

A B S T R A C T



This catalog was published on the occasion of the exhibition
ABSTRACT: Léonie Guyer, Ruth Laskey, Lynne Woods Turner,
on view at the Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery, Reed
College, from September 4 to December 5, 2010.

The exhibition was curated by Stephanie Snyder, John and Anne
Hauberg Curator and Director, Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art
Gallery, Reed College, Portland, OR.

The catalog contains poetry by Franck André Jamme, and essays
by curator Stephanie Snyder and Lawrence Rinder, Director,
Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, University of
California Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

The catalog was designed by Heather Watkins Design, Portland, OR.

A B S T R A C T

LÉONIE GUYER

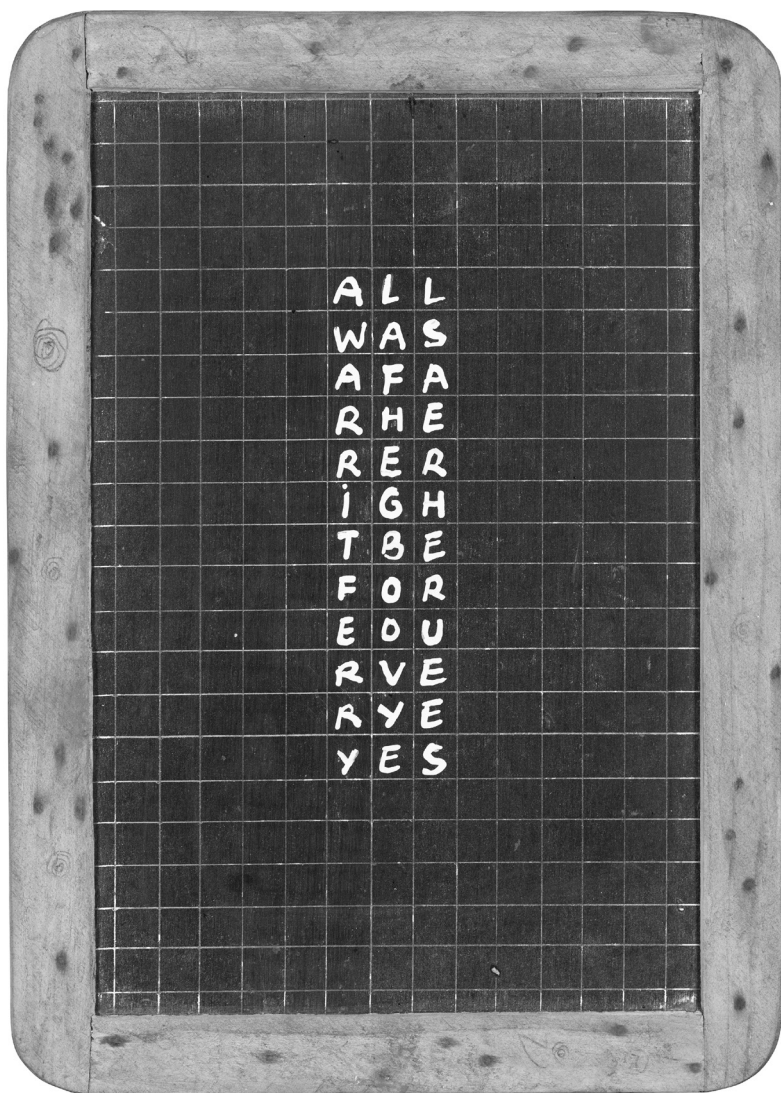
RUTH LASKEY

LYNNE WOODS TURNER

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Previous page:
Franck André Jamme
ALL WAS AFAR, 2009
Acrylic on schoolboard
10 x 7 1/8 x 1/4 in.
Courtesy of the artist

What remains of life is the spiritual. The spiritual in art, or we might simply call it the artistic ... abstraction in a picture is absolute and perhaps can only be recognized as such by psychic feeling. Creation lives as genesis under the visible surface of the work. All those touched by the spirit see this in retrospect, but only the creative see it looking forward (into the future).

—Paul Klee

HOW IS IT THAT WORKS OF ART become organs of insight? And how is it that through them, we are propelled inward, sometimes uncomfortably, toward a universal knowledge – touching the second mind of the psyche? “Art is not construction, artifice, the meticulous relationship to a space and a world existing outside. It is truly the ‘inarticulate cry,’ as Hermes Trismegistus said, ‘which seemed to be the voice of the light.’ And once it is present it awakens powers dormant in ordinary vision, a secret of preexistence.”¹ The vibrating tone that Merleau-Ponty describes is both a divining rod and a crucible. “The picture – paint, color – lies within our organism. Its outbursts are great and demanding,” Malevich wrote.²

The “inarticulate cry” of revelation dwells in the abstraction of experience. This truth, though part of every world culture, was re-discovered in the early twentieth century by visionary European and Russian artists such as Hilma af Klint (1862–1944), Paul Klee (1879–1940), Emma Kunz (1892–1963), and Kazimir Malevich (1878–1935). “Thus the psyche in abstract art doesn’t seek its projection in the outside, natural, ever-changing world with its ephemeral time and ever-changing appearances, but, as in some Buddhist practices, it desires to wrestle the self and the object from the arbitrary natural flux of being, from the appearances of the world, and to eternalize the soul in abstract forms beyond visible appearance.”³

¹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “Ontology and Painting: Eye and Mind,” in *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader*, Galen Johnson and Michael Smith, eds. (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1993).

² Kazimir Malevich, “From Futurism and Cubism to Suprematism,” in *Art in Theory: 1900 – 2000*, Charles Harrison and Paul Woods, eds. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003).

ABSTRACT presents the work of three extraordinary women artists – Léonie Guyer, Ruth Laskey and Lynne Woods Turner – all of whom share a deep commitment to abstraction's autonomous forms of knowing. It goes without saying that the nature of their relationship to the volition of the abstract is inseparable from their lives as women. The multiplicity of conditions bound within this fact must be understood as indistinguishable from the presence and realization of their work. In the words of Agnes Martin, "This indistinguishability swells love."⁴

The ancient Egyptians believed that the heart was the organ of speech. The heart, as a form of consciousness, they held, possessed knowledge that could only be revealed at death. "Spell 30B," in *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, beseeches the heart to protect the soul of the deceased. The spell is recited during the weighing of the heart after death. Abstracted from the body, the heart is depicted on a balancing scale (resembling a shape from one of Léonie Guyer's paintings), where it speaks its truth, determining the soul's future. The officiating priests implore the heart to be kind and loving as the soul drifts through the universe, vulnerable and fragile, like a work of art – like one of Ruth Laskey's textiles.⁵

We carry these shapes within us – as pressurized essences – like the atmospheres in Lynne Woods Turner's paintings. Perhaps it is the artwork that best preserves this energy – now, and after we depart. Hilma af Klint withheld her entire life's work from public view, for instance, until twenty years after her death. Af Klint, like the ancient Egyptians, recognized her work as a form of augury, in dialogue with a universal consciousness. She gave the world some time to catch up, before she offered it her vision.

³ Bracha Eitinger, "The Art-and-Healing Oeuvre," in *3 x Abstraction: New Methods of Drawing by Hilma af Klint, Emma Kunz, and Agnes Martin*, Catherine de Zegher and Hendel Teicher, eds. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

⁴ *3 x Abstraction: New Methods of Drawing by Hilma af Klint, Emma Kunz, and Agnes Martin*, Catherine de Zegher and Hendel Teicher, eds. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

⁵ *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, John Taylor, ed. (London: The British Museum Press, 2010).

*In abstraction, the artist seeks the kind of laws, like that governing crystalline beauty, found in the inanimate world, which constitute, according to [Austrian art historian] Alois Riegl, "the first and most eternal law of form." However, according to Worringer, these kinds of laws of abstract regularity are not simply "picked" from inanimate objects. Rather, they are somehow contained, beyond human understanding, in the human organization itself.*⁶

⁶ Bracha Eitinger, "The Art-and-Healing Oeuvre," in *3 x Abstraction: New Methods of Drawing* by Hilma af Klint, Emma Kunz, and Agnes Martin, Catherine de Zegher and Hendel Teicher, eds. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Wilhelm Worringer, in his most influential book, *Abstraction and Empathy* (1908), attempted to establish the difference between art as empathy and art as abstraction. The following quotation from Bracha Eitinger's essay "The Art-and-Healing Oeuvre," elucidates Worringer's central idea: "In art that expresses the urge to empathy, aesthetic enjoyment is the objectified self-enjoyment obtained by way of satisfying the urge toward the 'truths of the organic life' by self-projection (and, of necessity, alienation) through objects. In art as empathy, some correspondence and relations of confidence between human existence and nature are manifested. On the other hand, in art that expresses the *urge to abstraction*, understood as empathy's opposite urge, another psychic attitude toward the cosmos is revealed, one that corresponds to the transcendental in religions: 'an immense spiritual dread of space' conditioned by the feeling of being lost in a capricious world and by striving to find rest in the invisible underlying laws and regularities of the world, in those principles that lie behind nature with its ephemeral phenomena."

⁷ Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, Michael Hardt, trans. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

Love swells, as Agnes Martin wrote, when prejudice subsides. Abstraction, commonly misunderstood as a reductive response to life, is in fact an intersecting embrace of the interconnectedness of all things. The Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben describes this phenomenon in relationship to the "singularity" of love. In Agamben's words, "Love is never directed toward this or that property of the loved one (being blond, being small, being tender, being lame), but neither does it neglect the properties in favor of an insipid generality (universal love): The lover wants the loved one *with all of its predicates*, its being such as it is."⁷

The volition of abstraction echoes Agamben's definition of love – as an inability to discriminate against the overwhelming truth of lived experience. Abstraction too, can only be all that it is, at once – a sea of devotion. Within the absolute abstract, form, color, and sensation, unburdened by description, reach thresholds of invisibility that, as Paul Klee so beautifully describes, can only, simply, be *felt*. The works of art in this exhibition are presented with the hope of re-awakening this understanding.

ABSTRACT ART IS an incredible puzzle. I doubt that anyone will ever understand it completely. Which is, of course, why it's so fascinating. Abstraction tantalizes us with image and absence of image, with meaning and lack of meaning, with tradition and freedom from tradition. It is, to borrow a phrase from Jacques Rancière, an example of the "heterogeneous sensible." There is no summing it up because we can't even begin to fathom all of its constituent parts. Abstraction comes at us from everywhere and nowhere and, when it works, wallops us with an uncanny recognition of something we have never seen before.

For many people, abstraction exists on the edge of art and non-art, and sometimes goes over to the other side. Things that seem so simple, so random, or so physically obtuse can be more reminiscent of nature – rocks, clouds, waves – than of imagined creations. Abstraction plays in that in-between space, giving nature and culture a single voice. This is an exceedingly peculiar effect of abstract art and one that endows it with a radically atavistic quality: even the most refined, erudite geometries of Mondrian resonate with something pre-human. It's weird.

Time by itself can make something abstract. In the same way that saying a word over and over again makes it strange, looking at something for a long time can reveal its contradictions, its uncertain boundaries, its overflowing energy. These days it takes less time than it used to. The speed of life and

learning make any kind of looking, other than a glance, into an uncomfortable, yoga-like exercise. The nature of art has changed because of this: no matter what is represented, as long as the artist has invested an image with extended seeing we will stumble in front of it, tripping like a person who realizes too late that the moving walkway has come to an end.

Another thing that has changed over time is that simply making things has become abstract. It used to be that everyone made things, and abstraction was reserved for God and, later, for the mind. Now that most making is done by machines – or by people overseas – abstraction here and now belongs to the hand and the body. Touching things, shaping them, weaving them together takes us, oddly, out of ourselves. Rather than ground us, making (or seeing things made) disturbs our new natural comfort, offering evidence – by contrast – of how mental our lives have become.

Abstract art often has a basis in history or natural allusion: from quilts to Islamic architecture to feathers and the grilles of old automobiles, the bases for abstract forms are infinite. These allusions may be considered meaningful or not; regardless, once described or recognized, the antecedent shares the stage with a brand-new form. For the past hundred years, it has been typical to think of abstraction and newness hand in hand, which is why most artists have shied away from revealing their sources: it's like giving away the sleight behind a magic trick. But newness isn't what it used to be, so now abstraction and its precedents are comfortable being seen together.

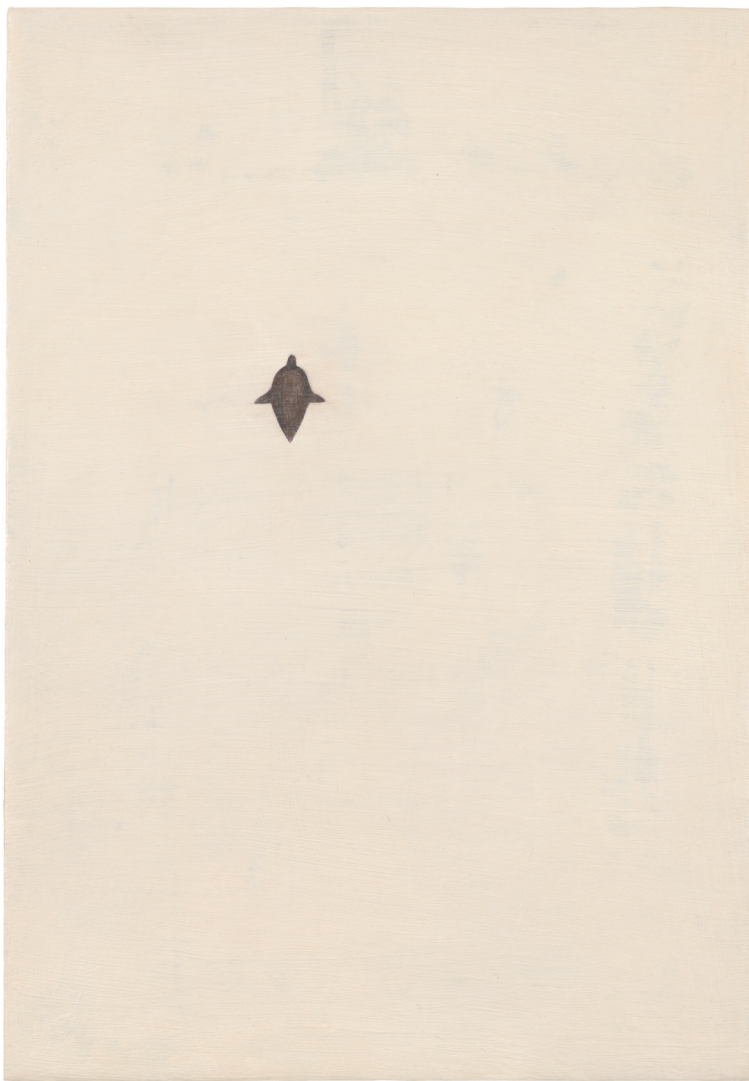
I tend to think pragmatically about art: what is it doing, and what does it make possible? Considered in this way, abstract art is on an equal footing with naturalistic representation.

Even so, as a tool among tools, it has a special job to do. What is it? The sense that abstraction – at least our understanding and experience of it – changes over time and depending on our social condition makes this already complex question truly unanswerable. There can be no universal key. Yet it's almost too much for most people to accept that the least imperfect authority on abstraction is themselves. Our relationship with abstraction – that is, our appreciation of its unique capacities – could develop much faster and in more interesting ways if more people felt comfortable approaching it on their own terms, without the gloss of criticism and theory. On the occasion of this exhibition, perhaps every visitor could start by asking of each work those two simple questions: What is it doing? What does it make possible?

L É O N I E G U Y E R



Untitled, no. 57, 2009
Oil and true gesso on wood panel
13 x 9 x 1 1/8 in.



Untitled, no. 54, 2008
Oil and true gesso on wood panel
13 x 9 x 1 1/8 in.



Untitled, no. 55, 2008
Oil and true gesso on wood panel
13 x 9 x 1 1/8 in.



Untitled, no. 63, 2009
Oil and true gesso on wood panel
13 x 9 x 1 1/8 in.



