

IN TRANSITION

MILENA ROGLIC

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF FINE
ARTS

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN VISUAL ARTS
YORK UNIVERSITY
TORONTO, ONTARIO

APRIL 2014

© MILENA ROGLIC 2014

Abstract

Precarious circumstances within our environment galvanizes our feelings towards an uncertain and unknown future. In Transition is a series of work that responds to transitional urban landscapes that fluctuate between collapse and renewal. Through the exploration of oil paint medium, application and formal devices, each painting becomes a pursuit in reorganizing cluttered and unresolved urban scenes while maintaining ambiguous qualities relating to the initial source. Contradictions and opposition arise in reaction to conceptual strategies and undergoing processes, however, implement emotive responses to stimulate and challenge the viewer.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my very great appreciation to those who contributed to this project. A very special thanks to Janet Jones for her constant support and understanding in helping me develop my thesis research. I would also like to thank Michel Daigneault and Gary Evans for their valuable feedback. Finally, thank you to Steve Maguire, Laura Moore, Natasha Chaykowski, Miles Collyer, Powell MacDougall, Nell Tenhaaf, and my fellow MFA graduates.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	page 1
Precarious Aesthetics.....	page 1
Process.....	page 5
In Transition.....	page 11
Bibliography.....	page 20

List of Images

1. *Street*, oil on canvas paper, 16 x 12 inches, 2012
2. *Tumble*, oil on canvas, 48 x 36 inches, 2013
3. *Parts*, oil on canvas, 36 x 30 inches, 2013
4. *Contra*, oil on canvas, 60 x 48 inches, 2014
5. *Entanglement*, oil on canvas, 60 x 48 inches, 2014

Introduction

In my paintings, I am interested in creating compositions out of clutter; representing precarious states within transitory urban landscapes by merging abstraction and representational elements. This aspiration comes from a desire to capture a feeling or mood based on constantly changing environments while, at the same time, referencing my personal history. Unstable urban landscapes become a subject for me to reorganize and transform through painting in order to activate affective responses from the viewer. Throughout the painting process I wonder...How can I; as a painter, reconstruct a precarious state -by using the medium of oil paint on a two-dimensional surface? Can I propose a visual tension between order and chaos through the exploration of paint application? How can formal strategies play a role in communicating a sensitivity to mood and atmosphere? These inquiries have been the basis of my research in creating a recent series of paintings titled, *In Transition*, for my York University MFA thesis exhibition.

My research develops through personal interactions and observations of transitioning urban spaces. Working between image and paint application, trial and error make up the foundation for my studio practice. My work also draws influences from; 20th century art history, contemporary artists and recent art theories surrounding precariousness. Specific paintings of mine will be highlighted when I describe my oil painting process, formal and conceptual strategies, and the importance of photography in my preliminary preparation. Throughout this development, various findings emerge from opposing factors leading to a visual experience that is triggered by curiosity and consciousness.

Precarious Aesthetics

"Endurance, whether it concerns objects or relations, has become a rare thing. We see that in the heart of the global economic machine that favours unbridled consumerism and undermines everything that is durable, a culture is developing from the bankruptcy of endurance that is based on that which threatens it most, namely precariousness."¹

In developing my thoughts and ideas about my recent work, I came across various texts relating to precariousness in contemporary art. Artworks and theories responding to precarious aesthetics varied only slightly; what stood out for me was the urgency for artists to react to present global issues such as globalization, consumerism, job mobility, political conflict, etc. Although my work involves a strong sense of personal history, I am triggered by the atmosphere, attitude and sensations present within urban environments which have been ascribed by the present-day zeitgeist. Under those conditions, existing urban landscapes undergo a precarious condition due to a lack of endurance and constantly changing features.

