Modes and Monikers

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Abstract

My work reflects the various modes of making in which I engage: painting and drawing, alongside playing of the violin, cooking, impromptu rhyming in English and Russian, the manipulation of recorded sounds, the movement of my body, and collaborating with other artists, musicians and dancers. I investigate the material narrative that takes place in my painting and drawing. This includes the marinating and cooking of different oils, pigments, and balsams as they are applied to different kinds of surfaces. Recently I have painted on linen, plastic shower curtains, window curtains, blankets, fencing, different types of paper, and most recently dry wall. I believe that an engagement with these surfaces inform the way I approach my painting. I believe that the kind of play, thinking, and processing that takes place in my painting is reflected in my other approaches to making. I have assumed different personae. These personas have been named. These monikers are attributed to each mode of making.
Dedication

This is dedicated to my Yelena Podgorny; my mother, Genya Vaks; my grandmother, and Anna Podgorny; my sister. They are the most important people in my life. I also dedicate this work to the memory of my grandfather Mendel Vaks.
Acknowledgments

Dear Suzanne
Thank you so much for making me feel welcome. You have been an endless wealth of knowledge for me.

Dear Laura,
Thank you for always making connections, and for helping me find the language to help describe what I am doing. My ideas on fluency and fragmentation have been the threads of my thoughts.

Dear Ann,
Thank you for your encouragement to tap into my childhood, for helping me get on the right path to find my form, and for your endless wisdom.

Dear Michael,
Thank you for bringing forth many questions. I feel a bit smarter every time I get to talk with you. Also thank you for your spirit and energy, it is contagious.

Dear Committee, You have played a major role in my growth as an artist and as a human being.

I also need to thank Alison Crocetta, Dave Covey, George Rush, and MJ Bole. Along with my peers such as Lauren Whearty, Stephanie West, Mike Ambron, Evan Dawson, Emi Inoue, Nick Bontrager, and Rachel Haberling. You all have contributed to my experience in a meaningful way.
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ART
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Chapter 1: A Description Of A Process Of A Painting

My most recent work on drywall is physically fragmented. Pieces of sheet rock are broken by me, the edge rough, the surface scraped raw until the plaster, fiberglass, and gypsum powder are exposed. I then lay them on the floor, and take out something that looks like a surgical tube, place one end into a glass jar of water mixed with soap, walnut ink, pigment, or fabric dyes. Foam bubbles come out of the tube and stain the surface of the drywall. I then cook up rabbit skin glue and seal the surface before applying layers of walnut oil alone or mixed with paint. Followed by the application of balsam, balsam mixed with spike lavender, and sometimes sun thickened walnut oil. Sometimes scented oils such as clove, or geranium are applied. I feel that the next step is to take these objects off the wall. I will use corners, ceilings, and floor. I will stack forms and objects on top of each other. I will address gravity and effervescence through touch, seeing and perceiving. This urge to build into space has been present within the paintings themselves. Infrastructure has showed up in my work, in the form of a gridded line layered over it self. I can orchestrate my surfaces and painted objects in a way where I can literally engulf by creating an environment that is referencing something internal.
This new physicality will still be a form of painting, and drawing through space, but it will adopt the visual, tactile, and olfactory presence with the way my materials are marinated cooked and applied.

I will use corners, ceilings, and floor. I will stack forms and objects on top of each other. I will address gravity and effervescence through touch, seeing and perceiving. This urge to build into space has been present within the paintings themselves.

I am facilitating an exploration along with material narrative and the narrative that is influenced by thoughts on color, response to surroundings, people, weather, scent, food, and time. I have urges to explore other practices and ways of thinking. In an attempt to organize my different practices and the thoughts surrounding them I have fragmented my self into different personas. I am not really split into five people. I am one person who happens to engage in many thoughts and actions. I have attributed monikers to each mode of making. 3axap Bakc (Zachar Vaks) written in Cyrillic represents my painting practice, and my playing of the violin. Zaktion represents my channeling of child like movement. BeaRaware is my title when I choose to engage in impromptu rhyming. Paint Conductor is linked to the part of me that yearns to collaborate. I will refer to these different monikers through out the thesis.
Chapter 2: Painting, Playing, Writing, Thinking, Marinating and Cooking

My most recent work includes taking my comforter of three years, nailing it into a wall, cutting the silky surface and exposing the innards. I then mixed soapy water with yellow pigment, dipping a brush and flinging the material in a calligraphic pitch. A few weeks ago I layered a piece of translucent fabric over a green window curtain. I then applied water and soap so that the translucent fabric becomes attached to the window curtain. I added some marks with walnut ink. I then applied rabbit skin glue to some parts of the translucent fabric to the window curtain so that the window curtain showed through. I left other parts alone, so they don’t attach and have an air to them.

