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Dot Matrices

Kelly Suzanne Sipes
West Virginia University

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Dot Matrices

Kelly Suzanne Sipes

A Thesis submitted to the College of Creative Arts
At West Virginia University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of

Master of Fine Arts
In
Painting

Alison Helm, MFA, Chair
Robert Bridges
Cynthia Camlin
Kristina Olson
Naijun Zhang

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Abstract

Dot Matrices

Kelly Suzanne Sipes

My thesis work is the production and mapping of painterly space using particular methods of formal abstraction, in contrast with common pattern. I construct these paintings in several layers, embellishing gestural atmospheres with idiosyncratic shapes and patterns in alternating rhythms. My focus is on the development of improvisational processes, creating a less ceremonious context for the measure of abstract painting as an idea, a visual language, and as an autonomous object. My technique of mapping is established to consider a territory for a reformed autonomous identity that is in opposition to the pluralist excesses of the postmodern. This paper will address the painting processes I used in developing the work for the exhibition, *Dot Matrices*. I will also discuss other abstract painters with similar painting techniques and goals.

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Introduction

The gestural manipulation of form and space in my painting is a distillation of the various languages of expressionism. Faintly recognizable shapes and objects floating within the paintings' surfaces are one result of a formal reduction of signs. My intention is to allow disoriented signs and patterns to counter the fluidity and atmosphere of the picture, thus activating the painting formally and conceptually. Whether mere shapes such as circles or squares, abstracted images, or phonetic notation, they are as much meta-language as they are gestural paint. I see them as standing in for the original impulse to make a picture, to represent or record.

My work is some distance from the original abstractionists' intent to break down representation, such as the early paintings of Philip Guston (1913-1980). I wish to redirect that process to conceptually map my own thought processes. Mapping then becomes my subject, serving as a metaphor for self-identification and the modernist practice of establishing identity. I use the term 'mapping' as a way of describing the plotting of atmospheric passages and forms to create invented or artificial worlds. This term will be more fully explained as I analyze a selection of my own works in *Chapter 3: Dot Matrices*.

Although I use patterns and abstracted images along with gesturalism, I address a more connotative aspect of picturing. That is, my work is concerned with implications of imagery rather than with explicit readings. For example, I consider gestural paint to be an example of materiality at one end of a painting's

sign spectrum while the faintly recognizable images and patterns are akin to narrative on the other. The interrelations between these forms of visual language create a formal conversation that can only imply meaning. The patterns and iconography, which are embedded within the more painterly and atmospheric surfaces, represent the formal debris from the clash of logic and instinct located in the discipline of painting. There remains an impulse to create and react in a formalist manner on the canvas or paper, rather than to plan in advance with drawings or sketches. I rely mainly on my own intuitive processes of acting and reacting on canvas to map out these spaces.

Brushwork and color establish the physical and intuitive language of expressionism while abstract thought is registered by unhinged details of recognizable pattern. Repeated shapes, or pattern, map the two-dimensional space and its occupants, or floating forms, existing in previous layers of paint, creating a new dialogue. These images, placed within the substrata of the painted surface, are presented as familiar and ordinary, as they are in fact common signs and ornamentation. Because of their ambiguity, the images are able to be fused within the surfaces by subsuming a similar stylistic reference to the brushwork and gesture, thereby producing an integrated, even though conflicted, gestalt. So the patterned units existing on the surface become a new interpretable space – a map of an invented world. For my thesis, I will explain how my paintings are constructed with an abstract language and how the subject is interpretable as mapped artificial spaces.

Processes

Being void of traditional representation, my paintings focus attention on the material surface and application of paint. I am also interested in the formal relationship of its passages of color and gesture with regard to locating and strategizing mapped spaces and forms. My paintings are constructed in stages without a predetermined compositional solution. In his 1967 article, "Painting in Color," artist Jules Olitski (1922-2007), wrote that the structure and forming of a painting is made from the inside out, and I use a sympathetic idea when constructing my own work. Olitski mentions that the development of the painted surface is always determined by the structure of the painting. That is, a painting must have a structure of "pictorial organization" for arranging and mapping forms.¹

My paintings usually begin with a colored ground, shape or pattern on a canvas or prepared paper surface. I then proceed with the construction of various shapes, colors, and expressive details. I paint in alternating rhythms until a desired result is achieved that is balanced in all formal relationships. The act of painting is a kind of conversation I have with the plasticity of paint and material ground. This process is analogous to searching an unknown space, tracing the steps taken and charting one's progress. I invent places or spaces by aestheticizing ordinary forms and shapes. I make credible autonomous forms and provide a map of possibility in which they are occupants.

