

ART  
BLOG  
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LOVE

Nov. 4 - Dec. 21, 2012

ARIEL DILL TAMARA GONZALES  
MARC HANDELMAN CHRISTOPHER K. HO  
CLINTON KING CHRIS MARTIN  
ALLIE PISARRO-GRANT  
CHRISTIAN SAMPSON JOSHUA SMITH  
CHUCK WEBSTER ROGER WHITE

Curated by Stephen Truax

**ONE RIVER**  
GALLERY

Opening Reception:  
Sun., Nov. 4, 3 - 6PM  
Gallery Hours:  
Mon. - Sat., 9AM - 7PM

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# LOVE

## Critical Strategies in Contemporary Painting

Stephen Truax

This exhibition is an effort to contextualize the practices of eleven Brooklyn-based artists working with abstract painting. They were selected to represent a cross-section of the incredible variety of media, styles, and subjects visible in the field today. These artists employ painting in concert with parallel artistic activities, deliberately address the history of painting, and concern their practices with its complex philosophical and theoretical issues.<sup>1</sup> What links these artists together is not a specific generation, nationality, or concept, but rather their approach, exemplified not by irony, cynicism, or a Conceptual apparatus, but their connections to the medium and subject of painting.

The bewildering amount of abstract painting shows since 2007 forces me to justify curating another. I have to answer the question: What am I doing that's different? This essay began as a collage of texts on the subject (of which there are many, the notes of which are included below) in an effort to answer that question. I find these readings to be extremely generative for my practice as an artist working with painting. I intend to provide one of many possible answers to these philosophical and theoretical questions: a romantic and emotional engagement with painting and its history; love.

Each art historical revolution is professionalized, subsumed into the art market and its institutions, and subsequently embedded into the Academy to be taught to the next generation of art students as part of the canon. It has become more and more difficult to imagine—or for there to be any possibility of—radical action in artistic production. As the archetype of the artist is deconstructed by contemporary curatorial projects, the identity of the artist is finally divorced

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1 “[Painting] delineates itself as a discursively charged praxis designed to articulate and reflect on the multiplicity of interrelations between image, painterly practice, and artistic aspiration.”  
Draxler, Helmut. “Painting as Apparatus: Twelve Theses.” *Texte zur Kunst*, Issue No. 77, March 2010.

from the artwork and its interpretation. As the definition of the artist and artwork is questioned/reinterpreted, and as advanced criticism continues to reject painting, over and over again, since the 1960s,<sup>2</sup> why continue to paint?

The legacy of Conceptual art has colored contemporary painting more than any other artistic movement in recent history. The critical objectives of Conceptual art were to undo the two most important and enigmatic elements of painting: “the demystification of artishood and the eradication of the aura of the work of art.”<sup>3</sup> The painter is the quintessential image of the ruminant genius. Yet, the proliferation of Conceptual, political and social art practices heavily influenced by Marxist philosophy eclipsed the solitary-artist model; art is more than ever a public, social practice. Painting remains inadvertently and necessarily tied to the capitalist system: painting remains the most highly sold and traded of any other artistic medium.<sup>4</sup>

Modern technology, such as printmaking, photography, and film/video, has long been a force that alienated painting from its elevated position in culture by making content ever-more accessible and reproducible. Each painting is valued for its individuality and irreproducibility, two qualities that can be seen as counterproductive in terms of Marxist philosophy, and luddite in terms of contemporary life. Recent history has introduced even more complex and pervasive technologies of reproduction, such as industrial design, digital media, and augmented reality, making painting even more antiquated.

We encounter innumerable media and practices which have removed the hand of the artist from artistic production entirely: the fetish-finish sculpture of Jeff Koons and Takashi Murakami, the science and industrial design of Olafur Eliasson, or the multidisciplinary philosophy-driven output of Ryan Gander. In contrast, paintings are still almost entirely made by the artist's hand. The development of a unique gestural vocabulary is perhaps the ultimate project of a painter, one that links painters and paintings back through art history.

