

# HYPERALLERGIC

ART • WEEKEND

## Navigating the Slippage Between Reality and Illusion

The architectonics of Leslie Wayne's structures exude impermanence and a poetic expression of loss.

Sharmistha Ray 3 days ago



Leslie Wayne, "Planetary" (2019), oil and acrylic on wood, 94 x 41-3/4 x 5 inches  
(all images © Leslie Wayne, all images courtesy the artist and courtesy Jack Shainman Gallery, New York)

*For a knowledge of intimacy, localization in the spaces of our intimacy is more urgent than determination of dates.*

— Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*

The titles of Leslie Wayne's paintings — "Planetary" (2019), "Heirloom" (2017), "Burning Down the House" (2018) — impart some clues as to what's been inside the artist's mind since her last solo exhibition, *Free Experience*, at Jack Shainman in 2017. Less than two years later, there appears to be an inversion. The joy and freedom of experimentation evident in those smaller-scale abstract paintings have yielded territory to sobriety and introspection. In the new show, Wayne takes a bold leap into representation. Intimate objects from the artist's private and inner world, primarily from her studio and home, are carefully reconstructed with wood, canvas and paint, using a technique that is equal parts painting and sculpture. The result is 14 new sculpturally-minded paintings that use illusion to play with our

perceptions of reality.

A painter's ladder, an overflowing tool chest, doors slightly ajar revealing ambiguous shapes, partially messy closets, a personal bookshelf of books and music, and broken windows appear like small monuments in the visual landscape of Wayne's new exhibition, [\*What's Inside\*](#).

"Planetary," the first work encountered in the show, is an eight-foot tall wooden panel shaped as the kind of ubiquitous metal ladder found in artist's studios. Wayne's ladder has a gorgeous rust red that's been spilled all over it. A runny mixture of pigment and solvent, it streaks and stains to create rivulets that evoke, for me, warm bodily fluids. The cool, metallic silvery shade of the ladder creates an optical contrast with the streaming pigment across its surface; its solidity and implied weight seem to imply the body itself.



Leslie Wayne, "Heirloom" (2017), oil and acrylic on panel, 71-1/2 x 48 x 7-1/2 inches

We approach "Planetary" at an oblique angle, imagining it to be just another scrappy ladder resting on the floor, albeit, possessing a rather aesthetic scrappiness. So convincing is Wayne's fabrication of reality, that only on closer inspection do the surface anomalies and spatial incongruities begin to reveal the fiction of the object. She is a master of the details that suspend the viewers' disbelief just long enough to hold them in an intimate encounter: tromp-l'oeil shadows that cast on the "wall" behind the ladder, and the loose screws that hold it together; a folded white cloth with flecks of brown

paint and colorful bundles of mushed-up paint rags on its steps; a tidy pile of striped and plaid cloths ornamenting the ladder's zenith (whose perspective is exaggerated to heighten its monumentality). The evident playfulness and humor of these illusions belie their meticulous construction, culled from a compelling toolbox of painterly tricks developed by the artist over three decades.

Windows and wardrobes are other sources of fascination for the artist. In *Free Experience*, Wayne introduced the window idiom with broken and partially boarded up panes. In this exhibition, she goes straight through them to explore what's on the other side. The most enigmatic of the window series is "Unforgotten" (2018), an oil on canvas work mounted on wood. It's the subtlest of the broken windows, with minimal traces of the artist's illusory devices, but all the more powerful for its simple evocations of metaphor and possibility.



Leslie Wayne, "Unforgotten" (2018), oil on canvas mounted on wood panel, 40 x 54-1/4 inches

The horizontal painting depicts a forlorn window with a ivory-colored wooden grille that has seen better days. The six-by-three grid that forms the rickety grille is lined with just a few remaining, if determined, glass shards. Behind the glass — or is it in front? — layers of white curtains appear to be captured in motion, in a gentle sway. Blue and indigo shadows dance upon their surface, forming wave patterns and oblique angles that intersect and overlap symphonically. The deep blacks, purple shadows, and warm and cool whites of the painting's interior are offset by the warm brick that simultaneously delineates the sides of the window frame and forms the edges of the painting. Art history is embedded in Wayne's work, and so it's not any more peculiar to chance upon a deliberate overture to the Modernist grid or Barnett Newman's "zip" than it is to notice a casual reference to Hokusai ("Heirloom"). Art history aside, "Unforgotten" pulls together all the marvelous ambiguities that underscore this exhibition's theme, and that it does so with an economy of means is all the more beguiling.

But I'll come back to this later.

In *Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard's seminal book on the resonances of a home, he writes:

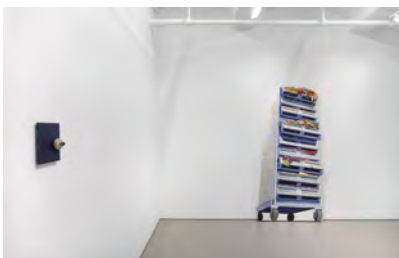
We comfort ourselves by reliving memories of protection. Something closed must retain our memories, while leaving them their original value as images. Memories of the outside world will never have the same tonality as those of home and, by recalling these memories, we add to our store of dreams; we are never real historians, but always near poets, and our emotion is perhaps nothing but an expression of a poetry that was lost.



Leslie Wayne, "Burning Down the House" (2018), oil on wood, 85-1/2 x 40 x 5-1/2 inches

The architectonics of Wayne's structures mediate the in-between space of impermanence and maybe even point to a poetic expression of loss. Duality reveals itself in the slippages between numerous dialectical manifestations: open/closed, illusion/reality, absence/presence, painting/sculpture, abstraction/figuration, among many others. Wardrobes, chests, and doors are all slightly ajar, revealing both literal and metaphorical situations. The most fictional of these, "Burning Down the House," depicts a powdery-blue door complete with a doorknob, which partially opens to reveal a closet. Stacked at the bottom of the closet are paint tube boxes, and atop of them are what appear to be crumpled-up cotton paint rags rendered in masses of impasto paint. The rags are engulfed in flames, which leap upward in an angry stream of fluorescent hues, until they're licking the neatly folded rags on an upper shelf. It's impossible not to feel an undercurrent of political anxiety, born of American hubris under Trump, and the subsequent crisis of art. These themes foster a palpable strain in this work and throughout the entire show.

Wayne was born in postwar Germany in 1953, where her family lived for a few years before moving back to California. She was, by her own account, raised in a secular upper-middle-class Jewish-American household. On my first visit to her studio, which occurred after *Free Experience*, my eye fell upon an exquisitely painted postcard-size copy of Gerhard Richter's masterpiece, "Betty" (1991) a photo-realist portrait based on a snapshot Richter took of his young daughter, Betty, in 1978. The painting, which blurs the lines between photography and painting, flattens perspective while simultaneously achieving a sense of deep space: Betty is turned away from the camera, and her act of looking into an indescribable distance produces the illusion of perspectival depth, mediating an imaginary threshold between the past and the present. The painting has largely been read as a critique of Germany's obsession with its past, and in turn, its denial of the future.



Leslie Wayne, *What's Inside*, Jack Shainman Gallery

The arresting temporal and spatial threshold of "Betty" is activated by the young girl's spontaneous turn as she looks away; similarly, the provisional frames of reference alluded to in *What's Inside* — movement, spillage, disorganization and disarray — indicate a threshold, passage, or becoming. It's telling that the artist painted her miniature copy in 2001 after 9/11 had devastated New York City and altered the American psyche forever. The additional shock of losing her father around the same time sent Wayne on a voluntary personal

sabbatical. While the artist experimented with figuration before and during her student years at Parsons School of Design in the 1980s, her rendering of this figurative painting during a particularly fraught personal and political moment potentially planted the seed for Wayne's return to representation. It also signals her preoccupation with thresholds that interface both lived and historical realities in the age of Trump. She nuances questions of who we are and where we stand: are we inside looking out, or outside looking in?

Wayne can, just as easily as Richter, perform slippages between categories and glide elusively across terrains of meaning; but, unlike Richter, Wayne doesn't shy away from sentimentality, with a sprinkling of joy and humor. In the press release for this show, she states, "Though these paintings represent my political anxiety, I am also not a bleak person by nature. So for me, the idea of a broken window is also an invitation for some sort of renewal. A window can be fixed, new histories can be made."

The insistence on hope, renewal, and the future is what elevates these safeguarded intimacies, revealed by Wayne for the first time through acts of representation, above the kind of heavy-handed rhetoric that the current political climate can justifiably invoke. For all the technical wizardry up her sleeve, these elaborate constructions exhibit, above all else, Wayne's attachment to those things in her universe that enable her to do the thing she loves most — painting.

[Leslie Wayne: What's Inside](#) *continues at Jack Shainman Gallery (513 West 20th Street, Chelsea, Manhattan) through March 30.*



# TWO COATS OF PAINT

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March 8, 2019

## *Leslie Wayne: Burning down the house*

8:53 am by Editorial Assistant



*Leslie Wayne, Instructions for Dancing, 2018, oil and acrylic on panel, 77.5 x 71.5 x 6 inches*

Contributed by Sharon Butler / Now in her mid-60s, **Leslie Wayne** has had several impressive shows at Jack Shainman, but the work in her current exhibition, on view through March 30, exceeds its predecessors in conceptual confidence, mastery of materials, and even an impressive swelling of imagination. She has scaled up the size of her work and kicked the process into a higher gear. Using beautifully crafted, shaped wooden panels, Wayne renders armoires, a studio bookcase, a tool chests, a ladder in towering, larger-than-life objects that combine carpentry with wonky linear perspective. Gone is the familiar reliance on a single repetitive format (paint rags, windows) and the paradoxical process of making paintings both of and out of paint. Through contextual expansion — from creating the illusion of fabric, to creating pieces of furniture where fabrics and other items are stored — Wayne's work has gained conceptual heft and substance without sacrificing her signature wit and love of a good pun.



Leslie Wayne, *Everything*, 2019, oil, metal and rope on wood, 81 x 45.25 x 5.5 inches

As always, Wayne is a master paint wrangler, and she has achieved an astonishing level of craftsmanship in her new work. In *What's Inside*, a pile of thick gooey paint is revealed behind a partially opened shed door, yet the paint never sinks into murky sludgy color. The clear, bright out-of-the-tube freshness may reference the light from Wayne's childhood spent in sunny California, and it certainly conveys a sense of optimism that is key in all of her work.

In *Everything*, a rope appears to keep a pair of closet doors from spilling open under the weight of an avalanche of paint. It's an illusion, of course, crafted with shaped panels, door handles, a rope, and paint. This facile transition between fact and fiction has always been a hallmark of Wayne's work, and here, perhaps in response to the new landscape of "alternative facts" and disinformation, it is fully and effectively engaged. Several, like *Toolchest* and *Burning Down the House*, have cropped lower edges so that the pictorial illusion is truncated, allowing truth to fully be revealed.



*Leslie Wayne, What's Inside, 2018, oil on wood, 84.25 x 41 x 3.75 inches*



*Leslie Wayne, Tool Chest, 2018, oil and acrylic on wood, 86 x 42 x 5 inches*





Leslie Wayne, *A Life*, 2018, oil on canvas

Each painting is hung less than a foot off the ground, and at 85-inches tall (and more), they tower above the viewer like the monolith in Stanley Kubrich's 1968 sci-fi film, *2001 A Space Odyssey*. But the images constructed in the panels are always a bit off-kilter and the perspective isn't quite right. In *A Life*, Wayne presents a set of metal book shelves, jammed with art books, CDs, an old boom box, and boxes of paint. The perspective is skewed to create the illusion that the shelves are much taller than they would actually be in real life, as if seen from a child's perspective. Similarly, in *Instructions for Dancing*, an oversized armoire, outfitted with paint-objects fashioned to look like textiles and a pile of paint on the floor, has some serious torque on the right hand side that would cause an actual object to buckle and fold.



*Leslie Wayne, Burning Down the House, 2018, oil on wood, 85.5 x 40 x 5.5 inches*





*Leslie Wayne, Burning Down the House, 2018, oil on wood, 85.5 x 40 x 5.5 inches (Detail)*

The show is titled “What’s Inside,” and the work is indeed about a threshold into an interior world. At the same time, they are very much about the things we amass over time. For an artist, that means ideas and, of course, for painters, objects. These remarkable pieces are full of art historical references—[Richter](#), [Artschwagger](#), [Tuttle](#), [Murray](#), [Poons](#), and more—but they are also a rejection of the ephemeral, the small-scale, and the unimportant. It’s as if Wayne, who has worked at a small-scale for much of her career, has come to the realization that physicality and size are not inconsequential. In this series, Wayne seems to be exploring new ideas about accumulation and permanence. They might be meditations about the things an artist leaves behind.

“[Leslie Wayne: What’s Inside](#),” Jack Shainman, Chelsea, New York, NY. Through March 30, 2019.

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Tags: [Jack Shainman](#), [Leslie Wayne](#), [painting objects](#)

## Artist Leslie Wayne reveals *What's Inside* her inner world

By SYDNEY FRANKLIN • February 26, 2019



Now on view at the Jack Shainman Gallery in New York, Leslie Wayne's collection features paintings of basic interior objects that pop against the gallery's white walls. (Courtesy of Jack Shainman Gallery and the artist)

A new exhibition by New York-based artist [Leslie Wayne](#) explores everyday spaces and how, through alternative modes of representation, we can see those environments in a deeper light. [\*What's Inside\*](#), now on view at New York City's Jack Shainman Gallery through March 30, features Wayne's newest collection of paintings that detail basic domestic scenes like messy closets, busy bookshelves, and broken windows. These disheveled objects evoke a German Expressionist perspective, according to the artist, and unveil Wayne's political and personal anxieties through singular depictions of an inner world that's "not quite right," but can be fixed.

[AN](#) spoke with Wayne via email about the layered inspiration behind *What's Inside*, and how color, both in architecture and in painting, can manipulate the emotions of its viewers. She also explains why studying art that highlights buildings or interior design can ultimately strengthen a person's appreciation for the built environment.

**The Architect's Newspaper:** Your current collection seems to build off your previous window pieces for [Free Experience](#). Can you explain why you decided to continue that project and how this show takes those previous themes to another level?

**Leslie Wayne:** As an abstract artist, my whole career, I've been wanting to bring representation into my work, but I didn't quite know how it would manifest itself given the idiosyncratic way I use paint. Those first window paintings gave me a way to do that. Conceptually, they allowed me to express my feelings and ideas about the world around me, about the current state of affairs, as well as my own personal life, by using domestic architectural forms as a motif and as a kind of organizing principle. I realized that my abstract paintings always kept you on a threshold—of what was visible, and what was beneath and behind the surface that you could never quite completely see or understand. Architectural thresholds can operate in much the same way. By making a painting of a doorway that is just barely cracked open, or a window that is boarded up, I'm keeping you on that threshold. So actually, I'm still exploring the same thing, only in a more pictorial way.



From left to right: *Unforgotten*, 2018 and *Shattered*, 2018 (Courtesy of Jack Shainman Gallery and the artist)

**AN:** Why did you choose to focus on normal interior objects and spaces? What draws you to imagining these details in a new way?

**LW:** I'm drawing largely on my immediate surroundings—the armoire in my bedroom, the tool chest in my husband's studio, and my bookshelves. While the forms as furniture are universal, their contents are autobiographical, and they tell you a lot about what makes up my life. In the beginning, the idea of creating a painting of a closet was just a response to my need to move on from an earlier body of work. But then the idea of closets became more interesting to me as types of containers. Containers, not just of clothing and everyday objects, but of things we hold dear, or secrets we want to keep. And then came the paintings of drawers and bookshelves, containers that hold evidence of your life—books you've read, music you listen to, materials you use for work, etc. And on a purely formal level, closets, shelves, and window frames provide an interesting platform for different kinds of architectural motifs, which as a painter is great because it's just an endless source of visual information.



From left to right: *Boarded*, 2017; *Burning Down the House*, 2018; *Instructions for Dancing*, 2018  
(Courtesy of Jack Shainman Gallery and the artist)

**AN:** Your work is very colorful and tactile. What do the different colors and the way those hues bring a tangible quality to your paintings say about these mundane architectural spaces you depict?

**LW:** Color is loaded with emotive power, much the same way that music is. It can be used to express tremendously strong feelings, but, because of that, you're in danger of being manipulative and clichéd if you go too far. It's tricky. You want to seduce the viewer but not knock them over the head with it! Most people, when they're thinking about architecture they're thinking about the facade and the overall shape of a building or an architectural detail. They're not considering the way in which a building is a container and a shelter and how the design and the color of an interior space can determine the way you feel when you go inside of it.

We were in Mexico City recently and went to the house of Luis Barragán. It was very interesting to see how he used color to visually block out certain spaces and establish an overall feeling of a room. Yellow walls made you feel warm and welcomed, pink walls gave you a sensation of joy and anticipation. I loved that. For me, when I'm painting, I try to use color to do much the same thing, to convey a sensation.





*An Inverted Doorknob and Tool Chest, 2018 (Courtesy of Jack Shainman Gallery and the artist)*

**AN:** Why is it valuable to look at architecture and interiors through the alternative lenses of painting or photography, rather than being in the space itself?

**LW:** I would say that it's valuable to look at architecture and interiors through the alternative lenses of painting or photography in addition *to* being in the space itself. There's no substitute for having a direct experience of an architectural space. But I think we take those spaces for granted. And those of us in dense urban environments usually have our heads down (or buried in our cell phones!) when we're walking rather than looking up and noticing what tremendously rich details are on buildings all around us. It's valuable to reconsider what those spaces mean to us and art can take you there through the poetry of metaphor and illusion. If you've ever been taken by a Fra Angelico painting for example, like *The Annunciation*, then perhaps next time you're inside a space that has vaulted ceilings you'll be reminded of the painting and become aware of the ceiling's elegance and structural integrity. Or a Dorothea Lange photograph of a young sharecropper's log cabin can make you really feel what it must mean to live in a structure of such simplicity. Bernd and Hilla Becher spent their lives documenting industrial architecture and brought the simplest most overlooked structures, like water towers, into the realm of the sublime. We look at these things every day, but art helps us see them more deeply.

See Wayne's new show, *What's Inside*, at the Jack Shainman Gallery at 513 West 20th Street, New York, New York.

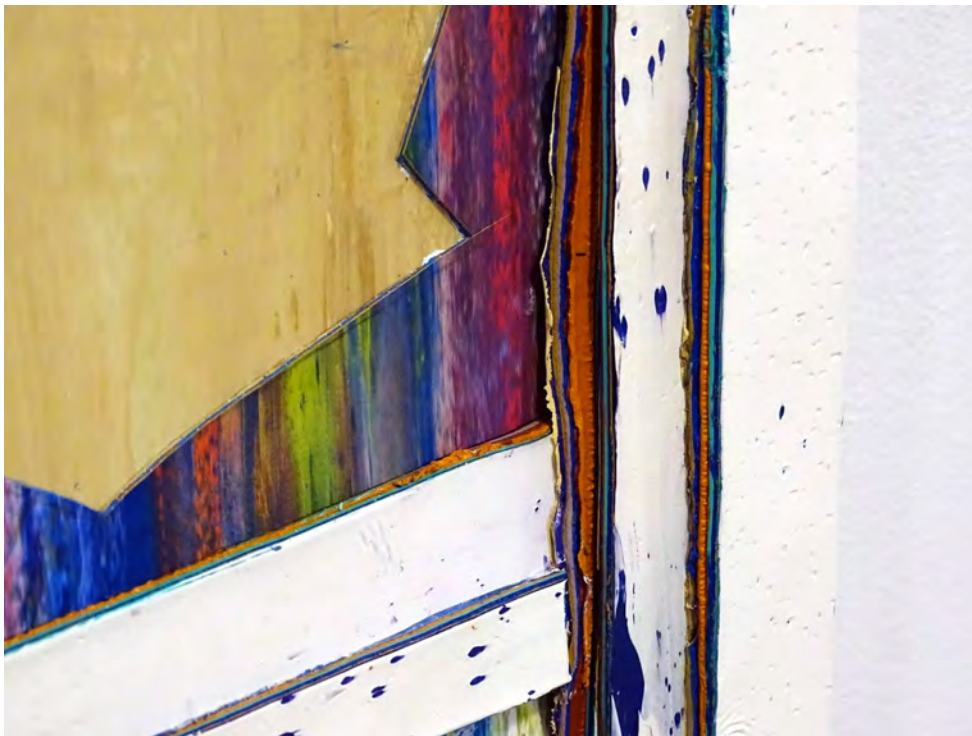
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# LESLIE WAYNE – THE INTERVIEW



FEBRUARY 26, 2019 IN ESSAYS & INTERVIEWS, LESLIE WAYNE BY MICHELE

## LESLIE WAYNE

Interview by Frédéric Caillard, February 2019

**Can you tell us about your last body of work, that you are about to show in a solo presentation at Jack Shainman Gallery in New York City?**

Yes, the show is called *What's Inside*. In terms of the subject matter it is divided in two different but related groups of paintings. One is a series of windows with broken glass. Some of them are boarded up so you cannot see in. It speaks to





many climate issues, social issues... Broken or boarded windows and flooded buildings represent neighborhoods that have been abandoned or have had some sort of climate disaster. The other group represents containers: bookshelves, closets, armoires or chests of drawers. These are pieces of domestic furniture that contain items which sometimes you can see and sometimes you cannot see. Closets and drawers contain personal things, perhaps even secrets. In all of these paintings of containers are my own personal items, things that reflect my life as an artist. I think this is – more than at any other time in my career – a very personal body of work in that way.

If I backtrack for a minute, I think the thread that goes through all my work over time is the idea of the threshold. Even when the work was small and very abstract, you always felt that you were on the threshold of seeing what was on the surface and what was behind, something that you could not see. I was always folding the paint over or lifting the paint up or covering it over so you never quite saw every layer of the painting. With this work the idea of the threshold is just made more manifest in terms of pictorial imagery: windows, doorways, and closets are all thresholds that you can or cannot cross, they provide a more personal approach to the idea.

Also, this is the first time that I've reflected so directly on the world around me through my painting. As an abstract painter most of my career, my work has been focused conceptually on process and material, and on the open-endedness of abstraction, which I love. But we are living in a time now that is very difficult to ignore. The political discourse, the climate crisis, are things that affect our lives in a very real way, and I just find it difficult to express my feelings about those issues through purely formal abstraction. I have been looking for a way to bring representation into the work for many years, but without negating the very particular and peculiar way I work with paint. And with these paintings I finally found a way to do that.

**I would like to talk about the different pictorial means that you use in these works to generate illusions. One is paint on the flat surface, in a trompe l'oeil manner, and the other one is the use of the paint matter to actually create the forms of the represented objects.**

Yes that's right. With this work, I am playing with abstraction and representation so that there is a real tension between trompe l'oeil, verisimilitude and abstraction. You don't really quite know whether you are looking at something that is a real object in the room or a painted illusion of the object. This is something I am having a lot of fun with. It is a way to make the viewer look more carefully because they don't quite understand what they are looking at until they get up close. I think that all artists, in spite of the conceptual blah blah they may have about their work, desire most to have their viewers *want* to look at their work. The question is how to keep the viewer engaged. So yes I am using trompe l'oeil, the most realistic type of illusion, and then as you say the actual material of the paint and also the structure of the panel to create a kind of seduction. The panels are constructed of wood and their shapes are determined by the subject of the painting: if it is a painting of an armoire, the shape of the panel is like an armoire. And with the exception of maybe one painting in this series, all of them are cut flat at the bottom. So you don't see the full contour of the object, because I like in the end to remind you that you are just looking at a painting.

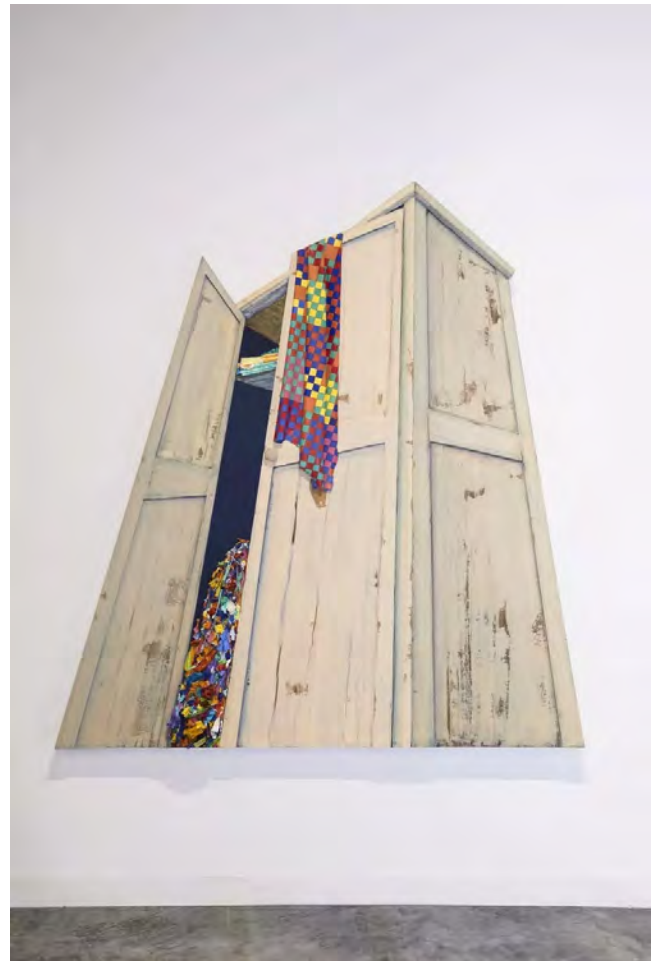
**In one of your previous series called *Paint/Rags*, there are wooden supports but they are not directly visible by the viewer. The visible parts of the paintings look like actual rags. They are made only of paint, with no underlying fabric nor cloth, you do not have any substrate for your paint.**

Yes. They originated from my *One Big Love* series, which started out as an exercise. I had been looking for something to do while I was working on very large paintings for a traveling show, something small and intimate that had a little more immediate satisfaction. So I thought I would give myself an exercise with a few rules: the paintings had to be no larger than 10 by 13 inches and they had to be on organically shaped panels. I wanted something that would allow me to just play. So one of the shapes that ended up being in this series was this kind of half a doughnut, as if it was hanging on a nail on the wall, and I liked that idea of the paint just being draped on to this support. This is how it started, but it was about making the *paint* look like it was hanging on a nail rather than fabric. But somebody referred to it as that “rag” painting and I didn’t know what they were talking about. At the beginning I was like “I don’t know if I want to make paintings that look like rags, who cares?”. But the more I thought about it, the more I felt it was pretty interesting. Apart from the fact that I know how to make paint look like fabric, I liked the idea of a rag – being a very humble object that you just throw away – that makes you want to come up and look closely and perhaps reconsider its value. And in a way it is kind of a play on Duchamp. It looks like a ready-made but in fact it is very meticulously made by hand.