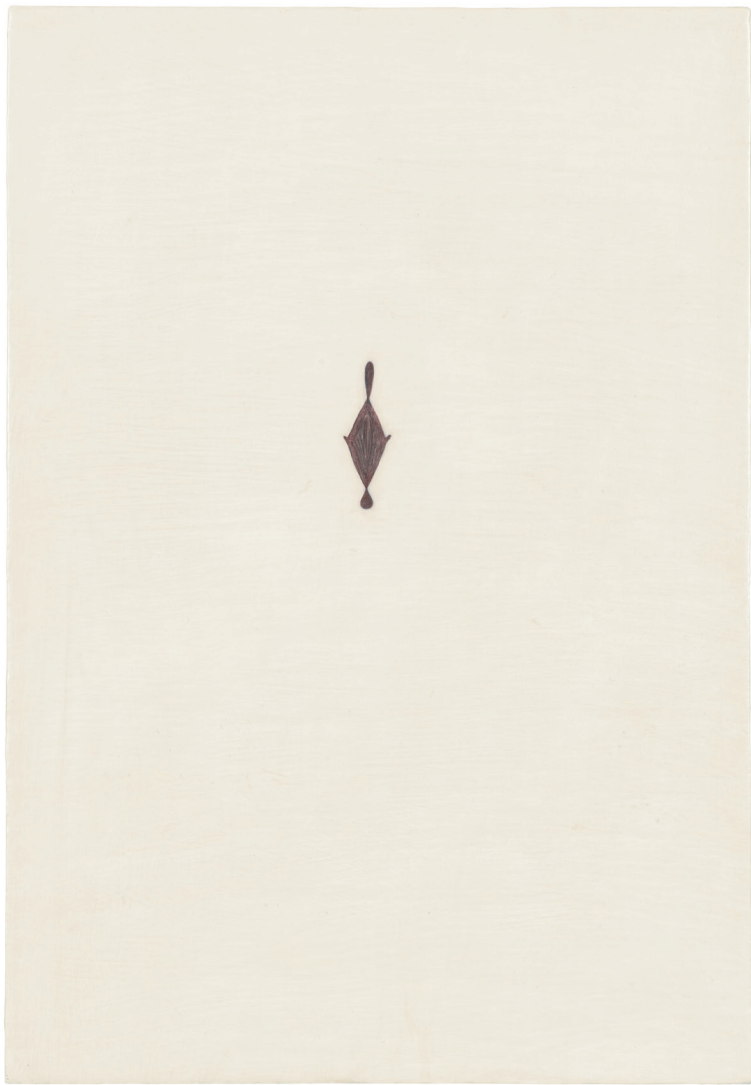
Untitled, no. 56, 2008
Oil and true gesso on wood panel
13 x 9 x 1 1/8 in.



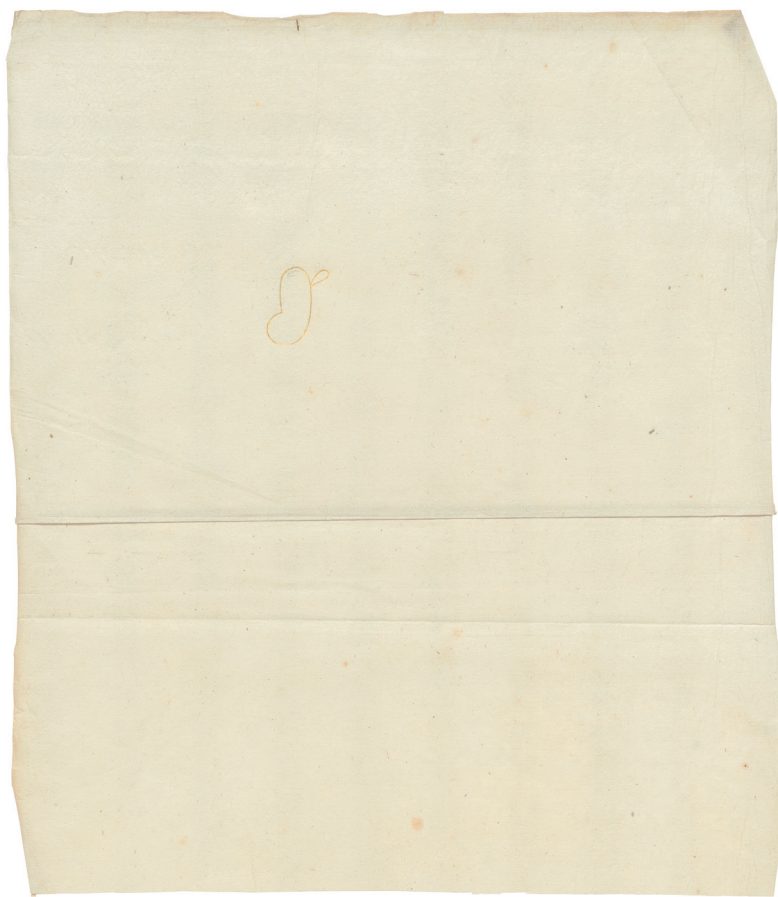
Untitled, no. 58, 2009
Oil and true gesso on wood panel
13 x 9 x 1 1/8 in.



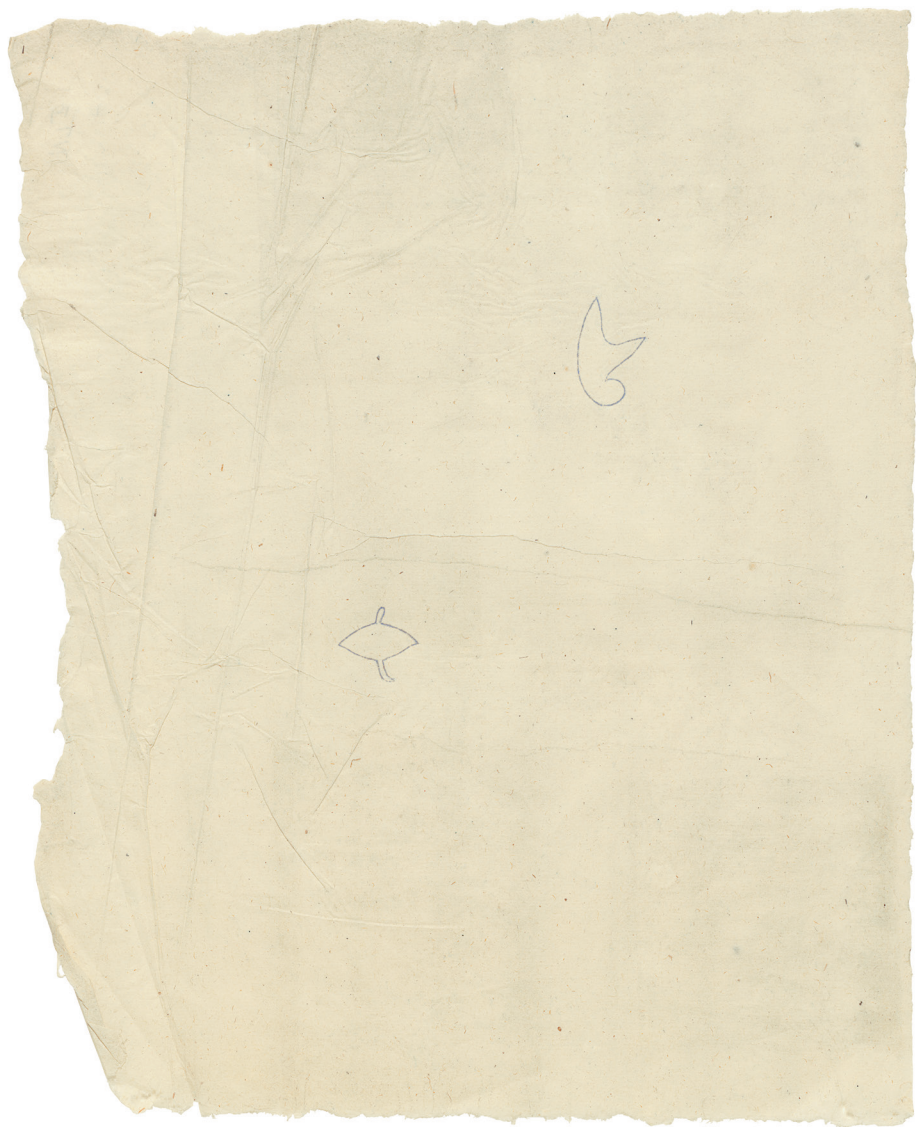
Untitled, no. 59, 2009
Oil and true gesso on wood panel
13 x 9 x 1 1/8 in.



Untitled, no. 60, 2009
Oil and true gesso on wood panel
13 x 9 x 1 1/8 in.



Untitled, FR-30, 2010
Colored pencil and graphite
pencil on old French paper
(18th–19th century)
12 1/8 x 10 1/2 in.





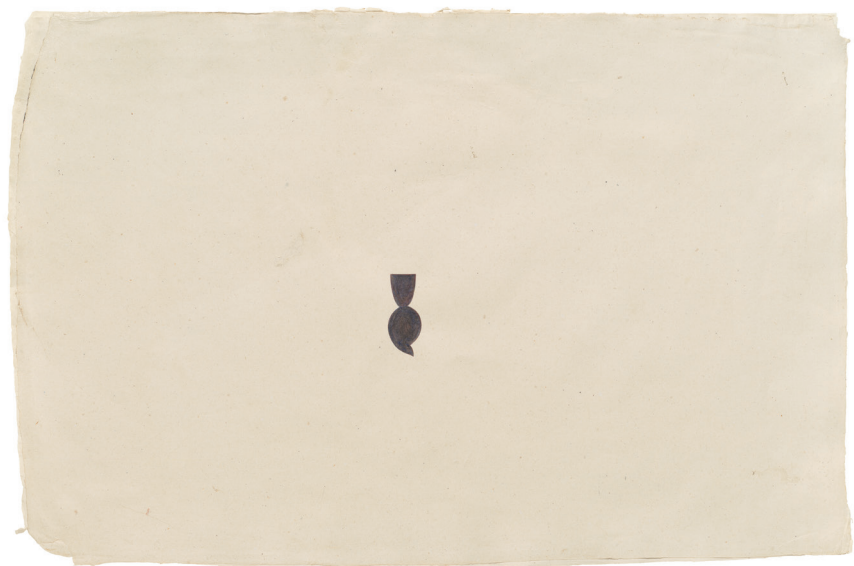
Untitled, FR-31, 2010
Colored pencil and graphite
pencil on old French paper
(18th–19th century)
13 1/8 x 10 5/8 in.

Untitled, FR-27, 2010
Colored pencil and graphite
pencil on old French paper
(18th–19th century)
6 x 5 1/8 in.

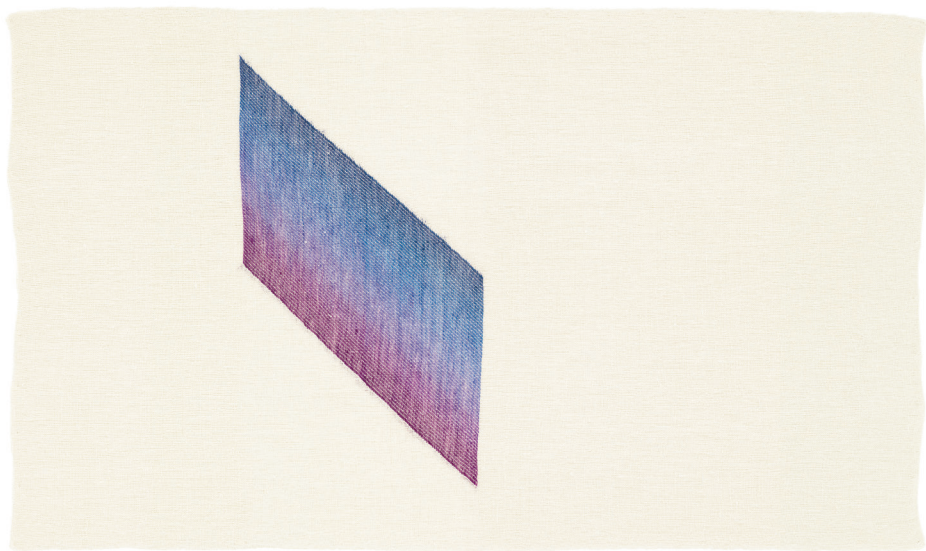


Untitled, MHK-4, 2008
Graphite pencil and gouache
on Indian paper
22 1/8 x 33 in.

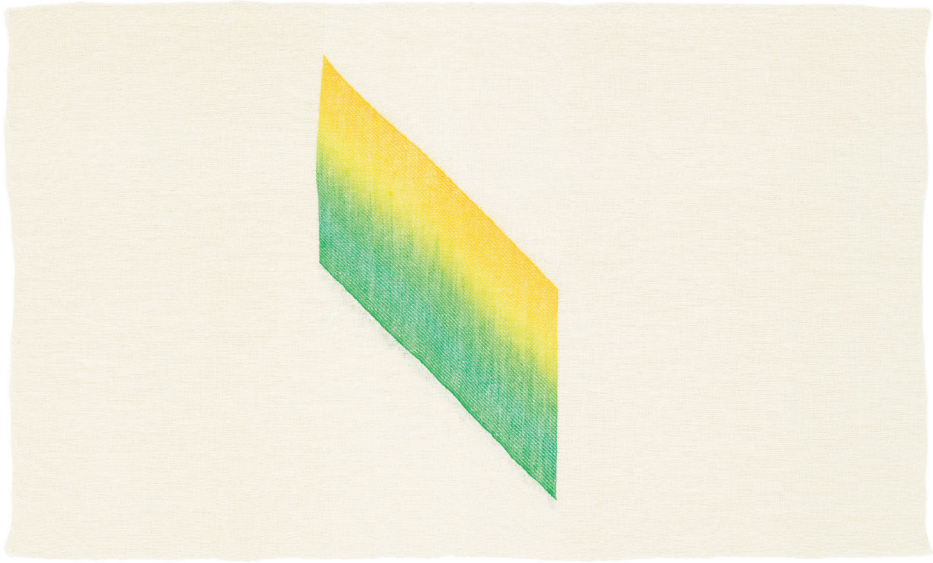
Untitled, MHK-3, 2008
Graphite pencil and gouache
on Indian paper
22 1/8 x 33 in.



