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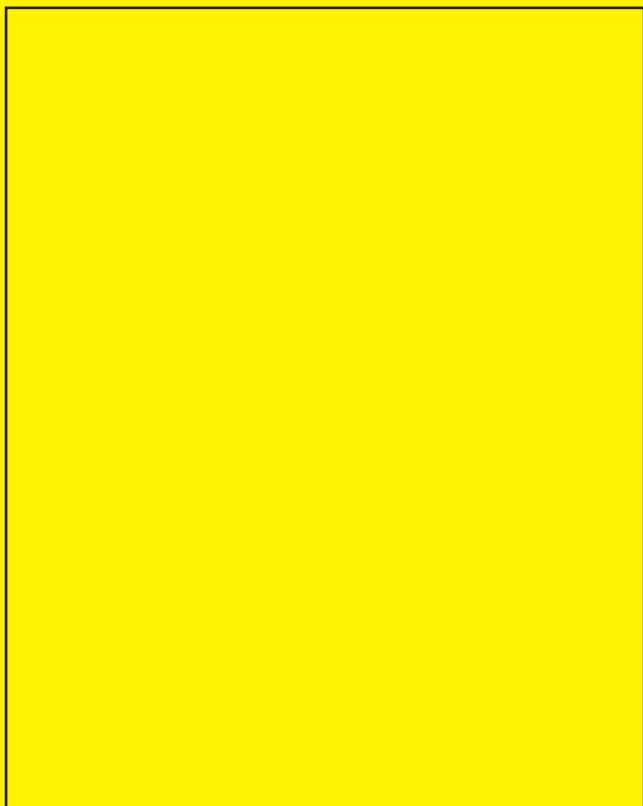
SURFACE,                      JULY 5 - AUGUST 3, 2024  
SURFACE                      HERRINGER KISS GALLERY

CURATOR                      NATE McLEOD                      

ARTISTS                      CLINTON ST. JOHN                        
   GODAM                        
   JONATHAN WOLFE                        
   JULI SONG                        
   LAILEY NEWTON                        
   LIAM J. BLACK                        
   MAY JONES                        
   PAMELA VICKERSON                        
   RISA WITTEN                        
   ROBYN MAH                        
   RYLEY WILLIAMS                        
   SKYE KACSMAR-MAYOH                        
   SYDNEY PAQUETTE                        
   TONI CORMIER                      

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS                      THANK YOU!                      

# NATE MCLEOD



Nate McLeod (he/him) is an artist living and working in Treaty 7 Territory in Mohkinstsis (Calgary, Canada). His recent works draw upon tropes of classical painting – specifically still life – by combining collected images of objects (found in personal photographs; screenshots of social media posts; AI-generated imagery; his own past works and the works of other artists, etc.) into a unified whole through the use of various framing devices.

McLeod holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the Alberta University of the Arts and is represented by Herringer Kiss Gallery. His work is included in private, public, and corporate collections including the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, Encana, and Royal Bank of Canada. He has curated several independent exhibitions, was the co-founder and Artistic Director of Avalanche! Institute of Contemporary Art, a former Associate Curator at Contemporary Calgary, and is currently the Educational Art Technician in the Drawing & Painting departments at the Alberta University of the Arts.

@natemcleod5



# SURFACE.

(**VERB: TO APPEAR OR TO BECOME PUBLIC**)

In October of 2017, when I left my role as an Associate Curator at Contemporary Calgary to begin a new role as the Educational Art Technician in the Drawing & Painting departments at the Alberta University of the Arts (AUArts), I was interested in shifting my focus from curatorial work to my own studio practice, which had been waning at the time. Being in an environment where I was doing more hands-on work and less administration, surrounded by staff and faculty whose practices I admired, and given access to facilities including a woodshop, library, and professional exhibition spaces, this felt like the change necessary to make that shift possible.

While all of this has been invaluable, I was surprised to find how much of an impact the students would have on my practice. As part of my role at AUArts, I'm available as a resource to students when they have questions about materials or processes that they're using, how to install an artwork, how to troubleshoot issues as they arise, and so on. I frequently meet with them to listen to their ideas, discuss their plans and give suggestions, and as a result I've developed a reciprocal relationship with many of them in which I also benefit from these meetings. I'm motivated by their energy and enthusiasm, inspired by their ambitious ideas, in awe of their ability to successfully navigate tight timelines across multiple projects, and am frequently learning about unfamiliar materials and processes.

Every year, there are students who stand out for the quality of their work, their prolific output in the studio, or how they generously support the practices of their peers. This exhibition brings together the work of only a handful of the outstanding alumni and former students I'm grateful to have worked with at AUArts. These artists have motivated me to reclaim an active and engaged studio practice, and more specifically, to reignite my love for painting. My hope is that this opportunity brings their work to the surface by exposing it to a broader public.

# SURFACE

(**NOUN: THE OUTER FACE, OUTSIDE, OR EXTERIOR BOUNDARY OF A THING**)

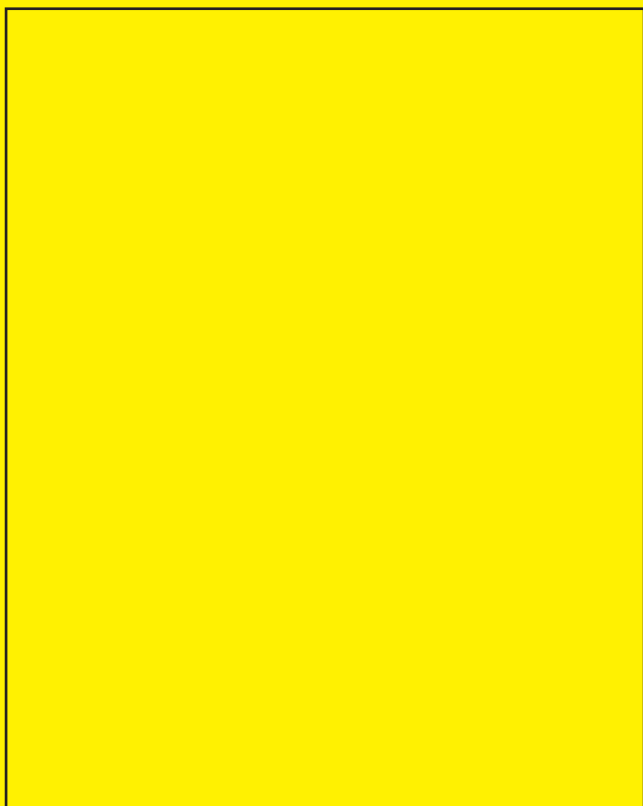
As part of his introductory essay in *Vitamin P: New Perspectives in Painting*, Barry Schwabsky asked himself, "why – above all today – do we need a book about painting and not simply a book about art?". It has been twenty-two years and the question remains relevant, whether compiling a publication or curating an exhibition. Why, then, is it *still* important to distinguish disciplines, particularly as artists continue to shift further and further into multidisciplinary practices? What makes an artwork a *painting*? What makes an artist a *painter*?

I've always been drawn to painting as a medium: the tactile quality of the surface; the texture of the paint whether applied thick or thin; the emphasis on colour; the tension that can be built through composition; the unity that can be achieved through light; the way a finished painting can have such an *objectness* despite being only an inch or two thick. When I was a student, my painting practice shifted away from traditional surfaces such as canvas or panel and expanded into three-dimensions, often incorporating wall paintings, constructed components, and an acute consideration of the exhibition space. Even as *paint* became a minor component in these works, I still considered them to be *paintings* and myself to be a *painter*.

An artist's output in the studio may not discernibly align with the traditional definition – painting is more than pigment in a binder being pushed around on a surface – a painting can be composed using an endless array of processes: photography, printmaking, weaving, performance, ceramic, drawing, carving, and so on. As demonstrated by the works in this exhibition, a painting is a *painting* as long as *something* is applied to a *surface*: glaze spread across a ceramic sculpture or housepaint upon a shaped piece of wood; gouache or ink smeared onto paper; applique letters stitched to a quilt; oil paint applied to butcher paper; cyanotype solution painted on a sheet of fabric before it is laid in the sun; acrylic paint brushed over a rock or along a carefully taped edge, or blown through an airbrush onto a piece of plywood or the surface of a canvas.

