



URBANIZE

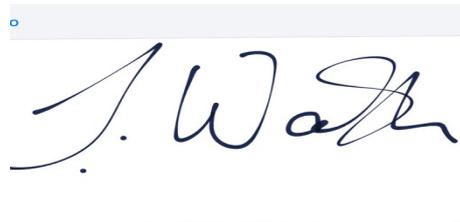
Tira Walsh

Exegesis in support of Master of Creative Practice

Unitec Institute of Technology, 2018

ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my work and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of another degree or diploma or a university or institution of higher learning.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "J. W. Walker". The signature is written in a cursive style. Above the signature is a light blue horizontal bar with a small blue circle on the left side. Below the signature is a thin horizontal line.

Contents

1 Attestation

7 Abstract

8 Introduction

9 The Case for Contemporary Abstract Painting

17 The Research Project as Defined at the outset

25 Dissection of a Painting from Drawing Practice

29 Dissection of three Paintings

41 'Studio' as the Site of Research

43 Conclusion

44 Bibliography

48 Appendix -Catalogue of works

Abstract

Painter Tira Walsh remembers the introduction to technology in the school's curriculum in the late 90's. The intrigue in this manipulative tool for creating hybrid images combined with an engagement in a discussion of contemporary abstract painting, designates the practical arena in which this research project takes place.

This current generation responds to screens, lives are dominated by what we view on mobile phones and laptops. Any device is a necessity. Digital media manipulates and restricts what we see. What is perceived to be normal and right, can be conflicting, manipulative and motivated by greed. Human dignity is distorted and blinded by images of conformity. One ponders on what the future holds for the next generations.

The paintings are descriptions of corruption and manipulation; associations that generate visuals of displacement. The creative process consists in exchanges of contradictory ideas. The work retains the ambiguity of a screen but also synthesizes these strands into complex paintings that operate as representations of a digital and physical urban-scape.

Introduction

This research explores the practice of representing authentic autobiographical visual narratives that stem from the artist's life experiences. Using the narratives of an idiosyncratic dialect, these paintings explore and generate visuals of displacement.

This exegesis starts by outlining a discussion that makes a case both for and against recent developments within contemporary abstract painting. It then charts the beginnings of the project with a description of the methodology of a drawing practice. This is followed by a detailed examination of three paintings and a discussion of the studio environment as the primary site of research.

The Case for Contemporary Abstract Painting

'Everything has already been invented, so one cannot expect innovative solutions.'
(Zmyslony)

"I always had this idea that paintings are zombies, because everybody says, 'Painting is dead,' and then they're walking around happily — dead. But now I actually think paintings are vampires, because they feed on the gaze and suck your eyes. I really have the feeling that the more a painting gets looked at, the stronger it 'gets'."
-Charline von Heyl (Heyl)

Von Heyl is being gutsy in her mockery of the 'painting is dead' argument – as if to say, we really don't need to be having this discussion any longer.

Historically, this commentary about painting and its death, began with Paul Delaroche in 1839, on first encountering the beginnings of photography when he saw a very early Daguerreotype. This chorus has been repeatedly appealed to in the latter half of the 20th Century and has become an unavoidable part of the dialogue around contemporary painting.

One can mostly attribute the notion, 'painting is dead' to a retrospective understanding of the formalist critic Clement Greenberg. 'Formalism' is defined by the way of analyzing and considering the basic elements of the art. – These visual elements, color, line, scale, format, composition constitute the fundamental language with which one can examine and analyze works of art through a formalist interpretation. A formal judgement on a painting, whether it be representational or abstraction, is based on the artist's ability to achieve a cohesive balance in the composition. Greenberg was the most influential advocate for formalism in the 1960s. He believed that an abstract painting did not need to refer to anything beyond its own reality and did not require any further verbal justification.

According to Greenberg, painting is non-representational nor should it stray from the flatness of the, picture plane, "any attempt to deconstruct and subsequently explain an abstract work of art was essentially to strip it of its intrinsic value". Greenberg thought that politics was irrelevant in art. Michael Israel asserts, for Greenberg '...political art (was) irrelevant to and irreconcilable with avant-garde practice, and thus a kind of retrograde art that was aesthetically inferior.' (Israel)

Greenberg's advocacy for painting to assert autonomy and maintain its freedom from actual social life and context, set the agenda for subsequent critiques of painting's irrelevance. This prompted continual and repeated claims that were to follow about the 'death of painting'. These debates were to dominate the discussion of painting in the last three decades of the 20th Century and into the new century.

Jason Farago questions the general health of painting, Farago writes, 'Painting's obituary has been written several times over the past 150 years. But it's now experiencing a major revival.' (Farago) Farago remarks about the contradictory nature of contemporary painting, that lurches from rude health to near death, creating confusion for the audience. 'Is painting sick or healthy? And why is it so hard to tell?' ...- it seems in terrible shape and yet in better health than ever.' (Farago) He comments on the 2015 *'The Forever Now'*, 'exhibition at MoMA. A varied contemporary painting show- that argues '...painting is well and healthy- yet isn't interested in being known as novelty. Rather, ...recycles or redeploys pre-existing styles for new purposes.' (Farago)

Historian and author Suzanne Hudson writing in *Painting Now* takes a deeper historical view of the position of contemporary painting. The book views the works of over 200 artists. Farago claims, Hudson looks away from style, instead insists that the painting is assessed in relation to history and traditions of the medium. Fargo proclaims that this offers Hudson with the '... freedom to think not only about paintings themselves, but about their motive, production, distribution, their framing and their institutions.' (Farago)

Farago states, in Hudson's introduction, she identifies two crucial moments in the history of art that were lethal to painting. One, the impact of the photograph in the 1930s. Photography depicted the world more accurately and faster than a painting could, the need for painterly language was therefore nonexistent.

After photography the second crash for painting came with Marcel Duchamp's ready-made. By elevating a bicycle wheel and upside-down urinal to the status of art, Duchamp changed the terms of artistic success, privileging ideas over visuality and also eliminating the need for the artist's hand. '...the ready-made object struck at the heart of painting's self-justification.' (Hudson) This mutiny removed technical skill as a painterly quality.

In 2009, *Art in America* magazine published an article by senior editor Raphael Rubinstein, *'Provisional Painting'* which refocused the debate about abstract painting. Rubinstein highlights an awareness of 'provisionality' in the practice of painting. The works turned away from what he termed 'strong' to '...looking casual, dashed-off, tentative, unfinished or self-cancelling.' (Rubinstein) He poses the question of why the artist would show a painting that demonstrates visual actions of hesitation, doubt or reluctance? And with this action, will the painting be presented as a failure for the viewer? What Rubinstein implies is that historically, there were painters who productively used an idea of 'failure' to further the possibilities of painting. This moment in time would suggest that there might be many different ways of understanding and interpreting what painting could be and might achieve.

Rubinstein creates a lineage of provisional painters which include; 'Richard Tuttle's decade long pursuit of humble beauty... Robert Rauschenberg's "cardboards" of the 1970s and the first-thought/best-thought whirlwind that was Martin Kippenberger.' (Rubinstein) He creates a case for these artists as having a different relationship to the canons of painting history. 'I take such work to be, in part, a struggle with a medium that can seem too invested in permanence and virtuosity, in carefully planned-out compositions and layered meanings, in artistic authority and creative strength...' (Rubinstein)

In writing about Christopher Wool, Rubinstein discusses how the use of digital tools has enabled the painter to productively create images of erasure; of allowing an image that appears to have been wiped away, to be presented as a finished work. 'The compositions feature large clumps of broad back-and-forth gray and white brushstrokes— think of whitewashed windows or rubbed-out chalk on blackboards— ...the artist seems to have obliterated a painting-in-progress and then presented this sum of erasures as the finished work.' (Rubinstein)

Rubinstein, asks the question about painting and its impossibilities. He talks about what makes painting 'impossible'? What makes 'great' painting impossible? He offers the suggestion that it's '...a sense of belatedness, a conviction that the earlier generation and artist have left only scraps to fight over.' (Rubinstein)

Contemporary painters are engaging more with the idea of impossibility in their work. This has led them to reject a sense of a finish with the work. There is less of a desire to paint a great masterpiece, as the likelihood is that all painting ideas are exhausted.

Two years later, 15 April -21 May 2011, Rubinstein curated a painting exhibition at Modern Art in London. Although Rubinstein article in *Art and America* involved a variety of historical and contemporary painting practices which identified with the idea of 'provisionality', the exhibition concentrated on the contemporary. Artists whose works were exhibited; Richard Aldrich, Jacqueline Humphries, Raoul De Keyser, Cheryl Donegan, Sergej Jensen, Michael Krebber, Albert Oehlen, Peter Soriano and Angiola Gatti.

Rubinstein concludes that this exhibition, *Provisional Painting*, '... is not about making 'last paintings', nor was it about the deconstruction of the medium.' (Rubinstein) Rubinstein wanted to show various works that shared neither style, content, techniques or materials, but represent '...a profound willingness to suspend closure, to leave painting open.' (Rubinstein)

Sharon Butler's, article, '*Abstract Painting: The New Casualist*', makes reference to Rubinstein's idea of 'Provisional Painting' but she does not treat it as a negative, as in the idea of failure and impossibility, but regards the visual characteristics that Rubinstein identifies as a new way of understanding contemporary abstract painting. She identifies a number of young, talented, artists, such as Amy Feldman — 'there is nothing zombified about her work!' (Hurst)

Butler starts with giving homage to the pioneers of abstraction - the Cubists, Abstract Expressionists and Minimalists, for their firm aesthetic roots and developing their own philosophies. Butler sees a shift in current attitudes, '...many abstract painters are saying goodbye to all that didactic thinking and exuding a kind of calculated tentativeness.' (Butler) She describes the works as harboring '...multiple forms of imperfection... unfinished but also the off-kilter... the not-quite-right.' (Butler) A sense of rejecting the fundamentals learned in institutes and embracing what leads to visual intrigue. Butler refers to the works of artists, Amy Feldman, Joe Bradley and Cordy Ryman, in which they '...have abandoned the rigorously structured propositions and serial strategies of previous generations in favor of playful, unpredictable encounters.' (Butler)

She urges you to look again, painting is heading in a new direction. '*The New Casualists*' are adapting a like attitude to an increasingly complex, unfamiliar, and multivalent world. If the viewer leaves a show of their paintings agitated by the abrupt shifts, their crosscurrents, and their purposeful lack of formal cohesion, the work has succeeded.' (Butler)

Butler admits, abstract painters are more restless, less repetitive, but more expansive. Artist Chris Martin experiments with materiality, paint application and color combinations, other painters such as Kadar Brock and Rebecca Morris are not invested in a visual language but use forms of abstraction and like Rauschenberg, use found objects. 'In the process, there is no room for handwriting about originality; it is simply assumed that it will result from synthesis...'. (Butler) She concludes with how academics would critique and evaluate the new 'Casualism', providing the example of Minimalist, Ellsworth Kelly. He said, "I have never been interested in painterliness ... putting marks on a canvas. My work is a different way of seeing and making something which have a different use." Butler suggests, '...the new casualists' could make the same general claim, believing that exploring even mundane subjective perceptions can yield extraordinary insights.' (Butler)

A new approach to contemporary abstraction, firstly acknowledged by Rubinstein and then further explained in a more positive light by Butler, also attracted considerable negative responses and an array of diverse criticism within the art world has come to life from commentators.

In 2014 artist and art critic, Walter Robinson wrote an article, '*Flipping and the Rise of Zombie Formalism*,' *Artspace*, which addressed a certain trend in the art world along with the signs of influence it is having on the art market today. He was not concerned about the art market, but rather what type of paintings that were driving it. Robinson coined this painting style as 'Zombie Formalism'. '... "Formalism" this art involves a straightforward, reductive, essentialist method of making a painting.... and "Zombie" because it brings back to life the discarded aesthetics of Clement Greenberg' (Robinson)

Robinson points to works produced by two artists, Jacob Kassays, electroplated silver monochromes paintings and Lucien Smiths, '*Rain Paintings*', produced from spraying paint from a fire extinguisher, both known for their success at auction. Robinson proclaims that works by these artists are '...prime examples of a vague sense of commentary on the history of painting and a clever ability to fetishize process in order to manufacture some simulacrum of originality.' (Hurst)

With their simple and direct manufacture, these artworks are elegant and elemental, and can be said to say something basic about what painting is...easy to understand, yet suggestive of multiple meanings... Finally, these pictures all have certain qualities – a chic strangeness, a mysterious drama, a meditative calm – that function well in the realm of high-end, hyper-contemporary interior design.' (Robinson)

Jerry Saltz describes the work as, 'decorated-friendly,' that would complement a contemporary apartment or house. Paintings that compliment collectors, Saltz describes the look 'cerebral', gives no insight into anything, instead translates on processes of abstraction, appropriation and recycling, employing a similar vocabulary of stains, spray paint and spills, with all over compositions of irregular grids, strips and maybe a bit of collage. At times, stretcher bars play a part. This is supposed to tell us, 'See, I know I'm a painting—and I'm not glitzy like something from Takashi Murakami and Jeff Koons'. (Saltz) He insists that much of this merchandise is '... painters playing scales, doing finger exercises, without the wit or the rapport that makes music. Instead, it's visual Muzak, blending in.' (Saltz)

Critic Jerry Saltz takes up this cause in his article, *Zombies on the Walls: Why Does So Much New Abstraction Look the Same?*, he describes zombie formalism as a '...kind of painting that is easy to understand...', mediocre; '...offers no insight into anything' or labelled; 'Crapstraction', 'Dropcloth abstraction', 'M.F.A. Abstraction' (Saltz) He even comments about the '...vertical format, tailor-made for instant digital distribution' (Saltz)

At the end of the article, Saltz admits he doesn't hate all of this type of work, but hopes this trend doesn't lose painters that really do paint like this, 'The saddest part of this trend is that even better artists who paint this way are getting lost in the onslaught of copycat mediocrity and mechanical art.' (Saltz) He also makes a point about prior art movements, that were championed by the extraordinary original artist(s). They influence everything, then become diluted, taken over by secondary talents and fade out.

