

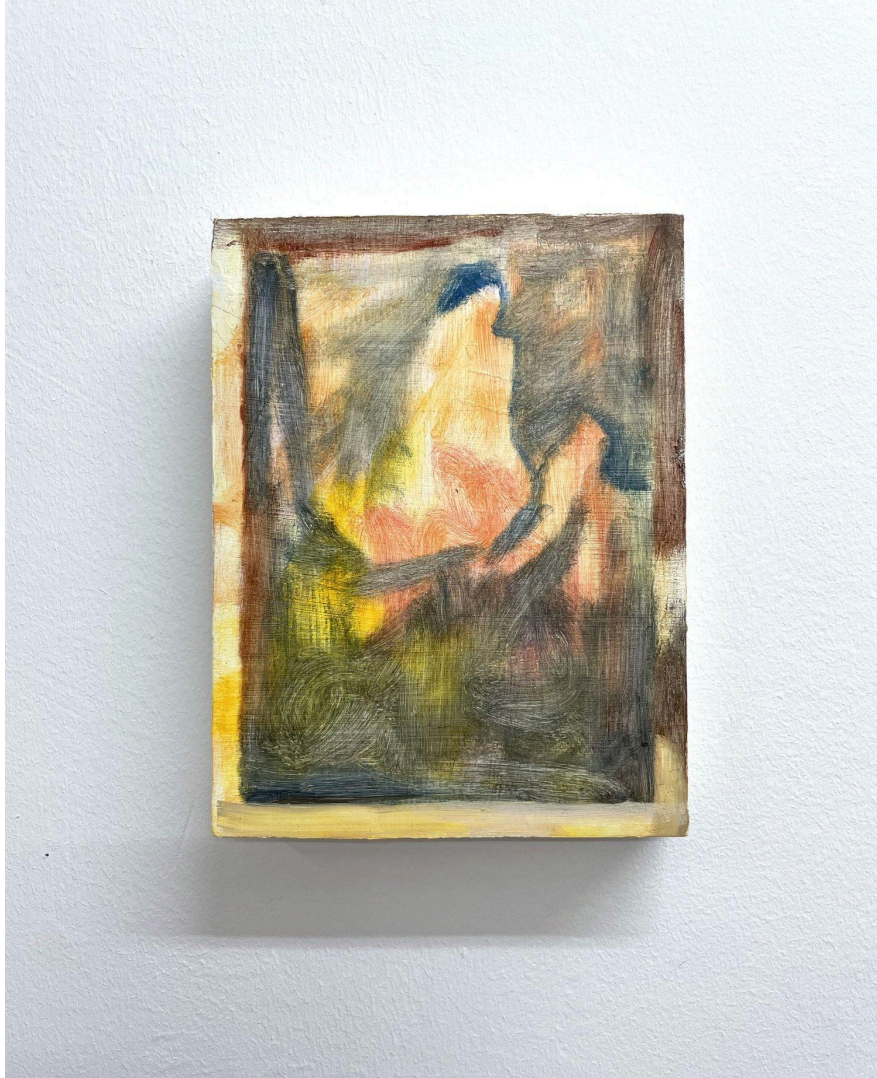
FRC is innovating the approach to showing/selling art online by offering new art collectors access to the market. There are certainly interesting conversations between the works for this selection, but what really binds them is the nuance in being experienced only through screens. I've never seen any of these paintings or drawings in person, and so I want to consider the importance of things being in actual space—specifically how images/art are experienced in your space.

I was ecstatic that FRC reached out to me because I've previously written on the issue of emerging art lacking simple platforms like this that support young artists in a very direct way. This was an opportunity to pull from writing I shelved in mid 2019 pertaining to emerging art and art collecting. I was thinking and writing often about the language associated with essays/statements about art—how it can be vague, noncommunicative, or even cause for further confusion. This led me to make the case for the simple, positive act of experiencing art as it is in space.