Whether or not one is a *painter* is simply a matter of preference. An artist's research, the texts they read, the artists they look at, the histories they are aware of, and of course the materials and processes they use may make an artist want to align their practice with a specific discipline. If you say you're a painter, *you're a painter*. Why not? Painting is dead anyways.

# CLINTON ST. JOHN



Clinton St. John (he/him) has an established place within Calgary's arts community, having developed a multi-pronged artistic practice over the last 30 years that balances output as a musician and songwriter with visual work in illustration, sculpture, and paint.

Music has taken him to stages in Calgary and beyond, having toured in Europe and North America, and visual art endeavours have recently been formalized, graduating with a BFA in painting from the Alberta University of the Arts in 2021.

His current work uses creative process to reflect on transfiguration of self and environment. This embodied practice engages with the physical, the sensory, the tangible, while embracing abstract instincts that reveal new narratives and allow an initial intention to transform, diverge, evolve.

@longhaired\_artist  
clintonstjohn.com



## WHAT MAKES A PAINTING A PAINTING?

If the definition of a painting is very specific, say that paint is applied by a brush onto a surface, then any deviations away from that simple concept could mean that some would no longer think of the work as a painting. In my most recent body of work, *A Constant Quest*, I have shifted from painting with oil and a brush on canvas to painting with ink and a brush on paper. These works are conceived of with a pen in a sketchbook, so maybe you could say that they are drawings, but in their final realization they are scaled up considerably and the ink is applied in sweeping painterly movements with a brush. I do consider these to be paintings but most importantly they are images that outwardly communicate in a non-linguistic manner.

The materials are important but also secondary, as in the end the goal is the same: the creation of an image. The materials allow the articulation of the idea to be clearer, as per the communicative desire that exists, wherever I may find myself in the evolution of thought and intention, in the pursuit of image creation through painting. When successful, this action manages to scratch an itch, fulfilling a need to materialize realms that, although mysterious, hold an immutable knowledge, and have the ability to express in a way that language cannot.

## DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF A PAINTER?

In spite of the fact that I am subject to a feeling of imposter syndrome in other facets of my creative work, I do consider myself a painter.

Perhaps it is as simple as the distinction on my diploma from AUArts, stating that I majored in painting. A simple but effective affirmation that has convinced me this notion must be true.

## WHO ARE YOUR FA- VOURITE PAINTERS?

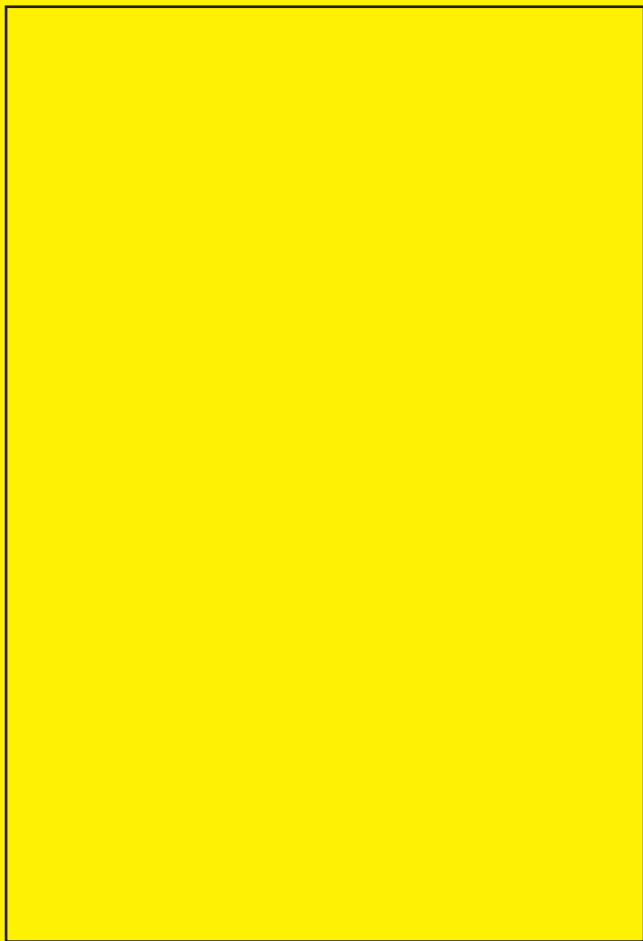
Francis Bacon  
Helen Verhoeven  
Pieter Bruegel the Elder  
Francisco Goya  
David Hockney  
Kiki Smith  
David Lynch  
Paula Rego  
Philip Guston

Some of these artists aren't strictly painters, as is the case with Kiki Smith, whose work consists of sculpture, drawings, and to a lesser extent, paintings.

David Lynch, better known for his work in film was a painter trying to make moving paintings and that led him to cinema. Ultimately, the artist is trying to deliver the images that are at the heart of their creative impulse through the best medium possible.

To say that something is or isn't a painting, or that somebody is or isn't a painter is part and parcel of the very limiting and awkward need we have to categorize, to make sense of the thing that is in front of us.

# GODAM



godam (he/him) is a visual artist currently residing in Mohkinstsis (Calgary). He completed a BFA in Painting and minored in Print Making at Alberta University of the Arts in 2019.

His work is heavily informed by his experience as an emotional human being. He utilizes his own tweets and meme-like imagery as material to explore themes of desire, loneliness, and self-acceptance. He considers his own work as a constructive personal coping mechanism towards a simultaneous longing and fear of intimate connection.

@gggooodddaaammm





## WHAT MAKES A PAINTING *A PAINTING?*

Personally, I follow a more traditional definition of painting, which is paint or some type of visual on some type of surface (canvas, paper, wall, floor, etc). But I'm also open to other definitions of it.

I used to make prints too and many of them act as paintings in my mind, or, more precisely, I incorporated printing processes to make those paintings.

## DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF *A PAINTER?*

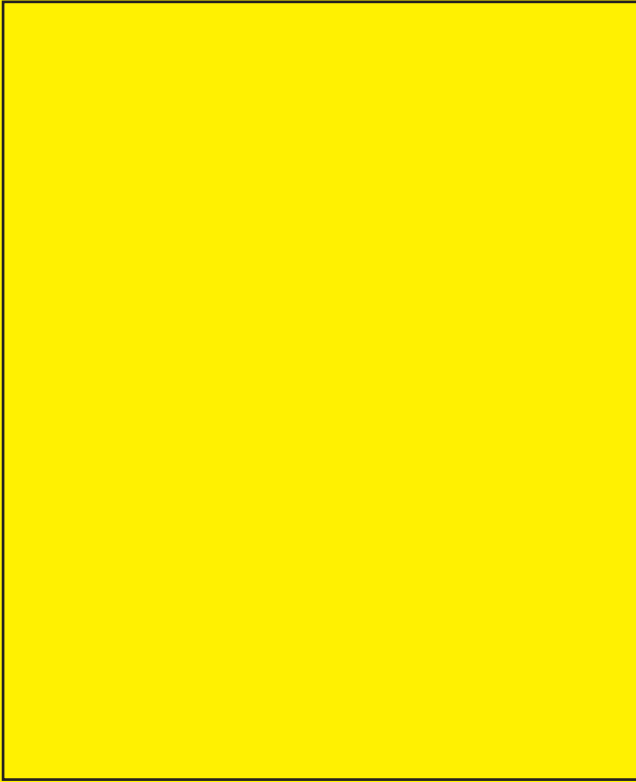
Not exclusively, but yeah sure.

## WHO ARE YOUR FA- VOURITE *PAINTERS?*

My current obsession / inspiration to paint is Matthew Palladino and Ochiai Shohei's stuff. I'm trying to find a nice combination between the two artists and make it my own.

I also really love Brad Phillips, Michael Dumontier + Neil Farber, Shannon Cartier Lucy, and Egon Schiele to name a few.

# JONATHAN WOLFE



Jonathan Wolfe (he/him), born in and based out of Calgary, Alberta, is a visual artist interested in portraying everyday places and objects, showing the sublime in ordinary scenes. This recent body of work is meant to be a look into the commonplace scenes that surround the artist, highlighting things you pass by on any given day. This attraction to the everyday started several years ago but has been further cemented as a key part of his practice with the growing prominence of AI. Artificial intelligence can create incredibly visually stimulating and detailed images in seconds, so a focus on creating work that is honest, painterly, and entirely human has become instrumental to his practice.