¹ Jules Olitski, "Painting in Color," *Artforum International*, January 1967: 20 - 21.

To achieve a visual display of alternating layers of gesture, pattern, and sign in which visual discord occurs, I use various tools and methods of application. For example, a wider cement trowel rather than a palette knife is used only for gesture and atmospheric results, while brushes are used for particular patterns and symbols.

The cement trowel is used in an additive technique for producing thin veils of paint, whether opaque or translucent. In the translucent state, the oil paint mixed with either gel or wax is scraped aggressively onto the painted surfaces, collecting within incised lines while enhancing remnants of the penultimate texture and color. This process shifts the effect of color saturation by fusing a mix of paint in unpredictable and improvised ways.

Where brushwork could also function in a similar way to the trowel, I mainly use it to apply opaque topical detail such as pattern, line, and abstracted sign. My brushwork is more independent and complimentary to its surroundings or its ground. Again, the oil paint applied via brush may be used at full strength, or like the trowel or palette knife application, it may be mixed with either a gel or wax. While both mediums are used to dilute the opacity and color saturation of the paint, they have the ability to maintain impasto with very different results. For instance, the consistency of oil paint mixed with gel is semi-glossy and rich like ointment. The quality of oil paint mixed with a wax becomes light like cake icing but, in a semi-dried state, appears to be grittier.

In either consistency, the purpose of the brushwork is to break the continuum of the gestural rhythms put into place by the knife work. My interest in

gesture is demonstrated by the exposed brush marks. The visual dissimilarity is the look of more intentional placement of a pattern, line, or repetition of abstracted image in comparison to the more loose gesture I create by trowel.

At times, however, my brushwork is used for more gestural applications. Unlike some of the American Abstract Expressionists, whose brushstrokes displayed a more aggressive application, my brushwork elicits a more oscillating atmosphere and landscape. When my brushwork is layered with the more precise patterned elementary forms such as circles or squares, it has a synonymous visual tension to the combination of knife work and brushwork. To create a tension with the atmosphere established by the gestural brushwork and/or knife work, patterns and solid forms are woven into and on top of the pre-existing layers. Both the regularity of the pattern and the evenness of brushwork create this tension with the irregularity of the gesture.

Where the gestural marks are not confined to the edge of the painting and establish a sense of continuity like that of a landscape, the patterns and flattened forms create a much different effect. Limited by a matrix or boundary, patterns of dots establish aerial, map-like arrangements. The atmosphere and abstracted forms become a space, or an invented space or world, while the patterned areas map that invented space in seemingly aerial views.

This variation of paint characteristics and application I described allows me to improvise endlessly on a matrix of form and color. I continuously adjust my criteria for painting closure, but it is forced on a continuum of one painting begetting another. Each painting is constantly citing a former individual work or

series. Together they celebrate and reflect visual perception and the construction of style through an inherited language of abstraction.

The iconic details embedded in the composition tether the passages of paint together like ornamental stitching. They call attention to the expressive possibilities of modernist painting that exist in both formalist and representational terms. Just as their linear forms detail the abstraction, the details of abstracted forms also create exciting pictorial ruptures. I push the color compositions from issues of taste to the brink of translatable content through the use of these patterned details. The content of the painting stops short of representation; however, and hovers in a state of incompleteness. In this way the paintings mirror the state of perpetual becoming implied in the gestural brushwork. In other words, even though my gesturalism and pictorialism are at odds, they belong in the same painting because each is in a state of potentiality.

Gestural abstraction cannot wholly be described because its meaning is in the suspension of future possibility - so too are the ambiguous fragments of iconography I use. Both reflect a fuller sense of artistic cognition with regards to art and can be best understood as a hybrid of ornamentation and improvisational abstraction. Formal ruptures and patterns can inhabit the space as ornament, yet the use of a space and its occupants is also a demonstration of a visual abstract language. One comprehends form only through its manipulation and usage. A form, for example, could be integrated as part of a space, or it could cover up a space and sit on top of the surface of the painting. So the same form could have different functions when painted in different contexts. To summarize, abstraction,

for me, is an acceptance of mutability and the exploration of painting as a visual language of formal shapes, color relationships, and space.

Framing Abstraction

“Through representing or symbolizing selected elements of ‘the world,’ experience is made susceptible to ordering and rearrangement; the world can be more completely grasped, ordered, and illuminated.”²

In part, my own work responds to previous abstract painters’ deconstruction of formalist painting. However, it is tempered by my conceptions of the abstract painting as a map and semi-autobiographical display. Though I find my work to have a relationship with the painters in early gestural abstraction, I find a stronger connection with more current artists. In the past, my work had a stronger tie to landscape, which was often an implied theme with abstract expressionism. While it remains in my work, the idea of landscape has become fictive, referencing newer abstract artists.