A unique lifelong painting “style” inextricably linked with their oeuvre usually expressed by the artist's hand remains forefront in our thinking about the production of paintings, such as with Van Gogh, Monet, Matisse, Picasso, Pollock, and de Kooning. Later, “semiotization of the painterly mark”—as found in the work of Mitchell, Twombly, Johns, Frankenthaler, and later more overtly in Lichtenstein and Warhol—would open new areas of research in the medium. Today, style is but one of many tools at the painter's disposal, rather than a

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2 “[A]n increasing gap between advanced criticism and contemporary painting had been set in motion, a split that essentially continues today ... Advanced criticism, of course, deemed [neo-expressionism of the '80s] to be amnesiac naivete, uncritical affirmation, even politically reactionary. How might a serious engagement with painting persist in the shadow of such opprobrium?”  
Hochdorfer, Achim. “A Hidden Reserve.” *ARTFORUM*, February 2009.

3 van Winkel, Camiel. *During the Exhibition the Gallery Will Be Closed: Contemporary Art and the Paradoxes of Conceptualism*. Amsterdam: Valiz, 2010.

4 Velthuis, Olav. *Talking Prices: Symbolic Meanings of Prices on the Market for Contemporary Art*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

signature aspect of an artist's body of work. With no particular allegiance to a method or style of painting, painters are free to quote from antiquity and recent art history, including contradictory styles.

Contemporary art projects reinforce every decision with specific philosophical or political concepts. As in architecture, every aspect of the work is designed to shape the work's interpretation. In opposition to this standard, painting is chosen before and independently of any content or concept. Painting has clearly lost its primacy as the most important artistic practice. Painting's response has been to "make visible the polarizations and polemics of the '60s," by addressing head-on the very philosophical arguments made against it, and applying the same Conceptual methodologies to itself that rendered it impotent in the first place.<sup>5</sup> Yves Alain Bois asserts in his quintessential treatise on painting that because contemporary painting is automatically about the medium and its own history, is in fact a conceptual practice.<sup>6</sup>

In the wake of the global economic downturn, institutional critique and Marxist philosophy seems increasingly problematic as the basis of critically engaged artistic research. The economic and sociopolitical arguments against painting have become obsolete, if by painting's ongoing survival if nothing else. This may explain the recent resurgence of painting in critical, curatorial and artistic projects. Painting has become an essential tool for artists' practices. Paintings that are being made today are exemplified by provisional<sup>7</sup>-i.e., unmonumental-finishes, and are unabashedly beautiful,<sup>8</sup> which cannot be separated from the current socioeconomic environment as an inherently political position.

Contemporary artists working with abstract painting neither do so blindly ignoring the theoretical and philosophical issues with the medium, as in a politically reactionary manner, nor do they approach the subject in intentionally self-defeating, ironic or cynical approaches (as with Oehlen and Metzger).

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5 "By the late '60s, Rosalind Krauss, Douglas Crimp, and others would argue that painting could remain theoretically sustainable only if it adopted an antimodernist perspective, subjecting itself to the dictates of Minimal and Conceptual art ... Painting in recent years has applied itself to the very problems that the polemics of the '60s declared dead ... Painting has reached a point, it seems, at which it has made visible the polarizations and polemics of the '60s." - Hochdorfer

"Painting can no longer just be painting. Today it is also necessarily a form of conceptual art, and as such it must be judged in relation to conceptual practices in other media, and in turn it must hold its own in this comparison." Verwoert, Jan. "Why Are Conceptual Artists Painting Again? Because They Think It's a Good Idea." Translated by Hugh Rorrison. *Afterall*, Autumn/Winter 2005.

6 Bois, Yves Alain. *Painting as Model*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990.

7 "What makes painting "impossible"? What makes "great" painting impossible? Perhaps it is a sense of belatedness, a conviction that an earlier generation or artist has left only a few scraps to be cleaned up. Or maybe, at a particular moment, in a particular life and history, nothing could seem more presumptuous or inappropriate—maybe even obscene—than to set out to create a masterpiece." Rubenstein, Raphael. "Provisional Painting." *Art in America*, May 2009.

8 Hickey, Dave. "Enter the Dragon: On the Vernacular of Beauty." *The Invisible Dragon*. Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2009.