Jonathan's output has led to exhibitions around the world, including Montreal, New York City, Los Angeles, and Shanghai. Beyond showing work, Jonathan has lent his talents to brands and artists such as Nike, Benée and Car Seat Headrest.

@jonathan.wolfe  
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## WHAT MAKES A PAINTING *A PAINTING?*

Essentially, everything I make falls under the traditional method of painting – paint, brush, and canvas – but to restrict painting to “pushing coloured mud on canvas” is boring.

In the simplest form, a painting is a physical object made with some sort of intention in mind.

## DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF *A PAINTER?*

The other day someone referred to me as a “mixed media artist” and I was almost taken aback. Even though I do a lot of work that isn’t just paint on canvas, like digital drawing, animation, or print, I still consider myself a painter. To me, a painter is a broad term, it can be many things but ultimately everything I do is based around painting. Whether it’s a digital sketch that will be the basis of a painting, or a sculpture that I made based on a painting of mine, it’s all centered around painting.

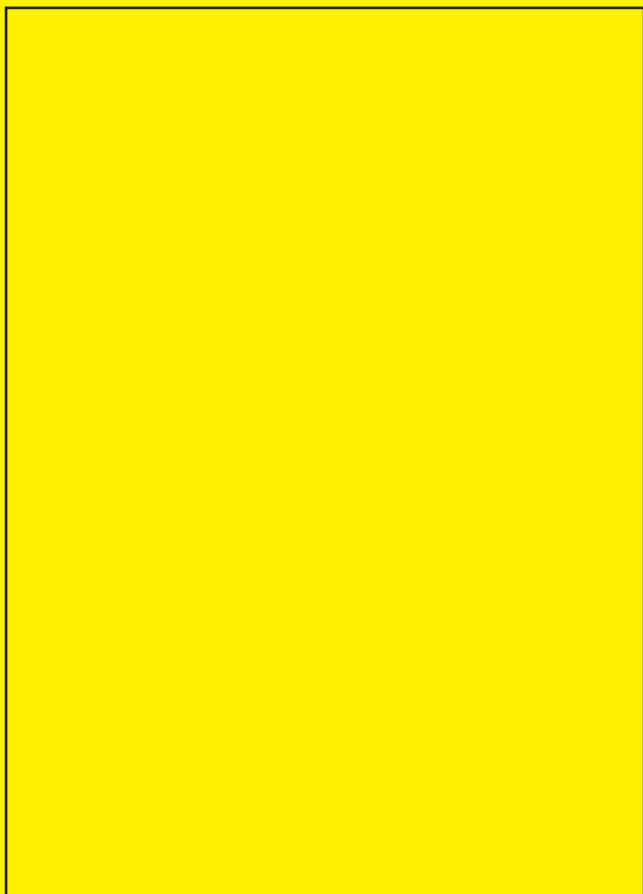
I do consider myself a painter – everything I work on relates back to it in some way.

## WHO ARE YOUR FA- VOURITE *PAINTERS?*

For contemporary artists, Jack Bishop, Kim Dorland, Erik Olson, Geoff McFetridge, E.J. Hughes, and Alex Colville are some favourites of mine. For the most part, all these artists depict Canadian scenes. When I was first starting out, it was encouraging to see other artists who were making work about places and things I’ve experienced myself. It gave me a lot of hope that the work I was making would be appreciated too.

Throughout history, Otto Dix, Gustav Klimt and Hieronymus Bosch come to mind.

# JULI SONG



Juli Song (she/her) is a Korean Canadian artist, based in Treaty 7 Territory in Mohkinstsis. Thematically connected through the expression of her lived experience, immigration, and family history with war, Juli's practice works to interpret Korean folktales within the lens of the Korean diaspora, developing contemporary narratives of gender, sexuality and identity through a decolonial lens.

As a textile artist, she primarily weaves tapestries incorporating multimedia elements of ceramics, performance, and installation. Juli's works have been featured in the Port Moody Arts Centre, Leigh Square Community Arts Village, the Evergreen Cultural Centre, cSPACE, and nvrind.

@julii.song



## WHAT MAKES A PAINTING A PAINTING?

As a ceramic and a textile artist my work is all about manipulating, designing, and interacting with the surfaces of objects.

When I am weaving an image, I paint with each strand of thread, I paint with glazes on ceramic sculptures or use clay as paint. Thus, the term *painting* to my practice is a representation of my process and how I engage with the materiality of my mediums.

Informed by my practice, what makes a painting *a painting* is then, the expressive material explorations of mark-making, surface, colour, texture, and movement.

## DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF A PAINTER?

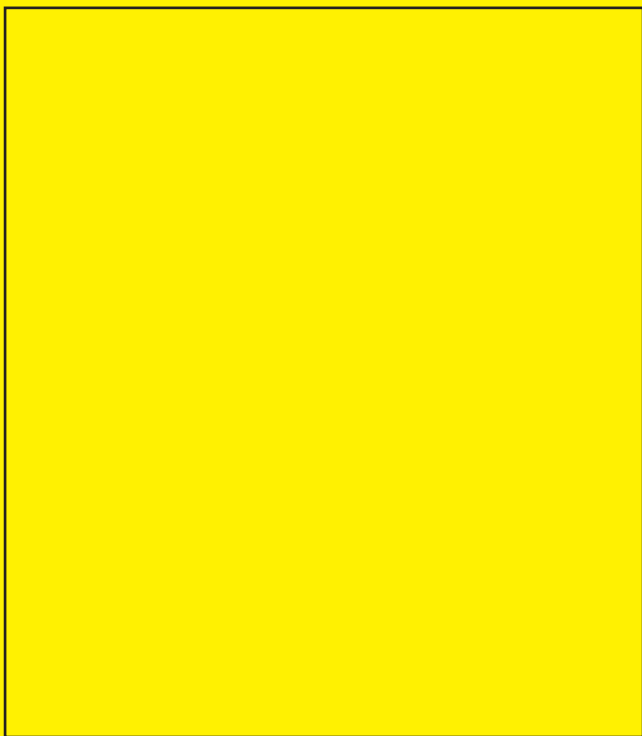
I personally prefer to call myself a ceramic and textile artist who works in a painterly way. Admittedly, in my mind, the term *painter* is still rooted in the use of paint rather than the representation of the process that I consider *painting*.

I feel a mental disconnect in *describing* myself as a painter due to the historical connotations of the term but I still *consider* myself as a painter when I create tapestries and work on ceramic surfaces.

With that being said, I view the works of textile and ceramics artists I admire as paintings and a form of painting, thus I consider them painters. I hope as I develop my practice, becoming comfortable calling myself a painter is something that will come with time.

## WHO ARE YOUR FA- VOURITE PAINTERS?

Zadie Xia  
Diedrick Brackens  
Young Joon Kwak  
Grim Park  
Erin M Riley  
Lauren Mabry



# LAILEY NEWTON

Lailey Newton (she/her) is a painter who works by making compositions digitally through photo editing and 3D sculpting software which she then paints with acrylic on canvas. She considers themes of built environments, re-creations of space, and architecture's influence on the body and psyche. Compositionally, the spaces she paints are contextless and float within voids. The sparsely decorated surfaces, sleek finishes, and limited color palettes highlight and reiterate the emptiness of the architecture of the last 50 years.

She was born and raised in rural central Alberta. She has recently graduated with her Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree with a major in Painting at the Alberta University of the Arts. While in school she was awarded the Frank Vervoort Memorial Scholarship and the Ian & Hope Cook Sr. Art Study Travel Scholarship award. Currently, she is a member of an artist collective that has opened an independent gallery, Crawlspace Gallery, featuring emerging artists in Calgary, Alberta. She is currently a co-director, treasurer, and marketing manager at Crawlspace Gallery.

@laileynewtonart  
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## WHAT MAKES A PAINTING A PAINTING?

The problem with definitions is that the more specific they become, the more exceptions they require to be complete. Defining painting feels as slippery as the medium itself, but I can answer what makes my paintings a painting.