**Did you get inspired by Sam Gilliam in some way, or was it a reference to Jasper John’s Savarin cans brush pots, which are also “trompe l’oeil ready-mades”, done with painted bronze?**

I wasn’t thinking of Sam Gilliam even though he is somebody I am familiar with. Gilliam’s work is about freeing the painting from its support, whereas I was thinking more about painting as a stand in for the object of representation, in this case a rag. And as for Johns, not really, although that’s the same idea, yes.

**You have two series of paintings where the paint is an extension of the support. In the *What Goes Up* series, the paint creates a bulge that is in continuity with the support, like a morphing between the support and the paint. It redefines the concept of supports and media, it intertwines the two ideas.**



Because of the small scale of those paintings, the

objectness of them, you don't know what is inherent in the actual structure and what is just applied on top, yes.

**You also did that in some of your landscape paintings, where you have paint that extends below the support. Is it a way to say that a landscape is too big to be painted in an enclosed frame?**

That's a very interesting way of looking at it. It is not untrue... maybe you're right. I had some early pieces too, one in particular where it is hanging so low below what should be the surface, almost like it's dragging the actual structure of the painting with it because it's so heavy.

That's something I have always wanted to create the feeling of with my work. That the material is so

overwhelmingly abundant that it just takes over. In the more recent works, like the *Free Experience*, I was looking at these images of third world countries where somebody is

carrying a huge stack of material, all you see are his feet on the bicycle pedals, and you just can't believe that the whole thing is not collapsing or falling over. So that was the feeling I was trying to create in that work, that overabundance of material.



**I wanted to discuss the three main formal elements that are found throughout your work. The first one is the geological folds. They look very natural, you can see the compression effect. Where do they originate and what is your process?**

I grew up in Southern California. I was a landscape painter as a young artist. Since I moved to New York, on the East Coast, I found that my relationship to the West, the light, the color, the landscape and the geography became much more important to me, and I am always conscious of those geological formations and the power of nature. Pushing the paint around is very geological to me. So I am thinking about the shifting of the tectonics plates, the layers of geological strata, this has always been a major part of my thinking.



As for my process, what I do is I trowel very thin layers of oil paint onto a flat surface. When that thin layer dries, it forms a skin, then I can trowel the next layer on. So I build these layers of paint, and my color sense is very intuitive, I don't generally have a plan. They have to be colors that have a kind of relationship to one another or have some sort of "frisson". To create these big folds, I scrape it off the support with the same knife from underneath and then lift it up. Then you can see the underside, all the different layers are revealed and it is very fragile because the oil paint is still wet underneath, which is why I work with oil because I need it to be soft and malleable. With acrylic it just dries immediately and with a very consistent kind of plastic quality, and it does not have the fragility of oil paint which I prefer.

**So you don't build your layering directly on the painting?**

No, not as much anymore. In the earlier works, everything was done directly on the support that was the support for the painting.

**The second formal element that defines your work are the strips or the ribbons. Process wise, they are close to the folds but look different visually because they are neatly cut, in a very systematic and organised way. It is like if you had a scalpel and if you were dissecting or performing an autopsy of your own painting.**

Yes. The process is exactly the same as I just described, only before I lift it up I score it, so when I do put the knife under it and start to push, instead of lifting it up from underneath, I am forcing the material to fold on itself. And because I scored it, all of those strips come up differently. When I was doing that directly on the surface of the painting rather than making them in advance to collage later, I was really thinking that I was peeling away the skin of the body of the painting, exposing its underlayers. And that's how I came to the next group of paintings called *Breaking and Entering*, because I thought: "I have been peeling the skin away, what would it be like if I could dig directly into the body of the painting".



**And this is precisely the third major formal element of your practice: the scrapping, revealing, exposing... You seem to always want to see what's behind and then what's deeper and even deeper...**

Yes, I went from folding back the surface of the skin of the painting to digging into the body of the painting, and now I am exploring a lot of the same ideas, but with trompe l'oeil.

**Yes, you were investigating paintings, and now you are investigating objects, using painting as an instrument... I also wanted to hear your own thoughts about your choices of formats, as you are using a lot of small formats in your practice.**

Early on in my career I had been working on a series of paintings which I was not happy with. I was a very newly developed abstract painter and the paintings felt very derivative and sort of formulaic. I wanted to replicate the excitement I felt when I had been making sculpture in school. So I decided to cut up some very small panels, 8 by 6 inches, so that I could just experiment and play. At the time it was just a way to innovate, to challenge myself. But as the work started to develop, I came to realise that what I was doing came directly out of the trajectory of Abstract Expressionism, and that as a woman painter, I could make a very bold statement, an heroic gesture, on a very small format. It did not have to be physically big to say something big. And so I took it on as a real commitment to the power of intimacy.

**Another type of unusual format that you use are the very elongated vertical formats.**

That began when I was working on a series of landscape or geology inspired paintings, I was thinking very deliberately about core samples and I layered my paint like you would see layers of geology, millions and millions of years of sedimentation. I was looking at a Barnett Newman at MoMA and I remember thinking how fantastic it was that it was just



the zip, without anything, just the single zip, and I was like “that’s it, he went right to the source of the inspiration”. And so I thought I didn’t need all the supporting environment around these layers and that I could go straight to the core.

**In one of these core paintings, *Slice of life*, the thickness of the panel changes along the height of the painting.**

Yes, here again I wanted to accentuate the weight of the material, I wanted it to look and feel heavier at the bottom than it was at the top. So that slight angling, that you may not see right away but that you can feel.

**Can you tell us about your work *Velocity*, which features 3 vertical elongated panels next to each other?**

I was thinking about the experience of riding in a train, and watching the landscape go by if you are not focused.

**Do you know in what direction you are going to work after this show?**

I have no idea. This move to my



current work came unintentionally. I think most artists Don’t really know what they are doing until they’ve done it. This series started with a painting I did three years ago. I had seen a work by Mamma Anderson, a fantastic Swedish painter. It was a detail of an armoire, the door slightly open with all the linens stacked inside, a very beautiful painting. And at that time I just didn’t want to make one more Rag painting! So I thought I could just put the rags away in this closet. It was a way to transition away from the Rags and the closet gave me that vehicle, a vehicle to continue my trajectory but in a different way, and it just opened the door new possibilities. It was completely unexpected! So I have no idea what’s next.

Illustration images (from top to bottom) - All paintings by Leslie Wayne:

***Boarded 2* - Detail**, 2017, oil on panel, 25 7/8 x 19 1/4 x 3 inches.

© Abstract Room.

***Boarded 2***, 2017, oil on panel, 25 7/8 x 19 1/4 x 3 inches.

© Leslie Wayne. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

***Instructions for Dancing***, 2018, oil and acrylic on panel 77 1/2 x 71 1/2 x 6 inches. © Leslie Wayne. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

***Paint/Rag 73***, 2018, oil on panel 23 1/2 x 14 x 6 inches.

© Leslie Wayne. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

***What Goes Up***, 2011, oil on panel, 13 x 10 inches.

© Abstract Room.

***Slippage***, 2005, oil on panel, 24 x 58 inches.

© Leslie Wayne. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

***One Big Love #62***, 2011, oil on panel, 10 1/2 x 13 inches.

© Leslie Wayne. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

***Untitled (Skirtlift)***, 2013, oil on panel, 34 x 7 inches.

© Leslie Wayne. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

***Words and Music* - Detail**, 2018, oil and acrylic on wood, 93 3/4 x 25 1/8 x 3 3/4 inches. © Abstract Room.

PAINTING

# LESLIE WAYNE REVEALS WHAT'S INSIDE @ JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY, NYC

Feb 22, 2019 - Mar 30, 2019

Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

On February 22nd, [Jack Shainman Gallery](#) in New York will open a solo exhibition of all new works by Leslie Wayne, marking impressive 25 years since her 1st showcase with the gallery. *What's Inside* will be the German-born artist's 11th show with the gallery and will present the continuation of her efforts to manipulate the medium of painting by approaching oil paint as a sculptural material.

[Read more below](#)



As introduced with her *Free Experience* showcase back in 2017 and *Paint/Rags* body of work before that, Wayne is interested in "exploring the ways in which painting as an object could force a re-examining of the term painting." Aiming to step away from the historical precedent of a painting, which is a picture on a two-dimensional surface, she is successfully attributing new features to the familiar artistic material. Through scraping, folding, cutting, and building up the surface, the artist constructs three-dimensional forms with layers, varying textures, and colors. These rich textures evoke the experience of geology and natural phenomena, creating the aspect of time to the works and adding to the authenticity of the object's appearance.

In the newest body of work, the artist continued the work on building windows and similar architectural structures using oil and acrylic on wood. Crating shattered glass effects, boarded passages, blinds, curtains, and playing with the effect of depth and reflection, these pieces eventually evolved in more elaborate, series of sculptural, furniture-like objects. Accentuating movement and instability these new pieces play with perspective and point of view, introducing a new step in the ongoing evolution of the artist's unique practice. Made entirely of paint, with colors and patterns being layered surface applications of the otherwise flat medium, Wayne is now building large closets, bookshelves, semi-opened spaces, cleverly combining tremendous technical painting skills and painting-sculptural "tricks" developed in her previous work. —*Sasha Bogojev*

# UNSORTED

MULTIDISCIPLINARY INSPIRATION

February 12, 2019 / Creative

**What's Inside:** Leslie Wayne's clever use of oil paint to create 3D window frames and wardrobes



Known for manipulating the medium of painting by approaching oil paint as a sculptural material, often times scraping, folding, cutting, and building up the surface, Leslie Wayne's artwork takes on three-dimensional forms with layers, varying textures, and colours.

The tactile, design-centric qualities of her work often evoke the experience of geology and natural phenomena, shaping the work in ways that accentuate movement and instability. A new show at Jack Shainman in New York, launching this month, will feature Leslie's newest series of sculptural objects, which diverts quite dramatically from her previous work and employs tremendous technical painting skills to create a sense of optical illusion within the works.

*What's Inside* will reveal a tectonic shift from the easy play with pictorial representation in Wayne's previous bodies of work, introducing instead an all-embracing magnetic pull towards *tromp l'oeil* and verisimilitude.

In two distinct, yet related bodies of work depicting containers and windows, shaped panels in exaggerated and skewed perspectives determine the painted object. Door and window frames, armoires, closets and shelves are rendered through constructed panels and an abstract and three-dimensional handling of paint. With this practice, Wayne explores conventional representation and figure-ground relationships. What is illusion and what is, in fact, real becomes tensely blurred. The large scale of these paintings invites further questioning as one could envision stepping across the threshold and into their imagined interiors.

Though Wayne's new work marks a departure in her practice, still there remains a continuity that, whether abstract or pictorial, has always explored portals to the other side.

Also presented within this exhibition is Wayne's 1990 painting, *Come In*, an inverted doorknob and oil on panel work, indicative of motifs further probed by the artist to this day. This new series of paintings takes stock of the many iterations of this thread and comes back full circle to a world of images where abstraction holds a firm grip on ambiguity.

Wayne's closets and containers are zones of refuge and comfort from the outside world; but they also contain the artist's secrets and anxieties about the current state of political affairs: climate denial, nuclear proliferation, immigration, and ongoing institutionalised racism that point to a breakdown of the cultural and moral fabric of our society. Paintings of broken and boarded up windows, or those in which a sort of toxic ooze seeps through the blinds, serve as metaphors for his unease. Large-scale paintings of cabinets, closets and shelves can be seen from the point of view of a small child peering into a forbidden space or up towards something just out of reach. These paintings take on an almost German Expressionist perspective of an environment that is not quite right.

In the creation of this series, Wayne relied on process over planning. Her driving impetus often stemmed from the result of something unanticipated – an encounter with another work of art, a technical “mistake” in the studio, a word or passage in a book, or a deeply personal event – rather than a deliberate blueprint for a specific outcome.

These new paintings allow space for all those moments to coalesce into a body of work that looks both outward to the world and towards Wayne's inner life. Wayne reflects, “Though these paintings represent my political anxiety, I am also not a bleak person by nature. So for me, the idea of a broken window is also an invitation for some sort of renewal. A window can be fixed, new histories can be made.”

## Art Fairs

### 10 of the Most Remarkable Artworks at the 2018 Armory Show

There's plenty to be absorbed by in this year's satisfying edition of the New York fair, the first under new director Nicole Berry.

Andrew Goldstein, March 9, 2018



Rafael Lozano-Hemmer's *Pareidolium* (2018) at Galería Max Estrella's Armory Show booth.

In its debut under new director Nicole Berry, the Armory Show did not seem to miss a beat in its tumultuous change of leadership but instead seemed to pick up some jazzy new rhythms, a thoughtfully slower tempo, and a scattering of lovely melodies. Brighter carpeting on the floors and airier aisles brought on by fewer booths lent an upbeat sensibility to the proceedings on the New York piers, sweetening ones spirit of discovery. And there were plenty of gems to find in the fair's nooks and crannies. Here are some of the most absorbing artworks in this year's edition.



**Leslie Wayne, *Heirloom* (2017)**  
**Jack Shainman Gallery – New York**  
**\$58,000**



Leslie Wayne, *Heirloom* (2017), \$58,000. Courtesy of Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

It took the painter Leslie Wayne years and years to perfect her unique style of layering acrylics and oils until they become objects themselves—and not merely trompe-l'oeil ones—by convincingly imitating draped fabrics and boards of wood. However, while she was able to pull off individual objects convincingly, she never managed to make a larger painting that could fuse her motifs... until now.

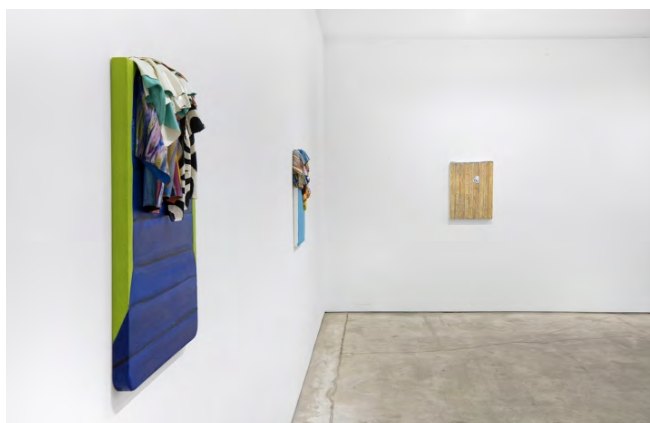
Considered a breakthrough piece, her painting at the fair replicates a linen closet overflowing with sheets and draped with blankets, with a blue substance that could might be water coursing through its middle, as if from a catastrophic water-pipe rupture. Wayne likes to depict thresholds in her art, and now that she has a solo show of this new body of work in preparation (and an Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum show to boot), her career may be in a liminal state as well.

# HYPERALLERGIC

## Sculptural Paintings Oozing with Color

Leslie Wayne's richly layered paintings remind us of the playfulness and emotional range to be found in abstraction.

Dennis Kardon | October 4, 2017



Installation view, *Leslie Wayne: Free Experience*, Jack Shainman Gallery (all images courtesy Jack Shainman)

Babyboomer and Gen X artists who outlived the “death of painting” ideologies of the last century will be impressed by the formal and conceptual riposte Leslie Wayne’s new paintings make to that strain of theorizing; young millennial painters, meanwhile, may just enjoy the fresh, inventive construction.

All twenty of the modestly sized paintings in *Free Experience*, Leslie Wayne’s exhibit at Jack Shainman Gallery, seem to come encrusted with various sculptural elements. Followers of Wayne’s work will not be surprised to discover that these are in fact the product of layers of oil paint, peeled off plastic surfaces and then cut, manipulated, and applied to painted wood trapezoidal supports.

In her previous exhibit at Shainman in 2014, *Paint/Rags*, she used these paint surfaces whole, hanging them picture-like on the wall as object metaphors for textiles. With painted patterns on their draped forms, they resembled clothing or dishrags. Throughout her career, Wayne has paired metaphors of painted surface — skin, cloth, and folds of earth strata — with queries as to the nature of painting as a historical idea. Now, by adding pictorial representation to her



palette, Wayne gains a new sense of improvisational freedom that makes this work look fresh but mystifying, simultaneously cool and passionate, yet balancing humor with an undercurrent of threat.

Upon entering the gallery and finding a sea of colorful abstraction, a painting like “MM” (2016), immediately grabs attention by appearing as a fogged-up, weathered barn window. Which indeed is a pretty obvious metaphor for the impermeability of the illusionistic window a painting might imply. Despite a winking homage triggered by associations with Josephine Halvorson or Marilyn Minter (the double M of the title) something different is happening here.

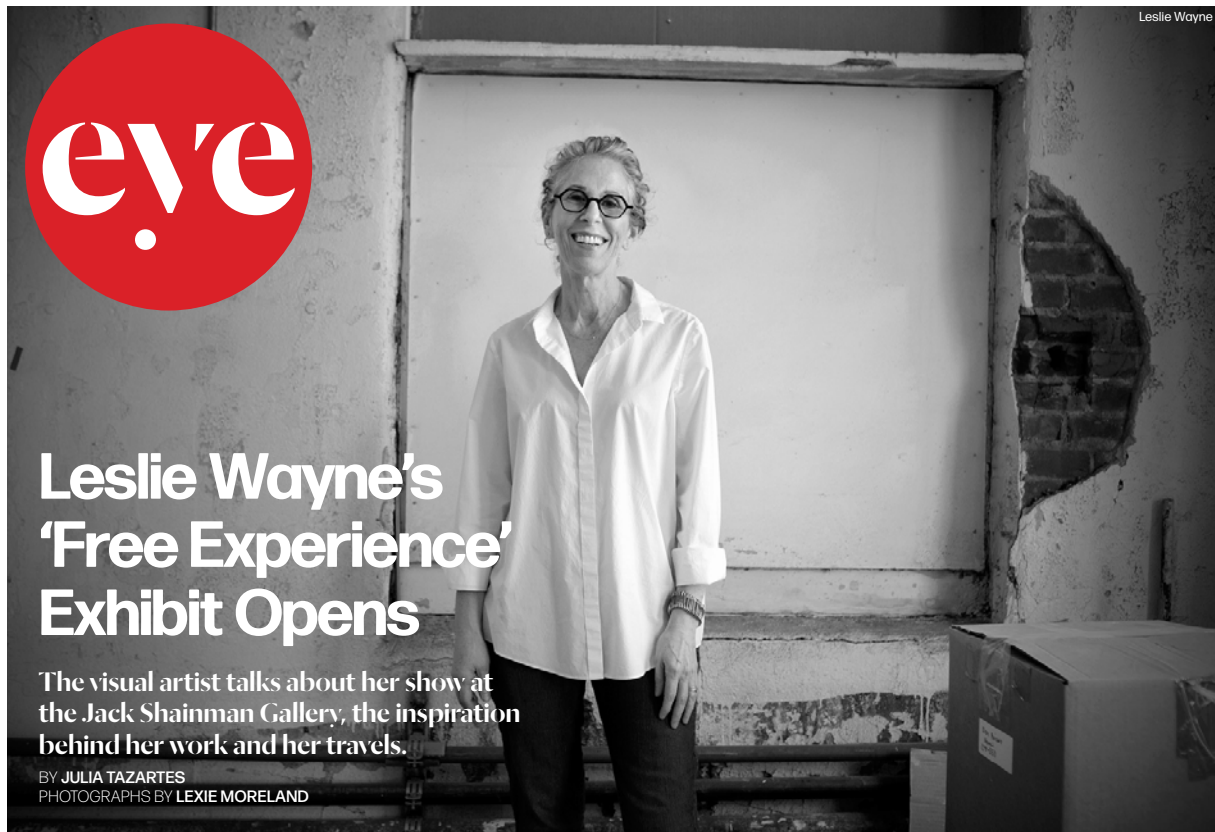


Leslie Wayne, “MM” (2016), oil on canvas on panel 27 1/2 x 21 X 2 1/8 inches

In addition to “MM, ” many of Wayne’s paintings reference other artists. The nods to Robert Ryman, through an unstretched early white painting of his haphazardly tossed over the back of a painted folding chair in “(W)resting Robert” (2017), and to Frank Stella in “To Be Frank” (2016) are fairly obvious.



Leslie Wayne, "To Be Frank" (2016), oil on panel, 26 x 22 1/2 x 6 inches



Leslie Wayne

## Leslie Wayne's 'Free Experience' Exhibit Opens

The visual artist talks about her show at the Jack Shainman Gallery, the inspiration behind her work and her travels.

BY JULIA TAZARTES

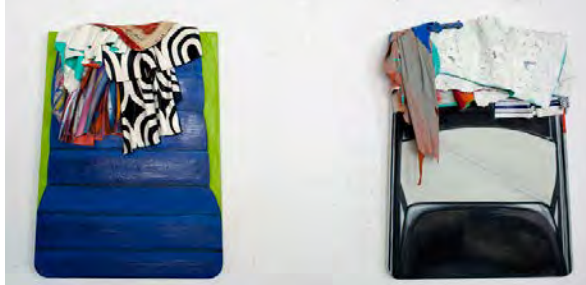
PHOTOGRAPHS BY LEXIE MORELAND

**"I'm always trying to free up the experience for myself, in this studio, from habit and complacency," begins Leslie Wayne, reflecting on her upcoming gallery show at Jack Shainman Gallery. "And hopefully by doing that, I'm freeing up the experience for the viewers as well."**

A freight elevator — "Larger than my first apartment," Wayne remarks — leads to her fifth floor studio in New York's Hell's Kitchen, which she shares with her husband, sculptor Don Porcero. The smell of paint mixed with stone dust fills the air throughout the studio's several open white rooms, and large windows bathe the entire space in natural light. Entering Wayne's working studio, the two-foot-tall pile of multicolored paint resting on a table immediately commands attention. "That's for when I clean my palette," Wayne explains of the colorful sculpture. "That pile is about three years worth."

The works for her upcoming gallery show, titled "Free Experience," are hanging all around her studio. Earlier this spring Wayne was awarded a coveted Guggenheim Fellowship. "I really decided to go back to my roots and introduce an element of representation into the work, which is something new," she continues. "That means including the trompe l'oeil painting — I'm actually painting an illusion of an image in space alongside my more recognizable dimensional use of paint, to create a form that mimics a real object in space. It's a real collision of abstraction and representation

Two pieces from "Free Experience."



In a way that forces the viewer to look really hard."

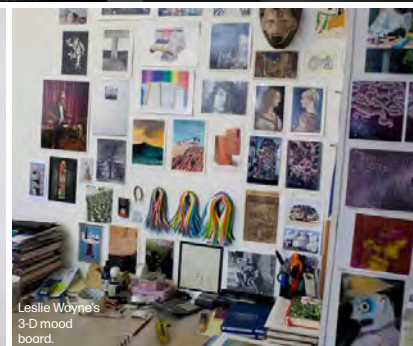
Wayne and the Shainman Gallery have been collaborating since the early Nineties, a partnership that the artist herself deems unusual. Most artists tend to move on from their partnerships and maintain a diverse track record, but Wayne has never felt the need for that. "Jack Shainman] has supported me and my work through all the ups and downs of the art world, and I love him," she adds.

Her signature style combines paint and sculpting. A sculpting major at The New School's Parsons School of Design in the Eighties, she wanted to bring her work into a more dynamic conversation about contemporary art. She began adding any kind of material she could find to her paint — foil and paper, sometimes even the stone dust her husband had swept up from the floor of his studio. "I no longer felt like painting had to be a window into Renaissance space and three-point perspec-



A mountain of paint in Wayne's studio.

**"I no longer felt like painting had to be a window into Renaissance space and three-point perspective. It could be anything. And paint is just another material to make a work of art."**  
— Leslie Wayne



Leslie Wayne's 3-D mood board.

tive. It could be anything. And paint is just another material to make a work of art," she says. Eventually, by manipulating the medium of paint and turning it into a sculptural material, she was able to achieve the effect of a three-dimensional structure without adding other materials.

The artist's greatest source of inspiration is the natural landscapes she encounters on her travels with her husband. "I particularly like to travel to places where the natural environment is very extreme," Wayne says. She's been to Patagonia, the Atacama Desert and Machu Picchu, and is planning a trip to Iceland later this year. However, her works aren't created to be direct reflections of the wilderness she experiences.

"I don't try to force that," she says. "I just prefer to allow it to filter in. Sometimes, it takes a year or two."

"Free Experiences" opens at the Jack Shainman Gallery on Sept. 7 through Oct. 29.



# NEW YORK

August 21, 2017



FALL  
PRE-  
VIEW  
'17

# FALL

**AUG.**

**8/18**

**"An Incomplete History of Protest: Selections From the Whitney's Collection, 1940-2017"**

Whitney Museum of American Art  
A compendium of protest art—loosely defined—from the Whitney's collection, including Toyo Miyatake's illicit photographs of the camp where he was interned during the Second World War and work by May Stevens addressing American involvement in Vietnam.

**SEP.**

**9/6**

**Keith Edmier: "Mother Mold"**

Through 11/4 at Petzel Gallery  
A series of plaster face molds form Edmier's "dysfunctional family tree." He displays one mask—of a friend, family member, or public figure—for each of the 50 years of his life.

**9/7**

**Kara Walker: "The most Astounding and Important Painting show of the fall Art Show viewing season!"**

Through 10/14 at Sikkema Jenkins & Co.

Three years after installing her monumental sphinx in Williamsburg's old Domino Sugar Factory, Walker returns. Details of the exhibit are being kept under wraps.

**Leslie Wayne**

Through 10/21 at Jack Shainman Gallery  
From a distance, Wayne's paintings seem like brightly patterned textiles. A closer look reveals that they're actually canvases painted and layered with exuberant streaks of color.

**Mira Schendel**

Through 10/21 at Hauser & Wirth  
Work from the final decade of the late Brazilian painter-sculptor-poet's career, including bold black-and-white pieces from her "Sarrado" series, which blends painting and sculpture.

**Pat Steir:**

**"Kairos"**  
Through 10/21 at Lévy Gorvy

The conceptual painter, known for the effervescent colors and forms in her "Waterfall" series, returns with more than a dozen new works, including a luminous blue-and-orange canvas dedicated to Agnes Martin.

