

PULSE

Since 1998, the PULSE Exhibition Series has featured new bodies of work by Northeast Ohio's most talented artists, both emerging and established.

Born and bred in New York City, Julie Langsam currently lives in Cleveland, Ohio, where she maintains a studio and works as Associate Professor of Painting at the Cleveland Institute of Art. Langsam's work has been exhibited in New York City at such venues as the Drawing Center, Clementine Gallery, ES Vandam Gallery and Momenta Art. Her work is represented in numerous collections throughout the U.S. including Progressive Corporation; Reader's Digest Corporation; and the New York Health & Hospitals Corporation. Langsam recently co-curated *House: Case Study Cleveland; Arte Povera American Style: Funk, Play, Poetry & Labor*; and *Artists For A New Era*. Langsam holds a BFA from SUNY Purchase and an MFA from Queens College. She has taught at Parsons School of Design, Queens College; and Ohio State University. She was the recipient of the Pollock-Krasner Foundation award in 1994.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

All works are courtesy of the artist unless otherwise noted. Dimensions given in inches.

Le Corbusier Landscape (Villa Savoye), 2000, 24 x 24

Gwathmey Siegal Landscape (Haupt House), 2000, 24 x 24

Neutra Landscape (Lovell Health House), 2000, 24 x 24

Frey Landscape (Frey House), 2002, 24 x 24

Wright Landscape (Fallingwater), 2002, 24 x 24

Meier Landscape (Giovannitti House), 2002, 24 x 24

Gehry Landscape (Lewis Residence, South View), 2002, 44 x 44
Courtesy Peter B. Lewis

Gehry Landscape (Lewis Residence, North View), 2002, 24 x 24
Courtesy Peter B. Lewis

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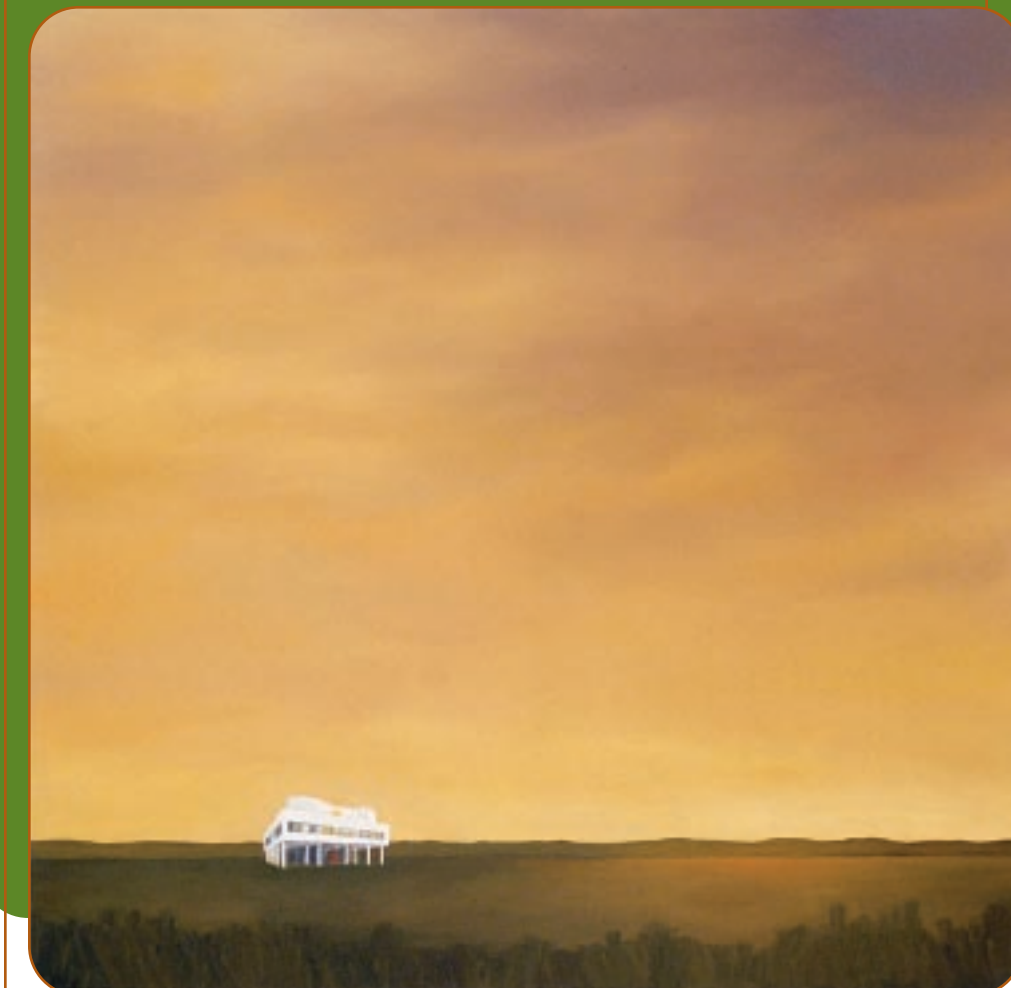
Members Brunch 12 noon

