

The Uncertainty Principle

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Artists' responses to 21st century concerns continue to reflect the current age's pervasive, quickening pace, and the density of information we have become accustomed to assimilating on a daily basis. Older languages and idioms such as painting are adapted, quoted, mashed-up, and regularly take on additional meanings through new contexts and appropriations. Conversely, new languages and idioms are introduced through the vocabulary of the old, having a reflexive and expansive effect on the original concepts. This is especially true when the original language manages to be broad yet somehow clear enough about its constraints to allow for coherent conceptualization. The recent paintings of David Lloyd are products of this paradoxical crucible, each painting another conclusion drawn from an active skepticism and articulation of some of the most basic, formal notions of image-making. A surface reading of Lloyd's new work indicates a synthesis of earlier inquiries into formal abstraction and more recent narrative impulses. However, the conclusions he draws are more than a simple hybridized amalgam of disparate elements, rather, they are an enlightened realizing and democratization of painting's many systems of imagery. The consistent vocabulary of his motifs seems beholden to another kind of logic—a specifically painterly logic—that in times past would have been complemented by a philosophy rooted in theosophy, spiritualism, Jungian analysis, etc. The subsequent postmodern demolishing of such ideas has given way to a new age of addressing and continuing these notions through a more skeptical lens. Lloyd's ability to see through this lens was first developed during the 1980s as a student at CalArts, where the very concept of painting as a viable contemporary language was continually challenged and questioned.



David Lloyd, *Being and Form*, 2014



David Lloyd, *An Illusive Path*, 2014

Lloyd's decades-long inquiry into painting exemplifies an approach that many informed painters often take as a matter of course: that the oft-referenced binary of figurative/abstract is a false dichotomy. While it is undoubtedly a useful polarity for students of painting as well as gallerists and dealers, Lloyd's work makes such labeling seem far less relevant than the actual visual function of the elements on the canvas. In this exhibition as in other recent ones, a leveling of any visual hierarchy allows for profound visual conjunctions and a peek into what could be metaphorically described as being near a "quantum level" of painting—a level right above pure, unmediated uncertainty. Lloyd's deft compositional juggling within that circumstance is evidence of a sustained investigation that puts the problems of painting above market fashionability, above easy classification, above the perils of abstraction devolving into decoration, or of figuration devolving into illustration. In the painterly space of Lloyd's work, discreet elements delineate from the ground and meet forms that appear half-in and half-out. They float on top of the other elements and seem to bleed away into a level of depth that incongruously folds back in on itself, reflecting illusions of cast shadows and delicately rendered memetic forms.



David Lloyd, *Eldorado*, 2014

Like microscope slides of the primordial soup of painting, Lloyd's works are snapshots of the universe of available imagery from which the initial chains of subject and content are formed. Connecting these instances of imagery on the canvas happens by way of hyperreal, illustrative threads and Pollock-esque drips; fragments of Karl Benjamin paintings that briefly define and then subvert the spatial logic of their surroundings; and atmospheric, stained clouds of colorfield patches that suddenly condense into outlines, strings, and serendipitous accidents. In a work like *Eldorado*, textured patches seem caught transitioning into hard-edge graphic forms, shedding their outline into a pure colored ether that is both near and far. In *Being and Form*, a discreet grouping of flat graphic shapes dangle precipitously into a washy maroon-stained field, and just miss landing on a stack of elements that are, from top to bottom: a self-conscious brushstroke-as-object, a collaged trompe-l'oeil patch, and a half-painted foundation lunging ahead from the right. Some of Lloyd's forms coalesce just enough to form the beginnings of more literal imagery, as in *An Illusive Path*, where a multi-hued polygonal arm and hand appears to be pulling the strings on a precarious, delicately balanced, Rube Goldberglike, two-dimensional construction. The result is a tension only possible through the implied visual logic Lloyd asserts as confidently in a single painting as he does across the entire body of work. Each work is a visual equation, asserting its own internal logic, every painting processing different variables.

While the current climate for contemporary painting is as diverse as ever, the fashionably distracting love/hate relationship critics, collectors and curators have with abstract painting reveals an unresolved and evolving idiom that still demands stances and declarations. Patience eventually yields to history, and if the history of art is any prior indication, it will reveal that the ones with skin in the game are the artists, as the authentic efforts they make toward uncovering and resolving art's issues frequently take firm root in the culture at large. Making informed, critical declarations in regards to some of the basic pigeon-holing of painting as it is often categorized in the market, David Lloyd has pushed investigations of form, narrative, figure and ground at times when they were at odds with momentary art world distractions. Ultimately it is this kind of sustained authenticity that should dictate art's value, both culturally and economically. To contemplate the implications of Lloyd's paintings is to awaken in terms of how visual perceptions are shaped, and how the things we do perceive possess the power to articulate ideas beyond their mere appearance.