My work is influenced by digital 3D software and consists of UV mappings of architectural photography onto simple solid geometric forms. I don't consider these initial compositions as paintings. They are compressed into flatness when displayed on a monitor and are too dead to be thought of as even digital paintings. As simple as it is, I don't think of anything I've prepared as paintings until I have begun to paint them.

How I use the medium of paint is slightly ironic given how I don't consider my digital compositions paintings. When I paint, I do a lot of things to try and make it feel as non-paint-like as possible. I paint with minimal texture, keep my edges sharp/"pixel perfect", and colour-match everything so that my original composition and my painting are as faithful as possible to the digital composition.

## DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF A PAINTER?

Yes. I feel somewhat silly categorizing myself as anything else since I largely do all of my work in acrylics on canvas or board. While I do a lot of things digitally, I'm more invested in paint as it offers a level of control when constructing an image that I can't achieve otherwise.

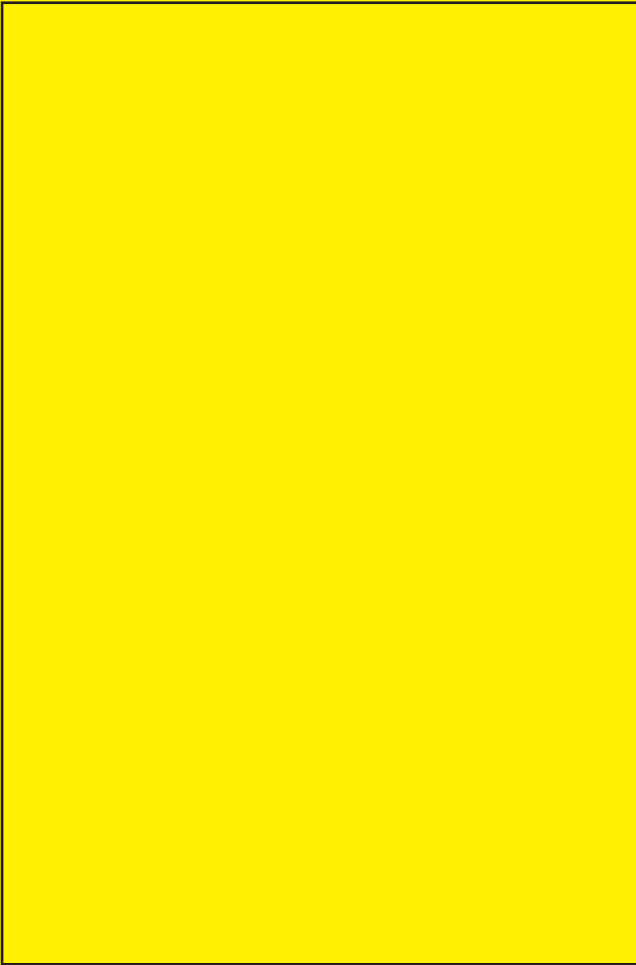
Paint is the only medium I can truly manipulate and micro-manage, so it's always been a rather appealing way of working once I got the hang of it. I feel like that says a lot about the kind of painter I am. I've always been rather meticulous when it comes to surface finish, texture, blending, colour matching, and uniformity.

## WHO ARE YOUR FA- VOURITE PAINTERS?

I've been looking a lot at Gao Hang stylistically as he challenges the expectations of the painted picture plane. His work takes the new idea of flatness that the computer monitor offers and uses it as inspiration for how they apply and handle paint. The paintings feature fluorescence, airbrushing, and visuals reminiscent of the digital graphics of the last 30 years. He also handles blurriness, sharpness, resolution, and structure in a way I find fascinating.

I also found myself looking at Sarah Messenger. The paintings she makes look like painted collages. Her use of borders, framing, and cropping painted interiors with digitally inspired elements has piqued my interest. The use of photography with flash, sharp shadows, and blurred unfocused images results in a lot of tension when mixed with the early 2000's digital backgrounds.

# LIAM J. BLACK



Liam J. Black (he/him) is a visual artist based in Treaty 7 Territory (Mohkinstis/Calgary, Alberta). He completed his BFA at Alberta University of the Arts (2021) with a major in Painting and a minor in Printmaking. His work is included in private collections.

His work explores how moving quickly and enjoying speed of your own accord is pleasurable but the speed at which contemporary life forces movement is exhausting and relentless.

@okiedokiehaha





## WHAT MAKES A PAINTING A PAINTING?

A painting is without spoken words an opportunity for conversation, for a silent reaction to a proposal or confrontation.

It is through following conversations that we grow and develop perspectives outside our regular purview. I use painting as a way to express the things I fear and admire simultaneously, often the speed at which we move and the relief that slowness or sudden confusion can provide. The thrill of moving quickly for fun and the anxiety when forced to do so.

## DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF A PAINTER?

I don't think of myself as a painter or describe myself as one. I don't believe my practice fulfills the criteria a painter's should. I'm not obsessive or honest with my paintings and often I find trouble within them rather than relief. It's an opportunity for me to reflect on my idea of speed and the clashing of feelings it creates.

I believe things that already exist are much more interesting and beautiful than anything I can create alone so I rely heavily on what is already made to inspire my paintings. These things are entirely more captivating than what I can imagine so maybe I fit the description of a poor documentarian or a biased scribe.

When asked if I am a painter, I seem to avoid answering the question with any kind of specificity.

## WHO ARE YOUR FA- VOURITE PAINTERS?

Chad Murray – Chad's paintings are luscious and are almost utopian to me despite their chaotic nature.

Trey Abdella – Trey inspires me to work off of my canvas and focus on pushing my style into a three-dimensional space. His work is both absurd and relatable.

Maddy Mathews – Maddy's work simply makes me smile and reminds me it's not that serious to be making stuff.

Jerry Hsu – Jerry is well known for things other than his photography which makes it all the more intriguing. He treats his photo books the same way he treated the tumblr page he originally posted his photos to when it was simply a passion. I see it as a documentation of things that surprise him. I admire his eye for composition and his luck when searching for things that don't belong.

# MAY JONES

My work aims to document and share my experiences with the medical system through the idea of comfort and care. I suffer from Chronic Lyme Disease, which is a highly controversial illness. This has led me to have countless disappointing doctor appointments and numerous instances of medical gaslighting. After all of the negative experiences I have undergone, I have been left with permanent damage (both from the untreated Lyme Disease and from the trauma caused by these interactions.) Unfortunately, these experiences are not only unique to me, but my goal is to share my stories in an attempt to create a voice for those who are unable to advocate for themselves and to share the truth about how we are being treated.

I find that quilting is an ideal medium to address these problems because it is an object of warmth and care and is associated with rest and the home. It is also a tedious and time-consuming craft that is often made with love. By using colorful, kitschy fabrics that clash and contrast with each other, I am transforming difficult experiences into loud and bright objects of comfort and protest. My quilted works act as a reminder to myself and others that your symptoms and your illness are real and valid, and that you deserve to be loved, cared for, and most importantly, believed.

@nicolejones.studio



## WHAT MAKES A PAINTING A PAINTING?

When I first started art school, I thought that painting was the most boring medium.

By my second year, I started falling in love with colour, and I realized that painting was the easiest way to explore colour.

To me, adding colour (including black and white) to an object's surface is what makes it a painting.

This process of adding is important because I think if you are carving something, like wood, for example, the wood will have a natural colour, but if you alter the colour in some way, by adding another colour to its surface, it can become a painting. This also brings into question functionality: if you add colour to a chair, does it suddenly become a painting? This is something I think about when making quilts because although they are also blankets, I do not intend to use them as such. With all forms of art, I think functionality comes into question when deciding whether or not an object is *art*, or just an object that serves a purpose.

## DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF A PAINTER?

I do consider myself a painter because I still paint, but I also consider myself a quilter and a textile artist. However, I think that painting for years before learning how to quilt has made my quilts quite painterly.

