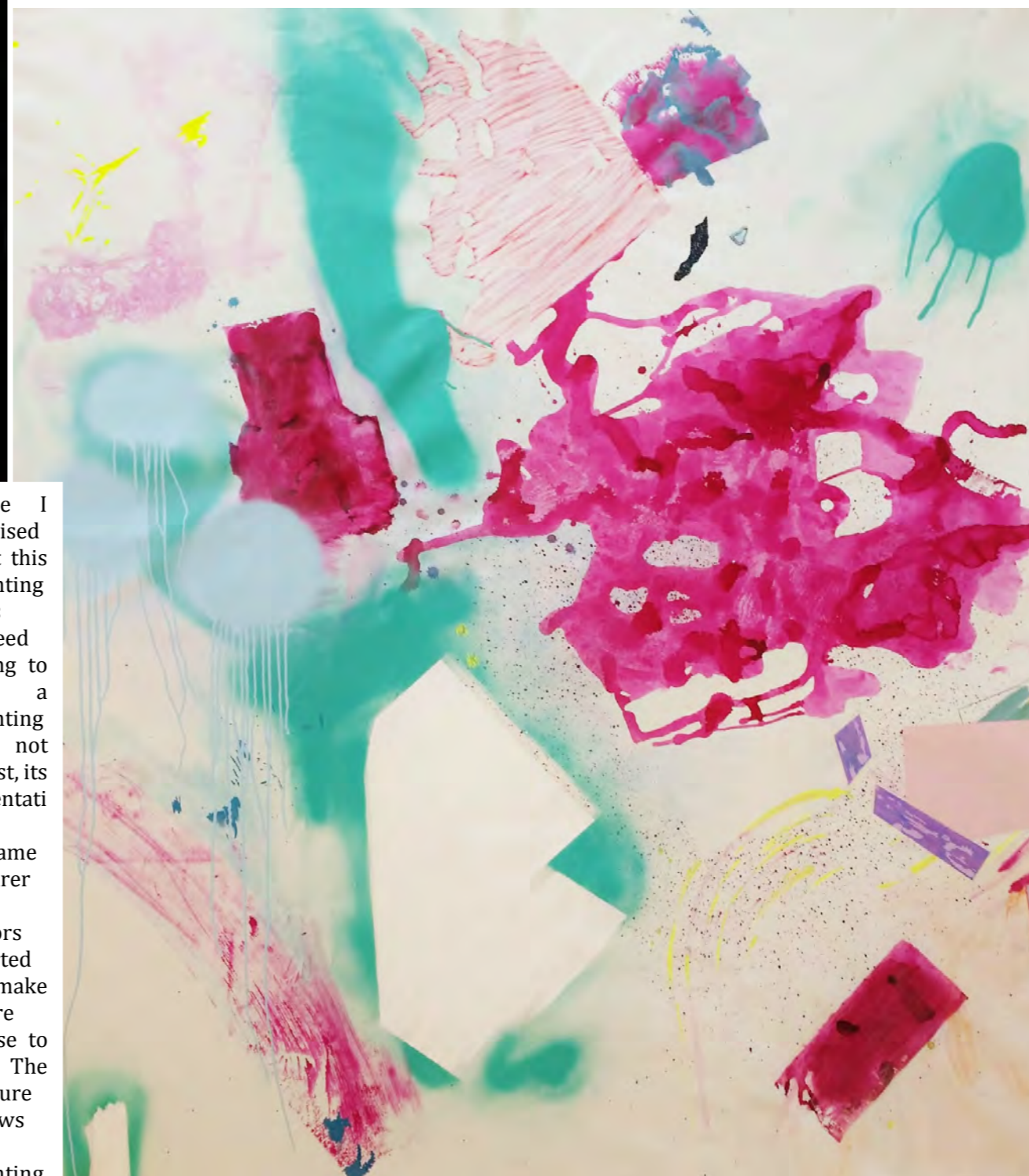
WILLEM DE KOONING

THE LAST BEGINNING SEPTEMBER 18 - OCTOBER 27, 2007

Mark experiment using Lilac Pink, Scampi Orange and Fresh Green



Once I realised that this painting was indeed going to be a painting and not a test, its orientation became clearer and colors started to make more sense to me. The picture shows the painting halfway.



