

TURN

Jordan Broadworth

Artist's Statement

"One must really be engaged in order to be a painter. Once obsessed by it, one eventually gets to the point where one thinks that humanity could be changed by painting. But when that passion deserts you, there is nothing else left to do, then it is better to stop altogether. Because basically painting is pure idiocy."

Gerhard Richter, in conversation with Irmeline Lebeer¹

Turn

Words like *turn* are both nouns and verbs — and both object and action share an affinity with painting. Paintings exist both as object and action. Though substantive and secure in their place in the world as 'things', paintings unfold and re-assemble themselves continuously. When paint is recording what the hand does, it is also recording the infinite number of things the hand does *not* do. Though the mark remains the mark, it is relative to other marks made and not made. Paint, like truth is a fluid, not a solid.

Next to doubt, the greatest tool an artist has is the ability to rotate ideas, concepts, problems — envisioning different angles, possibilities, solutions. A few of the questions that I continue to turn around in my head are: How can painting present itself through itself? (There is a difference between crafting an image and making a painting). What is the role and responsibility of an inherently immediate medium in an increasingly mediated world? How can painting address the loss of Modernist myths and certitudes without prat-falls and/or cynicism?

This exhibition would not have been possible without the generous support of my parents Carol and Allan Broadworth, Bill Watson and Barbara Zvan, Karen and Hall Smyth, and Michael Adamson. I would also like to thank Nick Breton, Joshua Peressotti, Gary Spearin and Fred Clifford.

In memory of Lynn Donoghue

¹ Irmeline Lebeer, "Gerhard Richter, ou la réalité de l'image," *Chronique de l'art vivant*, Vol. 36 (February 1973), pp. 13–16.

Turn: Jordan Broadworth

The Thames Art Gallery, Esplanade Art Gallery, and Moose Jaw Museum & Art Gallery are pleased to present *Turn: Jordan Broadworth*. The exhibition and accompanying publication are the result of an ongoing series of collaborations among our three galleries. We feel that the individual galleries, our respective communities, and the artists who have been involved in these partnerships benefit greatly from these types of projects.

We would like to thank Jordan Broadworth for his dedication to the realization of this exhibition and to Sky Glabush for an insightful essay. We gratefully acknowledge the financial support provided by our members and sponsors, the Municipality of Chatham-Kent, the City of Medicine Hat, the City of Moose Jaw; the Ontario Arts Council, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts, the Saskatchewan Arts Board, and The Canada Council for the Arts.