A few months ago I made a painting that was constructed by the stretching of spandex over a 36” x 39” frame. I then took a piece of linen that doesn’t quite fit the stretcher, and connected it to two sides. I then pulled it over the spandex, and applied rabbit skin glue. The result is a painting that has two surfaces. The linen is taking up most of the space, but the edges are the exposed spandex. The edge of the linen is exposed with its entire weave, and loose string spread over the dancer’s fabric. Once the rabbit skin glue dried, I laid down a piece of scrim over the painting and proceeded to apply different colored fabric dye mixed with soap and water over the linen and dancer’s fabric. I then removed the scrim, and
what was left was the stain of my mark mediated by the scrim. I know that this moment in my process was influenced by the set design I created in February. The backdrops I painted were 3 large pieces of muslin, and 2 large pieces of organza. I used soap water mixed with fabric dye, and was quickly noticed the staining on the wall behind them. I left the stain on the wall of my studio for a few weeks, and eventually had the idea to incorporate it in my process of making painting. After removing organza I mixed soapy water with dye in a bottle, placed a straw into it and began to blow until bubbles foamed out of the bottle and began spreading over the painting. After the bubbles popped the marks of their outlines were imprinted onto the surface. My next step was to cover the surface with walnut oil. Once the walnut oil dried I began mixing oil paint into it. The first colors which I mixed were trans sepia, and trans oxide, a beautiful rusty earth color that has a reddish orange glow once it spreads. Then I added Egyptian violet. The next day I applied genuine ivory black, and began pushing that paint around a small brush and a rubber tool, creating straight lines intersecting each other, creating grid like forms, or forms referencing some kind of man-made architectural structure. The next step was to pour a mixture of vermilion, cadmium orange, and cadmium red mixed with walnut oil over the genuine ivory.
The effect was a nebulous spreading over the structural forms. The imagery evoked was something incendiary.

Figure 1 "Incendiary Real and Recorded Time", 36" x 39", soap water, fabric dye, oil, on linen over organza, 2011
Chapter 3: Material Narrative, Subject Narrative

I want to address that the fact the fire and structure in the painting I just described has been explored in 14 previous works, mostly on dry wall, paper, and plastic. I have recently noticed that when I am painting these works, the beginning stage of the painting is usually dictated by my physical engagement with the surface and material exploration. It is only when the painting gets a few sessions on it that the visual narrative and its influences begin to take place. The straight line and the reference to something burning, or after it has finished burning began appearing in the drywall pieces. I know that I am interested in fire because it lightens and darkens at the same time, but that recognition did not take place until the most recent painting was made. I know that I have recently been looking back to the certain passages in Andrei Tarkovsky films, and am now conscious of the fact that those passages are playing a role in the vision in my painting. I am drawn to someone like Tarkovsky, or Maya Deren because of the kind of timing that is present in their films. Tarkovsky is also an influence in the presence of the incendiary. The idea of adhering the linen on top of the spandex came to me from thinking about how I begin paintings. When painting on stretched canvas or linen, the beginning was the moment I applied the rabbit skin glue. For some reason the stretching of the canvas or linen over the
stretcher was categorized as a preparatory stage, not really the beginning. When
I began painting on the pieces of drywall, the beginning was marked when I
scored and broke the piece I needed. So I kept that in mind when I approached
my most recent painting on the linen collaged onto the spandex.

The painting on glossy photo transfer paper began with me drawing on the
back with marker and bold point pen. I then added scented oil, which triggered a
chromatographic reaction, causing the ink and marker to spread and change
color. It also ended up soaking into the glossy side of the paper. Afterwards I
proceeded to apply genuine ivory black, trans sepia, trans red oxide, and
remnants of vermilion paint mixed with walnut oil over the glossy surface. The oil
paint was worked into the shiny surface. The result is a depth activated by the
seeping of the nebulous spreading of the pen and marker the gloss exposed,
surrounded by the oil paint on top of the surface.

Figure 2 "Incendiary Infrastructure", 23" x 27", ink, oil, on mylar, 2011
Chapter 4: Color

The mixture of trans sepia with trans oxide, the mixture of Indian yellow with genuine ivory black, Florentine lake, Egyptian blue, some Flemish white, and vermillion. Sometimes one color is mixed and applied to all of the paintings simultaneously, other times it was mixed and applied to just one painting that day. Although color has a narrative quality in my work, I believe that it is unpredictable. My personal approach to color is dictated by the fact that I can’t understand color. I know how I react to it. I remember moments in detail in which I can describe a color and its effect. Yet I cannot say that I know how to control color. I appreciate an attempt to understand color, and can enjoy some etudes that go along with studying color, but I honestly cannot believe that they will help you know what to do with color. I come to color through my material and subject narrative. What my materials are stays true to the color they embody. I use beet juice for its surface, richness, body, and because its color is something that feels internal to me. My idea an internal space is depicted with the color provided by a beet.
The surface on which the beet juice is painted also contributes to the material narrative of the color.

