Finite Perceptions

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FINITE PERCEPTIONS

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Fine Arts
Painting

by
Hilary Erin Siber
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Accepted by:
Todd McDonald, Committee Chair
Kathleen Thum
Dr. Beth Lauritis
ABSTRACT

I perceive that our world is ever-changing. I believe that as humans, we are not static creatures, but complex beings living in a complex, beautiful and broken world. External factors influence and engage our self-construction. Cerebral and emotional components operate in conjunction with the physical aspects of our humanity. Unmet expectations surface. Unforeseen conflicts arise. Life is not as we think we see it. One small shift in a vantage point can easily undo the very ground underneath our feet, fragmenting our own history of understanding. And while these fragments pierce us deeply, they are the pieces used to reconstitute a new understanding of self. Our humanity is caught up in this beautiful paradox; the dismantling of self is the very beginning of our own reconstruction. Our afflictions and trials produce a greater glory for our having walked through them. As a painter I am aware of how painting communicates, but within my work I hope to recognize where the rhetoric of painting falls short in explicating the complexities of our existence. I believe that the illusion of realism fails, the mark of expressionism fails, the eye of the viewer fails and the body of the artist fails, but it is my hope that together these components can accumulate to more closely convey our destabilized humanity. Failed attempts of communication and expression can point towards a hope for regeneration and purpose amongst the broken visions and ruptures of paint.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my father, Randall Stevan Siber. A captain in the U.S. Naval Reserves, a dentist that worked tirelessly at his profession, a loyal and loving husband, proud father and grandfather, but above all things a witness to his savior, Jesus Christ. He was my biggest fan, and having entered graduate school, I could not know how much his life would come to influence my own work. I am humbled that losing him in the midst of this program germinated a body of work that could not have been produced otherwise. I look forward to the promised day of full restoration and reunion, but until that time I wait eagerly as God redeems all things for his glory and our good.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful for the opportunity to study under Todd McDonald for the past two years. The conversations I have had with you in my studio have engaged a deeper critical awareness for visual perception and communication. You have shown me patience and genuine investment for my artistic practice as I have navigated through this program. My other committee members, Kathleen Thum and Beth Lauritis have been no less of a support for me, especially in my final semester. Thank you for reading countless manuscripts, for sincere dialogue regarding my thesis topic and for valuable critique, advice and insight. My fellow peer, Alexandra Giannell, has been a deep source of encouragement. Thank you for sweet memories in the studio, for sharing in tears and lots of laughter.

Maia, Courtney, Mike and Mom, I hold each of you in high admiration. The selfless decisions each of you have made in your lives are a continued source of inspiration to me. The paintings I have made in my studio are small expressions of experiences that we have walked through together. Thank you for holding my arms up through your encouraging words, your prayers, and your presence in my life.
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CHAPTER ONE

DEPICTION OF SPACES

The spaces we occupy, from the everyday to the noteworthy location, have profound influence upon the constitution of our experience, the formulation of our character and perception of self. Painting participates in a complex history of spatial development and the experience of viewing a picture plane. The height of the Renaissance marked a distinguished relationship between a painted illusionistic space and the viewer by utilizing mechanics of perspective to invite the viewer’s eye into the realm of the painting. Decades later the Baroque movement would go one step further by sharing the realm of the painting with the viewer, presumably engaging the viewer’s body into the work. The illusion remained, but the separation between viewer and artist began to dissolve and an active, unfixed and embodied spectator emerged. Painters in subsequent centuries continuing right up to the contemporary moment are challenged to consider the increasingly destabilized, multivalent and engaged viewer.

Like Baroque masters and 19th century landscape painters I am interested in a reproducing images of our world, but as a means of exposing the holes that exist within replication. My paintings are invitations into pictorial spaces that fracture time and space. Within these spaces I aim to destabilize the viewer and activate awareness of our shared human experience. I recognize how spaces and places can impact our psychology and emotions. As viewers, our visual experience is complex. Endless strata of data compile layers of context and meaning into how we experience the world around us. Tactile and cognitive information also communicate and contribute to our interpretation of
experience. My goal is to heighten optical, physical, psychological and emotional awareness so that these paintings catalyze contemplation of existential and metaphysical experience and query.

