

Absent art

There are three main areas of thinking behind the breeding squares works;

1. Your presence is required.

The squares are small and arranged on large surfaces which makes them very difficult to photograph clearly and therefore, share. Images bombard us every day and the sharing of them internationally seems to be encouraging some kind of collective global consciousness.

It has been possible for over twenty years for the whole world to share sights and experiences personal and otherwise via the internet. My squares are universal, but they are not easy to share. To be appreciated they require your presence so as to see the materiality of the surface properly; in some cases to realise that the alternating brush strokes on some, have a uniform direction, or to see the shadow cast by the paint itself.

Above all the large canvases allow you to be immersed in squares. When you stand in front of the large pieces I hope that after initial thoughts about the actual process, the viewer might consider the circular motion and the unending cycle. There are no surprises on the canvases, so it is possible for the mind to roam into personal, private images without interruption. I like to think that the work might be interesting enough to make you come back again to see something different.

I was born in the era of no mobile phones, only three television channels that went off air at midnight, and two postal deliveries a day. The last twenty years of rapidly advancing technology has been relentless, and it will never be possible for humans to keep up with the technical advancements. There is so much to look at, which feels like a richness, but sometimes can feel overwhelming.

While flicking through images and footage on our devices, are we giving them much thought? Does the physical presence of an image upon a real surface or rendered into a three dimensional form, not have more staying power in the mind, than a backlit image on a screen? Might you not linger over the physically present longer, because it exists in your space and there are no tempting distractions to hurry you on? Ironically the materiality gives it more permanence even though an image on the internet is there forever.

Perhaps the physically present is more likely to be returned to while you are undistracted because it exists in your real world; like a touchstone.

Lately we are being encouraged to live stream our lives as it actually happens. What is your experience of living if you are too busy filming it to be taking part? How are your memories formed if your brain thinks you are recording everything? Does your brain just not bother to store important experiences anymore?

My first seven memories occurred just before the age of 5. I think they endure because they involve revelations about myself and my place in the world. For example; one of these recollections is of me hiding in a neighbour's garden, waiting for her to leave her kitchen so that I could sneak in and steal a tea bag. I surmise that this memory endures because I was taking a risk. I knew I was doing something wrong; maybe my brain was responding to increased adrenaline and decided that this scenario was important.

Have there been changes to the way brains record early formative memory? Will our brains assume that since so much is being recorded, it doesn't need to log events? Does this result in us not really knowing ourselves? Perhaps it results in desensitisation, because our brains have not noted possible high risk scenarios? Or perhaps memories are logged but we will have trouble retrieving them because they are jumbled up in years of making and looking at images on screens.

2. Interruptions and the agrarian rhythm.

I am concerned that the persistent interruptions of blue light, sounds and vibrations from technology disrupt our sleep patterns and prevents us from taking time for deep reflection or simple empty headedness. I feel that technology is making us 24 hour browsers and consumers; we even turn ourselves into product, by rating one another with likes. We are losing the rhythm of our day, by allowing our devices to be at our bedsides, letting it keep us up late, maybe even checking it periodically when we wake at night. Over time deep sleep will become difficult and maybe sleep itself will become a commodity, as we resort to purchasing sleeping tablets.

Application of the grid and the small squares requires daylight. It is important not to lose my place or

forget which tone should be taking its turn. Therefore, the work reconnects me to the agrarian rhythm; rising with the sun to work, and resting when the sun goes down. (Something else which is being undermined to our permanent availability to the world.) When humans are attuned to nature in this way I believe they can be at their most creative and as such contribute more positively to society.

I hope that the evident process will suggest time passing uninterrupted and that the viewer might contemplate the importance of potentially unending creative act which is done purely for its own sake. I intend that the repetition of the simple square may allow the viewer time to let their mind wander to private reminiscence and imagining.

When I am engrossed in the process the repetitive action takes on its own rhythm and I am able to enjoy the elemental experience of simply applying the paint.

3. Context, feminism and infinity

I believe my squares are accessible when you are present. The passing of time and layered meanings should be evident to most. Many will recall the equation used in some of the pieces, from their own childhood, which will I think has a transportative effect. However, very few will I think, have seen this equation expanded upon to such a degree, and this in itself is interesting. Perhaps the viewer might consider this and how it might feel to draw a grid for a day or two and then to paint squares every day for many days and weeks. They might wonder about the steady repetition in relation to their own routines.

I consider my work to refute the purity of pure abstraction by making it intense and slightly off kilter. In its reference to memory I link it closely to Mary Heilman. Yet my work contains elements of my personality in its relentless persistence. I also relate closely to Agnes Martin. Her work is spare and hints at the memory of a universal experience of place and time; my work has an intensity and relates directly to my own private memories and encourages the viewer to seek theirs. The most exciting element of this work for me is that the squares can go on forever. In this respect I think the work references motherhood. Motherhood requires patience and attention to detail. Each day requires much of the same labour and care and it never ends. Therefore, I must acknowledge the feminist element of this work.

My squares also bring to my mind Miriam Schapiro 'Sixteen Windows' 1965. They seem to have architectural space and form. For Schapiro this meant the domestic environment; my work represents art as labour and in an abstract, other space.

It is constructivist occupying space as if it is sculpture. By this I mean the edges finished without a framing device. I want the work to exist as a thing not only as a painting with borders. I want it to feel possible to me that each piece could be picked up and continued into infinity.