**Jodi Hays-statements**

SHORT

“Southern identity is not really connected with mocking birds and beaten biscuits and white columns any more than it is with hookworm and bare feet and muddy clay roads.” -Flannery O’Connor

My painting practice is partly influenced by a rural vernacular (of the American South) and has become a way of note taking or organizing knowledge; landscape, abstraction, among others. These systems (grids) become a scaffold for pictorial inclinations. Stripes generate a placement in pattern, repetition and seriality. Textiles, associated with warmth, the body, pattern, domesticity and weave inform her work. Hard-edged shapes exist with more rounded/floral moves, inviting associations with the architecture of the rural; awnings, bead board, weathered boards and lumber. This core iconography elucidates a conversation on abstraction and a generative, inexhaustible mark.

LONGER

(I keep a long ruminating essay on my work, very much a living document, that I edit monthly, and also a list of quotes).

I don’t expect you guys to read all of it, but twice a year or so I will print this out and sit with it, rearead, take what makes sense to put in my shorter statements.

incorporate elements of disjunction and odd juxtaposition in their exploration of unfolding context

Reclaimed materials

I have always relied heavily on daily practice, most consistently through sketchbooks. They have been a familiar container for over 25 years.

Palette might be part of it, history and association with women (patterns, wallpaper, interiors, domesticity). Formally, the fabric work came from an interest in inserting a sewn mark into a canvas (2016/17). Then I began to play with more overt suggestions to the architecture of a painting. The fabric I was using for Tend (2019) was related to windows and architecture elements of painting (curtains) and/or pattern/stripes.;lllmm

In a recent panel at Watkins College of Art, a discussion ensued on what Flannery O’Connor called “the Christ-haunted” place I live. I think very much about interiors/exteriors and boundaries in my work, which is probably partially about a life long negotiation of this place, this geography, this complicated space. Sometimes I will leverage this in titles (Heaven, Devotion). If anything, religion points to how complicated, beautiful, terrible we are. Painting can do that same thing.

I can’t count the number of times I have visited the storied murals of Aaron Douglas in Cranath Hall [@fiskuniversitygalleries](https://www.instagram.com/fiskuniversitygalleries/). And I snuck in this week (a crazy busy mix of heaven and hell) because I am a mystic. And it was here that I learned how to love my adopted home city. And I still do. I love the artists, the activists, the dreamers and students and truth seekers. But I am having a hard time with the institutions. .

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. “O’Connor’s fictional universe, the whites in power are the only ones who can afford to be innocent of their surroundings. O’Connor’s most profound gift was her ability to describe impartially the bourgeoisie she was born into, to depict with humor and without judgment her rapidly crumbling social order. “

-Hilton Als

I spent all of 2019 intentionally reading intersectional voices, addressing my gaps. Als’s book White Girls seemed like something I should know about 🤷🏻‍♀️. His work, and many others, fraying the edges and complicating our monolithic stance is everything we need. Everything those in power should be seeking like water in a desert. .

I come from a small town in Arkansas, from small-business owners making hand-made signs on windows and roadsides. The script is indexical, like a painter’s facture.One can think of painting as similarly defined by both its expansive possibilities (say anything) and constraints (paper, paint, hand, language).

My fabric paintings came from an interest in inserting a sewn mark into a canvas (2016/17). Then I began to play with more overt suggestions to the architecture of a painting, piecing new canvas. Found fabric was a way of relating personally to a body (feminism, pattern, wallpaper and domesticity) and heritage, old curtains and pajamas.

Use of text crops up in my work from time to time, related to my reading and works on paper, but not disconnected from a sign painter’s lexicon. I come from small town business-owners, hand-made roadside signs that can also approximate an indexical, painter’s facture.

“Screens, curtains and doors are pragmatic solutions–keeping out unwanted pests or light, allowing a breeze to pass through. Screen doors are nostalgic for a lot of us with associative connections to home and the South: a land, a season, a breeze, an era, a housewife. One can think of painting as similarly defined by both its expansive possibilities and constraints.” .

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Painting can become many things (poetics of possibility) given its potential for note taking or organizing knowledge. I locate my work within the history of abstraction, but came to it through figuration and the genre of landscape. This might be related to a deep sense of my inhabited world growing up (fields, reforesting, cutover, cross country running, art history in books, Sunday painting). But I found abstraction once painting became the pace car, and I followed it. .