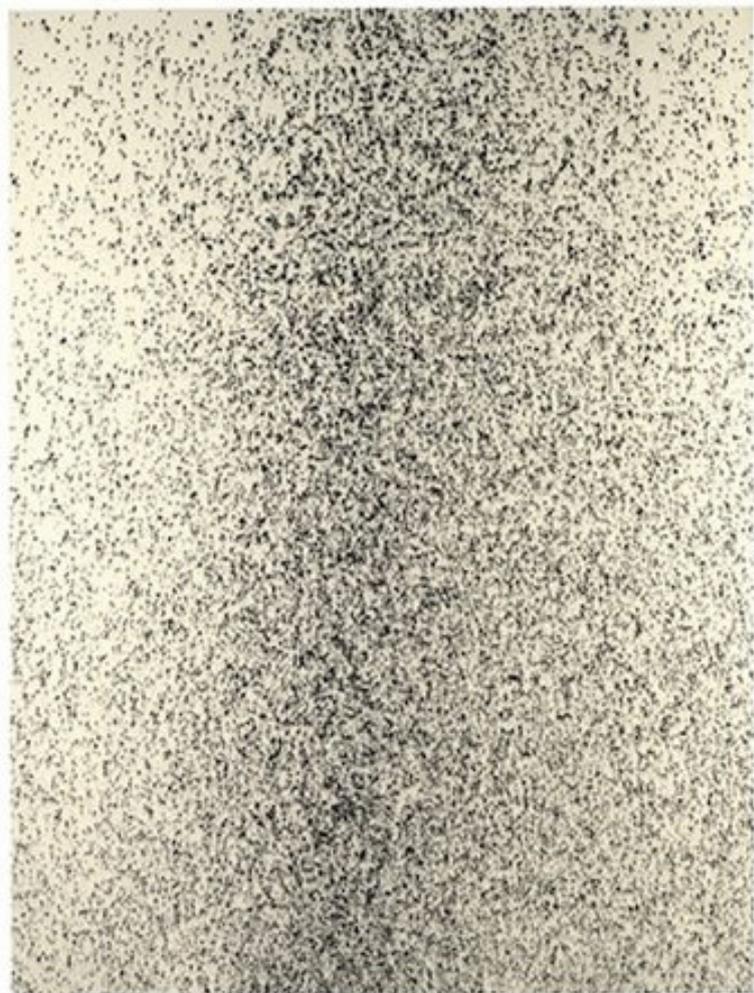
Saltz is highly critical of the drama around contemporary painting and the art market. '...artists making diluted art have the upper hand. A large strip of the art being made today is being driven by the market, and specifically by not very sophisticated speculator-collectors who prey on their wealthy friends and their friends' wealthy friends, getting them to buy the same look-alike art.' (Saltz) While some artists are acting in good faith, others are jumping on the band wagon, 'acting like industrious junior post-modernist worker bees', (Saltz) deploying the 'visual signals' of past abstraction movements and artists.



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2



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Fig 1.
Jacob Kassay's Untitled,
2010. (Robinson)

Fig 2.
Lucien Smith, Two sides of the same coin,
2012. (Robinson)

Fig 3.
Lucien Smith, Blazing Saddles,
acrylic on unprimed canvas,
274.3 x 213.4 cm, 2012 (Phillips)

Saltz refers to how these painting can be seen everywhere and are flooding the art market. 'Galleries everywhere are awash in these brand-name reductivist canvases, ... (It's also a global presence: I saw scads of it in Berlin a few weeks back, and art fairs are inundated.)' (Saltz)

Chris Wiley, *Artnews*, recently wrote an article, *The Toxic Legacy of Zombie Formalism, Part 1: How an Unhinged Economy Spawned a New World of 'Debt Aesthetics'*. He discusses how this trend transformed the art market, how the relationship between finance and art are the aesthetics that underpin Zombie Formalism, and what it means to be a young, recent graduate, an artist with huge debt hanging over them. Investors brought huge wealth into the art-market purchasing predominantly recent work. The economy was on the rise; money was coming in from very young collectors whose intentions implied they were committed only to make a fast profit. This changed for the young artist, a huge surge for their work became urgent. This could have been called a demand and supply chain from the artist. Like a mechanical productivity of paintings that are spat out into the frenzy for the collectors. Could Zombie Formalism refer to collectors, rather than the paintings? Wiley's depiction of the collectors trailing behind recent graduates could be simulated as corpses revived by making a quick buck, an '...infection among both newly minted MFA graduates and a rapacious class of collectors that inevitably trailed along behind them...' (Wiley)

Howard Hurst, *Hyperallergic*, attended a panel discussion, December 10 2014, hosted by the School of Visual Arts Theater in Chelsea, New York. Hurst acknowledged that, Walter Robinson was one of the panelists and opened up the discussion stating he was a 'humorous troublemaker', apologizing for hitting a nerve with his article, but continuing to describe his amusement of how young artists were using '...contrived process-fetish approaches'. (Hurst) Hurst continued that, Robinson takes credit for opening up this argument but admits that it was Jerry Saltz who 'weaponized it with his article'. Hurst is on the fence with this discussion, stating 'On the one hand, I'm an out-of-the closet, admitted, and passionate abstract-painting fanboy. On the other, I'm a bit of a curmudgeon. I have no problem with the idea that it takes years, possibly decades for an artist to mature, and that it's impossible to make every painting successful.' (Hurst)

Hurst protests his decisiveness of current abstract painting, 'I love that abstract painting has continued to thrive, and that renewed recent interest has expanded the field. But it sucks that a bunch of painters that have always seemed half-hearted at best are benefiting from the renewed interest in painting.' (Hurst) He explains his annoyance at Lucien Smith, '...he simply doesn't have the chops.', '...I am struck by how little seems to be happening inside each painting.' (Hurst)

These confessions from prominent critics who use the popular media to make provocative and controversial statements, are mostly focused on the excesses of the art market. In doing so their statements about the nature of contemporary painting could be argued as being over-generalized and hysterical, for the purposes of easy consumption. The fact that there is considerable more interest and production of abstract painting in recent times, would suggest that there are a great many more motivations and multiple possibilities for how abstraction can be reinvented and exhausted.



Fig 4. Tira Walsh Practice, Studio Shot, 2017

The Research Project as defined at the outset

A discrete practice-based research project was conducted at the start of 2017, consisting of a sequence of small scale paintings, 540 mm X 420 mm

Practice-based research provides knowledge for the art work. In this case, knowledge is understood as not being of a verbal or symbolic nature. The creative work is transmitting knowledge in a non-verbal manner, '...often unstable, ambiguous and multidimensional, (and) can be emotionally or effectively charged and cannot necessarily be conveyed with the precision of a mathematical proof.' (Dean)

This project produced 35 paintings, the majority of which were complete. The remnants were considered as works in progress. The project's intention was to engage in a continuous, systematic process of visual thinking. The creative process provides practical analysis when one understands the first principle of practice by; physically making a move, critically appraising its worth, modifying ones' intention and making conscious adjustments to the practical strategies. This is a procedure for the purpose of monitoring progress and providing the basis for ongoing judgement and further action. These drawings offer regeneration of processes and ideas through explorative making. This smaller scale is distinguished as my drawing practice.

I have two distinctive working methods, a drawing practice and a painting practice. The two practices structure the activities that occur within the studio. The drawing practice is of vital importance. It is the foundation of which I can build the painting practice. A method of three distinctive modes are the starting point of engagement for drawing, which are, passive, practical and contextual.

Passive: This gives a chance to bring my own interests and mark making capabilities together. A research question emerges and a paradigm develops that incorporates the two into a visual synthesis.

Practical: Drawings give the artist a distinctive visual voice. The practicality of drawing is based on experimentation, happy accidents, surprising interactions, unexpected outcomes, that may provide visual potential. Drawings are produced in series. This is a manufactured process of working and for the purpose of engaging in a systematic and continuous process of visual thinking.

Contextual: Identifying art contexts, assessing views and tendencies, understanding opinions and responding to the signs in my own physical environment.

As in with any research, interests may change. A dialogue emerges with the practice. This will relate to the negotiations between the artist, the work and the context in which it is located. This research method provided me with a means of formalizing and establishing a mode to work within. I was able to gain direct critical comparisons to consolidate where and what the focus for the paintings could be.

The only intended rule that applied, was keeping to a same scale, 540mm x 420mm, and on stretched canvas. Having the predisposition to shift the scale was instinctual. This in itself was challenging, the painting series prior to undertaking these '*drawings*' had been much larger in scale. Adapting to this shift was, at times, problematic. This variation carried the practice to a more mature and concentrated level of fruition.

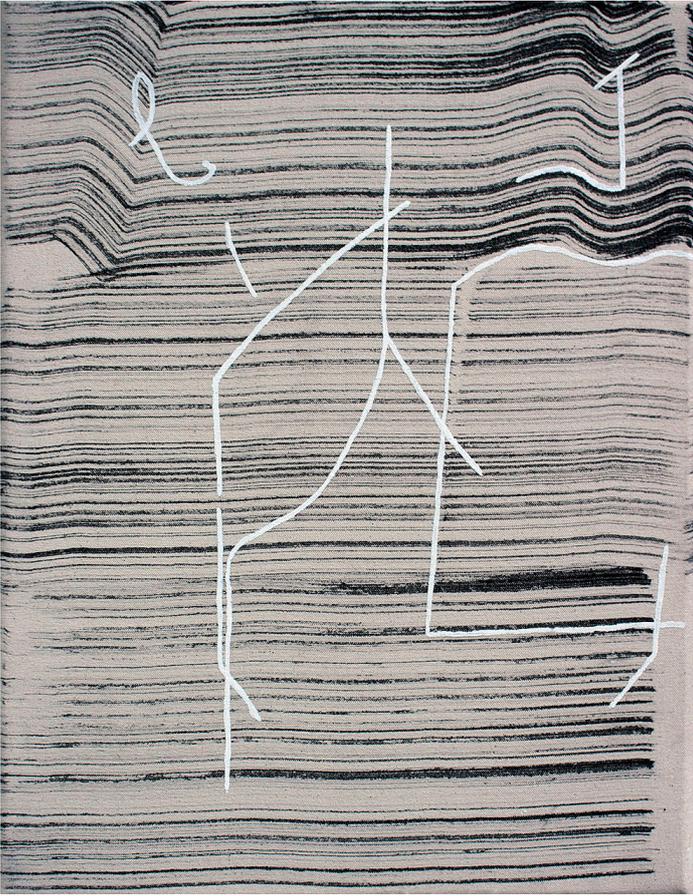
Works that were considered successful provoked ideas for the larger scale paintings. These works were based on material experimentation, surprising interactions and outcomes that were unanticipated. Visual production of painting was then a manufactured process of the working drawings. With this process, a unique visual language was created and acknowledgement that it will have the ability to continually reinvent itself.

There is no clear truth or falseness to the paintings in the sense that it holds an attitude rather than representation of anything. By conjuring, new obscure visions, fresh tasks that intrigue and ignite curiosity. Paintings can be understood as expressing energy; a repository of the negotiation that had taken place. These can be found in accidents and mistakes. The value of this process provides an immediate response that can give insight to the creative outcome.

Each painting has its own unique meaning, an uncluttered but different response to what had gone before. As in life, the paintings are a manifestation of disorientation, confusion or dread, in what can be described as an apparently futile, irrational world. The works deliver a reply, visually authentic as possible but with a sense of appropriating autobiographical dialect.

The particular sequence of work seeks to inhabit the uneasy coexistence of the internal workings of the mind and being in the world. It is intended that the works will operate as free agents. With provocation from the artist, it is hoped that the works might embody an existential manifestation which emphasizes the individual as a free and responsible agent, determining their own development through acts of will.

These works chart the act of the physical application of media onto a surface of raw canvas. In some cases, the surface is not primed, the grain of the fabric determines how the applied media is distributed. Using media that are unpredictable, dense and rigid can give unexpected outcomes. This provided the work an authenticity in the sense that the media choose its own appearance when applied to raw canvas.



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Fig 5.
Tira Walsh,
Five Man Army
mixed media on canvas,
540 mm x 420mm, 2018



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Fig 6.
Tira Walsh,
Famous,
mixed media on canvas,
540 mm x 420mm, 2017



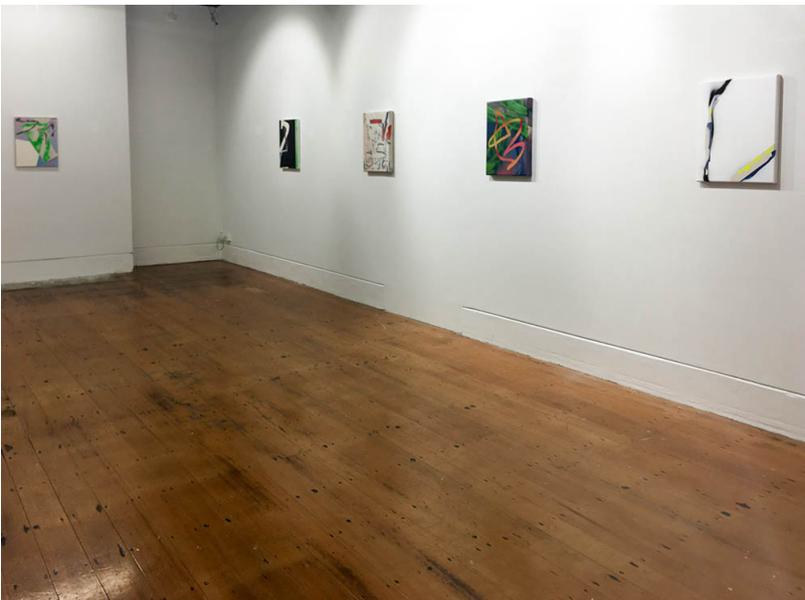
Fig 7.
Tira Walsh,
My Way,
mixed media on canvas,
540mm x 420mm, 2017.