Up until this point, none of my quilts have followed a set pattern, I build the patchwork behind the text quickly and intuitively, which is why I often gravitate to simple structures like square checkerboard. I find the patchwork of my quilts to be one of the least important elements, which is not very "quilterly" of me. As of now, I have no interest in learning complex patchwork patterns, my goal is to get it done as quickly as possible so that I can move on to the interesting part, which to me, is the appliqué text. Because of that, I think the text acts as the figure, and the patchwork the ground, which again, follows the "painter" formula.

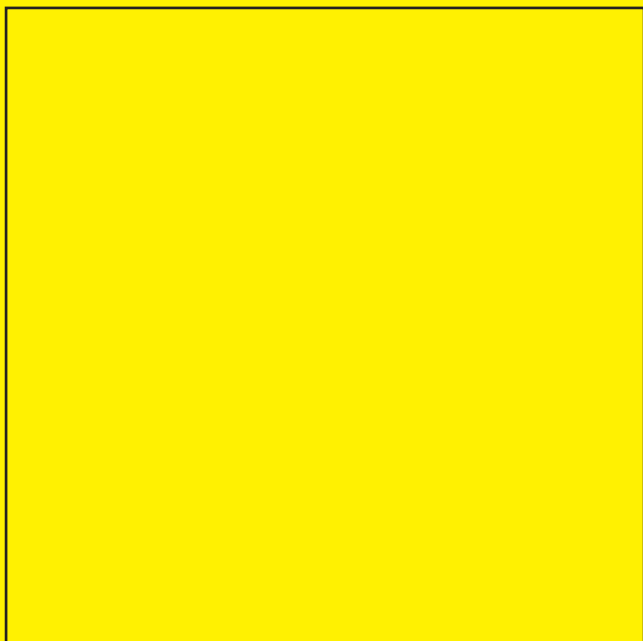
## WHO ARE YOUR FA- VOURITE PAINTERS?

I am a bit embarrassed to admit it, but I am a sucker for classic pop art painters like David Hockney, Andy Warhol and Yayoi Kusama. I love flat fields of colour, repetition, and pattern, which were all so important during this time.

Anni Albers is also a big influence in my work, I love the way her work explores the relationship between textiles and painting.

My more contemporary favourites include Finnegan Shannon, Gabrielle Garland, Hilary Pecis, Ida Ekblad, Petra Cortright, Lou Benesch, and so many more.

# PAMELA VICKERSON



Pamela Vickerson (she/her) grew up exploring Alberta, moving from the prairies to the mountains, then to the city as a teen. With a background in fashion and graphic design, Vickerson worked as an editorial and commercial illustrator for a number of years. She has been instructing in painting and drawing since 2000, and has been a student at the Alberta University of the Arts for more than two decades, both informally and formally, graduating with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree with Distinction in 2024.

Vickerson has been commissioned by private and commercial clients, most recently by the Calgary YMCA and the Alberta University of the Arts. Her nomadic and playful early years along with later experiences of loss profoundly impact the direction of her research and work.

Her art and writing currently explore the intersection between play and grief. It is at this point of intersection where she considers notions of attachment and loss, absence and presence, and the pro-social emotion nostalgia as avenues to personal and communal healing.

Vickerson gratefully creates and lives alongside her family and their cheeky whippet in Moh-kins-tsis/Calgary.

@pamela.vickerson  
@pamelavickersonart



## WHAT MAKES A PAINTING A PAINTING?

Although the artistic disciplines are constantly in flux, I believe the traditional definition of a painting is still relevant. New, hybrid and painterly approaches perhaps require new words. I think what makes a painting a painting has to do with applying pigments in a wet medium on a surface.

But it is also the intentionality of the one creating it. Beyond simple definitions, I experience painting as the just-right balance of challenge and pleasure. Mixing, pushing, and pulling pigments allows me to rest the worrying and controlling part of my brain. It is how I play, discharge tensions, re-energize, share stories, think and talk about difficult topics, preserve the past, heal the present, and connect with others.

## DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF A PAINTER?

My art practice is multidisciplinary, but I do call myself a painter. Paint is the one medium that has intimidated me the most, gives me the most satisfaction, and allows me to really explore nuance in colour, light, and texture.

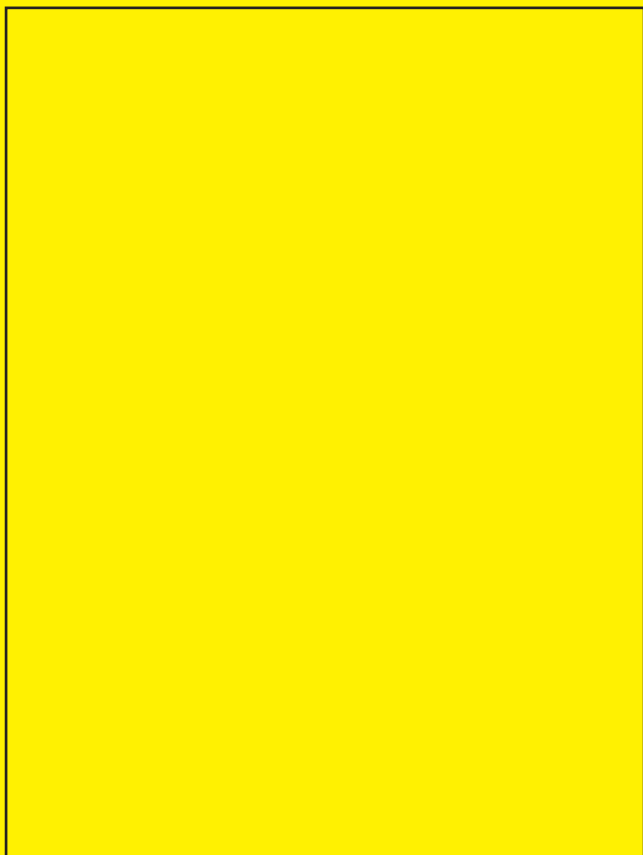
## WHO ARE YOUR FA- VOURITE PAINTERS?

Early favorites include Rogier van der Weyden, Edwin Holgate, and Frederick Varley for their impressive colour work and expressive figures.

My love for illustration and design also attracts me to the work of Willem de Kooning, Kai Althoff, Avigdor Arikha, Alice Neel, Robert Bechtle, Wayne Thiebaud, Raymond Pettibon, Dan Perfect, Karin Mamma Anderrsson, Peter Doig, and Henry Taylor.

But mostly Sun Xun, Amy Sillman, and my new favorite, Margaux Williamson. I see a similar “free” approach to painting from many of these painters. Betty Edwards calls this approach the “R-mode” (*Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*, 57), and author Annie Dillard calls it “letting go seeing” (*Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, 33). It is something less controlled and more open to discovery. Artists who I imagine as working this way especially inspire me.

# RISA WITTEN



Risa Witten (she/her) is a visual artist living and working in Calgary, Alberta. Witten is originally from Edmonton, Alberta and spent a portion of time in Vancouver, BC completing part of her undergrad at Emily Carr University of Art + Design. She then finished her undergrad in Calgary at the Alberta University of the Arts, graduating this spring.

Witten's practice sits between the realms of painting and sculpture, dealing with form, play and opticality. Using repetition, symmetry, positive and negative space within a string of inventive and lively compositions, the work builds upon itself, creating its own internal world of visual play. With an interest in optical phenomenology and colour theory, she builds off of a history of colour field painting and optical art, finding ways to establish their contemporary relevance.

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## WHAT MAKES A PAINTING A PAINTING?

A painting does not have to be two-dimensional. It does not have to be a flat object. A painting really just has to deal with the idea of using paint, in any form of application, and it has to deal with the painted image.

In my practice, I am interested in how far I can push a painting into an object, playing with where the line starts and ends.

I think of my works as paintings removed from the wall, yet still acting as 'portals'.

## DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF A PAINTER?

I'm not a *painter's painter*, but I most definitely feel that I am still a *painter*.

I'm one of those artists who have spent a great deal of time painting but aren't bound to the medium. Painting seems to be an important part of my process, where I build visual vocabulary and conjure up different pictorial spaces, but it is not the place where I stay. My practice ends up involving an interplay between two-dimensional and three-dimensional work.

What feels most painterly about my practice is affinity for colour. Colour is a core element in my work that supports everything else. Colour is what my images mainly concern themselves with, using it as a language.