Based on a lack of endurance, precarious aesthetics is expressed most often literally through artworks that are fragile, unstable and temporary. Conceptually, precarity represents an uncertain future or unknown outcome. While both perspectives pique my curiosity; the former reflects my subject, and the latter affects my approach to painting, as well as providing clues to my narrative. For instance, I look to my surroundings and respond to the excess, the waste and the overlooked while reflecting on the uncertainty of the present. The unstable characteristics supply an arena for me to rearrange and revive through the act of painting. Although various stages of decision making can lead to unexpected and unknown outcomes, a painting eventually becomes an object of endurance; an object to be engaged by the viewer.

French curator and writer Nicolas Bourriaud believes that precariousness within contemporary art stems from an increasingly globalized world; advancements in technologies, easy access to mass media and the overflow of images have produced clutter within urban spaces and the cyber world. Properties of chaos and confusion have

spilled into our daily lives and visually besiege our environment resulting in dense layered appearances and shifting perspectives. Within my own practice, the dismantled and disordered fragments of urban decline and development become subjects for me to alter and transform through paint application. Precariousness becomes a wavering state between what is depicted in my paintings and how the work is materialized from an initial starting point. Each painting arises from a deliberate approach that is clear and prepared then, comparable to its sources, changes and evolves through various transitions.

"The idea of the precarious entered the art world in the 1990's and has increasingly shaped artistic discourse and practice. This art is both precarious in its construction, feeble and provisional, and reflects the condition of precariousness as we see it in present social life."² Precarious artwork can be loosely constructed and short-lived; the work of Canadian artist Elspeth Pratt comes to mind. Pratt uses construction materials such as cardboard, steel and wood to produce fragile sculptural work which references architecture and social spaces. In a very direct way, she creates inept constructions that comment on the vulnerability of the built environments which surround her. I am intrigued by her sculptural work and the disorientating effect it has on the viewer; there is a looming sense that the work will disassemble when in the presence of her work. Within my own work I wonder if I too can produce similar sensations with oil paint on canvas. Can precarious sensibilities exist within a painting?

In his 2009 book *The Radicant*, Bourriaud depicts an artist as a nomad, a wanderer that is in continual motion encompassing the complex systems and networks through exploration. Bourriaud refers to contemporary painters; Julie Mehretu and Franz Ackermann who both create work that stems from experience and observation based on travels to international cities. Their large scale map-like paintings are made up of marks and lines which resemble fast paced lifestyles within the digital age. Although these artists produce very different work from each other (and myself), what interests me is the way they incorporate relatable issues that concern the world today such as, terrorism, poverty, and collapse. Both Mehretu and Ackerman express an immense

scope of movement and space within massively populated cities through their topographical paintings. Their works all seem to galvanize feelings of anxiety, momentum and restlessness. While I wish for my work to stimulate affective responses, I attempt my research on a smaller intimate scale. Similarly, I absorb nuances within the city but my approach is to move in and get extremely close to my subject matter in order to report on the passage of time and effects of change and translate this experience into a visual language made up of colour, form, surface and space.

Bourriaud expresses that "...radicant aesthetics refer to movement, to the dynamism of forms, and characterizes reality as a conglomeration of transitory surfaces and forms that are potentially movable. In this sense, it goes hand in hand with translation as well as with precariousness."³ Los Angeles based artist Mark Bradford deals with similar themes while specifically referencing urban life by employing found materials in his densely layered work. He collects found materials from travel, often gravitating towards low cultural ephemera to produce work that translates social and economic concern. Not only is this reactive notion of our changing world relevant today but was equally important to artists such as Giacomo Balla, Sonia Delaunay and El Lissitzky, between the wars in the first half of the 20th century. Many created work in response to technological changes, political chaos and the destruction of everything from the old regime albeit in visually diverse ways. While I agree that speed and dynamism reflect the measure of change, I am interested in suggesting a slower pace in my paintings as an invitation for reflection.

