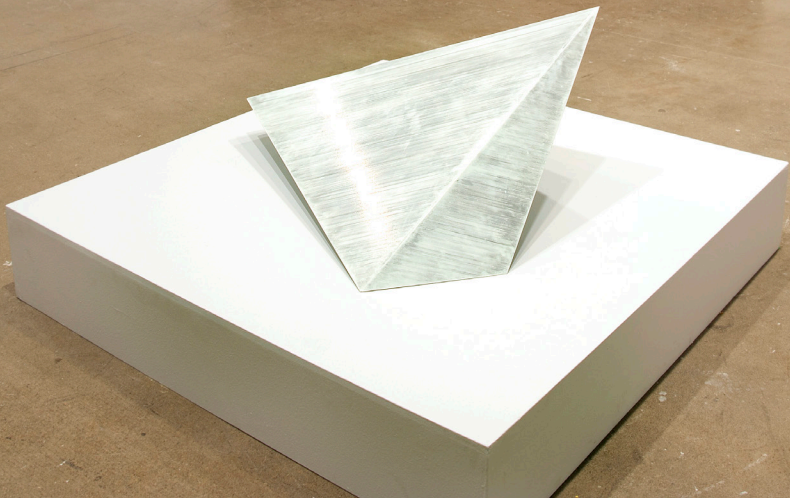


SPRING 2014
WHO'S AFRAID OF PURPLE, ORANGE AND GREEN?



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GALLERY

EXHIBITIONS | CENTRAL GALLERY

Who's Afraid of Purple, Orange and Green?

Krista Buecking, Arabella Campbell, Jessica Eaton, Marie Lannoo, Jennifer Marman and Daniel Borins, Luce Meunier, Sarah Nasby, Sasha Pierce, Jennifer Rose Sciarrino, and Celia Perrin Sidarous

Curated by Jennifer Matotek, Director/Curator

APRIL 25 TO JUNE 20, 2014

Jessica Eaton Artist Talk: Friday, April 25, 6:00 pm, RPL Film Theatre

Jennifer Marman and Daniel Borins Artist Talk: Wednesday, June 25, 6:00 pm, RPL Film Theatre

Opening Reception: Friday, April 25, 7:00 pm, Central Gallery

A Secondary Question

by Jennifer Matotek, Director/Curator

Between 1966 and 1969, just under a decade after his participation in the Emma Lake Artists' Workshop, American artist Barnett Newman painted a series of four large-scale abstract canvases entitled *Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue?*. The title was a sly reference to the 1962 Edward Albee play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolf?*, itself a sly reference to the song title "*Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?*" from Walt Disney's animation *Little Red Riding Hood*. *Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue?* is a visual pun as much as it is a taunting title. But it is also a passive aggressive threat, veiled as a question.



The history of modernist art is a narrative primarily created for, and by, men. Modern art critic Clement Greenberg – another Emma Lake Artists’ Workshop participant – has been vilified, decades later, for his sexism. The words used to describe modernist work are inherently masculine. Abstraction innovatively emerged from a venerable past towards some kind of endgame. Colour field paintings are large, uniform, flat, silent, and airless. Formalism, geometrical abstraction, and hard-edged paintings are rigorous and penetrating, celebrated for their perceived rejection of emotion. Key works are described as seminal. Male artists who worked in these movements spoke of strategies, hierarchies, taxonomies, vocabularies, and hegemonies of order and control.

Female artists worked, and continue to work, within this misogynistic culture. The female artists who were integral to the development of modernist art and not marginalized, such as the brilliant Saskatchewan-born painter Agnes Martin, compelled viewers to lean in to their work and objectively consider how their paintings pushed modern art discourses forward.

Less than a decade ago, in 2006, Canadian academic Mark Cheetham noted that abstraction, such as neo-formalism and neo-modernism, was failing to attract many female practitioners.¹ Now, in 2014, a neo-modernist aesthetic is notably evident in the practices of many female artists working across Canada. The intent of *Who’s Afraid of Purple, Orange and Green?* is to bring

together a breadth of works by some of these artists, to consider their works in relation to one another, and to consider their myriad responses to the hegemony of twentieth century formalism's historical narrative. These responses include alternative processes, conceptual and intuitive strategies, and particular aesthetic approaches.

From several feet away, Sasha Pierce's oil painting on linen, *Lake Superior Agate*, appears to be a mechanically-woven textile. But on close inspection, Pierce's work reveals itself to be hand-painted, radiating from a designated centre. Pierce creates her paintings by squeezing different colours of paint through pin-pricked holes in sandwich bags and pushing the beads together with a ruler, putting contrasting colours next to one another along pencil-sketched geometries. The craftsmanship of the work is seductive and mesmerizing, and the surface terrain is the result of hours of applications along compositions calculated from mathematical tessellations.

Sculptor Jennifer Rose Sciarrino's practice is similarly grounded in illusion, and like Pierce's work, the material qualities of Sciarrino's sculptures are a part of what make them so visually seductive. The perceived materials used in her sculptures often are not what they seem and in the case of the wall-mounted *Folded Facet*, steel is primed and hand drawn with thin layers of bronze using a metal point technique. Sciarrino frequently determines the preliminary geometries of her sculptures using a computer rendering



program. Light and shadow are as critically considered in the construction of Sciarrino's sculptures as the materials.