Painters today paradoxically hold these two contradictory positions (sincerity/irony) simultaneously. This recursive stance seems to be the only way to go forward in the field of art today. Recursion has become endemic in the medium, as we represent every possibility, long after having decided "it had all been done." It is possible to create a conceptual system of works in which painting is just one component in order to change the role of painting.<sup>9</sup> Many artists choose to work in multiple media, and brace painting, using a cross-compensation approach, with non-painting elements. As painting enters into a meta-art,<sup>10</sup> its analysis and interpretation become exponentially more complicated.

Painters today are able to make a painting no longer be just a painting, but rather, the symbol of the activity of painting.<sup>11</sup> This action mirrors the role of art in contemporary culture. The experience of an artwork is a metonym for art.<sup>12</sup> These artists are employing painting as a microcosm of artistic production<sup>13</sup>; the archetype of the artist is personified by the painter.

In this exhibition, I attempt to present a cross-section of contemporary painting being made in New York today by emerging and mid-career artists, underscoring the conceptual methodologies being strategically employed by painters, and how conceptual artists have turned to painting as a strategy. Painting is no longer relegated to the sidelines of cultural production, but is paradoxically at the forefront of innovation in visual art. These artists believe in the inherent value and the power of painting. They practice it sincerely, with a dedication one can only assign to a lifelong pursuit. Artists continue to paint because they *love* painting.

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9 "[T]he strategic installment of painting in a network of external references has the status of a meta-critical gesture."

"At the same time the boom in interdisciplinary and project-based approaches at international biennales raises the question of how resistant ephemeral forms of practice are to the administrative logic of the global exhibition industry, and whether a renewed examination of the intractable materiality of certain media-specific approaches might not actually be what is needed at this precise moment."- Verwoert

10 "... [painting] as a meta-art, able to assimilate some media effects and to reflect on others precisely because of its relative distance from it." Foster, Hal. *The First Pop Age: Painting and Subjectivity in the Art of Hamilton, Lichtenstein, Warhol, Richter, and Ruscha*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2012.

11 Nickas, Bob. *Painting Abstraction*. "The Persistence of Abstraction," London: Phaidon, 2009.

Shiff, Richard. "Breath of Modernism (Metonymic Drift)," in Terry Smith, ed., *In Visible Touch: Modernism and Masculinity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 184-213.

12 "The act of painting, as a historic form of production, may indeed be obsolete in a culture overflowing with media imagery, but painting *as such* continues to play a leading role in determining how we experience and think about art at all, irrespective of whether we reject or admire contemporary painting." - Draxler





**Ariel Dill**  
born 1976, Santa Monica, CA

Untitled (*Yellow Edges*), 2012  
Oil on linen, 16 x 20in  
Courtesy of the artist and  
Southfirst Gallery, Brooklyn