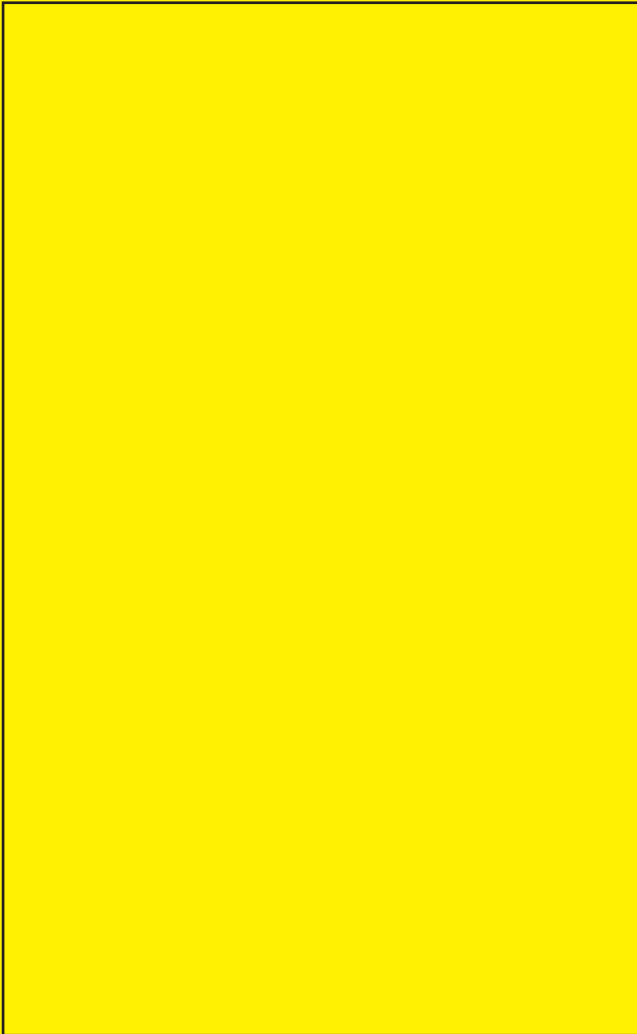
## WHO ARE YOUR FA- VOURITE PAINTERS?

Mary Heilmann is an important artist to me because of the way she has both an affinity for the forefathers of grid and colour field painting but also a cool, casual indifference to them. Her work is deeply personal, dealing with autobiography and aesthetic indulgence, rather than being heavily grounded in esoteric theory. The way she works with and speaks about colour speaks to me. Also drawing from the California Cool aesthetic, being a true hippie and surfer, I feel an element of sisterhood with her as a female skater.

Jeffrey Cheung. Not only does his painting practice stand on its own as deeply relevant to mine, but his presence within the contemporary world of skateboard-ing speaks volumes to the brand of skater I crave to be seen and represented. The "queer" "art-sy" skater is definitely my brand. 90% of the skate merch I own is THERE skateboards or UNITY, (which are his and his partner's companies), which typically features his iconic illustrations of intermingled bodies, pressing into one another in a loving, sometimes crude, but always playful way.

To me, the illustrations relate to Chris Johanson's neatly stacked figures, dealing with a whole genre of blue-chip, skateboard-ing-adjacent art of the 90s and early 2000s that I have a deep love for.

# ROBYN MAH



Robyn Mah (she/they) is a visual artist living and working in Mohkinstsis. Her work explores the constructs of individual and collective identities through contradictions, collections and care.

@mooncakekisses  
@oxgust  
robynmah.com





## WHAT MAKES A PAINTING A PAINTING?

To me a painting is a work that uses *some* of the fundamentals of what we historically understand as *painting*. For example, using paint and a canvas or board in any possible way would make it a painting.

The gift of painting is the fluidity of it, it can be abstracted or literal in the most extreme ways and still be objectively considered a painting.

## DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF A PAINTER?

Yes, in the way that painting is fluid and boundless, I am a painter.

As I try and box the identity of painting into a palatable statement, I find it similar to how I am exploring identity and authenticity within my practice—complex and contradicting.

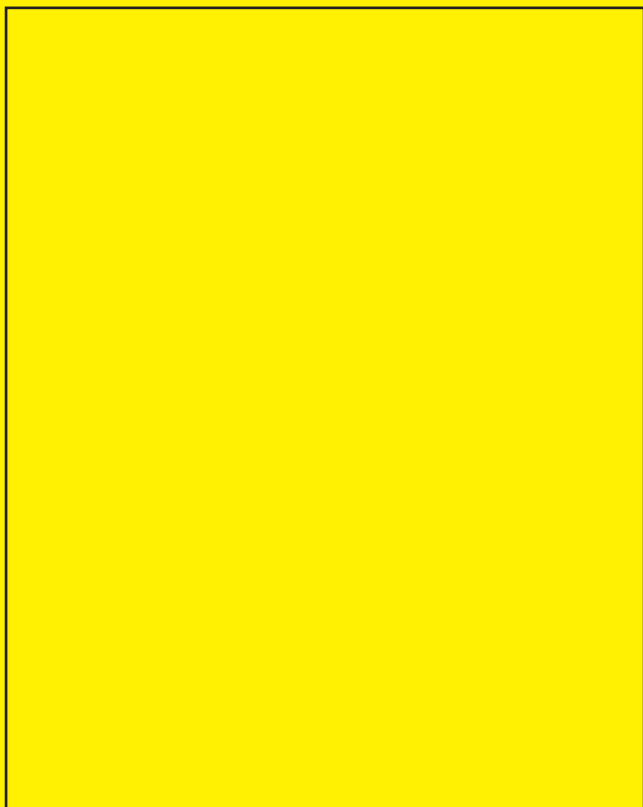
I manipulate and curate the materials and fundamentals of painting to create compositions that impose the desire to understand, the abstractness of identity, and all the complexities that comes with.

I use painting as the vessel or base for my work because it is a grounding space, though, more intentionally a liminal space for the objects I create to exist within, ripped out of their original context and environment and put upon a pedestal to be examined.

## WHO ARE YOUR FA- VOURITE PAINTERS?

Those who are questioning the bounds of painting and empowering the materials in new ways.

# RYLEY WILLIAMS



Ryley Williams (he/him) is a mixed first nations/settler person who currently lives and works in Mohkinstsis. His bloodlines are mixed up in the history of what we now know as northwestern Alberta. As relatives have opened up and dug a little deeper, he has traced relatives to the Beaver, Cree, Haudenosaunee, and Carrier peoples, as well as the settler histories of the Irish, Welsh, and French people who came here for farmland at the turn of the 19th century.

Ryley's art practice is based around (but not limited to) storytelling through mediums such as drawing, painting, filmmaking, and writing. He often incorporates themes related to his mixed heritage and upbringing in the boreal while also maintaining a unique creative voice that nods to the historical while playfully exploring new media. Often, his works include aspects of assemblage and colourful, layered compositions that maintain a narrative but can be read in an abstract sense.

@not\_your\_neechie



## WHAT MAKES A PAINTING *A PAINTING?*

I am no authority on the matter. I don't want to tell anyone the artwork they produced doesn't qualify as a painting. I never really knew how to paint or took any classes in school but I like the naïve quality my works have.

The closer I stipulate what defines my own paintings the more blurred the lines get. Generally speaking, my artwork comes together by intuitively collaging sketches, ideas, experiences & ramblings directly into more conventional mediums. Given my loose creative approach, limiting myself to medium and substrate act as guideposts that start and end somewhere neatly while growing my art practice and skillset along the way.

To me, painting might not make a huge difference between collaging or silkscreening but this viscous liquid color holds a profound amount of potential power and commands people's attention.

## DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF *A PAINTER?*

Yes. I mean I have made and continue to make paintings on a rectangular canvas with paint so it's easy to say I'm a painter.

I started doing it as a whole gimmick because I saw how much grant availability there was for folks in the painting program but I've really committed to the bit and have been making paintings for 5 years now.

I have worked in construction painting a little and a good friend of mine hired me to assist her in mural painting. They are all very different than studio painting.

I am humbled by paint, painting, painters. The technical challenges and problem solving aspects captivate me and keep me coming back for more.