CHAPTER TWO
SPATIAL FAILURES

Some experiences are irreducible to verbal and visual language; the enormity of grief over losing a loved one, the anguish experienced in seasons of loneliness or the seed of hope that flourishes through a painful depression. Aspects of our existence resist empirical and quantifiable measure, but their representation and expression is no less salient.

The fractured elements within my paintings are intended to convey that the vision and experience I have of and within this physical world is limited. We are finite beings; our experience, emotions and intellect fall short of revealing to me the desire I have to fully understand who I am. I am perhaps most acutely aware of this fallibility when I attempt to comprehend infinity; rationality butts up against irrationality and I am left in awe. I am a living, breathing human vessel. I am interested in the paradox of perceiving this more fully when I am face to face with a dying, lifeless vessel.

Landscapes and architectural spaces have the innate ability to illicit a phenomenological experience. We can experience this when fear is induced in the claustrophobic tomb of a dark cave or when we realize how small of a space we occupy standing atop an epic mountain peak. Romantic landscape painters of the 19th century utilized this mechanism in their paintings to reinforce the sublime experience of man’s
existence in nature. Albert Bierstadt and Caspar David Friedrich both depicted landscapes that position the viewer in humble submission to the wild, vast and untamed natural world (Rabb). Curator Lauren Rabb states, “the Sublime is a humbling reminder that humanity is not all-powerful” (Rabb). These men depicted landscapes that intentionally positioned and provoked the viewer to be made aware of their bodily engagement within the illusionistic vista. Thus the viewer was mobilized, but ultimately into a false representation of our perceived reality.

CHAPTER THREE
SPATIAL AND BODY CONSTRUCTS

This exchange between viewer and painting is important in my own work. I attempt to provoke these same tactics of subversion and embodied engagement in many of my paintings. In Containment (Fig. 1) I develop a space that constructs and dissolves the controlled surveillance of a circular prison cell. Containment places the viewer within a space that confronts and questions the stability of our perceived reality. Social reformer and philosopher Jeremy Bentham conceived of an idealized prison design in his panoptic vision for prison reform, whereby the vantage point of a single prisoner allows for the viewpoint of all other prisoners (Foucault 375-82). The vantage point that Bentham produces is singular, disciplined and specifically positioned. I pursue this concept of panopticism and undermine the authority of a single vantage point by developing a painting that encourages the viewer to question the viewpoints presented. The space I painted appears to simultaneously offer freedom and confinement, material order on the cusp of immaterial dissolution. The architectural scaffolding is a literal construction and
as a metaphor suggests that our reality is also a construct. Spaces produce and control us, but I explode and erode them to suggest that aspects of our self-construction lie beyond our environment. At left, a solid and contained structure gives way to a permeable and transparent one. Materiality slips into immaterial, and neither one triumphs over the other. Both are given equal merit and both exist alongside one another. The dualities at odds with one another are a visual suggestion of the difficult questions I meditated on while considering the physical and mental boundaries of imprisonment. Forced physical confinement cannot deny the grace found in freedom of our mental facilities; adversely, physical freedom does not negate the captivity I find in my thoughts and emotions. These insights are sometimes inexpressible to me, but lack of articulation makes them no less real. They are the groans that make me human.

*Containment* is a paradox; it is also a failed attempt to paint the infinite. Yet the attempt is not done in vain. I believe it is the very attempt of trying to grasp the ungraspable that I make a closer step towards the infinite. I attempt to represent the infinite in three formal strategies. The first is the cyclical structure that the viewer is placed in visually. If the eye scans the picture plane from left to right, he or she is seamlessly transported from a stable and concrete space to a shifting, transparent and more ephemeral one. An implication is made that you could continue in this cyclical space, always moving from solid space to slippery space back to solid and so on and so forth. The second formal strategy is the infinite, deep space above the viewer’s fixed vantage point and the infinite, deep space below the viewer. These two spaces are in opposition to one another, both in location and color palette. The viewer is positioned in
the center of the duality. The third suggestion of an infinite space is at the center of the picture plane where the structure begins to fade and fissure. I employ shifts in color temperature, line and edge quality to emphasize these three distinctions. By giving multiple locations of infinity within the same picture plane this painting enters a dialogue about time and space, asserting that our current reality, our past and our future are inclusive and co-dependent upon one another.