**Ariel Dill**  
born 1976, Santa Monica, CA

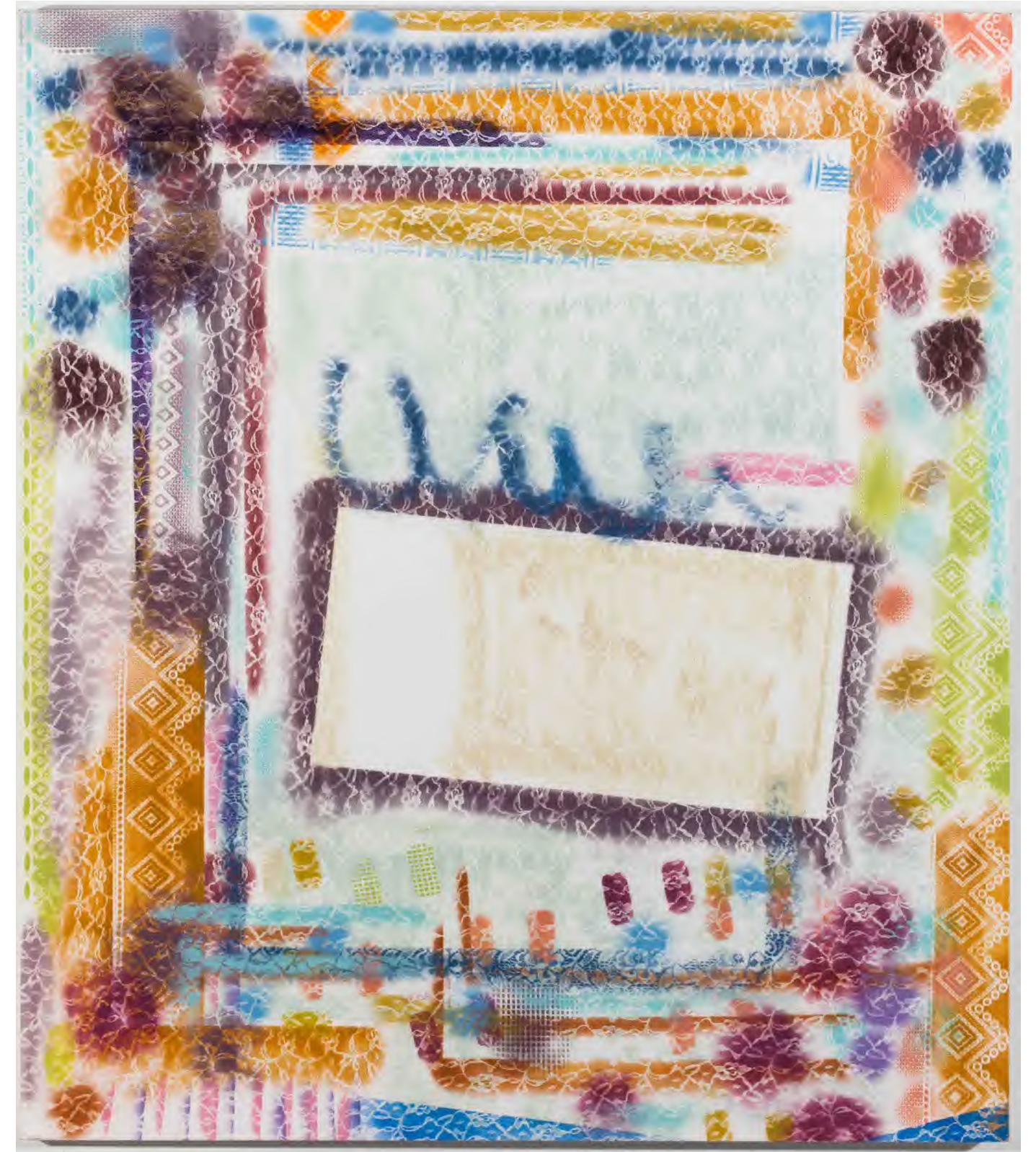
*Traipsed*, 2012  
Oil on linen, 16 x 20 in  
Courtesy of the artist and  
Southfirst Gallery, Brooklyn





**Tamara Gonzales**  
born 1959, Madera, CA

*Calm Before the Storm*, 2012  
Spray paint on canvas  
65 x 57 in  
Courtesy of the artist



**Tamara Gonzales**  
born 1959, Madera, CA

*Fade to White*, 2012  
Spray paint on canvas  
65 x 57 in  
Courtesy of the artist





**Marc Handelman**  
born 1975, Santa Clara, CA

*Cladding/Screen*, 2012  
Oil and projection screen glass on linen, 21.5 x 30 in  
Courtesy of the artist and  
Sikkema Jenkins, New York



**Marc Handelman**  
born 1975, Santa Clara, CA

*The Bend (inversion)*, 2011  
Oil on canvas, 24 x 17.125 in, framed  
Courtesy of the artist and  
Sikkema Jenkins, New York





**Christopher K. Ho**  
born 1974, Hong Kong

*Mondrian Automata (YBR and BYRWWW)*, 2009  
Gouache on embossed paper  
2 parts, 18.5 x 18.5 in each, framed  
Courtesy of the artist and Winkleman Gallery, New York

**Christopher K. Ho**  
born 1974, Hong Kong

*Regional Painting*  
by Hirsch E.P. Rothko 2001 / Christopher K. Ho 2010, no. 06  
Watercolor and acrylic on linen, 12 x 16 in  
Courtesy of the artist and Winkleman Gallery, New York





**Clinton King**  
born 1976, Ravenna, Ohio

*Absolute Threshold*, 2009–2011  
Oil and spray enamel on canvas  
64 x 50 in  
Courtesy of the artist