In his book, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*, Marshall Berman states that artists such as Claes Oldenberg, Robert Rauschenberg and Robert Smithson were among the many who

"experimented with forms that incorporated transformed non-art materials, junk, debris, and objects picked up in the street; three-dimensional environments that combined painting, architecture and sculpture - and that created distorted (usually in an expressionistic way) but vividly recognizable evocations of real life; "happenings" that reached out of the studios and galleries directly into the streets, to assert their presence and undertake actions that would both incorporate and enrich the streets' own spontaneous and open life."⁴

These approaches to connecting art and life continue to find ways of resurfacing and rejuvenating beyond the art world. In regards to the contemporaneous, Ralph Rugoff states in his 2007 essay *Painting Modern Life*, that "new art evolves not only in the reaction to the achievements of a preceding generation, but also in response to the cultural landscape of the times."⁵ In my own way of observing contemporary concerns, I am addressing themes of precarious states by gathering information from my immediate surroundings and translating my considerations of an urban environment into a painterly language to suggest an uncertain and changeable world. This occurs from blending and merging references that are both historical and present in order to create something that is new.

Process

Painters of recent years have an affinity to combine painting with modern technology through the use of digital devices. My own approach to technology in relation to painting is done with the use of my cellular phone's camera. I use the camera to gather personal photographs from expeditions much like the nomad Bourriaud describes. I explore urban areas within the city of Toronto and use my; low-grade, digital photography, cell phone to report on the various locations I encounter. I see the camera as a tool that encourages experimentation; images can be manipulated and distorted for varying effects to eventually render in painting. Digital photography also offers an immediate result, no processing or waiting involved; photographs can be taken quickly and stored for reference later on. Unless I choose to print the images (which is seldom) there is virtually no paper involved, just the images that I store on my phone and computer.

I rely on technology and memory to capture unstable scenes dominated by; clutter and collapse, debris and waste from abandoned industrial sites, manufacturing sectors and barren spaces. These places spark my own memories of growing up in Hamilton Ontario, Canada's Steel City, in a time when global steel industries struggled

to keep up with the changing conditions between the 1970's and the turn of the century.⁶ The fluctuating economy reflected on the city's appearance and the attitude of its habitants. Coming from a working-class immigrant family who worked in the local factories, I was always aware of this concern within my household; a certain vulnerability towards our way of life. Not only through my parent's workplace(s) did anxiety arise but also from their homeland, the former Yugoslavia, from which I observed on television images from this Bosnian War. Seeing and hearing stories of violence and destruction from the war had a great impact on me.

When thinking of Hamilton, I often recall the three storey brick homes, old towers, deserted storefronts, warehouses and distinctive landscape; the silhouette of the steel factories and ominous smoke stacks that lined the harbour casting a dark menacing aura over the city. Dreariness and liveliness coexisted in my upbringing, just as much as it does in present city life, yet in my own way of romanticising those moments, through gray-toned nostalgia, I set a backdrop for my recent paintings. It is important that my paintings are informed by urban environments but I don't expect the viewer to recognize any sentiment towards my upbringing; I am merely drawing inspiration from the atmospheric tones of an industrial setting. What I do want to achieve is a sense of ambiguity with traces of something familiar that may present an alternative perspective to be held by the viewer, something that is unknown and unpredictable.

Within Toronto, my current residence, I search for old, worn, and rough materials in tucked away nooks, dead end spaces and provisional locations, all of which are accessible. On a pedestrian level one is confronted by the numerous construction sites and obstacles scattered throughout the city even at some instances alluding to haphazard displays. On a daily basis I am confronted by sites, objects and environments that catch my eye and draw me in; I want to further inspect and inquire about peculiar and unknown circumstances. Historical architecture, nostalgic neighbourhoods and urban environments remind me of where I came from while simultaneously emphasizing mutability towards life. When I encounter transitioning spaces in my surroundings, I am captivated by objects and materials that clearly show

the passage of time; broken down cinderblocks, rusted steel, wooden shards, plastic packaging material, shredded tarps, abandoned machinery and mechanical parts all contribute to source imagery for my paintings. The material objects hold a mysterious quality that stir up questions relating to origin and history as well as destiny. Where did these items come from? What was their purpose? How did they become displaced? The lack of endurance, as Bourriaud described, accredits to the excessive waste and throwaway society we live in today. The abundance of clutter prompts us to speculate on our present situation in a world that is getting smaller and increasingly interconnected through digitization and mass culture. As a result clutter delivers a disarray of forms and a lingering atmosphere that can be associated with a culture that thrives on temporariness. In my paintings, I intend to capture and hold these fleeting scenes by drawing the viewer in to examine and observe them with curiosity just as I do when encountering them in the first place.