In *Body Series I – IV* (Figs. 2-5), I explore the constitution of self in a linear progression. The aim of these four works is to synthesize a metaphysical analysis of self. I utilize the human figure and architectonic space to expose, disrupt, analyze and rebuild myself as a physical body. Architecture operates within a long tradition of serving a utilitarian purpose while simultaneously serving as a metaphor to uphold the belief system of its designer. The scaffolding seen in this series supports the living structure of my body. The architectural structure enables the paintings to participate in a dialogue concerning systems, ideals and constructions. I use my human form as a structure to represent an impermanent dwelling, subject to the space and places it inhabits; I conceive of myself as a vessel that is mutable and influenced by its surroundings. Tension exists in this symbiotic relationship, demonstrating the beautiful struggle and hope I have amidst the development of understanding the finitude of my being. Aging, aches, pains and disease make me aware that my physical body is wearing out, and on the decline. Yet this impermanent dwelling houses a mind and spirit that counteracts this deterioration. Outwardly I am wasting away, but inwardly I have the hope for renewal and change; a paradoxical demonstration of redemption.
*Body Series I* (Fig. 2) synthesizes my body and a gridded structure akin to scaffolding. The human form references a single, contained body while the gridded scaffold makes reference to an exterior construct and infinitude. Both forms are generic, yet there is an intimacy in the marriage. It is the juncture of these two forms that expose a vulnerability of their constitution. Suggestions of flesh and organs, structure and space are on display, accessible and unprotected. The body is exposed, and arguably weakened. The collision of these forms suggests that although I am a singular being, foreign and exterior variables work to construct and deconstruct my understanding of being.

*Body Series II* (Fig. 3) explodes the flesh of the body. The demarcation between space, architecture and body begin to blur. The visceral application of paint reinforces the notion of fissured flesh. I apply paint as thin as skin on the paper surface using brushes, then contrast the illusion with swift applications of viscous, thick bodies of paint done with a palette knife. I have left surfaces of the paper exposed to reveal a charcoal drawing underneath while daubs of paint work together to constitute a fleshy body. Space and flesh bleed into one another making it unclear where the body and space begin and end. The very process of making the image is one that declares a fickle and disparate merging of parts in order to constitute a whole. One point perspective focuses the eye on a single, central vanishing point to imply a never ending space. The viewer is invited into the painterly fractured flesh of the body and simultaneously beyond the body, to a passage that implies infinitude. The space is hazily drafted out of charcoal and representative of an unclear but ever-present hope of life beyond our physical bodies.
In *Body Series III* (Fig. 4) the body has a more specific constitution. The particles of paint simultaneously pull away from the body and aggregate to establish an ambiguously rendered materialization of my face. Eyes closed, my countenance is at a peaceful rest, suspended and upheld by the scaffolding that had previously punctured my body. The imagery presented is both a literal and a metaphorical dissection into existential reflections. My body has gone through significant violence, both what is displayed on the paper and the literal process of rendering the forms. I believe the tests and trials that we endure are the very means that produce perseverance and patience within us. Only through the painful prodding and stretching is the visage able to be changed and lifted from its current condition. Thus, the fractured, liminal flesh is in and of the body, yet beyond the body because it is only part and parcel of a greater self that cannot be understood in physical form alone.

In *Body Series IV* (Fig. 5) the architectural forms integrate back into the flesh and a new body is constituted. The scale is smaller and I give more context of the surrounding realm. My body is lifted from an ominous space into a loftier one. This upward thrust could represent a positive change, a resurrection from the violence enacted in the previous three works. Viewing this moment is more passive than the three previous. My invitation for the viewer to participate in the form’s reconstruction is less overt; the scale offers a more distanced and peaceful observation of my body’s transformation. I have used a broader color palette with the goal of conveying renewal and hope for peaceful growth.
The suggested narrative in this series testifies the necessity of vulnerability, accessibility and even deconstruction in order to understand the constitution of self, enacting modes that trouble the ideas of who I am while advocating for growth in and beyond my current circumstances. Skins of paint develop imagery of bodies that are malleable, shaped and affected by their environments; visual representatives for the fleeting, ephemeral moments of my life.

Although I use my own body in these four works, the narrative was conceived under speculation, the terms were generic. I projected “what if” scenarios and then used my body as a testing ground for tribulation and testimony for transformation under existential inquiry. The paintings that I have since developed take a turn; they leave the safe confines of sterile hypotheses and enter into the mire of loss and the beautiful journey that unfolds as one faces the complexities of our human limitations and mortality.