**Clinton King**  
born 1976, Ravenna, Ohio

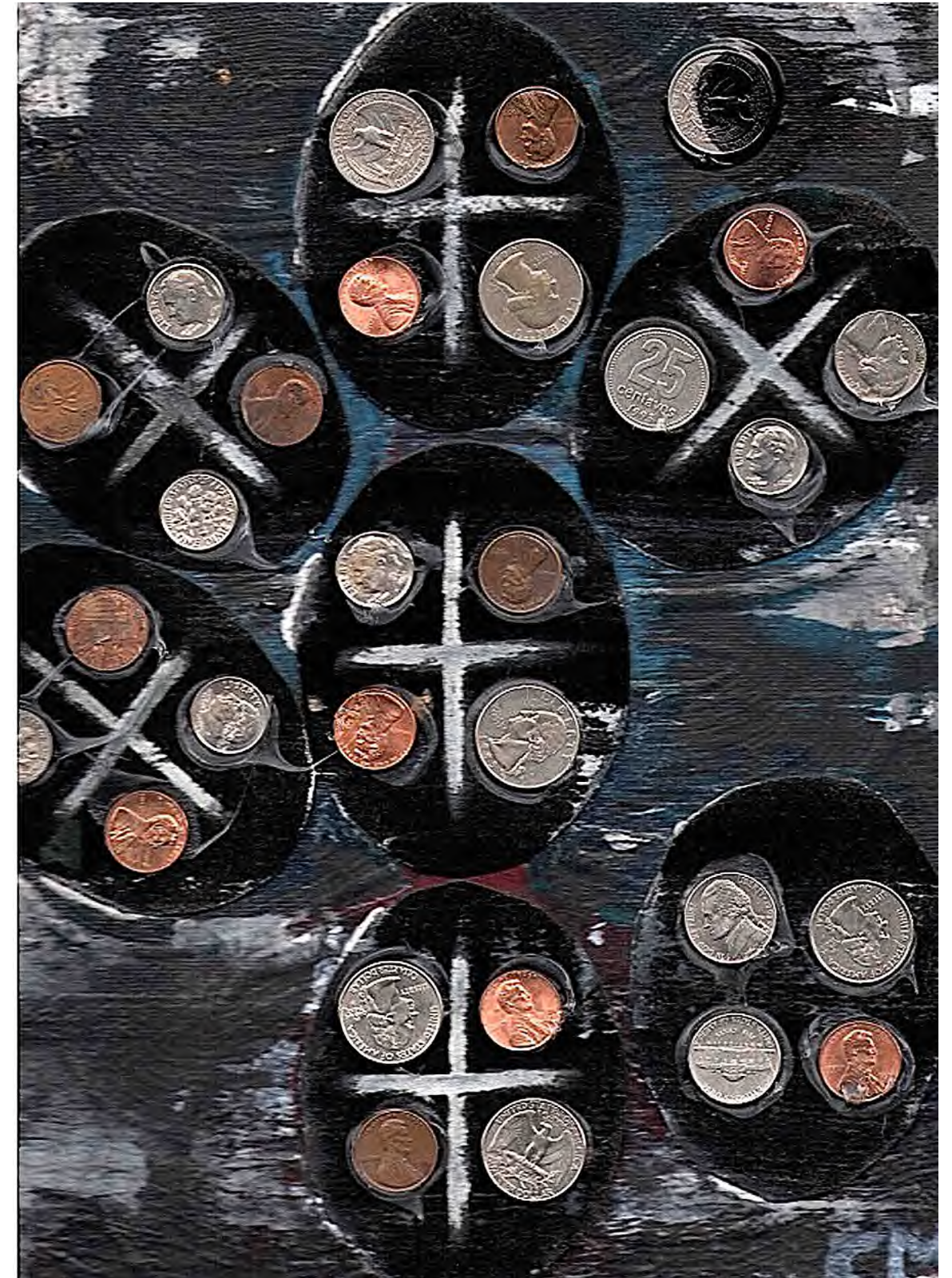
*Just-Noticeable Difference*, 2011  
Oil and spray enamel on canvas  
59 x 39.5 in  
Courtesy of the artist