**9/8**

**Trevor Paglen: "A Study of Invisible Images"**

Through 10/21 at Metro Pictures  
Paglen, who has photographed classified military bases, intelligence agencies, and other sites relating to government secrecy, turns his focus to artificial intelligence.

1. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY; 2. © GUERILLA GIRL/COURTESY OF THE WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART; 3. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND REYEL; NEW YORK; 4. © KARA



## Leslie Wayne, *Rags*

JACK SHAINMAN | FEBRUARY 20 – MARCH 22, 2014

by Jonathan Goodman

Leslie Wayne's sharp show of new work continues her interest in paint not as an embellishment on canvas but rather a physical material in its own right. She's always done fine things with the medium, but in this exhibition, entitled *Rags*, the artist takes her ongoing, nearly obsessive interest in oil paint to a new level, draping paint so that it bends and folds as fabric might. Working in this way, Wayne simultaneously moves toward trompe l'oeil, which might be seen as a nod to the past, and toward viewing painting as constituting three-dimensional matter, which would bring her art forward—toward a contemporary acknowledgment of its new use as a sculptural element. Her *Rags* asks implicit questions about materials and their art historical use; on one level, it would be easy to group her paint sculptures with the style of the New York School, which still holds sway in some New York circles. But although she acknowledges the possibility, Wayne doesn't quite see it that way. Instead, she is more interested in spanning genres, looking to the moment where a painting can also be considered three-dimensional in its origins and effects.

In the sparse installation at Jack Shainman's 24th Street gallery, viewers have the chance to zero in on one work per wall. The visual complexity of both the surface and its volumes is remarkable—vivid but never showy, painterly without being decorative. The works perform a marvelous feat of self-containment, whereby paint is viewed as raw matter. *Paint/Rag #27* (2013) is a towel-like construction that folds over on itself, its support hidden by the draping of the paint. Exuberant, even extravagant in its beauty, the work consists of blue with orange stripes on the surface closest to the viewer, with the sections beneath painted mostly in orange and red. The riot of colors freely alludes to the New York School's passion for both a physical and painterly surface, but the work is more than that. It is a hybrid painting-sculpture in which hues are built up physically,

maintaining an active sense of volume, with the folds resulting in the crevices and partially hidden spaces one might find in a draped fabric. The abstraction is not absolute; instead, the painting, like the others in the show, demonstrates a familiarity with what can be called the rags of time, silently requiring study for intellectual comprehension.

Most viewers will be taken with the technical tour de force of paint handled three-dimensionally, a compositional attribute that suggests the art of Lynda Benglis, but they will see, too, that the surface is nearly Pop in its wild variety of colors. Maybe, as well, Wayne's west coast origins come into play; the paintings' broad spectrum of hues is reminiscent of

California's outstanding colorist,

Richard Diebenkorn. Of course, Wayne's art is not figurative but rather formally determined, concerned with the gap between painting and sculpture, the point at which the two genres meet. This work, then, is congruent with Abstract Expressionism's treatment of paint as a raw material first and foremost, although Wayne keeps the movement at an arm's distance by her decisive move toward paint as a volumetric material. In *Paint Rag #30* (2013), the draping looks like a spattered napkin, with edges of brown, and again a reddish orange at the lowest part of the construction. The works are relatively small—*#30* is just over 18 inches high—but they are filled with painterly events that ask us to appreciate the medium's capacity for abstract beauty even as we regard the compositions representationally, as rags.



Leslie Wayne, "Paint/Rag #27," 2013. Oil on panel, 15" x 9" x 3 5/8".



Leslie Wayne, "Paint/Rag #30," 2013. Oil on panel, 18 1/4" × 12 1/2" × 5".

Wayne treats the surface of her work as being of interest in its own right, even though it belongs to the gestalt of a rag or weathered garment. Time and again, the viewer is directed to experience paint as more than simple decoration, and for all its deliberate beauty, there is something raw and assertively informal about the series. The level of visual interest is very high—we look and come close, marveling at art whose three-dimensional presence belies our knowledge that what we are looking at is paint. It is rare to see so tangible a painting! But that is the work's open secret, namely, its effortless

hybridity. Wayne performs in the gap between

painting and sculpture, in ways that pay homage to both. Wayne's paintings thus hold their own in the gallery, reminding us that a bit of progress has been made in the trajectory of painting, which many in the art world no longer trust as capable of new creations. The urgency of form and color in her art reminds us that there is still space for exploration in a field nearly toppling beneath its historical weight.

Edited by Stephanie Buhmann

# NEW YORK STUDIO CONVERSATIONS

SEVENTEEN WOMEN TALK ABOUT ART

THE  
GREENBOX





## LESLIE WAYNE

AUGUST 1, 2013  
HELL'S KITCHEN, NEW YORK

STEPHANIE BUHMANN: WE ARE LOOKING AT A PREVIEW OF YOUR UPCOMING SHOW AT JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY IN CHELSEA [LESLIE WAYNE: RAGS, FEBRUARY 22 – MARCH 22, 2014].

Leslie Wayne: Yes. I'm showing you two bodies of work, which have emerged organically over a long period of time.

THESE TWO BODIES OF WORK ESPECIALLY DIFFER IN FORMAT AND SIZE. LET'S TALK ABOUT THE GROUP OF LARGER WORKS FIRST, ALL OF WHICH SHARE THE SAME DISTINCTLY ELONGATED SHAPE.

I've been working on this particular shape for a number of years. This whole series started with the idea of covering the full range of colors on the spectrum. Each painting would be focused on one color and I thought of them like color bars. The shape comes from a work by Martin Puryear, which I saw at his MoMA retrospective in 2007. It was a ladder called **LADDER FOR BOOKER T. WASHINGTON** (1996), but I always think of it as Jacob's Ladder. In Puryear's sculpture, the frame of the ladder gets physically closer together the higher it goes, so it accentuates the diminishing vanishing point. It is so brilliant in its simplicity. I like the idea of

giving painting more than just the physicality of the paint to work with, and this shape accentuates your sense of the pull of gravity. YOU CONTRAST FLAT LAYERS OF PAINT WITH THICK, 3-DIMENSIONAL TEXTURES. IT MAKES FOR AN INTERESTING CONTEMPLATION OF GRAVITY AND POLARITIES.

The gravity aspect comes from my long interest in landscape and geology. But it also plays with the idea of cause and effect. I don't want my works to be illustrations of "A caused B". Instead, they embody two elements within the painting that are both describing each other and competing with each other, just as different elements in nature are thrown together through the laws of physics and are forced into unexpected yet inevitable relationships. I also think about clothing when making my work (clothing as opposed to fashion). I sew and I like to design and make my own clothes. What interests me is the structure of garments, how the bell curve of a sleeve needs to insinuate itself into the armhole without puckering, or the architecture of a fine piece of tailoring. Miuccia Prada has some interesting ideas about women's clothing and the separation between the top and the bottom, the bottom being sexier than the top. I like that. I also find her rough combinations of color and pattern interesting. I don't often find her clothes attractive, but I like the way she thinks.

DO YOU STILL SEE THIS BODY OF WORK AS AN EXPLORATION OF THE COLOR SPECTRUM?

No. Over time they took on a life of their own. I started to play with the idea of cause and effect, which led me to explore more fully what the material could do. I don't start out by saying I am going to do a painting of this or that. Instead, I begin with a general idea of what I am thinking and allow the process to lead me forward. In this painting for example, *UNTITLED [SIENNA MARBLE]*, the strips of paint were scraped off of another panel. I didn't know what to do with them at first, but I knew that they were interesting. One day I took them all and stacked them up and

I started playing around with them. I got this beautiful shape, and immediately saw its potential as the resolution for a panel I had already started. The surface of the latter had a beautiful marbling pattern, which coincidentally had all the same colors as the strips.

HOW MANY WORKS HAVE YOU DONE USING THIS PARTICULAR SHAPE?

Probably about 25. Some of the early ones I've destroyed when the work began to develop in a more interesting direction. They are constructed out of MDF (medium density fiberboard), which I like because it doesn't warp and is perfectly smooth.

THE SHAPE ITSELF ALSO HAS A MUSICAL QUALITY; IT REMINDS ME OF A MEDIEVAL LUTE, ALBEIT SIMPLIFIED.

I thought that you were going to say metronome.

THAT WOULD APPLY AS WELL.

I really haven't painted on a rectangular or square surface in 10 to 15 years. I just found it more interesting to work on shaped panels. LET'S LOOK AT THIS OTHER GROUP OF WORKS, TO WHICH YOU CASUALLY REFER TO AS ...

... "Paint/Rags". I've made a point of separating the two terms, "paint" and "rag", out of a concern that they not be read as merely a sleight of hand, or a trick on the viewer. They do go beyond painting, as a picture of a thing, being a facsimile of that thing if you will, and some of them do look remarkably like paint rags. But then beyond that, they also engage with many of the same issues I've explored in my other work with regard to nature, which is that all material is subject to the same laws of physics. Ultimately though, I just found it interesting to make a highfalutin art object about such an abject thing as a disposable paint rag.

YES, THERE IS OBVIOUSLY THE CONNOTATION OF AN EVERY-DAY, DOMESTIC OBJECT. WHEREAS THE OTHER BODY OF WORK IS RATHER TOTEMIC, SOMEWHAT STYLIZED, AND ICONOGRAPHIC, THESE PAINTINGS SEEM MORE FAMILIAR. IF YOU WOULD QUICKLY LOOK

AT THEM INSTALLED IN THE CONTEXT OF A HOME, IT COULD BE THAT YOU HAVE TO LOOK TWICE TO DECIDE BETWEEN ART AND A FUNCTIONAL OBJECT.

That's right. And I like that humble quality. The inspiration literally came from my paint rags in the studio. I thought they were so beautiful covered in stains. I first started by doing watercolors of them, wondering how I could actually incorporate that idea into the way I work with oil paint.

MEANWHILE, YOU'RE FOLDING THE MATERIAL, ALLUDING TO DRAPERY. THIS INTRODUCES A BAROQUE QUALITY TO THE WORK.

Yes. This gives me an opportunity to paint on the surface in a way that I don't often get to do, because the way I usually work is so process-oriented. Here, I'm cutting, slicing, and manipulating the material, but I'm also playing around with different kinds of surface patterns.

DO THE "PAINT/RAGS" START OUT AS FLAT SHEETS OF PAINT?

Yes they do, mostly.

HOW DO YOU DETERMINE COLOR COMBINATIONS?

It's largely intuitive. However, this piece for example was inspired by one of El Anatsui's large wall hangings.

IT'S INTERESTING THAT YOU ADMIT TO LOOKING AT OTHER ARTISTS FOR INSPIRATION. I THINK MOST ARTISTS DO, BUT YOU CITE SPECIFIC WORKS BY PURYEAR AND EL ANATSUI, FOR EXAMPLE.

I think it's wonderful to get inspired by particular works of art, especially here in New York, where we have the great privilege of seeing so many things up close and in person. Of course, I've seen many of El's works in person and they are spectacular and really so much like paintings themselves. So I wanted to use some of his ideas about pattern and color combinations. I have also looked at Philip Taaffe quite a bit, and the Pattern and Decoration movement is something that I have been interested in for a long time. Years ago, I saw a Taaffe show of works on paper in Zurich. They were incredibly beautiful and simple, using marbling as the

main motif. Now I finally found a way to incorporate marbling into my own work in a way that makes sense given my process.

IT'S AN EFFECT REMINISCENT OF FLORENTINE PAPER.

Yes, absolutely. And again, it ties into the whole baroque quality that my work has always had. My approach to color is often driven by its emotive potential. But also, color and form are one and the same in my painting, which is what defines so much of their character.

BUT THESE NEW WORKS INVOLVE A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT PROCESS. I REMEMBER THAT WHEN WE MET TWO YEARS AGO, YOU WERE SCRAPING BACK MULTIPLE LAYERS OF PAINT TO UNCOVER WHAT WAS UNDERNEATH. THERE WAS A SURPRISE ELEMENT TO THAT TECHNIQUE. NOW YOU ARE CONSCIOUSLY PUTTING TOGETHER COLOR COMPOSITIONS BEFORE SHAPING THE WORK. IS THAT CORRECT?

I would say that it's more of a combination of processes that are both familiar and new for me. I'm still building up layers and scraping them back, but maybe privileging more of the applied pieces in these works than ever before.

DO YOU EVER FEAR THAT A SPECIFIC PROCESS COULD BECOME ROUTINE?

No, but it is good to change things up a bit. I actually have been working on a couple of other projects, which have taken me completely out of my normal routine. That makes me think of something the New York based artist Glenn Goldberg said in a recent interview on Hyperallergic. He talked about the devotional aspect of his painting. One of the things that makes work for me difficult is that I am so dependent on a process that is outside of my control that I'm always in a slight state of anxiety. I don't usually have an opportunity to sit down and do something that is meditative and calming, a process that is devotional if you will. DO YOU MEAN THAT YOU TRY TO AVOID MAKING A WRONG DECISION, AS IT IS HARD TO BACKTRACK FROM THERE?

No. I make wrong decisions all the time! That's when I decide to scrape off the paint and hopefully reuse the material later. But I generally don't sit down and paint an image that I know will be more or less guided by a process that I can anticipate and control, like a straightforward still life in watercolor, for example. However, I've recently started two projects that offer up some of that opportunity. One is, that I'm designing some wallpaper for a company out in New Jersey called Studio Print works. The owner is Indian and the company has been in his family for thirty years. The family still operates out of India, where they are using traditional block printing techniques. When I learned that, I immediately thought of the 19th century Rajasthani serpent painting that we have in our living room, because it lends itself so brilliantly to a repeatable pattern. I have had a tremendous amount of difficulty finding information on these kinds of images, but as far as I can tell they are called Naga (a group of serpent deities in Hindu and Buddhist mythology) Bandhas (a term for the body locks in Hatha Yoga). There's very little about them in books and on the Internet and I've talked to numerous people, but I can't seem to get more information than that. Nevertheless, I have taken one of these Naga Bandhas, which was initially a square and I turned it on its axis and made a diamond out of it. I then removed all the references to a snake and just took the core element of its design motif. So now this is being produced in India in the traditional block printing technique.

**THIS PROJECTS FITS NICELY WITH YOUR INTEREST IN PATTERN AND DECORATION.**

Yes, absolutely. It also led me to another project when, while researching the Naga Bandhas, I came across a beautiful book called "Tantra Song; Tantric Painting from Rajasthan" (Siglio Press, 2011). I fell in love with this particular group of images of the Lingam (representation of the Hindu deity Shiva used for worship in temples) and it sparked a new group of works on

paper. It's the first time in I can't tell you how long that I found a single image that can sustain me. In the past, I have had trouble finding ways to translate what I do in painting into works on paper. So I jumped around a lot, stylistically and thematically. These new works however allow for an element of surprise and exploration not unlike what I experience with my paintings, but they are much more meditative and engaging in a way that feels devotional.

**MANY OF THEM FEATURE A FINE COLOR BLEED AROUND THE LINGAM SHAPE, WHICH CAN BE DESCRIBED AS AN ICONOGRAPHIC BLACK OVAL.**

Yes. That is the framework or the consistent motif. At Dieu Donn  Papermill (New York), I started pursuing the same image in cast paper. I start by pulling the paper pulp onto a flat sheet and transferring that sheet onto a surface. Then, I lay down a stencil before putting the colored pulp (usually black) into the center. The last step is to add other colors around the composition's edge and then the whole work is run through a printing press to flatten it and compress the layers of fiber. Again, all these unexpected things happen in the process through material interactions.

**YOUR WORKS ON PAPER MAKE FOR AN INTERESTING CONTRAST TO YOUR PAINTINGS. WHEREAS THE FORMER TRANSLATE AS MEDITATIVE CONTEMPLATIONS, THE LATTER OFTEN APPEAR AS AFFIRMATIVE AND CONCRETE. TOGETHER, THEY ACHIEVE A TEMPERAMENTAL BALANCE.**

In India, these Lingam images are used as an everyday, ordinary focus for meditation. They are not considered valuable and they're created anonymously. They are not signed and they aren't considered art. They are just painted and tacked up on the wall. I like the humbleness of that – like my paint rags – and I like the beauty in the simplicity of it.

**HAVE THESE WORKS ON PAPER BECOME PART OF YOUR DAILY PRACTICE?**



I just started them but I think they will. I don't meditate myself. I practice a little bit of yoga, but it is not something I've been a devotee of for years. But the works on paper do provide me with a kind of meditation, something I can practice every day. It's also a way of perfecting another medium in a flat, two-dimensional way. I'm not interested in fetishizing paint. I don't believe that the thicker the material the more infused with emotionality and depth of expression it is. More paint does not mean a more deeply felt gesture. Paint is just paint and I happen to use a lot of it in order to achieve a certain range of ideas, but I try to resist being lumped into a category of thick painters.

**DID YOU EVER SEE YOURSELF AS A SCULPTOR?**

I was a sculpture major in school. And I think there is no question that it had an impact on the way my work developed, but I did not consciously decide to make sculptural painting. For me paint is simply another material in which to construct an image. It happens to be made on a flat surface, but it's a construction material nonetheless.

**HOW DID YOU SETTLE ON PAINT AS A MEDIUM, WHEN YOU ORIGINALLY CAME FROM SCULPTURE?**

I was always a painter. I grew up studying traditional observational landscape and figuration and in fact the training was so rigorous that I feel I was ultimately drawn to abstraction as a way of releasing myself from my own skill. When I was 7 years old, my parents arranged for private lessons on Saturdays and then, I went to adult classes in high school on weekends. I don't think I was ever encouraged to develop my imagination – it was all about skill. Of course, now I'm very happy to have the skill, but I don't often get to use it in that way anymore.

**THE PERIMETERS YOU ARE WORKING WITH NOW ARE CERTAINLY YOUR OWN; YOU SET UP A FRAMEWORK WITHIN WHICH YOU EXPLORE COUNTLESS VARIATIONS.**

That last body of work I showed in New York, the "One Big Love" series came about because I wanted to give myself a more intimate project while I was working on a much larger body of work for a traveling show. I set myself up with a set of rules, something to push up against. I think those limitations allowed me to find new ways to think about the way I work and what I can achieve. These new works embrace a similar kind of process where limitation is the format and within that format I investigate how many infinite variations I can come up with.

**IT'S AN INTERESTING CHALLENGE THAT YOU'RE EMBRACING AND OBVIOUSLY ENJOYING. DO YOU THINK YOU WILL SHOW SOME OF THE WORKS ON PAPER IN YOUR UPCOMING EXHIBITION AS WELL?**

I would love to, but I don't know how it would work out. The show is going to be in Jack Shainman's new 24th Street gallery, which has a very long corridor that separates two spaces. That actually lends itself perfectly to showing two bodies of work that are different yet related, but it doesn't leave too much room for adding the works on paper as well. So I think I would like to save these for a whole other exhibition opportunity.

**TELL ME ABOUT YOUR STUDIO'S WALL OF INSPIRATION, A COLLECTION OF IMAGES AND CARDS CLOSE TO THE ENTRANCE.**

It changes all the time, but right now I've got up images of works by friends, and announcement cards that I find inspiring. They currently include an early piece from a catalog of David Reed's that gave me a lot to think about in terms of the vertical format and several by Ken Price who I've been thinking a lot about lately. Price has had a very significant impact on my work in terms of how I think about the conflation of form and color. He also represents a sensibility toward craft that I think is uniquely Californian, which is something I certainly relate to having grown up in California myself.

**SURFACE CERTAINLY DESCRIBES A MAJOR ASPECT OF YOUR OWN WORK AS WELL.**

Yes. And I also want for it to have an aspect of inevitability, that the forces in play caused the material to behave in a way that could not have produced any other kind of result other than the one you see. There is a fair amount of manipulation involved every time of course. Each work is the result of a very distinct experience. In the end, it's kind of like a family; all the members of the family are related, but each one remains an individual.

**AND SOME OF THEM GET ALONG VERY WELL AND OTHERS DON'T.**

And that's usually what happens when I have a show. All the works go to the gallery and we start hanging things. Inevitably there are paintings I am really attached to that don't get hung, because they don't "play well with others!" You just have to let go at some point. That's something most artists struggle with in the studio as well, letting go. I think that some of the best things I've done have been when, in a moment of paralysis, I've said "screw it, if I ruin it I ruin it. Just do something!" Then, something wonderful happens – not always but often. It's that point where you are able to allow the process to take over without completely denying your bank of knowledge.

# ARTFORUM

CRITICS' PICKS

## New York

### “Common Thread”

MIXED GREENS

531 West 26th Street, First Floor

July 23–August 28

Thirty-two years ago, the Bauhaus-schooled artist and textile designer Anni Albers made *Study for DO II*, (1973), a shimmering mélange of small parallelograms and triangles. Colored in with shades of either silver or yellow gouache on blueprint paper, the work seems preparatory, almost casual: lines appear unruled, and shapes vary in size and skew. Brushstrokes haphazardly emerge and recede into flat color. One year later, Albers refined this pattern and christened it *Eclat*, which was subsequently manufactured and sold as an upholstery fabric by the design firm Knoll.

In 2009, Ellen Lesperance painted 1921, Annie Fleischmann Demonstrates Simultaneous Contrast Herself with *the Help of a Knitted I-Cord Necklace: It Would Be a Year Before Even Meeting Josef Albers*, a rendering of a knitting pattern that corresponds to a sweater she saw Albers wearing in an old photograph. This work and Albers' *Study for DO II* are neighbors in this group exhibition, “Common Thread,” and they accompany fifteen contemporary paintings—all made by women—that employ pigment to imitate fabric. Sarah Harrison paints an intricate, pointillist detail of a Persian rug; Summer Wheat's *Twin Bed*, 2015, drizzles loopy acrylic daisies atop a black canvas in a perfect evocation of a knotty yarn blanket. Angela Teng and Leslie Wayne venture further into the physical realm: The former crochets dried acrylic paint into a rigid cloth the size of a hand towel, and the latter molds oil-painted panels into the shapes of hanging rags, their ripples and curls eternally frozen into topographic simulacra.

By adapting properties of textile design to the conventions of painting, the works in “Common Thread” expose the restrictive power of our categories for artistic production. For many artists, it is an important theme; for others—the countless women who have been relegated to the domain of arts and crafts—it is the center of their practice.

— Juliana Halpert



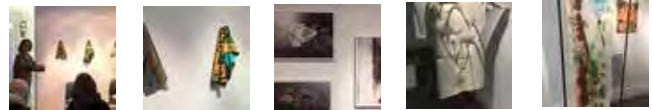
Ellen Lesperance, 1921, Annie Fleischmann Demonstrates Simultaneous Contrast Herself with the Help of a Knitted I-Cord Necklace; It Would Be a Year Before Even Meeting Josef Albers, 2009, gouache and graphite on tea stained paper, 22 x 29".

## Stamford Art Exhibit Explores The Influence Of Painting

by Casey Donahue Lifestyle



Leslie Wayne discusses her technique used to create pieces hanging in a new exhibit at Franklin Street Works in Stamford. Photo Credit: Casey Donahue



STAMFORD, Conn. -- Take a look at Leslie Wayne's pieces in a new exhibit at [Franklin Street Works](#) in Stamford, and you might think they were just rags hanging on the wall. But a closer inspection reveals they are actually pieces created out of oil and acrylic paint on panels. Wayne is one of several artists in the exhibit "About Like So: The Influence of Painting" now on display at Franklin Street Works. The pieces in the exhibit include paintings, sculpture, videos, photographs and digital prints. The exhibit was curated by the gallery's creative director Terri Smith, who said the aim was to explore how history and processes of painting inform conceptual art practices. The pieces use paint in unorthodox ways or show its influence on other media. Wayne visited Franklin Street Works on Saturday afternoon for a talk on her series "Paint/Rag." She discussed her beginnings as a landscape painter who studied in Paris, and how she moved on to sculpture and eventually abstract expressionism. She eventually moved into paintings with shapes, such as her rag series, which are created by taking layers of paint and draping it over other layers to create the appearance of a rag hanging on a hook. "The ideas come out of the process," Wayne said. Some of the pieces are meant to look like paint-stained rags, while others resemble African tribal fabrics. "It's very organic." Other pieces in the exhibit include John Knuth's "Transformation Foresight," which he created by feeding paint to flies and letting them excrete it onto paper. Siebren Versteeg created abstract paintings using a computer algorithm, put them into Google Image search to find pictures that looked like it, and painted the results. The Franklin Street Works will hold an artist talk and closing reception for the exhibit Saturday, Feb. 21, from 4 to 6 p.m. The event will feature some of the artists involved in the exhibit, including Sophy Naess and Siebren Versteeg.



KAREN WILKIN

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## At the Galleries

THE PAST SEASON'S GRIM WEATHER MADE VISITING galleries in New York's windswept Chelsea—and elsewhere—a test not just of perseverance but also of endurance, but for the hardy, there were ample rewards. These included sumptuous abstractions by Larry Poons and Melissa Meyer, playful wall pieces by Leslie Wayne, solemn still lifes and figure paintings by William Bailey, and, if we ventured uptown, thoughtful disquisitions on perception by Lois Dodd—a notably diverse list of exhibitions unified only by their all dealing with (mostly) recent work by mature Americans. If we braved the slush and ice of alternating thaw and freeze further uptown, there was a mini-retrospective of the German-born Swiss sculptor Hans Josephsohn (1920–2012), a high point of the Arsénale installation at the 2013 Venice Biennale whose work is all-too-rarely seen in this country.

At Danese/Corey, Larry Poons's large, seductive canvases, all painted in 2013, first impressed us with their simmering energy. These urgently stroked expanses threatened to explode; their accumulated touches of paint might break free to hover like force fields in midair. At first, too, this new series seemed dominated by a creamy, blonde palette, like an update of Renoir's best, most inventive color—which fascinated both Matisse and Picasso. But soon, the individuality and unexpectedness of each painting's chromatic structure, which Poons has taught us to expect of him, became evident. Like all of his work, starting with the optically challenging Lozenge paintings that first established his reputation, his new paintings revealed themselves slowly, despite the immediacy of their initial impact. Once our eyes adjusted to intricate nuances of hue and subtle, almost ungraspable modulations, the gatherings of fluctuating, tawny strokes yielded up flashes of radiant blue, notes of chartreuse and deep greens, improbable pinks and reds, strange lavenders, and more. These brilliant notes pulsed among the wristy skeins and whorls of more neutral colors, creating such ambitious and unpredictable harmonies and dissonances that it was impossible to resist the perhaps obvious metaphor of symphonic music, with its complex development of themes, rhythms, and tonalities over an extended period of time, as a way of thinking about these authoritative paintings. In works such as *The Forlorn Patrol* or *Big Tilda*, large-scale drawing, suggestive of growth, fecundity, and our constantly changing view of our surroundings, threaded through and across the shifting webs of color, establishing generous rhythms that momentarily stabi-

lized the tenuously associated brush and finger marks, altering the way we intuited space and changing the scale of the confrontational field before us.