CHAPTER FOUR

DECONSTRUCTING REALITY AND RECONSTRUCTING HOPE

Loss and grief are pertinent undercurrents of this work; my contemplations and experiences guide my desire to explore existential components of our humanity. Loss can often be equated with absence; an emptiness that was at one time full. In “The Principle of Hope” Ernst Bloch makes insights into humanity’s search for a better condition. This yearning can be heightened when we go through some of our most difficult passages of life or when we are sympathetic to the injustices and broken aspects of the world in which we live. “Utopian consciousness wants to look far into the distance, but ultimately only to penetrate the darkness so near it of the just lived moment, in which
everything that is both drives and is hidden from itself” (Bloch 43). The present manner in which I live is seated fully in the hope of the future. Bloch suggests (and I think he is right) that most of all that we do / construct / make / invest in operate under the condition of hope. I believe that what we put our hope in is therefore the most relevant decision we can make as humans. We are fundamentally fragmented, but the hope of wholeness is innate. None of us share the same pain - but there may be repair found in the common, shared experience.

The rending of ones life from another slices into our physical, emotional and psychological being in a painful manner. Release I (Fig. 6), Release II (Fig. 7) and Rip/Recalibrate (Fig. 8) attempt to communicate the emotional processing I have gone through after losing my father while contemplating the severing of multiple relationships. Release I and Release II both depict figures in an ambiguous space. The figures emerge from environments that constitute their form. Release I is a self portrait that uses a Mannerist color palette to establish landscapes that constitute my own body. In the upper register of the painting I intentionally apply paint in a contradictory method. The reference of a physical landscape is disrupted by brushwork that stands more defiantly against illusionism. My visage is literally and metaphorically being pulled away as multiple layers of paint are built upon the canvas to reveal multiple representations of myself. Grappling with my father’s death meant that I had to grapple with my own understanding of self. His life was a part of mine, and very suddenly that part of my life was gone. Release II further expresses the physical and emotional turbulence of loss. Physical paint both constitutes and abstracts form. The figures are suspended in an airy
whirlwind; a turbine of forces influencing their relationship. As space and time explode, the figures also rupture into fragments, resulting in a closer approximation to the experience of loss. This idea of force was the impetus for Rip/Recalibrate. There are no references to human figures, instead I employ the paint pigment to serve as a flesh upon the surface of the canvas. The pigments allude to deconstructing and exploding forms. The beautiful relationship between two people cannot be wholly defined in visual or verbal terms. I believe there is a mysticism in relationships, therefore to visually describe the abrupt end to something as intimate as marriage is difficult. This abstracted space is neither physical nor cerebral - but a liminal “third space”. It is my attempt to use visual terms to communicate the non-visual experience of a difficult severing of two people.

CHAPTER FIVE
MATERIALITY AND PROCESS AS COMMUNICATIVE DEVICES

Several of my paintings demonstrate that materiality of paint is a potent communicator, able to participate in the history of painting and unravel its presumptions. My work begins to enter into this contemporary dialogue. Ann Gale is a contemporary painter using portraiture to give recognition to our shifting and frail human condition. DeWitt Cheng claims that “time and mortality are the subtext of [her work]; the figures wait in a space which is contingent, shifting, simultaneously collapsing and expanding” (Cheng). These anomalies are at play in my own work. I believe that within the rift of paradox I can come closer to visually articulating aspects of our humanity that interest me.
Spatial relationships and the gestural mark are important tools I use in my painting vocabulary. Albert Bierstadt and Caspar David Friedrich are two painters I have looked to who amplified realistic images to conjure a sublime understanding of our relationship to the landscape. The sublime that each of these men depicted was uniquely “theirs”. Despite the intention of the artist, the response from the viewer remains subjective. There will always be a divide between author and viewer. Realism, then, no matter how convincing the illusion, is an inaccurate model for representation. Clement Greenberg’s modernism heralded the honesty of material. If paint is linseed oil mixed with dried minerals, then a painting should be nothing more than a pigment applied to a substrate. Abstract Expressionism championed the index of the maker; the artist as supreme author of gesture, paint the chosen vehicle for that gesture. Historical declarations of what painting should be have done little more than show me what painting cannot be.