Formally, the humble and sombre aesthetic that I am drawn to echoes the Japanese admiration for wabi sabi which “describes a traditional aesthetic sensibility based on an appreciation of the transient beauty of the physical world. It focuses on the melancholic appeal of the impermanence of all things – especially the modest, the rustic, the imperfect, and even the decayed. With its focus on the delicate subtleties, objects, effects, and environments, wabi sabi promotes an alternative approach to the appreciation of both beauty and life itself.”⁷ Much like the characteristics of wabi sabi, I look for varying surfaces and textures, broken down and uneven forms which not only unveil age but suggest some sort of trauma. These discoveries occur through personal expeditions. Most of the time these heaps of mundane objects are easily dismissed as we are so accustomed to their accumulation in our city, yet, I can't help but to be quietly attracted to them. I am inclined to move in, to be closer to these objects and examine them. It is not a conventional beauty that interests me, but rather an unusual and awkward disposition in the way in which these objects have been displaced; they describe a time and place.

Practically, I collect photographic documentation in preparation for my paintings. Each image acts as a sort of personal diary entry that reminds me of the nuanced impressions I encountered. In *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes states, "If I like a photograph, if it disturbs me, I linger over it. What am I doing, during the whole time I remain with it? I look at it, I scrutinize it, as if I wanted to know more about the thing it represents."⁸ I have a similar realization with the photographic images I use in my studio practice. There is something visually in the design, colours, composition, and textures that tempts me but at the same time the subject matter presents an emotional realization that I want to probe; I am curious to explore these possibilities through the act of painting while cautious to the chance of getting carried away by depicting an image. In *The Painting of Modern Life*, Rugoff highlights artists Gerhard Richter and Luc Tuymans as painters who incorporate photographic sources into their works. He points out that many contemporary painters dealing with photographic imagery are finding ways to transform the subject matter rather than simply copy an image. He states, that "the key to achieving this result was the manner in which artists, in translating photographic imagery into paintings, managed to preserve a near-perfect tension between the visual rhetoric of the parallel pictorial systems. "...these works do not rest on a secure, one-directional reference, but fluctuate between source and transformation, in place of wonder we are given uncertainty."⁹ For me, the precarious state lies somewhere between observation and the translation of an image into what is eventually depicted on the painted surface. These in-between moments are not tangible or easy to explain yet involve a private and personal awareness of an artist to the process.

When working, I deliberate on how to equally find harmony and tension between image and painting. I begin by zooming in and creating tightly packed frames (with the use of my cellular phone) and I fix a composition. Out of this process, a form of abstraction occurs; objects appear larger, are not easily recognized and forms are altered from their original state. The ordinary objects, debris and rubble change and turn into something else and take on something new within their transformed presentation. There is an immersive quality; the cropped and zoomed images accent the abundance

of clutter and tension of the scene it was taken from. Therefore, the photographic image is keynote in the first stages of manipulating the forms; the subject is from the real world but becomes blurred and shifted through a digital device. The image then supplies a layout for each painting. The image presents an arrangement of the many details; the material objects, the contrast of shadows and highlights, the varying textures and tonal values, they all provide interesting matter for me to tackle through paint application. Overall, the image fixes and holds an otherwise fleeting, temporary moment while providing a composition to undertake.