Carl Lavoy, Director/Curator,
Thames Art Gallery

Joanne Marion, Curator of Art,
Esplanade Art Gallery

Heather Smith, Curator,
Moose Jaw Museum & Art Gallery

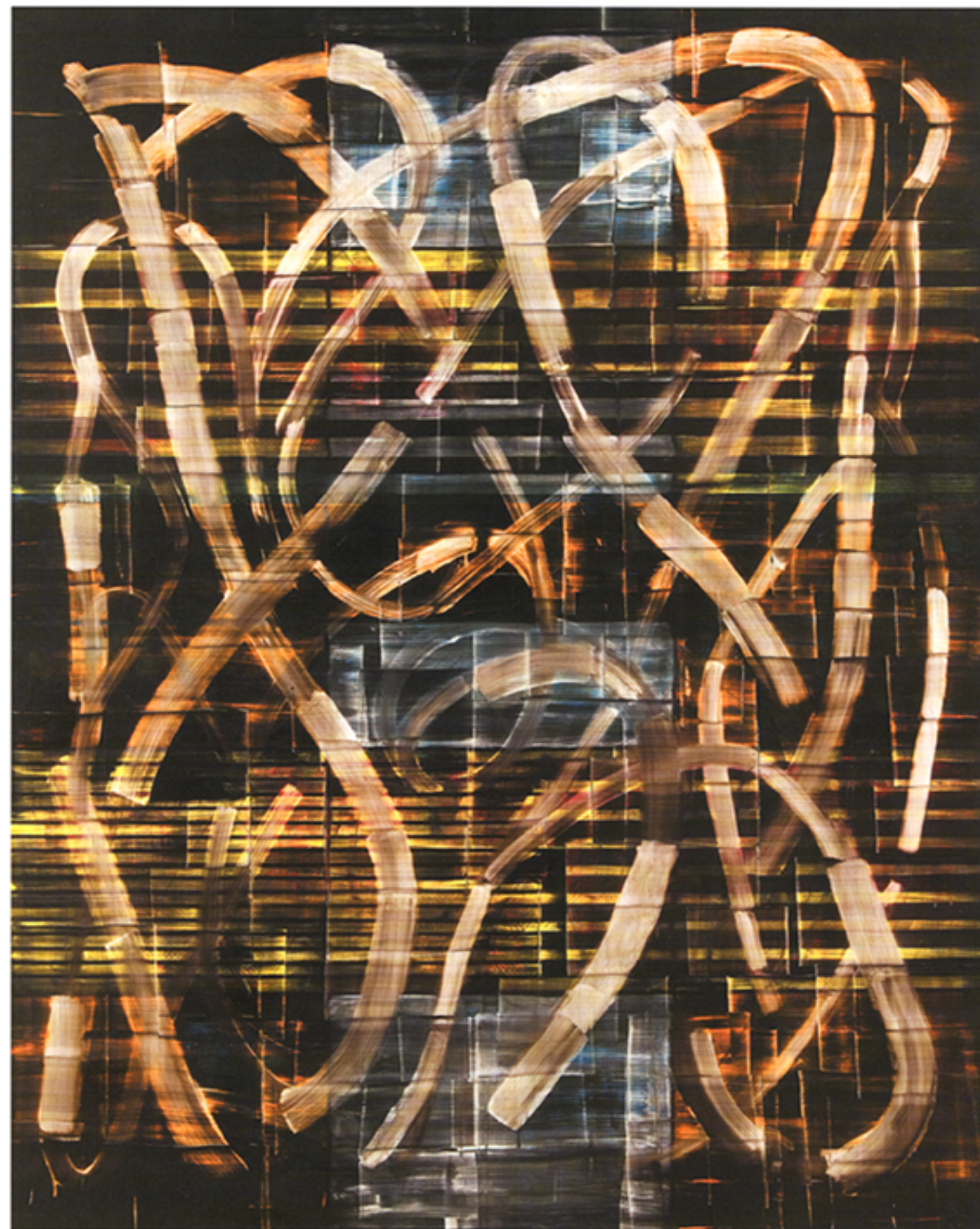
Jordan Broadworth's studio typifies all the romantic images often associated with the lone painter labouring away in isolation: coffee tins heavily encrusted with oil and filled to overflowing with dirty, sticky brushes; floors darkened under layer upon layer of paint; the requisite overworked fan perched on a window sill, ineffectively pumping air out of a room choking with fumes. I love these places, these laboratories dedicated to reveling in and testing the potentialities of paint. And for the last decade or so, Broadworth has been industriously, even obsessively, preoccupied with the stuff. So upon looking at his new work I was expecting the sophisticated, process-laden abstract paintings with all the attendant nuances of colour and surface that he is known for. I came away with something else. It is not as if these new paintings forgo a luscious treatment of materials, it is just that the aesthetic and formal punch quickly fades, leaving behind a kind of deliberate uncertainty. The work straddles formalist abstraction and something more awkward, dark, and reticent. This ambivalence is refreshing. Rather than viewing uncertainty as an abnegation of the promises held out by Modernism, Broadworth boldly asserts that abstraction has the breadth and capacity to convey something direct and visually commanding, even — or especially — when one loses faith in the dreamy myth of its singular, autonomous purity. This restrained, somber tone is most apparent in