As I process grief, loss and human finitude I have discovered that my paintings cannot fully articulate my experience and emotions. For myself, the gesture will fail. The illusion will fail. Nevertheless, my attempt to use these archaic and fallen systems to communicate and explore the broken, bruised and beautiful nature of our humanity hits the mark closer than not. The character of what and how I make these paintings has a relationship to my experience; the brushwork and illusions that I present on these canvases can serve as a mirror between viewer and artist. As I paint my process is disjunctive and nonlinear. Hours of rendering a photographic image are destroyed in the sudden impulse to destroy the illusion and display my own index. Spaces, renderings and
marks are spliced together because in isolation I believe these components fail to fully capture the complexity of my reality. So, with components combined together I attempt to communicate more clearly both the anguish and the hope of human experience.

My indexical mark is a fugitive variable among the works in the gallery, varying in degrees of immediate accessibility. My hand is more concealed in the illusions developed in *Containment* and *Fear Space* (Fig. 9); the linework is controlled and references to photographic images and fabricated spaces become forefront, while pieces such as *(Im)perishable* (Fig. 10), *Waiting Space* (Fig. 11) and *Release II* more quickly identify the use of my body to produce the images on display. Layers of paint are built up to constitute the image of a person, spliced landscapes and the rending of one body from another. In *Rip/Recalibrate* we see paint that is scraped away and my hand is evidenced through incised lines and fast applications of paint with the palette knife. *Departure Space* (Fig. 12) and *Waiting Space* and *Hoping Space* (Fig. 13) marry both the illusionistic and the gestural painting processes. Illustrated spaces are presented, then loose and immediate marks are applied to the canvas. The illusions are interrupted and marred. This process acts as an indelible scar upon the image. The act itself is violent and descriptive of the fallibility of image-making to communicate the conditions and circumstances that we at times painfully endure as we grow as humans. I use painting strategies in a defiant manner to attempt to elucidate the sometimes ungraspable articulation of the human condition. Color is not used to model a romantic landscape or somber vista, but intuitively and somewhat recklessly chosen. In those moments of
abandon, control is relinquished. The canvas serves as an arena for marks of unmediated expression; gestural applications that could pave a path towards amelioration.

By referencing both my index as maker and creating illusionistic images, I develop an access point for the viewer to participate in the formation of the spaces and individuals before them. The paintings are in a state of flux. The viewer can discern recognizable spaces, perhaps even bring their own history and understanding to the quality of a space, but because the spaces are incomplete and interrupted, the viewing is not static. Instead, the viewer is able to recognize my own participation in the process of the making of the image. I hope to promote a dialogue among the viewer, myself and the canvas. The unstable experience of viewing the work is as mutable as the shifting spaces that I create on the canvases. This location and dislocation of the viewer is an attempt to mirror my understanding of the reality in which we live.

CHAPTER SIX
CHARACTER OF SPACE AND TIME

The character of the spaces I develop contribute significantly to the destabilized viewing experience. Optical distortions akin to a fish eye lens warp preconceived notions of how we interact with a visual illusion and how we consider the quality of a space. Rackstraw Downes is a contemporary painter who depicts mundane vistas from New Jersey landfills to expansive Texas skylines. His works force the viewer to sit and stay. To look and observe and to question our own misconceptions of how we think we see the world we live in (Cohen). A subtle or not so subtle curve of the horizon line snaps the viewer’s understanding into “truer” reality. Downes landscapes offer a sober
understanding of perception; we are finite and we have limitations in our ability to perceive and observe. Some of my picture planes depict vistas that imply expanses extending beyond the limitations of the canvas, engaging peripheral vision. Others appear to implode on themselves, inviting the viewer into an intimate, specific and centralized moment. I amplify compressed and expansive space to convey a warping of time and space with the goal of undoing time and space. These spaces are able to aid control of the viewer’s optical vision and the viewer is able to piece together and apply content and context onto the illusions of space. The relationship is tension-filled and symbiotic. A gestalt representation requiring suspended components to inflict one another.