It's often noted that Poons's recent works, unfettered as they are, are deeply informed by his sense of continuity with the art of the past: Pollock, late Monet, Bonnard, Cézanne, and Titian, to name only a few. (Mondrian is also one of his heroes.) But Poons's dazzling canvases also contribute to what his friend, the sculptor Anthony Caro, called "the onward of art." Such Modernist concepts as all-overness and color's independence from reference are made into new kinds of intensely personal, uninhibited visual phenomena. Poons's recent work transubstantiates our encounters with the world around us, both natural and man-made, into a wholly abstract language of paint, gesture, and color that, paradoxically, conjures up myriad, fleeting associations. "Color is light," Poons has repeatedly said. For all their evident seamlessness with the inventive art of the past, his new canvases also explore uncharted territory. He appears to have distilled painting to its essence—colored marks on a flat surface, as equivalents for "pure" visual experience—at the same time that he asserts both the important presence of the person making those marks and the elusiveness of the perceptions to which they refer. The ravishing results prove the vitality of "the onward of art"—still more evidence, as many of us keep saying, that it's time for a full-scale Poons retrospective.

At Lennon, Weinberg, Inc., Melissa Meyer's bold new paintings and watercolors, made over the past two years, reminded us that she, like Poons, proceeds from an acute awareness of her surroundings, wedded to a thorough understanding of the implications of Modernism, to arrive at lively, personal abstractions. Meyer refines a host of visual suggestions into glyph-like calligraphic gestures, disciplined by the almost subliminal presence of a generously scaled grid. Each painting had a particular mood, quality of light, and temperature, a function of variations in color, density, scale, and in the character of the "glyphs," which are as individual and spontaneous as handwriting, now cursive and fluid, now angular and abrupt.

Meyer's compositions begin with large blocks of color, often, in her recent work, in hues so pale and evanescent that we can doubt that we are seeing them. The overscaled drawing, in various colors, that overlies the generating blocks, can be layered or sparse, tangled or orderly, expansive or compressed, complex and knotted, transparent or crisp, or spare and geometric. While the generating grid sometimes declares itself forcefully in some paintings, in others, the energy of any given "glyph" appears to have affected everything around it, constraining drawing incidents to spread, elongate, or compress. Alterations in the density of the fabric of gestures further change our relationship to these paintings, determining whether we read the grid of glyphs as a single, inflected, confrontational plane or attempt to plunge through layers of drawing to explore fictive depths.

The biggest surprises in the recent show were a group of large, near-monochrome canvases built of dark calligraphic gestures of various weights on white grounds that, on first acquaintance, seemed as restrained as Meyer's black-and-white works on paper. Almost immediately, though, transparent greys, some tending towards brown or purple, declared themselves, reinforcing the shifts in clarity and width among the glyphs. Similarly, faint tinges of unimaginably delicate color beneath the drawing began to animate the grounds of these seemingly graphic, straightforward pictures. The longer we looked, the more there was to see. Equally provocative was *Devlin*, 2013, a large, squarish canvas with mouth-puckering oranges made more acidic by the proximity of brushy reds tending to purples, citrus yellows, and saturated blues. At once densely layered and airy, *Devlin* was distinguished by loose, dark calligraphy that suggested trajectories through space, like the paths we mentally trace in classical Chinese landscape painting. Both this painting and the tantalizing monochromes pointed to new directions for Meyer. Deeply satisfying as her recent works are, they also make us eager to see what happens next.

For some years, Leslie Wayne has celebrated the materiality of oil paint. The surfaces of her paintings seemed to crumple and buckle; pleats and gathers of "skin" appeared to accumulate in corners. In some works, the sheer weight of expanses of color seemed to make them droop in voluptuous curves, like heavy, cowl-necked garments. Yet no matter how physically insistent Wayne's robust works appeared to be, it was impossible to read them as anything but magically stilled embodiments of her chosen medium's ability to be both thick and flowing—that is, they read primarily as variations on the time-honored, literal flatness of the painting. Her show of recent works, at Jack Shainman Gallery, provocatively titled "Rags," expanded on ideas announced in her previous efforts in witty, irregularly shaped, multihued objects that verged on relief, as if demonstrating that she had completely revised her idea of the defining characteristics of painting.

The "Rags" read as if Wayne had peeled the surface layers off her earlier works and hung them, casually, without calculation, on the wall, like scarves tossed onto coat pegs. Conceptually, in fact, this was more or less how these ambiguous objects were made. Like her earlier works, the "Rags" are manipulated skins of oil paint, yet Wayne's extreme draping, in the current series, made us think less about conventional, flat painting than about supple, soft things made of fabric. The exuberant patterns and/or freely applied color of each "Rag" not only reinforced those associations but also moved us into the realm of decorative textiles (in the Matisse-ian sense) and fashion. Wayne refers to a work with rippling, parallel bands of color as "my Missoni." Yet the pools and streaks of color sometimes returned us to the workaday world of the studio. "The show should be called 'Paint/Rags,'" Wayne says, not wholly facetiously. "They look like paint rags and they are 'rags' made of paint."

Yet these shorthand descriptions fail to account for the multiple ways



these apparently declarative objects demand to be considered. Wayne plays with our perceptions, creating works that are at once highly illusionistic and highly artificial. The pleats and folds of the drapery are obviously real three-dimensional events, but as we approach each "Rag," we realize how free and improvisatory the paint-handling is, at the same time that we note the rigidity of the materials themselves and the individuality of the draping of each work. The sense that we are being presented with soft, patterned fabric is replaced by heightened awareness of gesture, shaping, and the physicality of materials. As installed at Jack Shainman, the size and general configuration of the draped, wall-mounted "Rags," with their curved tops and descending ends, mounted at eye level, provoked yet other associations. The elegantly spaced row of vaguely triangular, round-topped, projecting objects started to stare back at us, becoming a row of stylized, abstracted heads. These playful, multivalent works are among Wayne's most engaging to date.

William Bailey's exhibition of still lifes and figure paintings at Betty Cuninghame Gallery surveyed his evolution over the past five decades, beginning with a 1963 profile head that, like all of Bailey's work, announced his deep love and understanding of Italian Renaissance painting. The picture also announced other constants in his approach: muted "dry" color, evocative of fresco or tempera painting; firmly modeled, clearly delineated form; a sense of dusty, diffuse light; a mood of preternatural stillness—Bailey's images, whether still lifes or figures, resonate with the endlessly prolonged time of an idle summer afternoon in Italy. All of these qualities were present in the large, haunting *L'Attesa*, 2006—half-length woman at a window, bathed in moody light—and in a series, painted between 2010 and 2013, of women stretched out on an Umbrian hillside, like decorous improvisations on Courbet's *Young Ladies on the Bank of the Seine*. The still lifes, too, with their familiar cast of inanimate characters, echoed with similar concerns. Perhaps this consistency owes something to Bailey's working not from observation but from memory and imagination, filtering his keen awareness of his environment through his understanding of the history of art.

Morandi is often invoked in relation to Bailey's still lifes, despite the notable differences between the two artists' work, largely, I suspect, because of Bailey's reprising of particular objects—mixing bowls, pitchers, tureens, vases, eggcups—although it's worth noting that these domestic accouterments are quite unlike those portrayed by the Bolognese master. Most of Bailey's recent still lifes, at Betty Cuninghame, were notable for a new kind of monumentality. There seemed to be more air around each of the objects, so that their three-dimensional geometry, their allusion to Platonic archetypes, seemed to be of greater import than their connection to the real world. The relationship of the corner of a room to an egg, lying on a table among bowls and cups, seemed to embody the fundamental difference between angularity and roundness. Piero della Francesca's measured gatherings of economi-



cally modeled figures seemed more present as the ancestors of these introspective groups of household china than Morandi's bottles and oil pitchers. Bailey is eighty-three. As the selection at Betty Cuninghame makes clear, he has been a remarkably single-minded and consistent painter for half a century. Is the new sense of amplitude and generosity in his still lifes of the last few years a sign of what art historians call "late style"?

Uptown, at Alexandre Gallery, Lois Dodd's radiant landscapes and flower paintings offered another example of the undiminished abilities of a gifted octogenarian. Yet Dodd's approach is diametrically opposed to Bailey's. The light-struck summer and winter landscapes she exhibited, along with a few night scenes and some larger-than-life tributes to such plants as Queen Anne's lace past its prime, were all done directly from observation, in sharp contrast to Bailey's improvisations from memory and imagination. Yet Dodd's paintings, for all their apparent specificity of subject, season, and time of day, are also highly abstract. She distills the inexhaustible complexity of summer foliage and shifting light into broad zones of color and assured passes of the brush, convincing us of the truth of her vision not by meticulously recording what she has seen but rather by leaving things out. The essentials of her acute perceptions are reduced to an evocative palette and economical shapes. Multitudes of visual incident are refined into passages of amazing directness. Thin washes of unbroken color become sunlight shining through patchy yellow-green leaves or radiating off snow; a flat red shape stamps itself out as a shirt on a clothesline, graphic evidence of human presence in an uncannily still, seemingly uninhabited world; large zones of brushy gray and near-black recapitulate how we deduce the particulars of what is before us from minimal clues at night.

Nothing in Dodd's paintings is quite as straightforward or uncomplicated as it seems. Viewpoints shift. The scale of individual objects seems mutable. In one memorable work in her recent show, the pale yellow bells of a foxglove loomed over a wheelbarrow. The disparity implied space, but Dodd's forthright paint-handling application and consistently weighted color made the fictive, two-dimensional character of the eloquent, modestly sized panel as demanding of our attention as its evocation of the yard surrounding her Maine house in summer. In all of Dodd's paintings, an implicit firm but non-Platonic geometry resonates, making each apparently inconsequential fragment of "something I saw" seem enormously significant. Yet in some of the most compelling works at Alexandre Gallery, she seemed to play fast and loose with our expectations of logical structure, as she often has done in images of windows (both as passages into other spaces and/or as reflective surfaces) as if reminding us of the unpredictable, unreliable aspects of vision. Dodd's account of a complicated rooftop in a painting pared down to intersecting planes was both as unpredictable as a Cubist construction and utterly convincing as architecture. Just as we must invest time in Poons's abstractions if we are to grasp the surprising nuances of his extraordi-

nary color, we must pay close attention to Dodd's deceptively simple extrapolations of what she has seen if we are to understand just how remarkable a painter she is. She only *seems* to present us with uncomplicated views of a familiar world.

For anyone who missed the stunning Hans Josephsohn installation at the Arsenale last year, the selection of his sculptures and reliefs at Hauser & Wirth's East 69<sup>th</sup> Street space was a wonderful introduction to this uncompromising artist. It was possible to trace the evolution of his forms from a sturdy but articulate, thickset, standing, over-life-size nude, made in 1969, to a massive reclining nude, similarly larger than life and as implacable as a mountain range, made in 2006. The trajectory was reinforced by the presence of two small early figurative reliefs from 1952 and 1962–64 respectively, along with some blunt, mysterious, larger wall-mounted pieces from the 1990s. Heads, torsos, and half-figures traced Josephsohn's evolution over the years, vivid testimony to his slow working method of accretion, a cumulative process of layering on and removing masses of plaster until the sculpture has achieved a kind of expressive bulk and looks back at us. Josephsohn's burly forms ambiguously shift scale and reference, now confronting us as over-scaled, minimally defined torsos, now suggesting that features are struggling to emerge from the swelling mass before us, now pulling themselves up to evoke half-length beings.

Josephsohn convinces us that we are watching the invention of sculpture, made privy to the moment when someone scooped up the first double handful of mud and modeled something that suggested a body. His rough-hewn surfaces and the dark patination of the brass in which these uncanny creatures are cast strengthen the idea. His best works seem primordial and, despite their evident weight and visual solidity, strangely unstable, as if they might slump back into the earth again, should we look away. Yet, oddly, this association with the natural world also makes Josephsohn's loaded, blurred volumes seem inevitable and, paradoxically, permanent, as if they were part of the landscape itself. But the harder we look, the more the vaguely implied features and body parts subside into the dense, aggressive form—which keeps us looking and moving around his enigmatic masses, at once enjoying them for their sheer physicality, divorced from reference, and seeking clues to the maker's intention. Josephsohn is a fascinating, puzzling artist who clearly followed his own path with great determination. Let's hope we get to see his work with some regularity from now on on this side of the Atlantic.

A marvelous, notably intelligent exhibition, "American Adversaries: West and Copley in a Transatlantic World," organized by Emily Ballew Neff with Kaylin H. Weber at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, provided a fine excuse to escape the New York cold for Texas. The show examined the overlapping careers of the expatriate eighteenth-century painters, Benjamin West and John Singleton Copley, both born in 1738, West in Pennsylvania and Copley in the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

Improbably, these American-born Britons, provincial outsiders from a remote part of the Empire, became leading lights of sophisticated London art circles, just as America's ties to Britain were breaking irrevocably apart. Both were elected to that bastion of high-minded aesthetic values, the Royal Academy of Arts, established by George III in 1768, and West, a co-founder of the Academy, became its second president after the death of the first, Sir Joshua Reynolds. Even more improbably, the two American-born artists essentially reinvented the most prestigious genre of the day, History Painting, changing its purview from scenes from the ancient past and classical literature to up-to-the-minute current events.

Of the two emigrés, West is relatively unfamiliar in the U.S., while Copley is acclaimed here for the incisive portraits of his fellow Bostonians he did before leaving the Colonies, such as his well-known image of a young relative with a squirrel, which caused a sensation when he sent it to London for exhibition. Impressed British artists began corresponding with him, including West, who had settled in London in 1763, after a three-year Italian art tour, and had attracted enough notice to be appointed history painter to the king. He encouraged Copley to leave Boston, finally persuading him to embark on his own Grand Tour in 1774. The following year, Copley moved permanently to London with his family.

Through an illuminating selection of works of art, artifacts, and documentary material, the fascinating exhibition traced the influence of Italian art on the two men, evoked West's famous collection and school, brought to life the turbulent times in which they worked—especially in relation to the peoples and events of North America—and offered an economical overview of their respective evolutions as painters. Important works of art dominated, including West's *The Death of General Wolfe*, 1770, a paean to heroism populated by British officers, Indians, and exotically clad Colonials co-opted to the British cause against the French in Canada, plus Copley's astonishing *Watson and the Shark*, 1778, with its pallid swimmer, transparent water, and crowd of anxious rescuers. Such spectacular pairings, along with enriching contextual material, demonstrated the aesthetic and political climate of the period under review, while other sequences of works made clear how West and Copley, as colleagues and fellow Academicians, gradually changed from friends and mutual supporters to bitter rivals. It was exciting to follow this interesting story as told by the exhibition's well-chosen paintings and related objects—all in all, a splendid show. "American Adversaries" didn't travel, but there's a first-rate catalogue.

Winters are cold in Marfa, Texas, home of the Chinati and Donald Judd Foundations, dedicated to the work of Donald Judd and some of his artist friends, permanently installed in Judd's conception of ideal settings. In addition to these largely unchanging exhibits, the Chinati Foundation sponsors artists-in-residence, who are invited to do temporary exhibitions in some of the town's utilitarian buildings that



Judd liked so much (and acquired so many of). Recently, the photographer Zoe Leonard installed *100 North Nevill Street*, a camera obscura, in one of those buildings, the Ice Plant, near Marfa's railroad tracks. A powerful lens focused the inverted panorama of bare trees, wonky power-poles, fences, and nearby buildings the full length and height of the tall, rectangular interior, with distorted views wrapping around the ends. Changing light and passing cars, their definition varying according to their distance, animated the space. Best of all were the long freight trains loaded with brightly colored containers, a narrow band of geometric drawing. The spectacle was mesmerizing, with the unprepossessing subject matter abstracted by inversion and by the unpredictability of what was projected. Time seemed to slow down in the Ice Plant, as the hard-to-identify images moved at varying speeds and irregular intervals around the walls. The result was terrific vernacular theater, even if the naked branches of the projected trees reminded us that it was still winter.

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# Facing the Blank Canvas

Terror. Doubt. Anxiety.  
Artists offer their tricks  
and tips for getting  
beyond the roadblocks  
and starting new work

BY ANN LANDI

In Tom Burckhardt's installation *FULL STOP* (2004–5), a large, empty canvas dominates a cluttered studio filled with books, paint tubes and brushes, sketches on the walls, and other paraphernalia of an artist's working life. It's a tour de force made entirely of cardboard; the whole thing has been shipped to such places as the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum in Ridgefield, Connecticut, and DiverseWorks in Houston. It will be shown this fall at the Columbus College of Art & Design in Ohio.

The New York-based artist says the blank canvas in particular was his "response to feeling stuck with some of my painting, and not liking the way I was painting at the time, the way that everything was coming out so polite and well-mannered. Like every artist, I was starting to think, 'Well, what if I'm going to be stuck, what if I can't make anything else?'"

And that white slab of canvas, about 40 inches square, represents the terror many artists suffer before beginning a new project or body of work. Like an athlete, the artist requires downtime to recharge and gear up for new endeavors—and to forestall the panic of possibly not having the stamina or talent or inspiration to pull it off again. Tactics for filling up or emptying out before moving on can vary from the simple expedient of



Nene Humphrey revs up by scouring her studio. Her sculpture *Kentler Braid*, 2012, re-creates Victorian mourning braiding patterns in wire and bead.



COURTESY THE ARTIST AND LESLEY HELLER WORKSPACE, NEW YORK (2)



taking a vacation to months of reading to turning to a new medium, but one of the favorites seems to be the mundane task of cleaning out the studio.

Nene Humphrey is artist in residence at the Joseph LeDoux Center for Neural Science at New York University; her recent drawings and sculptures were inspired by the science of the brain. For years, she has been following the same ritual of thoroughly scouring her work space, a process that can take as long as a month.

"I start at the back of my studio. I get a big pail of hot water, some Mr. Clean, and a bunch of rags. I start at the top of the shelf nearest the door, and I slowly move my way up the room until everything is absolutely immaculate and orderly," she says. "And then it's so clean I have to do something again. I can start whatever's been rummaging around in my head."

**S**culptor Don Porcaro turns to the same strategy, cleaning his tools and getting rid of "all traces of the last body of work. I consider it a form of meditation, a way of focusing and getting relaxed." Some find that any meditative activity offers a way of emptying the mind in preparation for pursuing new endeavors. Painter Emilio Perez likes to go surfing between bodies of work, "to get rid of all that nervous energy, to get to a point where I can just focus on the work."

Pat Steir was influenced by John Cage early in her career, and her practice is founded on meditation. "The



**The empty canvas dominating Tom Burckhardt's cardboard installation *FULL STOP*, 2004–5, expresses the artist's recurrent fear of "feeling stuck."**



size is predetermined, and in each case the colors are predetermined," she says of her large-scale canvases. Because she considers her work grounded in performative actions, she envisions the kinds of movements she will make that will bring the pictures to life.

"Like the Japanese calligraphers, I meditate on the action," she explains. "I mix the paint in big buckets, and then I sit in front of the canvases for a long time, maybe for an hour, sometimes as long as a month."

For Steir, having many paintings going at the same time helps forestall any dread of not knowing what to do next. The same is true for Peter Plagens, whose life as both an artist and a critic means that he's "always

toggling between on and off, or 'A' and 'B.' Two hours at a shot is a long time in the studio for me," he says, adding, "My wife has told me that I have the concentration span of a toddler."

Plagens finds it useful to work in groups of about six canvases at a time, and to get started he turns to certain strategies in order to avoid what he calls his "mannerisms and pretty-making impulses." For him, one way of getting started is to work late at night or when he's tired, "so that it's like drawing with your 'off' hand. Basically, it just involves haste and fatigue to get ideas off the ground."

"Before I stand in front of the canvas, I make a big effort not to have an image," says Enrique Martínez Celaya, a Cuban American artist who divides his time between Delray Beach, Florida, and Los Angeles. Martínez Celaya works in many different mediums. If he's at work on a painting, "more often than not I like to break the whiteness of the canvas by doing something to it, not worrying so much if this is what I'm really after. I like to discover the painting in the act of painting itself."

As an example, he cites his work *The Surrogate* (2014), a large picture of a solitary tree, which was painted over an image of a house. "All my paintings typically have three or four or five others underneath, but you very often don't see that history in the work."

Turning to an entirely different medium can also serve as a bridge to a new body of work. "I've been working on a series of gouache and acrylic paintings on paper with a single motif based on the Tantric lingam, an oval shape often used as a point of meditation," says Leslie Wayne, whose last show at Jack Shainman Gallery, "Rags," involved a labor-intensive process of building up layers of paint draped over an armature. "Usually one body of work morphs into the next, but I find that sometimes if I just sit down and start doing a few of these in the morning before I get going, that gets all the muscles moving."

Sketching is another age-old activity for artists in their off hours, as a way of unwinding and of generating new ideas. When she visited the Grand Canyon last summer, Elisabeth Condon, who divides her time between New York and Tampa, Florida, and shows big abstract work at Lesley Heller Workspace in New York, made drawings and watercolors every day. "I would do small studies and draw for hours by the canyon and I would build those up into larger watercolors, and now I'm in the process of building those up into paintings."

For Will Ryman, making sketches between large-scale installations may have nothing to do with the final product. "They're never specific ideas, but they keep my hands moving, and that keeps me grounded creatively in some weird way and usually leads to connecting the dots between whatever concepts I'm thinking about and then whatever images I want to create three-dimensionally," he says. "I do that for weeks and months sometimes. It's a germination process."



**Elisabeth Condon's large paintings are built up from drawings and watercolors, such as *Slipping Cheops Pyramid*, 2013, painted during a visit to the Grand Canyon.**



**Emilio Perez surfs to use up nervous energy and refocus for a new body of work. *The Endless Island*, 2013, suggests the flux and flow of masses of water.**

Given the growing popularity of the computer as part of the creative process, it's not surprising that certain programs lend themselves well to sketching. Between bodies of work, Eric Fischl turns to Photoshop to work up new imagery. "That can take some time," he admits, "which is good because I am still avoiding the blank canvas. When I have the image I want to work from, I print it out, and having done that I stand in front of the canvas, holding up the image and wishing I could just sneeze and the image would magically scale up and adhere to the canvas. But, unfortunately, I actually have to paint it."



**Kathy Butterly draws inspiration for sculptures such as *Color Hoard-r*, 2013, from her bedtime reading. She recently made her way through *Moby-Dick*.**





**"I like to discover the painting in the act of painting itself," says Enrique Martínez Celaya. The solitary tree in *The Surrogate*, 2014, was painted over an earlier image.**

For many artists, reading offers a way to decompress between projects, and yet the books artists select may seem at first baffling choices. A few of Ryman's preferred titles right now include *Academic Capitalism and the New Economy: Markets, State, and Higher Education* by Sheila Slaughter and Gary Rhoades, Noam Chomsky's *Media Control* and *How the World Works*, and James Barrat's *Our Final Invention: Artificial Intelligence and the End of the Human Era*.

"I'm interested in the psychology of our culture, specifically the psychology of capitalism," Ryman says. Though installations such as *The Roses* (2011) and *America* (2013) may not at first appear to be overtly political, they are about taking "very simple truths and making them into complex objects."

Similarly, Kathy Butterly's bedtime reading may be a surprise, given the spirit of her whimsical and seductive ceramic sculptures: she was recently making her way through Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*. "Even reading just one or two pages," she says, "it's like looking at a great painting. That's all I need at the moment—just to feel that passion in his word choices."

For Julian Hatton, a painter who shows at Elizabeth Harris Gallery in New York, reading has provided a way of understanding his own processes. One of his favorite authors is Eric Kandel, a neuropsychiatrist and an expert on the subject of memory storage in the brain.

"After studying his ideas, I have a much better idea of what's going on in my head, and why I don't know if what I'm doing that day in the studio is any good, because the brain takes a long time to process new information," Hatton says. "He helps me understand why I have to wait till the next day to see if I'm on the right track."

Just as music works as a powerful source of arousal for everything from dancing to sex, it also puts artists in the mood. "The thing that always gets me into the right frame of mind to work is just putting on some music," says Wayne. "I have everything from jazz and classical to pop and rock and roll."

For one of Condon's series, music was essential to getting the paintings off the ground and staying in the right rhythm. "In 2012 I made a group of paintings called 'Seven Seas,' and it was a huge departure for me," she explains. "I wanted to do a series of landscapes about Los Angeles circa 1974, which was when I went to my first nightclub, and the paintings were based on the music of the time, which was glam rock—David Bowie, Iggy Pop, Led Zeppelin, and so on. The music was essential and put me into that state of walking into the nightclub. I would remember what it was like—I was 14 at the time, and it was a wake-up call from my suburban childhood."

Of course, there is always the rare artist whose batteries recharge quickly and effortlessly. Between paintings or drawings, Mark Sheinkman says, "I clear off the work table and lie down and close my eyes. Or I walk the dog. I just take a pause. The unspoken subtext here is procrastination. One thing I almost never do is bring my computer to the studio. It's the most efficient procrastination device ever invented." ■



Leslie Wayne's *Lingam 2*, 2013, is from a series based on the Tantric symbol of fecundity, an oval shape often used as a focus of meditation.



Artist and critic Peter Plagens works in groups of about six canvases at a time. A central motif composed of flat geometric shapes often plays a dominant role, as in *untitled (red)*, 2013.





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# New York artist Leslie Wayne challenging traditional two-dimensional painting in 'Mind the Gap' at UAB's AEIVA

By Michael Huebner

May 20, 2014 at 5:10 PM

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama -- For New York artist [Leslie Wayne](#), color is space, and space is form.

If that concept sounds too abstract, it's because Wayne's work is also abstract. Yet her artistic vision is really quite simple – transform something as elemental as paint into something tangible, and entirely her own.

Wayne's art lies somewhere between paint and sculpture. In fact, in the works she will exhibit in "Mind the Gap," opening June 6 at UAB's [Abrams-Engel Institute for the Visual Arts](#), the paint is the sculpture.

Still difficult to grasp? Take a look at one of her brightly-colored draped hanging cloths. Fabric? Sculpture? No, it's paint, fashioned into a what looks like a cloth. Or the stacks of billowing, drooping paint that somehow coalesce into a finished work that suggest bolts of fabric. Or, on a much larger scale, the movement of tectonic plates.