Painting with oil onto canvas may seem contradictory while exploring these themes with a medium that fixes onto a stable surface, yet as a painter, I ask myself how can I both depict a precarious, transitory experience within a composed painting? This has been both an exciting and difficult problem in producing this body of work, alluding to my influences yet allowing my intent to be visible. My plan was to paint from the image without giving away too much information; to maintain a sense of ambiguity. However, working from an image does provide some disadvantages. It became incredibly easy to rely on an illustrative mode; to simply follow the images as seen. The result became stiff and obvious. This discovery re-iterated (for me) the importance of exercising technique and application; of the significance of trial and error. I explored with wet and dry applications through the use of different mediums that provided slippery, smooth and thick surfaces. Depending on the look I wanted to achieve, I had to play with consistency and texture of paint. In some instances I left areas of the painting undone and loose in contrast to areas that had a greater amount of attention. I experimented with variations of lines, large flat planes of colour, and details all in an attempt to delve into the material.

Formal devices such as scale, colour relationships, composition and space are paramount in creating something visually interesting while also setting a mood. Through various stages of decision making, I became more aware that the practice of painting, especially the handmade quality, provided less rigid, less secure lines and forms which

lend to representing an increasingly vulnerable state. Therefore, my aim with this series of paintings was to translate a vocabulary built on mixed spaces and multiple textures and also to paint in a way which embodies a precarious state, as if the content of the painting is shifting slightly. Ultimately, I needed to transform the image through the painting process for my work to depict an alternative view of our constantly changing environment by presenting the complete strangeness and otherworldliness of all things in transition.

My source imagery of places and things from the physical world possess a truthful visual representation yet the manipulation of the image occurs through the digital process, then during the painting process. Recognizable matter becomes altered and eventually reconstructed while exploring into paint application and formal analysis. Representational and non-representational forms resist each other; the relationship between figuration and abstraction in my work acts as an apparatus to present oppositional elements. Some forms are rendered and painted with a similar likeliness to the image then juxtaposed by forms that have been distorted through exaggeration of scale or colour and at times by using multiplication and repetition. I want to suggest to the viewer, even if vaguely, my influences and narrative. I want to allude to them, while at the same time pulling back from a literal depiction of them. Playing with contradictions will lead to various interpretations of the work. For example, I incorporate aspects of darkness and light, opaqueness and transparency, hardness and softness; the differing approaches create tension in order to excite a reaction and emotion. In *An Aesthetics of Affect: Thinking About Art Beyond Representation*, Simon O'Sullivan expresses that:

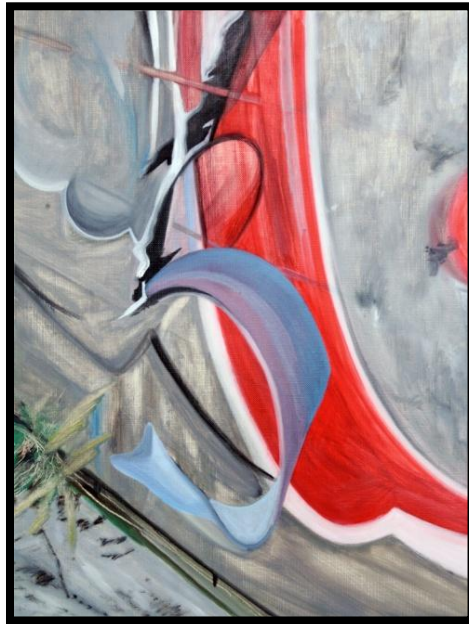
"art operates as a fissure in representation. And we, as spectators, as representational creatures, are involved in a dance with art, a dance which – through careful manoeuvres – the molecular is opened up, the aesthetic is activated, and art does what is its chief modus operandi: it transforms, if only for a moment, our sense of our "selves" and our notion of our world." He continues that "this is in a sense to move to a post-medium notion of art practice, in that it is not so important what the specifics might be rather, what becomes important is what a particular art object can do."¹⁰