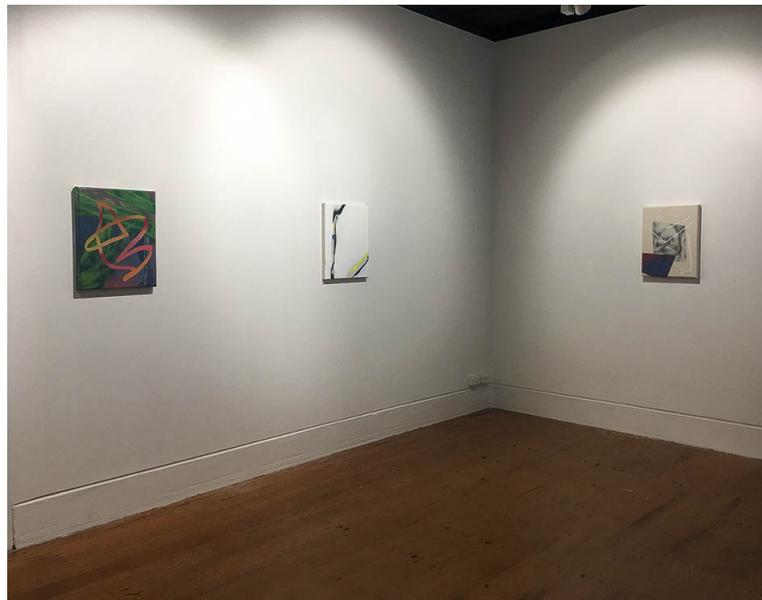
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Fig 8.
Tira Walsh,
State Gallery, Drawcard, Mt Eden,
Auckland, 9-24 March 2018

Figs 9-12.
Tira Walsh,
Intoxique, Snowwhite Gallery,
11-21 July, 2017



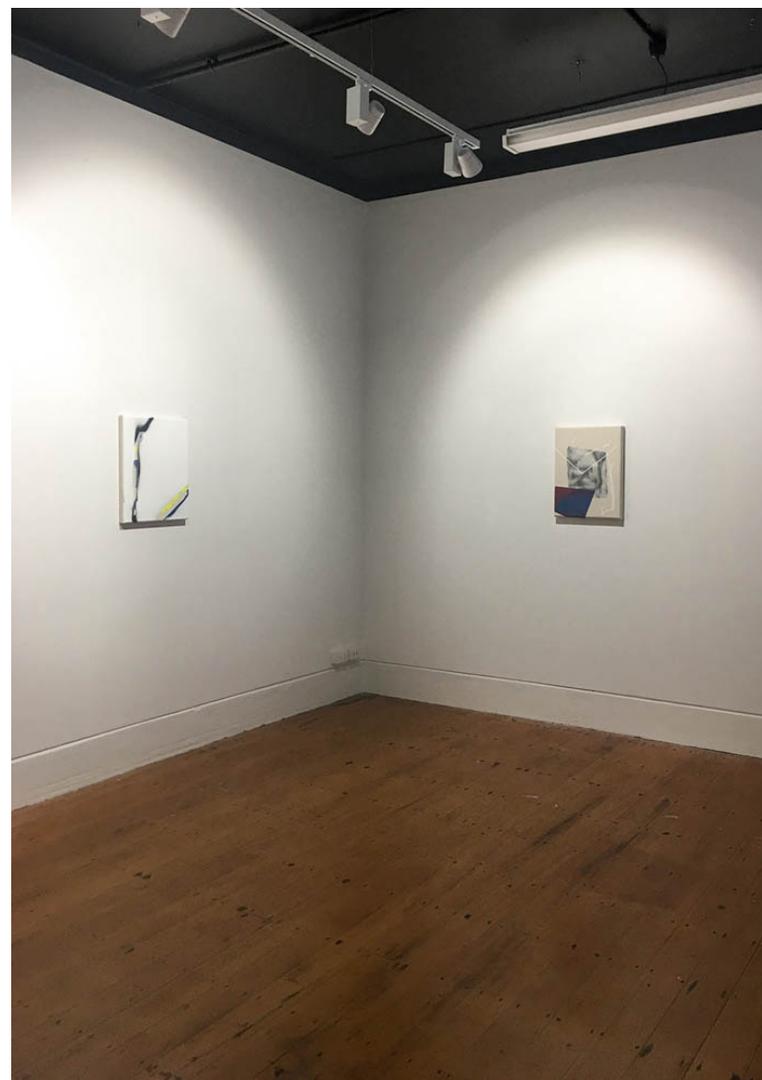
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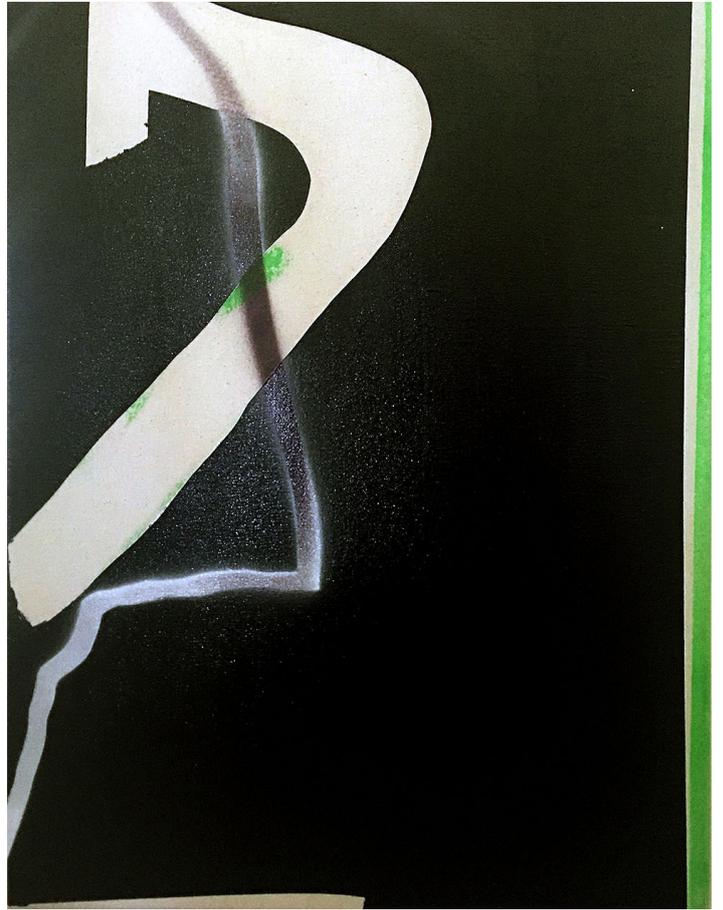
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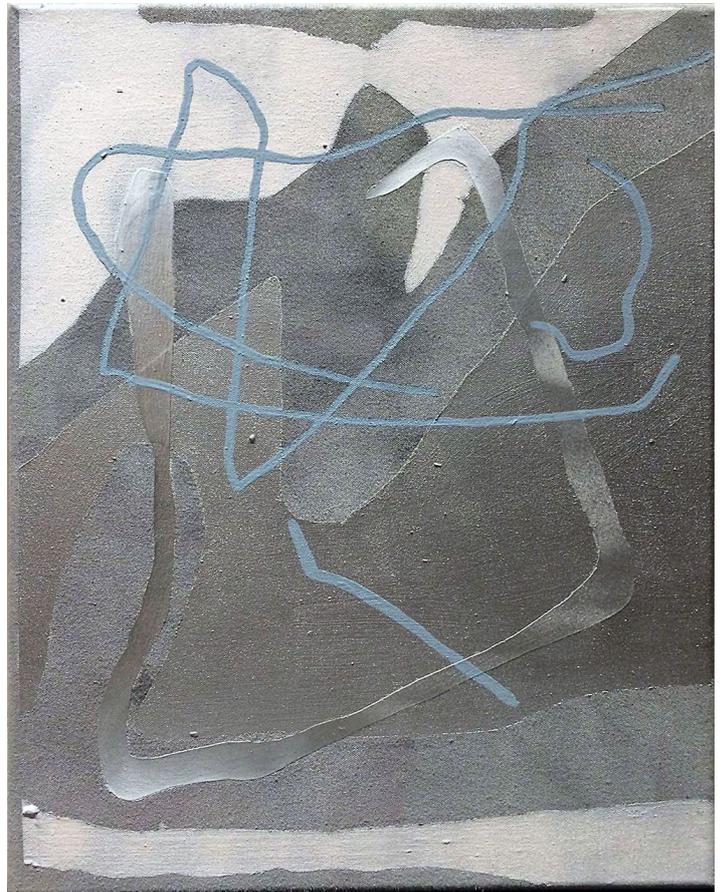
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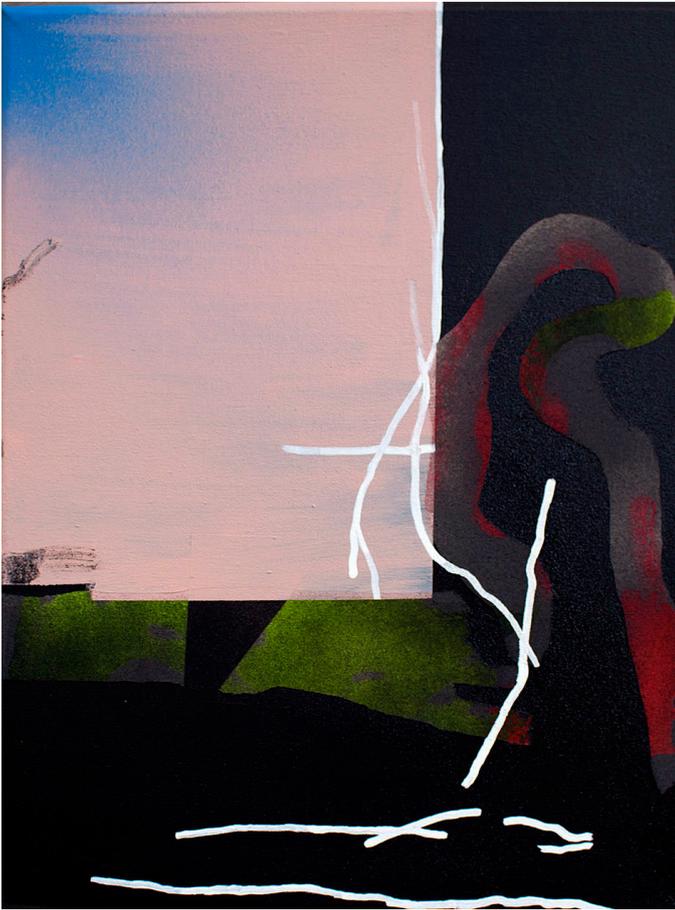
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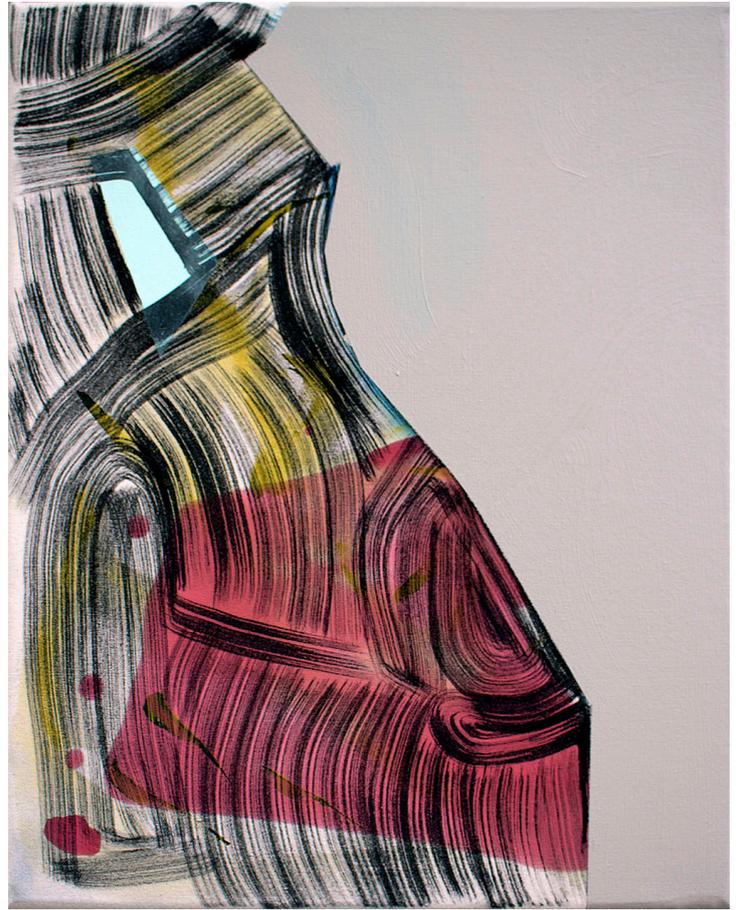
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Fig 13.
Tira Walsh,
Alright,
mixed media on canvas,
540mm x 420mm,
2017

Fig 14.
Tira Walsh,
Selfish,
mixed media on canvas,
540mm x 420mm,
2017

Fig 15.
Tira Walsh,
Cowboys,
mixed media on canvas,
540mm x 420mm,
2018

Fig 16.
Tira Walsh,
In for the Kill,
mixed media on canvas,
540mm x 420mm,
2017

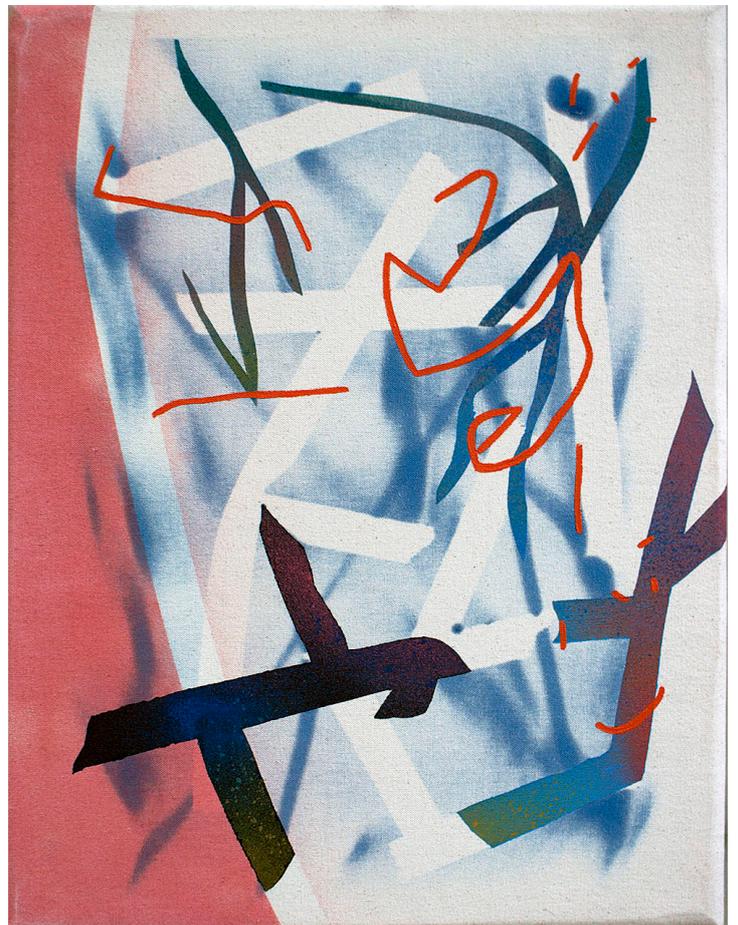


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Fig 17.
Tira Walsh,
Roads,
mixed media on canvas,
540mm x 420mm,
2018

Fig 18.
Tira Walsh,
Undenied,
mixed media on canvas,
540mm x 420mm,
2018

Fig 19.
Tira Walsh,
Inercia Creeps,
mixed media on canvas,
540mm x 420mm,
2018



19



Fig 20. Tira Walsh, Heartless, mixed media on canvas, 540mm x 420mm, 2017

Dissection of a Painting from the Drawing Practice

Heartless

The painting, *Heartless (2017)*, is a description of corruptions and manipulations; a disrupted virus that generates the visuals of displacement. The spray paint gives an immediacy to the work. Accent sprays of fluorescent green, blue and pink remind one of neon lights dazzling one's perception. Illuminated lights can daze your visual spectrum, giving you a different sense of what enlightens and illumines.