I lived in a small space for a long while so nearly every painting I've made lives at friend's houses and they seem to really like them. It's nice for my works to connect to people so I usually aim to make something I might like to see in a friend's home.

## WHO ARE YOUR FA- VOURITE *PAINTERS?*

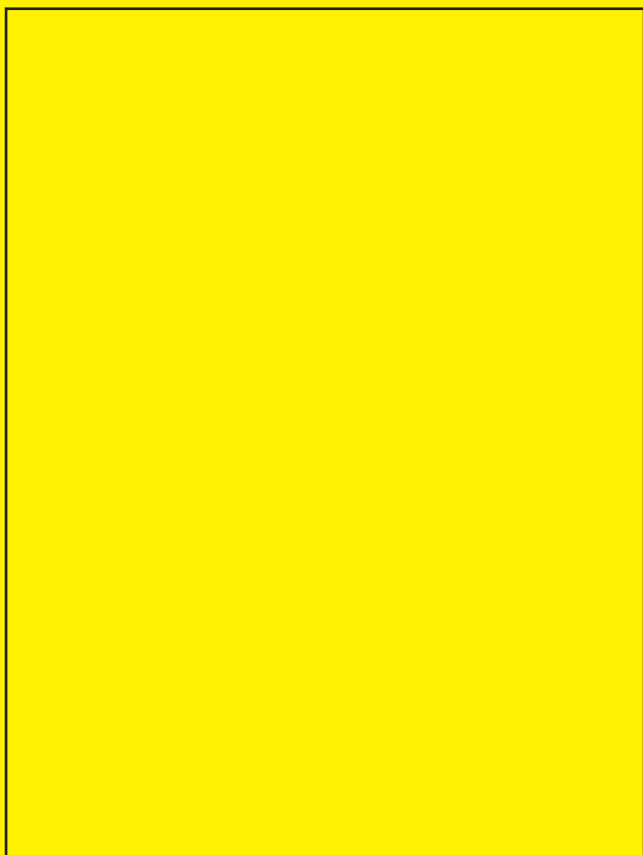
Professional Native Indian Artist Inc. aka Indian Group of Seven. I am deeply stylistically influenced by this group of painters.

Their brushwork is bold and decisive and the subjects spiritual and connected to their experience as indigenous people. It helps me recognize my own experiences have a place in the world of contemporary art. My work would likely not have as much merit in a gallery context if it were not for the advocacy of this group of indigenous painters.

I've always returned to Swedish painter Mamma Andersson's work as a source of painting inspiration. Her sense of space and texture and dreamlike scenes capture me. Also growing up in the boreal I end up connecting to the landscapes in her works.

Also, notably two historical painters: Paul Gauguin & Edouard Manet. I love them and I hate them but their paintings will always have an impact on me.

# SKYE KACSMAR-MAYOH



Skye Kacsmar-Mayoh (she/her) is an artist and dreamer, and works primarily with gouache and watercolour paints, making small and intimate artworks. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts in drawing and a minor in illustration from the Alberta University of the Arts. Working from a cozy desk nook at home, Skye paints and draws and makes other things, often listening to gentle music, and always with a cup of tea.

She tends to tread lightly, speak softly, hold herself close, and daydream often. These qualities carry into her art, where she considers feelings of warmth, softness, vulnerability, and slowing down. As a gentle-hearted being, Skye is interested in rewriting narratives around shyness, sensitivity, and being vulnerable, recognizing how these qualities can be their own kind of strengths.

@pineandpidgeon



## WHAT MAKES A PAINTING A PAINTING?

The term painting feels like a shape-shifting and fluid word, one that eludes any concrete definition. I feel paintings have a kind of presence, something that can be experienced and felt. Often, they seem to create room for thought, conversation, and introspection. Painting feels playful and curious to me, like there is a great element of possibility and of stumbling upon something unanticipated. Painting for me is comforting, challenging, and exciting, and frequently surprises me with how unpredictable it can be, leading to new discoveries.

For me and my own practice, painting is a quiet, soft, and nuanced form of expression, and a calming and introspective process. I like how paintings can communicate a thought or feeling or idea without words, and as someone who is shy and often at a loss for words it feels nice to be able to communicate in this more subtle way.

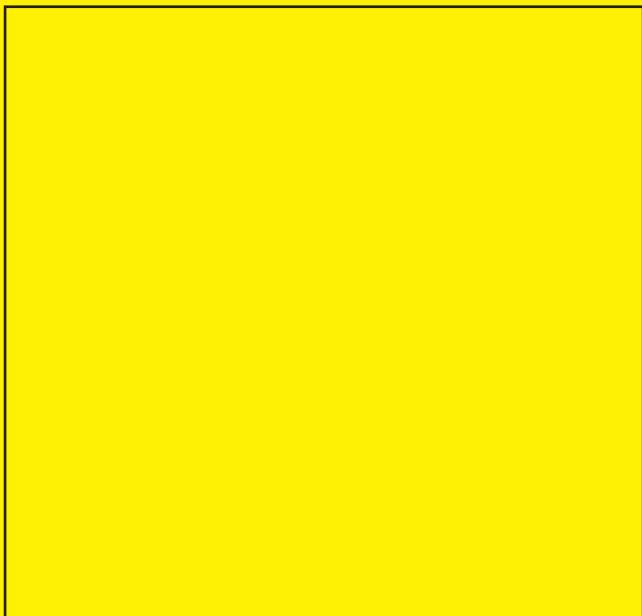
## DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF A PAINTER?

Although I often use paint, I feel more comfortable describing myself as an artist, or artist who paints, as I believe that painting is only one facet of how I like to work.

I enjoy using a wide variety of materials and techniques, but painting is currently my main form of expression when it comes to creating art.

## WHO ARE YOUR FA- VOURITE PAINTERS?

Cy Twombly  
Yoshitomo Nara  
Cecile Metzger  
Emily Winfield Martin  
Marcel Dzama  
Ikumi Nakada



# SYDNEY PAQUETTE

Sydney Paquette (she/her), a Calgary-based painter, holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) with distinction in painting from Alberta University of the Arts (AUArts) and is currently pursuing her Master of Fine Arts (MFA) at the University of Calgary, where she has received numerous awards for her art and research. During her undergraduate years, she not only honed her skills in the classroom and studio but also established her own residential painting business in Calgary, an experience that inspired her to integrate a unique blend of hardware materials and textures into her art.

While pursuing her MFA, Sydney also works with Youth Initiatives at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT), where she is able to channel her passion for helping young women learn about pathways into the trades. Supported by numerous Government of Canada grants and funding through the University of Calgary, her artistic research interests focus on advancing women's agency in the skilled trades and construction industry.

Sydney's painting explores these themes through an innovative style that blends playful gestures and materials to convey agency and a contemporary depiction of women in the skilled trades. Her recent solo exhibition at Crawlspace Gallery in Inglewood showcased her new work, and she aims to continue sharing her vision by exhibiting her art at polytechnics across Canada.

@sydpaqart  
sydpaquette.com



## WHAT MAKES A PAINTING A PAINTING?

Simply put, paint.

I'm a firm believer in that, regardless of the type of paint used. Personally, I favour house paint and apply it to just about everything.

For me, a painting requires some form, serving as the surface for the application of paint. I see painting as the process of adding colour and enhancing the uniqueness of an object.

## DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF A PAINTER?

Yes, I'm a painter.