In Transition

The title, *In Transition*, exemplifies my subject of mutating objects and environments and the process from the transformation of an image into my painting process. I also feel that my development as an artist is in transition and reflected in this series of paintings over the past two years. This recent body of work consists of a dozen paintings; they range from 16 x 12 inches to 60 x 48 inches. Starting each painting always begins with an image; I study the image and decide how I will begin the painting. Which colours will I use, which forms I will reference first and in what order they will be placed on the canvas. Choosing colours is often based on what is displayed in an image, then tweaked or exaggerated while painting to reinforce a certain mood. I often begin by sketching out a rough composition in oil paint while referring to the image and at times abandoning it. It is important for the painting in its fundamental stages to hold a certain amount of tension that can occur through the opposition of applications and surfaces. I can usually tell within the first few hours if the painting will work or not. There is something in those essential moments that capture an intuitive response from observation. This discovery is the most intriguing moment for me, yet all that follows is completely unpredictable. While my approach is often careful, I ultimately lose some control during the painting process, as unexpected circumstances undeniably present themselves. Therefore, the image is of greatest importance at the beginning stages of each painting until finally the painting becomes of the greatest importance.

In the 2009 article, *Provisional Painting*, featured in *Art In America*, Raphael Rubenstein described a recent tendency in contemporary art that involves "a growing number of artists who are entertaining the idea of impossibility in painting. This has led them to reject a sense of finish in their work, or to rely on acts of negation."¹¹ However, I see my small scale paintings on paper as finished works, *Street*, for example, is an informal vignette due to the loose, fluid movement that demonstrates gestural and smooth brushwork. This occurred out of quickly sketching with paint onto the canvas; moments of spontaneity and surprise occurred through the rapid process of switching

between studying the image and executing the painting. This resulted in works that demonstrate diaphanous and vague forms juxtaposed which prompt inquiries as to what is depicted while pointing to an unknown, uncertain scene. Rather than completely rendering the model with excessive amounts of material, my aim was to capture a mood out of less; I wanted to use as much as necessary and as little as possible.



1. *Street*, oil on canvas paper, 16 x 12 inches, 2012

All of the paintings have been created with a layering process; in this way I could selectively work on areas while contemplating my next move. I wait many days for the paint to dry before the next series of forms begin to overlap. Depending on the amount of layers, a painting can take place over several sessions. The overlay of shapes in each painting leads to designating multiple spaces, in some cases determining foreground, middle ground and background. I want the viewer to explore the surface and take account of the possibilities of what is moving forward and back into deep space. I am interested in entertaining a relationship between what is stable and what is ephemeral. I hope that this visual experience with space can trigger a sense of

confusion and wonder while at the same time introduce something that is equally familiar and unidentifiable. These oppositional forces depict a composition out of clutter; something new emerges from organizing the disorderly.

Tumble is an example of a painting in which I fused traditional devices to create a cryptic visual display. The surface explores a sensitivity to line and space through the depiction of a large flat space, the muted uneven gray tones surround a pasty yellow irregular shape midway within the canvas. A shock of electric blue occupies the top right corner while also skimming across the bottom -moving into the centre, complicating the foreground and background simultaneously. To contrast the hard, sharp form and colour I've developed a murky mid section made up of twists and folds containing highlights and shadows that add dimension. A small white band sits awkwardly between two light blue stripes (over the gray folds) while a cluster of unclear forms lined in black support the bottom left edge. Delicate lines within the folded gray area assert a visceral quality; they begin from a faint point and morph into various consistencies. This effect is created by applying different pressures of the brush with my hand as it moves across the surface. A typical understanding of space is questionable here. At first glance, one can witness an obvious entry point or platform from the blue slab located at the bottom of the painting. That initial sense of security is then banished by the drooping material-like central form that looks to be pushing forward from the muted and obscured slope behind it. My intention was to suggest a disorientating visual experience within a secure frame in order to galvanize an uncertain and unknown disposition; to symbolize a precarious appearance through various mutations of space and form. This idea was inspired by Cubism, specifically in the way Braque and Picasso fragmented geometric forms in their paintings to produce multiple viewpoints; an effect which produced dimension and depth onto a two-dimensional plane. Although the forms in *Tumble* are less geometric and more organic, they seem to embellish the slumping posture of a failed effort as the title hints at. My aim was to challenge the idea of diverse visual perspectives from multiple angles and views, to highlight the recession of the subject in its environment.