R U T H L A S K E Y

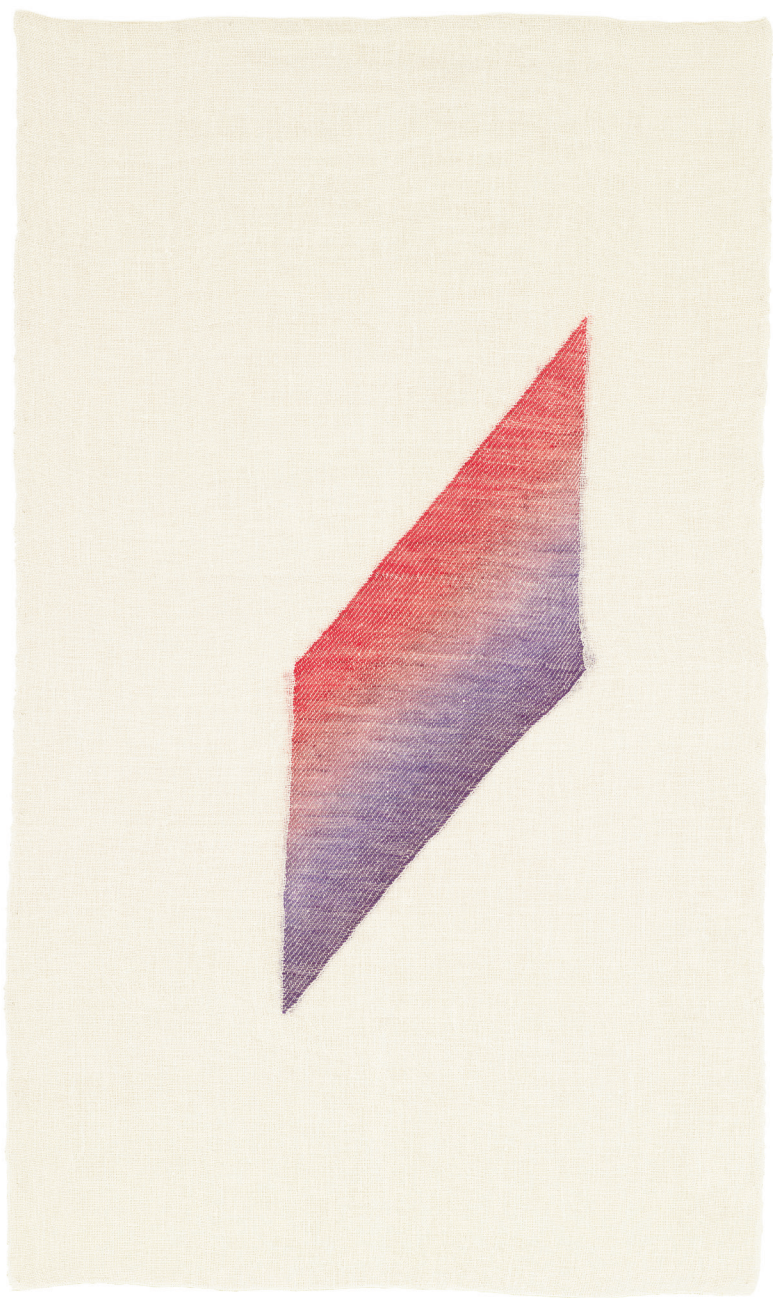


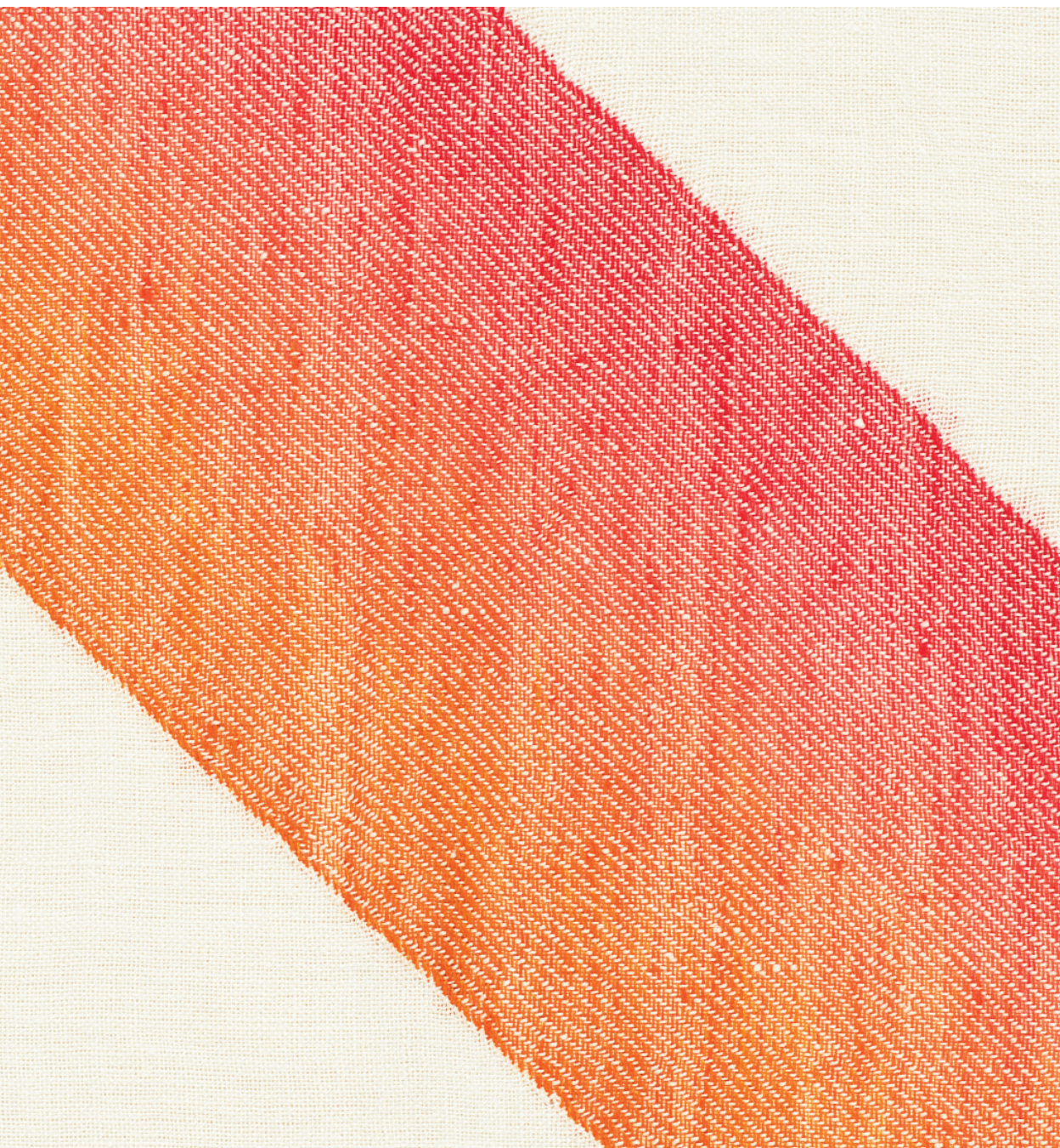
Twill Series
(Purple/Brilliant Blue), 2008
Hand-dyed and hand-woven linen
14 x 23 1/2 in.

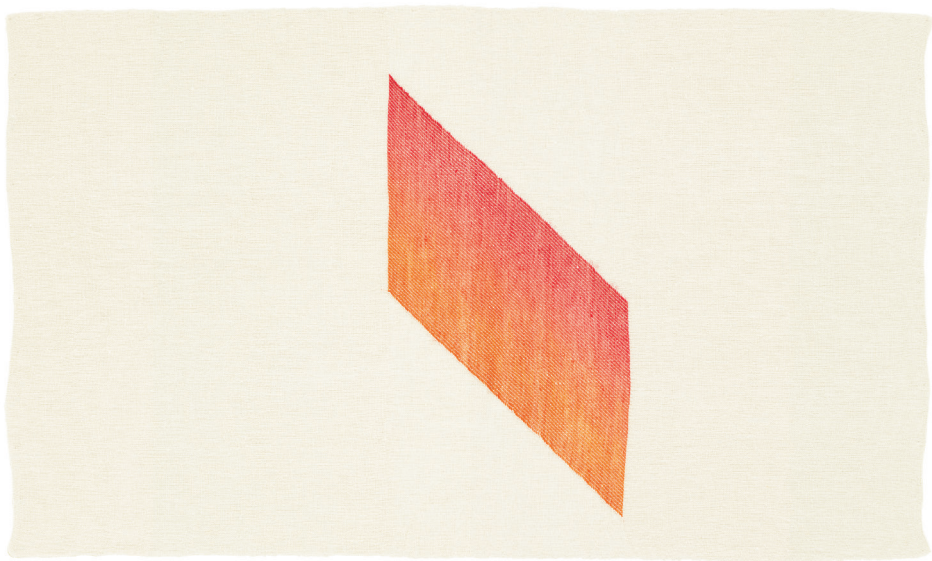


Twill Series
(Kelly Green/Clear Yellow), 2008
Hand-dyed and hand-woven linen
14 x 23 1/2 in.

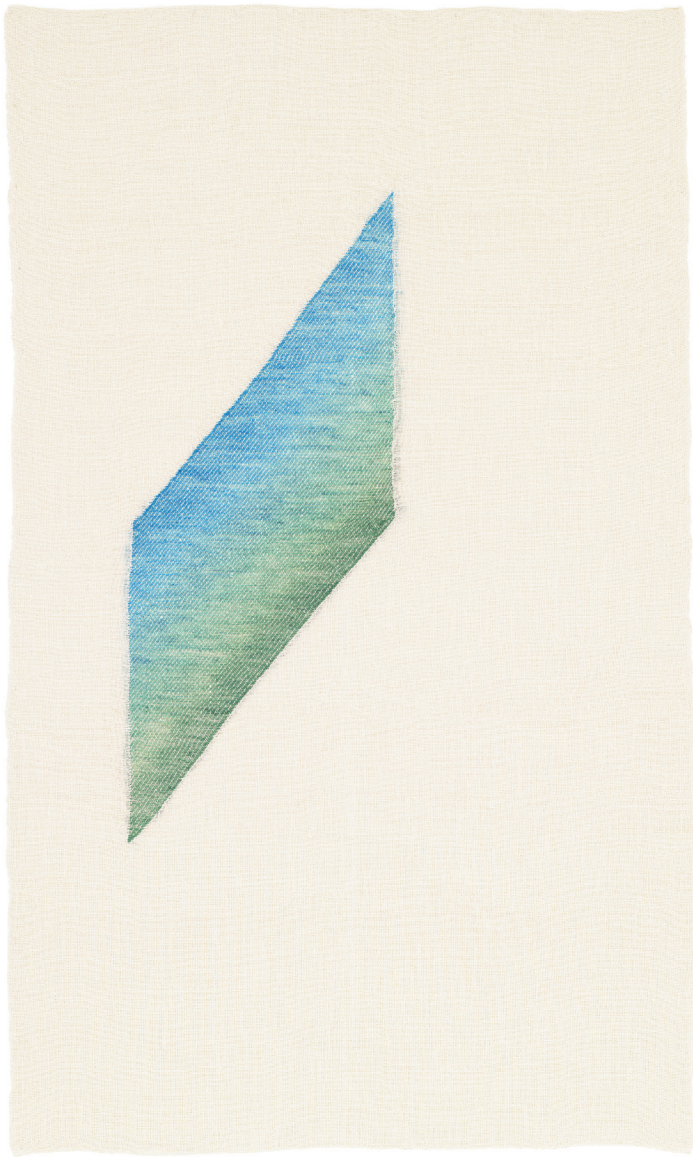
Twill Series
(Ultra Violet/Rose Red), 2008
Hand-dyed and hand-woven linen
23 1/2 x 14 in.







Twill Series
(Light Orange/Scarlet) [detail left], 2008
Hand-dyed and hand-woven linen
14 x 23 1/2 in.



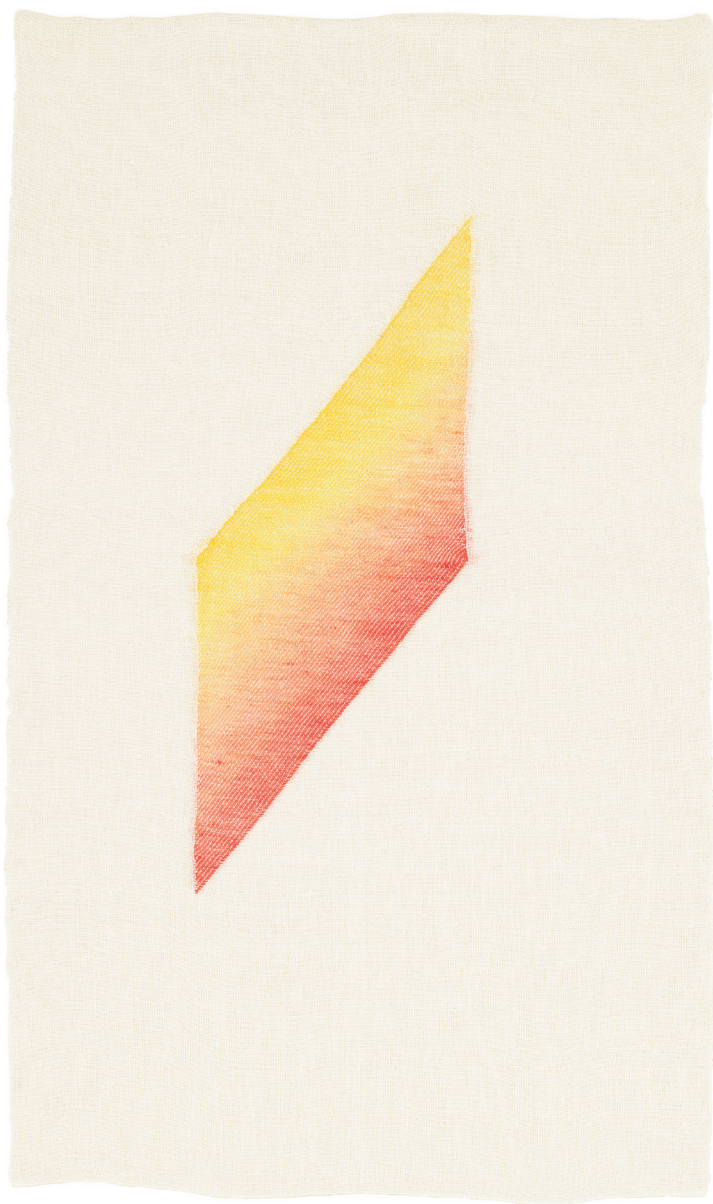
Twill Series
(Forest Green/Electric Blue), 2008
Hand-dyed and hand-woven linen
23 1/2 x 14 in.



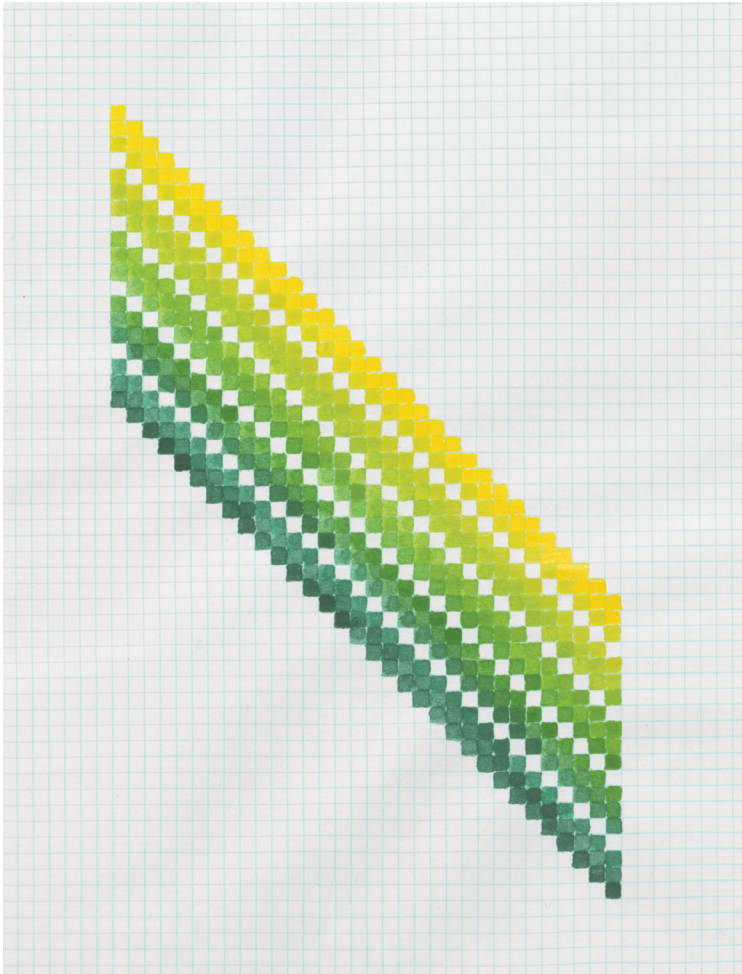
Study for Twill Series
(Forest Green/Electric Blue), 2008
Watercolor on graph paper
10 x 6 in.



Study for Twill Series
(Tangerine/Bright Yellow), 2008
Watercolor on graph paper
10 x 6 in.