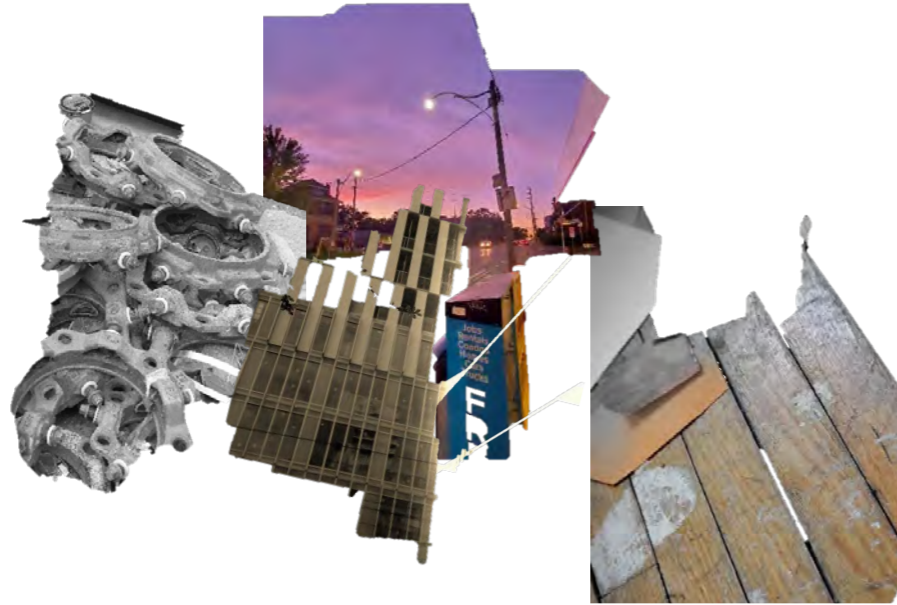
Painting on
unstretched
canvas.

Medium: Acrylic
paint, acryl
gouache, paint
markers, spray
paint, image
transfer, vintage
heart embroidery.
glow in the dark
thread.

Color palette:
Scampi orange,
Maize Yellow, Lilac
pink, Violet Dark,
Aqua green,
Fluorescent
Yellow.

Dimensions:
185x168
cm (73x66 inches).





Fragments of research elements to complete the painting preliminarily called "Sapphire Floor".

NEWLY COMPLETED WORKS

THE SAPPHIRE FLOOR

This work was started in 2018 and was put aside until I could figure out if would be part of the graduating show or not. There is a natural aspect to this painting and I am thinking of ways of conveying a more spiritual touch to it. There is a dance between the geometric and the variable lines/waves.

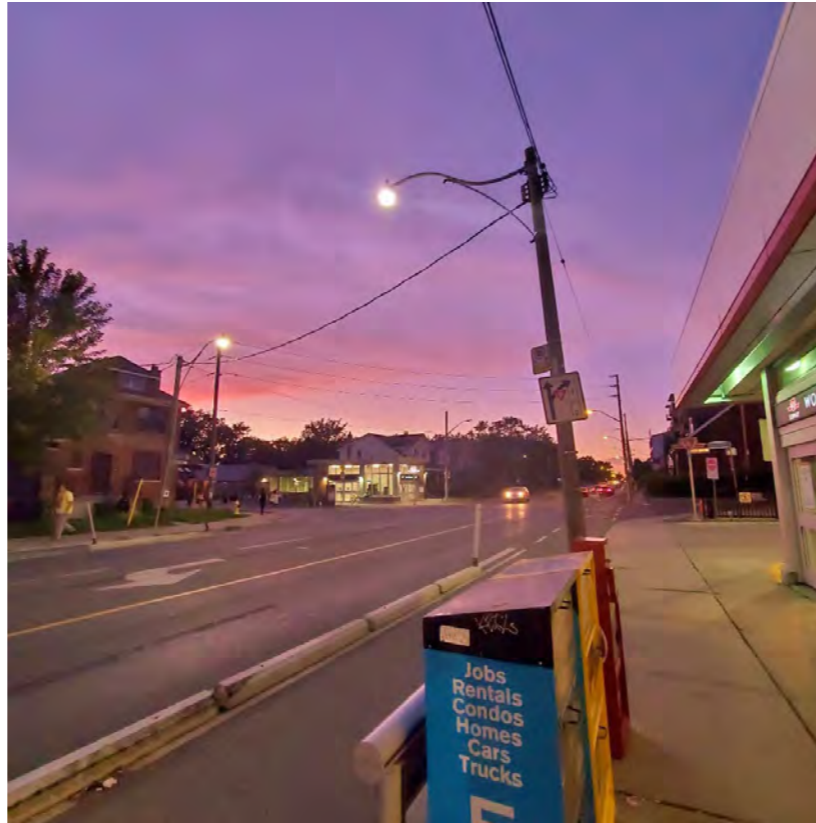
The text I was inspired by for this work talks about a private space: *There's a private place//Reserved for lovers of God, Where they sit near him and receive//The revelation-secrets of his promises.* (Psalm 25:14)