Wayne has been strongly lauded for her works, which have been written about in Art in America, ARTnews and the New York Times. A recipient of a Joan Mitchell Artist Grant and a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Artist Grant, she began her artistic career as a traditional landscape painter. After she moved to New York, she entered a sculpture program at Parsons The New School for Design, but her love for paint, particularly the more malleable oil paint rather than the quick-drying acrylic, led her back to painting. The "gap" in "Mind the Gap" refers to the various periods that bridge her career, and her method of creating art.

"I was trying to find a title that would encompass more of a philosophy that would describe a process rather than the actual work," Wayne said from her studio in the Hell's Kitchen area of New York. "The apparent gap will be that there are three very different looking bodies of work, but in fact, there is a thread that runs through them all. The thread that binds the work is stronger than the apparent gap."

The exhibition is the first solo show for AEIVA, which opened in January across from the [Alys Stephens Center](#). Two works in the show are being lent by Birmingham collectors Lydia Cheney and Jim Sokol. Others come from Jack Shainman Gallery in New York. "Mind the Gap" will coincide with two other exhibitions – "Objects of Authority: Embroideries and Other Contemporary Arts from Western India" and "After Sosaku Hanga: Creativity and Modernity in Japanese Prints of the 1960s and 1970s." All three exhibitions will share an opening reception on Friday, June 6, from 5-7:30 p.m.

Wayne, who will oversee the hanging of her works, will also speak to UAB painting students, who stand to benefit from her unique vision, at 4 p.m. on June 6.

"The works exhibited challenge traditional notions of painting as a two-dimension work of art, the traditional painting on canvas," said [Lauren Lake](#), chair of UAB's [Department of Art and Art History](#). "Wayne challenges the pictorial plane in her brightly colored, delightful abstract objects."

For Wayne, getting those works finished is a matter of process rather than planning. When does she know when the process, or an art work, is finished?

"It's hard to explain," she said. "It just feels right. Sometimes I just don't know, and I have to put it away or not look at it for a week, or just with fresh eyes. But when you know, you know."

It works a lot like nature, she said, each layer of paint working like the movement of the earth over time.

"I'm trying to express things that happen in nature, so they have to be convincing," she said. "I can't manipulate the paint to be a picture of something that happens in nature. It has to be authentic. If it looks like the paint is drooping down to one side because of its weight it has to *really* be drooping. It can't just be a picture of something that looks like it's drooping."

It's part of a growing movement that uses layers of paint, but without a brush.

"Leslie Wayne's work is part of an exciting movement focusing on paint as subject matter, not as a means to create an image like many of the abstract painters throughout the 20th century, but rather as a means to create form that speaks of paint's inherent physical and tactile properties," said [Gary Chapman](#), UAB professor of painting. "We are very excited to have her and her work at UAB, stimulating and expanding our ongoing conversation about the infinite possibilities of paint as an important and relevant medium for art."



## Leslie Wayne

Jack Shainman

Leslie Wayne united the mediums of painting and sculpture in this elegant and cerebral show of eleven painted "studio rags." Using heavy applications of viscous oil paint, she molded, shaped, and otherwise manipulated the medium until it took on a particular guise. Each "Paint/Rag" was hung in isolation from the others on a blank wall, underscoring its elevation from an everyday functional object into a complex one with multiple meanings and associations, as well as into a thing of beauty.

Perhaps the most compelling aspect of these "Paint/Rags" is that they convincingly adopt the underlying properties of a common cloth. The modest pieces maintain the size and basic tactile properties of rags, while they take on their various new capabilities. In works such as *Paint/Rag* #34 (2014) and *Paint/Rag* #31 (2013), Wayne elevates the constructions into sumptuous-looking fabrics. Her paint simulates the rich texture and orate patterns of scarves one might find in an open-air market.

In *Paint/Rag* #29 (2013), she used an egg-white paint, and then accented it with only a few bursts of blue and yellow

between the folds. Thus the painting assumed a glossy veneer and took on an architectural form and attitude. In the right light, it looked as though it were moving subtly—coming alive in some way. But lying at the core of this multifaceted construction is nothing more than the idea of an ordinary rag.

Wayne inventively demonstrates in these constructions the unexpected dual nature and dynamism to be found in seemingly humble articles, and by extension, everyday activities. —Stephanie Stranick

## Brian O'Doherty

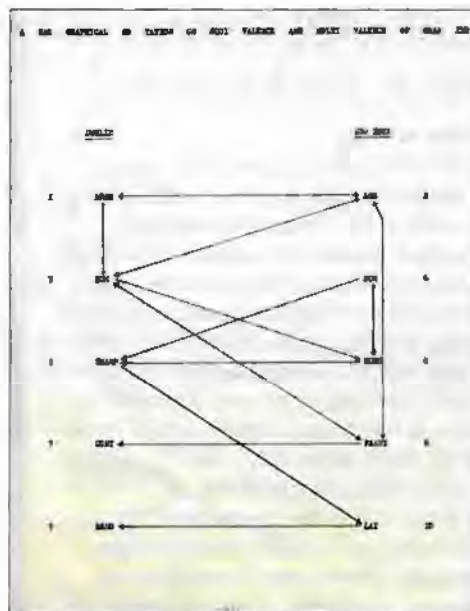
P! and Simone Subal

A pair of overlapping exhibitions brought fresh attention to the entertaining conceptual output of Brian O'Doherty, an Irish artist, writer, educator, and one-time editor of *Art in America*. Works from 1951 to a new, site-specific installation were included in the exhibitions. O'Doherty has inhabited several fictional personae, including a British bon vivant and a female art critic, though certainly his best-known alter ego was Patrick Ireland.

The name was adopted as a political protest in 1972, and the artist vowed to use it proudly until the last British soldier left Ireland. (He used the moniker until 2008 when a mock funeral for Ireland was held.)

At P! a mixed-media tower stood at the center of the small gallery. Viewers were to peek into the eye-level hexagonal structure of the work, titled *Sight (Narcissus)*, 1966, and witness several reflected reflections of a classical bust of Narcissus. The work, perhaps a sly reference to Marcel Duchamp's mysterious, erotic *Étant donnés* (1946–66), was also viewable only through a peephole.

Duchamp and O'Doherty were friends and collaborators, sharing an interest in chess, sex, and language. O'Doherty was an early champion of video as a medium for art. Playing on a monitor set on the floor was the video



Brian O'Doherty, *A Geographical Notation on Equivalence and Multivalence of Meaning (Arse / Ass)*, 1965, typewriter and ink on paper, 11" x 8½". Simone Subal.

*Structural Play: Vowel Grid* (1970), in which two men are acting out an apparently absurd biomechanical theater piece on a grid. They wear white outfits and cones over their faces and shout instructions in an abstracted form of Ogham, an ancient Celtic language denoted by notches or hash marks on stone. All human interaction in O'Doherty's world is subject to instructions and restrictions. The rules laid down in his artworks are based on empirical observations of humankind as well as on an approach that mingles logic and perception. A sound can become a painting, and human sexual intercourse might be reducible to a handmade spreadsheet.

Simone Subal presented a new installation in acrylic, titled *Rope Drawing #122: Here/Now* (2014). Geometric forms painted on the gallery walls were "framed" by rope tied at angles from the ceiling to the floor. The fractal-like lines of rope outlined the portal shapes, and the work was best experienced with a partner to walk through it while you watched that person with one eye closed. Beside the drawings, sculptures, and the same video that was being looped at P! gallery, there was O'Doherty's 1966 "portrait" of Duchamp—a wood construction with glass and motor and a round hole through which could be viewed the French master's heartbeat.

—Doug McClelland



Leslie Wayne, *Paint/Rag* #31, 2013, oil on panel, 14" x 9" x 4½". Jack Shainman.



## In 200 Words: Leslie Wayne at J. Johnson Gallery, Jacksonville Beach, FL

By Lily Kuonen on October 29, 2011



Leslie Wayne, One Big Love #49, 2010. Oil on panel, 12 x 9 1/2 inches. Image courtesy the artist.



[J. Johnson Gallery](#) in Jacksonville Beach, Florida, stands just about a block from the salty shores of the Atlantic. This proximity complements the nature of the 20 turbulent paintings exhibited in *Leslie Wayne: Paint Tectonics*, on view September 20–November 1.

Media or genre exclusivity is hard to come by these days. Exhibitions such as [Paint Things](#) (January 27–April 21, 2013) at deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum and [Phantom Limb: Approaches to Painting Today](#) (May 5–October 21, 2012) at Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago have brought together artists working through resuscitated painting traditions to rebrand process, materiality, and form in ways that are not easily labeled. Although [Wayne](#)'s shaped panels ornamented with heavily layered, scraped, manipulated, and re-formed paint may, with quick judgment, be chalked up to this current painting trajectory, instead they are more so the unbridled and passionate outcome of primarily fetishizing pure paint. Thus, they assert their painterliness, which is not easily swayed by alternative activities or even genres.

Wayne's paintings are dramatically presented within the large (7,000-square-foot) gallery space. This dramatic presentation makes the physical folds, layers, and extrusions of her work appear to be in motion, and the compression of mere gravity could soon be too much, forcing the paint to bubble out or spill off the edges of her surfaces. Given her color choices, the paint embodies an acidic threat, much like the Sherwin Williams logo that reads, "Cover the Earth" as paint is enveloping the world. Through abstract representations of various scales she uses a vibrant palette in which geographic, thick layers of manipulated paint come to symbolize real environmental threats, as well as mystifying earthen formations. Although Wayne is a New York-based artist by way of California, her paintings, derivative of landscapes, access a common ground, but her emotional gestures and labored surfaces encourage the viewer to accept an alternative take on the sublime intensity of nature.

-Lily Kuonen

Leslie Wayne with Stephanie Buhmann  
August 1, 2013  
Hell's Kitchen, Manhattan (New York)



*Paint/Rag #27, 2013, oil on panel, 15 x 9 inches*  
Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, NY.

**Stephanie Buhmann:** We are looking at a preview of your upcoming show at Jack Shainman's Chelsea Gallery opening February 20, 2014.

**Leslie Wayne:** Yes. I'm showing you two bodies of work, which have emerged organically over a long period of time. I've been pondering the idea of whether or not I should present them separately or together. Now I think I am going to show them together.

**SB:** These two bodies of work especially differ in format and size. Let's talk about the group of larger works first, all of which share the same distinctly elongated shape.

**LW:** I've been working on this particular shape for a number of years. This whole series started with the idea of covering the full range of colors on the spectrum. Each painting would be focused on one color and I thought of them like color bars. The shape comes from a work by Martin Puryear, which I saw at his MoMA retrospective in



2007. It was a ladder called "Ladder for Booker T. Washington" (1996), but I always think of it as *Jacob's Ladder*. In Puryear's sculpture, the frame of the ladder gets physically closer together the higher it goes, so it accentuates the diminishing vanishing point. It is so brilliant in its simplicity. I like the idea of giving painting more than just the physicality of the paint to work with, and this shape accentuates your sense of the pull of gravity.

**SB:** Here you contrast flat layers of paint with thick, 3-dimensional textures. It makes for an interesting contemplation of gravity and polarities.

**LW:** The gravity aspect comes from my long interest in landscape and geology. But it also plays with the idea of cause and effect. I don't want my works to be illustrations of "A caused B". Instead, they embody two elements within the painting that are both in a way describing each other and competing with each other, just as different elements in nature are thrown together through the laws of physics and are forced into unexpected yet inevitable relationships. I also think often about clothing when making my work (clothing as opposed to fashion). I sew and I like to design and make my own clothes. What interests me is the structure of garments, how the bell curve of a sleeve for example, needs to insinuate itself into the armhole without puckering, or the architecture of a fine piece of tailoring. Miuccia Prada has some interesting ideas about women's clothing and the separation between the top and the bottom, the bottom being sexier than the top. I like that. I also find her rough combinations of color and pattern interesting. I don't often find her clothes attractive, but I like the way she thinks.

**SB:** Do you still see this particular group of works as a cohesive exploration of the color spectrum?

**LW:** No. Over time they took on a life of their own. I started to play with the idea of cause and effect, which led me to explore more fully what the material could do.

**SB:** Do you think of specific landscapes and geological textures, or clothing patterns perhaps, or is your overall thought process more abstract?

**LW:** It's more about the idea of these things. I don't start out by saying I am going to do a painting of this or that. Instead, I begin with a general idea of what I am thinking and allow the process to lead me forward. In this painting for example, "Untitled [Sienna marble]", the strips of paint were scraped off of another panel. I didn't know what to do with them at first, but I knew that they were interesting. One day I took them all and stacked them up and started playing around with them. I got this beautiful shape, and immediately saw its potential as the resolution for a panel I had already started, on which the surface had a beautiful marbled pattern, in – coincidentally – all the same colors as the strips.

**SB:** How many works have you done using this particular shape?

**LW:** Probably about 25. Some of the early ones I've destroyed when the work began to develop in a more interesting direction.

**SB:** Are you working on a wooden surface?

**LW:** Not exactly. They are constructed out of MDF (medium density fiberboard), which I like because it doesn't warp and is perfectly smooth.



*Untitled (Sienna marble)*, 2013, oil on panel, 15 x 9 inches  
Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, NY.

**SB:** The shape itself also has a musical quality; it reminds me of a medieval lute, albeit very stylized.

**LW:** I thought that you were going to say metronome.

**SB:** That would apply as well.

**LW:** I really haven't painted on a rectangular or square surface in 10 to 15 years. I just found it more interesting to work on shaped panels.

**SB:** Let's look at this other group of works, to which you casually refer as...

**LW:** ... "Paint/Rags". I've made a point of separating the two terms, paint and rag, out of a concern that they not be read as merely a sleight of hand, trick on the viewer. They do go beyond painting, as a picture of something, to

being a facsimile if you will, of the object itself, and some of them do look remarkably like paint rags. But then beyond that, they also engage with many of the same issues I've explored in my other work with regard to nature, which is that all material is subject to the same laws of physics. Ultimately though, I just found it interesting to make a highfalutin art object about such an abject thing as a disposable paint rag.

**SB:** Yes, there is obviously the connotation of an every-day, domestic object. Whereas the other body of work is rather totemic, somewhat stylized, and iconographic, these paintings seem more familiar. If you would quickly look at them installed in the context of a home, it could be that you have to look twice to decide between art and a functional object.

**LW:** That's right. And I like that humble quality. The inspiration literally came from my paint rags in the studio. I thought they were so beautiful covered in stains. I first started by doing watercolors of them, wondering how I could actually incorporate that idea into the way I work with oil paint.

**SB:** Meanwhile, you're folding the material and as soon as you get into drapery, there is a baroque connotation as well.

**LW:** Yes. This gives me an opportunity to paint on the surface in a way that I don't often get to do, because the way I usually work is so process-oriented. Here I am cutting, slicing and manipulating the material, but I'm also playing around with different kinds of surface patterns.

**SB:** Do these "Paint/Rags" start out as flat sheets of paint?

**LW:** Yes they do, mostly.

**SB:** How do you determine color combinations?

**LW:** It's largely intuitive. However, this piece for example was inspired by one of El Anatsui's large wall hangings.

**SB:** That's interesting so you often look at other artists for inspiration?

**LW:** Yes.

**SB:** I think most artists do, but you give very concrete examples, such as specific works by Puryear and El Anatsui. Some artists wouldn't admit to such contemporary references.

**LW:** I think it's wonderful to get inspired by particular works of art, especially here in New York, where we have the great privilege of seeing so many things up close and in person. And of course I've seen many of El's works in person and they are spectacular and really so much like paintings themselves. So I wanted to use some of his ideas about pattern and color combinations. I have also looked at Phillip Taaffe quite a bit, and the Pattern and Decoration movement is something that I have been interested in for a long time. Years ago, I saw a Taaffe show of works on paper in Zurich. They were incredibly beautiful and simple, using marbleizing as the main motif. Now I finally found a way to incorporate marbleizing into my own work in a way that makes sense given my process.

**SB:** It's an effect reminiscent of Florentine paper.

**LW:** Yes, absolutely. And again, it ties into the whole baroque quality that my work has always had.

**SB:** When I look at your work, I'm always amazed at how color defines the character of each painting. Their specific physicality and shape already provide a sense of character, but it really is color that truly animates them and turns them into protagonists. Meanwhile, you offer an incredibly wide range. Some works are electric-galactic and others seem rooted in nature...

**LW:** ...almost like birch bark.

**SB:** Yes.

**LW:** My approach to color is often driven by its emotive potential. But also, color and form are one and the same in my painting, which is what defines so much of their character.

**SB:** But these new works involve a slightly different process. I remember that when we met two years ago, you were scraping back multiple layers of paint to uncover what was underneath. There was a surprise element to that technique. Now you are consciously putting together color compositions before shaping the work. Is that correct?

**LW:** I would say that it's more of a combination of processes that are both familiar and new for me. So I am still building up layers and scraping them back, but maybe privileging more of the applied pieces in these works than ever before.



*DD18, 2013, handmade paper, 11 3/4 x 9 inches*  
Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, NY.



**SB:** Do you ever fear that a specific process could become routine?

**LW:** No, but it is good to change things up a bit. I actually have been working on a couple of other projects, which have taken me completely out of my normal routine. That makes me think of something the New York based artist Glenn Goldberg said in a recent interview on Hyperallergic. He talked about the devotional aspect of his painting. One of the things that makes work for me difficult is that I am so dependent on a process that is outside of my control that I'm always in a slight state of anxiety. I don't usually have an opportunity to sit down and do something that is meditative and calming, a process that is devotional if you will.

**SB:** Do you mean that you try to avoid making a wrong decision, as it is hard to backtrack from there?

**LW:** No. I make wrong decisions all the time! That's when I decide to scrape off the paint and hopefully reuse the material later. But I generally don't sit down and paint an image that I know will be more or less guided by a process that I can anticipate and control, like a straightforward still life in watercolor, for example. However, I've recently started two projects that offer up some of that opportunity. One is, that I'm designing some wallpaper for a company out in New Jersey called Studio Print works. The owner is Indian and the company has been in his family for thirty years. The family still operates out of India, where they are using traditional block printing techniques. When I learned that, I immediately thought of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Rajasthani serpent painting that we have in our living room, because it lends itself so brilliantly to a repeatable pattern. I have had a tremendous amount of difficulty finding information on these kinds of images, but as far as I can tell they are called Naga (a group of serpent deities in Hindu and Buddhist mythology) Bandhas (a term for the body locks in Hatha Yoga). There's very little about them in books and on the Internet and I've talked to numerous people, but I can't seem to get more information than that. Nevertheless, I have taken one of these Naga Bandhas, which was initially a square and I turned it on its axis and made a diamond out of it. I then removed all the references to a snake and just took the core element of its design motif. So now this is being produced in India in the traditional block printing technique.

**SB:** This projects fits nicely with your interest in Pattern and Decoration.

**LW:** Yes, absolutely. It also led me to another project when, while researching the Naga Bandhas, I came across a beautiful book called "Tantra Song: Tantric Painting from Rajasthan" (Siglio Press, 2011). I fell in love with this particular group of images of the Lingam (representation of the Hindu deity Shiva used for worship in temples) and it sparked a new group of works on paper. It's the first time in I can't tell you how long that I found a single image that can sustain me. In the past, I have had trouble finding ways to translate what I do in painting into works on paper. So I jumped around a lot, stylistically and thematically. These new works however allow for an element of surprise and exploration not unlike what I experience with my paintings, but are much more meditative, and engaging in a way that feels devotional.

**SB:** Many of them feature a fine color bleed around the lingam shape, which can be described as an iconographic black oval.

**LW:** Yes. That is the framework or the consistent motif. At Dieu Donn  Papermill (New York), I started pursuing the same image in cast paper. I start by pulling the paper pulp onto a flat sheet and transferring that sheet onto a surface. Then, I lay down a stencil before putting the colored pulp (usually black) into the center. The last step is to add other colors around the composition's edge and then the whole work is run through a printing press to flatten it and compress the layers of fiber.

**SB:** These works on paper might involve a different process, but there is a similarity to the larger paintings in the sense that shape comes before color.

**LW:** Yes and again all these unexpected things happen in the process through material interactions.

**SB:** How do you envision presenting these works on paper?

**LW:** Ultimately, I would love to show them together as one wall installation and hang them on top of the wallpaper.

**SB:** They surely enter into a wonderful dialogue with your paintings. Whereas the former translate as quiet contemplations, the latter often read more as statements. The works on paper are more meditative, whereas the paintings are more affirmative and concrete. Together, they establish a temperamental balance.

**LW:** In India, these lingam images are used as an everyday, ordinary focus for meditation. They are not considered valuable and they're created anonymously. They are not signed and they aren't considered art. They are just painted and tacked up on the wall. I like the humbleness of that (like my paint rags) and I like the beauty in the simplicity of it.

**SB:** So have these works on paper become part of your daily practice?

**LW:** I just started them but I think they will. I don't meditate myself. I practice a little bit of yoga, but it is not something I've been a devotee of for years. But the works on paper do provide me with a kind of meditation, something I can practice every day. It's also a way of perfecting another medium in a flat, two-dimensional way. I'm not interested in fetishizing paint. I don't believe that the thicker the material the more infused with emotionality and depth of expression it is. More paint does not mean a more deeply felt gesture. Paint is just paint and I happen to use a lot of it in order to achieve a certain range of ideas, but I try to resist being lumped into a category of thick painters.



Leslie Wayne Studio detail, August 2013.

**SB:** Did you ever see yourself as a sculptor?

**LW:** I was a sculpture major in school. And I think there is no question that it had an impact on the way my work developed, but I did not consciously decide to make sculptural painting. For me paint is simply another material in which to construct an image. It happens to be made on a flat surface, but it's a construction material nonetheless.

**SB:** How did you settle on paint as a medium, when you originally came from sculpture?

**LW:** I was always a painter. I grew up studying traditional observational landscape and figuration and in fact the training was so rigorous that I feel I was ultimately drawn to abstraction as a way of releasing myself from my own skill.

**SB:** So you studied painting in college?

**LW:** Much earlier. When I was 7 years old, my parents arranged for private lessons on Saturdays and then I went to adult classes in high school on the weekends. I don't think I was ever encouraged to develop my imagination - it was all about skill. And of course now I'm very happy to have the skill, but I don't often get to use it in that way anymore.

**SB:** The perimeters you have set for yourself now are certainly very much your own. It's as if you are setting up a framework for yourself within which you explore countless variations.

**LW:** That last body of work I showed in New York, the "One Big Love" series came about because I wanted to give myself a more intimate project while I was working on a much larger body of work for a traveling show. I set myself up with a set of rules, something to push up against. I think those limitations allowed me to find new ways to think about the way I work and what I can achieve. These new works embrace a similar kind of process where limitation is the format and within that format I investigate how many infinite variations I can come up with.

**SB:** It's an interesting challenge that you're embracing and obviously enjoying. Do you think you will show some of the works on paper in your upcoming exhibition as well?

**LW:** I would love to, but I don't know how it would work out. The show is going to be in Jack Shainman's new 24th Street gallery, which has a very long corridor that separates two spaces. That actually lends itself perfectly for showing two bodies of work that are different yet related, but it doesn't leave too much room for adding the works on paper as well. So I think I would like to save these for a whole other exhibition opportunity.

**SB:** Tell me about your studio's wall of inspiration, a collection of images and cards close to the entrance.

**LW:** It changes all the time, but right now I've got up images of works by friends, and announcement cards that I find inspiring. They currently include an early piece from a catalog of David Reed's that gave me a lot to think about in terms of the vertical format and several by Ken Price who I've been thinking a lot about lately. Price has had a very significant impact on my work, on the way I think about the conflation of form and color through the building up of and then excavating those layers to create a unique surface. He also represents a sensibility toward craft that I think is uniquely Californian, which is something I certainly relate to having grown up in California myself.

**SB:** Surface certainly describes a major aspect of your own work as well.

**LW:** Yes. And I also want for it to have an aspect of inevitability, that the forces in play caused the material to behave in a way that could not have produced any other kind of result other than the one you see.

**SB:** When looking at a completed work one does not get the sense that any manipulation was involved.

**LW:** And yet there is a fair amount of manipulation involved every time of course. Each work is the result of a very distinct experience. In the end, it's kind of like a family; all the members of the family are related, but each one remains an individual.

**SB:** And some of them get along very well and others don't.

**LW:** And that's usually what happens when I have a show. All the works go to the gallery and we start hanging things. Inevitably there are paintings I am really attached to that don't get hung, because they don't "play well with others!" You just have to let go at some point. That's something most artists struggle with in the studio as well, letting go. I think that some of the best things I've done have been when, in a moment of paralysis, I've said "screw it, if I ruin it I ruin it. Just do something!" Then, something wonderful happens - not always but often. It's that point where you are able to allow the process to take over without completely denying your bank of knowledge.

**SB:** You never put the whole group of works together in the studio beforehand?

**LW:** Well no, first of all because my studio is not big enough for that. But also because every architectural space is so different. For some studio visits I arrange thumbnails of the paintings around on the computer first in order to work out the best installation, so I'm not over-handling them in the studio. Do you like the two bodies of work together like this?

**SB:** I like to view them in proximity, I do. I think it is interesting to intimately and simultaneously experience the very different facets these two bodies of work have to offer. Even though all of these paintings are unique, the distinct shape of the larger works provides a strict vocabulary and sense of rigor. Meanwhile the "Paint/Rags" have something tender and appear more playful. Together, the two series seem to offer a more complete picture of you or better the state of mind you are currently in. I also think that it perfectly reveals the staggering amount of creative possibilities you harvest in your work on a day-to-day basis.





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DOWNTOWN'S RENAISSANCE | CUMMER INSIDE OUT | GOLDBERG AT MOCA

BY WESLEY GRISSOM

# P A I N T

New York artist  
Leslie Wayne  
creates vibrant  
abstract paintings  
through a  
multidisciplinary  
process akin to  
geological forces  
working in nature.





**Opposite page:** *Colorbar NUMBER SIGN 1*,  
2012, oil on panel, 49 x 6 inches.

**Right:** *Heaven to Me*, 2007, oil on wood,  
21 x 14 inches.



# THE TONICS



"Rather than paint a picture of a landscape, I am more interested in capturing that corporeal essence of natural phenomenon, the... alchemical wonder of natural processes like compression, subduction, the shifting of tectonic plates," she explains.