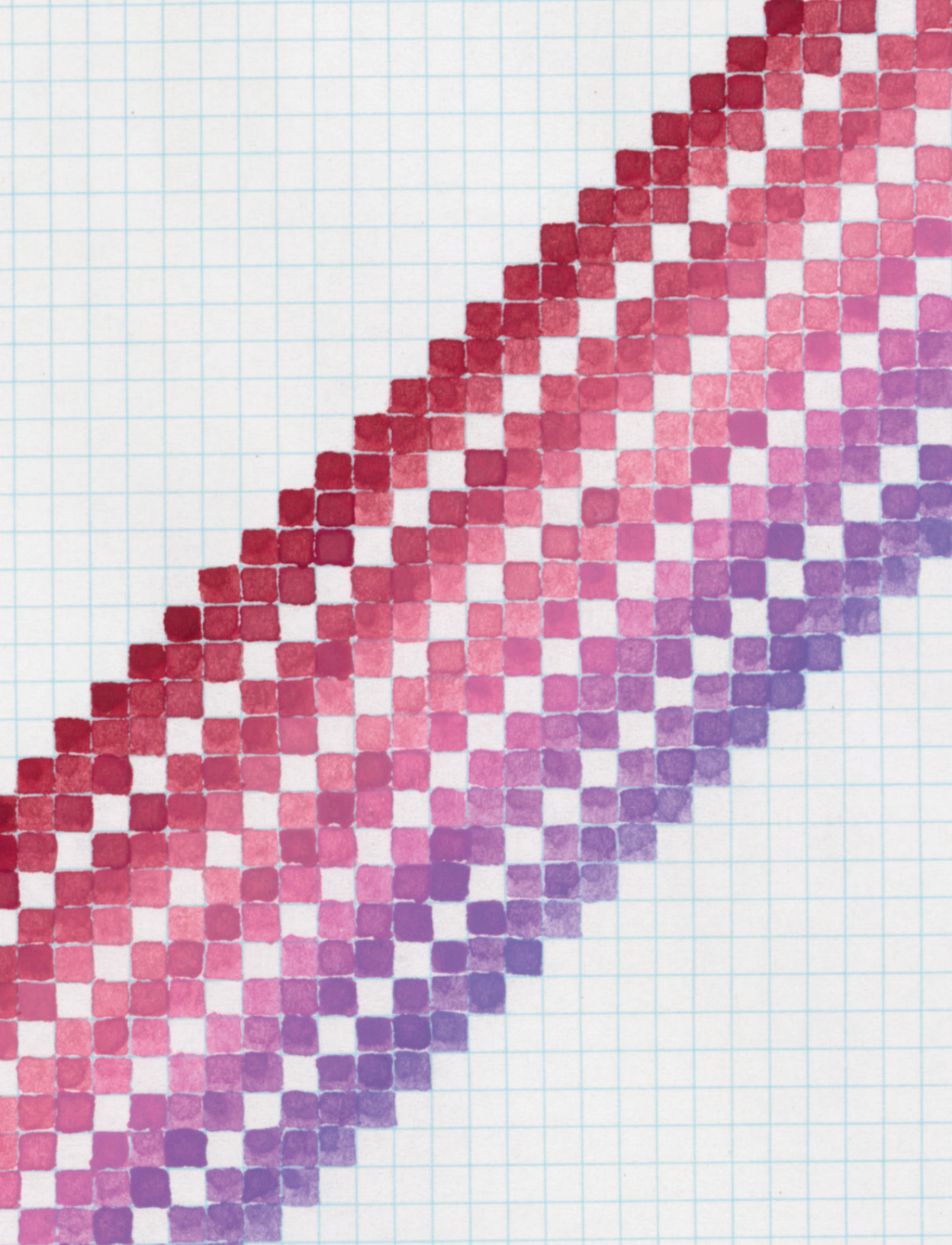


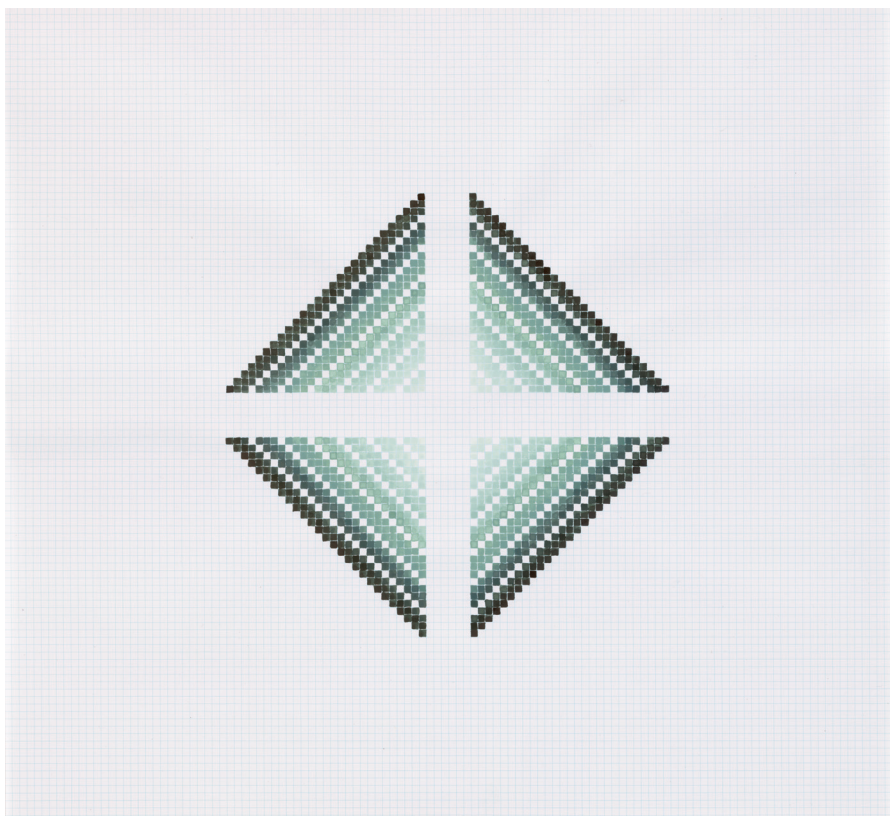
Twill Series
(Tangerine/Bright Yellow), 2008
Hand-dyed and hand-woven linen
23 1/2 x 14 in.

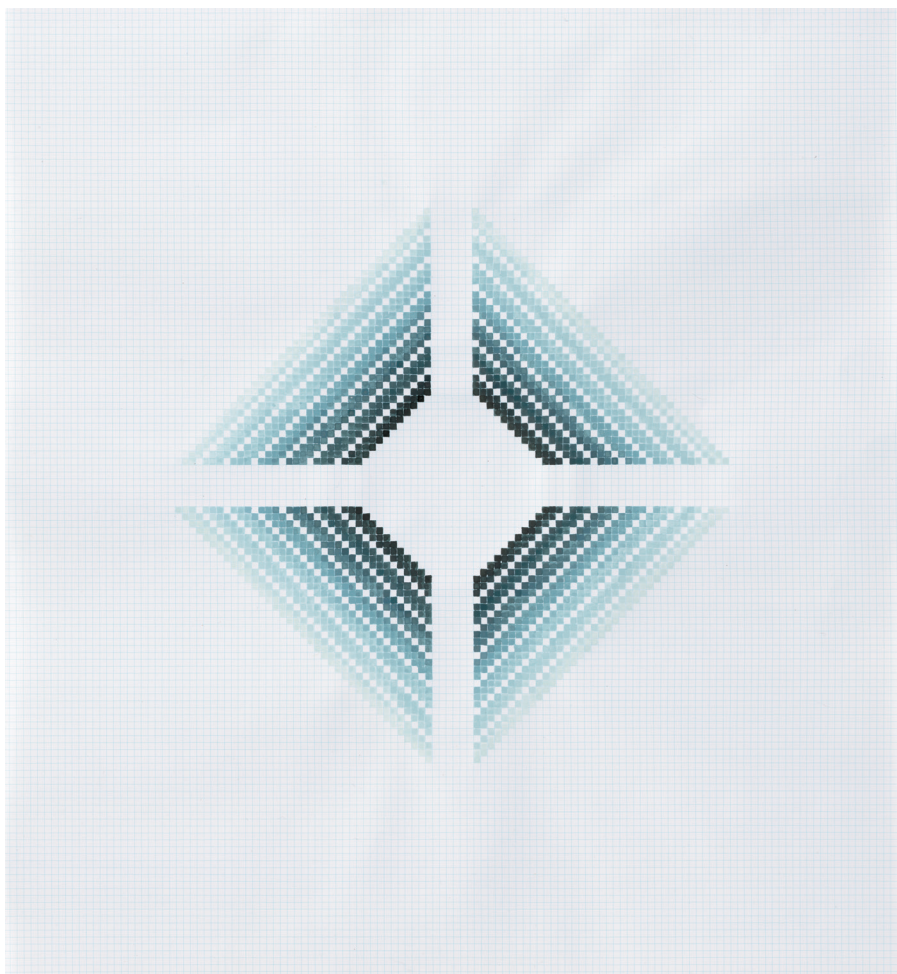


Study for Twill Series
(Kelly Green/Clear Yellow) [detail], 2008
Watercolor on graph paper
6 x 10 in.

Study for Twill Series
(Ultra Violet/Rose Red) [detail], 2008
Watercolor on graph paper
10 x 6 in.







Study for Twill Series (Black), 2009

Watercolor on graph paper

11 x 12 in.

Study for Twill Series (Better Black), 2009

Watercolor on graph paper

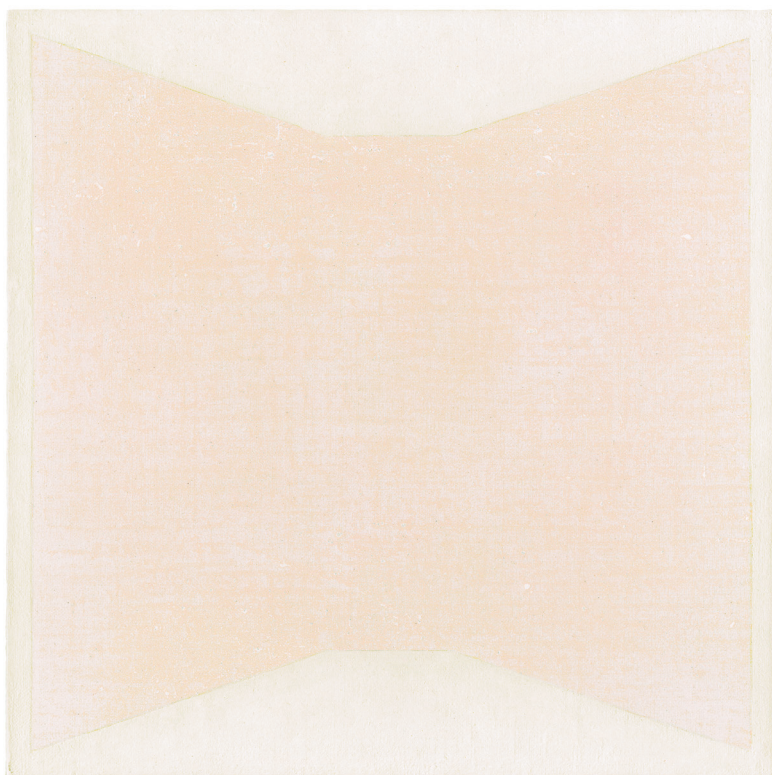
14 x 13 in.

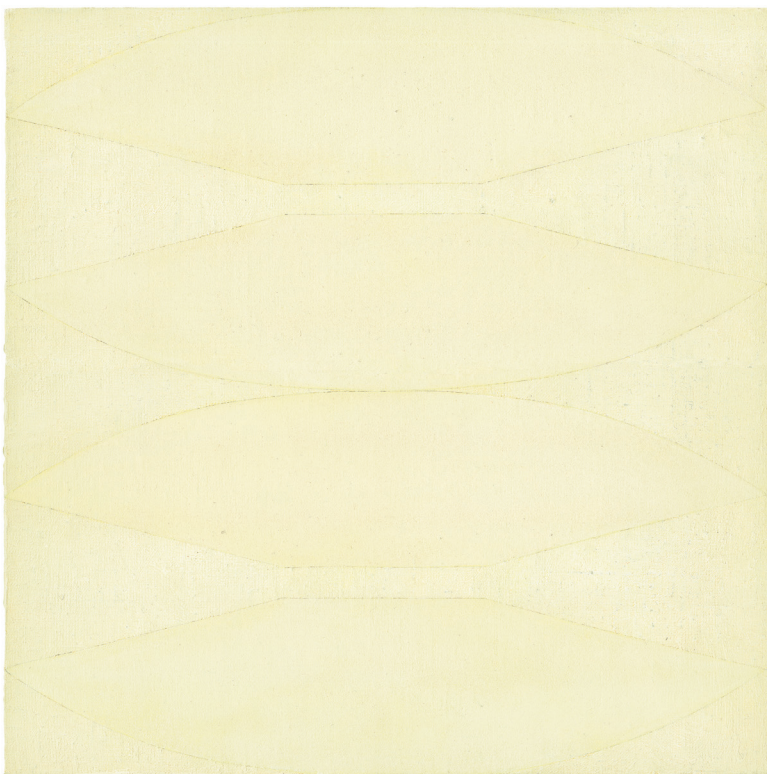
L Y N N E W O O D S T U R N E R



Untitled (No. 9062), 2007
Oil on linen over panel
12 x 12 in.

Untitled (No. 9010), 2008
Oil on linen over panel
12 x 12 in.





Untitled (No. 9061), 2010

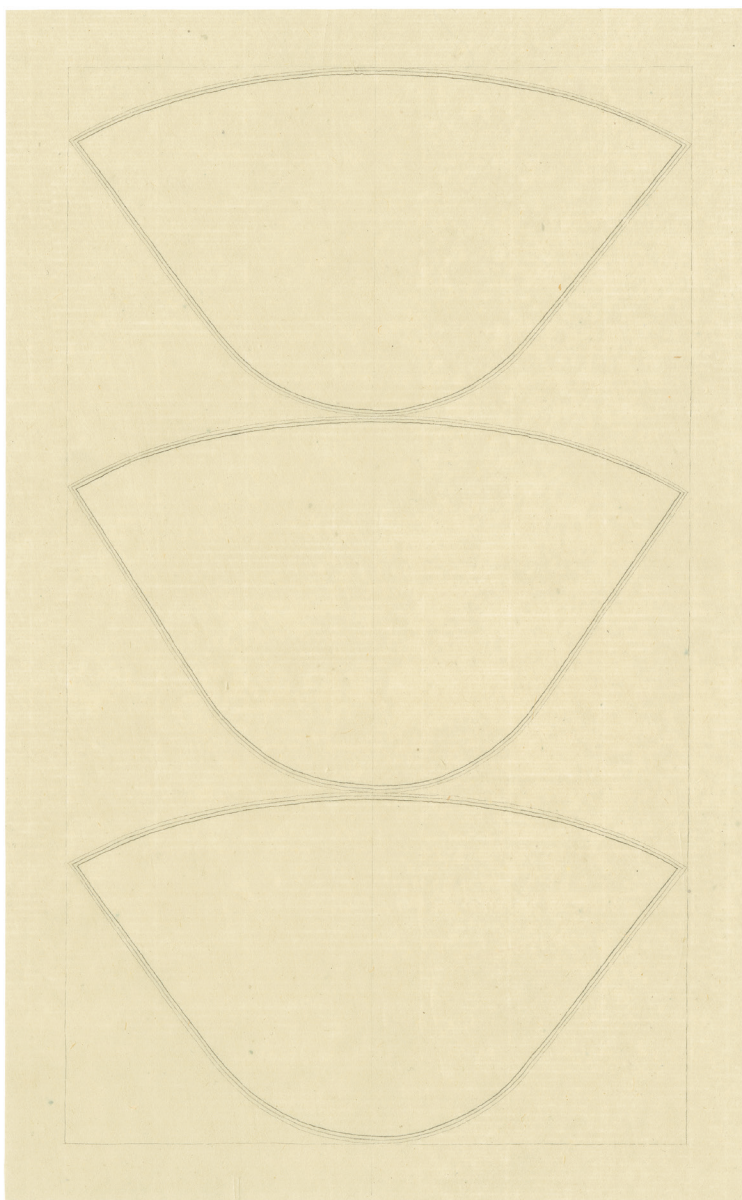
Oil on linen over panel

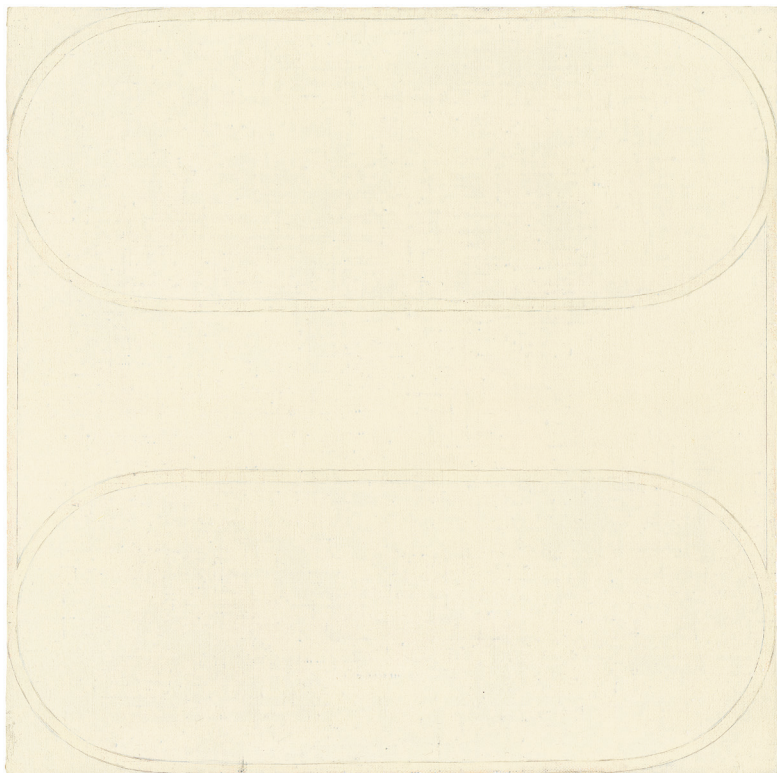
14 x 14 in.