The combination of natural with narrative elements, figures, and geometric forms is a language created from experience in the paintings of abstract artist Per Kirkeby (b. 1938). The experiences he draws upon become formal spatial arrangements of personal history and gesture (see Figure 1).³ According to Micheal Leja in his *Reframing American Abstract Expressionism*, visual forms that are contingent upon other ideas and fragments increase knowledge skewed by other interests and values.⁴ So where the 1960s hardboard paintings of

² Nelson Goodman, *Problems and Projects* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976), 115.

³ Michael Juul Holm and Poul Erik Tojner, eds., *Per Kirkeby 122 x 122: Paintings on Masonite* (Louisiana: Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, 2002), 4-5.

⁴ Michael Leja, *Reframing American Abstract Expressionism: Subjectivity and Painting in the 1940s* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 1.

Kirkeby are about archeological layers revealing the presence of time and making, he is theoretically using a language of gestural landscape and internal narration in a process of ordering and mapping things and placing or understanding himself.⁵ Experience and painted gesture are arranged and mapped in structural details and spaces. I am interested in both the visual tensions of Kirkeby's multi-layered surfaces as well as his use of an abstract visual language as interpretable subject matter in understanding the world – internal and external.

Where Kirkeby's paintings can be theorized by reflecting upon and registering nature and his experiences, my current work demonstrates an analogous subject. That is, my first interest in painting was in landscape in *plein-air*. As the subject of my paintings has shifted from a representational view of the world to one loosely inspired by nature, other changes have followed.

The first shift was the downplay of illusion of layering real objects (leaves, rocks, etc.) to layering paint in the literal sense. This layering of paint occurred in often sweeping horizontal motions, stylistically similar to the abstract paintings of Gerhard Richter (b. 1932).

Richter's abstractions have been described as the substance of paint, in non-specific form, revealing its material past in an abstract language.⁶ I am interested in his formal mark-making with an ambiguous content to which many analogous subjects could be potentially linked. The density of visual layers and

⁵ Michael Juul Holm and Poul Erik Tojner, eds., *Per Kirkeby 122 x 122* (Louisiana: Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, 2002), 7, 11.

⁶ Robert Storr, *Gerhard Richter: Painting in the Nineties* (London: Anthony D'Offay Gallery, 1995), 17-18.

textures of atmosphere or nature could be represented abstractly by the literal layering of textures and color, for example. I achieve this by borrowing a similar visual language to Richter's (see Figure 2), the repetition of application by palette knife on canvas or by putty knife on an unyielding hardboard, such as masonite, or a cement trowel on canvas.

As with Richter's paintings, my works then were solely "gestural or pigment loaded," with an undertone of nature and atmosphere.⁷ The generally horizontal scrapes of the putty knife that were implemented in those works soon shifted from the loose repetition of texture and mark to include new forms of repetition in order to create a visual tension. This new repetition of circles or squares was then used along with the repetition of the scraped atmospheric mark as a slight disruption, as the scraped marks also occurred in repetition. These patterns of shapes covered only a fraction of the surface, allowing for the remainder of the scraped mark-making to be intact. As previously mentioned, the addition of these patterns were first intended as visual ruptures to the gestural mark-making, but their function was also to broaden my visual vocabulary and lead to an interpretable subject matter.

Placed sporadically throughout the composition, the function of the repeated shape was formal. When placed in a group or form, the patterns of shapes began to function separately from the gesturalism as a new entity of an aerial view of space. Generally, these dot patterns lacked the depth created by the gestural scrapes; however, these groupings brought a new graphic element

⁷ Robert Storr, *Gerhard Richter: Forty Years of Painting* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2002), 71.

and visual tension to the work.

Dot Matrices

“Believe it or not, I really see my surroundings as dots. I love all dots. I am married to many of them. I want all dots to be happy” – Gerhard Richter and Sigmar Polke⁸

In my work, dot matrices are used as a method of forming a regular pattern to the existing irregularly painted surfaces. The presence of these flattened elementary forms in my work began as an investigation in previous paintings, which were mainly constructed as landscapes. The repetition of gestural mark-making in those works, loosely based on landscape and atmosphere, was ultimately enhanced by the addition of a more regulated and more precisely painted repetitious surface tension, such as dots.