New York is as much a psychological place as it is physical. This is especially true for artists. It is a place I visit, I stay, a place of deep history and talent, a place of like artistic minds. Though my practice grows from my situation of place (in the south) and its informants, I also rely on a larger sense of place.

I think about how place and land inform a sense of what is possible, who we are, what we become.

"I should say: the house shelters day-dreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace."-Bachelard

My family of origin is in a stage of moving, archiving and inventorying all that was my grandmothers: textiles, home, land, objects, dishes. All of my paintings have, not literally, held a touchstone to that place, that architecture, that feeling, that land, that dream. These leadings have me thinking more intentionally than ever about the architecture of my paintings: the fabric, the lumber, the constraint. These are not new concerns, but have come the front of my practice.

In this time I have been doing a deep dive into architecture of my past--family homes, places of business and how these specific and personal imagery can then speak to broader issues of "southern" and rural spaces: old town storefronts (commerce), awnings (shelter), sign painting (artistry), shades (darkness, covering).

Much like a painter’s relationship to a complicated medium and history, “southern” artists contend with a troubled and complicated “place.”[[1]](#footnote-0) We make work leaning into a gritty subconscious, remnants and ghosts, not unlike a gothic tradition, yet considering a wider, more inclusive, more complicated path; just like painting.

Overlays (historic, red lining), borders, layers, foundations, structures

Papaw’s store, Papaw Bill’s Pharmacy, lunch counter, General Store, When the Kitchen and the Pharmacy were the same room. -Memaw’s home

Painting can become many things in its particular way of note taking or organizing knowledge; landscape, abstraction, among others. These systems (grids) become a scaffold for pictorial inclinations. Stripes generate a placement in pattern, repetition and seriality. Textiles, associated with warmth, the body, pattern, domesticity and weave (stripes) inform this work, as do fragmentary shapes that are plant-like or jaggedly organic, bringing the “outside” into the studio. Hard-edged shapes exist with more rounded/floral moves.

Paintings can function how a folded map relates to a pocket, holding potential to be a locative device, to consider consequences and ask questions, including and beyond self-reflexivity. The work is always generated from a daily relationship to drawing, painting and reading. My core iconography elucidates a conversation on abstraction and a generative, inexhaustible mark.

My recent work is a rumination on grids as related to interiors, pattern, landscape and material. The work gathers around what it can mean to care for and remain attentive through one’s practice. Painting can become many things, including a locative device for memory.

Through my work I consider the relationship of painting and its material to context, but not directly--more like how a folded map relates to a pocket or a quilt to a bed.

My core iconography rests on the grid and associative connections with architecture and perspective--stripes, walls and patterns that can demarcate. I have become interested in how this iconography elucidates a conversation on abstraction and a generative habit or mark.

Restraint and Abandon

“Screens, curtains and doors are pragmatic solutions–keeping out unwanted pests or light, allowing a breeze to pass through. ScreenDoors are nostalgic for a lot of us with associative connections to home and the South: a land, a season, a breeze, an era, a housewife. One can think of painting as similarly defined by both its expansive possibilities and constraints.+ Number Inc,

A device I find particularly powerful is the use of language through titles. I’d like to think that Title (*The*) and surface (gesture, color) are perfect lovers, making a home in a world that is both object and subject, closure and opening.

Much of my interest in painting intersects with that of photography, a situation of interests seriality and time. Underscoring temporality and color some of my moves most directly reference a lens-based possibility to painting.

is a careful but unprecious furthering of a project.

Brushstrokes form bands in the same palette build up to form shapes. My facture opens wide the door to reference with cartoon-like figures and chunky feet. Erratic paint strokes read like choppy contrails, like in the *Wizard of Oz* when the witch skywrites “Surrender Dorothy” on her broom.

Abstraction’s strength is in its flexible, expansive vocabulary. Inexhustable marks, a persistent non-dominant narrative in painting

The Inexhaustable Mark

A pen’s tip lays down a flat, color-fast track. I have been thinking about the never-ending medium and mark of a digital situation. Made on a simple paint app, or as a Microsoft Paint-referenced nod, a mark made my a finger begins and ends rounded, and only when you pick up your hand. It makes for a saturated “gestured” moment outside of Modernism.

Painters construct iconography and work around a complex set of narratives formed in and out of our studios. Formally, the disintegration of marks and palette creates a veil through pattern, texture and mark. Bright decal-like shapes of color flatten any invitation or illusion created. This composition positions the viewer/critic as primary participant, empowered to activate.