Figure 3 "Kindled Kindling", 27"x 33", soap water, fabric dye, beet, oil on scraped and carved drywall, 2011
Chapter 5: Etude

The idea of “etude” plays an important role in my work. Etude is a French word for study. I learned the word as a child learning the violin. Now I never really made sketches for a specific painting, but I have drawings, collages, and other constructions that are made in my studio simultaneously with the paintings. Last year I had the shaped canvas that ended up soaking up the stray brush strokes between paintings. Most recently I have made constructions using the debris from the drywall, combined with stray window net, and tissue paper glued together. I also have a piece with paper attached to a plastic trash bag, which on which I am painting with oil. These etudes have a different kind of speed to them, and I am able to be more daring with how I use materials. Sometimes if an etude is up long enough, I start recognizing it as a work within itself. I find this very interesting, like I find musical etudes to be just as good as finished compositions.
Chapter 6: Fragments as Wholes, Wholes as Fragments

This next passage has a few grammatical fragments. I find this to be a good omen. My thoughts on the fragment being referenced in the material narrative, the dry wall referencing fragments from frescoes, yet each fragmented piece is painted as an individual painting. Once those paintings are placed over each other, stacked, or otherwise, a certain narrative begins to take place. It is informative to create a dialogue between my past and current thoughts. Old processes involving material or ritual can be used, with different thoughts, while looking at older work can trigger older processes to be actualized in new ways.

This dialogue with current and old, echoing the idea of fragment and whole. The practice of looking at older work along with the newer work, opening up older ideas and revisiting them in newly informed forms. Taking marinated drawings and re engaging with them in a new way. New meaning from engaging with our past. If we take our memories and experiences, there is a wholeness to them, yet we remember them as fragments. Our experiences can be whole or fragmented, current in dialogue with the past. Putting the dry wall pieces together, or stacking them. This thinking in fragments helps me define the relationship between current and past thoughts and processes. Have been
cutting drawings for quite some time and when I am not, the forms within the edges of my canvasses echoed those of the cuts.

The shapes of the actual surfaces are fragmented. I can put certain ones together to see direct or subtle connections. Essentially I am taking these fragments and treating them as a whole.

Figure 4 "Fragment As Whole", various sizes, soap water, fabric dye, oil on scraped drywall, 2011

Putting the elongated, rectangular ones against the wall on bottom, as base.

Taking the shaped pieces and placing them in clusters. There is linearity in forms, color. Broken linoleum stacked on frescoes. Continues thought,
segmented thought. New shapes, same environment. As fragments treated whole, getting to the whole through fragmentation. The fragmentation is more defined where before it wasn’t necessarily in my thoughts. Another layer of understanding, when you see trajectory of your work. The visual language, material narratives, shaped by new thought, but still connecting to previous thoughts and makings. Narrative of material really lends itself to fragmentation. Drywall can get broken easily, fragile frescoes. Connecting to history, how they are preserved.
Chapter 7: Fluency in Language, Painting, Sound and Movement

I have been academically trained as a painter. If we begin with my undergrad education, add the three years after graduation, and include my painting experience up until today. That is a 10-year painting learning curve. This is probably why I feel like my ideas stem out of painting. I feel like I can say that there is a level of fluency within my making as one who engages with painting and drawing. The same can be said about my experience with the English language. I feel that I am pretty fluent in the English language although writing this thesis may prove me wrong. Now when I think back to my experience as a child.

My mother began teaching me the violin when I was 5 years old. For the next 5 years the violin was my primary discipline. I would always find myself drawing, but I practiced the violin for hours. However because the violin was not something I chose, eventually, after moving to America I decided to stop playing. The moment before I quit I achieved a certain level of fluency. However once I stopped playing, I ended up forgetting, and losing a lot of the technical skill.

When I pick up the violin now, the fluency is reflected in my use of vibrato, and the gusto of my sound, but the speed and ability to hit high notes is affected
by the loss of time. I am less fluent in my violin playing than I am in my painting, just like I am less fluent in my use of the Russian language as opposed to English. However I am interested in the dialogue between these modes of making and their various levels of fluency. I have ideas that are influenced by my improvisational playing on my violin. This improvisation is echoed in moments in my painting, my performed actions, collaborations, and spontaneous rhyme.
Chapter 8: BeaRaware: Impromptu Rhyming as Making

I engage in spontaneous rhyme in English and Russian. Again, the kind of searching that takes place when I let the words come out can reflect the way that I work out a painting or a drawing.

For Example: (I will now spontaneously rhyme)

“The written form is different from, a contained spitting oral norm. No fabric weave, just textural sounds, reflected in the lathered nouns, perhaps mathematically the square of rounds. Em Bear Ass Mint is always present, through space in out of instilled present.”

Contorting verbiage to make it work.

