



ERASER

Generator Gems

*We speak in tiny generator gems. Everything
you say sets off a new whirling and wheeling
in me. Your each sound is a gem, and you pour
polished opals, rainbowing thoughts and
fractalline noise over my head; each time
I am washed away in your light waves.*

~ Alexis Christakes

ERASER

VOLUME 2

KING

DE GALVAN

A BRIGGS

SULLIVAN

ANDERSON

R BRIGGS

CHRISTAKES

CURATING CONTEMPORARY

Contributors



Born in London 1977, Jai Llewellyn is a Painter living and working in Scotland. He received his BA in drawing and MA in printmaking both from Camberwell College of arts London. He has exhibited across Europe and the USA and is represented by Gray Contemporary, USA, And Gallery and Tatha Gallery, UK, and Galerie Christoph Abbuhl, CH. He has been highlighted in several online publications including, Studio Critical, Freud Monk Gallery and has written for Instantloveland.com. He has also curated for Raumx, London.



Rachel Jobe Reese is Director and Curator of the Cress Gallery of Art at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (UTC) since 2020. From 2015-2019, Reese served as Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at Telfair Museums where she stewarded the permanent collection of modern and contemporary art as well as organized 20 special exhibitions in the Jepson Center—including the 2019 retrospective and accompanying catalogue for Suzanne Jackson: Five Decades (Telfair Books, 2019).



Jacob Cartwright is an artist based in New York City. He received a BFA in Painting from the Kansas City Art Institute in 2000. His paintings explore patterned color space as a constructive method. Recent curatorial work includes New York is Now, a show presented in Athens, Greece as part of the Platforms Project independent art fair. He is a member of American Abstract Artists



Lauren Whearty is a painter based in Philadelphia, Pa. She received her MFA from The Ohio State University, and her BFA from Tyler School of Art, Temple University. She has attended Yale's Norfolk School of Art, The Vermont Studio Center, & The Golden Foundation, & recently received an Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation grant. Lauren currently teaches at Tyler School of Art & Architecture and The University of The Arts in Philadelphia, PA, and is a Co-Director at Ortega y Gasset Projects, an artist-run curatorial collective in Brooklyn, NY.



James Lambert is an artist based in Boston, MA. He earned his MFA from Massachusetts College of Art, and BFA from Rhode Island School of Design. His work has been exhibited nationally and in Europe. Outside of his individual practice, he is cofounder of two collaborative ventures in the Boston area, Artist Made Paper and the artists group JAWS. He teaches part time at Massachusetts College of Art, Bunker Hill Community College, and Endicott College.



Alan Pocaro is an artist and writer based in Illinois. His award-winning works have been featured in numerous national and international exhibitions. Associated with the New Aesthetics movement -an informal group of individuals who emphasize the physical and material nature of art- Pocaro is a member of the AICA. His writing has appeared in New American Paintings, Art Critical, Abstract Critical, City Beat and ART PAPERS. Pocaro is currently appointed Associate Professor of Art + Design at Eastern Illinois University.

RICK BRIGGS

Alan Pocaro: The statement on your website resonated with me as both a writer and an artist, particularly the notion of surprise. Abstraction is also my first love. But I also think that as a visual idiom, abstraction has been pretty thoroughly explored, and the remaining room for formal surprise, if there is any, is pretty small. To combat this, I've noted that many contemporary abstract painters self-consciously mine "bad design" in order to effect the "shock of the new". Is this something that informs your approach, are you concerned with something that looks "new"?

Rick Briggs: That's a good question but I don't agree that abstraction (and painting in general) is exhausted, and I say that as someone who has lived through all those years when painting was marginalized. As I look around at the myriad examples of abstraction in NYC shows and the studios of my peers, it's clear that the language of abstraction is constantly being revitalized and expanded upon.

I don't know much about the world of design, although I do know one shouldn't put a "figure" smack dab in the middle of a composition, which, of course, occasionally compels me to do exactly that. I'm also conscious of the need to distinguish myself from others and make a contribution that furthers "the conversation". But rather than trying to make something "new", I'm more concerned with expressing something reflective of my life. So when attaching a paint roller sleeve to the surface of a canvas, I'm not only disrupting the surface and making a compositional decision, but also referring to my lifelong day job, and building a vocabulary. The rollers (or rags) I attach are often the same ones used to move the paint around on that particular canvas. This has precedent in a Jasper Johns' painting titled "Fool's House" from which he hangs a broom that was used in the making of the painting – a pretty radical, and new, gesture for 1964. So in the context of the Johns' painting, or the surface embellishments of many, many other artists such as Chris Ofili, or Thornton Dial, it's simply one painting within a much larger tradition. We're all standing on the shoulders of others.





The Owls Are Not What They Seem (2018-19) 14 x 16 in.
Alkyd house paint, spray, oil stick on canvas

AP: Much of abstraction’s more than 100-year history has been associated with the quest for an autographic “style”, an inimitable approach to the canvas that distinguishes one artist from the next. Although I see commonalities between paintings, your works seem to embrace “styleless-ness”. What do you think are the roles played by style and technique in your work and in contemporary abstraction?

RB: I’ve always admired artists who give themselves the liberty to move around stylistically and who are truly involved in investigating what Painting can be. Since you’ve looked at my website, you see that I’ve moved from abstraction to a cartoon-like narrative series and back to abstraction. It’s very important to commit to a field of play (aka, idea) for a number of years, with a set of variables that makes one’s terms of engagement clear. I respect the integrity of each individual painting and am open to the process to see where the painting wants to go. Rather than having an agenda in advance, I rely on improvisation and my language to make something happen while building on my personal painting history.

As far as technique is concerned, I’ve always been fond of the phrase ‘necessity is the mother of invention’. Technique invents itself.