Wayne pushes layers of wet paint across her surfaces, the converging colors resembling a raised-relief map of a seafloor or mountain range. She often balances these variegated peaks of paint with mottled, monochromatic plains of pigment (achieved by troweling several colors over one another, without blending.) The artist's lavish application of materials results in viscous impasto surfaces that might be folded, scraped, rolled, modeled like clay, or even compressed to create crenulated shapes suggestive of lava. Wayne slices these paint forms like bread to reveal concentric plumes of color and dendritic fractals evoking agate or coral. These slivers are collaged onto surfaces large and small (her works range from intimate to 14-foot-long) or thrown into a box for later use.

Wayne, a conservationist, creates paintings that speak to man's impact on the environment as well as natural geological forces beyond our control. She describes her organic creative approach as process-oriented and intuitive. Likewise, the artist hopes the initial reaction to her work will be visceral rather than intellectual.

Bruce Dempsey, director of J. Johnson Gallery, recalls his response when first viewing Wayne's work in person: "I was immediately struck by the strength and power that such small canvases are able to project." The Jacksonville Beach gallery opens their twelfth season with a reception featuring Wayne's textured paintings on Friday, September 20, continuing the gallery's commitment to exhibiting artists who demonstrate an innovative approach to materials.

## HISTORY

Wayne grew up in Southern California where the ever-present threat of earthquakes breeds an innate connection to geology. She demonstrated early artistic aptitude and her parents were committed to providing extensive art instruction, though Wayne notes the lessons were "directed at perfecting the skill of observational drawing and painting," and recalls, "I was never encouraged to explore my imagination...I think that's why I eventually turned to abstraction."

While attending the University of California, Santa Barbara's College of Creative Studies in the seventies Wayne concentrated on French Impressionism rather than the California Conceptualism movement burgeoning nearby. After sophomore year she moved to Paris, embarking







**This page, top:** Painter Leslie Wayne; **bottom:** *Before the Quake* (detail), 2006, oil on wood, 36 x 132 inches.

**Opposite page:** *Velocity*, 2009, oil on wood, 49 x 22 inches.



on a self-guided classical arts education comprising plein air painting and ambling around museums. However, after ten years abroad (including five in Israel) she altered her artistic trajectory by returning to the States and transferring to New York's Parsons School of Design.

"This is the period that represents my definitive break with making representational work," Wayne shares. "I made this tectonic shift by becoming a sculpture major."

Studying under recognized pioneer of minimalism (and painter-turned-sculptor) Ronald Bladen, she was exposed to a new sphere of ideas and artists which guided her towards the development of her own unique artistic voice.

After graduation, Wayne exhibited in group shows while pounding New York pavement to establish herself. Soon after her first solo exhibition, a private dealer introduced her to Jack Shainman, who represents artists like El Anatsui and Nick Cave. Since signing with Shainman's gallery over twenty years ago, Wayne has exhibited in museums and galleries across the US and as far away as Sweden and Germany, and has been awarded numerous accolades (most recently a 2012 Joan Mitchell Foundation Artist Grant).

## RECENT WORK

Wayne's One Big Love (OBL) paintings began in 2007 as a side project while working on the Landscape series. "I needed something with more immediate satisfaction," she explains. (The large Landscapes take years to complete due to drying time and her accumulative process.) Wayne challenged herself to thoroughly develop the series (she has completed 89 OBL paintings and plans to stop at 100) and established self-imposed parameters: having music on while working, using only organically-shaped canvases, and painting no larger than 10 by 13 inches. "I set out very consciously to make a heroic statement on a small scale," she says. Seven OBL artworks are included in the J. Johnson exhibition as well as ten mostly multi-panel Landscapes.

In 2012 Wayne began the Colorbar paintings, expanding on a tall, vertical format previously explored in striated Landscapes like Velocity. Many of these new linear works were destroyed in flooding, however Colorbar #1 survived Hurricane Sandy and hangs in the show. On first glance it appears Wayne has squeezed oils directly from tubes onto the long panel; however, a closer inspection reveals a wrinkled surface. She amasses each colorful bar by trowelling a thin layer of paint down the panel before pushing it all the way back up.

Wayne has worked in the same Hell's Kitchen studio overlooking the Hudson since 1986. She shares the floor with two artists, including her husband, sculptor Don Porcaro, who plays a significant role in both her life and work. Porcaro was an influential professor at Parson's and, three decades later, crafts Wayne's organic OBL panel designs with precision. "I have the good fortune of having an in-house engineer," she laughs.

Inside Wayne's studio, amid curved panels dripping with pigment and towers of palette scrapings, hangs an unex-

pected lone oil painting. The diminutive realistic portrait, a reproduction of Gerhard Richter's ethereal *Betty*, is "an exact to scale replica of the postcard from his last retrospective at MOMA." The stunning miniature demonstrates her technical prowess and reveals a background steeped in naturalism. Says Wayne: "I just loved that painting and thought 'I have to have it.'"

Richter, a record-breaking artist of diverse oeuvre, often employed a home-made squeegee to drag paint across his oversized abstract compositions. It is understandable that his work resonates with Wayne, who also cites Elizabeth Murray as an influence. (The late artist's eccentrically shaped canvases and colorful biomorphic shapes convey a spirit similar to her own paintings.) Dempsey identifies additional artistic connections: "When looking at Leslie's work I noticed the thick, wonderful gestures of DeKooning and the influence of Lynda Benglis."

Leslie Wayne draws creative inspiration from diverse sources such as art history, geology, personal experience, and nature. She has developed a unique visual vocabulary filled with energy, texture, abstraction, and a vivid palette and continues challenging her materials. Wayne's intuitive, physical process blurs the distinction between painting and sculpture while paying homage to the natural world.

*J. Johnson Gallery, 177 Fourth Avenue N., Jacksonville Beach, (904) 435-3200. [www.jjohnsongallery.com](http://www.jjohnsongallery.com).*







**Above:** *One Big Love NUMBER SIGN 34, 2009*, oil on wood, 13 x 10 x 1 2 inches. **Below:** Leslie Waynes Hells Kitchen studio.




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## Pam Harbaugh: NY artist to attend sculptural paintings show opening



*'One Big Love,' a sculptural painting by Leslie Wayne, will be among the New York artist's works on exhibit starting Saturday at the Foosaner Art Museum in Melbourne. / COURTESY OF LESLIE WAYNE*

January 9, 2013

The Foosaner Art Museum in Melbourne will open "I am Nature," a collection of works by New York artist Leslie Wayne. Wayne uses paint as sculptural material. She studied at the Parsons School of Design in New York City and has shown in museums around the world. A New York Foundation of Arts fellow, Wayne will be present for "In the Making: A Visual Lecture by Leslie Wayne" at 10:30 a.m. Sunday at the museum.



I talked with Foosaner curator Jackie Borsanyi to understand more about the artist and the exhibition.

**QUESTION:**

**How did Leslie Wayne come to the attention of the Foosaner Art Museum?**

**ANSWER:** Carla Funk, director of University Museums, “discovered” Wayne’s artwork while researching exhibition possibilities for the Foosaner Art Museum. I contacted the artist at her New York studio and we were able to arrange the exhibition. Unfortunately, some of the pieces originally slated for the exhibition were destroyed in Hurricane Sandy. Fortunately, Wayne was able to incorporate some newer pieces to offset the loss.

**Q:**

**Why did you want to bring Wayne’s work to Brevard?**

**A:** Wayne’s process is unusual; she allows “the phenomenology and the nature of the material to lead the way.” Her sculptural paintings reference geology, nature and important art historical movements in a non-representational way. The materiality of her work is best experienced in person.

**Q:**

**How does the exhibition figure into the museum’s mission?**

**A:** The exhibition reflects the Foosaner Art Museum’s commitment to stimulating thought, to inspiring creativity, and to enriching the community through diverse, high-quality exhibitions and programs.

**Q:**

**How would you encourage visitors to view the works?**

**A:** As with all art exhibitions, visitors should come with an open mind. There is a short, informative video of the artist describing her work and process, but a willingness to engage with the actual work in real time is most important.

**Q:**

**What do you hope will be the lasting impact of the work upon your patrons?**

**A:** We always hope viewing an exhibition will engage viewers in multiple ways, by sparking lively discussions about ideas, by encouraging people to want to make art, and enticing people to seek out more exhibitions.

“I am Nature” runs Saturday to March 17 at the museum, 1463 Highland Ave., Melbourne. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, 1 to 5 p.m. Sunday, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Thursday. Admission is \$5; \$2 children and students and free for Florida Tech faculty, staff and students. Admission also is free to the public on Thursdays. 321-242-0737 or visit [www.foosanerartmuseum.org](http://www.foosanerartmuseum.org).

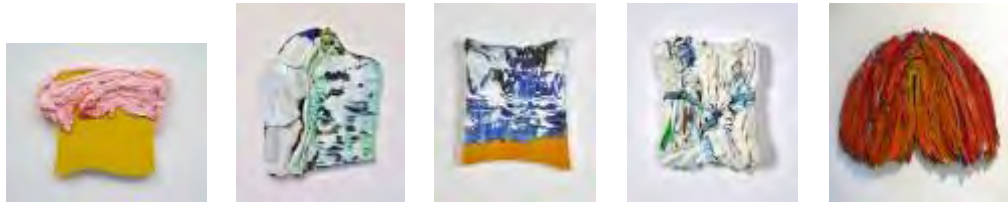
# TITLE MAGAZINE

## One Big Love by Leslie Wayne

Posted: May 21st, 2012

Bridgette Mayer Gallery  
May 2 – May 26, 2012

By Marcelino Stuhmer



Whether ironic or sentimental, silly or heart wrenching, Leslie Wayne's new series of small 10 X 13 inch works on shaped panels deserve close attention. She doesn't really paint so much as fold and twist thick pastes of oil paint to explore the materiality and processes of the medium in relationship to natural and sculptural forces. The work displays a playful poetics of unconscious fears and desires. Wayne creates an uncanny interpretive relationship between inextricable performances of material on shaped surfaces, the objects of painting and the paintings' objecthood, and between the artwork and the viewer.

Leslie Wayne's paintings reference German and American Pop paintings by Gerhard Richter in One Big Love #58, and Claus Oldenburg in One Big Love #52. In front of #52 my first reaction was smiles and laughter. The shaped panel looks like a piece of bread perfectly spread with peanut butter. On the top half is a thick, wrinkled spread of what looks like a delicious combination of strawberry jam and cream cheese. However, the pink-red is meticulously folded and choreographed in different widths to remind me that it is indeed paint and not especially edible.

Wayne's works hinge on quotation as well as sculptural and color suggestion, and thus provoke layered interpretation. One Big Love #58 appears both melancholic and celebratory: on the left third of the painting surface are thick gray slabs of oil paint mixed with hints of yellow ochre, creating odd greens. On the right side, in clear reference to Gerhard Richter's enormous squeegee paintings, is a thick, rich, ultramarine turquoise blue undercoat, spread with white paint using a squeegee or palette knife. The gorgeous horizontal white-gray-azure with windows of the purest blue shifts spatially to the left, colliding with the gray slabs to create ripples and waves off the surface of the painting and natural crevices in between. This painting is poetic, dark, and romantic in the Caspar David Friedrich tradition: anxious and steeped in the history and loss of producing something real and natural in the studio process.

*Marcelino Stuhmer is an Assistant Professor of Fine Arts and is the new Painting Coordinator at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia.*



# HEAVY PAINTINGS FROM LESLIE WAYNE



**SUSAN DUNNE**  
sdunne@courant.com

**L**eslie Wayne studied traditional oil painting, and then switched to sculpture at Parsons School of Design. Later, she transitioned back to painting, but the Parsons years left their mark. "The experience of making sculpture had a big impact on the way I think about making paintings," Wayne says in an interview from her home in New York City, where she lives with her husband, sculptor Don Porcari. "Paintings don't have to be a flat illusion of a three-dimensional world. They can be three-dimensional themselves. They can be built the way you build anything."

Wayne builds her works with thick layer upon thick layer of oil paint, in a riot of colors and textures, in works as wide as 14 feet, so thick and complex, she can't work on canvas. "It's not strong enough. The paint gets too heavy," she said. "I have to work on wood."

A show of Wayne's recent work opens Tuesday at the Joseloff Gallery on the campus of the

University of Hartford in Hartford. The show originated in January at the Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art in Charleston, S.C.

The paint is so thick, in fact, that it fools the eye. "It's hard to believe it's all paint," says Lisa Gaumond, managing director of the Joseloff. "It looks like leather, or paper."

Wayne gets her inspiration from the natural world, but not in the matter of a plein air painter, which she used to be.

"Creating a painting of nature from observation ... you have to be completely in the moment, reacting to the changing conditions of light and color," she says. "In a studio, I'm drawing more from associations, ideas of geology, geography, rather than thinking specifically of something I saw."

"Somewhere, it's always on my mind, thinking about nature," she says. "I'm thinking about the compression of layers of sedimentation, layers of history. All of it is translated into metaphorical layers of experiences in time."

The titles of her works reflect this focus on nature: "Before the Quake," "Red Tide," "Marianas," "Shift 'n' Flow" "Lulworth" (named after a cove in England), and the intensely red "Exquisite Corpse."

"That's a term the surrealists used, but I'm really speaking about toxic detritus at the bottom of the ocean," she said. "I'm not painting a specific picture of the ocean with junk on the bottom. It's an image on my mind."

"I made it red because, if you're going to articulate something disturbing, you should do it in a

way that will seduce people," she says. "The red in that painting is almost bloody like. It's also a very beautiful, seductive color."

Besides her large-scale works — many of which are presented on multiple panels because of the weight of the paint — the Joseloff show also includes several small-scale items from Wayne's "One Big Love" series, which takes its name from a Patty Griffin song that Wayne listened to, among other songs, while she created the works.

"Artists are always looking for insight, at least for a way to get into that zone where they can let go of the consciousness of control and let that metaphysical magic happen," she says. "One of the ways to do that is to listen to music."

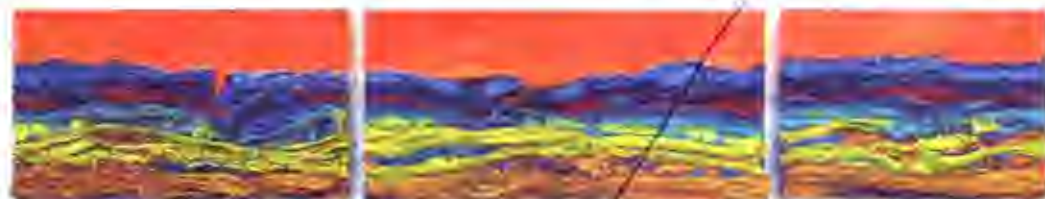
"I decided before working on the paintings to set up a set of conditions, in a way sort of to push myself up against some limitations," she continues. "One was that they were all on shaped panels. No panel could be larger than 10 by 13. And I had to listen to music. I really wanted music to inspire me to go places I hadn't gone before I did my work."

► **"LESLIE WAYNE: RECENT WORK"** is on exhibit in the Joseloff Gallery at the University of Hartford, 200 Bloomfield Ave., West Hartford, from Tuesday to Oct. 9. An artist reception is Sept. 8, when Wayne will present a public lecture in the Koopman Commons from 3 to 4:30 p.m., and the reception will be in the gallery from 5 to 7 p.m. Details: [www.joseloffgallery.org](http://www.joseloffgallery.org).

Tuesday-Friday, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.;  
Saturday-Sunday, noon-4 p.m. University of  
Hartford, 200 Bloomfield Ave., West Hartford  
([www.joseloffgallery.org](http://www.joseloffgallery.org)).

## SCHOOLS & COLLEGES

**Joseloff Gallery** — "Leslie Wayne: Recent Work," Aug. 30 to Oct. 9. Traveling exhibition from Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art, College of Charleston. Curated by Mark Sloan. Local exhibition design by Lisa Gaumond and Wayne. Reception Sept. 8, 5-7 p.m. Hours:



**"RED TIDE,"** a 2006 oil painting by Leslie Wayne, is done on panel, like most of her works, because the myriad layers of paint she uses are too heavy for canvas to support. An exhibit of her work begins Tuesday at the University of Hartford's Joseloff Gallery.



# ART PAPERS

MAY/JUNE 2011



## LESLIE WAYNE

CHARLESTON, SC + RICHMOND, VA

Leslie Wayne wants viewers to react viscerally to her sculptural paintings. If, for her, that means bursts of pleased, spontaneous laughter, then she has succeeded. Like icing on a wedding cake, her thick oil paintings curl and twist, inviting us to lean closer. Appropriately, a sign hangs on the gallery walls, warning us "Do Not Touch or Lick."

Wayne grew up on the West Coast and studied landscape painting at the University of California at Santa Barbara, and sculpture at the Parsons School of Design in New York. Her abstract paintings now combine both mediums, and reflect the forces of geology, the compression and subduction of the earth, the weight of water, and the flow of lava.

*Leslie Wayne: Recent Work* features work from the last five years, including paintings from her 2010 series *One Big Love* [Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art; January 21—March 12, 2011 / Visual Arts Center of Richmond; April 1—June 4, 2011]. A video detailing the artist's conceptual and material process is included in the show. In it we see Wayne layering one color after another on the panel with a flat brush, building layers to create a three-dimensional surface. When the top layer is dry, she slices, folds, and sculpts the painting's surface with small tools.

The physicality of Wayne's process is alive on the Halsey's expansive walls. Each painting seems to breathe and pulse with life in vibrant curls, ribbons, and toothpaste-like texture. Color choices evoke dissonance, tension, and playfulness rather than harmony. The work calls into play a sense of exploration and primal pleasure, as if we were peeling back the layers to see what's inside.

Featuring works in diverse scale and size, the exhibition offers a sweeping overview of Wayne's range. The stripe-like *M and K*, 2008, is tall and thin, encouraging us to step back to consider it in its entirety. *Before the Quake*, 2006, comprises four shaped panels and stretches across the walls in contrasting shades of fire and ice. The upper half is covered in a thin swatch of

orange-red and disappears into thick layers of steel blues, muddy greens and spots of turquoise that curve like a wave. Up close, the paint appears crispy and burnt like the charred crusts of the earth. Three panels similar in size and shape to *M and K* make up *Velocity*, 2009, which reads like a picture book full of deep undulations and energy.

The fifty smaller panels of *One Big Love* suffer in comparison to the commanding works across the room. Made of three colors, a lilac surface with drips of orange and yellow hues, *#50*, 2010, feels tame next to the punch of the larger works that simmer with energy, like the edge of a shout contained within the walls of clenched teeth.

Ultimately, Wayne's combined play with scale in colorful and aesthetically-pleasing panels, her use of paint as a sculptural medium to engage us in the physicality of the creative act, and her reliance on darkly suggestive titles endow the exhibition with emotional depth. This psychological weight, embedded in the layers of paint, invites us to ponder the complexity beyond the surface.

—Amy Stockwell Mercer

## Internationally acclaimed artist brings innovative style to Richmond



Leslie Wayne creates her color-saturated, dimensional oil paintings without the use of brushes. Wayne doesn't sculpt her forms and then paint them; the color and form are one. Credit: TAYLOR DABNEY

By JO LORD | Special correspondent | Published: May 08, 2011

Close your eyes and picture an artist painting a landscape. You might see someone quietly seated in a sun-dappled meadow, brush in hand, serenely contemplating the beauty of nature.

Leslie Wayne is not that artist.

For her, landscape painting is a physical process. She pushes, she pulls, she slices, she scrapes and she scores the paint, all without benefit of a brush.

The result — a dynamic collection of color saturated, dimensional oil paintings — is on view at the Visual Arts Center of Richmond.

"Leslie Wayne is a significant contemporary artist, and we're honored to bring this important survey of her work to Richmond," said Caroline Wright, the center's director of exhibition programming. "She uses an innovative process and a massive amount of oil paint to expand both the possibilities of her medium and our understanding of what a painting can be."

Like her paintings, Wayne's inspirations are layered. She's responding to her personal history and the history of art in her work. She's also responding to the history of the Earth by visually referencing its sedimentary layers and shifting tectonic plates.

"She applies and manipulates paint with the sensibility of a geologist," Wright said. "She observes how time and physical forces can transform liquid paint into dimensional, sculptural forms."

Other contemporary artists — Thomas Nozkowski, Martin Puryear, Lynda Benglis and Charles Burchfield included — provide additional inspiration.

"Elizabeth Murray is also hugely influential," Wayne said. "She released me from the tyranny of the rectangle."

As a young artist, Wayne gravitated toward landscape and oil painting in their traditional styles. She studied painting at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and sculpture at the Parsons School of Design in New York City.

The move to New York in the early 1980s set her on a course that led to her break with strictly observational painting. In the past, "I knew what I wanted the paintings to look like before I even started painting them," Wayne said. "There was no challenge in the process itself. Eventually, I gave myself permission to fail and I really began experimenting."

In time, she developed the intuitive, abstract style that has become her signature.

As a "process painter," Wayne doesn't set out to create a work about a particular subject. Instead, she lets the material lead the way.

What's not immediately apparent is that she doesn't sculpt her forms first and paint them later. Instead, the color and form are one.

"The paint is the color, which is the form, which I manipulate all at once," she said.

Wayne achieves her effect using a retractable blade and spackling trowels ranging from 6 to 24 inches wide. Using the trowels, she drags thin layers of paint, building one on top of another, allowing each to dry.

She then manipulates the material — the top layer of color having dried while the layers beneath are still malleable — and cuts into the surface with the blade, pushing the paint with the trowel and manipulating it into its ultimate three-dimensional form.

The result is work that evokes a strong response in its viewers.

"I want people to be viscerally moved when they look at my work. The intellectual stuff can come afterwards," Wayne said. "I think the work is really successful if it makes the hair on the back of your neck stand up."



# The Post and Courier

## Artist captures natural world in sculptural paintings big, small

By Bill Thompson Sunday, January 16, 2011

Exulting in the embrace of nature, especially in what feels like its "primordial" state, can be a spiritual experience having little to do with religion.

It is this secular immersion in the natural world, alloyed with an abstract response to 19th-century Romantic landscape painting, that informs the work of New York artist Leslie Wayne.

Produced over the past five years, her sculptural oil paintings compose the exhibit "Leslie Wayne: Recent Work," opening Friday at the Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art.



*Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art "One Big Love #55" (oil on panel) by Leslie Wayne.*

The exhibition begins with a 4 p.m. address by the artist in Room 309 at the Simons Center for the Arts followed by a reception 5-7 p.m.

"Unlike (Frederic Edwin) Church, (J.M.W.) Turner and (Thomas) Cole, who were very motivated by religion, I'm inspired in a very different way," says Wayne, whose show will venture to multiple venues around the country after its Charleston debut.

"Rather than the overwhelming, sublime quality of nature, I'm looking to capture the more corporeal aspects of it.

"Instead of painting pictures of landscapes, I am looking to give an analogous experience of being in the natural world, an alchemical look."

When an artist holds forth on "compression, subduction and the shifting of tectonic plates," one assumes that person knows something about science, or at least harbors a fascination with the art of science.

"Full disclosure? I have no background in science," says Wayne.

But she did grow up in California, which is to say she is quite familiar with earthquakes, mudslides, raging wildfires and other natural calamities common to the state.

"I haven't lived there in 27 years now, but I am still well-acquainted with the physical processes, as well as with the light and color and that sense of always being in the midst of some natural wonder. That's really what I mean by 'secular': not religious but definitely spiritual."

Her paintings range in size from 14 feet in length to as small as 10 by 13 inches.

Halsey Director Mark Sloan, also the exhibition's curator, says Wayne molds her paintings, with folds, strata and other manifestations of dimension.

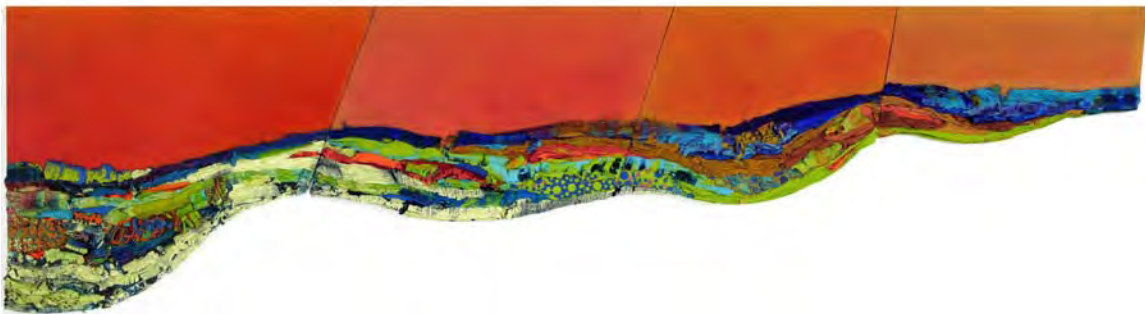
"She packs the narrative passages into the interstices of each successive layer of paint," he notes, "testing the range of Richard Serra's famous 'Verb List' by pulling, scraping, folding, cutting and collaging her material like clay."

Wayne agrees. "Absolutely. Some (elements) can protrude off the surface as much as 3 inches. It's analogous to the physical processes of the natural world, in which material is pushed under pressure. I try to give the paintings that same sense of physical inevitability, the size of the panels forcing the paint to go in a particular direction. I try to imagine how the paint would respond if it was being determined by this shape."

"My work is definitely process oriented. I don't set out to make a painting about a particular subject. And it's always a surprise to see what comes out in the end."

Born in Germany in 1953, Wayne's undergraduate studies began at the University of California-Santa Barbara. She completed a BFA in sculpture at the Parsons School of Design.

After moving to New York City in 1982, she relinquished observational painting to develop a more intuitive style of her own.



*Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art, "Before the Quake, 2006" (oil on panel), by Leslie Wayne.*

Wayne's work has appeared in numerous solo and group exhibitions, including those at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Miami, Fla.

She was the recipient of a 2006 New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship in Painting and is a past grant recipient from both the Pollock-Krasner Foundation and the Adolph and Esther Gottlieb Foundation.

The smaller paintings on display at the Halsey are from Wayne's series, "One Big Love," and reflect her desire to challenge herself in new ways.

"Before I started these very large works, I had for years worked on a very small 10-by-14-inch format. When I decided to do this work, I was in middle of producing larger paintings that were taking a long time to resolve, and I didn't want to slip into the trap of falling victim to being in a too-comfortable position. So I gave myself a set of limitations: that would all be shaped panels, and none could be larger than 10 by 13.

"The power of the small paintings is that you can create a huge sense of scale in a small format, whereas in a larger piece the actual physical marks on the surface have to match the physical size of the painting, in direct proportion" she says.