Crash 2007



Prime 2007



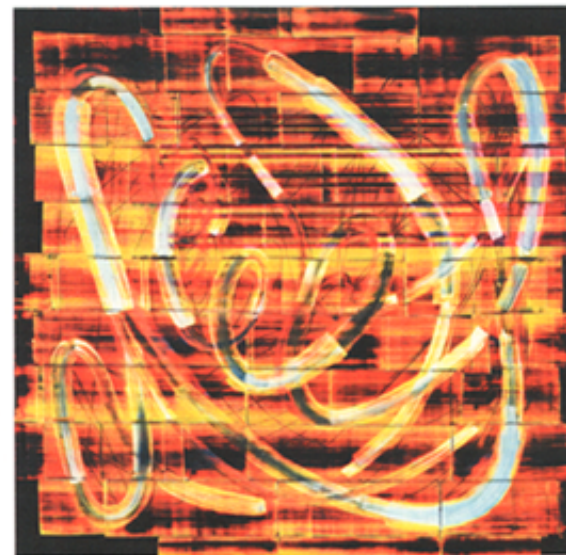
Stammer 2007



Trace 2006-07

three areas of the work: line, colour, and surface. And while my analysis may appear at the outset to be devolving into a kind of strict formalist critique, I will argue that Broadworth's real achievement lies in his ability to both celebrate and thwart these very notions. Or, to borrow a phrase from Gary Michael Dault, Broadworth's paintings display a kind of "gorgeous nostalgia, (which is let's say critique without conviction)."¹

Take for example the loopy, calligraphic marks that appear in this recent work. Based loosely on signatures found in rejection letters, this linearity is ghostly and transient, made from a complicated process involving varying drying times, squeegees and working wet over semi-dry paint so that what remains is the after-image of a mark, the leftovers, a remnant. These are gestures that defy being gestural, or at least question the swagger often associated with expressionism and the creative genius of the "hand." He seems to be looking for a way back into the realm of the intuitive while acknowledging the contingent and mediated plight of the imagination. According to Broadworth, these marks emanate from a position of "post-belief." Yet despite an apparent hesitation, this recent work is his most dramatically gestural to date. Even as the wildly fluid lines emphatically assert the gesture, their bleached-out, even noncommittal character cleverly avoids any sort of bombastic flourish.



Manoeuvre 2006



Wire 2007 (detail)

Broadworth's use of colour also reinforces a kind of purposeful undermining. It never seems to be applied directly to the surface, but must find its way through a dissolving miasma of black paint. This blackness, embellished by a bold grid of linear bands, allows the colour to rise towards the surface in a series of exquisitely complex passages like strands of silk in an embroidered tapestry. But somehow this quality of light is both present and momentary. Similar to the glowing blue hum of a television as seen from the street at night, or the light that peeks through a house with its blinds closed, Broadworth's faintly radiant blues and yellows only exaggerate the darkness that surrounds them. His application of light and colour is beautiful yet cunningly antagonistic to its own sense of luminosity, and therefore seems to further emphasize a notion of belief and denial that pervades the work.

And then there is the surface. Broadworth is extremely sensitive to the accrual of materials that coalesce in the creation of the plane. These latest paintings accomplish something quite remarkable in their ability to act as a substrate upon which to project audacious, dramatic gestures while remaining permeable, porous and temporal. Broadworth achieves this balance by creating a network of

interlocking vertical grids that provides a kind of architectural screen. The solidity of this structural plane is then subsumed beneath varying degrees of dark impasto that dissolves its solidity while simultaneously creating a field in which to float the bold gestural marks. Thus the marks both hover above the plane and travel through and around it. To be both graphic and atmospheric is no small feat. His surfaces revel in a kind of intermediary status, never quite succumbing to a simple figure/ground relationship, yet not really creating an "all-overness," either. It is this tension between the stated and the deferred, the present and the passing, that imbues Broadworth's pictorial language with degree of criticality that I find timely and relevant.

When asked to write about Broadworth's work, I was a bit hesitant since I have been struggling with the ideological certainty that seems to propel most abstract painting. I've had a crisis of faith so to speak. While I admire the confidence and bluster of progenitive artists like Barnett Newman and Ad Reinhardt, I believe — and this is hardly a revelation — that the historical determinism that posited abstraction as the golden road and acme of the western pictorial tradition not only smacks of hubris, but is also a dead end. It is a way of thinking about painting that shuts down avenues of possibility and fails to account for the wildly divergent and contradictory manifestations that continually appear



Code 2 2007

around and outside of this historical cul-de-sac. But after looking at Broadworth's work and speaking with him, I realized that he too was questioning many of these same assumptions. Regardless of the seeming clarity of his language, his methodological aplomb, and his choice of a non-representational subject, Jordan Broadworth is troubling the ontological apparatus of his enterprise. Rather than a singular affirmative declaration, these paintings are propositions that ask necessary questions about doubt and faith, about the possibility of the imagination, and finally, about the role of the artist in a time when the act of making something beautiful or transcendent seems interminably fraught with a deep and abiding sense of suspicion and loss.