Grieving the loss of my father showed me that time is a unique contributor to our understanding of self. Our past, present and future are knit together in a shifting fabric, as malleable and changing as our visions, circumstances, relationships and revelations. If grief is too large to bear, then presenting space and time as linear is an inadequate metaphor. The failure of illusion comes closer to an accurate model of emotional turmoil. Romantic utopian landscapes offer a subjective view of a distant hope, but they do little to represent any hope within our current circumstance. The drip of a 20th century action painting gives visual form to the authenticity of a medium from the authentic expression of the artist’s hand; but I have found these marks also fall short to express or exemplify both the turmoil and the hope I have found in loss and grief. I choose to use a discord of painting strategies to more closely replicate my own experience and emotions. The variety of modes also encourages the viewer to discern the spaces presented; to constitute their own understanding of ground plane, time of day and construction or deconstruction
of space. *(Im)*perishable and *Awaiting Redemption* (Fig. 14) formally present stable space and our cerebral comprehension of a countenance and identity. Each painting removes gravity and undermine the viewer’s very own understanding. These shifts are problematic if we see ourselves as fully fixed and fully embodied in our humanity; but it is my belief that we are not. Thus, chaotic marks sit upon the surface of a canvas, plopped upon the illusions of deep space and a neatly rendered reality. Splices and explosions disrupt the tidiness of visual perception and we are left to contemplate a space of existence that is neither material nor intellectual. Neither interior nor exterior - but suggestive of a third space.

This third space can also exist at the intersection of painting and photography. Roland Barthes states that “painting can feign reality without having seen it” (Barthes 76). This subversion belies the culture we live in where photography is more often believed as a truthful representation than painting. With profundity Barthes speaks of the photographic image, “this image which produces death while trying to preserve life” (Barthes 92). By painting an image that references photography I locate the image into a specific time and space. The image has a history and operates as a personal trigger for me as maker, but also has the possibility of triggering the memory and experience of my viewer. The photographic image has been captured on film, and then in an act of what Baudrillard calls “simulacra”, it is re-presented and encapsulated in paint (Baudrillard 253). The image I paint unhinges the history of the photograph, snapping focus away from the referenced image and pointing to the material itself. This process calls into question a medium’s ability to fully represent a true experience, be it photography,
painting, drawing, etc. Marlene Dumas uses photography as a drawing reference for her portraits. She says, “There is the image (source photography) you start with and the image (the painted image) you end up with, and they are not the same. I wanted to give more attention to what the painting does to the image, not only to what the image does to the painting” (Dama). I echo this belief in the two portraits I have developed of my father in (Im)perishable and Image Bearer (Fig. 15).

(Im)perishable references a photograph and aims to fight against the death of the image that Barthes claims to occur within photography. Paint is the vehicle that propels the image of a face beyond its death towards a different life. The size and orientation of the painting participates in the long-standing tradition of portraiture. (Im)perishable challenges the assumptions of fixing an identity within a picture plane. The figure represented is being painted and “unpainted” at the same time. There is a paradox at work of giving form to the formless. The face is not recognizable at first glance, but as the viewer spends time with the work a man’s face does begin to appear. The dissolving quality of the man’s face is ever-present and the paint that constitutes the human form is the same paint that begins to build a space beyond the human form. Vertical lines allude to an existence that expands beyond the confines of the canvas, a similar cylindrical construct found in Containment. The man’s face is present in a fixed location, and also participates in a future location, beyond himself in an implied infinite realm, despite physical mortality. Larger geometric and immediate marks of paint in the lower register of the canvas pull towards the viewer. This interruption gives merit to my own mark-making and engages the viewer to consider participating in the construction of this man’s
identity - who he was, who he is and who he will become. A life that exists beyond his
material construction; more than flesh and bone.

CHAPTER SEVEN
EMPTY LOCATIONS

In my paintings of empty spaces I move away from depictions of the body and
towards imagery that evokes a bodily experience. Meditations of loss and death ebb and
flow between the rational and the irrational, concrete and ephemeral. An empty space can
operate in both of these ways. The lofty vault of a cathedral is at once and simultaneously
filled with the sounds and atmosphere of a space of worship. Marginal parking lots,
aircraft runways and rural expanses serve as representations of vacuous emotional
experience and hope for voids to be filled again.

The places I painted are mundane, banal and everyday, but I hope to present a
romantic vision of hope in the midst of their loneliness. Vast physical spaces stand as
representations of the immateriality of hope and potential. Fear Space depicts the banal
space of an empty parking lot. The captured moment aims to position the viewer
simultaneously at the edge of despair and on the brink of hope. The lower right inverts
the photographic colors of the parking lot scene. This inversion is symbolic of a past, a
memory. I juxtapose this moment with sunlight in the center, upper register of the picture
plane. Light punctures the horizon to suggest the arrival of a new and future day. Fear
Space offers a location of peace and a resting place for contemplation. Arrival and
departure are both possible and it is the vantage point of the viewer that determines the
quality of the space. The viewer is invited to participate in the construction and
deconstruction of these realms. This agency is pertinent because the viewer’s
participation extends the conversation of embodiment and constitution of self beyond the
picture plane and into the viewer’s mental landscapes.