"In a way, you can almost pack a bigger punch in a smaller painting because you attract the viewer to look more closely."

Accompanying the exhibition is a film by Charleston-based director John Reynolds.

The Halsey, which commissioned a film, also has produced a color catalog with an essay by Ron Platt, curator of modern and contemporary art at the Birmingham Museum of Art.

*The catalog will be for sale at the opening reception and throughout during the exhibition, which runs through March 12.*



## 'Reflection'

Nathan A. Bernstein & Co.

This intriguing show offered a wide range of takes on how reflective surfaces can draw us in. Metallic paint, silver leaf, mirrors, and crystals threw light back at viewers—sometimes with near-blinding intensity, other times with a muted glow.

The range of artists was impressive. In one room, a 1977 Andy Warhol screen-print portrait of Georgia O'Keeffe cast its jaded gaze from beneath a sprinkling of diamond dust. Warhol himself was appropriated in Douglas Gordon's *1 piece multi Marilyn* (2008), which burns away part of Warhol's image of Monroe and places the portrait over a mirror, so viewers can see their own faces completing Marilyn's.

Marc Swanson won for sheer dazzle with his *Untitled (Sitting Buck)*, 2009, a polyurethane-foam sculpture of a deer wearing a glamorous, scintillating coat of armor. For a companion piece, *Untitled (Crystal Antler Pair)*, 2009, he covered a rendering of intertwining antlers with crystals to evoke an outsize Surrealist brooch.

Many other works, by contrast, focused on the warmth of tone that metallic paints and surfaces impart. For her 2010 series of untitled pieces, Nancy Lorenz poured melted gold over blocks of poplar wood. Thanks to the medium's

subtle radiance, the feeling of the heat required to melt the gold was palpable here. There was also interesting work from Shinique Smith, whose *Little Glutton* (2007) coats a bale of clothing in metallic paint, and Anne Peabody, whose glass-and-silver-leaf *New York City Landscape* (2003), *Courtney's Room*, and *Mimi* (both 2005) call to mind daguerreotypes. Perhaps most mysterious was Lynda Benglis's wall hanging *Tempest (Juliet)*, 1990, made of stainless-steel mesh and aluminum. Its series of coils seems to be curling away from us, while its shining surface pulls us in—all in the spirit of this well-thought-out exhibition.

—Steve Barnes

## Leslie Wayne

Jack Shainman

Leslie Wayne is doing what she does best—building small, lush paintings that pack an outsize punch. Here, the process-obsessed artist sculpted her widely varied abstractions out of thickly layered pigment in deep, unexpected tonal combinations. Her medium came off as

mostly her message.

Although Wayne's work can suggest Richard Tuttle's in the free-associative nature of the forms, or Gerhard Richter's in the layering and stretching of color, or Ken Price's in the curious interplay of hues—and these references are just for starters—it never seems derivative.

There was a

striking variety in this show of 17 works, all measuring about 13 by 11 inches and all produced while listening to music. There was a sense of movement throughout, and deep harmonies were in evidence. In putting abstraction through its paces, however, Wayne can't help allowing some works to hint at landscape, or piles of blankets, or wigs, or waves, or even portraits.

*One Big Love #42* (2009) looks like an inverted vase, with stylized blue, black, and white pourings running midway down it, in the Japanese manner; *One Big Love #41* (2009) could be a gesture standing for a portrait bust in profile—nothing but a thick sort of neck rising up into an elegant curve; and *One Big Love #37* (2009) is a green and bluish plate with a deep orange Lucio Fontana—alluding slash in the middle—very sexy.

Hanging in the viewing gallery downstairs was *One Big Love #29* (2009), a surprising anomaly that reflected on the whole enterprise. It is an irregularly shaped peach painting on wood surrounded by side- and rearview mirrors—a clue to the kind of thinking, on life and art, that went into this show filled with curls and swoops and pressed-together layers. The ensemble was so physical, so sensuous, that body, art, and substance could be seen as, well, one big love.

—Barbara A. MacAdam



Leslie Wayne, *One Big Love #5*, 2007, oil on wood, 12¾" x 11½".  
Jack Shainman.



Marc Swanson, *Untitled (Sitting Buck)*, 2009, polyurethane foam, crystals, and adhesive, 34" x 40" x 50". Nathan A. Bernstein & Co.

## Leslie Wayne, "One Big Love"

★★★★★

**Jack Shainman Gallery**, through July 16 (see Chelsea).

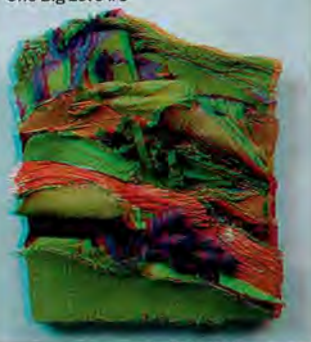
Leslie Wayne doesn't paint. Instead, she slices, folds and pinches. For her, paint is sculptable material, and she clearly delights in its haptic sensuality. Wayne's fascination with the medium's malleability is infectious, and *delectable* was the word that kept coming to mind while taking in the small, mostly 13-by-10-inch canvases that belong

to the series "One Big Love," now on view at Jack Shainman. A New York artist who has enjoyed a successful if under-the-radar career, Wayne frequently works in series and at a small, intimate scale.

Despite their size, each of the 17 canvases on view forcefully asserts its own personality (not unlike Richard Tuttle's wall-mounted sculptures). When viewed together, however, the works take on a companionable, narrative quality. A layer of paint on #38 has been sliced away from the lower half and pulled upward, its underbelly a bright orange swath that complements the ribbons of purple paint playfully emerging from beneath the fold. Meanwhile, a neighboring composition, #37, has a nearly smooth aqua surface except for a Lucio Fontana-esque slit that reveals a glimpse of orange. Some works are even more sculptural, such as #25 and #26, upside-down U shapes composed of many layers of pinched and folded paint that squinch together with the pliability of wet newspaper. Full of juicy colors and surprising twists, this show works hard to please at every turn, and succeeds every time.

—*Claire Barant*

One Big Love #6





## ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

## Married to Art and to Each Other

A Show Focuses on Artists Who Share Lives and, Often, Creative Spirits

Can the two artists in a couple be identified based on the artwork they create? That is the question behind "Couples," the exhibition currently at the Islip Art Museum. More than just an art show, it is a parlor game.

On display are the works of six couples in which both people are artists; most have been married for years, some for decades. In the accompanying catalog, each pair of artists is asked to describe their working methods and how their relationship affects their art. It makes for compelling reading.

The question in the exhibition catalog that relates to problem-solving offers the most revealing answers. A majority of the artists said that while each was not directly influenced by his or her partner's work, each drew on the other's vision and thinking. Perhaps that is the secret of a healthy relationship.

That doesn't necessarily mean that the couples see eye to eye on everything. In fact, in interviews with the couples, the interpretation of each artist's work sometimes varied significantly between partners. It seems that couples everywhere can always find something to fight about.

### Works by the partners hang in proximity, inviting comparison.

Because the common theme that unites the works in this exhibition is the marital status of the artists, and not any kind of aesthetic criteria, it stands to reason that the show would lack visual cohesiveness. This is indeed the case, a problem that is compounded by an abundance of mediocre work.

But here and there individual pieces rise above the rest, like James Burgess's colorful painting of intertwined organic shapes and forms, "Multiverse" (2006), which fills a wall. The work resonates with a sense of nature's vulnerability, hinting at possible outcomes from preservation to disaster.

Karen Shaw, the curator, has hung the work of each partner in proximity to the other, inviting a direct comparison. Near Mr. Burgess's painting are some abstract drawings by Paula Elliott, his wife, in which we see a related palette of earthy colors and love of abstract forms. It is not hard to imagine these two working side by side in the studio.

Similarities also abound in the works by Leslie Wayne and Don Porcaro. Both are interested in ideas of visual sensation, though except for a generous use of color, they generally rely on different means to achieve it. Whereas Ms. Wayne creates abstract, almost sculpt-means to achieve it. Whereas Ms. Wayne creates abstract, almost sculptural paintings by bunching strips of dried oil paint at the tip of a jagged wooden base, as if to simulate a burning flame, Mr. Porcaro makes sculptures from discarded industrial materials, which he then paints. Both artists put traditional mediums in play, resulting in intensely hands-on, original art. It is powerful stuff.

Other couples share a more immediate and obvious aesthetic sensibility. An affinity for Minimalism unites the work of Jeanette Cole and William Childress, who have been partners for 26 years. Echoes of his Minimalist wire sculptures can be found in her abstract, largely monochromatic paintings.

The works of Miriam Bloom and Ron Morosan have a natural sort of whimsy, joyfulness and love of color. She makes bulbous, abstract sculptures, often using painted clay, while he paints colorful gouaches blending doodling with appropriated imagery. They share not only their lives but the same creative spirit.

Conversely, though Todd Johnson and Sally Brogden both work with ceramics, their works have little in common. While Ms. Brogden is interested in the sensuality of abstract forms, Mr. Johnson is far more conceptual, his work ref-

erencing that of other artists. His sculpture "Saucers With Four Face Cups (For J. J.)" (2007) is an obvious homage to Jasper Johns.

In the catalog interviews, some couples say their works have nothing in common, while others, like Virginia Maksymowicz and Blaise Tobia, see all kinds of similarities. You wouldn't know it to look at their work on display here; while she makes figurative conceptual sculpture, he takes snapshots of quirky-looking street scenes worldwide.

Burning with an awkward, artless energy, Mr. Tobia's photographs are worth lingering over, for somehow he manages to capture moments of poignancy, humor and pathos in the everyday. One series of pictures documents oddball signs and billboards, while another shows struggling urban gardens; together they reveal a combination of flawed beauty and social and cultural insight.

"Couples," Islip Art Museum, 50 Irish Lane, East Islip, through June 1. Information: (631) 224-5402 or [www.islipartmuseum.org](http://www.islipartmuseum.org).



## RELATED

Right, Leslie Wayne's "Hefty Hunk of Burnin' Funk" and below, "Nomad 20," by her husband, Don Porcaro.



# COUPLE'S ART COMPLEMENTS, contrasts

By KEVIN COSTELLO  
CORRESPONDENT

The modest size of the Crossley Gallery at the Ringling School of Art and Design is an ideal venue for the scale and atmosphere of "The Object of Time: Charting a Decade," a survey of 10 years' work by New York painter Leslie Wayne and her husband, sculptor Don Porcaro.

Both artists emphasize bright color, sensual surfaces and whimsical intentions in their

art. They share a sensitivity to the tactile nature of materials and intimate scale, but part company in regard to their intentions.

Wayne's language is a subtle fusion of reductivist formalism and romantic expressionism, while Porcaro's is early 20th-century totemic abstraction, biomorphic surrealism and Pop art.

They show a conceptual concern with ceremony in the process of making their art, but from different historical per-

spectives. The energy of both artists is a consequence of acknowledgment of their precursors and their ability to supercede these influences without abandoning them completely.

The dynamic of Wayne's paint oozes like magma into the viewers' space in "Breaking & Entering: Fallout," which has the immediacy of action associated with mid-century French Tachiste painters, in particular the ex-patriot Canadian painter Jean-Paul Riopelle.

In "Spillway," Wayne has

stripped down the paint in the upper-right corner as a device for addressing the relationship between reductivist abstraction in the pale-green, flat three-quarters of the painting and the gestural abstraction of the ribbons of scraped-off paint.

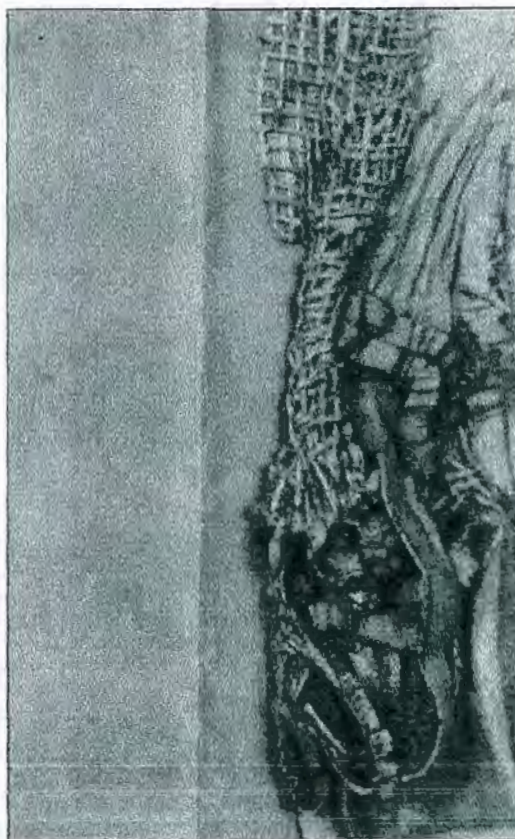
The poetry of this device is in the point at which she stopped the stripping and allowed it to coexist with the painting's support and the remaining monochromatic three-quarters of the

PLEASE SEE ART ON 11M

"Nomad #1,"  
stone, metal  
and paint by  
Don Porcaro



"Escape of the  
Intruder," 1998,  
oil on wood, by  
Leslie Wayne





# Exhibit crosses artistic genres

ART FROM 10M

painting's surface.

In a phone interview, I asked Wayne if she saw herself as a romantic painter deconstructing abstract expressionism.

"Yes, in a way," she replied, "but not in a conscious way... I'd like the viewer to have a visceral response before they have an intellectual response to my paintings.

"I'm an old landscape painter from California — the painting is a body, and there is a certain violence in the way I attack the material" as a body.

Porcaro's sculpture, such as "Oracle #10," suggests forms that have materialized from surrealist landscapes by Miro or Matta. Their physical presence seems about to dissolve and return to the place from which they came: visionary forms for purposes yet to be conceived.

Porcaro has three kinds of sculpture in this exhibit. The first are small objects arranged at regular intervals on metal tables. They can be seen as gadgets or parts of a machine used to measure psychic anomalies on display in a museum dedicated to metaphysics.

The second are larger, free-standing sculptures, and the third are wall hangings.

His art advances the formal devices of Brancusi and Oldenburg — the former's reductivist surfaces, the latter's visual wit and color — while individualizing the process through a selective restraint in the use of these influences, which serve to objectify the artist's own authentic sculptural language.

"I'm playing the game of formal/informal (serious) object making," he said. The small,



"Breaking & Entering: Fallout," 2000, oil on wood, by Leslie Wayne

## TICKETS

**The Object of Time: Charting a Decade**  
On display through Friday at Crossley Gallery, Ringling School of Art and Design, 2700 North Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Gallery hours are 12:30 to 5 p.m. Monday-Friday and 1 to 4 p.m. Saturday. Call 359-7563.

fist-sized objects on the metal tables "...appear formal and serious as in a museum display; up close, they take on an air that is lighter."

Porcaro said he is interested in "borderline things that seem

familiar at a distance that on closer inspection are not."

His sculpture is a consequence of combining Home Depot plumbing and electrical appliance parts, Toys 'R' Us bright enamel paints, and the textures of stone and ceramic elements.

The exhibit is a collaborative installation celebrating 10 years of creative dialogue, one in which a shared approach to materials and color complement each artist's work without loss of distinction or intention of expression.

## Leslie Wayne

JACK SHAINMAN

In her characteristic process, Leslie Wayne scrapes forward, gouges through, and peels back layers of paint that she has gradually applied over weeks or even months. For the remarkable new work shown here, she followed the same practice but confined her activity to a corner of each of the canvases—which, in the meantime, have grown bigger. The shift in scale has resulted in works that appear both more restrained and more playful, the corner flourishes providing teasers of what might be.

Despite its focus on paint as medium and subject, Wayne's work is surprisingly narrative. Intimations of a larger story abound—the canvas, for example, appears as a body, with Wayne's knife, like a surgeon's, probing her subjects' innards. Descriptive titles also opened the works to broader interpretations. One canvas, in which the bottom edge is peeled back to reveal bric-a-brac-like clusters of paint, is titled *Finders Keepers*. Another, featuring a long slit descending from a corner of blue in the upper left, is named *Free Flow*. The pockets of concentrated activity, meanwhile, conveyed the impression of something being kept under wraps and about to break free. Peeled-back strands of paint—which seemed frozen in the midst of unraveling—revealed a mess of curling and coiling layers of pigment. The neon colors of the underlayers were in clear contrast to the sedate grays and blues of the surfaces.

In the way she opens up the complex interiors of her canvases, Wayne alludes to, but inverts, the process of Lucio Fontana. But her paintings reveal fertility; her gouge marks expose not emptiness but a trove of energy.

—Melissa Gronlund



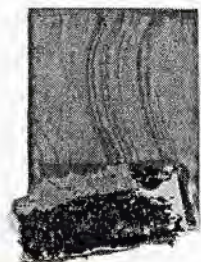
Leslie Wayne,  
*Spillway*, 2002, oil on  
wood, 32" x 28".  
Jack Shainman.



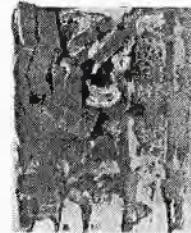
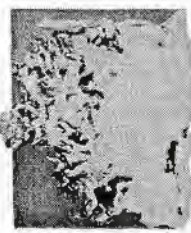
## **The New York Times**

Friday, September 15, 2000, E32

**LESLIE WAYNE**, Jack Shainman, 513 West 20th Street, (212) 645-1701 (through Oct. 7). Paintings don't come much thicker than Ms. Wayne's. The artist layers paint into two-inch-deep boxes and then gouges into the still-wet oil with instruments or her hands, producing deep, multicolored gashes. In a whole-wall piece, scattered punctures and slashes colorfully bleed; the effect is at once prettily decorative and viscerally violent (Johnson).



Leslie Wayne



Don Porcaro



## DON PORCARO ORACLE AND LESLIE WAYNE LOVE IN THE AFTERNOON

At the Samuel Dorsky Museum, SUNY, New Paltz

by Jeanette Fintz

Enter the modest-sized gallery that houses the joint exhibitions titled "Oracle" by sculptor Don Porcaro, and "Love in the Afternoon" by painter Leslie Wayne, and the whole room invites you to frolic in a quasi-Dadaist landscape bristling with kinetic energy. The exhibition consists of 60 lush 6 x 4.5 color relief paintings on three walls by Wayne surrounded by 60 of Porcaro's hand-tool-sized sculptures, arranged in six receding rows of tables like archeological relics. Almost all your senses are tickled at once by the combination of the two.

The intimacy of the installation encourages you to touch, squeeze, roll, lick, and poke (which of course, you, as well brought-up art viewers, will not do). But the stirring of visceral curiosity brought about by the immediacy and scale of the works on view here is in direct proportion to the importance tactile processes play in recognizing and revealing meaning for both artists. Each of these artists makes larger work, but have trusted in the directness of the hand-held scale to summon and release creative resources most intuitively accessed through touch.

Leslie Wayne's installation "Love in the Afternoon" offers a virtual Kama Sutra of positions one never knew paint could assume. Literally turning the concept and fact of surface

inside out, Wayne says she is excavating the painting to retrace and retrieve the history of making the painting itself, attempting to uncover some truth in the process. Wayne had a traditional art background, coming out of landscape and geometric abstraction. She began exploring the sculptural possibilities of paint after meeting Porcaro, using thick oil paint as an intrinsic building material. She says that in the beginning phases this process was very liberating for her, hence the title reference, which implies having all the pleasure without the pressure of making art.

The layers, sheets, bundles, and strips of paint that slide, mound, and tangle on the particle board supports allude to the title, depicting not only bodily attitudes but the evidence of the tryst. They also call to mind Wayne's Abstract Expressionist antecedents who used the canvas as an arena for reenactment of primal sexual dramas. It also might help to imagine a Hans Hoffman with a painted rectangle that had a mind of its own and took off for a corner to curl up and take a nap, or rolled down and nearly fell off the bottom of the canvas!

Wayne is skillful and inventive, boldly manipulating the vivid color just short of the point of crudeness, leaving the eye tingling with the surprise of a neon green or pink on the inside of a paint sandwich. Balancing form and color are a

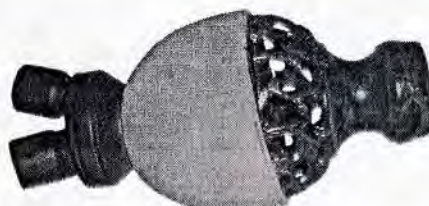
tall order and it is to her credit that many of the pieces found me peeking inside around a curve to see what new sensation was in store. Surfaces range from confident gestural slabs, compressing many layers, to whimsical ribbons and curlicues piling and dangling from one edge.

Wayne and Porcaro are both involved in gesture, with the former's pieces heading in a decidedly mannerist direction. Least successful because of the self-consciousness were some of the crashed paint grids. The most successful paintings maintained connection to the acts that animated them without getting overly fussy.

Porcaro's pieces in this installation are innately animated and humorous, an attitude he shares with Wayne, though with a more contained less overtly dramatic delivery. His work has an affinity with work by artists like Martin Puryear and Tony Cragg. This manifests in his use of incongruous unions of form and material, a sci-fi morphing. There's a dreamlike sensation in the gallery of thinking you recognized some work-a-day utilitarian object which suddenly confounds you and behaves like a creature from *Naked Lunch*.

Porcaro's ongoing involvement with archeology and history are a direct link to the importance he places on memory and context, and how they inform function and meaning, a concern shared by Duchamp. We are surprised by the integrity of form in a common object taken out of its familiar location. Expectations of familiarity or lack of it often imbue relics with a glamour that ordinary light sockets, pencil sharpeners, and doorknobs don't have. Porcaro brings back the fresh sensation of surprise and makes us reexamine our assumptions by hybridizing forms and materials. His excellent craftsmanship elegantly, seamlessly, and convincingly joins stone, rubber, metals, and plastics. Porcaro keeps throwing you off kilter, too, with colors that recontextualize the "tools," blending contemporary and archaic references.

The work of both artists in this excellent installation has a lightness of spirit that perhaps comes from allowing the life force to flow freely.



Don Porcaro, Art-or-Fact, 2002, stone, metal, and rubber

The exhibition is on view at the Samuel Dorsky Museum at SUNY New Paltz through September 20. Summer hours Wednesday-Friday from 1-5 pm and Saturday from 1-8 pm. For more information and fall hours call 845-257-3844 ■

## **The New York Times**

Friday, September 15, 2000, E32

**LESLIE WAYNE**, Jack Shainman, 513 West 20th Street, (212) 645-1701 (through Oct. 7). Paintings don't come much thicker than Ms. Wayne's. The artist layers paint into two-inch-deep boxes and then gouges into the still-wet oil with instruments or her hands, producing deep, multicolored gashes. In a whole-wall piece, scattered punctures and slashes colorfully bleed; the effect is at once prettily decorative and viscerally violent (Johnson).



## Leslie Wayne

JACK SHAINMAN

Part *Picture of Dorian Gray*, part painterly illusionism on steroids, Leslie Wayne's oozy little paintings are

hard not to like. For one thing, they are so well made. And they have such winning titles—*B&E (Unbecoming)*, *Baboom*, *Shampain*, to name a few. Interrupting her smooth, monochrome expanses of paint on small, wood boxes are slits and gouges from which explode thick and gloppy handfuls or trowelfuls of paint in many colors. Sometimes, as in *Sunset Park*, ribbons of paint seem peeled back—in this case, solid blue coming out of a bed of orange and chartreuse bands on a blue ground. Each piece is a knock-out—and something of a gimmick.

The artist is clearly aware of and reverent toward her influences, from Milton Resnick's thick and complex allover color mixes to Cy Twombly's random touch. And she can really pull off the painting part. But given all the hidden realities—as observed most readily in the large *Under My Skin* in the gallery's project room, where Wayne put holes in drywall and had paint drip from behind—the effect begins to seem like stage blood.



Leslie Wayne, *B&E (Unbecoming)*, 2000, oil on wood, 14" x 12" x 2 1/2". Jack Shainman.

One feels, as sometimes with Gerhard Richter, that the artist wants to have it both ways—to benefit from the hard-won beauty of modern painting and, at the same time, to appear removed from the entire enterprise. But while in Richter's abstractions we can be seduced by the anxious line between gorgeousness and modernist cliché, here we feel a bit manipulated by the special effects. Wayne's talent is real, but perhaps her paintings' innards are just a little too exposed.

—Cynthia Nadelman

# Inside out

## WAYNE'S EMBEDDED PAINTINGS TOY WITH THE CONVENTION OF CANVAS

BY FELICIA FEASTER

FELICIA.FEASTER@CREATIVELOAFING.COM

**NEW YORK ARTIST** Leslie Wayne's clever intra-sheetrock works — paintings that seem to erupt from the gallery wall like wounds spewing gobs of paint — are often more tantalizing as an idea than as the objects assembled at Midtown's

Solomon Projects.

Subverting the integrity of the gallery's pristine white cube and blurring the line between painting and installation, the majority of Wayne's works in *Under My Skin* appear to short-circuit the usual commercial exchange of cash for art.

Literally embedded in the gallery walls, Wayne's visceral works appear to be scooped or slashed out of the white sheetrock and thus difficult to sell as artwork commodities. In fact, the paintings are seamlessly dry-walled into place but can be taken out of their gallery prison as wooden forms, which are then re-installed into the buyer's own wall at home.

The work itself has an edgy, violent feel that continually evokes assaults on the body. Like the smooth organ of skin that encases all manner of blood and gore, Wayne's paint eruptions challenge the comparably smooth, unassailable backdrop of the gallery space. The work evokes flesh and blood, but its highly artificial, garish color scheme seems more related to process and the degrees of artifice and manipulation involved in not only painting but in gallery display strategies. With their chunky, globbed, sweeping cascades of paint, Wayne's works foreground the texture of her medium. Not merely paintings, these works are first and foremost about paint as a malleable, molded substance closer to clay or unformed bronze.

Wayne's work has a horror-movie appeal on strictly formal terms, but unfortunately the look and the content of the work never seem to coalesce in a satisfying way. Wayne's disruption of the gallery space is challenging and savvy, but beyond

VISUAL ARTS

the activity involved in such a process, the work often feels surprisingly static and limited — a formal experiment at a dead end. The works are often physically unappealing — their color scheme of detergent blues, burnt oranges and shimmering golds make the patent artificiality of their form hard to match up with the "visceral" world of blood, flesh and bodies. If Wayne's goal is to evoke the visceral, that objective partly fails in the patently fake, "painterly" colors of her canvases, whose pigments are more about the sensationalism of paint than about deeper or metaphorical ideas of the body. And her

fake, pharmaceutical, auto-body color palette seems antithetical to her themes of viscera, body, blood and injury.

