

FLAT FORM

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Flat form is an inquiry into concepts that explore surface relationships where visual perception prompts a tangible awareness of painting's objecthood in relation to our own body and the natural world. In a practice that wavers between human and material concerns, abstraction and monochrome paintings have become the foundation of a personal pursuit to re-blur the limitations and the boundaries of the traditional easel painting.

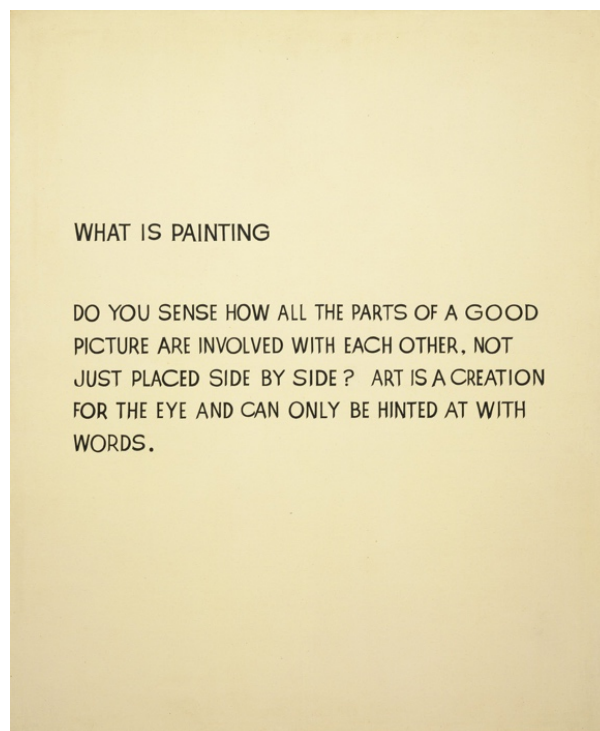
Working in spontaneous and investigational methodologies, I am conscious of a recognisable common physicality between object and Self and ultimately our space amongst all things. This exhibition requests viewers to comprehend the reality of art, the medium, and the materials that are presented to them. By building forms organically, the paintings aim to evoke their own reality by acknowledging the physical and abstract in the residue of a gesture. This inquiry approaches a series of paintings that I call 'bleed layered abstractions', where surface relationships are used to explore the tension of weight and gravity through layering and experimenting with flat form using studio-made tools as intermediaries between gesture and the transfer of pigment to ground.

In retrospect, the diptych *Untitled (Rectangles are lighter than squares)* was developed from the juncture of Colour Field and Dansaekhwa or Korean monochrome painting. In fact, there are many common formal qualities that unite Dansaekhwa, Color Field and Minimalist painters, some of which include: "simple, flat and repeated motifs made with reductive gestures"¹; a concern for spatial qualities; and a dependency on a range of processes including the staining of raw canvas, for example soak-satin and colour wash. Paintings that offer their own medium as subject point both inward to themselves and outward to their relationship with all other things. Work such as, *Untitled I (Deliberate Pictures Series)* and *Untitled II (Deliberate Pictures Series)* navigate constructed forms and space through various brushwork and stitching embedded together in abstract and monochromatic compositions. In 'Francis Bacon: Logic of Sensation' Giles Deleuze states that "the form and the ground lie on the same place of the surface, equally close to each other and to ourselves."² This reasoning can be recognised in the works: *Untitled (Hang)* where the double-sided canvas thrusts out from the wall and into the space of the viewer; and *Untitled (wall painting for Grey Street)* where the white paint retracts into and wraps around the wall it occupies as if not wanting to be seen at all.

¹ Simon Morely, "Dansaekhwa: Korean Monochrome Painting," *Third Text* 27, no. 2 (2013): 189-207.

² Gilles Deleuze, "Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation," London; New York;: Continuum, 2003.

Three smaller and arguably more approachable paintings in the exhibition, *Rectangles are lighter than squares (Dioxazine Purple) III*, *Rectangles are lighter than squares (Australian Sap Green)* and *Two Whites* “remain close at hand, like people we face in intimate conversation. They address the interpreter as collaborator and equal, as if viewer and artwork possess complementary physicalities (we too have bodies, faces, fronts, backs, mirrorings). We can become part of their tactile pictorial order...connecting us to the material world and engaging us in a consciousness of common physicality. That physicality is at one and the same time constructed and lived.”³ Inseparable from how the rhetoric of painting and the natural world coexists, the mutual capacity to simultaneously represent and embody the abstract and the physical in painting remains a poetic concept for my practice.



John Baldessari, What Is Painting, 1966-68, acrylic on canvas, 172.1 x 144.1cm. Gift of Donald L. Bryant, Jr. © 2020 John Baldessari.

Platform raises questions about painting's ontology - how the physical and the abstract are the basis for the 'nature' of painting and just as perplexing as nature itself. The visceral 'bleed layered abstractions' between fabric and gesture rest in a nebulous zone somewhere between subject and object - the human and the metaphysical. Painting is not only a 'live' entity that is capable of change and 'becoming', it has relationships, a common physicality with its 'viewers', and an objecthood that ultimately belongs to a place amongst all things – organic, metaphysical or otherwise. Whilst the practice-led research into Platform does not intend to answer a specific question, especially about the whys of painting, what it does offer is a few monochromatic, flat forms as a platform to jump off.

³ Richard Shiff, "Constructing Physicality," *Art Journal* 50, no.1 (1991): 42-47.