(I will now resume normal speak)

When I was three years I would always say. “Nagami budim mi, budim mi nagami” Which in Russian translates to “Legs we will be, We will be legs.” believe that that little phrase is the root for my poetic verbal play.
Chapter 9: Paint Conductor: Collaboration and Choreography

Paint Conductor yearns to collaborate. The collaborations explore the modes of making differently from how I operate in the privacy of my studio space, or any other situation where I am deep in thought. I am interested in performance being another way to experience the olfactory, gastronomic, haptic, audio, and visual qualities present in my work. There is a dialogue between the making that takes place in my studio and my performed actions. My ideas about performance come from the thinking, processing, playing, writing, marinating and cooking that takes place in my studio. I am still marinating on how I would perform an attempt to synthesize my making live.

My painting “Real Response Ability”, began as a 5.6’ x 5.9’, (my height and wingspan) stretched linen. The first marks were painted with beet juice. This was done outside, while my friend Tristen Claus Seufert orchestrated over 30 musicians to play simultaneously. I was painting in response to the sound, sometimes drumming on the canvas to the rhythm. Another collaborative action between Tristen and myself surrounded this painting. Tristen brought his music and sound equipment to my studio space. I took out the painting and set up a camera that frames the painting some space in front of it, and Tristen was to the side wearing my gaudy teal windbreaker. I then walked over to the canvas and
began drumming with a big brush. This sound was recorded by Tristen and then played back and altered, as I continued to respond live. There is an interesting moment when I transition from the drumming, which leaves a direct mark on the wet surface, to the gentle brushing that softens the immediacy of the thump. At some point I briefly let BeaRaware come out.

![Image of painting](image)

Figure 5 "Real Response Ability", 5.6' x 5.9', beet juice, oil on linen, 2010

I have noticed that when I am painting live in front of people it tends to be limited to one idea of what painting is. That idea of painting is very kinetic and gestural. Those quick and gestural moments do exist in my paintings when I am
alone in the studio, but they are accompanied by other moments that are slow, fast, urgent, calm, clear, hesitant, serious, and fun.

In February I made the set design for Betsy Miller. An MFA candidate in dance. This was Betsy’s thesis project, and she chose to recreate La Parade. La Parade was first put on in 1915. Directed by Jean Cocteau, with a set design by Picasso, and music by Satie.¹ a 15 minute performance which celebrated and critiqued France, The United States, and that moment in history. Betsy wanted to take that idea, which was an important and revolutionary moment in the history of dance. Betsy wanted to adapt La Parade to a Midwestern setting. My job with the set design was to bring forward my response to the Columbus Ohio, landscape. I paid attention to the effect of The Ohio State University that is so very present in Columbus. I also was responding to the music of Satie.

Figure 6 Image still from "La Parade" rehearsal, 2011

¹"Deborah Menaker Rothschild, Philip Wilson Publishers, Picasso’s Parade, May 2003
Recently I performed in “Hole Parts”, with Dan Harvey. This was Dan’s idea, the way he sees me, and our relationship, how we have gotten to know each other. This is the trigger for the performed action that will take place. My role has been to respond, and try to embody Dan’s vision, but also bring my own modes of thinking and making. Before Dan and I began rehearsing I a few chosen recordings of me either singing, documenting ideas, rhyming, playing the violin, etcetera. He decided to have me play my violin after seeing my performance for Maree. The way I used my violin was in response to Dan’s interpretation of the recordings I sent him. Although we rehearsed a few times, there was always room left for improvisation.

Figure 7 Stills from "Hole Parts" performance, 2011
Chapter 10: Zaktion: Moving As A Way To Synthesize

My grandfather set up rings and a pull bar for me in Tashkent Uzbekistan. I would hang, place my legs over my head and rotate mid air when I was very young. I had the habit of climbing up, hooking my feet to the second to last, or last stair, grabbing the loops and leaning until I was fully stretched and bowing with my chest outward. I would spend some time in this position staring at the floor and taking in the sensation of being suspended in space. It is to no surprise that had I taken a liking to engaging in martial arts. I have had some official training, but most of it was formed in my toddler years, doing slow motion jump kicks in the lake water. Water played an important role in the training of Zaktion. I remember vivid physical play inside the black sea, in Odessa. Or kicking up the sand in the Caribbean and imagining it is an explosive force that I have to dive away from, or am that I am being flown by it. I also remember floating with my legs crossed in a meditative position under the water in a lake in the Ural Mountains. I am interested in continuing to investigate my recollection and then embodiment of the way I used to move as a child. I have been channeling this kind of playful movement as a way to synthesize the various modes of making. For example, I can pick up my violin, play a melody, and then begin to move in
an acrobatic way while still holding on to the instrument, creating a new kind of sound. In the same action I could transition to picking up the brush and begin painting. A painting which the mark or touch is influenced by the movement and the recent engagement with the violin.

In April I performed “Zaktion synthesizing 3axap” live. I got to experience structure in the form of the choreography in collaboration with Maree ReMalia. Maree is the dancer and choreographer who asked me to perform my action after seeing a documentation of it executed in my studio. This was an opportunity to re-experience the process of this action of embodying my child like movement, and combining it to my making with violin and painting. But by because I performed it live, it now takes on new meaning. I am happy to say that I was able to gauge the amount of structure needed, and how much needed to be in the moment. I found myself imagining a certain kind of engagement minutes before going out. I chose to actualize some of those ideas, and some were as imagined, and others not. But it was a very painterly moment, I had a basic sense, or idea, and once it is complete, it takes on new meaning.