Electricity came to life in the 1880s, primarily used by wealthy families, to give lighting to their mansions and department stores to attract customers. Then it was introduced into the public domain infecting cities with street lighting. This essentially gave a new attitude to the urban nights. (Koslofsky) Night has been described in negative terms, when unusual emotions and practices take place, '...whether they entail criminal act, a rendezvous for lovers, nonconventional behaviors', or organizing rebellion', (Williams) street lighting provided light to dark spaces. The intension was to help create a sense of order where criminal activities reigned. (Painter) Electric lighting transformed cities, street lights glamourized these urban spaces, creating an enticement to inhabit the city at night. (Koslofsky) This artificial technology revolutionized nights, urban cities developed into an expansive space producing a more sociable society. (Koslofsky) I am drawn to the illuminating lights but am not afraid of what the dark may raise. This creates '...a sense of surrender which is unsettling, but also a feeling of liberation which can be uplifting' (Morris).

These photographs are pinned up in my studio and remained instrumental in the production of paintings. Using the camera settings, I deconstructed and restructured the urban lights at night. By altering the function of the camera, I manipulated the lights visually. From the resulting image, a new narrative can be created. It worked as an investigation method, that produced a new meaning. Photographs are documents of existence in a history to be transformed into memories and monuments of the past. The sequence of photographs reminds me of an existing memory. (G. Bruno)

My brother pushes the *VCR* into the video machine, fast-forwards the previews and pauses at the start of the credits of the movie. Lights are off, attention is on the TV, he presses play. A short narrative is established through the text my brother reads out loud, as I am too slow. This offered a familiarity to *science-fiction* movies of this era. *Star Wars* has the same narrative sequence at the beginning of the movie. (Lucasfilm) The opening scene of the 1982 movie *Blade Runner*, (WarnerBros) gives a birds' eye view of the Los Angeles landscape at night. The shot spans the city, bursts of fire balls explode from atop of skyscrapers which punches through the blackness of the sky. Scattered are speckles of the urban lights, glistening against the heavy black night. A flying car glides past, the scene transitions the viewer to a massive structure reminiscent of the Egyptian pyramids. (G. Bruno 67)

The special effects have been recognized as one of cinema's greatest of all time, considering the *(non-digital)* technology at the time. 'Anyone wondering if it still holds up need look no further than the opening 5 minutes, in which we are introduced to a seemingly endless stretch of neon-soaked cityscape and fire spurting chimneys, then whisked down into the urban nightmare that is L.A in 2019'. (Woodrow)

The film is set in the futuristic, dystopian city of Los Angeles. The film links postmodernism and late capitalism along with highlighting the representation of post-industrial decay. (G. Bruno) The connection of postmodernism and post industrialism is obvious by the visible architectural layout in *Blade Runner*. The city, an abandoned wasteland left to crumble from the elements, once stood monumental buildings, now a postindustrial vision, full of decay and ruins. Even though this film was released over 30 years ago it still holds up and reflects modern trends and concerns of today.

Syd Mead, (visual-effects artist who worked on *Blade Runner*) stated that director, Ridley Scott, said the movie could inspire innovation, Mead added, "I've called science fiction 'reality ahead of schedule'." (Cathcart)

This movie gave me insight to how technology and people emerge in a postindustrial and digitized reality. This could be part of my intrigue into the reality of corruptions and disruptive visuals. Blade Runner influenced me with the almost nonexistent special effects it had at the time. I had never seen special effects like this before, especially in the opening 5mins. The use of artificial colors and the non-digital aspects are reminiscent of the ambitions I have for the paintings. My work can sometimes look as if it was printed from software or technology, but it is all hand made. It's as if digital software has had some use in the making of the work. The visual-effect artist, Syd Mead had said, '...the movie could inspire innovation, and it did. The futuristic dystopian aesthetic of Blade Runner registers significantly alongside my interests in interpreting and representing my own urban environment.

Fig. 21
Tira Walsh, Beast,
photograph, 2016.

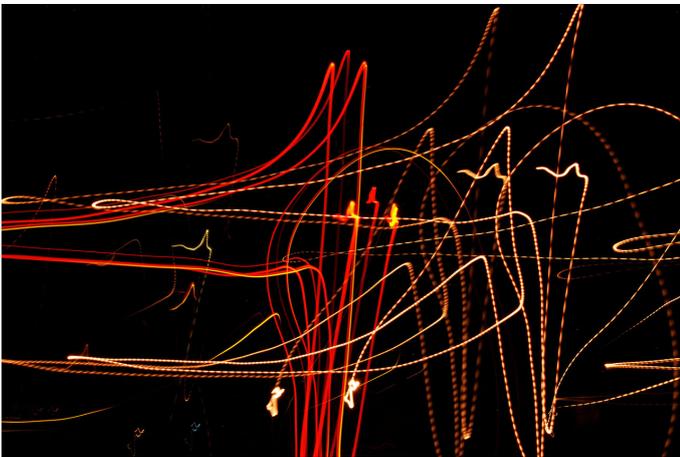
Fig 22.
Tira Walsh, Cursed,
photograph, 2016

Fig 23.
Tira Walsh, Vortex,
Photograph, 2016

Fig 24.
Tira Walsh, Buzzed,
Photograph, 2016

Fig 25
Tira Walsh, Buzzed,
Photograph, 2016

Fig 26
Tira Walsh, Buzzed,
Photograph, 2016



23

24



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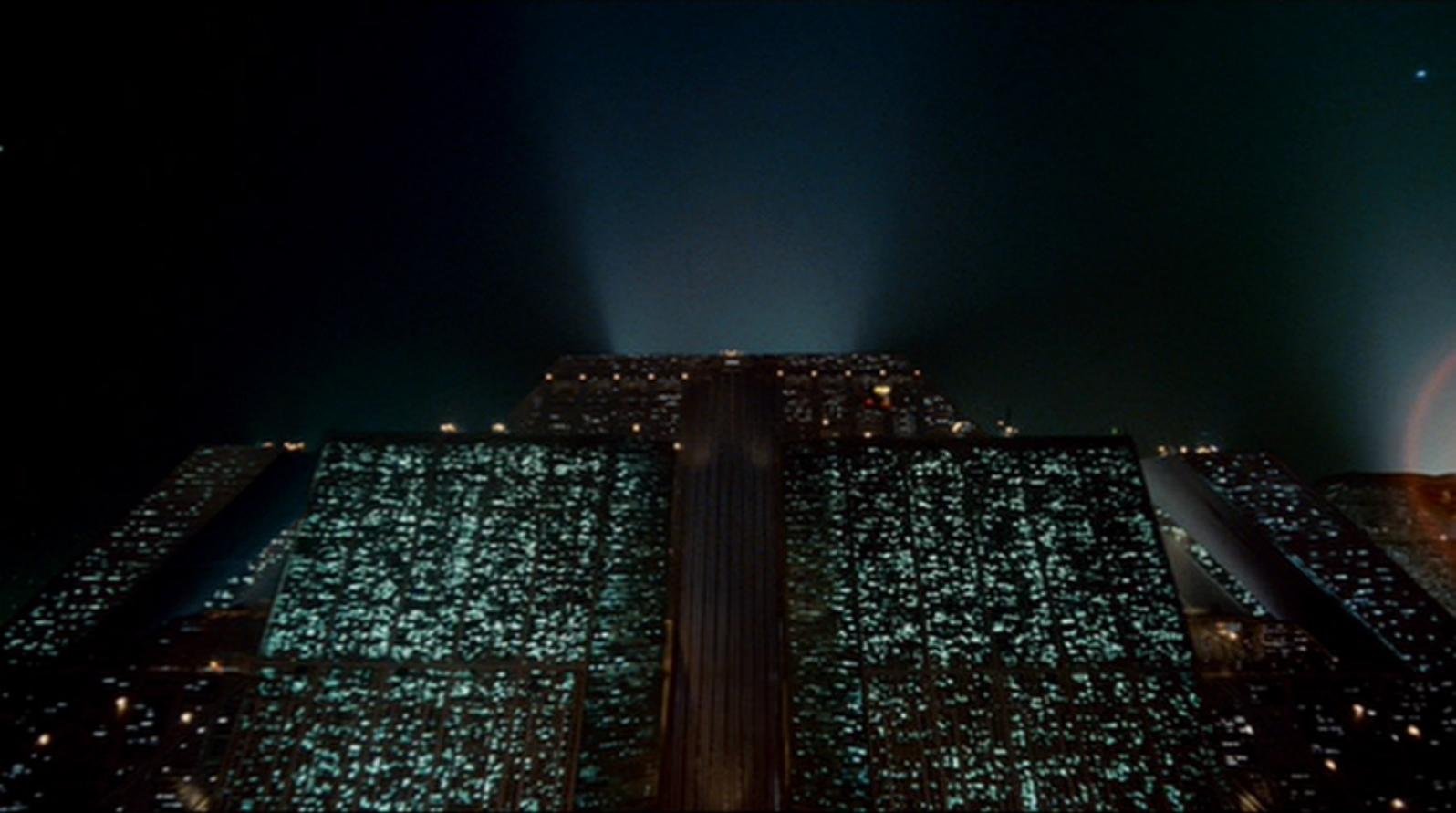
26

Images over
 Fig 27.
 Still shot, Tyrell Corporation Ltd building,
 Blade Runner, 1982. Courtesy of Warner Bros Ltd.

Fig 28.
 Still shot, street scene, Los Angeles city 2019.
 Blade Runner, 1982. Courtesy of Warner Bros Ltd.

Fig 29.
 Still shot, street scene, Los Angeles city 2019.
 Blade Runner, 1982. Courtesy of Warner Bros Ltd.

Fig 30.
 Still shot, LA Cities landscape.
 Blade Runner, 1982. Courtesy of Warner Bros Ltd.



Dissection of Three Paintings

Check Yo Self and Gosh

The Paintings, *Check Yo Self* and *Gosh* (2018), represent autobiographical visual narratives signs that stem from an individual response to the urban landscape informed through, '...(A)n approach that concentrates on the study of consciousness and the object of direct experience.' (Fallico) These paintings seemingly display a cool aesthetic, but also rely on a delicate and idiosyncratic dialect.

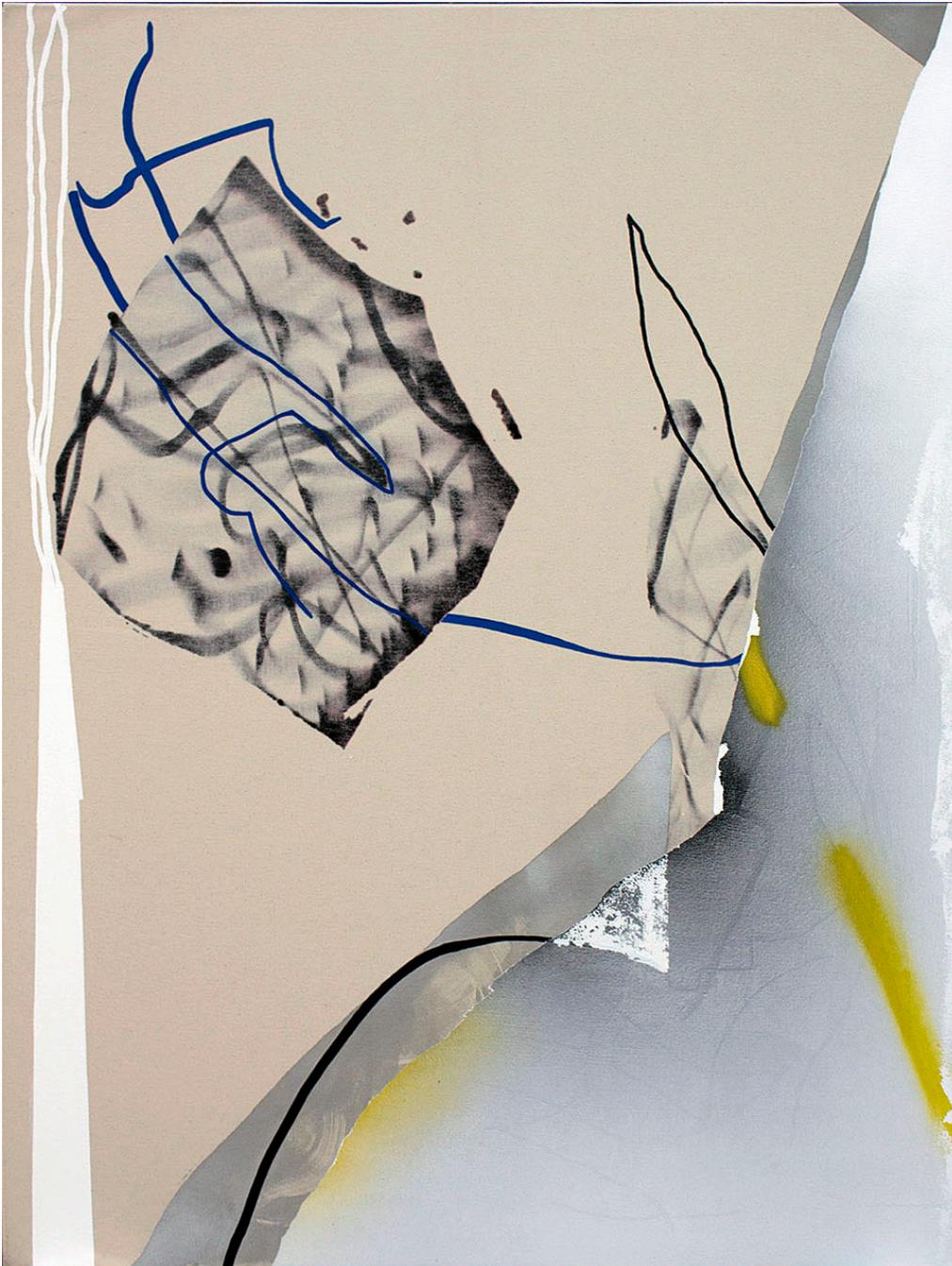


Fig 31 Tira Walsh, *Check Yo Self*, mixed media on canvas, 1150mm X 1550mm, 2018



Fig 32. Tira Walsh, Gosh, mixed media on canvas, 1550mm x 1150mm, 2018.