Good art writing should help the reader expand on something they already enjoy in the work rather than impose itself on the impact of an artwork. Art writing is language fabricated from images with no real language in the first place (most paintings). In the words of the legendary art ride-or-die Dave Hickey, “a lot of art is best talked about by talking about something else” (*25 Women: Essays on Their Art*, p. 3). Statements and criticism shouldn't give some heady explanation of true meaning of a work. Looking at any given 2D expression, what's happening for me is pretty much not what is happening for you. I don't really want to fill your head with what I think you should be seeing.

Analog artworks (paintings, drawings, prints, sculpture) carry all of the energy of the setting of their making and past works they may be referencing, like they are having a conversation with the ether of all of the artwork ever made. Analyzing artworks brings all of one's own experiences into that fold, and therefore one's interpretation must be unique. Though ultimately as artists we are all curious about how our work is experienced, so here I've created a bit of text that you would find printed out at the show. Let me guide you through this exhibition as if you were in actual space with these artworks.

(now, you're in the gallery)



(you just picked up the print-out)

The featured selection of works in this gallery can be categorized as vaguely representational. We recognize shapes as flowers, leaves, and figures—each work having some haziness, or obscurity between us and the thing being represented. Perhaps this is most so in Isabel Monti's "Burning Apparition." Centralized form with a distinctive border and weight, compositionally characteristic of a renaissance portrait, draws us into an image that feels familiar while also being indefinable. There's playful and sensitive layering, pulling darks gently away to reveal only inner light.



The deciphering is left to us in most of these works, where we are often left in the weeds of abstraction. Most literally in Tom Wixó's "Palm Springs Cowboy" we are left to solve the visual puzzle of foliage, with levels of technical plays, first by collage between images, next by their perceived transparency, and last by their drawn space-between-things to shape the thing.

When everything is drawn but the flowers are they really drawn? In "Soft Stock Rodeo IV" a similar riddle teases the eye with layers of implied hooks. Things we ought to recognize drawn in pure and precise line create momentary and recurring abstraction by their overlapping. Emma Barnes implies a larger untold story in her work "Split" that we

are left at guessing. An almost dadaist assemblage of things—a print of daisies, a vague lamp shape, a sponge—feels like it references a specific fragment of memory. Left mysteriously open-ended, printed images onto plaster encourage closer examination, and conjure our own associations and memories.





There's a sense of paintings working themselves out of being paintings, a sort of in-betweenness that continues to be expressed in some of these works, which might be reflective of a larger phenomenon where painting and sculpture are dissolving into one another.

Mark McLeod's hybrid collage painting "Maeghan's Noise" hangs on a wall but also asks to be recognized as sculpture. This work in particular relies on viewer movement and participation as part of the design experience, with what I imagine to be varying display possibilities in the order of the stack of pages, as well as subtle shifts in the image when moved about in space.



Lauren Rice's painted collage "Nebulous Bones" rides similar lines between painting, sculpture, and textile. This work dazzles the eye with textural and compositional subtlety, inviting us to swim through the wefts like a fish in a reef. Its presence is like a dripping relic pulled out of a psychedelic space bog; decomposition is occurring and a wet hollowness is palpable. There's some continuation or connection in this work to the spatial treatment in Elizabeth Murray's "The Lowdown" (2001), whose zany paintings-as-sculpture have certainly fueled this entire contemporary phenomenon of painting/sculpture fusion. Rice's "American Dream" is toying instead with forms floating in a deep and prismatic expanse, while happily adventuring beyond the rectangle. Although less compositionally dynamic, this work is still remarkably sculptural thanks to a torn diagonal overlap that momentarily pulls us out of the painting field.

We might be witnessing the departure from medium as we know it, and this selection and format are an illuminating sample for study. It's hard not to notice the widespread influence by artists that make painting, video, and sculpture in a media-fluid way, and how readily we continue to embrace tech in art by the way we show it (again, I am talking about art I've only seen on a screen). Although perhaps the most painterly of all, Rachel Glasser's work "Living on this Hill Day/Night" seems to be in touch with this media-fluidity through subtle pantones and awareness of itself on screen. Unmistakably design driven, and pulling generously from the likes of Stuart Davis and other early 20th century designer artists, there is great implied movement in extreme flatness. A calculated left to right emblem with almost clock-like color gradation evokes passage of time, or perhaps the sun changing position in the sky—another reminder for us to notice the subtlety of real-time.