AP: I always tell my students “art is hard”. It’s kind of a joke, kind of not. Unlike a still-life comprised of fruits painted from observation, which has an end-point and a series of formal and technical problems that need to be solved by the artist (how do I make these lines and color seem like fruit?) abstraction has only self-imposed formal problems. There is no preconceived compositional end-point, only stopping points. From that point of view, abstraction is especially hard. How do you negotiate this? How does a work get started, and how do you make the decision to end it?

RB: Art is hard and that’s no joke! But there are ways to get going that take the weight off. For me, a painting can start anywhere and end anywhere. Often I’ll start by rolling on vertical up-and-down paint strokes as if I’m rolling out a wall. Sometimes I’ll just attach the paint skin that forms within the paint can because I need a particular color to continue working on a painting that’s already in progress. In this way, I take the pressure off starting a painting. I work on multiple paintings at the same time, which also lessens the pressure of focusing too much on one individual painting. A painting is complete when it answers all the questions it raises, both formally and content-wise.

Lauren Whearty: A sense of ease and immediacy are painting goals that feel like they take a lifetime to achieve, and I see those things in your painting in a way that expresses both bravado and shows great care. I think that's a tough balance to strike, and you achieve that while still having this really rich and physical material history on the canvas. Can you talk about arriving at that kind of impactful moment of a painting - whether that be a sense of totality or thinking about the 'final image' of a painting?

Rick Briggs: First of all, thank you, Lauren, for those comments. I spent a ton of time from my Tyler days at the original Barnes Foundation studying those early Matisse's. His paintings are full of confident strokes delivered in a relaxed manner that build solid compositions via color. I was in awe then and I continue to be in awe. So to double back for a second on Alan's question: our "style" becomes an amalgam of all these qualities of those who've gone before us that we admire and try to emulate. I think of qualities I'd like to have in my paintings and things I like to do that give me pleasure in the making. Instead of "bravado", which generally carries negative associations these days (wrongly, I think) for AbEx painters, I hope people see courage, economy, and freedom. I love risk-taking, which could also be mistaken for bravado. When I pick up a can of spray paint I never know quite what will happen: will the spray go where I want it to go?, will it sputter?, will it run?, but that's the excitement of it, the not knowing, and just trusting yourself. One problem I pursue is how to keep the process and risk-taking open all the way through to the end of the painting. The final image is a matter of getting the space, color, and rhythm right, and keeping it fresh.

LW: I think comedians and artists have so much in common, we're all using our energy and time to crafting experiences and reactions on a very personal level. I literally laugh out loud when I get to experience some of your paintings in person - from the conversation between tools and paint to the art historical relationships to the "I can't believe he did that!" moments. Can you talk about humor in you paintings and why that is such a strong element in your work?

RB: Ha! I do occasionally make myself laugh by surprising myself in the studio and I'm glad that somehow comes through. The thing comedians are great at is creating the set-up, which is a line of thinking (or field of play?) and then when you least expect it, they hit you with the unexpected punch line. For me, that idea of doing the unexpected is pretty exciting but without the pre-existing context of one's own language, it wouldn't make any sense. My earlier Painter Man series were narrative and intentionally darkly humorous but humor in abstraction is perhaps more subtle or absurd. BTW, it's funny you bring this up because when I was in 5th grade, I had pretty much narrowed down my possible future occupations to priest, artist, and comedian.



Wild Child (2010-19) 30 x 30 in.
Alkyd house paint, spray, oil stick, roller sleeve, stir stick on canvas



In the Beginning was The Garden (2016-19). 24 x 30 in.
Alkyd house paint, spray, oil stick, paint swatch on canvas

LW: Titles are so hard for me - and so I recognize in yours the ability to add something to the paintings - because their context can shift the original perception of the painting. Your titles add a sense of memory, narrative, imagery and/or word play to the paintings that I find really exciting. Can you talk about your process of titling artworks?

RB: Titles are hard for me too but generally they arrive just as the content becomes apparent. A title is another way into a painting and I try to choose one that doesn't foreclose multiple readings. I think of titles as completing the act of generosity or vulnerability that painting entails. I'm shooting for titles that are personal and poetic, and lately there have been a bunch that reference pop culture, but that have personal meaning for me. I paint to fulfill my creative need but also, since painting has an aspect that is philosophical, it becomes a meditation on my life, which the meditative nature of painting lends itself to so naturally. As I'm painting I'm thinking of the formal elements and things I'd like to do in the painting. As I proceed, I'm looking for a shift from that logical brain that knows how to make a painting to a more illogical, unconscious brain for some kind of transformation to happen. A fragment of an image may occur or something else about the process or color that might suggest the content. I recently took a singing class where we sang the 4-part harmony of the Beach Boys, who I love both harmonically and lyrically, and the songs we covered ended up as titles for paintings. One way or another, the personal always enters the work. It's unavoidable.



Acid Spring (2016-19) 30 x 36 in.
Alkyd house paint, spray, oil stick, roller sleeves on canvas



Wild as the Wind (2016) 24 x 30 in.
Alkyd house paint, spray, oil stick on canvas



Transmute (2016) 24 x 30 in.
Alkyd house paint, spray, oil stick, oil on canvas



Flash (2016). 24 x 30 in.
Alkyd house paint, oil stick, rags, on canvas



Don't Worry Baby (2019). 37 x 54 in.
Alkyd house paint, color swatches, spray, oil stick, oil on canvas



Bouquet for Mom (2017). 24 x 30 in.
Alkyd house paint, oil stick, on canvas



Door Number Three (2020). 12 x 9 in.
Acrylic house paint and paper towel on paper



Installation shot, American Academy of Arts and Letters, spring 2019