Fig 34. Tira Walsh, Bad Beast, mixed media on canvas, 1550mm x 1150mm, 2018.

Gosh (2018), looks like it may or may not be quite finished. The heavy overloaded white enamel across the surface, covers and obscures a previous attempt. Initially the attitude was worthlessness and erasure, but then happy accidents and coincidences elevated this work. The imperfections only give it more sustenance. Ghostly forms extrude from a sloppy application. These aesthetics function as an artificial additive, a quick fix to the problem. With enamel being a 'heavy duty' medium, robust in nature, it has suffocated the failed painting to its demise. Enamel paint is characterized by its hard, durable glossy finish. Remembering a distant memory of our family's fridge being refreshed by being painted with white enamel paint. Rust spots started to appear caused by the constant leak from the freezer. The coverage was thick, dense in quality, a quick solution to cover imperfection. The kitchen smelled like my father's huge industrial paint factory, where he worked for Hawkins Steel Ltd, from the mid-80s till the late 90s. He had no formal qualifications but could 'talk the talk' and 'sell water to a camel.' He was named as the head of the painting workspace where he painted enormous steel structures with a large industrial spray gun. My mother became an industrial sewer and she worked in a factory setting as well. These early experiences of large scale industrial processes remain embed in my memories, eventually manifesting visually onto the canvas.

With the painting *Check Yo Self (2018)*, raw canvas is essential for its overall execution. For me, leaving the exposed canvas has given the work a vulnerability and unpredictability. Canvas has its own physicality. I was interested in how the material would react. Paint medium is applied from behind the work and is forced to seep through to appear on the front of the painting in ways that are not always predictable. By leaving room for coincidences and mistakes, paint media manifests itself in imperfect possibilities. So, a 'one chance, one hit' philosophy is the means of operating. Deciding if the content is good or bad can be a conflict of interest and it is this conflict that is at the center of the creative process.



Fig 35 Tira Walsh, Army of Me, mixed media on canvas, 1550mm x 1150mm, 2018.



Fig 36, Tira Walsh, M.I.A, mixed media on canvas, 1550mm x 1150mm, 2018.



Fig 37, Tira Walsh, Paper Plans, mixed media on canvas, 1550mm x 1150mm, 2018..

‘When a girl leaves home at eighteen, she does one of two things. Either she falls into saving hands and becomes better, or she rapidly assumes the cosmopolitan standard of virtue and becomes worse. ...The city has its cunning wiles, no less than infinitely smaller and more human tempter. There are large forces which allure with all the soulfulness of expression possible in the most cultured human.’ (Theodor Dreiser)

The growth of cities and the centralizing of power within the urban metropolis have, what McMichael suggests, become the great contemporary focal points of human ecology. (Melosi) I migrated to Auckland in 1998. New Zealand had just experienced a population increase through the changing of the national immigration policy that allowed new migrants to enter. During this time threequarters of the nation’s growth occurred in Auckland, bringing its population to one million. My impression of the cityscape and architecture of Auckland, was that which emulated and exuded power and wealth. The high-rise buildings stood as monuments of authority. Artificial neon lighting associated as dazzling decorations to entice willing occupants. The city never sleeps, a 24/7 finance machine, observing its hold over New Zealand as a country. The city is an intimidating entity, but the streetscapes are full of hybridized details and layered entities. At street-level, the decay and excretion exposing a more sinister contradiction to the core of towering structures overhead.

Faded, torn advertising posters line alley-way walls, disintegrating from the effects of natural elements. Graffitied dumpsters decorate back streets, bombings exposing territory rights of the artists within the area. Worn paint on lampposts decorate the urban pathways. Rubbish bins overflowing of garbage, expose our excessive consumption with consumerism.

The daily impact of living in this cityscape and the visual signs of contradiction and dissolution form the backdrop to this research project.

The following sequence of paintings demonstrates visuals of displacement in an urban environment. Depictions of decay and degradation, the paintings invite viewers to imagine affiliations capable of challenging the dominance and segregation of power in urban surroundings.



Fig 38. Tira Walsh, Galleriet, mixed media on canvas, 1550mm x 1150mm, 2018.



Fig 39. Tira Walsh, *Borders*, mixed media on canvas, 1550mm x 1150mm, 2018.



Fig 40. Tira Walsh, Hide and Seek, mixed media on canvas, 1150mm x 1550mm, 2018.



Fig 41.Tira Walsh, Painting, studio shot , 2018.

Studio as the Site of Research

The studio is the environment where the research can only take place. It provides the working conditions to motivate a certain state of thinking that is divorced from the usual and casual everyday domestic environment. A space that creates and dictates what kinds of things can happen. This game, willingly entered, can become a place for true creative manifestation. For my practice a studio space is essential. I enjoy the freedom of having my own space and get quiet territorial when intruders advance.

In the studio one leaves the order that has been established at home. One's greatest of accomplishments reside there; where routine and predictability is established in the cause of raising children. This dwelling is a fortress, a sanctuary with safety and boundaries put in place. The studio space is an escape and a chance to deal with thoughts and perceptions of this incoherent world, one that is not predictable. It is unreasonable, one contemplates what the next generation must endure. In dealing with these observations, a space is required in which risks can be taken, mistakes can be constant and enduring failure and unpredictability is necessary. From the paintings, emerge forms that were never meant to go together. Emergence is a term with multiple meaning. In English it has the advantage of being used in colloquial speech: emergence means a process of becoming, coming into existence and coming out, as befits its Latin root 'emergere.' The Latin concept is, 'to work one's way out of a critical situation.' The conditions under which something comes into existence are therefore more closely described here, and the term used is crisis. (Verwoert) In this way the works will act as a mirror to the unexpected, violent shifts of existence. Within the confines of the studio the atmosphere is forcefully poised to capture the unpredictable. I am constantly having silent discussions in my studio with the paintings. Painting mentally and visually stimulate me. An acceleration in which I have not experienced before.

Within the studio, the game begins, negotiations commence, strategic moves are made by appropriating previous experiences. I thrive on making strategic moves with the work. We are constantly having a silent dialogue. I act and the painting reacts. It's a back and forth visual dialect. For me, it's always having the approach of thinking 2 or 3 exchanges ahead. If the painting has reacted on my original move, and is not looking right, I then know I have 2 to 3 moves in order to win the visual argument. I enjoy the constant mind game with painting. I hustle with paintings. The mental stimulus painting provides me is like working through my own problems. The methodology I use are very subjective and this is the mode of operation.

Avenues are quickly formulated to circumvent repetition and petrification. The aim is for a smooth verdict, yet complications arise. When dealing with an irate player, the game will quickly move into a long dialogue of compromise. When two parties, the painting and the artist, come together to examine whether resolution is reached, both parties have questions and through the creative process, emerge answers. This is understood as a process, 'by which something decides, or something is decided that was previously undecided, but demands a decision.' (Verwoert) These negotiations are almost like a battle of strategical intelligence. I am intrigued and motivated by how painting can be, not only physically, but mentally exhausting. It keeps one up at night, contemplating the next move, then makes one rise early. You're continually invested in this process until you find resolution. I know the value of challenging myself, this strategy propels my interest further and provides me with determination. The studio is an isolated space where a fraught binary relationship between painting and artist is established.

The studio space is where I play the game with the silent equivalent. Demeanor is transformed, a staunch presence escalates, awaiting paintings lay bare in a tense quietness. Raw canvas can give you limited possibilities, one chance, one hit, it can determine its own outcome. For this reason, I work on impulse. The pressure can get high, no waiting and contemplating but, strategically making my move is essential. Deciding if the content and media is good or bad can be a conflict of interest. Though paintings cannot physically speak, the content to which it holds and translates, speaks loudly and will judge you on its merit. These silent transactions are what drive my interest in painting. I question myself on how painting can have this much effect on me?

Conclusion

This exegesis started with a discussion about the current condition of abstract painting. A suggestion made by some, was that any further possibilities of what abstraction could represent, had historically been exhausted. The allegation here, was that current painting could only ever be an appropriation and reworking of ideas that already had been widely explored.

The other point of view expressed that it was precisely because of this historic condition, was why some artists had responded to the notion of 'failure' and had found productive ways of opening up other discussions, adopting different aesthetics and approaches to materiality. This was largely defined through an understanding of 'provisional painting'

What followed, was an account of the methodology employed within this research project. This was understood in terms of the operational function that drawing has in relationship to practice. Experimenting with technique and materiality that naturally lead to a refining of context and content. Through this creative process, an attitude and understanding eventually consolidated as to where and what the focus for painting could be.

Through a detailed examination of three paintings, I was able to convey some of the content and context of these works. This included some of the photographic resources I had created in response to the urban environment, references to a post-industrial, postmodern aesthetic that were relevant to my own aesthetic sensibility and a recollection of childhood experiences that had a significant influence on the industrial methods I employed in the means of applying paint.

Living within the Auckland urbanscape has provided me with an unlimited supply of influence and possibilities. Visual impressions, perceptions and associations of this urban environment are appropriated and made visually manifest within the work. However, this needs to be understood in relation to the activities and mindset that are located only within the 'studio' - an off-site distribution center for dealing with the glitches and gloss from one's existence. It is here, where practical methodologies and contextual conversations are appropriated, dismissed, established and declined through the endless infusing of an individual's creation of contemporary abstract painting.

Painting has given me an alternative focus of what I was accustomed to. It has provided me a compromise from past life choices, which I am beholden to.

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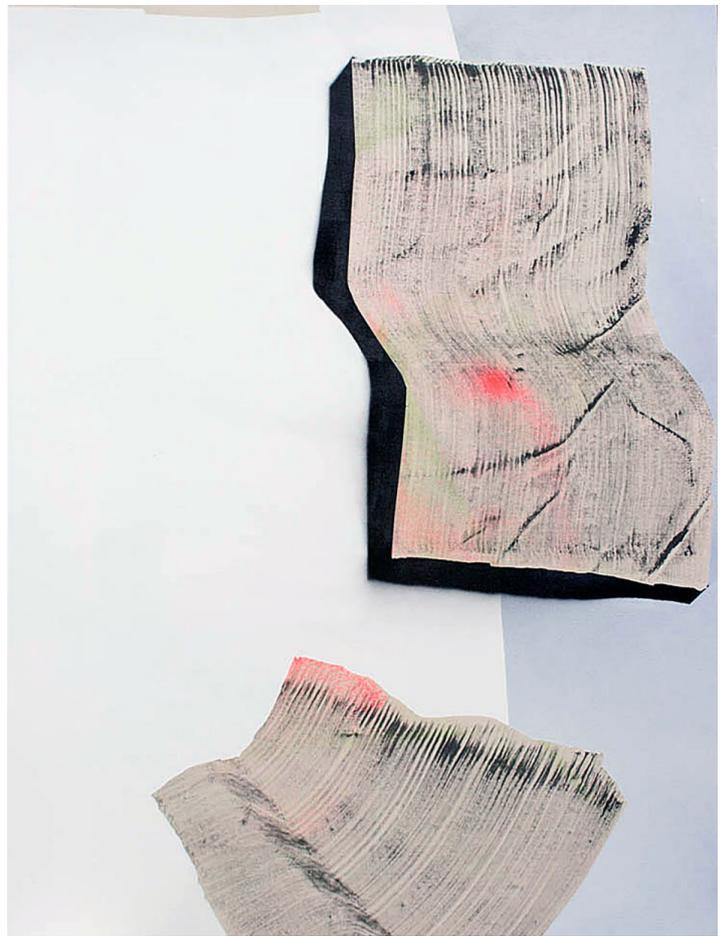
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Catalogue of works



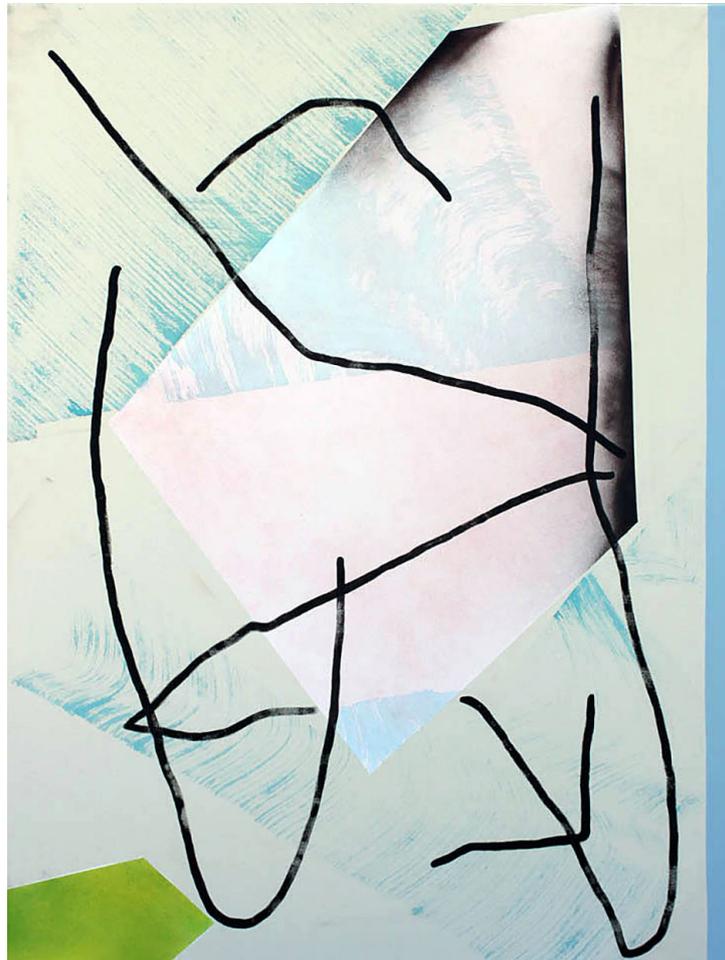
4. Tira Walsh, Crimewave, mixed media on canvas, 1770mm x 1330mm, 2017.