(end exhibition)

(now picture yourself opening this book, which is resting on a plinth in the gallery)

Psychological and Physical Benefits to Art Ownership (In the Age of Gadgets) : Paintings

(great cover illustration)

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Introduction

Why This Book?

To begin properly, I'd like for you the reader to imagine for a moment the last time you were truly *taken* by a painting. Picture the work—briefly revisit what that felt like.

The two dimensional image in paint is uniquely captivating. Its aura of one-of-a-kindness is oddly precious and satisfying—it could never exist in the same permutation. Its static quality gives infinite time for it to be examined. I'd like to make a case for the power of this *aura* by describing my own experience as an owner of paintings. In doing so I will explain in depth what I mean by the *aura* of an artwork, which is affected by many aspects beyond what is actually on the surface. I will explain the psychological space that fills the room with the presence of a painting or multiple paintings. This book will prompt you to distinguish what it is that you like to look at, and guide you in how to use your eyes in relation to a painting. Ultimately I will make a case for the positive physical effect of art ownership in regards to the well-being of the owner—a new concept of value in art collecting.

A Proposed Definition for *Painting*

As this book will be discussing the effects of art on the body and the mind, we must first define *art*, or more specifically, *painting*.

(quote: Frankenthaler?)

As the definition of painting has expanded, it has become difficult to narrow down to one sentence. I propose a painting to be a one-of-a-kind object made by combining multiple colored substances, intended to occupy a space within a space. Paintings are tangible, stable, and most often static (in their physical attributes). In the diaspora of painting we have almost gone far enough that a definition based on physicality might not suffice. One might ask, “then what is a painting if it only exists in virtual reality?” An appropriate question, but for the purpose of this text we will assume that paintings can only exist in our three dimensional physical world (the digital and physical will remain separate for the purpose of this text, although they are now symbiotic, and one could assume them to both be a part of reality. I stress this distinction because there is an incredible amount of importance in surface quality in relation of my definition to painting, as well as the ability to move around a painting, and how it will affect actual space).

I will also propose for my definition no distinction between painting and drawing, because the line that separates them is too blurred. A pen is just another form of a brush and paintings can be made with just about any material you can imagine. I'll consider the case closed by the cubists over 100 years ago when newspaper and cardboard were essentially used as paint, thus making collage painting too. *New American Paintings* also considers collage to be painting (see Joe Rudko, West Coast 2018).

The Question then becomes the difference between painting and sculpture. This is perhaps the most difficult distinction of all, but for now I'll propose that anything utilizing the practice of painting, where the object's relation to a wall is considered, is a painting.

The Original: The most apt description of an original work of art was proposed by Walter Benjamin in 1935, “Its presence in time and space, its unique existence of the work of art determined the history to which it was the subject throughout the time of its existence” (p. 13). This *history* is quintessential—the artist and art enthusiast must be conscious of it. Benjamin is highlighting the part of art that lies beyond its visual effect. The time and space in which it was made is there, endowing the object with context.

When looking at a painting one can imagine the sounds of the day of its making. What was happening that day? Who got to see the painting in an in-progress state? Where was the artist that day before the studio? It's the mighty thing about painting—all of that is there, frozen in the paint.

Hence, the importance of one-of-a-kind-ness in this definition of painting has a huge effect on its presence in a space. Why do people crowd *Starry Night* at MoMA, instead of all of the other great paintings in that gallery? Is it because of its aura, being the only real *Starry Night*? One can actually imagine the experience of the artist in front of the easel, the colors on the canvas saturating the artist's palette and brushes, completely unaware of completing one of the world's most coveted masterpieces.

(Quote Definitions of Painting?)

Finding the Painting for You

...

(you've just closed the book).