**Chris Martin**  
born 1954, Washington D.C.

Untitled, 2012  
Oil and glitter on canvas, 58 x 49 in  
Courtesy of the artist and  
Mitchell, Innes & Nash Gallery, New York



**Chris Martin**  
born 1954, Washington, D.C.

Untitled, 2007-2012  
Oil, US and Argentine currency, 12 x 9 in  
Courtesy of the artist and  
Mitchell, Innes & Nash Gallery, New York





**Allie Pizarro-Grant**  
born 1987, Santa Monica, CA

*Tiny Swap/Tiny Swamp*, 2012  
Cold-water dye, charcoal, pastel, and  
acrylic polymer on canvas, 68 x 56 in  
Courtesy of the artist



**Allie Pizarro-Grant**  
born 1987, Santa Monica, CA

*O. Henry*, 2012  
Cold-water dye and acrylic  
polymer on canvas, 28 x 23 in  
Courtesy of the artist





**Christian Sampson**  
born 1974, Bradenton, FL

Installation view  
Centre Pompidou, Paris  
Courtesy of the artist and  
the Centre Pompidou, Paris

**Christian Sampson**  
born 1974, Bradenton, FL

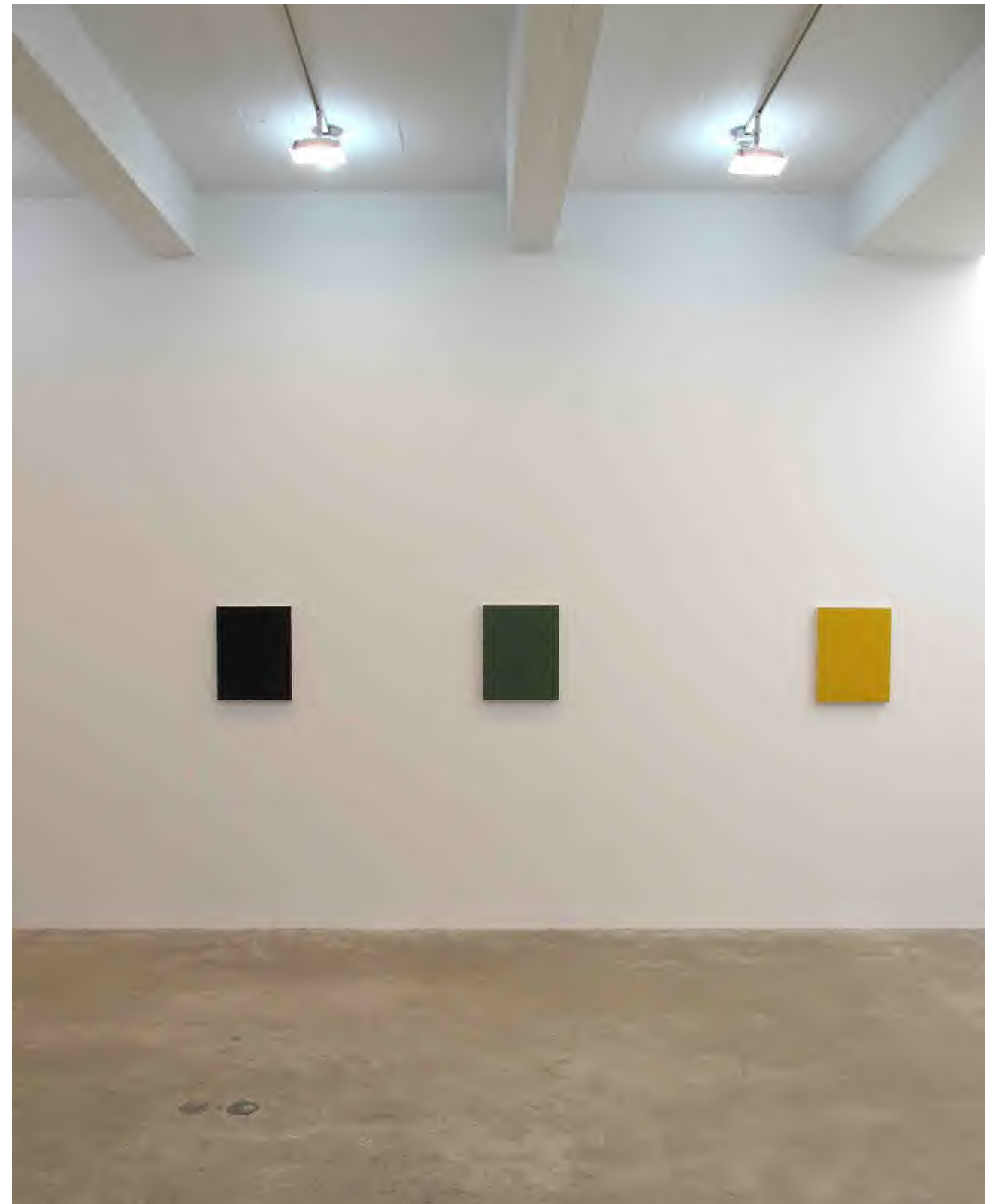
Installation view  
Centre Pompidou, Paris  
Courtesy of the artist and  
the Centre Pompidou, Paris