If we as humans are in a state of flux, then the environments we exist in are
inescapably experienced and seen through this shifting lens. I believe that our
experiences can never truly be represented and I aim to freeze these paintings in a state of
unresolve. *Waiting Space, Hoping Space, and Departure Space* utilize aggressive mark-
making; my struggle with material in the paintings is a mimicry of the struggle of the
material world in which we live. The spaces I represent are appropriate spatial metaphors
for the quiet emptiness of loss, but they are spliced and sliced together in order to further
emulate the accumulation of memory, time and experience that closer visually emulates
my emotional experiences.

I explore disruption further in my panoramic paintings, *Awaiting Redemption,
Further Up, Further In* (Fig. 16) and *Be Still* (Fig. 17). Unified, continuous flat parking
lots are elevated as constructed and carefully regarded landscapes, yet they are
interrupted by dissolving ground planes that give way to constellations, ambiguous mists,
and swift marks that suggest mobilization to another location. *Be Still* reflects the
graphics of parking spaces into the sky, literally flipping reality on itself while visceral
paint marks make further allusions to the possible interruptions and interventions at work
in our perceived reality. In *Awaiting Redemption* I have painted numbers to express our
limited days on earth and my desire to make eternal impressions during a finite lifetime. I
express finitude in *Further Up, Further In* by splintering the viewer’s eye level. The illusion presented to the viewer is distorted, exemplifying that our perceptions are misleading and limited; we are not in control. Our vision is myopic and an intervention is necessary.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

The world that we occupy is elusive, and not easily captured nor comprehended. Saying goodbye to my father has taught me not to hold tightly to the things of this world. Life slips away, and so do these landscapes. I cannot paint the bright hope of tomorrow, but I can attempt to depict spaces that point to locations beyond themselves to a place of infinite rest and peace.

I make paintings that visually grapple with the very paint of their construction to represent the ineffable qualities of our experience. Unstable locations are tempered and shifts in space and time occur that offer a liberty of expression for myself as maker. This body of work literally and metaphorically demonstrates what the painting process is for me. These works are honest attempts to communicate, grapple, heal and find hope through a simple vehicle of pigment and linseed oil. It is my hope that the finished result exemplifies that struggle, and opens up a greater dialogue that lives beyond the picture plane.
FIGURES

Figure 1: *Containment*

Oil on canvas, 30” x 50” x 1”, 2013
Figure 2: *Body Series I*

Oil on shellac paper, 12” x 22”, 2014
Figure 3: *Body Series II*

Oil on shellac paper, 12” x 22”, 2014
Figure 4: *Body Series III*

Oil on shellac paper, 12” x 22”, 2014
Figure 5: *Body Series IV*

Oil on shellac paper, 12” x 22”, 2014
Figure 6: *Release I*

Oil on canvas, 36” x 48” x 2”, 2014
Figure 7: Release II

Oil on canvas, 36” x 48” x 2”, 2014
Figure 8: *Rip/Recalibrate*

Oil on canvas, 15” x 36” x 1”, 2014

Figure 9: *Fear Space*

Oil on canvas, 17” x 28” x 1”, 2014
Figure 10: *(Im)perishable*

Oil on canvas, 18” x 22” x 2”, 2014
Figure 11: Waiting Space

Oil on canvas, 24” x 18” x 3”, 2014
Figure 12: *Departure Space*

Oil on shellac paper, 20” x 12”, 2014
Figure 13: *Hoping Space*

Oil on canvas, 24” x 18” x 3”, 2014
Figure 14: *Awaiting Redemption*

Oil on canvas, 71” x 35” x 1”, 2015
Figure 15: Image Bearer

Oil on canvas, 10.5” x 12.5” x 1”, 2015
Figure 16: *Further Up, Further In*

Oil on canvas, 70” x 24” x 1”, 2015

Figure 17: *Be Still*

Oil on canvas, 28.75” x 14.5” x 1”, 2015
BIBLIOGRAPHY