Untitled (No. 776), 2008

Graphite pencil on Chinese laid paper

10 1/2 x 6 1/2 in.





Untitled (No. 9028), 2009

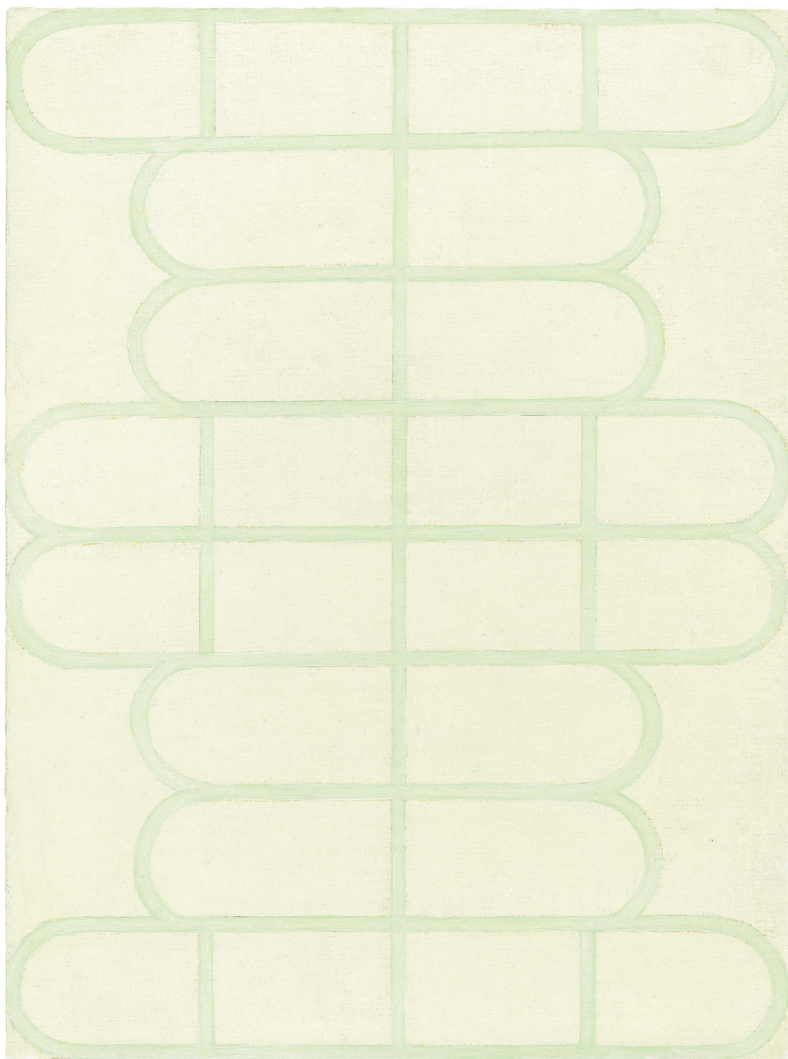
Oil on linen over panel

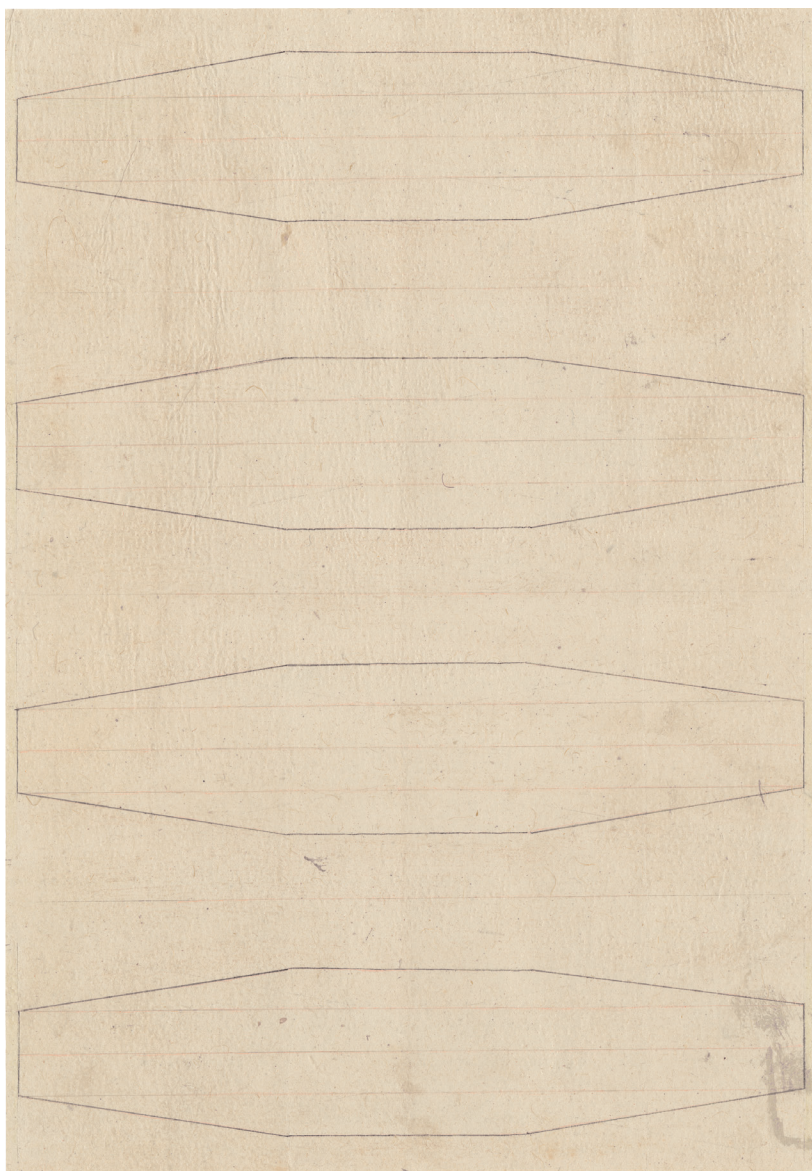
14 x 14 in.

Untitled (No. 9046), 2009

Oil on linen over panel

12 x 9 in.

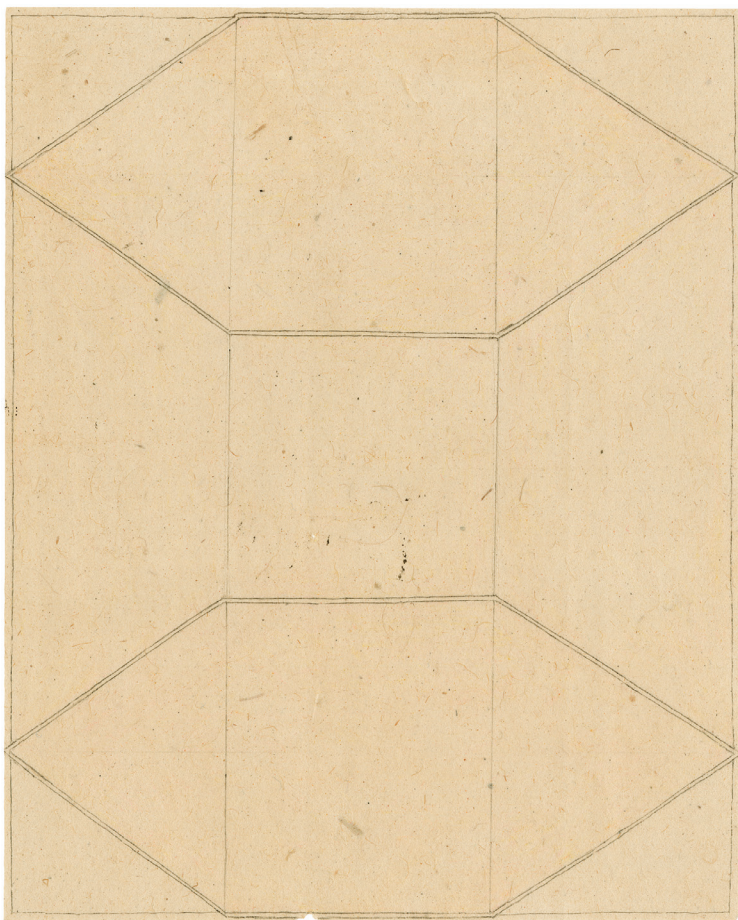






Untitled (No. 927), 2010
Graphite pencil and colored pencil
on old Indian paper
8 1/4 x 5 3/4 in.

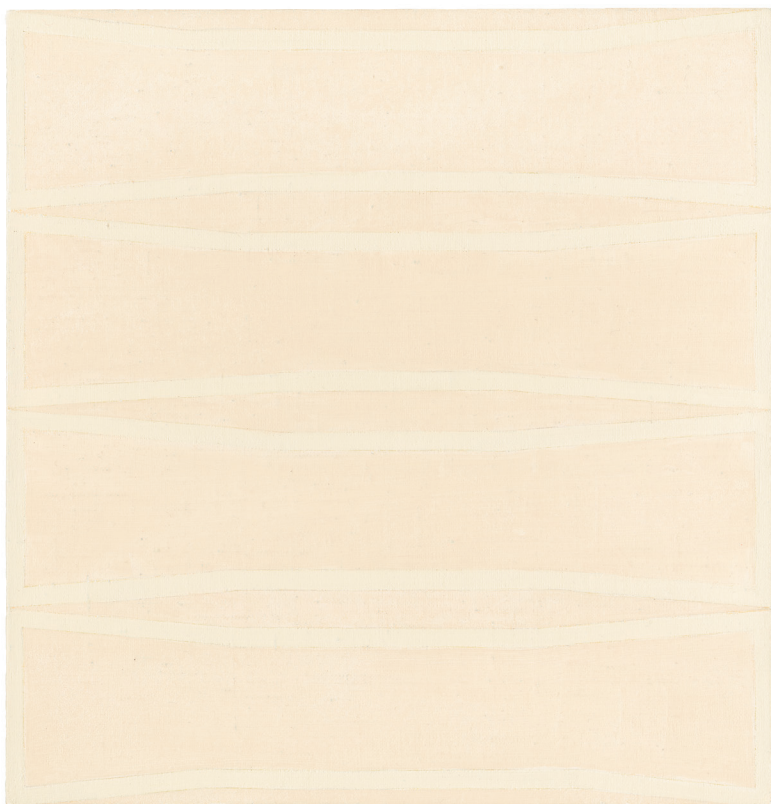
Untitled (No. 904), 2009
Graphite pencil and colored pencil
on old Indian paper
6 x 3 1/4 in.



Untitled (No. 813), 2009
Graphite pencil on old Indian paper
5 3/4 x 4 5/8 in.

Untitled (No. 938), 2010
Graphite pencil and colored pencil
on old Indian paper
8 x 6 1/2 in.





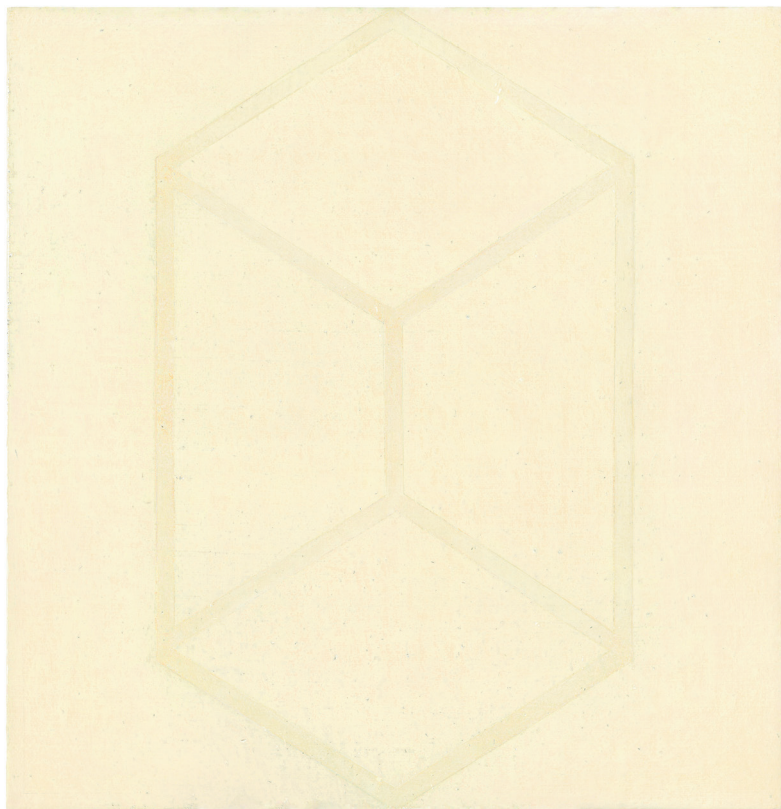
Untitled (No. 9038), 2009

Oil on linen over panel
12 x 12 in.