Illusion is likewise critical to the colour photographs produced by Regina-born artist Jessica Eaton. Eaton's photographic interest for many years now has been the cube, which features so prominently in Minimalist sculpture, and the square, which features so prominently in Constructivist painting. The cubes and forms featured in the pieces from her *Cfaal (Cubes for Albers and LeWitt)* series are, in actual fact, grey – not wildly coloured as her images would suggest. Eaton uses a tripartite additive colour process to photograph her works, which involves repeatedly photographing the cubes using the same negative, placing different coloured filters over her lens for each exposure. Eaton's manipulation of colour is a reminder that visual perception is entirely contextual.

The graphic, boldly coloured shapes mounted on Sarah Nasby's sculptures, collectively titled *Once More With Feeling*, hang on a white metal display grid, referencing the aesthetics of late twentieth century consumer culture. The shapes that hang off the grid frequently appear in the graphic design of commercial objects as a strategy to convey positive feelings and emphasis. But here, displaced from commercial objects and text, the swooshes, triangles and other closed figures simply speak for themselves on a blank commercial and compositional plane.

Krista Buecking's artistic concerns include the legacies of abstract and conceptual art, and like Nasby, Buecking has an interest in the contingent qualities of consumer culture. *WE THING (leverage island)* is best described in concrete terms, as a piece that brings together a tropical plant, a riser covered in carpet, a triangular sculpture covered in red wipeable vinyl, and a small whiteboard that reads: "POSTULATE 1: TIME IS MONEY. POSTULATE 2: KNOWLEDGE IS POWER." This declaration and the title of the work serve as a reminder that the zeitgeist of capitalist society is "things" and arrangements of things.

Arabella Campbell also uses readymade objects – including tarps, books, and fruit – and applies a conceptual approach to produce works with a stark visual simplicity. Campbell is interested in abstraction in general, and geometric formalism in particular. Her practice is largely embedded in the studio, and in the notion of the gallery as white cube – not unlike the practices of Eaton and Celia Perrin Sidarous. The gallery's white wall is the stated third component of *Triptych*'s two grey tarps stretched over frames, acting as a ground for the figures which are Campbell's monochromes – a nod to the legacy of artist Elsworth Kelly. Campbell's *Book* and *Gradient* also utilize everyday items to create art objects that are at once concrete and abstract. The modernist interest in rearranging common materials to create poetic configurations, as in Campbell's photographs, is also evident in the work of Celia Perrin Sidarous. The subjects of her photographic series *Les Choses* are objects which range from constructed geometric forms, to colours and patterns, to everyday objects



like chairs and mirrors. Sidarous' work isn't so clearly about abstraction, or formalism, or geometries as it is about what it means to make a still life using an internal, associative logic. The repetition of objects and patterns throughout various images in the series create a kind of uncanny vocabulary.

Marie Lannoo and Luce Meunier both use the act of folding to consider surface and flatness – one of the primary preoccupations of modernist artists. The grid relief composition that is the material surface of Lannoo's monochrome, *Black Square*, was created by folding and unfolding a piece of mineral powder paper covered in black acrylic paint. The compositions of Meunier's *Figure Semblable* series are comprised of more chaotic visual intersections, as a folded piece of paper is etched and printed, floating on a blank background, to form several portraits of compressed space.

The title of Jennifer Marman and Daniel Borins' *Pavilion of the Blind* is a visual pun and a sly reference to H.G. Wells' 1939 text *The Country of the Blind*. The imposing structure of colourful hanging blinds is still and silent until a viewer triggers the motion detector and the kinetic piece cycles through a series of constantly changing abstract compositions. Although Marman and Borins typically characterize themselves as conceptual artists, *Pavilion of the Blind* looks back at the legacies of Constructivism as well as Abstract Expressionism. As Marman and Borins' collaborative projects consistently consider modernity using a wide variety of media, it follows that the kinetics

of the work challenge the notion that art historical movements and ideas can be still or fixed. The piece literally does not function unless the viewer is cognizant of how looking at art demands corporeal experience.

The works of *Who's Afraid of Purple, Orange and Green?* embrace the aesthetic potential of dreaminess after the wake of high modernism, while simultaneously grappling with the difficult question of what it means to make art in the twenty-first century as a female artist, after the twentieth century's declaration of the death of the (male) author. Is everything in contemporary art just a foundational return? Is the narrative of twentieth century art history just a series of choreographed tableaux, unworthy of artistic reconsideration – unless that reconsideration is deftly critical? Is the future of a contemporary art that dares to reflect on past aesthetics condemned to become a calculated endgame of permutations? Are these pejorative questions, or questions worth asking?

Women tend to ask more questions than men, and tend to articulate as questions, what should be statements of fact.

¹ Mark Cheetham, *Abstract Art Against Autonomy: Infection, Resistance and Cure since the '60s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 23.

CREDITS

EXHIBITION VIEW

Photo: University of Regina Photography Department

JENNIFER MARMAN AND DANIEL BORINS *Pavilion of the Blind*, 2013, mechanized vertical blinds, shades, and panel systems (custom coloured), motors, microcontroller

Photo: University of Regina Photography Department

MARIE LANNOO *Firefly*, 2013, acrylic on panel

Photo: University of Regina Photography Department

JESSICA EATON *cfaal 312, cfaal 314, cfaal 315*, 2013, archival pigment prints

Photo: University of Regina Photography Department



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Sunday 12:00 pm to 5:00 pm
Closed statutory holidays

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