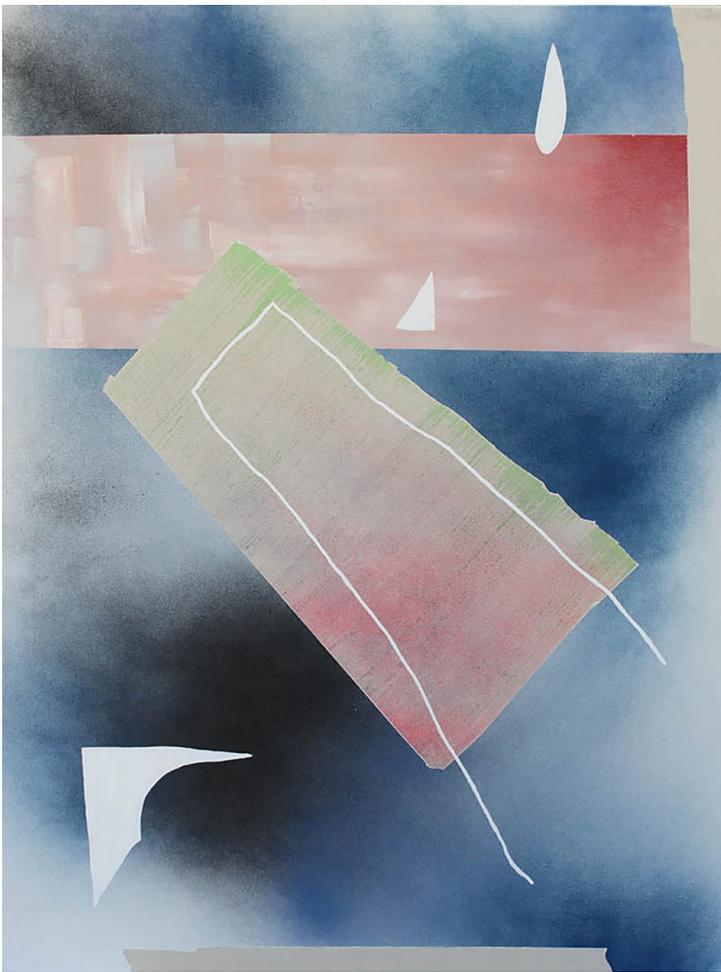
5. Tira Walsh, Evidence, mixed media on canvas, 1770mm x 1330mm, 2017.



6. Tira Walsh, Grind, mixed media on canvas, 1770mm x 1330mm, 2017.



7. Tira Walsh, Lapdance, mixed media on canvas, 1550mm x 1150mm, 2017.



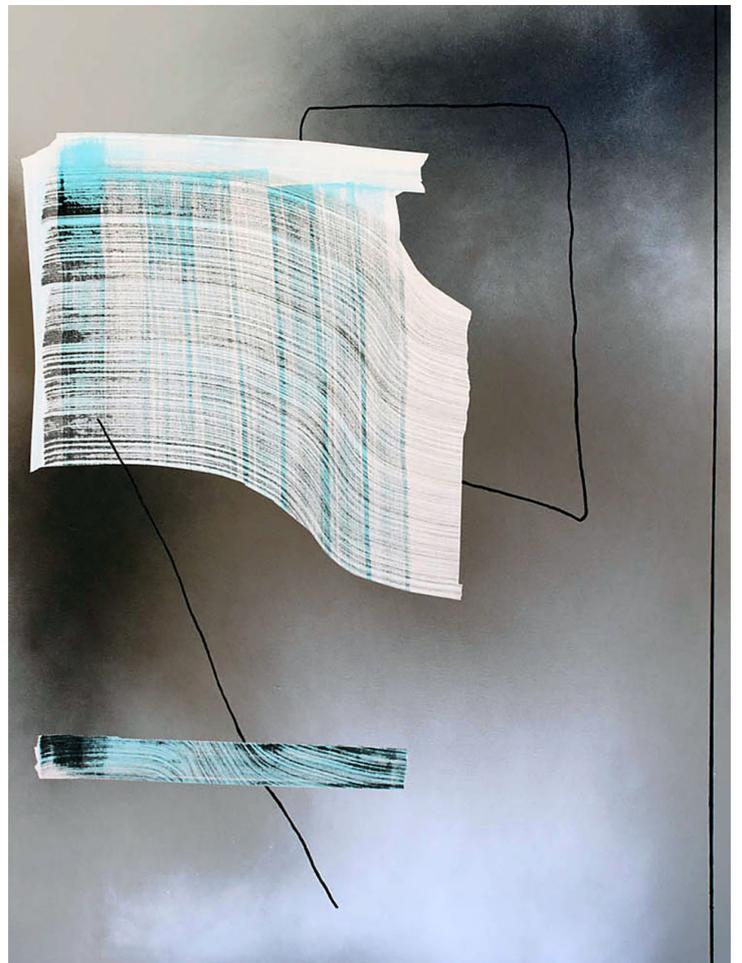
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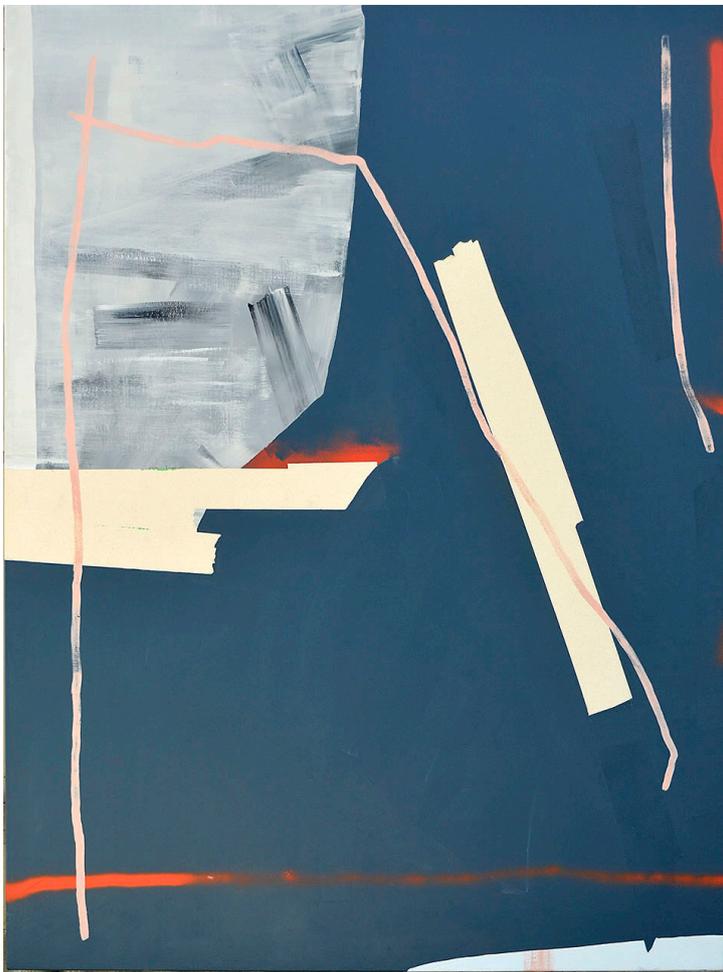
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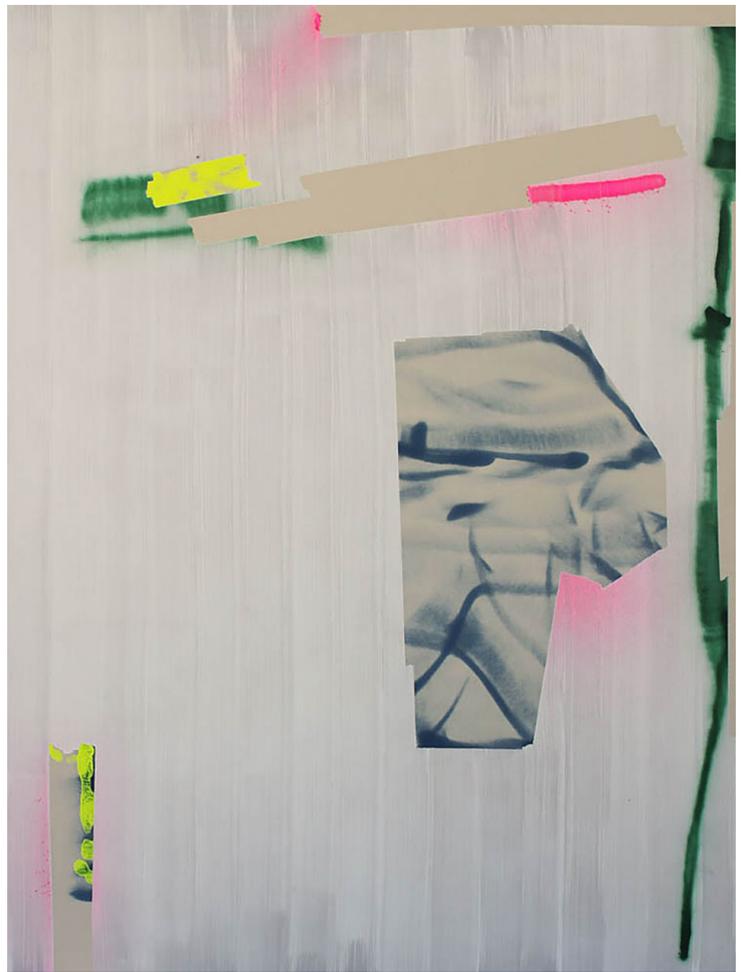
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14. Tira Walsh, Riot, mixed media on canvas, 1150mm x 1550mm, 2017.



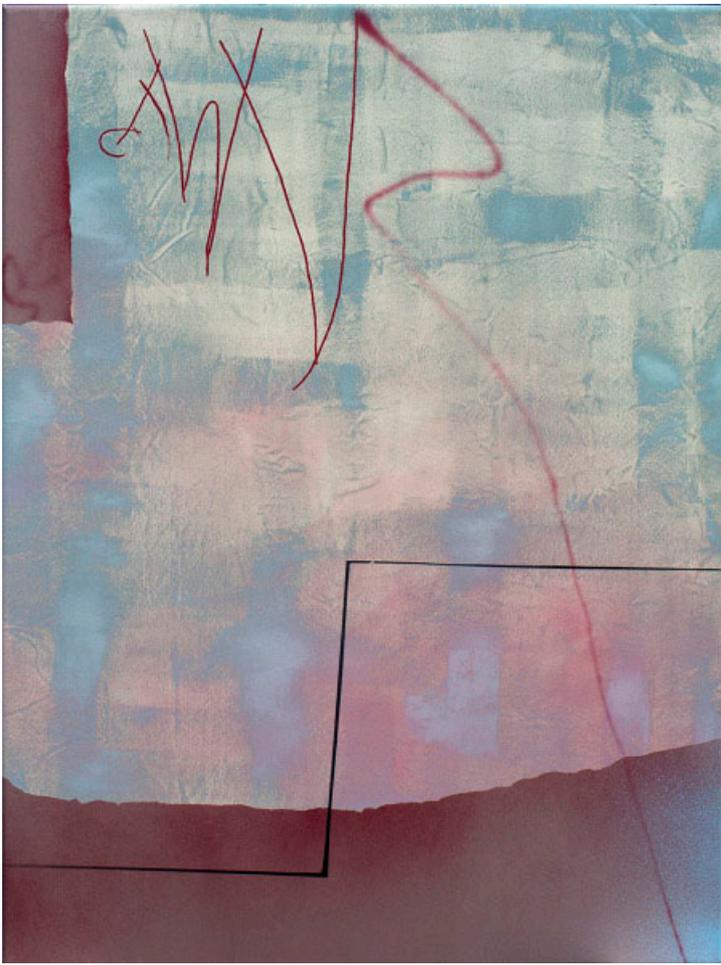
15. Tira Walsh, Lemon, mixed media on canvas, 1600mm x 1200mm, 2017.



16. Tira Walsh, Half Day Closing, mixed media on canvas, 1550mm x 1150mm, 2018.



17. Tira Walsh, Check Yo Self, mixed media on canvas, 1150mm X 1550mm, 2018..



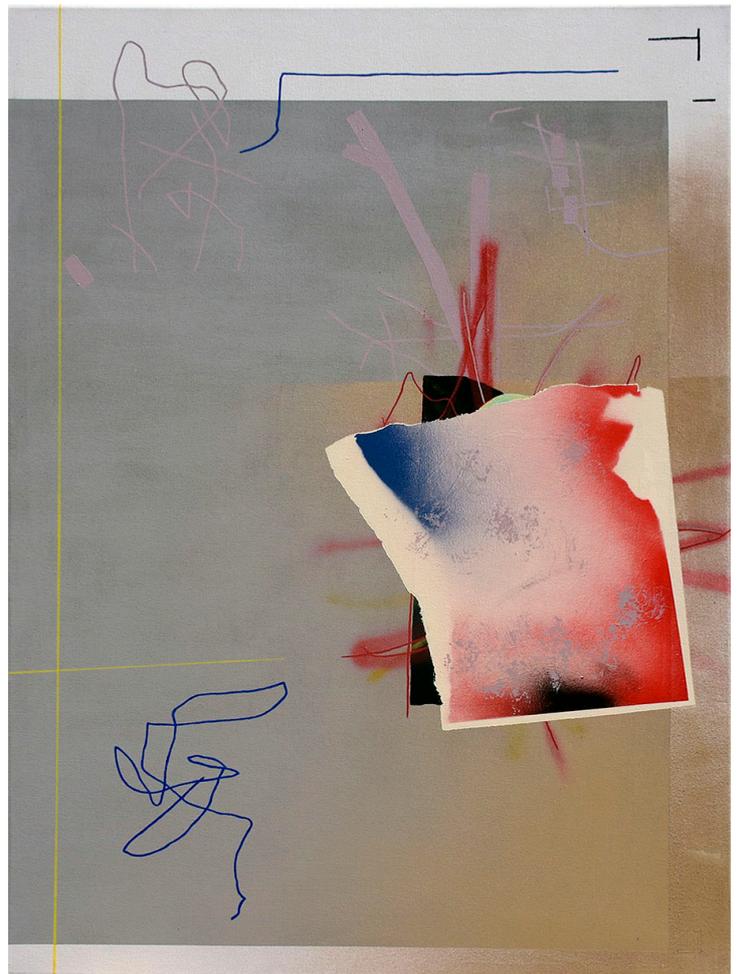
18. Tira Walsh, *Army of Me*, mixed media on canvas, 1550mm x 1150mm, 2018.