As a continuing presence in each of my paintings I use dots as a playful instance of color and form. At times, I also use multiples of dots to spread over the painting in units or matrices, adding detail to the pre-existing gestural surfaces. The presence of the dot matrix and gestural abstraction can co-exist in my paintings because both resist illusionism. The proportion of dot to gesture allows the matrices to float over the gestural surfaces as pattern without disrupting or overruling the abstract gestural surfaces as a whole. In other words, the amount of atmosphere and gestural marks covering the surface is greater than the amount of surface coverage by dots and dot matrices. I treat these matrices in a style akin to Kirkeby's, where the images of figures float above the

⁸ Hans-Ulrich Obrist, ed., *Gerhard Richter: The Daily Practice of Painting: Writings 1962 - 1993* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1993), 42.

textured surfaces in map-like plots above more nature-inspired formations and gesture.

Layering surface over surface to creates a collage-like appearance to my paintings. Though I do not think of creating collages specifically, I do think of space and how the layers of surfaces of my paintings are stacked on top of one another – each layer of paint a strata above the last. Generally, I alternate opacity over translucency, pattern over gesture, and vice versa. So the dot patterns, which I think of as flat discs, are part of an invented space – a shallow distance over the lower strata, or layer. When dispersed within the layers of the painting, I think of these dots as individual occupants of a space. When functioning as a particular shaped unit or matrix, I think of the dots as an abstraction of an aerial view. Therefore, I use the dots as both form and description.

For instance in *Dot Matrices* (2007), the red dots are flat disc-like occupants in an invented space (see Figure 3). I treat the smaller red dots as occupants of an invented space. I plot or map these dots to a specific area as to nestle them into the plush white ground or atmosphere. I paint the larger dot and ring on top of the previous layers and space so that they sit on the surface of the painting. They are like an abstraction or a generalization of the grouping of small red dots as seen in aerial view. Consequently, there is interplay of shapes integrated into the space (the smaller dots) and shapes that sit on top of the space (the larger dots), as collaged elements would seem to do.

At the same time, I map and configure the painting into sections, some overlapping the others, forming a shallow space. I treat the ovals in *Dot Matrices* much like the larger red dots, meaning that the ovals appear to sit on top of the surface, again reiterating an aerial view of space. In a lower section, I use quarter-sized black dots forming a unit to represent another flat map-like form of space. In this instance, the matrix is not painted as a literal interpretation of the space, but a suggested one.

These forms suggest maps because both maps and matrices have specific borders to indicate the form of a place as well as representing that space in serial view. As a further point of reference, the repetition of dots both in the space and on the space, in larger scale, suggest a more detailed view of the same space. The large red dot is the group of small red dots in aerial view, as would be suggested by a larger view of a city on a state map. In that specific instance the city occurs twice on the map – once in a size proportional to the adjacent cities (sitting in the space), and another in an enlarged version as to see details (sitting on the space).

So I map and organize spaces, leaving the idea of a map as a suggested theme. I map and construct spaces with an abstract language. So the word map in my paintings means creating a space, or showing that space in aerial view.

I think of mapping space with overlapping and interchangeable positive and negative spaces. This works well with my buildup of painted surfaces. Often paintings are changed significantly from start to finish. By using thin veils of paint, often achieved through the use of wax medium, I am able to push back

underlying surfaces while still being able to keep them in view. Several layers of translucent paint are built up to opacity. At other times, I will bring back previous shapes, which have been pushed back by simply painting around them. This turns the negative spaces back into positive shapes.

In *Balloon Project* (2007), for example, I reveal both positive and negative spaces through the manipulation of the painted surfaces (see Figure 4). Specifically, the dots reveal the new positive surfaces as well as the previous layers. The green dot, for example, is created through the absence of the newest layer of paint. Here I covered the underpainting with a circle template, painting around the dot with white paint. So the previous negative green space is made into a positive shape by painting a new negative space around it. This procedure also reveals time involved in my painting processes. So the green occurred before the surrounding white atmosphere, which is under new objects, and so on.

At the same time, dots can become an abstract representation of other things occurring in the world. With only a slight alteration of attaching a line to connect the lower half of the green dot with the blue figure-like form, I indicate a balloon. So now in the same painting, I use dots to create negative spaces and positive spaces as well as suggesting things existing in the real world. Other positive shapes I make with dots include hanging dots or lights, hollow dots or rings, and dots suspended in mid air or a gravity-free world, such as the bright pink dots in *Balloon Project*.