SAPPHIRE FLOOR (2020)

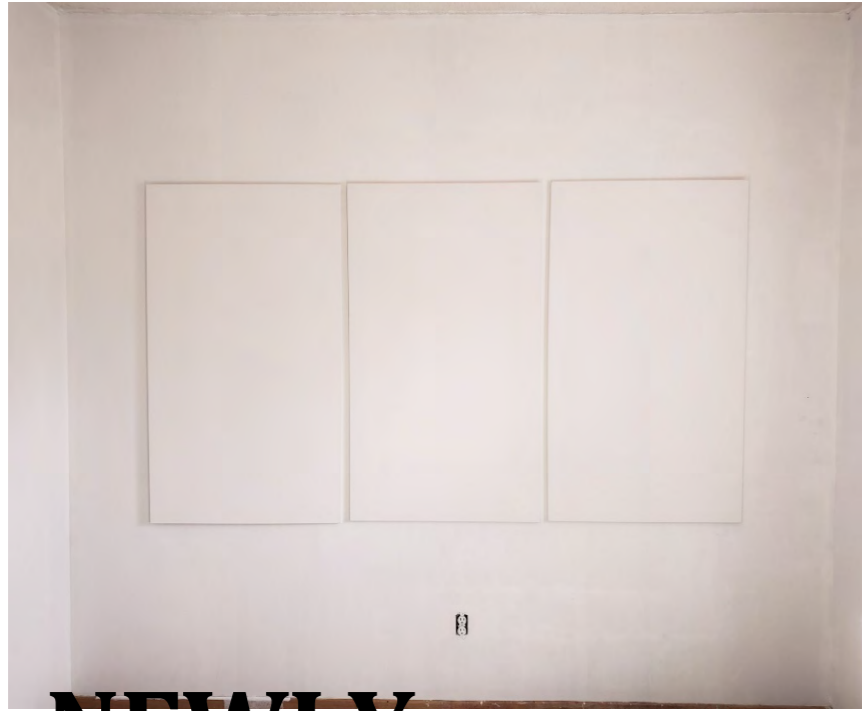
COLOR STUDY

A series of inspiration shots from my daily walks at the beach but also in the city from 2018 until now. I particularly like the silver textured panel as it was both very reflective and matte. I enjoyed the cool colors and decided to use a pearlescent acrylic ink in Blue called "Galactic blue". In the end the frame was damaged in transport and the painting will need to probably be printed on canvas again. This is the final version however (next page).





Sapphire Floor. Dimensions: 60inches x 30inches. Medium: Pearlescent acrylic ink, Acryl gouache, paint markers, spray paint.