Untitled (No. 9011), 2008

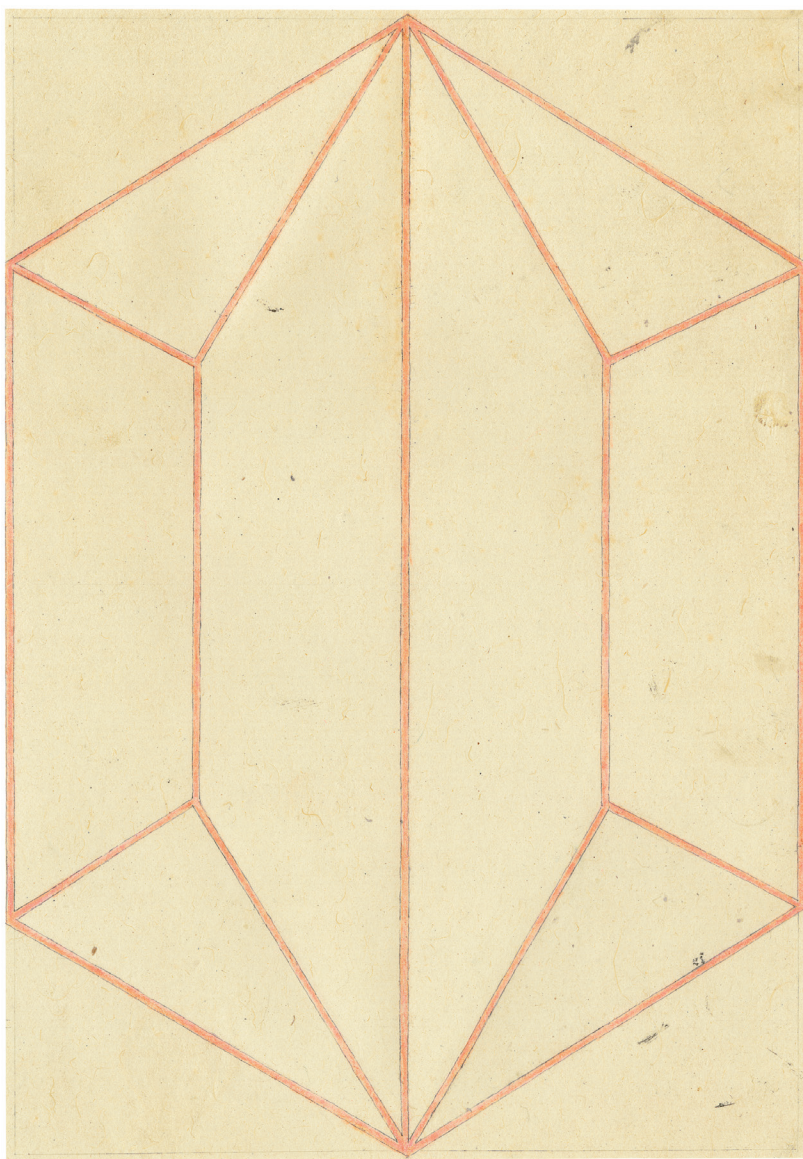
Oil on linen over panel
12 x 12 in.





Untitled (No. 9013), 2008
Oil on linen over panel
12 x 12 in.

Untitled (No. 940), 2010
Graphite pencil and colored pencil
on old Indian paper
8 x 5 3/4 in.



E S S A Y S

STEPHANIE SNYDER

THE RICHLY LAYERED, albescent grounds of Léonie Guyer's most recent paintings are inspired, in part, by the creamy surfaces of ancient Greek white-ground vessels, by the work of painters such as Piet Mondrian (1872–1944) and Giorgio Morandi (1890–1964), and by natural materials such as milk, bone, and chalk. Guyer mixes her paints by hand from raw pigments, often restricting her palette to the “ancient” primary colors (iron oxides, yellow ochres, and mineral-based blues), in addition to various blacks and whites. This alchemical chromaticism allows Guyer to experience the physical and energetic properties of each material as directly and as sensitively as possible. Hand-mixing paint is an intimate, time-consuming, and repetitive activity, resulting in modest batches that settle and cohere in accordance with the subtle variations of each particular admixture of pigment, linseed oil, and mineral spirit. No two batches are the same, recalling the ancient philosopher Heraclitus of Ephesus's observation that “You cannot step twice into the same river.” At the core of Guyer's paintings and drawings is an awareness and embrace of life as a vulnerable and temporary moment within a measureless, universal continuum.

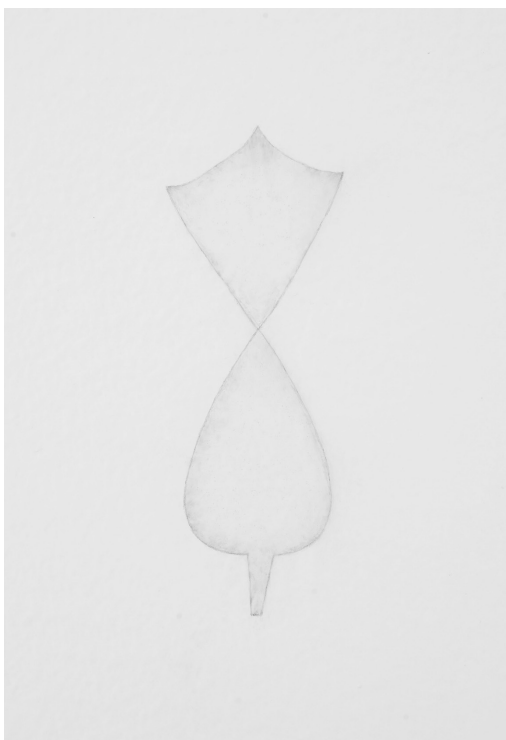
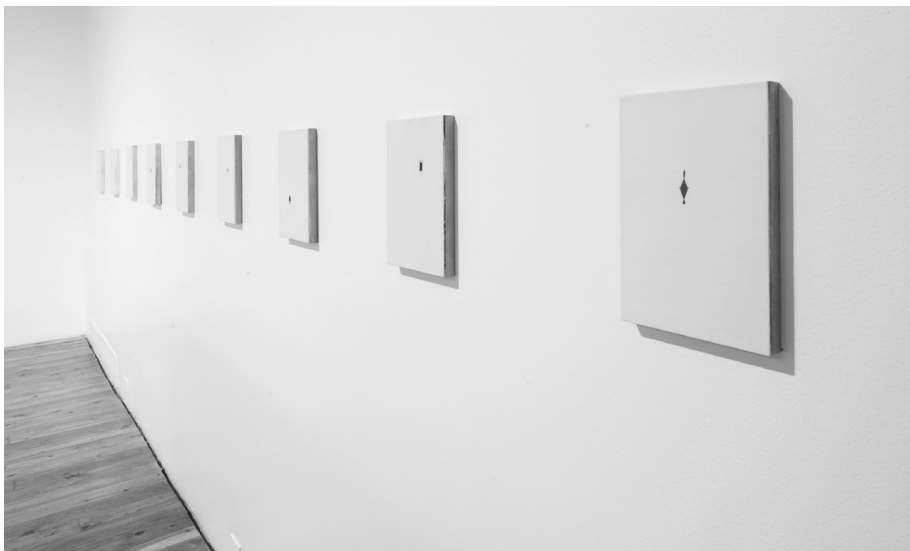
When one gazes at the paintings from an oblique angle, soft, energized topographies bleed into focus. Smooth and dappled, they bear witness to the body of the artist, having grown into being like other living membranes such as human skin and fallen snow. Guyer creates the space and conditions for materials to ease into coexistence, while releasing control over any ultimate outcome, focusing her intention on the emergence of the materials into meaning with an iconic energy that is resonantly clear but also deeply idiosyncratic. The ethos of the work dwells in the possibility and reciprocity of intimacy. Pursuing this encounter, the work solicits – not demands – intimacy in return, and a quieting of the viewer's mind toward the integrity of the present moment. The possibility of spiritual recognition is catalyzed in this possibility, *qua* presence, continually emptying and renewing itself: in the flow of the viewer's attention and its divergence, in the flow of the painting's life as an extension of the artist's body and mind, and in the flow of the ancient matter – ground and suspended – that forms the work. The velocity of this flow swells and shifts around the vivid, simple, and unusual shapes that are situated within each painting's expansive environment.

Guyer develops the abstracted shapes that become the dynamic foci of the paintings in relationship to an archive of her own drawings, but ultimately, each unique form reaches fruition according to its own nature, as the painting evolves over many months. The shapes are inspired, in part, by objects and artifacts such as Cycladic figures (6500 to 1650 BCE) and antique Turkish prayer rugs (thirteenth to fifteenth centuries). Each one harnesses a unique simplicity and energy within the

expansive whiteness of the painting, and each one possesses a pulsing interiority. As forms, they are not *filled* but *forming* – their intensity, not without humor and lyricism, can feel at times like a flash of insight or an oasis of repose – another dimension of the flow of *being and becoming* at the heart of Guyer's work.

For the past several years, Guyer has drawn on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century papers, mostly of French and Indian origin, that possess rich and eccentric traces of their histories. These traces are integral to Guyer's interest in the paper, and to her personal drawing methodology, which is based on her responsiveness to the nature of individual materials and their unique properties. Working on these richly storied sheets, Guyer explores the nature of visibility and invisibility, soliciting close, focused attention from the viewer. At times it is nearly impossible to discern what is *drawn* and what is *already present* within the delicate sheets, as the space of the page is transformed into an engrossing field of heightened awareness. Guyer often uses graphite over colored pencil, to create vibrating lines that contain, but do not fill, the shapes that they demarcate. Periodically, Guyer paints on paper using gouache. The gouache is carefully brushed and layered to create the same intimate, intensified forms.

Over the past twenty years, Guyer has created a group of temporary and permanent installations that have allowed her to bring the same artistic philosophy and practice into architectural space. In 2006, she was an artist in residence at the historic 1829 Mount Lebanon Shaker Village in New Lebanon, New York. Living and working among the buildings and artifacts of one of America's most significant religious and artistic movements, Guyer developed a body of painted shapes on the crumbling walls of the old Brethren's Workshop. For ABSTRACT, Guyer created a delicate wall painting near her work in the gallery. Slightly hidden from view, it brought her presence into direct contact with the viewer's body, bringing the space of the Cooley Gallery into the continuum of her other site-responsive installations. In all aspects of Guyer's work, the act of making is a synchronous exploration of past and present, catalyzing the viewer's awareness of time, space, and presence.



ABOVE: Installation view: Léonie Guyer, paintings
LEFT: Léonie Guyer, *Untitled*, 2010, Graphite pencil and oil on gallery wall, 4 1/4 x 1 1/2 in.

RUTH LASKEY WAS a committed painter when she began to investigate weaving – drawn to textiles, in part, because of their abstract properties, but also, and more importantly, because of their dualistic nature as both surfaces and objects. Laskey studied traditional foot-pedal weaving at the California College of the Arts, in between receiving her undergraduate and graduate degrees in painting, and subsequently incorporated woven elements within her MFA thesis, *Warm Geometries*. Weaving has allowed Laskey to realize works of art that articulate the structure and logic of their own making with a resounding clarity of purpose. Laskey's weavings integrate substance, structure, and color into a totalizing whole.

The body of weavings exhibited in ABSTRACT contain crisp, diagonal forms that appear to traverse or “slice” the works’ bone-colored grounds. Laskey describes these spectral bands as objectified “brush strokes” or “marks.” At first glance, the shapes appear clean and angular, but closer examination reveals countless eccentricities and aberrations, particularly at the edges of the shapes, where Laskey has integrated the dyed linen thread into the weft. Laskey’s favored weaving material is unbleached linen, which she uses for the general membrane of the overall textile (in raw form), and for the brightly colored geometric forms (in dyed form). Typically,

Laskey's color palette references natural phenomena such as visible light, minerals, and plant and animal life. Laskey creates the shaded color gradations within each shape by using thread that she has dyed through a multi-stage dipping process. She also adjusts the position of the thread after she guides it into the weft in order to control the gradation of the color throughout the form. Each geometric shape is created through the integration of a single length of variegated thread in the steady forward motion of the loom.

Laskey created this series using a twill weave. In twill, the weft (horizontal) thread passes over one or more warp (vertical) threads, and then under two or more warp threads, with an offset between rows, resulting in a diagonal, stepped pattern. This alternating rhythm is reflected in the watercolor studies exhibited with the weavings. The works are woven upside down and at a ninety-degree angle in relationship to their final state. Shifting the orientation of the weavings balances the shapes within the work *en pointe*. When framing the work, Laskey tips these diagonals in different directions. Laskey explores the work's expressivity as she installs groups of weavings – sometimes forms point in the same direction, at other times the diagonals flip back and forth with a vibrant, kinetic energy.

Like Agnes Martin's drawn graphite grids, Laskey's weavings become a register of the artist's body, in particular at the constraining margins of the geometric forms. In Laskey's case, however, the generation of meaning occurs both through the action of the loom (as an act of construction), and concurrently through the direct insertion of the colored thread into the weft (more akin to an act of drawing). These two interpolated forms of repetition create a deeply satisfying sense of friction between the work's haptic and optic aspects. As described by art historian Bracha Eitinger, "Rather than constraining difference, repetition allows for *maximum* difference, exacerbating, even, the multiplication of variables."¹ The work's innumerable idiosyncrasies and expressive turns chronicle the integration of multiple forms of making, and bear witness to the relationship between the artist and the loom – the bodily

¹ Bracha Eitinger, "The Art-and-Healing Oeuvre," in *3 x Abstraction: New Methods of Drawing by Hilma af Klint, Emma Kunz, and Agnes Martin*, Catherine de Zegher and Hendel Teicher, eds. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

extension without which the work would be impossible. Ruth Laskey's weavings buzz with the incantatory, poetic nature of this ancient relationship.

Laskey has also continued to paint, creating watercolor studies for each weaving that are critical precedents to the execution of each work. Ruth Laskey acknowledges a holistic relationship between these watercolor studies and the weavings that ultimately result from their completion. As Laskey describes it, if a visual idea is resilient enough to come to fruition as a finished study, then it definitely makes its way to the loom. In the artist's words, "a study is a commitment to an image." For Laskey, what is most important is the overall concinnity of the work: its purposeful reinforcement as a set of ideas manifested through highly considered material interactions.

Executed on gridded graph paper, the studies might appear deceptively sketch-like, but close inspection reveals that they are carefully planned and realized watercolor paintings – each cell of the paintings possesses a jewel-like radiance. Depending upon the viewer's vantage point, puckers radiate from the forms – an index of the unseen natural forces that Laskey welcomes into the work. Laskey has been greatly inspired by the work and artistic philosophy of Agnes Martin, who described art making as a process of mindfulness, particularly in relationship to the solitary focus of the artist as she connects, through mark making, with universal consciousness. Ruth Laskey's weavings and watercolor paintings share a deep affinity with Martin's resolutely autonomous and personal investigations into the nature of making, and the spiritual dimensions of existence as experienced through the measured practice of the individual artist.



Installation view: Ruth Laskey, weavings

LYNNE WOODS TURNER's rigorously subtle oil paintings and works on paper emerge, slowly, through the artist's passionate exploration of geometry, mathematics, and natural phenomena – specifically in relationship to the artist's visceral experience of the work as it evolves. A methodical investigator, Turner develops visual ideas in relationship to the most essential, expressive possibilities of mark making, including: directionality, tactility, vibration, and visibility. Turner pushes form, line, and color to thresholds of invisibility, coalescing a strange and luminous presence within and around the work. This palpable essence becomes a force of visual dispersal and expansion. It is composed of immeasurable amounts of sensitized information gathered and distilled within the work. Turner has clearly stated that for her, abstraction is not a reductive activity, but rather, a process of refinement comprised of the meticulous accumulation of finely tuned material and visual events.

“The artist’s psyche moves and external gestures and acts bind the boundless, measure the measureless, and make visible the invisible in “homeopathic” measures; they sample the cosmic light like a crystal, they access the void by joining them and by passing through them and by being traversed by them, body and mind, matter and function.”¹

Turner lived in Pakistan as a child, traveling widely through India and Asia. Perhaps these early experiences account, in part, for her great appreciation and mastery of atmospheric color and abstract form. Turner’s paintings are typically composed of soft, spectral hues, and she often applies raw pigment and oil paint to the paintings with a stippling brush in order to distance the presence of her body from the surface of the work. Removing the immediately recognizable registration of her hand imbues the work with an impression of spatial drift. At the same time, Turner carefully inserts subtle (sometimes barely visible) boundaries into the work that capture and re-circulate the work’s expanding energies. In several of the paintings and drawings in the exhibition, for instance, delicate, horizontal lines are collected into groupings that are then bisected (at their outer edges) by slanted lines, forming elongated pod-like convexities. These shapes, in turn, pressurize the space around them: positive and negative forms pulse against one another, compressing and decompressing like lungs.