In *Modern Dog* (2007), I play with other ideas of how dots, though the same shape, can be depicted with various functions in mind. This again creates a

collage, or multilayered appearance (see Figure 5). The purple dots on the left side, for instance, exist as a visual tension to the painted surfaces. Its function is mainly ornamental. I use the yellow rings behind as a means of emphasis and drawing. I circle the purple shapes as a means of accentuating the previous layer. The red dots are not floating as the green dots do in *Balloon Project*. Instead, I nestle them into the white and green ground, or my idea of landscape. Finally, the white dots on the orange plane exist in aerial view. This is my abstraction of mapping space. Constructing these shapes, planes, and atmospheric passages together is my metaphor for mapping space.

Because I think of these paintings as invented spaces with aerial map forms, I choose color that does not exist in natural spaces, on the whole. Instead of using a natural green, I select the green that occurs in places such as the interior of school bus walls. Instead of sky blue, I prefer a more washed out toothpaste color. I prefer artificial colors because I want to accentuate the unnaturalness and simulative purpose of map construction.

Even more so, some viewers perceive my color palette as feminine or domestic, and some of the pastel colors may be associated with food. I recognize these associations; however, these issues are only somewhat analogous to the work and exist outside of my normal reading. Yet these conditions are more complicated by other readings. Wax mixed with pastel colored paint, for example, may remind one of icing, but black color mixed with gel in a wet state looks like tar. I see the texture of cement when wax has been mixed with gray oil paint and

dried for a day or two. In addition, an iridescent pink oil bar drawn on the canvas looks like smeared pink lipstick.

Influential Artists

The interpretations of color and texture support my idea of unnaturally constructed map spaces. There is a formal jarring of hard versus soft, pure and vibrant color versus pastel, and geometric form versus the softer airy gestures. The materiality of the paint can take on multiple characteristics in order to construct and define artificial spaces. The use of the dot matrix allows me to counter the previously developed gestural processes and visual language, inherited from my early influences.

The abstract images in my work are grounded both in art historical references and in intuition and play renouncing sentimentality as does the work of painter Amy Sillman (b. 1966). Sillman's use of imagery, which is personally derived, is broken down in order to understand the process of figuration in her work.⁹ The imagery explored in my work diversifies a more abstract process as a new substratum, i.e., a variable less influenced by handmade gesture.

In her paintings, Sillman aspires to rework the critical counterparts of expression and improvisation, or logic and memory (see Figure 6). The tensions between personal experience and pure painting are analogous to the visual tensions of line and shape in what Sillman says is, "handwriting in a language that isn't handwriting yet." Painting nouns, as Sillman calls it, is an attempt to understand the world and categorize it in a linguistic abstraction.¹⁰ It is this theme

⁹ Linda Norden, "Amy Sillman: The Elephant in the Painting," *Artforum International*, February 2007, 239-240.

¹⁰ Linda Norden, "Amy Sillman: The Elephant in the Painting," *Artforum International*, February 2007, 240-243.

of understanding the world that is an underlying theme present in Sillman as well as other abstract painters influential to my own work.

Where Sillman's paintings involve some form of a figure placed with abstract forms and lighter negative space, per Kirkeby uses these interchangeably. In Kirkeby's work, figures can exist as flat floating positive shapes, but also as ghost images or negative spaces. He does this by painting around shapes, as I too have done. What I have taken from my research of his work is the relationship of figure and ground created by the densely layered surfaces. This treatment of paint on hardboard is very raw and aggressive – much more so than my own processes. Yet, a relationship still exists. His aggressive brush marks are translated into my slightly more subtle gesture by cement trowel or putty knife.

I am drawn to artists like Sillman and Kirkeby because of the unpredictable element in their work. Even though there are processes that each artist uses, there are not set formulas for arriving at the same point. That idea of not being predictable is something that I try to emulate in my own work. Therefore, in developing my own paintings, play and intuition is just as important as research and learned processes.

I link these two artists together because of their emphasis on the surface plane, by either line or aggressively layered mark-making. For Sillman the use of line draws attention to the surface, like drawing. But more than that, it shows the work of the hand. This idea is carried out in my own work, yet with another strategy. Showing the work of an artist's hand, especially in drawing, reveals a

level of intimacy. In my work I do this in my smaller paper paintings. In these paintings, I show my decision-making. I mark out my space to paint with graphite first. Later, I draw into the painting when it is still wet to mark out and map new forms. Because of the small size, roughly 15 x 15 inches of painted space, the viewer must come within inches of the painting to experience the invented space and mark-making, again bringing that intimate level into the work.