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Cleveland philanthropist and art collector Peter B. Lewis joins featured artist Julie Langsam in a lively dialogue exploring her exhibition, *House Paintings*. This talk is preceded by a brunch exclusive to Center Members. Become a Member today to enjoy these and other benefits of Membership; call 216.421.8671 ext. 29 for additional information.

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The PULSE Exhibition Series is sponsored by Hahn Loeser & Parks LLP.



JULIE LANGSAM: HOUSE PAINTINGS

In 1809, Caspar David Friedrich painted *Monk by the Sea*, which portrayed a lone individual pitted against the elemental forces of nature. Its lonely confrontation of a single figure with the simplicity of a completely unbroken horizon line was a daring departure from conventional marine painting. The elimination of naturalistic detail and the purposeful organization of the figure in the landscape furthered Friedrich's expression of a universal Romantic ideal favoring transcendental experience over narrative depiction.

Close to two centuries later, that ideal informs Julie Langsam's recent landscape paintings. In these intimate, luminous compositions, light, energy, and elemental nature are rendered through vast expanses of sky. Langsam fashions her moody landscapes from lushly brushed surfaces and color tonalities ranging from stormy grays and bruised purples to the garish theatrics of tropical pinks and oranges. In her abstract striations of earth, horizon, and sky, the artist conjures Friedrich's notion of the sublime while paying compositional homage to Mark Rothko, the mid-20th century American abstract painter.

Langsam plays seriously with the religious motif evoked by Friedrich's stark portrayal of a monk contemplating nature. Instead of a lonely monk, however, Langsam sets Modernist buildings by Mies van der Rohe, Marcel Breuer, Richard Neutra, and other twentieth century architects, against a boundless void. At the dawn of the twentieth century, utopian movements ranging from

Cubism in France, De Stijl in Holland, and Non-Objectivism in Russia advanced the idea that art in its pure, abstract form is a direct expression of universal beauty. At the Bauhaus in Germany, these abstract principles found their apotheosis in architectural design. Early Modernist architects such as van der Rohe and Breuer shared in the belief that the work of art is a metaphor of the universe and the great hidden laws of nature were embodied in their buildings.

Reduced to an improbable, diminutive scale, these buildings become somehow whimsical and inaccessible, evoking a Never-Never Land of fairytale castles. Stripped of their once-heroic proportions, they are overwhelmed by their natural environment. Langsam's carefully detailed architectural icons – ghostlike avatars of Modernism's high style, tainted by the melancholy of loss – evoke nostalgia for the utopian ideal of the early twentieth century. And yet, they are not entirely defanged images. Tautly painted, with the muscular compactness of steel and glass, they defy the sensual qualities of the landscape that surrounds them.

The Romantic ideal is thus the subtext of these paintings, but their stylistic referencing of two historical periods suggests another dimension. Langsam's starkly simple compositions are imaginary landscapes where the twentieth century's High Modernism and nineteenth century's Romantic Sublime are symbolically united; the paintings, at once aesthetic and psychological, abstract and representational, take on allegorical qualities. Like a number of her contemporaries, such as Lisa Yuskavage and John Currin, two painters who borrow freely from art history, Langsam is conducting a dialogue with history in order to carve out new territory for her painting.

Langsam's paintings become less about architecture and nature per se than about Modernism and painterly illusionism. In aligning these two historically opposed modes, Langsam refuses the strictures of vanguard and traditional styles and enters creatively into a central dilemma of the modern painter. Can one be at once an abstract and representational painter? Are these definitions even relevant to the 21st century painter? Artists like Langsam, succeeding a recent generation that wielded the critical tools of appropriation and deconstruction relentlessly, aspire less toward social critique than toward a historical fusion that reinvigorates painting. Qualities of a personal confession, too, play out in this strangely evocative series. Attachment, desire, and longing permeate the engaged, sensual, liberated surfaces and remote, inaccessible buildings. Indeed, one can almost imagine the artist herself projected onto these Modernist icons.

By casting the compositional formalism of a Modernist icon in illusionistic space as a psychological occasion, Langsam embraces representation without relegating abstraction to the basement. Highly self-conscious and stylistically deliberate, Julie Langsam's symbolic paintings offer a meditation on contemporary painting, the weight of art history, and the artist's sense of self in claiming new creative ground.

Jill Snyder, Executive Director