Like fellow artist Léonie Guyer, Lynne Woods Turner collects old and new drawing papers from around the world, choosing sheets that possess unique surfaces, colors, and eccentric properties. Within the exhibition, several such papers are represented, hung together in an enclosed space, situated in dialogue with one another across the time and location of their origin. Here, a small sheet of Indian paper becomes an infinitely expanding world, in part, because Turner often draws on both sides of her semi-transparent papers. Activating the recto and verso of the page creates a perceptual doubling that reflects the work’s mystical influences and ritual aspects. The corresponding forms straddle the membrane of the paper, vibrating like live wires. In Turner’s work, “Repetition

¹ Bracha Eittinger, “The Art-and-Healing Oeuvre,” in *3 x Abstraction: New Methods of Drawing by Hilma af Klint, Emma Kunz, and Agnes Martin*, Catherine de Zegher and Hendel Teicher, eds. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).



Installation view: Lynne Woods Turner, paintings and drawings

is understood as a means not of deadening but of heightening experience, just as infinity is not opposed to the material trace so much as rescued through it.”²

Throughout Turner’s work the viewer witnesses the evolution of particular forms through the careful adjustment of their proportions: bow shapes, rounded “bowls,” volumetric polygons and curious ovoid shapes reveal their affinities with one another as they are transferred among works. Turner carefully morphs these forms to discover new possibilities of visual experience: graphite lines that are quietly subdued or barely visible in one iteration of a form, may become animated with red pencil in another as though they have been infused with blood. Turner continually explores the ways in which proportion is affected by matter, something that she has studied for decades in the work of artists such as Myron Stout (1908–1987) and Piero della Francesca (1415–1492). In the words of the artist, forms are “found, and not illustrated.” To find, is to divine. Lynne Woods Turner asks the viewer to *feel* the presence of sight.

² Bracha Eitinger, “The Art-and-Healing Oeuvre,” in *3 x Abstraction: New Methods of Drawing by Hilma af Klint, Emma Kunz, and Agnes Martin*, Catherine de Zegher and Hendel Teicher, eds. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

Léonie Guyer

EDUCATION

- 1989 MFA, San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA
- 1985 BFA, San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA

SELECTED ONE-PERSON EXHIBITIONS

- 2006 *Gift*, The Shaker Museum and Library, New Lebanon, NY
- 2004 *Léonie Guyer*, Marjorie Wood Gallery, San Francisco, CA
- 2000 *Léonie Guyer: Paintings*, Patricia Sweetow Gallery, San Francisco, CA
- 1997 *Léonie Guyer*, Patricia Sweetow Gallery, San Francisco, CA
- 1992 *Léonie Guyer*, Untitled Gallery, San Francisco, CA
- 1990 *Materia Prima*, 30 Rose Gallery, San Francisco, CA

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2010 *Triple Base Gallery*, San Francisco, CA
- 2009 *50 very small works on paper*, Gallery Joe, Philadelphia, PA
Out of the Flat Files II, Triple Base Gallery, San Francisco, CA
- 2008 *Form +*, Meridian Gallery, San Francisco, CA
Reimagining the Distaff Toolkit, Bennington Museum, Bennington, VT
- 2005 *Michael Damm, Léonie Guyer, Kyle Knobel*, Remote Satellite, Oakland, CA
Bay Area Bazaar, Pulliam Deffenbaugh Gallery, Portland, OR
Paint on Metal, Tucson Museum of Art, Tucson, AZ
- 2004 *Traces*, Rosenwald-Wolf Gallery, University of the Arts, Philadelphia, PA
small works, Gallery Joe, Philadelphia, PA
Three Week Show, Gallery Joe, Philadelphia PA
- 2003 *New Place-Oriented Works*, 21 Grand, Oakland, CA
- 2002 *brilliant pebbles: Sarah Cain, Michael Damm, Léonie Guyer*, Plus KUNST, Düsseldorf, Germany
Sight Unseen, Walter and McBean Galleries, San Francisco, CA
- 2001 *Taking Stock*, Gallery Joe, Philadelphia, PA
ExtraOrdinary, Walter and McBean Galleries, San Francisco, CA
- 2000 *Introducing: Drawings by Four Artists*, Gallery Joe, Philadelphia, PA
Flat Files, Pierogi 2000, Brooklyn, NY
- 1998 *perFORMative ACTS*, Walter and McBean Galleries, San Francisco, CA
Work in Progress, Second Space Gallery, San Francisco, CA
- 1996 *Abstraction Absolved: 10 Bay Area Painters*, Mills College Art Museum, Oakland, CA
Joyce Burstein, Léonie Guyer, Laurie Reid, Kathryn VanDyke, Push Artspace, San Francisco, CA
- 1995 *Big Jesus Trash Can*, Victoria Room, San Francisco, CA
Black, White, and Grey Matter, Robert Berman Gallery, Santa Monica, CA
Window, Artopia Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

- 1994 *The 6 x 9 Show*, Victoria Room, San Francisco, CA
- 1993 *The Return of the Exquisite Corpse*, The Drawing Center, New York, NY
Mondo Lot—Sine Qua Non (The Essential Thing), Robert Berman Gallery,
 Santa Monica, CA
- 1992 *Still Lives*, Zen Center Hospice, San Francisco, CA
- 1991 *Fresh Squeezed*, Budapest Galeria, Budapest, Hungary
Evidence of Life, ATLA, Los Angeles, CA
Lingua Franca, Falkirk Cultural Center, San Rafael, CA
- 1990 *Chain Reaction VI*, San Francisco Art Commission Gallery, San Francisco, CA
A.M.D.G. Exhibition, Terrain Gallery, San Francisco, CA
Good Friday the Thirteenth: A Flower Show, Emmanuel Radnitzky Gallery,
 San Francisco, CA

PERMANENT INSTALLATIONS/RESIDENCIES

- 2010 The Lumber Room, Portland OR
- 2006 The Shaker Museum and Library, New Lebanon, NY

COLLECTIONS

- Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT
- Shaker Museum and Library, New Lebanon, NY
- Reed College, Portland, OR
- San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA

LITERARY COLLABORATIONS

- Berkson, Bill (poetry) and Léonie Guyer (artwork). *Not an Exit*. Fairfax, CA:
 Jungle Garden Press, 2010.
- Jamme, Franck André (poetry) and Léonie Guyer (artwork). *Mantra Box*. Paris:
 Festina Lente, 2009.

CURRICULA VITAE

Ruth Laskey

EDUCATION

- 2005 MFA, California College of the Arts, San Francisco, CA
- 1999 BFA, California College of the Arts, San Francisco, CA
- 1997 BA, Art History, University of California, Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz, CA

SELECTED ONE-PERSON EXHIBITIONS

- 2010 *Ruth Laskey, Ratio 3*, San Francisco, CA
- 2009 *Six Weavings*, Galerie Cinzia Friedlaender, Berlin, Germany
- 2008 *Ruth Laskey, Song Song*, Vienna, Austria
7 Weavings, Ratio 3, San Francisco, CA
- 2004 *Disarticulate*, Build Gallery, San Francisco, CA

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2010 *The Craft*, Lehman College Art Gallery, New York, NY
Afterglow: New Light & Space Art from the West Coast, Weigand Gallery, Notre Dame de Namur University, Belmont, CA
SOLACE, Austrian Cultural Forum, New York, NY
- 2009 *Liberation Upon Contact*, Ratio 3, San Francisco, CA
- 2008 *Dogtooth & Tessellate*, The Approach, London, England
here's why patterns, Misako & Rosen, Tokyo, Japan
- 2007 *Artists of Invention: A Century of CCA*, Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, CA
Alpha, Ratio 3, San Francisco, CA
Four Generations of Women at CCA, 871 Fine Arts, San Francisco, CA
- 2006 *Material World*, Alliance Francaise, San Francisco, CA
- 2005 *The Sleight of Hand, the Artist's Touch*, Linc Art, San Francisco, CA
Bay Area Bazaar, Pulliam Deffenbaugh Gallery, Portland, OR
New American Paintings: MFA Annual, Open Studios Press, Wellesley, MA
- 2004 *Cadogan Fellowships in the Fine Arts*, San Francisco Arts Commission Gallery, San Francisco, CA
- 2003 *Taqueria Cancun*, Allston Skirt Gallery, Boston, MA

COLLECTIONS

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

Lynne Woods Turner

EDUCATION

- 1977 MFA, University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA
- 1976 MA, University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA
- 1973 BFA, Stephens College, Columbia, MO

SELECTED ONE-PERSON EXHIBITIONS

- 2010 Greg Kucera Gallery, Seattle, WA
- 2007 Gallery Joe, Philadelphia, PA
- 2005 Devin Borden Hiram Butler Gallery, Houston, TX
- 2004 Greg Kucera Gallery, Seattle, WA
- 2003 Gallery Joe, Philadelphia, PA
Greg Kucera Gallery, Seattle, WA
- 2002 Michael Kohn Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 2000 Gallery Joe, Philadelphia, PA
- 1982 William Sawyer Gallery, San Francisco, CA

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2010 *Works on Paper*, Danese, New York, NY
Geometric Progressions: Eleven Painters, Ed Thorp Gallery, New York, NY
- 2009 *Formulation*, Gallery Joe, Philadelphia, PA
Of, On, or About: 50 Paper Works, Texas State University, San Marcos, TX
- 2008 *Walking the Line*, Kudleck van der Grinten Galerie, Cologne, Germany
Dimensions of Nature: New Acquisitions, 2006 – 2008, San Diego Museum of Art, San Diego, CA
Marks on Paper, University of Southern California Roski School of Fine Arts, Los Angeles, CA
- 2007 *Block Party II*, Daniel Weinberg Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 2005 *Erotic Drawing*, Diverse Works, Houston, TX
Erotic Drawing, The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, CT
Drawings and Works on Paper II: Selected Artists from the US, Patrick Heide Arts, London, England
- 2004 *Pink*, Devin Borden Hiram Butler Gallery, Houston, TX
- 2003 *Fine Lines*, Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum, Santa Barbara, CA
Way to Blue, Devin Borden Hiram Butler Gallery, Houston, TX
The Great Drawing Show 1550 to 2003, Michael Kohn Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Components, Elizabeth Leach Gallery, Portland, OR
- 1999 *The Great Drawing Show 1550 to 1999*, Kohn Turner Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Planes of Color, Greg Kucera Gallery, Seattle, WA
Zen Spirit, The Invisible Thread, Karen McCready Gallery, New York, NY

- 1996 *Selections Summer '96*, The Drawing Center, New York, NY
- 1985 *Blackfish Gallery Sixth Anniversary Exhibition*, San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art, San Jose, CA
- 1984 *Seattle City Portable Works Collection*, Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, WA
- 1980 *Introductions 80*, William Sawyer Gallery, San Francisco, CA
- 1978 *Small Works Exhibition*, Cheney Cowles Memorial Museum, Spokane, WA
- Celebration of Women Artists*, Northwest Artists Workshop, Portland, OR
- 1977 *Iowa Artists' Annual*, Des Moines Art Center, Des Moines, IA

COLLECTIONS

Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, MA
 Alliance Bernstein, Tokyo, Japan
 Arkansas Art Center, Little Rock, AR
 Bank of America, World Headquarters Galleries, San Francisco, CA
 Birmingham Museum of Art, Birmingham, AL
 Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA
 Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH
 Modern Master Tapestries, New York, NY
 Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY
 San Diego Museum of Art, San Diego, CA
 Seattle Arts Commission, Seattle, WA
 Hammer Museum, University of California, Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA
 University of Iowa Art Museum, University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA
 Weatherspoon Art Gallery, University of North Carolina at Greensboro,
 Greensboro, NC
 Yale University Art Gallery, Yale University, New Haven, CT

LÉONIE GUYER

Paintings

Untitled, no. 53, 2008

Oil and true gesso on wood panel
13 x 9 x 1 1/8 in.

Untitled, no. 61, 2009

Oil and true gesso on wood panel
13 x 9 x 1 1/8 in.

Untitled, no. 62, 2009

Oil and true gesso on wood panel
13 x 9 x 1 1/8 in.

Works on Paper

Untitled, FR-34, 2010

Colored pencil and graphite
pencil on old French paper
(18th–19th century)
10 3/4 x 10 in.

Untitled, FR-35, 2010

Colored pencil and graphite
pencil on old French paper
(18th–19th century)
6 1/8 x 6 in.

Untitled, FR-33, 2010

Colored pencil and graphite
pencil on old French paper
(18th–19th century)
4 1/8 x 4 1/4 in.

Untitled, FR-36, 2010

Gouache and graphite
pencil on old French paper
(18th–19th century)
6 7/8 x 4 1/4 in.

Untitled, FR-29, 2010

Colored pencil and graphite
pencil on old French paper
(18th–19th century)
13 1/4 x 9 1/4 in.

RUTH LASKEY

Works on Paper

Study for Twill Series

(Light Orange/Scarlet), 2008
Watercolor on graph paper
6 x 10 in.

Study for Twill Series

(Purple/Brilliant Blue), 2008
Watercolor on graph paper
6 x 10 in.

Study for Twill Series

(New Black), 2009
Watercolor on graph paper
11 x 12 in.

Study for Twill Series

(Jet Black), 2009
Watercolor on graph paper
14 x 13 in.

LYNNE WOODS TURNER

Works on Paper

Untitled (No. 781), 2008

Graphite pencil on old Indian paper
8 1/8 x 6 1/8 in.

Untitled (No. 833), 2009

Graphite pencil and colored pencil
on old Indian paper
8 3/16 x 6 5/16 in.

Untitled (No. 826), 2009

Graphite pencil and colored pencil
on old Indian paper
6 5/8 x 17 in.

Untitled (No. 825), 2009

Graphite pencil, colored pencil,
and ink on old Indian paper
6 3/8 x 17 1/8 in.

Untitled (No. 933), 2010

Graphite pencil on old Indian paper
8 1/16 x 5 5/8 in.

Untitled (No. 581), 2005

Colored pencil on parchment paper
7 3/8 x 6 3/8 in.

Untitled (No. 922), 2010

Graphite pencil and colored pencil
on old Indian paper
5 3/4 x 4 3/4 in.

Untitled (No. 771), 2008

Graphite pencil and colored pencil
on old Indian paper
8 3/8 x 5 7/8 in.

Untitled (No. 772), 2008

Graphite pencil and colored pencil
on old Indian paper
7 3/4 x 5 7/8 in.

Paintings

Untitled (No. 9014), 2009

Oil on linen over panel
12 x 12 in.

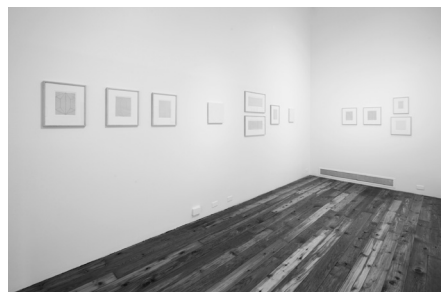
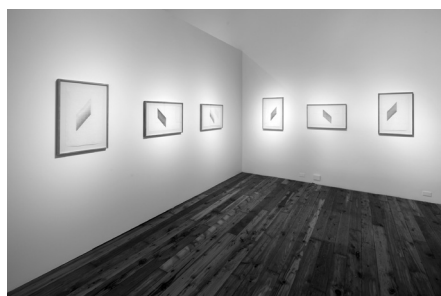
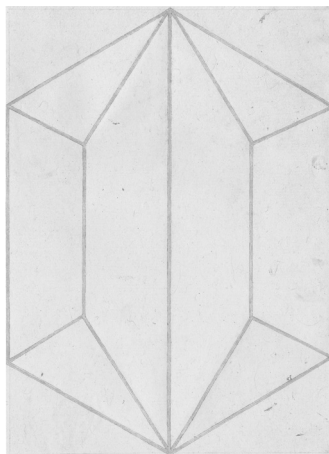
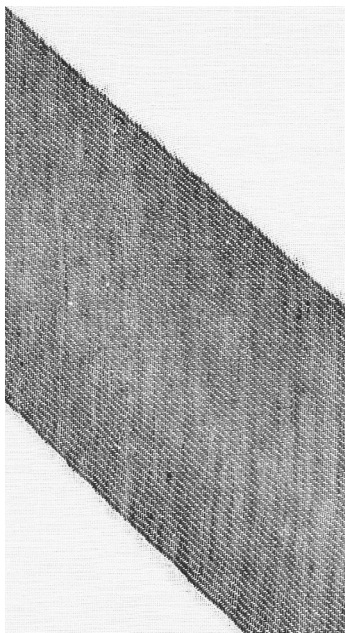
Untitled (No. 9006), 2008

Oil on linen over panel
12 x 12 in.