The performance began with me walking in front of the stage during the intermission after the first performance. People were still talking the lights were on. I walked out and began to open the violin case, rosining bow, taking out violin, and fine-tuning. I then play the strings to confirm that they are in fact in tune. I then begin to hum and whistle a melody and then echoed that melody with
my violin. This beginning was thought about before hand. I had the melody in mind a few days before the opening night. I then began to improvise with the violin. Playing, simply, yet with full vibrato. Eventually I begin to scale down. I had an idea of how this would happen, but it changed every night. Eventually I play a rift that repeats, as I walk off stage, out of earshot. There is an interesting in between space of performance and non-performance. An intermission is a time to go to the bathroom, or discuss the performance that was just presented, with the lights specifically set, the house lights off, curtains drawn etc. Me coming in and performing during the intermission changed that environment. After the second dance, there was another intermission. I come back picking up the same tune I left playing. I then swiped with my bow as if aiming at a fly. this was Maree’s idea. I noticed that the change of attention within the audience. After the first swipe I walked towards the stairs while peeling away toward the climax of my violin playing. Then I jumped off the stairs and swiped my bow once again only this time in mid air. All of the sudden I had the crowd’s full attention. The intermission space became something else.

Maree had a few visions for me. She imagined me transitioning from playing the instrument, to swinging it in a fierce combative, child like way. The way she saw it in my video. With this, Maree imagined me moving as if I was playing tennis. This athletic take on my movement is not something I associate with my reasoning in moving this way, but taking it on and embodying the
movement has added another way to process. Maree also envisioned me interacting with another inanimate object. That object was a plastic water bottle. She asked me how I would engage with a water bottle. Without thinking too long I swung my bow fiercely at the bottle, stopping short of whacking it. All of the sudden I am tracing the contour of the bottle with the bow. Maree also imagined me holding the violin as if it is a mirror, and use my bow to comb my hair. I do not think I would ever engage those objects in that way, yet after doing it for the first time, I believed in her reasoning for asking me to do that. As soon as I believed that the bow made sense as a hairbrush, a feeling of reality seeped in to the action.

On the first night, some one yelled out, “Get it!”

Figure 8 Image still from "Zaktion Synthesizes 3axap" performance, 2011
Chapter 11: Writing, Thinking, Editing

I think that it is a natural progression for me to explore ideas through the form of video. Not only is it a way to document the various processes in my studio, but also I am able to compose them according to the way that I approach time. Editing in my video is a way to think, and visualize the way that I want to experience time. Video and sound editing is a material. My experience with materiality is underlined in painterly terms; the composition of moving images and sound to me is very similar to painting. One can layer, speed up, slow down, dilute, and muddy sound. Sound has a material. For me, editing is an opportunity to experience a painterly thinking. Video is another way to present my yearning to synthesize. The most recent footage I want to shoot is of Zaktion moving in front of a projected blue light. I already have footage of Zaktion using his acrobatic beginnings to transition from playing the violin to painting, in real and recorded time. It provides a framework for how a viewer may experience this. If I want to use that footage in a longer narrative, the viewer may want to see other moments where Zaktion moves. Perhaps I will shoot the leaping, stretching, and leaping on a bar, channeling the early moments of me staring down into the floor, completely pulled by gravity. I used video to document the cooking of food, writing, rhyming
in my bathtub, rants, material investigation in the studio, such as mixing of color, sprinkling of mica powder and the brushing of soapy water mixed with dye. A framed 50 mm lens creates an invented framework for the process. I try to document space that shows a timely moment, or a non-verbal place. Video is another way to think. The most recent video of me eating a beet and rhyming was a by-product of video I was shooting of my self-cooking food. All of the sudden I had the impulse to grab a beet, and bite into it, but that wasn’t all, because as soon as I did this I had a very urgent feeling to rhyme. The Paint Conductor was commissioned by 3axap to document the cooking of food, to compare it to the cooking that happens within the act of painting, but now he was documenting BeaRaware eating the by product of that cooking, and engaging in impromptu rhyme.

Chapter 12: Attempted Synthesis: Structure And Improvisation
Chapter 12: Attempted Synthesis: Structure & Improvisation

Structure, has began showing itself in my work in the form of synthesizing the violin playing with painting, rhyming, moving, and collaborating. For example, BeaRawe needs structure as a way to balance out the constant free styling. Bear aware should write more in his rhyme book. Zaktion can use choreography to set up a foundation to improvise in response to the structure provided. Improvisation plays an interesting role in my violin playing. I improvise, and then remember portions of the improvisations. This is similar with the rhyming every once in a while I channel or remember improved rhymes, or rhymes written a long time ago.

