STRUCTURE AND DISRUPTION:
A DETAILED STUDY OF COMBINING THE MECHANICS OF WEAVING
WITH THE FLUIDITY OF ORGANIC FORMS

A thesis submitted to the College of the Arts
of Kent State University in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Masters of Arts

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December, 2013
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I’d like to take this opportunity to thank J.R., my husband, who has provided support and encouragement and a steadying presence through the years of graduate school, and to Willow and Ash I was grateful for your company. I want to thank my friends for their positive impact, in particular Joan for the long walks, Heather for being a grammar hero, and Lauren for keeping me on schedule, and my family for entertaining the kids on long visits. I’d like to thank the faculty of the School of Art for stimulating conversations during my graduate studies and in particular Janice, my academic advisor, for challenging me.

Thank you
Weaving holds a fascination for me in that it requires the interlacing of many rules and established systems to transform a field of singular yarns into a stable structure. On the loom intersecting vertical and horizontal threads follow an orderly rhythm and are transformed into a patterned whole, a woven matrix. As an artist, I am always interested in how to inject the personal and intuitive into the regularity of systems, and with this body of work, I do this primarily by introducing what I refer to as disruption. Responding to the flat, loom-controlled patterning that is used to structure the field, I introduce value fluctuations in the threads. This irregularity generates a disruption at two levels: it creates a dimensionality that affects our perception of the constructed pattern, and the smooth value transitions of the interlaced threads are fixed with patterning. My thesis, titled “Structure and Disruption,” consists of six woven pieces, a body of artwork that employs a system of balancing the mechanical and the organic.

Each of the six panels begins as two separate but related paintings done on a field of un-woven linen yarns using curved abstract shapes reminiscent of tulip or onion bulbs. Each painting is distinct yet related. They depict shapes inspired by one original image and appear as either zoomed in or zoomed out views of that image. This is done to imply a detailed study, either scientific or theoretical about movement and gesture, following themes of organic curves, arching shapes and gestural lines. The imagery is painted with a monochromatic palette, which imparts an illusionistic movement of shadow and light to the lines. By reducing my images to tones of black and white, I can focus on the physical concreteness of the object, on the relationship of contrast and texture, and on illusion and flat patterning. I can also focus on the continuity of the
images so that when viewed as a collection they will appear as fragments of a larger whole. After the paintings are completed, the threads are united by weaving, physically combining two paintings into one. I use a weave structure of geometric rectangles to merge the painted fields together. This creates a complex network out of the two images, which are partially revealed and obscured, as a result of the intersecting layers and creates final images that look like they have folds and dimensional interruptions, giving them an animated quality. Here I see a parallel between the mutability of nature and my own inquiry into injecting disruption. Like nature, weaving is a matrix of systems, rhythms, patterning, and geometry, but whereas nature is always in a state of transition, the mechanical structures I use are pre-programmed and locked into a set system. By injecting my paintings, which are initially complete, with a weave structure, which is always regular, the combination creates a quality of disruption and order, mirroring the transition and systems of nature.

Imbedding one image into another through the repetitive mechanical steadiness of weaving casts the weave structure into polarizing roles of both joiner and disruptor. While weaving the images together makes them more concrete in space, it also imbues them with the illusion of transparency and multidimensionality that they did not have before. In *Flame* (figure 1), for example, this illusion of transparency imparts the quality of one image appearing through another, similar to viewing two overlapping pixilated images. With *Carried* (figure 2), a long panel of two similarly shaped silhouettes, the pixilation of the images is used to beautiful effect where the silhouettes overlap and their missing pixels, or disrupted areas, are filled by the presence of the other and become
solid, giving their interaction a poignancy it would not have had without that illusion of transparency.

This geometric disruption of the paintings, such as in *Honey* (figure 3), which is a long panel of overlapping gradating gray streams, creates a doubling effect at the contours of the imagery, reminiscent of shadow play. The rectangles stamp the visual field with a strong grid, a rhythmic network that emphasizes the physical presence of the woven object while simultaneously acting as building blocks of a multidimensional picture plane. The blocks both obscure and reveal, and as a result, themes of presence and absence run throughout this body of work. With *Tulip* (figure 4), a small panel, absence is both real and imagined. In this piece I sought to figuratively peel away a layer and literally expose an underlying structure. By creating two paintings, each one reminiscent of a tulip bloom, and leaving a large area in one layer unpainted, the structural joining of the two layers creates the illusion of absence. The joining structure of the two layers never varies, but leaving one layer mostly unpainted visually amplifies the weave structure, revealing a presence and implying an absence, much like removing a layer of skin and exposing the underlying structural network. Fragmenting the images with structural cells make some of the pieces comparable to the experience of viewing a tissue sample through a microscope. This is particularly true of *Angel* (figure 5), which is a small panel of undulating amoebic like forms. Disrupting the organic with mechanically structured patterning creates the cellular grid in my work. However, as can be seen in *Away* (figure 6), the presence of organic movement in my
paintings in turn disrupts the visual patterning of the weave, challenging the flatness and repetition of the structure.

At first glance, the pieces in this series then appear to emphasize illusionistic transformation through the use of fluctuating contours and subtle lines of translucent forms, all of which appear to be viewed through a pixilated prism of squares. However, closer inspection reveals a complex system of woven grids composed of painted yarns. To exhibit them (figure 7), I present them away from the wall, mounted on armatures that allow the physicality of the woven structure to be reinforced by allowing air to circulate around the panels. Exhibited in this way, they appear to float slightly in space, suggesting a transition from a two-dimensional viewing experience of wall-hung art to a three-dimensional experience of looking into structures—structures, hanging in space, mechanical in construction, and formed through a delicate balance of disruption and cohesion.
Figure 1
Flame
23” x 18”
Figure 2
*Carried*
23” x 50”
Figure 3
Honey
23” x 50”
Figure 4
Tulip
23” x 23”
Figure 5
Angel
23” x 23”
Figure 6
Away
23” x 50”
Figure 7
Exhibit
Interior of gallery during exhibition of “Structure and Disruption”