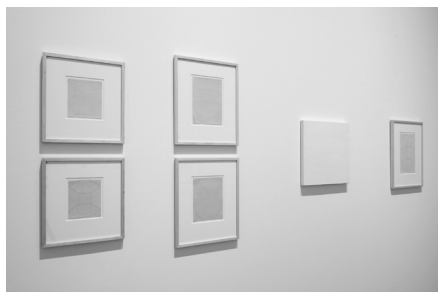
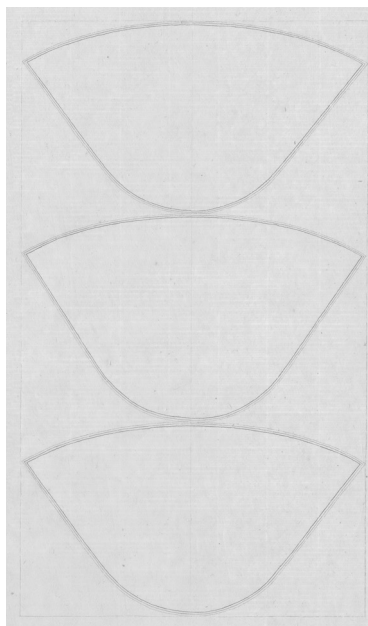
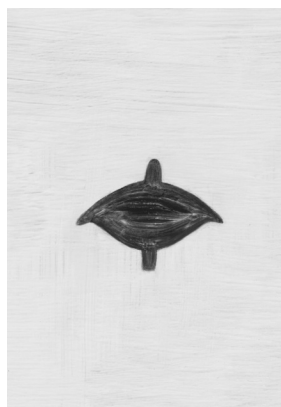
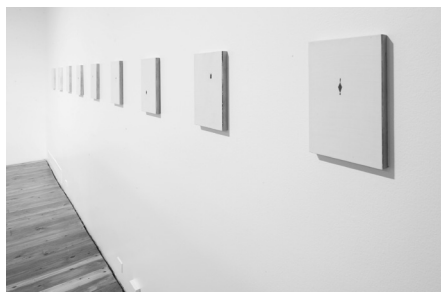
Facing page:
Heather Watkins
Study for ABSTRACT, 2010
Ink on paper
2 x 1 1/2 in.

4

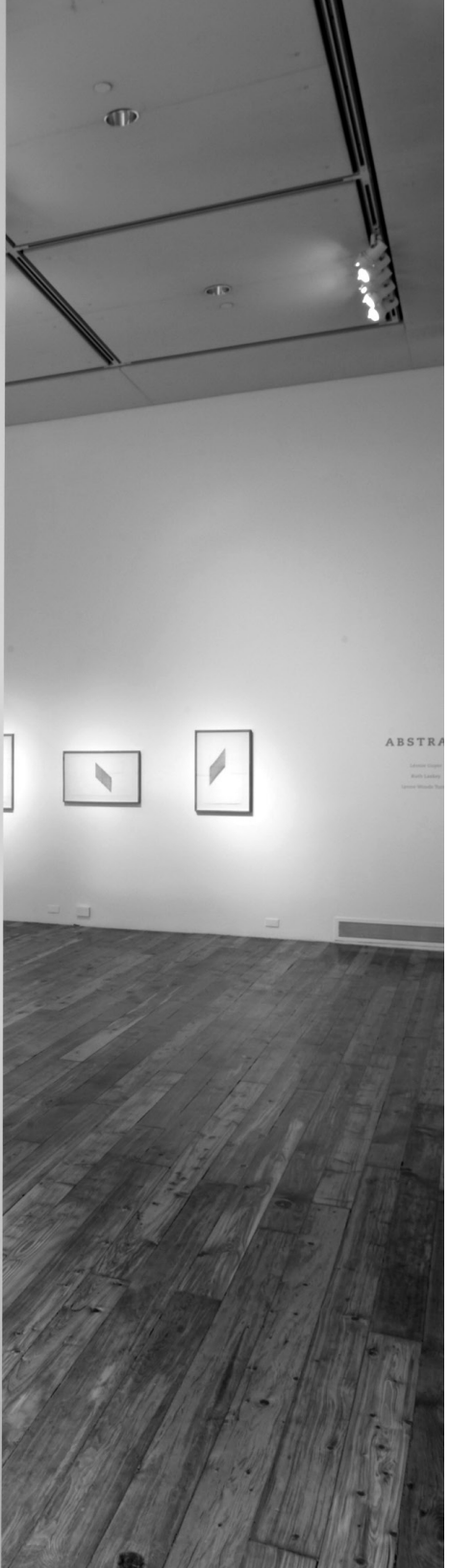
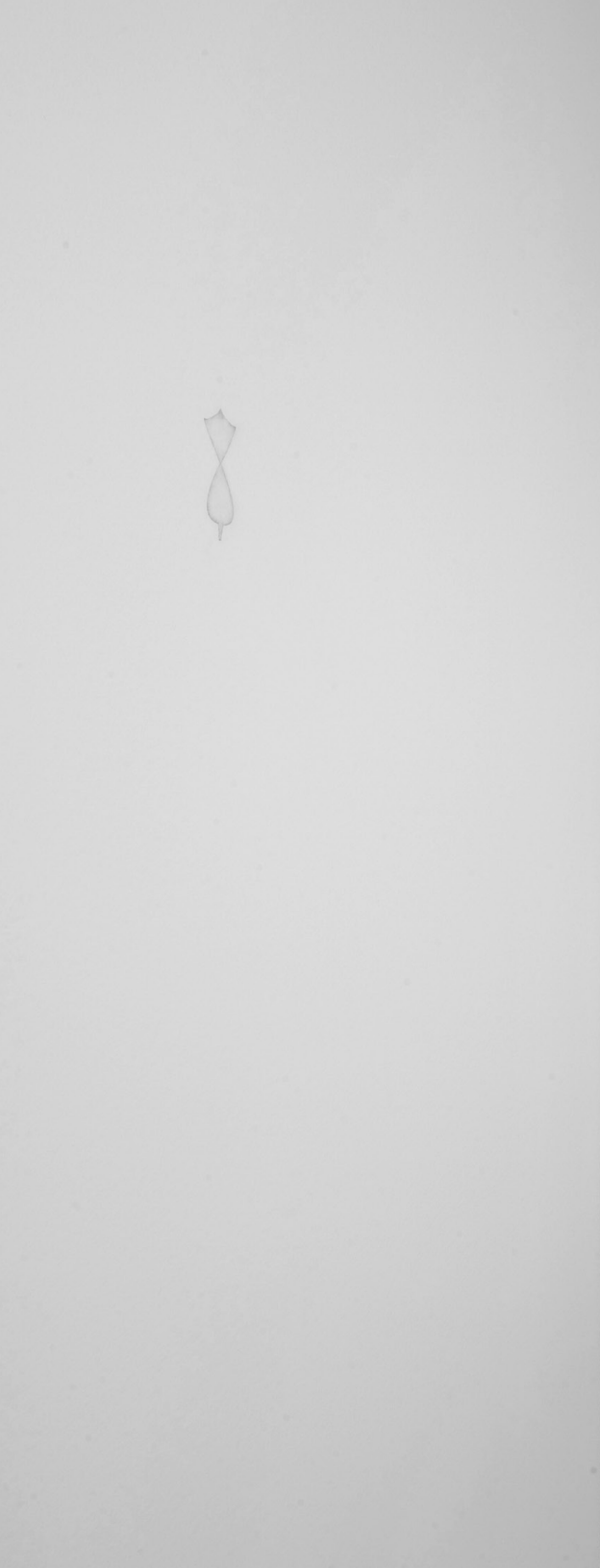
INTERIOR VIEWS

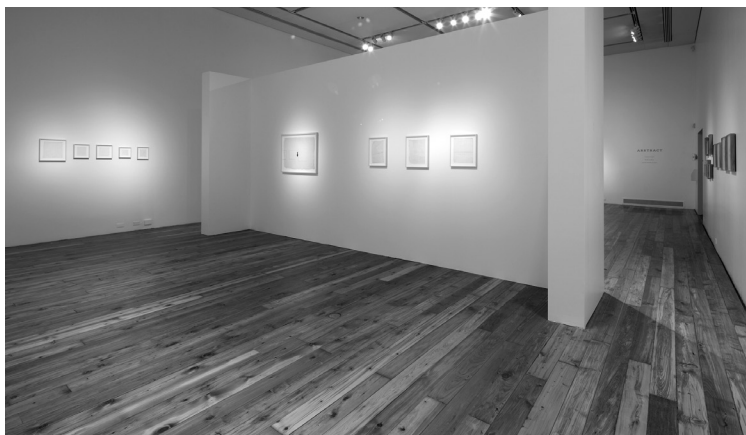
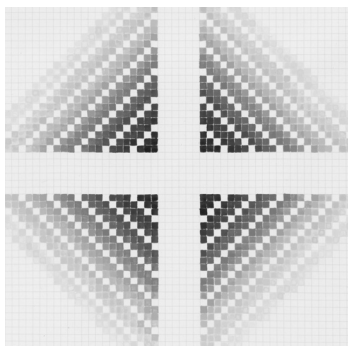
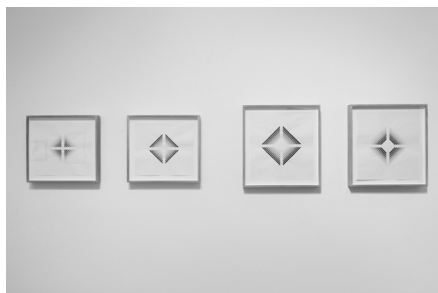
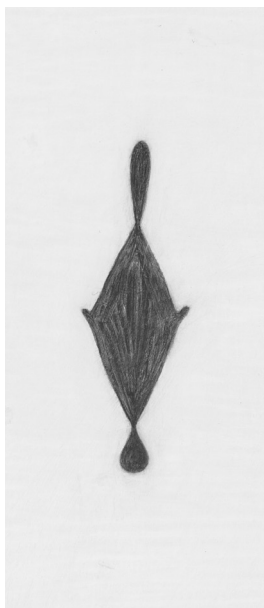


CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Ruth Laskey, *Twill Series (Purple/Brilliant Blue)*, 2008 [detail]; Lynne Woods Turner, *Untitled (No. 940)*, 2010; Installation view: Ruth Laskey, weavings; Installation view: Lynne Woods Turner, paintings and drawings; Installation view: Lynne Woods Turner, paintings and drawings [left] and Ruth Laskey, weavings [right].



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Installation view: Léonie Guyer, paintings; Léonie Guyer, *Untitled*, no. 56, 2008 [detail]; Installation view: Léonie Guyer, works on paper; Installation view: Lynne Woods Turner, drawings and paintings; Lynne Woods Turner, *Untitled* (No. 776), 2008.





LEFT: Léonie Guyer, wall painting [left] and Ruth Laskey, weavings [right]. ABOVE: Clockwise from top left: Léonie Guyer, *Untitled*, no. 60, 2008 [detail]; Installation view: Ruth Laskey, watercolors; Installation view: Léonie Guyer, drawings; Ruth Laskey, *Study for Twill Series (New Black)*, 2009 [detail].

I WOULD LIKE TO extend heartfelt gratitude to Léonie Guyer, Ruth Laskey, and Lynne Woods Turner for their caring and rigorous partnership in realizing ABSTRACT. It was a truly rewarding and inspiring experience working with three such remarkably serious, brilliant, and dedicated artists. This project began over seven years ago, when I made my first visit to the studio of Léonie Guyer in San Francisco, California. During the years that followed, Léonie and I had innumerable conversations about the history, practices, and meanings of abstraction – artistic and otherwise. In 2006, I traveled to New Lebanon, New York, to the historic Mount Lebanon Shaker Village, to study Gift, Léonie's permanent painting installation inside the historic 1829 Brethren's Workshop. Léonie and I also spent considerable time in Old Chatham, New York, studying The Shaker Museum and Library's remarkable collection of paintings, drawings, and religious material with Jerry Grant, Director of Research and Library Services. Jerry guided us through other regional collections, and I extend my warmest thanks to him for this astonishing experience. ABSTRACT was deeply shaped by these experiences, and I remain profoundly grateful to Léonie Guyer for her knowledge, wisdom, and artistic dedication, and for her contribution to the core beliefs, goals, and inarticulable aspects of this project.

I am deeply grateful to American curator and Reed alumnus Lawrence Rinder '83 for contributing such a personal, poetic, and insightful piece of writing to the book, and for his dedicated and inspiring exhibitions of non-objective and spiritual art over the past several decades. Larry's devoted consideration of quiet, mystical, and philosophical works

of art by artists known and unknown has made an invaluable contribution to American art, and these projects have long been an inspiration to me. I would also like to thank poet Bill Berkson for his remarkable work, support, and engagement. All of our deepest respect and thanks to French poet and Tantra drawing scholar Franck André Jamme, for contributing his mystical, incantatory poetry and art to the catalog. And my warmest, heartfelt thanks to book designer Heather Watkins for her exquisite conceptualization and design. An accomplished abstract artist and book designer, Heather translated ABSTRACT into codex form with a rare elegance and intelligence. Many thanks to Malia Ross and Color Technology Inc. for expertly managing the book's printing and binding, and to Allison Dubinsky for her expert copy-editing. I would also like to thank Todd Putnam and Framing Resource, and San Francisco artist Jonathan Runcio, for greatly aiding in the installation of his wife Ruth Laskey's work.

Many thanks to the galleries and dealers that represent and support the artists: Léonie Guyer: Triple Base, San Francisco, CA. Ruth Laskey: Ratio 3, San Francisco, CA. Lynne Woods Turner: Danese, New York, NY; Susan Lorence, New York, NY; Devin Borden Hiram Butler Gallery, Houston, TX; Gallery Joe, Philadelphia, PA; and Greg Kucera Gallery, Seattle, WA.

In addition, and with tremendous thanks, I would like to acknowledge the exceptional work of the staff of the Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery: Colleen Gotze, the Cooley's Registrar and Program Coordinator, expertly organized the preparation and installation of the exhibition, and meticulously cared for each work of art, supported by the careful assistance of freelance preparators Thom Ross and Eric Gibbons. I would also like to thank Elizabeth Spavento, the Cooley's MALS student curatorial assistant, who beautifully performed an enormous variety of duties related to the successful production of ABSTRACT. Warmest thanks to Gregory MacNaughton, our Education Outreach Coordinator, who will teach hundreds of K-12 students about the history and core concepts of abstraction through the Open Gallery

Program, the Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery's no-cost K-12 education program, supported by the Robert Lehman Foundation and the Office of the President, Reed College. Many thanks to our Open Gallery Program student educators: Allison Tepper, Elizabeth Bidart, Anna DeFillipi, and our newest educators, Matt Doyle, Paul Flanders, and Zoe Stal.

Warmest thanks to Reed College Controller Tracy Frantel and the staff of the Reed College Business Office; to Beth Martin and the staff of Conference and Events Planning, including Bon Appétit Catering, and to Jennifer Bates, Director of Public Affairs, and the staff of her office.

I would like to thank Reed College Dean of Faculty Ellen Stauder; Reed College President Colin Diver; Vice President for College Relations Hugh Porter; Vice President and Treasurer Ed McFarlane; and the faculty of the Reed College Art Department – Doris Chon, William Diebold, Dana Katz, Michael Knutson, Michele Matteini, Aki Miyoshi, and Gerri Ondrizek – for their continued support of the Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery and its programs.

Stephanie Snyder '91
John and Anne Hauberg Curator and Director

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What remains of life is the spiritual.
The spiritual in art, or we might simply call it the
artistic ... abstraction in a picture is absolute and
perhaps can only be recognized as such by psychic
feeling. Creation lives as genesis under the visible
surface of the work. All those touched by the spirit
see this in retrospect, but only the creative see it
looking forward (into the future).

—Paul Klee