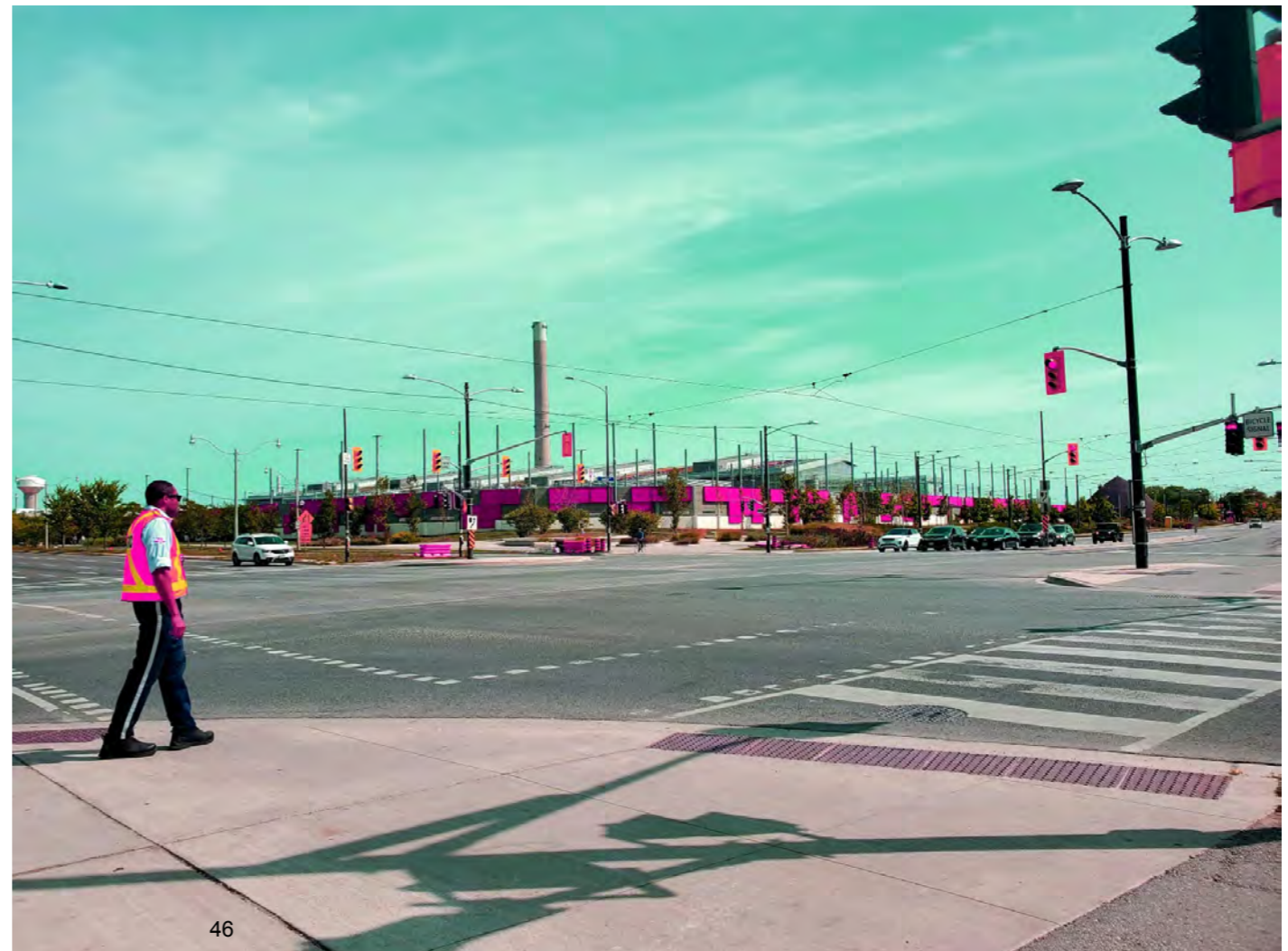


NEWLY COMPLETED WORKS

Lockdown: Pansies in the Snow (2020)

A few months ago, this was still a work in progress. I had wanted to make a triptych. I thought it was going to be with the piece called Brother but it didn't end up this way.

Even before the name of the painting became obvious to me, I kept my eyes open to capture certain patterns, colors and textures. My spiritual quote to meditate on was this one: *And when all things are brought out to the light, then their true nature is clearly revealed; for anything that is clearly revealed becomes light.* (Ephesians 5:13)



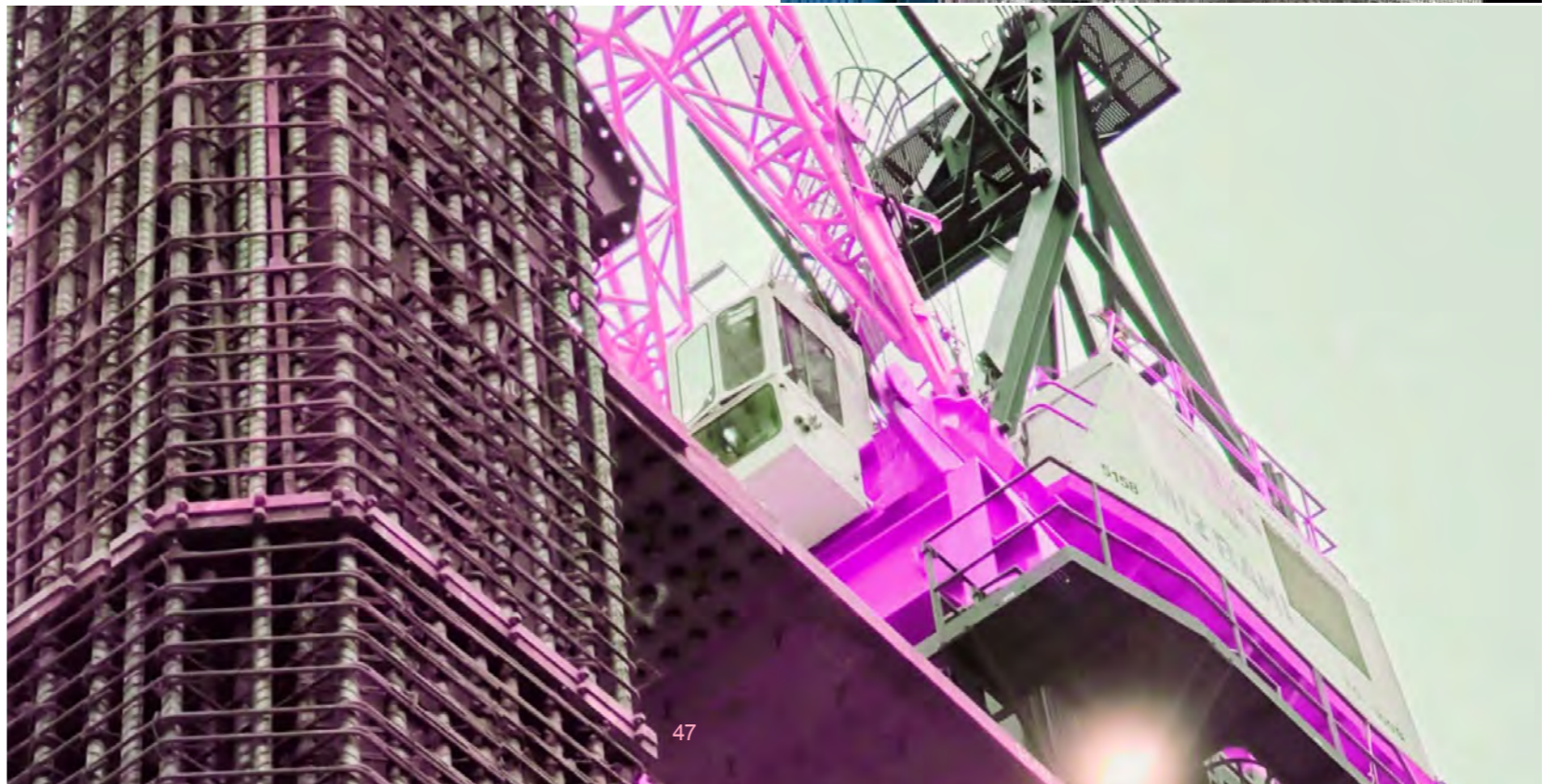
Shown here: three color and texture study pictures