Sky Glabush

Sky Glabush is an Associate Professor in the Department of Visual Arts at the University of Western Ontario. Glabush has had numerous exhibitions in public galleries throughout Canada including solo exhibitions at the Mendel Art Gallery, the Mackenzie Art Gallery, and at the University of Manitoba. He has exhibited internationally with Suzanne Biederberg in Amsterdam and in Melbourne. His work is in many public collections and was recently purchased by the Canada Council and featured in "Dialogues: the changing face of Contemporary Art" at Rideau Hall. Glabush frequently writes for publications such as *Border Crossings* and *Canadian Art*.

Notes

1 Gary Michael Dault, "Gallery Going: Jordan Broadworth at Leo Kamen Gallery," *The Globe and Mail*, Oct. 14, 2006 p. R19.



Stroke 2006

Turn: Jordan Broadworth

Thames Art Gallery

Chatham, Ontario

Esplanade Art Gallery

Medicine Hat, Alberta

Moose Jaw Museum & Art Gallery

Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan

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Heather Smith

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Moose Jaw Museum & Art Gallery

List of Works

Manoeuvre 2006; 94 x 96.5 cm
Stroke 2006; 167.6 x 167.6 cm
Vent 2006; 241.3 x 193 cm
Trace 2006-07; 241.3 x 193 cm
Code 2 2007; 123.2 x 118.1 cm
Crash 2007; 94 x 96.5 cm
Gage 2007; 121.9 x 106.7 cm
Hound 2007; 121.9 x 106.7 cm
Parachute 2007; 94 x 96.5 cm
Prime 2007; 94 x 71.1 cm
Stammer 2007; 241.3 x 193 cm
Wire 2007; 94 x 96.5 cm

COVER *Vent* 2006

Jordan R. Broadworth (b.1968, Esquesing, Ontario)

Education

1995-97 University of Guelph, MFA
1992 Boston School of the Museum of Fine Arts
1987-92 Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, BFA

Selected Solo Exhibitions

2008 Paintings, Newzones Gallery, Calgary
2007-09 *Turn*, Thames Art Gallery, Chatham; Esplanade Art Gallery, Medicine Hat; Moose Jaw Museum and Art Gallery, Moose Jaw
2007 *Trace*, Leo Kamen Gallery, Toronto
2006 Paintings, Leo Kamen Gallery, Toronto
2005 *New Paintings*, Studio 21, Halifax
2004 Paintings, Simon Gallery, Morristown, NJ
2002 *Jordan Broadworth: Contingency*, Kenderdine Art Gallery, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon
Paintings, Pari Nadimi Gallery, Toronto
2001 Paintings, Pari Nadimi Gallery, Toronto
2000 Paintings, Pari Nadimi Gallery, Toronto

Selected Two Person and Group Exhibitions

2006 *Abstraction*, Diaz Contemporary, Toronto
Taking the dog for a walk, Leo Kamen Gallery, Toronto
2005-06 *Spell*, Mendel Art Gallery, Saskatoon; Robert McLaughlin Art Gallery, Oshawa; Thames Art Gallery, Chatham
2004 *Vivid*, University of Waterloo Art Gallery, Waterloo
Fluid Archeology, Jordan Broadworth, John Kissick, Elora Arts Center, Elora, Ontario
2003 *Get Real, Eighteen Artists from Canada and the United States*, St. Louis Hotel, Calgary
Alchemy and Mysticism #2, Momenta Art, Brooklyn, NY
Sunscreen, Newzones Gallery, Calgary
The Big Abstract Show: Summer Invitational, The Painting Center, New York
RBC Painting Competition, Museum London, London, Ontario;
Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax
2002 *Hungry Eyes*, Dalhousie Art Gallery, Halifax
Points of Reference, James Baird Gallery, St. John's, Newfoundland
2001 *Triangle Artists' Workshop: Selected Canadian Participants*, Ontario College of Art and Design, Toronto
Controlled Substance, Macdonald Stewart Art Center, Guelph
2000 *Triangle Artists' Workshop Exhibition*, World Trade Center, New York

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