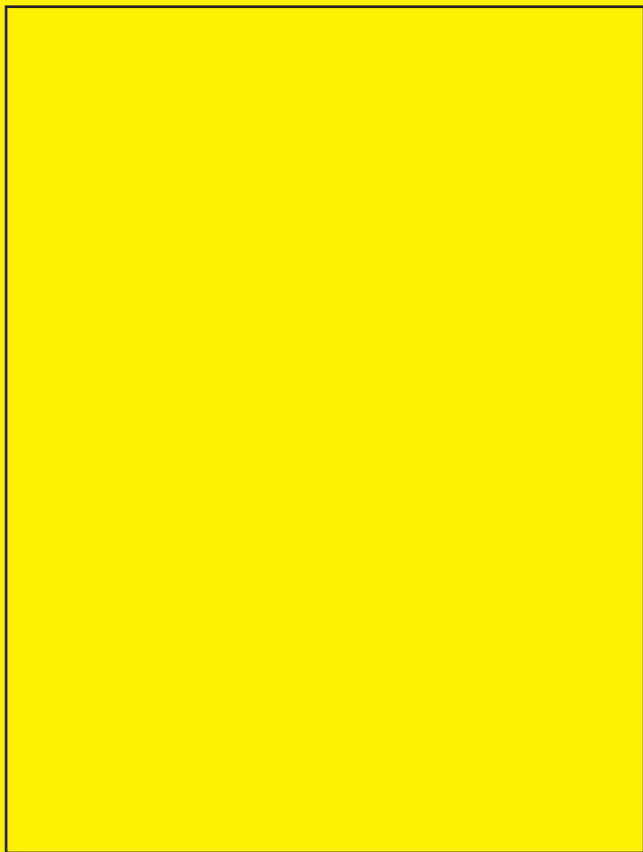
Painting not only forms the foundation of my artistic journey but also plays a crucial role in my professional identity and self-expression. It has guided my exploration across various forms, from fine art to house painting. As a painter, the openness and flexibility of the medium allow me to engage with diverse materials, grounding me and facilitating my exploration and research.

I can confidently say that without painting being the first creative medium I tried, I might never have pursued a career in art.

## WHO ARE YOUR FA- VOURITE PAINTERS?

Elizabeth Murray  
Richard Tuttle  
Tala Madani  
Gladys Nilsson  
Veronika Pausova  
Manuel Mathieu  
Imi Knoebel  
Bea Bonafini

# TONI CORMIER



Toni Cormier (she/her) is an interdisciplinary emerging artist based on Treaty 7 territory (Mohkinstis/Calgary). She graduated with distinction from the Alberta University of the Arts with a BFA in Drawing. She won the Board of Governors Graduating Student Award for Drawing and was nominated for the BMO 1st ART Award. Since graduating, Cormier has maintained an active role in the Mohkinstis arts community as an artist and arts programmer, including her current position at National accessArts Centre as the Drawing & Painting Facilitator.

Through the disciplines of painting, drawing, sculpture, and video, her works create speculative underwater environments to explore ideas of queer otherness, intimacy, and community.

@tonicormier  
tonicormier.com





## WHAT MAKES A PAINTING A PAINTING?

I believe a painting has the ability to bring you somewhere, or to notice something, or to invite you into a narrative. It shares a moment with you, be it fleeting or prolonged. Regardless of its form or content, a painting offers verisimilitude in the moments it shares. Even though painting is a still image, it can invite you to expand a moment, or even create one, beyond the stillness. I'm interested in paintings that offer slow and non-prescriptive expansions. I think good paintings flirt with the zeitgeist too.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of painting is its relationship to the body. I see painting as inherently body-centric or body-reflective, with every mark made being a reflection of the artist's body. It serves as a medium for bridging bodily experiences (or lack of), between people whether they are shared or individual.

## DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF A PAINTER?

I am a drawer learning how to paint. The monument of painting is looming, and I often stumble when I think too much about paint.

What I love about painting is its sensual materiality, visual richness, and inviting nature.

What I love about drawing is that it feels vulnerable and private and easily invites intuitive mark-making.

Drawings can be seen as preparatory and rudimentary, which, for me, lends itself to potent exploration and risk-taking. When I paint, I try to approach it like a drawing and focus on mark-making, values, and shapes. This painting/drawing combination helps prevent me from exerting too much control over the final image.

## WHO ARE YOUR FA- VOURITE PAINTERS?

Margaux Williamson  
Aubrey Levinthal  
Wangechi Mutu  
Mina Loy  
Artemisia Gentileschi  
Hadeer Poplan Ali  
Toyin Ojih Odutola  
Ambera Wellman  
Jorge Queiroz

Herringer Kiss Gallery, and the exhibition *Surface, Surface*, are located on the ancestral land of the Siksikaitsitapi – Blackfoot Confederacy which includes the Siksika, Kainai, Piikani Nations and the shared territories of the Tsuut’ina Nation as well as the Iyârhe Nakoda–Stoney which includes Bearspaw, Chiniki, Good Stoney Nations and also the home of the Métis Nation of District 5 and 6.

The City of Calgary has long been called Moh’kins’tsis by the Siksikaitsitapi, Guts’ists’i by the Tsuut’ina, and Wîchîspa by the Nakoda.

## MANY THANKS TO:

Deborah Herringer Kiss for her support of this exhibition and the artists.

Cassandra Paul for listening to me talk endlessly about painting, this exhibition, and this publication for the past three months.

Richard Brown for our weekly conversations about painting and our monthly charcuterie lunches.

Dara Humniski for her expert guidance on building plinths and shelves, and her much appreciated feedback.

Logan Lape for giving me a pin that reads “there is only sculpture” – something that I thought about often while working on this exhibition, because many of the ideas expressed can be applied to any discipline. So, of course, if “there is only sculpture”, then “there is only print-making”, and “there is only ceramics”, and “there is only photography”, and so on, but most importantly, “there is only painting.”

And a very special thank you to all of the artists: Clinton, Jonathan, Juli, Lailey, Liam, May, Nathan, Pamela, Risa, Robyn, Ryley, Skye, Sydney, and Toni.

## AN INCOMPLETE LIST OF THE ARTISTS’ AND CURATOR’S FAVOURITE PAINTERS:

Agnes Martin	Kai Althoff
Alex Colville	Karin Mamma Andersson
Alice Neel	Kiki Smith
Ambera Wellman	Kim Dorland
Amy Sillman	Laura Owens
Andy Warhol	Lauren Mabry
Anni Albers	Lou Benesch
Artemisia Gentileschi	Maddy Mathews
Aubrey Levinthal	Manuel Mathieu
Avigdor Arikha	Marcel Dzama
Bea Bonafini	Margaux Williamson
Brad Phillips	Mary Heilmann
Cecile Metzger	Matthew Palladino
Chad Murray	Michael Dumontier
Chris Johanson	+ Neil Farber
Colleen Heslin	Mina Loy
Cy Twombly	Ochiai Shohei
Dan Perfect	Otto Dix
David Hockney	Paul Gauguin
David Lynch	Paula Rego
David Shrigley	Peter Dofg
Diedrick Brackens	Petra Cortright
E.J. Hughes	Philip Guston
Edouard Manet	Pieter Brugel the Elder
Edwin Holgate	Professional Native Indian
Egon Schiele	Artist Inc. aka “Indian
Elizabeth Murray	Group of Seven”
Emily Winfield Martin	– Alex Janvier
Erik Olson	– Carl Ray
Erin M Riley	– Daphne Odjig
Finnegan Shannon	– Eddy Cobiness
Francis Bacon	– Jackson Beady
Francisco Goya	– Joseph Sanchez
Frederick Varley	– Norval Morrisseau
Gabrielle Garland	Raymond Pettibon
Gao Hang	Richard Tuttle
Geoff McFetridge	Robert Bechtle
Gladys Nilsson	Rogier van der Weyden
Grim Park	Ron Moppett
Gustav Klimt	Sarah Messenger
Hadeer Poplan Ali	Shannon Cartier Lucy
Helen Verhoeven	Sun Xun
Henni Altan	Tala Madani
Henry Taylor	Tammi Campbell
Hieronymus Bosch	Toyin Ojih Odutola
Hilary Pecis	Trey Abdella
Ida Ekblad	Veronika Pausova
Ikumi Nakada	Wangechi Mutu
Imi Knoebel	Wayne Thiebaud
Jack Bishop	Willem de Kooning
Jeffrey Cheung	Yayoi Kusama
Jerry Hsu	Yoshitomo Nara
Joe Bradley	Young Joon Kwak
Jorge Queiroz	Zadie Xa



CLINTON	ST.	JOHN
G O	D A	M
JONATHAN		WOLFE
JULI		SONG
LAILEY		NEWTON
LIAM	J.	BLACK
MAY		JONES
PAMELA		VICKERSON
RISA		WITTEN
ROBYN		MAH
RYLEY		WILLIAMS
SKYE	KACSMAR-MAYOH	
SYDNEY		PAQUETTE
TONI		CORMIER