LOCKDOWN: PANSIES IN THE SNOW (2020)

Background

In one particular walk on Danforth Avenue in Toronto, I was walking toward the nearest coffee shop and in a flash, I noticed how some flowers were still alive but also covered in snow. This really touched me on an existential level as it made me think of the realities of trying to survive and thrive and still being in the middle of a pandemic.



Background of the triptych:

Payne's Grey on 30x48 stretched canvas panels.

The order of the panels was changed throughout the completion of the piece but in the end, it seemed that the original layout was the best.



Details of 3rd panel: Spray paint, acryl gouache.

Colors: Mint Green (Venom), Violet (Sweet Dream), Fluorescent White, Lilac Pastel, Paynes Grey.





Left and bottom pictures: details of middle panel of the triptych.

Top left detail picture shows use of Lilac Pastel and Fluorescent Yellow acrylic paint markers with tiny piece of Yellow colored grid Japanese paper.

Bottom picture shows use of Paynes Grey acrylic ink for the background and White and Purple Blue acrylic paint.

Right picture shows installation of the triptych for the virtual exhibition named "Forms for Angels" which was presented on-line to the committee on December 8, 2020.



Lockdown:Pansies in the Snow. Completed work. 3 panels on stretched canvas. Dimensions: 90 inches x 48 inches. Medium: Acrylic ink, Acryl gouache, paint markers, paper, image transfers, spray paint.



Artist Statement

Through the use of painting, drawing and photography, I communicate my passion for color, textures and impasto. My process is based on the spiritual. As a seer, I participate into the supernatural by sharing visions, or glimpses of Heaven, always inspired by God, using sights and sounds; music and poetry. Those I meditate on and are then transformed into artworks (paintings, drawings, sculpture).

My work as a visual artist borrows from collage, alteration and reinterpretation. Within the last few paintings such as "Brother" and "Human After All"; my goal has been to look deeply into how we can overcome mental health issues such as depression and anxiety by yielding to the love of God. This is a process where I walk around the city looking, experiencing, participating; with the goal of helping others overcoming hunger, pain, trauma and limitations through art making.

Painting is a transformative, interpretative and collaborative act. It is my unique way of saying to God "come and light up my heart" and share that experience with anyone who has the curiosity and the passion to say "*Where would we go? You have the words of eternal life* (John 6:26,53-57). Since as early as I can remember, I've been wanting to have that close relationship with God. I have been in the pursuit of Jesus and the spiritual experience of Heaven. During this worldwide pandemic, I have been meditating daily on the wonderful Psalm 139:

Wherever I go, your hand will guide me; your strength will empower me. Its impossible to disappear from you or to ask the darkness to hide me, for your presence is everywhere, bringing light into my night. There is no such thing as darkness with you. The night to you is as bright as day.
(Psalm 139:10-12 The Passion Translation)