2. *Tumble*, oil on canvas, 48 x 36 inches, 2013

Parts, is a painting which at first glance comes across as a combination of a bust portrait and/or a still life due to the composition and clear definition between near and far, despite not having any of the traditional characteristics. One is initially struck by the centrally focused, muted yellow, rectangular shape; but, unlike a true geometric shape, the murky form contorts as if caught in a moment of transformation. Below lies a thick band painted in varying tones of ochre only much denser, detailed and deeper in hues, suggesting that it is closer to the viewer. Again, as in *Tumble*, a band sits lower on the canvas creating a border or platform in which the viewer can enter the work. There is a balancing act between two highlighted structures; the one in the middle which slumps vulnerably towards the left; this structure consists of folds and pleats in tonal whites, grays and blacks. It mirrors (although not identically) the stark white triangular shape exiting at the bottom left of the surface. Sitting behind is a layered area of shadowy hues; unrecognizable proportions are accented by tiny flicks of cherry red and white. The most prominent and striking feature in *Parts* is the bright primary yellow gestural line that squiggles atop the surface of the piece, looping in and around the lower section

of the painting. It is strong; saturated in its yellowness while simultaneously appearing insecure and unsure of itself, reattributed by its own demeanor. I intended to highly saturate the yellow line in order to provide contrast within the painting while suggesting something that is artificial and manufactured.



3. *Parts*, oil on canvas, 36 x 30 inches, 2013

Texture along with composition, space and line are all of equal importance in my work. This is most evident in *Parts*. The emphasis on texture stems from the source imagery which in this case consisted of broken down mechanical components photographed up close to enhance the differing surfaces. I came across the parts while exploring a construction site where mechanic garages were demolished, in order to build condominiums. The plastic and steel materials offered a range of consistencies from smooth and flat to coarse and uneven. Some areas looked polished while others exposed dusty, dirty and gritty expanses that can be compared to the worn and irregular traits which are characteristics of wabi sabi. The diverse qualities of texture are what I wanted to highlight in the painting process. My aim was to demonstrate contradictory textural features in a way that is simulated, much like those in a photograph. This effect

came about by my applying many thin layers of muddy colours over brighter areas. For a contaminated look, saturated areas were created with opaque application while others remained flat. I wanted to achieve textural presence without an impasto application. Therefore, I created an illusion of physical texture by applying the paint in different ways on a two dimensional plane. The result is a conglomeration of forms and textures that suggest a transitioning moment which has been held in suspension.

The two works *Contra* and *Entanglement* seem to strike a balance between order and transformation. Both canvases exhibit the same up-close cluttered space while offering larger open fields for the viewer to roam. Although aesthetically different in form and composition, each painting contains a sense tension between uneven organic forms, reminiscent of wabi sabi, and sharp bold geometric angles influenced by Russian Constructivist art and design. The introduction of geometric elements in these works play with and against the worn and uneven aesthetic of wabi sabi to reinforce oppositional forces.



