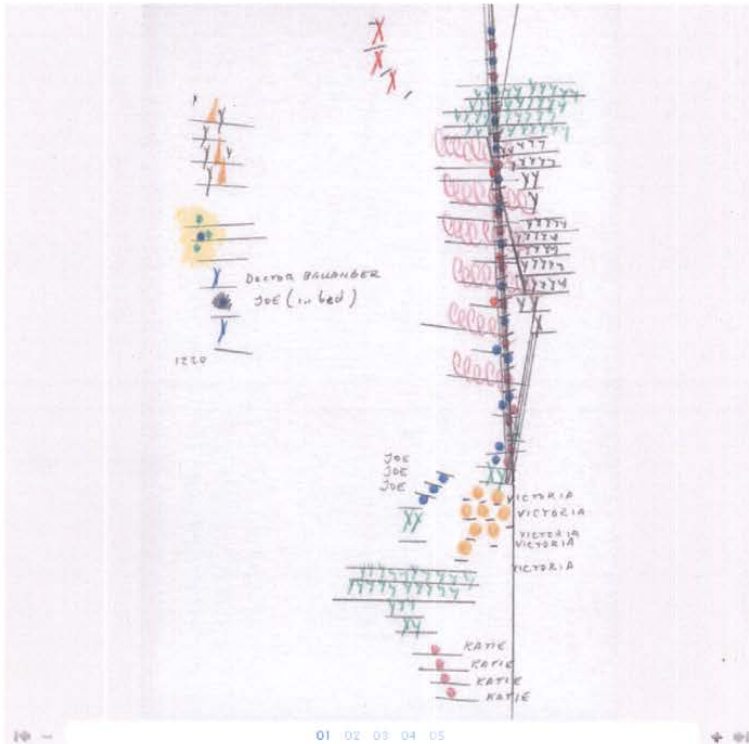


...might be good

Artist's Space: Brian Lund

by Lyra Kilston



Gigli or *Showgirls*: which movie is worse? What does it take to receive a rating of zero stars, or in film critic parlance, a turkey? How do bad films attain cult status? For artist Brian Lund, these questions occupied an adolescence spent renting movies and poring over film encyclopedias in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Even now, Lund, 34, watches films like few other people do. He makes detailed notes on index cards of the cuts, camera movements, settings, events and characters in each scene. For his current drawing series on Bob Fosse's 1979 musical *All that Jazz*—a movie made up of a remarkable 1,946 cuts—Lund produced 195 index cards, each charting 10 edit cuts. These cards are Lund's first step; next, he creates a code of symbols that correspond to the action. A green dot might stand for a particular sound, red triangles for the character Michelle, purple dots for Katie. Using materials you can find in an office supply store—colored pencils, pens or highlighters—Lund draws in a neat, mathematical-looking flurry of sparse color, taking the symbols from each scene as a loose guide for his "imagined re-edits." For an earlier series based on *Gigli*, Lund used mostly magenta or purple dots, and the results resemble intricate molecular chains fanned across the page, punctuated with the names Jennifer

Lopez or Ben Affleck in tight handwriting.

The drawings for *All that Jazz* are pinned in a grid on the wall of his neat Brooklyn studio. Each one displays a code of edit cuts on the left side and on the right, an abstract network snakes down the page's shoulder. Clusters of lime green Y's evince the many theatrical dance scenes, something for which Fosse—whose films Lund will focus on for the next year—was renowned. Both Lund's meticulous hand and fondness for dance films are likely linked to his upbringing: his father handicapped horses as a hobby, working out complicated statistics and calculations on paper, while his mother sewed colorful sequined costumes for her Philippine heritage festivals.

After studying graphic design in college, Lund turned to painting, making large abstract works for several years. With strong color and hives of densely repetitive shapes, these early paintings owe a debt to the works of Ross Bleckner and Terry Winters, both of whom he admires. (He also cites Cindy Sherman as a favorite at the time, her scrutiny of cinema perhaps resonating with the work he would later undertake.) But while in grad school at SUNY Purchase a few years ago, Lund quickly abandoned his purely nonrepresentational style. He explains simply, "abstraction has its limits." The catalyst for his next direction came from a most unlikely source: *Sex in the City*. As a shameless viewer, Lund quickly discerned the show's ironclad structure: specifically, how each episode features a scene in which the four women sit down around a table. This show sparked his first attempt to apply abstraction to mass media, as he sought a visual language that could translate filmed drama into drawing.

Lund's markings filter tension, dialogue, sex, murders, chase scenes, weeping, dancing, or graphic violence (*Rambo* and *Diehard* were also past projects) into one democratized landscape. "I want to develop a graphic language that can go through everything," he explains. Notably though, while Lund's initial coding is exact, the final drawings retain a freedom of form; he realizes that following a rigid system will turn an artist into a machine. While certainly obsessive, Lund's works juxtapose a strict discipline with a looseness of interpretation and fictional play. The results are beguiling compositions that slyly reference, distill, and complicate the lurid human drama on screen.

Lyra Kilston is a writer living in New York. She is an editor at Modern Painters.