Kirkeby also shows much handwork in his hardboard paintings, only more aggressively. In his works, process is revealed by marking out and painting over surfaces. He drills holes and sands edges of the hardboard to reveal his process but also to draw attention to the surface. The surface he emphasizes is not just the sanded and drilled hardboard but also the flat modernist idea of surface. Kirkeby fills and overloads his paintings with clusters of marks, shapes, images, and sometimes patterns and repetition of figures as to flatten the surface in a collage-like appearance. Again, what I take from my research of his work is the attention to layering flat surfaces over surfaces to create shallow spaces. However, my treatment of these shallow spaces is more delicately controlled.

There is evidence in both painters' works that spaces are invented through their painting processes. For Sillman, this could involve grounding the figure or suggesting the figure. For Kirkeby, this is often achieved by creating shallow spaces in landscape settings. The inventiveness involves the overlapping of clusters of figures, animals, and abstracted over that landscape. Creating these spaces for the figures, etc. for both artists is essentially mapping out and creating spaces in an ambiguous manner. This mapping leaves room for narration and

concept to develop in the work, while also referring to the modernist idea of surface.

I have sifted out the modernist idea of shallow surface, inventive creation of space, and mapping objects within a landscape setting in order to enrich my work with the spontaneity of play and intuition. These works invoke emotion through bright and intense color vibrations within the invented spaces. These works are not dull or somber but inviting to an inquisitive mind. The viewer is expected to exercise his imagination as each painting does not give all the answers but a portion of the story, asking the viewer to fill in the rest, to complete the image. The two must work together to invoke the question of a personal narrative.

Considering gestural abstract painting as a map acknowledges a different conceptualism for what began in the early part of the 20th century as unrestricted free expression. I initially make spontaneous images in my paintings and then work to define their limitations and contours. This activity relates to the overall reexamination of modernist aesthetic premises, which has been parodied and critiqued. I stand on the side of artists who choose modernist language as a way to selectively establish a historical linkage to the past and construct a more coherent logic of expression than exists in the cultural chaos of post-modernism.

Conclusion

I adopt and improvise upon an existing visual language in order to re-picture an identity with certain traditions of modernist abstraction. Each painting is a new fragment and record of a continuously reconstructed site. So I identify with the abstract artists that I have mentioned in one way or another, and their ideas resurface in my own paintings by way of mapping.

Processes I have developed over a period of years were at first formal investigations, but they evolved into the idea of imagining spaces. The perception of this space is always artificial and flat, though the concept behind it is not. In mapping these spaces, marks fluctuate between play and the intuitive to marks that are very calculated. Both marks are visually similar to those in abstract paintings of the past as well as my own painting influences.

When mapping a world using these inherited painting techniques, a space or atmosphere must exist to hold them together, but there must also be occupants existing in that space. Visually this creates a tension – precise pattern over gestural passages. Conceptually, this offers the idea of invented space and existence in that place.

When I look at works of artists like Sillman, I see figures or some part of a figure existing either on a background or as a shape in a painting. In Kirkeby's works I see landscapes fused with figures and animals, and the juxtaposition of these things in the paintings lead to visual puzzles as well as an idea of a place and time existing from his experiences.

I want to create these artificial experiences, or mapped layers and spaces. My manipulation of these layers and spaces in my paintings is broken down through the language of abstraction. The placement of abstracted images I create, such as balloons, trees, or lights establish space in these invented worlds. Sometimes objects are grounded and nestled in another layer of paint. In other instances, matrices of dot patterns float over atmospheres to counter the fluidity of the established space in the painting. This establishes a new concept in my work: to map spaces.

Though I think of mapping space as creating space, and at times incorporating aerial views of space, I suggest an ambiguous map. In formal terms, I am documenting abstracted images, establishing an identity and place for those images, or forms. I do this in a style that references abstract painters of the past, not in an ironic way, but out of respect of that tradition, which is rejuvenated with each subsequent generation.

List of Figures



Figure 1

Per Kirkeby
Storm P. Fluer
mixed media on masonite
48 in. x 48 in.
1966
Randers-Kunst Museum



Figure 2

Gerhard Richter

704-2

oil on canvas

28 ¼ x 24 ½ in.