**Joshua Smith**  
born 1983, Houston, TX

Installation view  
Shoot the Lobster, New York, 2012  
Courtesy of the artist and  
Martos Gallery, New York



**Joshua Smith**  
born 1983, Houston, TX

Installation view  
Shoot the Lobster, New York, 2012  
Courtesy of the artist and  
Martos Gallery, New York





**Chuck Webster**  
born 1970, Binghamton, New York

Untitled (4660), 2012  
Oil on panel, 60 x 70 in  
Courtesy of the artist and  
ZieherSmith Gallery, New York



**Chuck Webster**  
born 1970, Binghamton, New York

Untitled (4649), 2012  
Oil on panel, 18 x 20 in  
Courtesy of the artist and  
ZieherSmith Gallery, New York





**Roger White**  
born 1976, Salem, Oregon

Untitled, 2010  
Acrylic on paper, 7.5 x 9.5 in  
Courtesy of the artist and  
Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York



**Roger White**  
born 1976, Salem, Oregon

Singleton, 2011  
Oil and pencil on canvas, 60 x 40 in  
Courtesy of the artist and  
Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York



# About

## **One River Gallery**

One River Gallery is dedicated to presenting the most innovative exhibits just west of NYC. Our program focuses on emerging artists who are prepared to participate on the NYC art stage, while also presenting important projects from mid career artists who have already built a brand there. The space is also home to One River School of Art and Design, a new direction in art and digital design education. Focused on the importance of lifelong creative learning, One River School offers a wide variety of creative classes and programs for all ages.

## **ART BLOG ART BLOG**

ART BLOG ART BLOG is a curatorial project by Joshua Abelow. From a recent interview with Abelow, "Initially the blog was a way for me to contextualize my own work alongside artworks and text by other artists and writers I was interested in, and it still is that. But, it's also a way for me to curate in the simplest way possible. To call a gallery space a blog is something that had never been done before and I think it generated a lot of interest because of that simple gesture. It created an element of confusion - like what is ART BLOG ART BLOG - a gallery, a blog, or a website? And, for a temporary period, it was all three."

ART BLOG ART BLOG presented a two-part series of exhibitions at Gallery Diet during the summer of 2012, including Leave it to Beavers, curated by Gina Beavers, and ASTRAL WEEKS, curated by Van Hanos. In the summer of 2011, ART BLOG ART BLOG presented ten exhibitions at a temporary location on the 11th floor of 508 West 26th Street. The location was generously donated to Joshua Abelow by the painter, Ross Bleckner.

## **Stephen Truax**

Stephen Truax is an artist, writer, and independent curator based in Brooklyn. Upcoming exhibitions include DONUT MUFFIN, curated by Jessica Duffett and Tamara Gonzales, at the Dorsky Foundation in 2013. Past exhibitions include The escape from the banal..., curated by Brooke Moyse at NURTUREart, and a solo at Storefront Bushwick in 2012. He co-organized PORTAL with Janis Ferberg in 2011, a multi-city exhibition series of video and digital media presented simultaneously between New York, Sydney, and Beijing. He earned his BFA at the Rhode Island School of Design in 2007.