Wayne is clearly challenging the essential barriers of life that become so disturbing when they are ruptured: between inside and outside, appearance and reality. Her trio of paintings mounted on wooden boxes mimic the look of a vaginal gash ("Breaking and Entering: The Mouth that Roared II"), a series of claw marks executed in blood-red slashes on gold



Leslie Wayne's "Under My Skin: Interstices"

canvas ("Breaking and Entering: Happy Gold") and bullet holes dripping a Crayola spectrum of color ("Breaking and Entering: Shooting Gallery"). While these works on wood seem more literally about inside and out and more explicitly corporeal, they lack the critical edge of Wayne's "embedded" paintings.

Challenging the flat, confined two-dimensional space of the painting, work like Wayne's is, in critic Peter Plagens' words, about "how much can you fold, spindle and mutilate the convention of a flat, rectangular canvas and still come up with a painting?" Wayne has certainly retained the features of painting in *Under My Skin*. But for those looking for a happy marriage of form and content, Wayne's theoretical tampering with the parameters of painting may finally disappoint. ♦

*Under My Skin: Wall Installations and Paintings* runs through Nov. 25 at Solomon Projects, 1037 Monroe Drive. Wed.-Sat. 11 a.m.-6 p.m., Mon.-Tues. by appointment. 404-875-7100.

# Art in America

May 1998

## Leslie Wayne at Jack Shainman

"Breaking and Entering," Leslie Wayne's recent exhibition, included an astounding number of mesmerizing pictures. The artist exploits the physical malleability of oil paint to striking effect. Her unorthodox palette—ranging from matte olive to metallic green, bright orange to meaty red and ochre to light brown—is equally dazzling. It reminds one of the unusual and occasionally disturbing color schemes of Braque, in his late phase, and de Staël, two painters who likewise explored the materiality of the oil medium.

Wayne's small, abstract, mostly vertical pictures of 1997 and 1998 were split into two groups. The first consisted of works in which dense layers of paint rise brutally from the ground in distinct areas that contrast with other, flatter zones. The second comprised works in which she has cut into the box-like, painted wooden support, allowing the viewer's gaze to enter the recesses, which are either darkly or brilliantly colored. A classicism of design, according to which forms and colors are often arranged along horizontal or vertical axes, underlies this Baroque treatment of the surface.

In *Breaking and Entering: 3 Windows for a Skeptic* (1998), two wide, vertical gashes, their irregular contours resembling Lichtenstein's spoofs of Abstract-Expressionist brushwork, are cut into the panel, thereby exposing deep, palpitating, blood-red "wounds" which are juxtaposed with the slick, bright-green skin stretched at the surface of the picture. Lucio Fontana's slashed and punctured paintings come to mind, although Wayne stresses the painting as an object vulnerable to tampering, a reading reinforced by the titles of her works.

In *Intruder* (1998), the picture's (pink, olive-green epidermis snaps on the right into a chaotic succession of crumpled strips of oil paint, exposing dense ochre and orange underlayers. The leathery, flailing bands, about the size of taggables, give form to predictably charged orifices and protuberances (and evoke both Fontana's strapwork at Fontainebleau and Robert Morris's felt wall-reliefs). In *Escape of the Intruder* (1998), a bright orange line serves as a foil for the layers of green over ochre over orange paint, squeezed, wrinkled, slashed and twisted at the right. The transition from this region of dramatic salience to the more planar area at the left is partly draped over with a thin net of olive lines.



Leslie Wayne: *Breaking and Entering: That Old Sinking Feeling*, 1998, oil on wood, 14 by 12 by 2 1/2 inches, at Jack Shainman.

Leslie Wayne is a virtuoso paint handler, with an exceptionally refined sense of scale, proportion, color and texture. She is willing to skirt the margins of good and bad taste as she explores the fertile ground where painting and sculpture meet.

—Michael Amy



visual arts

# OverThere

■ A critical guide to San Francisco events

In her first San Francisco exhibit, **INSIDES OUT** at Haines Gallery (through April 24; 49 Geary, 415-397-8114), New Yorker **LESLIE WAYNE** transforms oil paint into the sliding plates and malleable surfaces of an accident-prone earth. Layers of paint buckle upward or ooze into ridges. They striate into ribbons as thick and unctuous as fat udon noodles. Confined to a quadrant of a small canvas, the strips of paint pleat and pucker and loop over themselves, revealing, underneath, dime-thin strata of outlandishly bright colors. While each of the nine paintings is no larger than a square foot, the desire they incite is vast. You itch to squeeze the caked extrusions and peel the sensual ribboned skin away from the canvas or, if that's not possible, to grasp the materialist poetics embedded there in the paint.

Though sculptural in their thickness and in the slow, evolutionary movement they record, the works are also like action paintings, calling attention to their own creation. In particular, Wayne's colors—jarring,



LESLIE WAYNE'S *DRAWING LESSON IV*

alternately rich and fluorescent shades laid down one on top of the other—get our minds rewinding to the very first application of paint.

The paintings often seem logically impossible. *Barely Breathing* is divided between a vertical rectangle of plum, filled with pencil-thin teal, a smaller patch of madder, and a citrine rectangle scored with aqua lines. Each section appears to be of equal

depth, but the lacerated madder, folding over itself, slid down towards the bottom of the canvas, exposing a thin layer of plum above that same citrine.

The work raises questions of the technical/voodoo variety: how could the plum hidden under the madder derive from the same stroke as the plum next to it? Its

real magic, though, is aesthetic and tactile. Wayne's exact, manifold juxtapositions of colors and textures—at once an integral whole and nearly inassimilable elements—have you scrambling for an anchor less irrational than beauty, but it's only so that you can catch your breath before taking it in again.

The original action paintings (by Pollock, Rothko, Newman, et al.) supposedly direct the viewer to the spontaneous performance of painting. With the canvas as a monument to the act, we are brought up close to the actor, the painter himself: his psyche, spiritual yearnings, and heroism. But in Wayne's case, the paintings often look as mindless and self-directed as lava, mud, dough, noodles. When her gestures do look deliberate, they're insistently, humorously *fluffy*—cake decorations, not the shadow of quests.

Individually and taken together, the paintings play between these polarities, between entropic movement and deliberate design. On one end is *October* midway across the canvas, a viscous, bubbling stretch of grainy orange paint streaked with red rising in a small spiky wave to meet its textural opposite, a voluptuous sienna folding and huddling like smooth leather. *Romeo is Calling*, on the other end, intensifies these natural effects until they become

ornate. This time, the lava-like flow of paint begins a third of the way down the canvas, below blotches of thin paint in bright pink and orange, decorated with semi-obscured black curlicues. Near the bottom of the canvas, the lava butts into a baroque mass of congealed aqua spaghetti.

Fascinated for long moments before her virtuosic range, you try to assimilate Wayne's irreconcilables. You think it's the limits of the material being pushed that has you caught and held. It's not. It's the limits of aesthetic possibility.

## the short list

With equal attention to texture and color, **ERIN PARISH**'s subtle abstract paintings shift between swirling chaos and linear order, between shadowed depth and surface shine, like the sea. At Marcel Sitcoske, 251 Post, through April 17. 415-434-8408.

The current solo shows at **SOUTHERN EXPOSURE** are delicate, funny, and slyly dark: **STAS ORLOVSKI**'s charcoal drawings; **DAVID MORROW**'s cloud paintings; and **TOSHI ONUKI**'s installation of outsized Astroturf desks. Through April 17, at Alabama and 17th St. in the Project Artaud building. 415-863-2141.

— Apollinaire Scherr

SATURDAY, APRIL 3, 1999

KENNETH BAKER

Art

## Painter Wayne's In Touch With Her Inner Clown

**T**he recent work of New York painter Leslie Wayne at the Haines Gallery is pure comic abstraction: She makes paintings clown.

Early abstract painting had a utopian flavor on which contemporary taste gags. The modern utopias all having backfired, any promise of shining social or personal prospects in art today inspires suspicion.

For painters such as Wayne, the trick is to keep abstraction lively with no false glow of optimism.

She does this by overplaying aspects of painting that abstraction sets free: color, gesture, surface structure. Her work's exaggerations are amusing, not idealizing.

Wayne applies oil paint in layers of intense, tartly

contrasting color to panels of about one square foot. She peels back nearly dried areas of paint like flaps of hide, then ruches and lacerates them so that rills of underpainting lie exposed or wink through.

A slab of blue-violet paint seems to have sunk toward



In Leslie Wayne's "All Over Myself" (1998) the paint appears to be slipping down the panel.

the bottom of "All Over Myself" (1998), pleated with folds like spilling cake batter. A swath of dark pigment surges from below, like an incoming tide, as if to shore up the painting's slipping skin, which has exposed a brilliant green on the panel's top half.

Wayne's paint contortions read as burlesques of abstract expressionist pride in gesture and excess.

Like clowns, her paintings go beyond irony to ex-

### AT THE HAINES

**LESLIE WAYNE: INSIDE OUT.** Paintings.

**YOSHITOMO SAITO: PACIFIC CROSSING.**

Sculpture. Through April 24. Haines Gallery, 49 Geary St., San Francisco. Call (415) 397-8114.

KENNETH BAKER

Art

► ART

*From Page C1*

tremes where we feel free to relish them without fancy excuses. After all, they have mugged, stripped and come unstrung just to get and hold our attention. The act is uncomfortable only in the pictures that try to regain their dignity with filigrees of drawn decoration.

Most of the space at Haines is given to sculptor Yoshitomo Saito, who takes on a staple of minimalism — the box — in many of his new bronzes.

Saito's recent work, like that in his previous shows, gives the impression of productivity outrunning invention. When he casts small, Japanese-style wood boxes in bronze, the results are precious. But when he makes a subject of material — cardboard — rather than of a fabricated object, things happen.

"Skin of Cardboard No. 1" (1999), for example, makes an unusually intelligent nod to Richard Serra's "prop" pieces. It is a large, creased sheet of corrugated cardboard cast in bronze. Standing on edge, it spans the corner of a room.

Serra will sometimes stand in a corner a sheet of steel or lead so massive that it makes us wonder whether the architecture will support it. Saito has made a sculptural image of something so light that we wonder whether it would stand on edge if it were not bronze.



## NATIONAL REVIEWS

### Leslie Wayne

L.A. LOUVER  
Venice, CA

Oil paint appears to have a life of its own in "Folding Time." Leslie Wayne's exhibition of 21 diminutive works. Impelled by the unseen force of the artist's hand, sheets of pigment slide off their wood support structures, bunch up in heaps, and collide with other thickly painted passages. Although the paintings range in size from a mere 8 by 6 inches to 15 by 12 inches, they pack the power of a major earthquake. Indeed, anyone who lives in a region prone to seismic activity is likely to view this work as an artistic version of plate tectonics. Just as



Leslie Wayne,  
*Without Fear*, 1998,  
oil on wood,  
15" x 10".  
L.A. Louver.

the earth's surface has been formed over time into mountains and valleys by the collision of oceanic and continental crusts, Wayne's paintings seem to have been shaped by uncontrollable movement.

Her works don't illustrate natural phenomena, however. While some pieces resemble slices of landscape—waterfalls plunging down sheer cliffs, say, or waves crashing against rocks—the paintings are abstractions that revel in the beauty of paint. Working intuitively, Wayne applies multiple layers of strong, sharply contrasting hues to rectangular blocks of wood, then manipulates the paint as it dries, treating it like a sculptural element. Titles such as *Out on a Limb*, *Sleepwalk*, *Return to Sender*, *Talking to Myself*, and *Just No Telling* suggest that the artist lets herself go while she paints, but the results are so successful that she clearly knows what she's doing. She has an extraordinary ability to present big ideas on a small scale while conveying the pure joy of painting. —Suzanne Muchnic

## Los Angeles Times

## ART REVIEWS

By DAVID PAGEL  
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

**Pint-Size Power:** Despite measuring only 15 by 12 inches, the largest paintings in **Leslie Wayne's** first solo show in Los Angeles have the presence of much bigger works. Though size may matter for movie monsters (and their advertising campaigns), what counts for a painting is scale, the relationship between its actual dimensions and your bodily experience of its physical impact.

Wayne's abstract panels compress the inconceivable power of massive geological processes into pint-size demonstrations of raw forcefulness. In the sunlit second-floor showroom of L.A. Louver Gallery, 21 new paintings resemble three-dimensional models of the Earth's ever-changing crust.

Hardly a painter of serene landscapes, Wayne focuses on geological hot spots and the ensuing organic traumas that occur when the vast plates that make up the Earth's surface collide, slide alongside or buckle under one another. One group of paintings outlines the shapes of a variety of mountain ranges that seem to have been pushed up when two immovable forces met.

Another group appears to depict active fault lines, along which all sorts of Earth-shattering activity takes place as gaps open, protuberances thrust upward and once-smooth expanses crumple like flattened tin cans. Landslides, tidal waves and volcanic eruptions occur frequently in Wayne's dramatic paintings, which often suggest that they—and the Earth they

stand in for—have been run through trash compactors or paper shredders.

One of the best things about these gritty works is that they don't seem to depict events that have ended; they look as if the violent processes they record continue into the present. You can't help but feel that if you watched very closely, you'd see an encrusted surface decompose even further. Their queasy, postindustrial palettes add to this impression, evoking noxious chemical meltdowns and strange transformations.

Wayne intensifies the power of her art by removing herself from it. Never does she insist that a painting's vigorously worked surface refers back to her gestures or movements, preferring instead that each piece appears to have been formed by an impersonal impetus. This approach works beautifully, putting viewers face to face with forces beyond the scale of individuals.

• *L.A. Louver Gallery, 45 N. Venice Blvd., Venice, (310) 822-4955, through July 25. Closed Sundays and*



**Bright and raucous:** Stockholder's 'Untitled #241' (1994), an assemblage containing a real couch

ART

## Peeling Paint

A Washington museum asks: what's in a picture?

BY PETER PLAGENS

**P**AINTING HAS HAD A ROUGH TIME since the end of the 1980s, when the market for neoexpressionism collapsed and ambitious young artists went back to making installation art. The Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., hasn't had it any easier. Attached to an art school filled with typically bumptious art students, it was—in spite of a slightly frumpy collection—long considered by artists to be their kind of open-minded place. In 1989, however, the museum caved in to political anxieties and canceled that Robert Mapplethorpe show. Censorship! cried artists. The Corcoran's reputation within the art world nose-dived and, as the brouhaha about nasty art in public museums played out, looked like it would never recover. A Corcoran rebound began when curator Terrie Sultan, who came from New York's trendy The New Museum in 1988, took over the museum's Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting in 1991. You might say painting and the Corcoran have tried to make a comeback holding hands. But judging from the 44th Biennial (on view through Feb. 19), the museum has bounced back better than the medium.

Corcoran Biennials have always been more conservative than the Whitney Mu-



**Peel me a jape:** Wayne's witty 'Ruckus' (1995)

seum Biennial of American Art in New York (which includes more than painting). Painting—however artists stretch it—is inherently less far out than, say, video installations. And there's nothing like the Manhattan art world's careerist feeding frenzy to promote institutionalized outrageousness. Still, the Corcoran Biennial has tried to kick out some jams. It dumped its jury system (in which George Bellows and Edward Hopper did duty) in 1967, and broke out of an East Coast bias with shows culled from various

regions in the 1980s. Then Sultan set out to survey what she sees as the pervading themes in contemporary American painting. She tackled abstraction in 1991, featured figurative riffs in 1993 and, in the current show, scans the physical "boundaries and definition" of painting. In other words, how much can you fold, spindle and mutilate the convention of a flat, rectangular canvas and still come up with a painting? The answer (mostly by negative example): not much.

**Deft touch:** There are some good pieces among the Biennial's 90 works by 26 artists—who work preponderantly in New York or California and whose average age is a relatively seasoned 43 years. Leslie Wayne's diminutive "Ruckus" (1995) does meet Sultan's criteria by partly peeling paint off a panel to make a picture. But it does so with uncommonly elegant shapes, bright but unclashed colors and a deft touch. Richard Artschwager, who's been in the boundaries and definitions business since the 1960s, converts cartoony images of chairs into what look hilariously like hides (legs splayed out to the side like, well, legs). And Jessica Stockholder does pretty well here with domestically sized versions of her usually huge, raucous assemblages.

But if the last 30 years of art prove something, it's that you can call anything—a row of bricks, a ditch, two Englishmen singing atop a small platform—a sculpture and it still falls within sculpture's flexible convention. Painting is more fragile. As soon as you lay it face up on the floor, let it droop from the ceiling in strips or add bungee cords (as do some artists in this Biennial), it turns into colored sculpture that isn't nearly as adventurous as bricks, ditches or a music-hall act. Biennial paintings made from lengths of movie film stock woven like a cheap lawn chair, or pharmaceuticals cast in resin, or sheets of poured acrylic paint hung like shower curtains, may turn out to be surprisingly pretty, but they really don't push any envelopes. The 44th Biennial consists essentially of tepid sculpture gussied up with glitz, glue and glop. Perhaps the theme of the 45th should be "Back to the Drawing Board."





THE NEW YORKER

DECEMBER 16, 1996

## GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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**LESLIE WAYNE**—Tiny oil paintings with dense, sculptural textures, which seem to have an intense inner life. The artist takes sheets of dried oil-paint seum, slices and dices them, and then jumbles the result on panels as small as four by six inches. Some shimmer with masses of delicate filigree; others look like the work of a pasta machine gone mad. Through Dec. 21. (Shainman, 560 Broadway.)

## OPENINGS

## Abstract Visions

Painters use color, form, and texture to create sensuous, self-expressive geographies.

By George Melrod



Leslie Wayne's densely layered, jewel-like paintings are as beguiling as they are petite. Made of oil paint on wood, or rather paint that has been scraped, sliced, and smeared off the wood, Wayne's works are notable for their sculptural textures and vivid colors. Generally they are modest, roughly the size of a page of notebook paper, though some are as small as six inches tall. Wayne creates them by building layers of colors, then pulling them apart to reveal the delicious contrasts within. In some works, the top layer is gently folded back like a bedsheet; in others, like *And Then Some* (left), it is shredded into ribbons, then propped up to show swaths of gem color glinting beneath. This tension between what is hidden and what is revealed lends the works a thrilling theatricality and unusual intimacy. "I like the heroic aspect of a small painting with a large scale," Wayne says. "It draws people in." Her newest works go on view November 16 at Jack Shainman in New York City.

# Art in America

April 1995

## Leslie Wayne at Jack Shainman

Leslie Wayne makes diminutive paintings that have the substantial presence of bas-relief. She piles and shapes mounds of oil paint, applied with anything but a brush, to small wood panels. Although Wayne employs traditional compositional devices, the resulting weighty panels usually look quite fresh. The thick passages suggest all sorts of things—drapery, waves, rocks, pages of an open book—while mostly skirting depiction of recognizable images. She is seemingly able to touch on conventional genres such as landscape, figure or interior

without straying too far from her preoccupation with the material pleasures of paint.

Where representational images are apparent, however, the results are mixed. *Ironically Not* (one of two works from 1993, all others from 1994) and *Craving III* appear to be straight renderings of a rocky coastline and a close-up view of an erupting volcano, respectively, with little room for alternative or multiple readings. At their most literal, Wayne's paintings resemble miniature dioramas waiting for tiny figures to complete the scene. But the varied thickness and texture of the paint can help to make predictable content less distracting. *By Fiat* manages to settle comfortably between intimations of landscape and pure painterly invention: a formidable massing of intense cadmium red sits precariously atop a smooth field of pale lavender-brown. Both areas are set against the grain of the wood support, which is scraped with white. Wayne builds up pigment until the interrelationship of mass, color and texture asserts itself. This is painting by accretion; the folds of paint take on a distinct objecthood. Wayne keeps each work coherent by limiting the number of elements to three, or four at the most.

In *Clementine* Wayne uses ridged patches of strong hues against a backdrop of smeared red and white to set up a dynamic interplay between matter and space despite the relatively static components. This is one of the more evocative pieces, suggesting a minuscule empty theater, set on its side, or a partially disassembled landscape at sunset. Wayne's painting methods are bold and distinctive; when she employs them without literal constraints, the results are compelling. —Robert G. Edelman

Leslie Wayne: *By Fiat*, 1994,  
oil on wood, 13 1/4 by 9  
inches; at Jack Shainman.







THE NEW YORKER

OCTOBER 4, 1993



## ART

**INAUGURAL**—Small works by forty-seven artists baptize a new space and a new resource, an institution founded by painters to affirm the currently questioned value of their medium and to counter the ascendancy of the installation in galleries today. The Center will show nothing but paintings and will hold panel discussions and other events. The range of techniques, approaches, and influences on view suggests that the medium, however imperilled, is flourishing somehow. Leslie Wayne glups it on wood until it resembles glued-on folds of cloth, then deconstructs it by peeling some back; Milton Resnick builds up a richly textured liver-colored impasto; Cora Cohen uses marble dust and enamel to create a gleaming, splashed surface; Louise Fishman applies bold swaths with rollers. Through Oct. 2. (Painting Center, 52 Greene St.)

# ARTFORUM

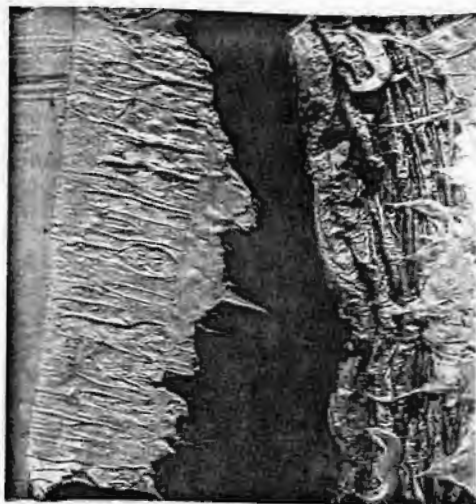
## REVIEWS

LESLIE WAYNE

JACK SHAINMAN  
GALLERY

Last year, Leslie Wayne curated a group show with the demurely categorical title of "Painters," placing her own work in the company of paintings by artists such as Milton Resnick and Jake Berthot, among other, less-well-known cultists of the hand. If that's really what she means by "painter," however, then she'd best find a more pertinent rubric for herself. I'm reminded instead of what Cézanne is supposed to have called Courbet: "A builder. A crude mixer of plaster. A pulverizer of tones. He masoned like a Roman." Wayne is capable of treating paint with great delicacy, as the brooding atmospherics of *Red Rain*, 1992, attest. But in paintings like *Freefall*, 1992, or *Breathing*, 1993, it is treated very much as physical stuff to be thrashed, twisted, and displaced while still in a semifluid state, and these pieces are most typical of her work.

So it's clear that despite the work's diminutive scale (most of the paintings are about 9 by 12 inches), Wayne is no intimist. She manhandles our preconceptions of what small paintings are about with as much severity as that with which she works the paint itself. Restraint, delicacy, sensitivity, and the rest are not at a premium. The paintings seem to have been conceived theatrically, and what's playing are not exactly drawing-room comedies. Rather, these are baroque pageants or Wagnerian operas full of extreme situations, extravagant gestures, and opulent rhetoric. The thick, relieflike masses of paint Wayne builds up serve as actors, scenery, and, for that matter, even curtains. Sometimes knots of paint take on quasi-figurative poses, as in *The Poem is a Substitute*, 1992, in which the torsion of the central mass suggests a swooning body. Moments of concealment and revelation keep the plot thickening, with layers of paint breaking open as though under unbearable pressure from the colors welling up beneath them, or turning themselves over like skin being flayed. There is the baroque affinity for ruins, exemplified by *The Edge of Desire*, 1992, with its globs of paint crushed down to the bottom of



Leslie Wayne, *Breathing* (detail), 1993,  
oil on wood, 9 x 12".

the picture—painting as the collapse of painting.

What keeps all this from disintegrating from its own hyperintensity may be the limit set by the firmly objective or intransigent plane of the wood support. Paradoxically, this support gains its ability to serve as the metaphorical "stage" or "backdrop" for these theatrical doings, simply from the way it otherwise asserts its literal facticity. Such crossing or fluctuation between metaphorical and literal understanding is very much to the point of Wayne's paintings. The paint is pushed to maintain its sense of brute materiality just as it is pulled to spin out complex and free-ranging associations. Wayne gives it to us full force.

—Barry Schwabsky

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## Leslie Wayne

In the work of Leslie Wayne we witness painting practice the theory of painting by exacerbating and resolving the tensions between paint and its support — or, one might say, between three-dimensionality and two-dimensionality, and therefore between two different ways painting can, according to the instance, either fall short of or transcend the condition of (modernist) painting; that is, between illusionism and relief. The paintings shown here were all quite small, either 6x8 in. or 9x12 in. For the most part they were not simply loaded with oil paint but downright overloaded with it. But note that the hyper-realization of the "objectual" aspect of the painting leads to a sense of its fragility: you wonder why the sheer weight of the stuff doesn't bring it crumbling onto the floor. Unlike lyrical painting that uses the drip, sign of the lightness and fluidity of the painterly substance, to signify a willing complicity with the force of gravity, with everything that militates against the "uprightness" of the wall-hung painting, here gravity is signified by the painting's resistance to it.

If what I have called theory here is an articulation of tensions, then the fact

that this word "tension" means not only something formal (structural) but is pre-eminently psychological shows that modernism (painting as theory) is not the same as formalism, or anyway that formalism is not an absence of "content." The tension that emerges here between stasis and flu-

idity, inertia and movement, has something to do with human effort as such, not simply with the physical characteristics of paint handling. The surfaces may be gouged either part way through or down to the wooden panel itself, colored only by whatever paint it has absorbed, or the layers may be pulled up and overturned, a kind of flaying. The paint may also be whipped or "teased" into a kind of fantastic baroque encrustation, as in the marvelous *Forest Primeval*. This is not expressionism. What is in operation is not the spectacle of violent paint handling as the index of a heightened emotional state but that of the willingness to do this, despite all reservations — and Wayne's *pudeur*, her desire to let things be, is everywhere implicit here — as evidence of a ruthless submission to the logic of the painting process. Wayne is also an inventive colorist — I love how, in *Weather of the World*, a sly turquoise makes a rusty brown do the work of a hot red. And the paintings even seem to have a sense of humor about how far their theory takes them in the demand for beauty's upheaval.

Barry Schwabsky

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Leslie Wayne, *Love's Archaeology*, 1991, oil on wood, 6x8 in.



Leslie Wayne, *Forest Primeval*, 1992, oil on wood, 9x12 in.