1989

Barbara Mathes Gallery



Figure 3

Kelly Sipes
Dot Matrices
oil on canvas
48 in. x 48 in.
2007

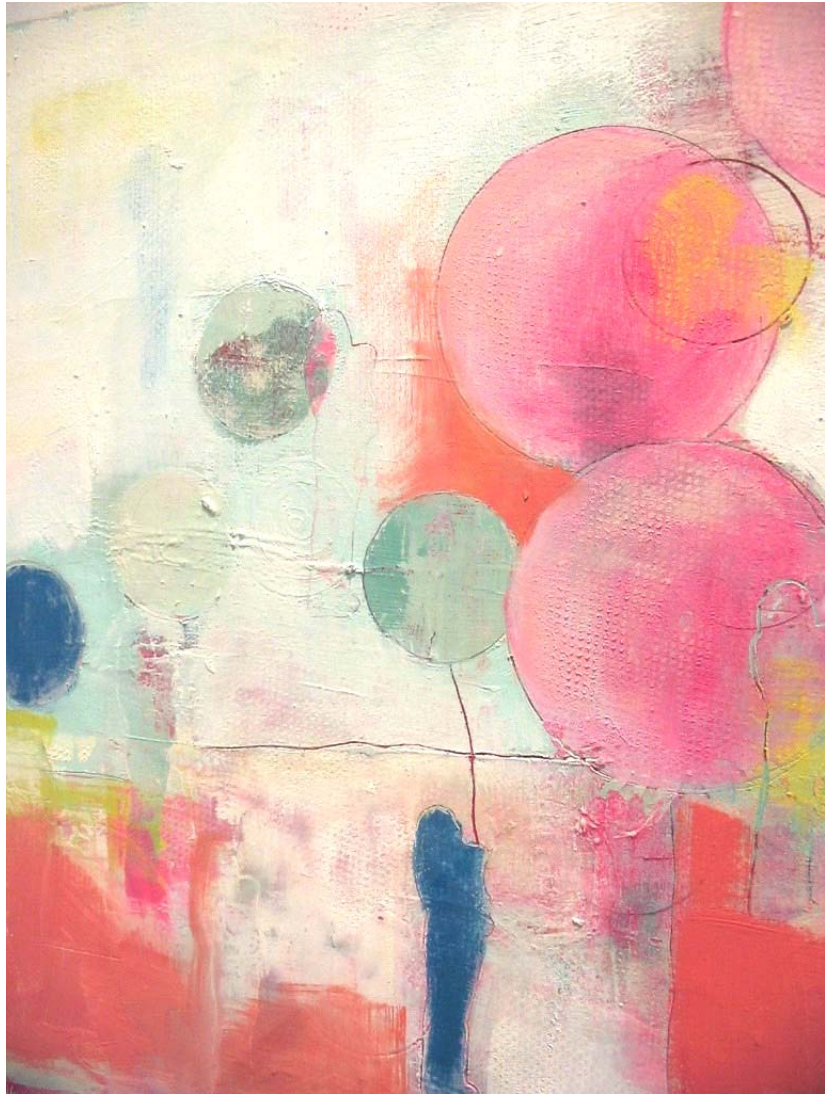


Figure 4

Balloon Project, detail
oil and graphite on paper
30 in. x 22 ½ in.
2007



Figure 5

Modern Dog
oil on paper
30 in. x 22 ½ in.
2007



Figure 6

Amy Sillman
The Elephant in the Room
oil on canvas
80 in. x 69 in.
2006

Collection of Liz Gerring and Kirk August Radke

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Appendix A

kelly.sipes@gmail.com

Kelly Sipes

Education

- 2007 M.F.A., Painting, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV
- 2004 B.A.E., Art Education, Fairmont State University, Fairmont, WV (Magna Cum Laude)
Certified PK – AD, by West Virginia Board of Education

Professional Experience

- 2007 *NY ARTS Magazine*, January/ February Edition, Vol. 12 no. ½, New York, NY
Instructor, Drawing 1
Drawing 2 – Abstract Drawing and Non-Traditional Media, West Virginia University,
Morgantown, WV
Teaching Assistant, Advanced Painting and Senior Projects, West Virginia University,
Morgantown, WV
- 2006 *NY ARTS Magazine*, November/December Online Edition, New York, NY
Graduate Visiting Artist Program, Slide Lecture and Discussion, Murray State University, Murray, KY
Instructor, Basic Drawing 1 for Non-Majors
Drawing 2 - Abstract Drawing and Non-Traditional Media, West Virginia University,
Morgantown, WV
Teaching Assistant, Art History Survey
Advanced Painting and Senior Projects, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV
- 2005 Instructor, Basic Drawing 1 for Non-Majors, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV
Teaching Assistant, Art History Survey, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV

Solo Exhibitions

- 2007 *Dot Matrices*, MFA Thesis Exhibition, Laura Mesaros Gallery, West Virginia University,
Morgantown, WV
- 2006 *Paintings on Masonite*, The Book and Bean, Fairmont, WV
- 2004 *Substance Through Surface*, James David Brooks Gallery, Fairmont State University, Fairmont, WV