“Torso sized”

Much of my work since 2015 is 16” x 12”, on canvas wrapped panel. The work is daily, has a relationship to my body, and I see them in serial.

Most of my work is a presentation of a perspectival space or framing a “scene” between architecture and garden, outside and inside (a way inward)  
  
Always Guston. Glenwood.

My family always had land, both land on which they built their homes and cabins, on rivers and next to ponds. It was not until college that the idea of a “family farm” departed from a way of life to a class distinction.

In some ways I think the same about Painting. The painter’s language is specific and daily lived, but also carried with it class distinction through market attachment and an archetype of the bougie “Sunday painter”.

The core of my iconography with stripes, fences and grids. A painting seeks to make a new world, or begin to ask the viewer to believe in the world made, like a camouflage.

I continue to question painting’s agency as I walk throughout my neighborhood. I think of these as genre paintings, of my neighborhood history.

Painting has been an alternate measurement of our socio-political moment. I am investing in a allegorial tendency that illumination is hard won.

TEXTILES- flattened pattern, lenses, stripes, flags, shrouds

Entry is a protractor piece, a continuation in steps towards developing some language around my place in painting and cultural moment.

"If one of the tasks of the artist is to work on problems of form through active repetition in a manner that presents an actual and theoretical engagement with the issues of both making and perceptions such that those activities can be used to help gain a greater understanding of the world we inhabit and create, then can we think of Asawa as doing this work from the ethical position of the mother within the framework of the family?

And since Asawa did not produce sentimental images that extolled the nuclear family above all other social formations and instead sought to engage deeply with her community through her children and even more specifically through the apparatus that creates society itself, the public schools, can we open up a discursive field around her work that links her interests in wires and sculpture, in negative and positive space, in repetition and difference in the social to her dynamic position as an artist and a mother, as a Japanese American, as a product of progressive education, and as a believer in arts education?

To put this another way, were Ruth Asawa’s family, her home, and these activities, her version of an art world?"

One of my earliest memories is of seeing inexplicable dots hovering and slightly obscuring my vision. I came to know these interruptions as my eyelashes, soaked with water or tears, veiling my sight. I remember asking my Mom what the dots could be, and understood myself to be separate from her.

Track, driven and self, underdog

Boston, photography, home, longing

Grad school-photogprhay and painting, longing and fears

The uncovering my interest in the event, came from elevating “non events” to high status. I began my airplane works in 2004, to make work that elevated a potentially mundane or pervasive experience to an event, worth being captured, worth painting, even. I used my own photographic reference. The work is as much about the photographic situation of painting as it is fear and loneliness.

Pushing this interest through the meditative, exacting process of drawing elevates the condition of the snapshot. There is satisfaction in the process of drawing - an accounting of events that I might have forgotten otherwise. The drawing becomes a reminder, like a souvenir penny, stamped with the place and date of my trip.

What came out of grad school thesis work (self portraits) were a cross country move and a clarity. The self portraits were not saying what I wanted to say, ultimately. They were too couched in the self, myself, my ego and subjectivity. I began making small sculptures through which I initiated getting to know my new town.

I became aware of my interest in the visual language of celebration, usually parallel to written language through titles.

"Every real painter wants to be, and his greatest desire is to be, a realist," -Guston

On walking, events: "A lone walker is both present and detached, more than an audience but less than a participant. Walking assuages or legitimizes this alienation." Rebecca Solnit

My works are metaphors for both personal and collective memory, as seen in my flags/tents, etc. In these works I work, like in my self-portraits, from photography and take out the context (backgrounds). I am interested in defining the image outside of context, on its own, alone, or through titles.

I make art to be in the world, to live in community, to process my part of what it means to be human. My paintings extend from an interest in space, landscape and architecture, language. Usually parallel to titles, my work is a composite of influences, from the history of painting, to soundbites, to what I see on a road trip or walks, to the color of a Play Doh container.

I am adding what I see is missing in the world of painting. The pieces come from the specificity, density but possibility of intimacy with images and text we process. Interior textiles and exterior structures, toddler conversations, concrete slabs and language from podcasts are deposited as a unified visual mass.

As an extension of the grid, my personal iconography has grown to include stripes- it can demarcate or camouflage. The grid as a formal consideration and content, landscape as catalyst or container for a psychological expression, preoccupation with death and transition (perfect for the religious painter). The core of my iconography with stripes, fences and grids. A painting seeks to make a new world, or begin to ask the viewer to believe in the world made, like a camouflage.