Improvisation plays a big role in my work. I am interested in exploring this along with some structural elements. I believe that structure has begun showing in my paintings direct straight lines drawn and painted over each other. Creating a grid like looking infrastructure. I just recently bought two different kind of tape. Rough electrical tape, and asphalt tape. I feel the need to attempt to use tape in my painting. Perhaps even assimilate it. I used to not respond well to seeing tape used as part of the painters’ vocabulary. I can attribute that to the same kind of reaction to geometric lines, or flat color applied in painting. I had certain material
beliefs. I like my color translucent, fresh, and completely unpredictable. I like my line human, and I like my touch to reflect all sorts of passage of time. However, in the last few months I have been seeing forms of infrastructure show up in my paintings.

Zachary Podgorny has to facilitate the different fragments. Monikers attributed to different ways to create. Zachary Podgorny is enrolled in The Ohio State University. Zachary Podgorny is not confident in his writing. He sometimes allows the others to take charge. In the last few months I have allowed 3axap, Zaktion, and most recently BeaRaware to lead forward, with backward reflection. These reflections of how my different modes of making were formed allow me to perceive the forms, which they will take on.
Chapter 13: Some Influences

Last year I made a painting “The Autumn Spectacular” in direct response to a poem “The Avocado” by Kendra De Colo. Kendra and I have a Ekhrastic kinship. She would send me her poetry and I would give her my response, while she would respond verbally to my paintings.

The Avocado

Today the avocado tastes less like avocado, more like a woman in a dress made of butter offering you a sip of her sleeve. You are hungry and devour the entire swath of it. And isn’t that a parable in itself, what happens when a gift is abused, the betrayal in her eyes as she breathes there in polished nakedness, your cream-soiled lips sputtering little apologies. Today is like that. The autumn spectacular, the what-we’ve-been-waiting-for, god spilling pitchers of his best air over us like a drunk host emptying his wine cellar. A day not quite earned, but lavished upon us,
each cell stocked with hurricane supplies
of sunlight, the kind that seems to trickle
through a traffic of leaves, ground under
pestle-tongues, a dog’s muscles sleeked
with it, streaming through the gasp
and slather, the rise and wreckage of all flesh-
born desire, into the avocado seed, its infinite
wisdom spiraled inside a wooden heart.
If only it could be swallowed, this entire
day canaled through the jaws, if only
this bouquet of fingernails and ghost-
organs could amount to something more
than missed days-at-the-beach. The windows
now are speaking into fruit bowls, the candles
are festive. We taste as we should, ourselves
coming home to ourselves, waiting in a single
lit room, the bird-language books spread out,
walls shaking like the beloved dead’s arms
around our born-again bodies, bathed
in goodness, absurd and our own.²

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² Kendra De Colo, The Avocado © Kendra De Colo, 2009
I read Kendra’s poem over and over, and couldn’t help being effected by the kind of sensation I felt, along with the imagery that it provided for me.

My interaction with Kendra was a very direct kind of influence. An influence that is fueled by a kinship between two people[. I feel that Kendra’s making as a poet is echoed by my pursuits as a painter.

Last year I was introduced to the films of Maya Deren. I was immediately struck by the sense of timing that is present in her images. I connect to how she comes into film from poetry. “ Seeing her film makes me wonder about poetry.
The idea that other modes of making like film, or painting, or sound can be poetic. “I was a poet before I was a film maker, and I was a very poor poet because I thought in terms of images. What existed as…essentially a visual experience in my mind. Poetry was an effort to put it into verbal terms. When I got a camera in my hand, it was like coming home! It was like doing what I always wanted to do without the need to translate it into a verbal form”\textsuperscript{3}

Her film “Meditation on Violence” has crucial influence on Zaktion’s exploration with movement. This is a fifteen minute long film with her friend doing practicing The Wu Tang School’s style of shadow boxing. We see him go through a few routines, with and without weapons, inside and outside. As with all of my work it is difficult for me to explain how it effected my thinking. But shortly after watching this film for the second time, I documented Zaktion Synthesizing 3axap in my studio. I played a passage with my violin, and went into swinging both the bow, and the violin as if they are weapons. I also incorporated an acrobatic playful movement showing some pone engaging in a phantom battle. I feel the phantom battle borrows from my ideas of shadow boxing, which is a form of an etude only it is a study that has to do with movement.

I can see how my explorations as Paint Conductor can be informed by the Gutai Movement. After Learning of them I sense their influence in the shaping of my future ideas. The way they thought of painting is a way to record an action, a moment in time is something that really resonates with me. I want to talk about

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{3} Transcribed from “In The Mirror of Maya Deren”, by Martina Kudláček © Zeitgeist Video, 2002}
Saburo Murakami, Kazuo Shiraga, Akira Kanayama, and Yasuo Sumi. I focus on these artists not just because of the performative element they bring to painting, but also because the result of these actions reflect their use of materials in a poetic way. The material narrative is infused assimilates the subject. I want to say that I relate to the Gutai artists more than I do with people like Jackson Pollock or Willem De Kooning. I have a hard time denying a connection between the Gutai painters and their relationship with the artists of post war modern art in the West. I believe that the Gutai influence can be seen in my material exploration with painting and drawing, along with my thoughts on performance.