19. Tira Walsh, *Rebel*, mixed media on canvas, 1150mm x 1550mm, 2018.



20. Tira Walsh, *illest*, mixed media on canvas, 1550mm x 1150mm, 2018.



21. Tira Walsh, *Hide and Seek*, mixed media on canvas, 1150mm x 1550mm, 2018.



22. Tira Walsh, Faceless, mixed media on canvas, 1550mm x 1150mm, 2018..



23. Tira Walsh, Strong, mixed media on canvas, 1550mm x 1150mm, 2018..



24. Tira Walsh, Tame Impala, mixed media on canvas, 1550mm x 1150mm, 2018..



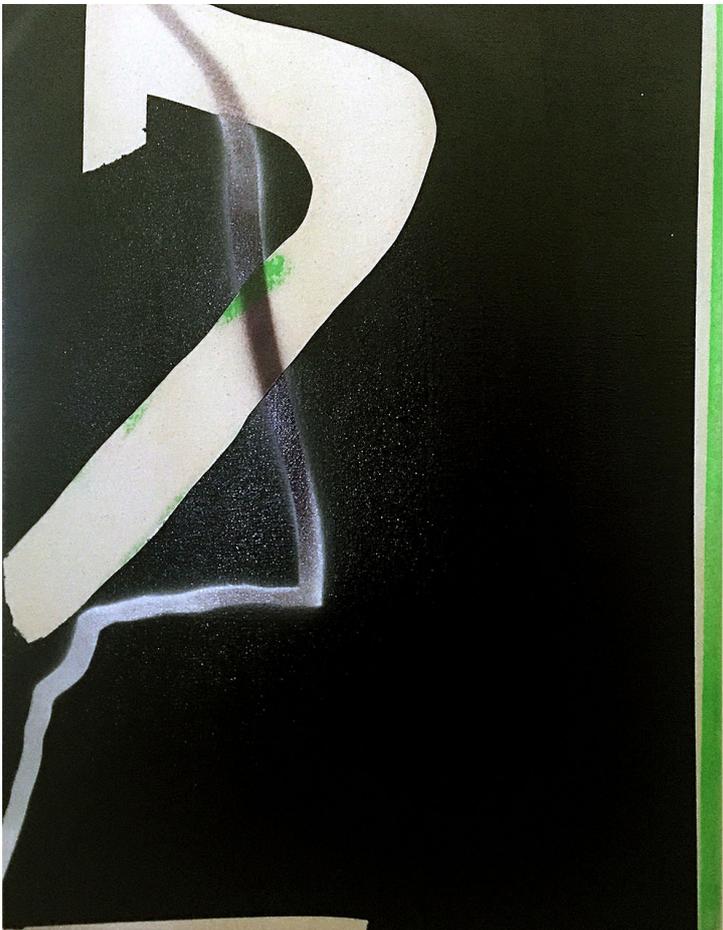
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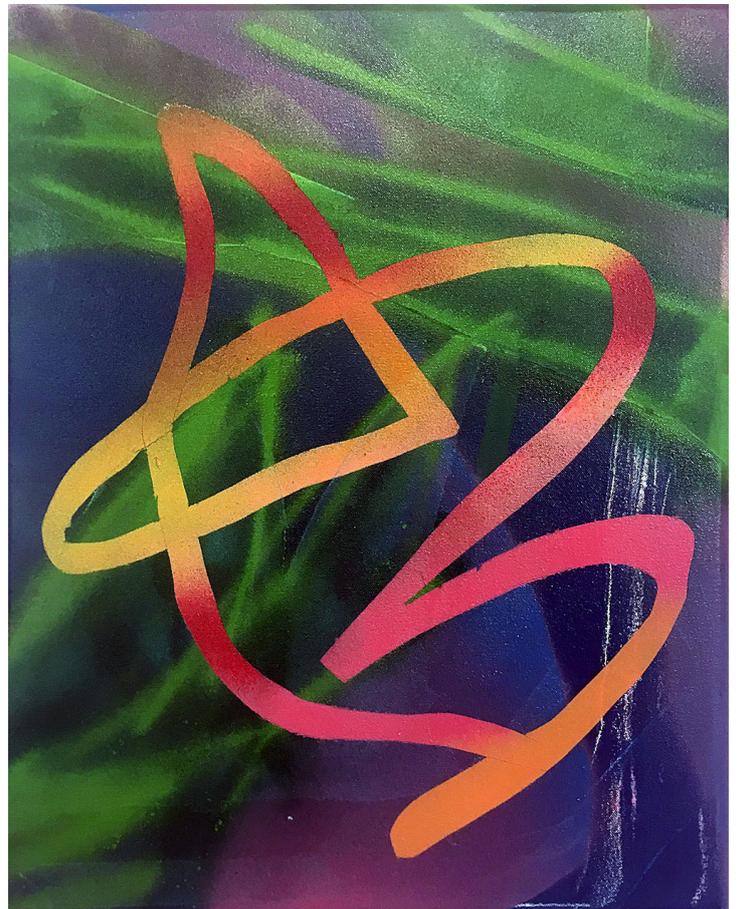
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3. Tira Walsh, Selfish, mixed media on canvas, 540mm x 420mm, 2017.



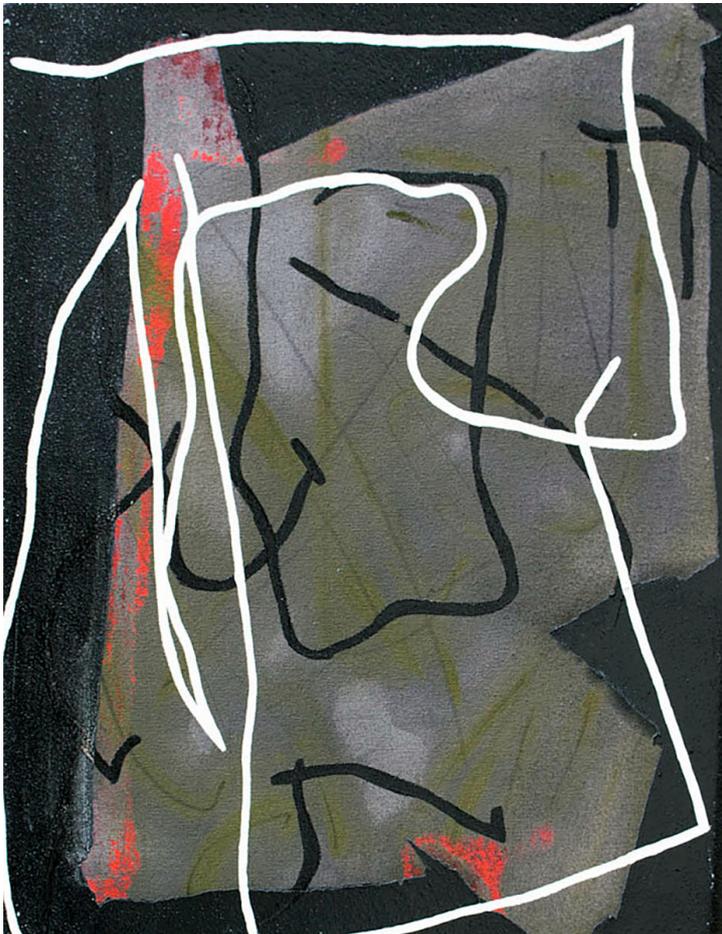
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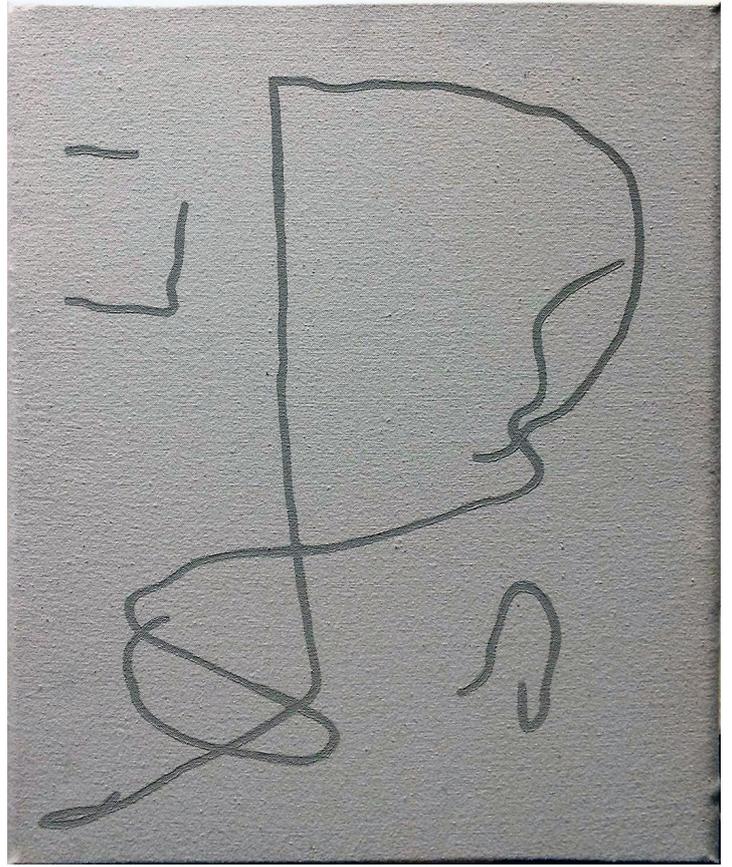
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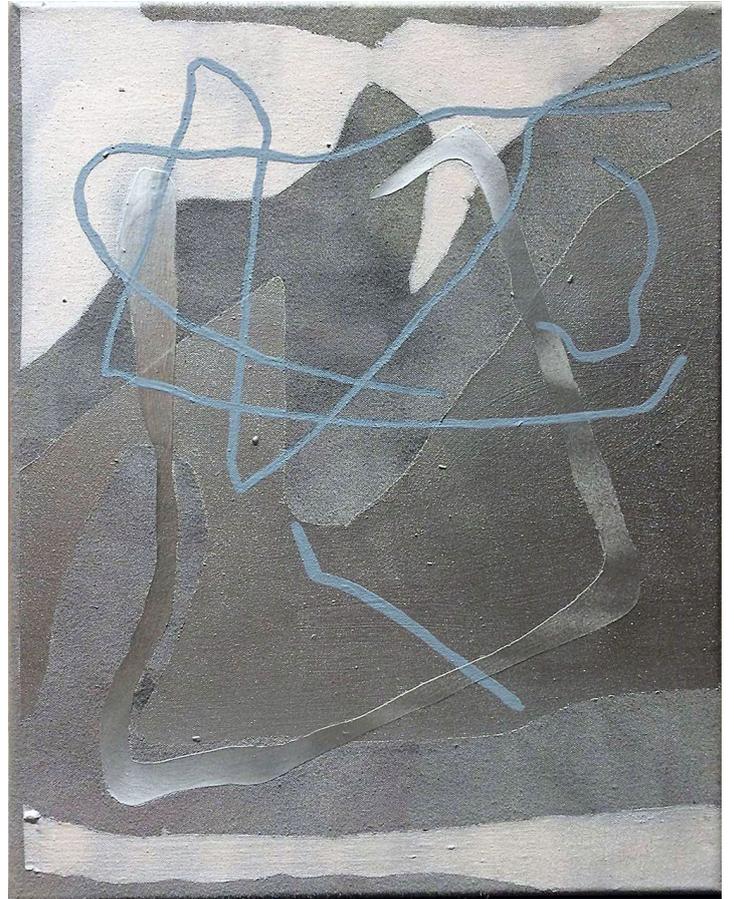
10. Tira Walsh, Take me out, mixed media on canvas, 540mm x 420mm, 2017.



11. Tira Walsh, New Sensation, mixed media on canvas, 540mm x 420mm, 2017..



12. Tira Walsh, drawings, mixed media on canvas, 540mm x 420mm, 2017.



9, Tira Walsh, In for the Kill, mixed media on canvas, 540mm x 420mm, 2017.