4. *Contra*, oil on canvas, 60 x 48 inches, 2014

Contra displays assorted layers of geometric planes that appear to be sliding in and around one another, hinting at precarious sensibilities by presenting transitory surfaces and forms as representing movement. This recalls what Bourriaud described in *The Radicant*. The hues are muted alterations of each other; various tones of yellow, orange and blue occupy the surface; the colours bring to mind industry, the manufactured and mechanical. The prominent forms seem to suggest a structure - of an industrial sort relating to my source imagery -that is in between collapse and rebuild. The severe diagonal lines create movement and counteract the horizontal divisions that take up the top half of the painting. The play between unstable and secure are attributed here by the blurry atmosphere located at the top portion of the painting. A cluster of irregular-shaped configurations float onto thicker intersecting segments and flat orange and yellow planes are slick and opaque against the dark unclear space in the background. In contrast, a heavy brown shape shows signs of gesture and detail near the bottom right corner while contained within a bright blue malleable looking arch. The title, *Contra*, implies a struggle between opposing forces; tension between stability and uncertainty emanates from the painting. Opposition in differing forms create dissonance; hard geometric structures collide with loose natural forms. Shapes overlap and stack within the vertical frame signifying ambiance and space. The varied paint application hints at texture due to the contrast created by flat smooth areas against visible brushwork. Overall, the painting represents a precarious state within an ambiguous atmosphere built up by conflicting formal devices and applications.

The original source image for *Entanglement* was taken from a strewn about setting where recently demolished structures left behind commodities. The image is filled with an array of manufactured items and construction materials; the combination of objects in their varying sizes, shapes and textures initiate a starting point for me to work with. In *Entanglement* there is a large field of cadmium red which derived from the original source and was then amplified to reflect the commerciality of the subject matter.



5. *Entanglement*, oil on canvas, 60 x 48 inches, 2014

Similar to *Contra*, *Entanglement* was organized around large areas of flat colours in this case, a bright matte red central form is surrounded by gray, black and brown divisions. The large coloured blocks are both opaque and broken in their tonal values and run mostly from left to right and vertically. Although they appear solid and severe, they all suggest contorted forms which support precarious sensibilities. A range of corporeal and ambiguous lines and forms suggest something from the natural world and create an interference against the graphic angular backdrop. Shadowy oblong shapes conglomerate towards the left, while wispy white lines trail through and around them. An elongated yellow rectangle seems to float across the middle of the painting and seemingly involves itself with a ghostly veil that sweeps across the bottom, left side of the surface. Two dark forms provide portals where an illusion of space is intensified. Above all, my intention with *Entanglement* was to create a visually dynamic painting that enlivened an interplay between experience, observation, execution and resolution, in hopes of stimulating curiosity within the viewer.

My wish is to for the viewer is to experience a personal discovery in my work; to simultaneously see something familiar and new, to be surprised and challenged and to allow for a relationship to take place between the viewer and the painting, a place where thoughts and feelings can mingle. My paintings propose a combination of personal experiences and painterly processes to explore the present state of transitioning urban environments. As a painter, I want to appropriate various precarious scenes by using painting as a tool to communicate an emotional consciousness; to suggest fragility and vulnerability between individuals, objects and environments.

Bibliography

1. Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Precarious Constructions. Open Cahier on Art and the Public domain*. Ed. Liesbeth Melis. Rotterdam: Nia Publishers, 2009. 20-37. Print. p.22.

2. Bitter, Sabine. Weber, Helmut. *Nonetheless, the Precarious*. Elspeth Pratt. Ed. Kathy Slade. ECU Press, 2011. p. 72. Print.

3. Bourriaud, Nicolas. *The Radicant*. New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2009. Print. p. 79.

4. Berman, Marshall. *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982. Print. p.319.

5. Rugoff, Ralph. *Painting Modern Life. The Painting of Modern Life*. London: Hayward Publishing, 2007. Print. p. 13.

6. Livingstone, D.W. *Manufacturing Meltdown*. Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing, 2011. Print. p 7.

7. Juniper, Andrew. *Wabi Sabi: The Japanese Art of Impermanence*. Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 2003. Print. p 51.

8. Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1981. Print. p. 99.

9. Rugoff, Ralph. *Painting Modern Life. The Painting of Modern Life*. London: Hayward Publishing, 2007. Print. p. 15.

10. O'Sullivan, Simon. *Aesthetics of Affect: Thinking About Art Beyond Representation*. *Angelaki*. Volume 6. No. 3, December 2001. Web.

11. Rubenstein, Raphael. *Provisional Painting*. *Art In America*. www.artinamerica.com. 4 May 2009. Web.