I love the work of Kazuo Shiraga. One of the first members of Gutai Shiraga is known for painting with his feet while suspended by a rope. Color was one of the few elements that he controlled. I feel that my painting “Response Ability” related to some of Shiraga’s results of his process, even though his process is completely different, I feel that his sensitivity to material is an influence, along with how he focuses on the process.

Figure 10 Kazuo Shiraga, "Chimeisei Tetsutekisen, oil on canvas, 1961

Figure 11 Kazuo Shiraga, still of a painting being made, 1961

4 Marco Francioli, Gutai: Dipingere con il Tempo e lo Spazio / Painting with Time and Space, p.89-69, Silvana Publishing, 2011
Saburo Murakami is another huge influence on me. There have been a few moments where I took my Zaktion channeling and applied that action onto my painted works. Most recently I recorded my self breaking a painting on dry wall with my fist. I also really connect to Saburo’s freedom to just expose the process as the idea. Him moving through the paper is a painting actualized. The relics of that action or a recording of time.

Figure 12 Saburo Murakami, "Passage[Paper Break Through], 42 kraft paper sheets, performance view, The 2nd Gutai Art Exhibition, Ohara Hall, Tokyo, 1956
This work exemplifies how the artists in the Gutai movement used materials to distance themselves from the canvas. I really connect to the material narrative that evokes light and transparency.

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Figure 13 Yasuo Sumi, colors on metal net on stretcher canvas (color laid with objects and hands), 120 x 80 x 10 cm, 1958

Figure 14 Zachary Podgorny, tissue paper rabbit skin glue, and walnut oil on metal net, 33 x 27 in, 2010

Marco Francioli, Gutai: Dipingere con il Tempo e lo Spazio / Painting with Time and Space, p.96 Silvana Publishing, 2011
I also feel that there is an influence on some of the “Hard Times High Times artists such as Richard Van Buren, Peter Young, and Lynda Benglis. I believe the exploration of material narrative is very present with these painters in a way that resonates echoes of the Gutai Movement. Although it focuses in process. This is the kind of work that was painted when the phrase “Painting is Dead” was frequently spoken.

Figure 15 Richard Van Buren, Untitled, Polyester resin with pigment, approx, 60 x 12x 12in, 1970
Artists like Carolee Shneeman explored the performative in painting, connected it directly to the body. This is something we see in Gutai, and also with artists like Yves Klein, who happened to correspond with the Gutai artists in the late 1950s. I do believe that he tried to take painting to a new place. He did so with finding new ways to leave a mark, mediate the body. Along with exploring material, as we see with his creation the Klein Blue. He also shares that performative spirit of the Gutai painters. That spirit was shortly felt all over the world, from the Vienese Actionists, to the happenings in the United States. Artists like, Marina Abronovich, or John Cage and Robert Rauchenberg. Collaboration was a part of many these artists’ practice.

I can go on to continue and talk about many more influences of object makers who perform their processes. I must not forget the painters that deal strictly with marinated and cooked materials on a surface. I am moved by the paintings of Chaim Soutine, Joseph Mallord William Turner, Jean Fautrier, Francis Bacon, and Stanley Whitney, just to name a few. The way I use my materials, approach the use of space, layering, thoughts on color, or time, is very much influenced by these painters. Here are some visual comparisons of my work set next to my painting heroes.
3axap Bakc next to Chaim Soutine:

I look at Soutine as some one who is a kindred spirit in how he moves paint around. I see his influence on painters like De Buffet, or Fortrier. I am happy when my work can get to that visceral presence that I see in Soutine’s work.

Figure 16, Chaim Soutine, "View of Ceret" 74 x 75 cm, oil on canvas, 1922, Baltimore Museum of Art

Figure 17 3axap Bakc, "Memory of Smoked Grape Vine in Uzbekistan, 12 x 12 in, oil on linen, 2009
3axap Bakc next to Joseph Mallord William Turner:

I always loved Turner’s paintings but it wasn’t until this year, that I noticed his influence on how I approached the layering in my painting. He was also in mind when I was meditating on the incendiary in my work.

Figure 18 Joseph Mallord William Turner, "The Burning of The Houses of Parliament", 38 x 48 in, oil on canvas, 1834

Figure 19 3axap Bakc, "Thermo Dynamic", 34 x 26 in, fabric dye mixed with soap, oil on dry wall, 2011
3axap Bakc next to Francis Bacon:
Francis Bacon was a huge influence on me a while back. This painting was made while I was reading a book of his interviews with David Sylvester, although I didn’t notice the connection until much later.

Figure 20 Francis Bacon, "Two Figures", 152.5 x 116.6 cm, oil on canvas, 1953

Figure 21 3axap Bakc, "Khatera", 5.6 x 5.9 ft, oil on canvas, 2007
3axap Bakc next to Jean Fautrier:

Fautrier is important to me, his use of paper, layering, and painting on various surfaces is something I can glean from.