Group Exhibitions

- 2007 *In Medias Res*, Summer Graduate Exhibition, Paul Mesaros Gallery, West Virginia University,
Morgantown, WV
- 2006 *The West Virginia Five*, Clara M Eagle Upper Gallery, Murray State University, Murray, KY
Entre Nous, Summer Graduate Exhibition, Laura Mesaros Gallery, West Virginia University,
Morgantown, WV
- 2005 *What You Will*, Summer Graduate Exhibition, Paul Mesaros Gallery, West Virginia University,
Morgantown, WV
- 2004 *C.A.O.S. Spring Juried Art Exhibition*, Wallman Hall, Fairmont State University, Fairmont, WV

Group Exhibitions Continued

- 2003 *C.A.O.S. Spring Juried Art Exhibition*, James David Brooks Gallery, Fairmont State University, Fairmont, WV (Award)
C.A.O.S. Sensual Art Show, Wallman Hall, Fairmont State University, Fairmont, WV (Award)
Day of the Dead Exhibition, James David Brooks Gallery, Fairmont State College, Fairmont, WV
- 2002 *C.A.O.S. Fall Juried Art Exhibition*, James David Brooks Gallery, Fairmont State University, Fairmont, WV (Award)
- 2001 *C.A.O.S. Fall Juried Art Exhibition*, James David Brooks Gallery, Fairmont State University, Fairmont, WV (Award)
C.A.O.S. Spring Juried Art Exhibition, James David Brooks Gallery, Fairmont State University, Fairmont, WV (Award)
- 2000 *WV Mountain State Third Annual Art Show*, The League of Independent Artists, High Gate Carriage House, Fairmont, WV

Awards

- 2005-2007 Full Graduate Assistantship, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV
- 2004 Outstanding Senior Art Award, Fairmont State University, Fairmont, WV
- 2003 Scholarship for New York City Trip, Fairmont State University, Fairmont, WV
- First Place: Printmaking, Honorable Mention: Art Education Project,
C.A.O.S. Spring Juried Art Exhibition, Wallman Hall, Fairmont State University, Fairmont, WV
- Certificate: Sculpture, *C.A.O.S. Sensual Art Show*, Wallman Hall, Fairmont State University, Fairmont, WV
- Second Place: Watercolor, *C.A.O.S. Fall Juried Art Exhibition*, James David Brooks Gallery, Fairmont State University, Fairmont, WV
- 2001-2004 Fine Arts Scholarship – Kinney Award, Fairmont State University, Fairmont, WV
- 2001 Honorable Mention: Painting, *C.A.O.S. Fall Juried Art Exhibition*
James David Brooks Gallery, Fairmont State University, Fairmont, WV
- Second Place: Drawing, *C.A.O.S. Spring Juried Art Exhibition*
James David Brooks Gallery, Fairmont State University, Fairmont, WV
- 2000-2004 Fairmont Undergraduate Scholarship, Fairmont State University, Fairmont, WV

Charity and Community Activities

- 2006 *Rape and Domestic Violence Information Center Gala Auction*, Morgantown, WV
Betty Puskar Breast Care Center Auction, Morgantown, WV
- 2002 *C.A.O.S. Theory* coordinator and painting teacher for high school students,
Fairmont State University, Fairmont, WV

Appendix B



Kelly Sipes
A Landscape Painting, detail
oil and graphite on paper
30 in. x 22 ½ in.
2007



Untitled
oil and graphite on paper
30 in. x 22 ½ in.
2007



Untitled, detail
oil and graphite on paper
30 in. x 22 ½ in.
2007



The Pink One
oil and graphite on canvas
48 in. x 48 in.
2007



The Pink One, detail
oil and graphite on canvas
48 in. x 48 in.
2007



Purkinje Effect
oil on canvas
48 in. x 48 in.
2007



Purkinje Effect, detail
oil on canvas
48 in. x 48 in.
2007



The Moon's a Balloon
oil on canvas
48 in. x 48 in.
2007



The Moon's a Balloon, detail
oil on canvas
48 in. x 48 in.
2007



Purkinje Effect
oil on paper
30 in. x 22 ½ in.
2007



Pangaea
oil on paper
30 in. x 22 ½ in.
2007



Pink Puffy Painting
oil and graphite on paper
30 in. x 22 ½ in.
2007



Pink Puffy Painting, detail
oil and graphite on paper
30 in. x 22 ½ in.
2007



Untitled, detail
oil on paper
30 in. x 2 ½ in.
2007



The Green One
oil on canvas
48 in. x 48 in.
2007



The Green One, detail
oil on canvas
48 in. x 48 in.
2007



Installation view
Laura Mesaros Gallery
West Virginia University
Morgantown, WV
2007