13. Tira Walsh, drawings, mixed media on canvas, 540mm x 420mm, 2017.



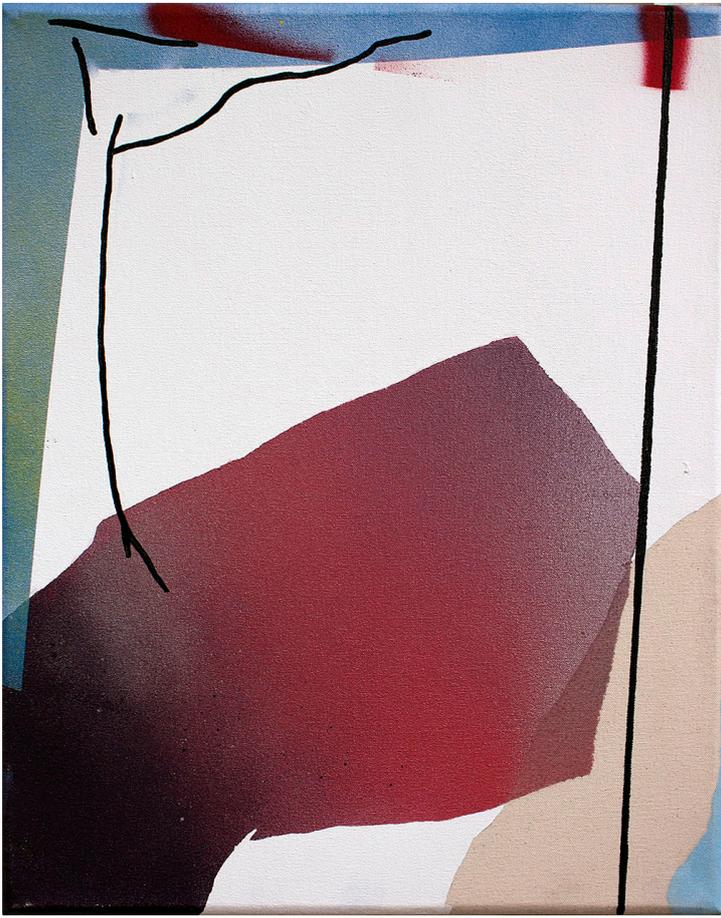
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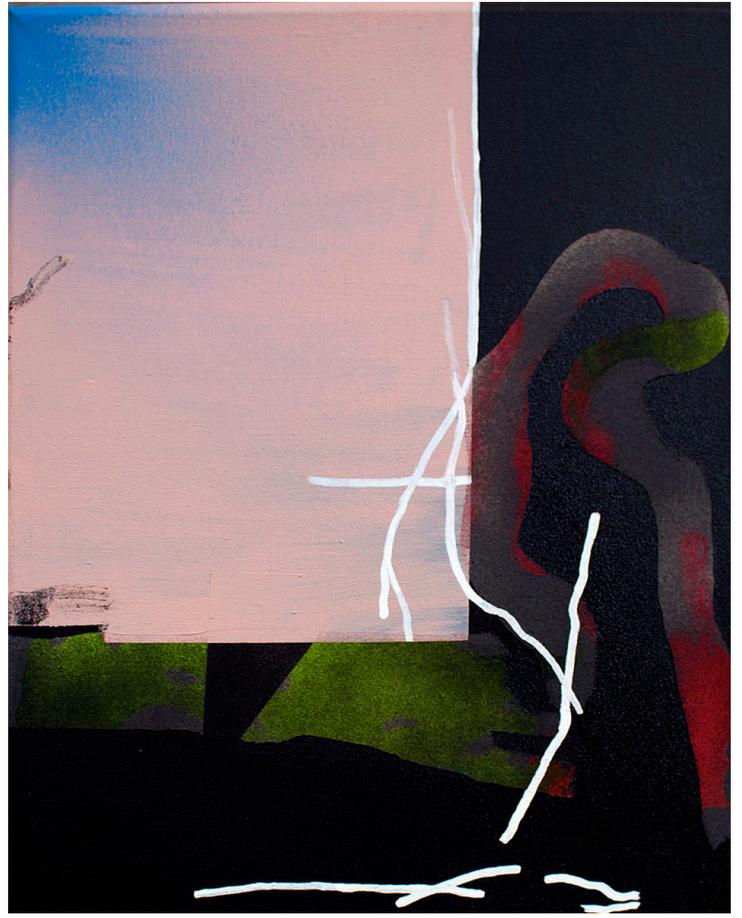
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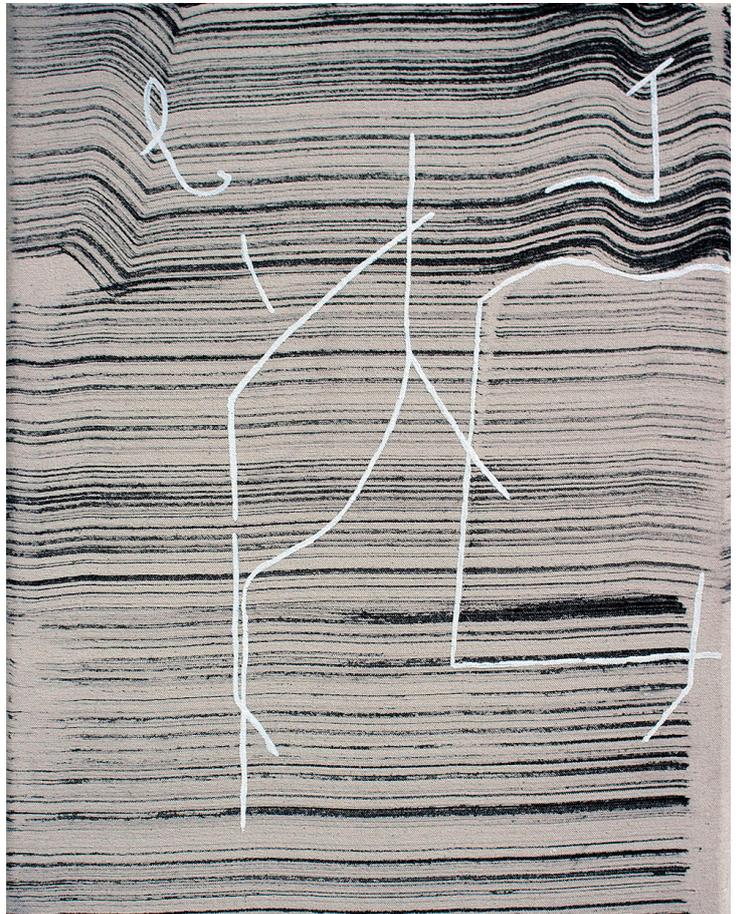
25. Tira Walsh, mixed media on canvas, 540 mm x 420mm, 2018, 7.



26. Tira Walsh, Roads, mixed media on canvas, 540 mm x 420mm, 2018, 2.



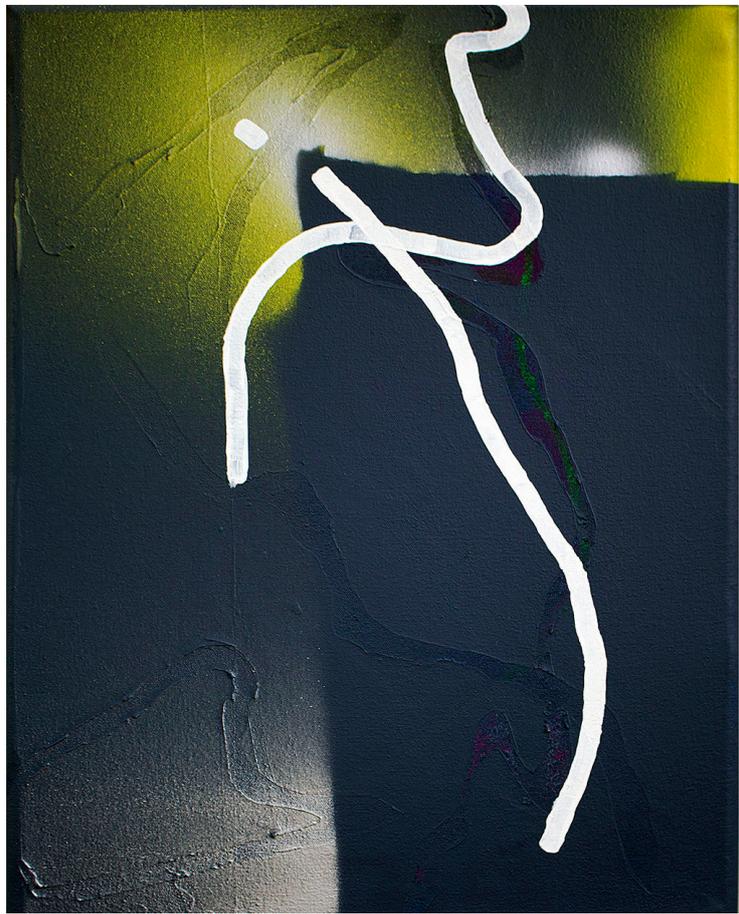
27. Tira Walsh, Morning Air mixed media on canvas, 540 mm x 420mm, 2018, 4.



28. Tira Walsh, Five Man Army mixed media on canvas, 540 mm x 420mm, 2018, 5.



29. Tira Walsh, Undenied, mixed media on canvas, 540 mm x 420mm, 2018, 3.



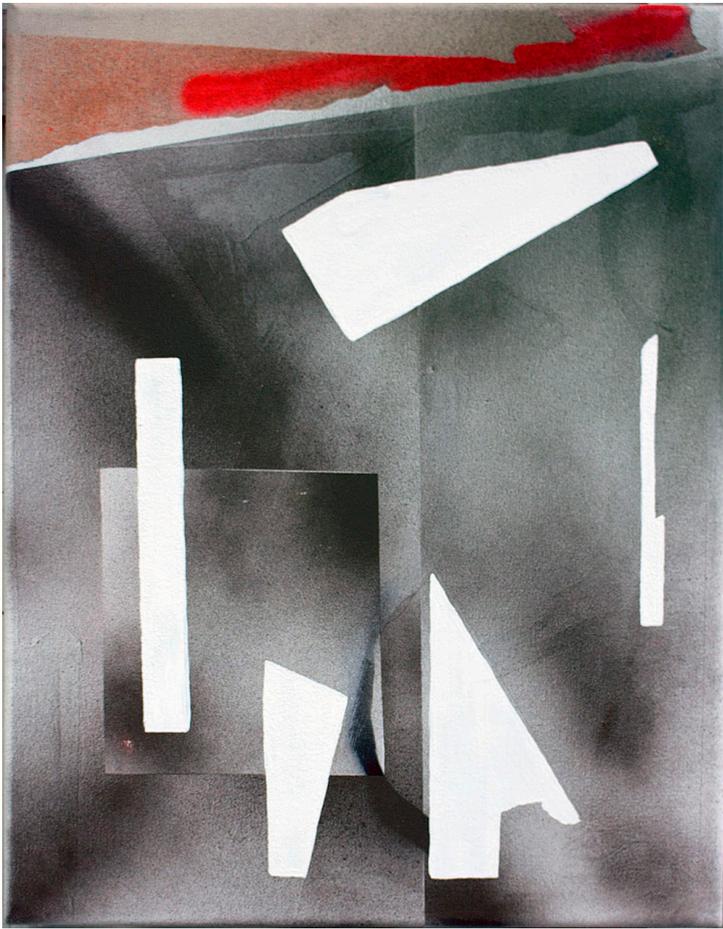
30. Tira Walsh, Blue Monday, mixed media on canvas, 540 mm x 420mm, 2018, 8.



31. Tira Walsh, Inertia Creeps, mixed media on canvas, 540 mm x 420mm, 2018, 6.



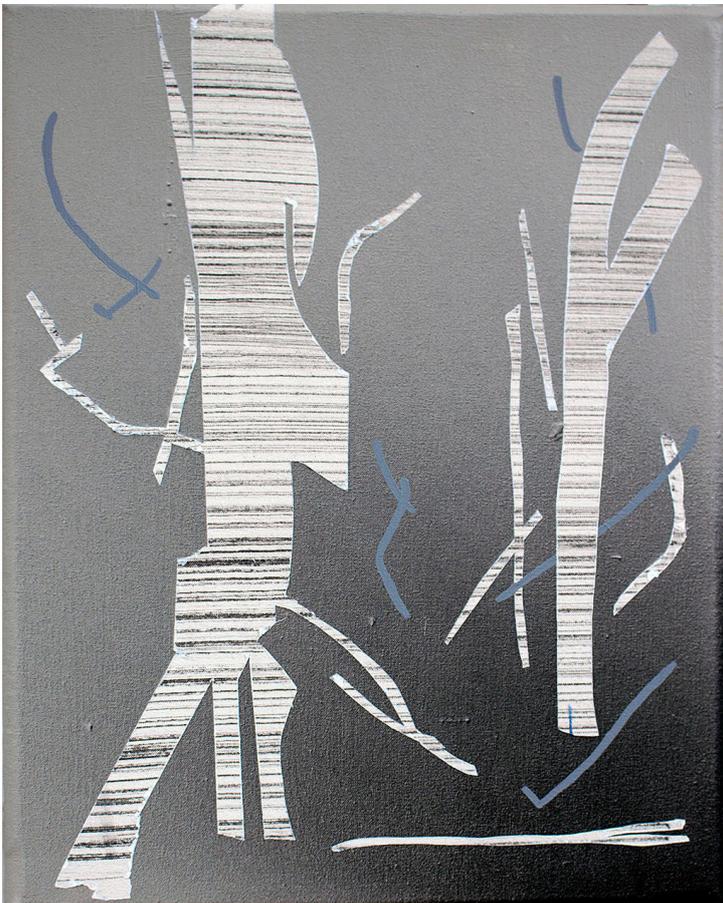
31. Tira Walsh, mixed media on canvas, 540 mm x 420mm, 2018, 11.



32. Tira Walsh, mixed media on canvas, 540 mm x 420mm, 2018, 9.

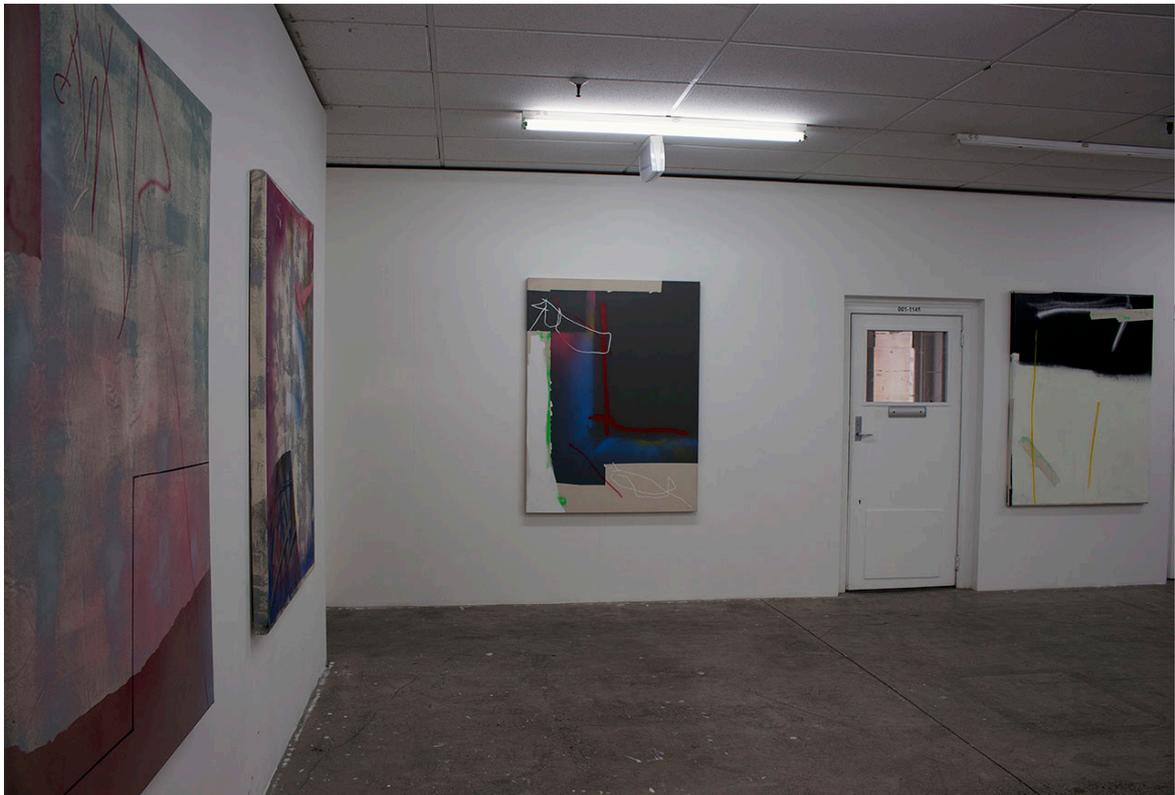


33. Tira Walsh, Four Walls, mixed media on canvas, 540 mm x 420mm, 2018..



34. Tira Walsh, Cowboys, mixed media on canvas, 540 mm x 420mm, 2018, 10.







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Full title of thesis/dissertation/research project ('the work'):

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.....

Practice Pathway: Visual Arts-
Painting.....

Degree: Master of Creative Practice.....

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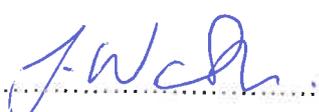
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Principal Supervisor: RICHARD FAHEY

Associate Supervisor/s: EMMA SMITH

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