Figure 22 Jean Fautrier, "Tete D'Otage No.24, 35 x 27 cm, mixed media on paper laid down on canvas, 1964

Figure 23 3axap Bakc, "Figured", 33 x 23 in, soap, mixed with ink, water, charcoal, oil on paper, 2010
3axap Bakc next to Stanley Whitney:

Stanley Whitney has played a major role in helping me find my voice as a painter, and his thoughts on color as something you can’t control resonate with me to this day. Stanley Whitney is the artist who introduced me to the concept of time within a painting.

Figure 24 Stanley Whitney, untitled, 12 x 12 in, oil on linen, 2005

Figure 25 3axap Bakc, "Paintease", 12 x 12 in, oil on linen, 2009
Chapter 14: In Conclusion

I have taken on the role of curator and present my work in different ways. I am juxtaposing thoughts that are current along with the thoughts that have formed earlier. I need to engage with the present moment. Moments before writing I was in conversation with Paul Simmons, my friend, roommate and fellow maker. We discussed the dissolving of barriers, I am a painter, but I also engage with physical space. I have been exploring movement, paying attention to it with my body, and processing it with my mind. Right now I feel that I am predicting the next step to my work. A certain synthesis is taking place within my painting and drawing practice. I am incorporating different surfaces and different kinds of physical engagements to inform my overall process. The synthesis is being echoed in an attempt to bring together the different modes of making. This includes my painting, playing of the violin, bodily movement in space, rhyme, scented environments, performed actions and collaborations. Some of them go together very naturally as in “Zaktion Synthesizing 3axap. Others are better off as individual practices.
Appendix A: A Response

I wanted to share a response to my work by Michael Morris. Michael Morris is a PHD candidate in the Dance Department at The Ohio State University. Michael led a yoga class that I have taken 4 times since the winter quarter of last year. I found that my experiences in the class, and my conversations with Michael have been very significant in shaping my thoughts and making.

“Some of the supports seem found. There are more textures on these surfaces than just paint. The paint functions in different ways as my eye follows the colors and surfaces: at some point it seems primarily concerned with the trace of action, and I am pulled into the surface as an encounter with your action and the absence of your body from its trace; at other points, it becomes more representational, and recognizable forms seem to appear. In the drift between these modes of experience; between observing the traces of your actions and your absence in these traces, and my eyes adjusting to appearance of forms--I am left to navigate your role in these forms, the role of action in repetition, the role of repetition in recognition. And then my eye drifts again to paint-as-surface, paint-as-trace, and the images are lost again to the [sometimes] murky and muddy play of color and line. This disappearance of the recognizable is one way
that I see the "incendiary" at play in the paintings: what I recognized to be there dissolves as my eye follows your strokes to something else, a play of creation/destruction in the visual experience.

The paintings are dense, even the sparsest of them. I remember my experience of seeing your paintings in Betsy's piece, and how much more mobile I felt in my encounter of them. Their scale gave breathing room to your paint in a way that I had not encountered in your work before. In these paintings, I have to settle in; I can't move nimbly through them. I have to stand and look and look and look, and gradually my eye begins to follow forms and move through/over the surface of the paintings, and then they begin to do something with me. I can't take them in as a whole; there's too much to see. Instead, my eye has to meander gradually across the surface, and when I don't take this time, I can't "see" the paintings (too dense). In this sense, there's a necessary temporal quality to my experience of the paintings, one that calls to mind the conditions of their production. I think with other paintings it is easy to encounter the work as a finished form, which it in tension with the temporality of their production. The density of your paintings recalls the stages in which they are painted (or, perhaps not the particular stages in which they were painted, and more like the fact of their production over time).

Lastly, my experience with what I saw as recognizable forms: I saw tanks and buildings on fire, structures in various states of deconstruction. These were the scenes that came into and out of focus, that appeared and disappeared. The
paintings functioned in this way to re-present/remark/reiterate these scenes of destruction (and possibly war, if the tank image is to be taken literally); successionally, as my eye moved on to other modes of perception and these images faded from appearance (though never fully "disappeared"), the paintings functioned to unmake these scenes. I get dizzy in this moment, in which the act of making functions as both a re-making and unmaking of destruction. To what degree can unmaking and destruction be comparable? To what degree do these paintings function as a [visual] destruction of destruction?"
Appendix B: A Quick Afterthought

“Painting is both a verb and a noun.” ⁶ With this in mind I feel like I cannot choose whether my painting is more concerned with process, or with the final outcome.

⁶ From a conversation with Laura Lisbon
Bibliography


2) Kendra De Colo, *The Avocado*, © Kendra De Colo, 2009

3) Martina Kudlácek, “In The Mirror of Maya Deren”, © Zeitgeist Video, 2002


5) Conversation with Laura Lisbon, May 27, 2011