Landscape had been a consistent touchstone in my work--sometimes overtly, sometimes not--perhaps related to having almost literally grown up in a National Park. Living in cities for my adult life, I began to collect images of constructions sites that I could then isolate to speak to disparate issues of time, upheaval, restraint and abandon, and progress. The grid can contain most of these references, and the flatness of a painting.

When I chose to paint exclusively in about 2008/9, part of that choice was for painting’s ability to comment on itself and to leverage the overlap of painting’s properties with the preoccupations on my practice--artifice, time, landscape references, grids, and structure. I see my work couched in a moment in which there is less doubt, less angst, more hope.

I began to slow down the car for construction sites, or landscapes in transition perfect idea-haunts for my process. Nashville was booming, seemingly unstopped by most of the economic bust. In these sites I found the anti-landscape, the anti Sunday painter--the hard edges of concrete next to “fuzzy”, droopy plastic sheeting forms. Formally, I use masking tape in these works, not only for its material properties, but it’s associative properties with binding, fixing, mending, constructing.

I am working with the language of materiality in Painting. Though one could discern recognizable “stuff” in the work, I am interested in defining the image on its own terms, out of context or within a new one, a “referential” abstraction. Using surface and grid as metaphor for the super-modern condition, I demarcate and assert physical and psychological borders in the work. The grid becomes a springboard for expression, not a constraint.

Fences and walls stand as permeable exits rather than solid barriers--they break, bend, droop and sag. Wire-like lines cross, tangle, loop and deshevle, becoming metaphors for lost and broken conversations, helicopter Moms or the experience of grief. The works are mis-steps, tryouts, attempts at perfection but really only repairs. But, the repairs end up being so much more satisfying.

The works shifted in 2010-11. On first glance it could be when I had children, but I think the instinct is even deeper--more about seeing, walking, finding. Simple painterly concerns. Simple human concerns, that I accessed through raising children (the vulnerability, the slow pace, the deep intuition).

The paper works *The Devil’s Neighbor* (*Winter Papers)* happened on my dining room table in the winter, perhaps tapping into an intimacy of scale and thought. They’re informed by using the stripe--a device of pattern and a lead character in my iconography--as a standard or element of the grid. The paintbrush has its own width or measure, setting up a logic on the paper. With these small works, I was seeing what happens when the stripe or grid sags or sways. I began to think about the grid as relative to a “devil”--this metaphorical or actual standard of bad or evil. The guy who lives next door to the devil is his neighbor, not conditioned with a label, but complicit nonetheless because of proximity.

The work is not about migrants or the public's relationship to police, but the works are dependent on a grid system (laws, leaders, police) and then the system bending, yielding and being interrupted (protests, revolts, moves). The work is still the work, and formal, yet I can sense some of the gray and darkness was informed by the world around me.

Titles are a toehold, a way to create a snag in the fabric of the work, for both me and the viewer. I keep titles on my iPhone in a note now but used to keep notebooks of lists. At one point I had a cigar box full of post-its. They are culled from my reading, soundbites, but have to function on two levels: to comment on the medium of painting--a wide girth--and be rooted in personal directive.

The entrance of color after a long run of monochrome was more surprising to me than the dark/muted turn. There’s so much of the gray out on the world, literally and figuratively. My

favorite color is Payne’s Gray. I love a good grisaille (Tuymans, Richter and deKeyser). The color was a really hopeful, bright surprise, like when I first saw a Joanne Greenbaum.

The red works came from hazard orange, cadmium red was a bit off from blood red, politics and “red letter Christians”, editions of the bible in which the words of Jesus are red, which calls to mind issues (in painting for me) of context versus content, and both. I found myself repeating patterns with the small work and wanted to explore large works on wrapped panels.

The painter chooses what to keep as a prompt or motive for making a painting. The act of walking is like painting in its immersive nature and ability to frame experience, keeping one present in “the anthropology of the near” (Auge, 7). Moving at three miles an hour, the neighborhood is like a theatrical set, one that allows entrances and exits from one yard and boundary to the next. This architecture of life carries wide implications for walkers and participants, aware or unaware, both participant and audience (Solnit, 30).

redlining,

Painting has been an alternate measurement of our socio-political moment. I am investing in an allegorical tendency that illumination is hard won.

A pen’s tip lays down a flat, color-fast track.

1. It’s not down on any map. True places never are. Moby Dick, Melville. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)