

ART SPIEL

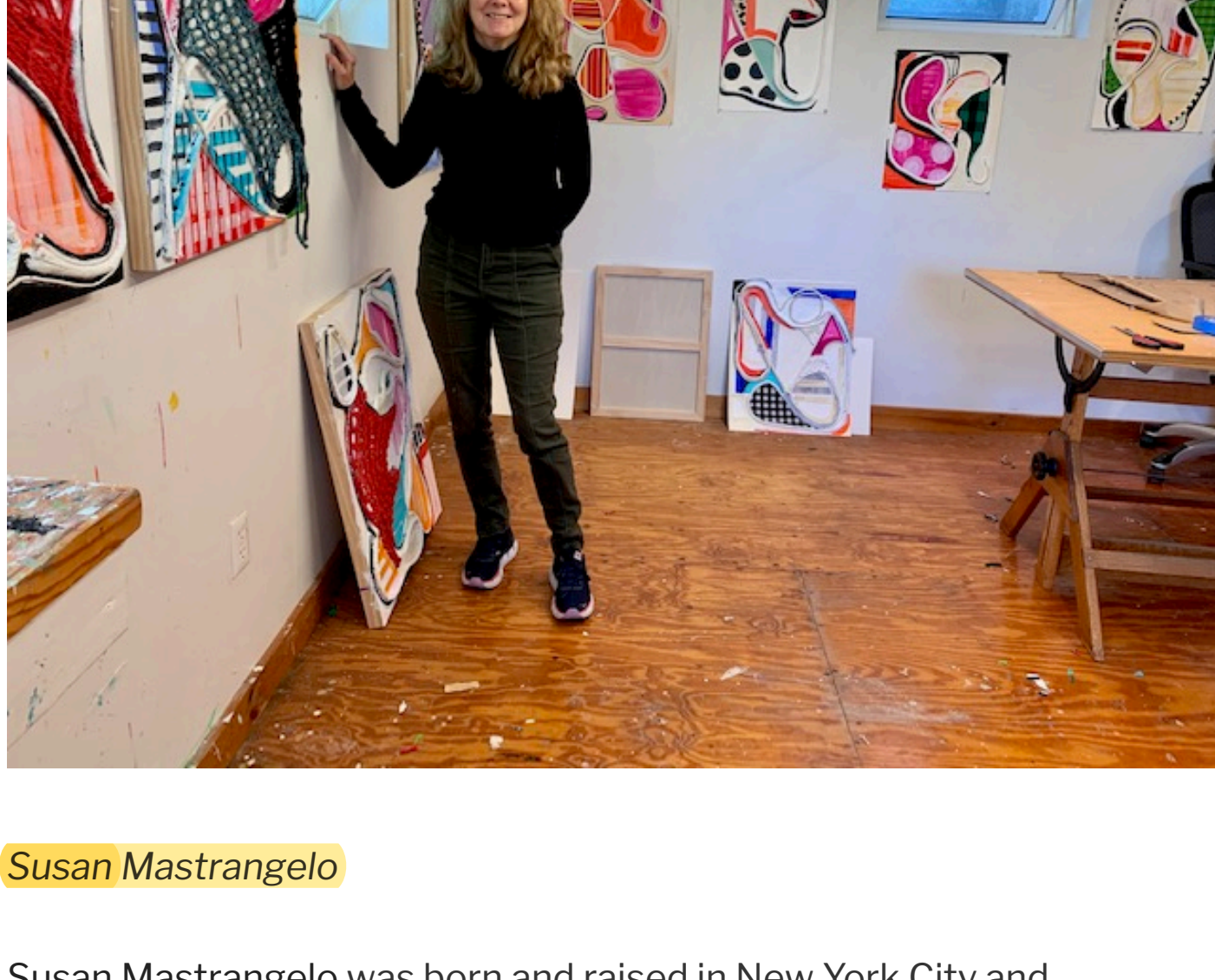
Reflections on the work of contemporary artists

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JUNE 25, 2020 BY CATHERINE KIRKPATRICK

Artists on Coping: Susan Mastrangelo

During the Coronavirus pandemic, Art Spiel is reaching out to artists to learn how they are coping.



Susan Mastrangelo

Susan Mastrangelo was born and raised in New York City and Washington D.C. She studied at the Kansas City Art Institute and the New York Studio School, and received her MFA from Boston University under the tutelage of Philip Guston. Based in New York since graduate school, she has shown nationally and internationally, and is a recipient of a Rockwell Grant as well as two grants from the Pollock Krasner Foundation. She has been a visiting artist at the American Academy in Rome, a guest at Civitella Ranieri, and a resident at Yaddo, The Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, The Ragdale Foundation, The Triangle Workshop (as a student of Anthony Caro), and the Tyrone Guthrie Center. For 27 years she taught and chaired the Art Department at the Buckley School in New York City, and now works as a full time multidisciplinary artist at the Can Factory in Gowanus, Brooklyn.

AS: How are you coping?

SM: I live in Brooklyn in a high rise with my partner. We both took public transportation every day: he to teach, me to get to my studio at the Can Factory in the Gowanus. Which meant we constantly had to navigate through groups of people—on the subways, in the elevators, on the street. Being in a high-risk category, I became increasingly stressed, terrified, and consumed by anxiety. We knew people who were getting very sick, and on March 13th, decided we needed to leave Brooklyn for our house in Catskill, New York. We had never spent more than two weekends a month there during winter, and it was still bitterly cold when we arrived. At first I felt angry that in order to be safe, we had to leave our regular life in Brooklyn. We listened to daily reports of the virus getting worse and taking lives, not knowing when it was going to end.

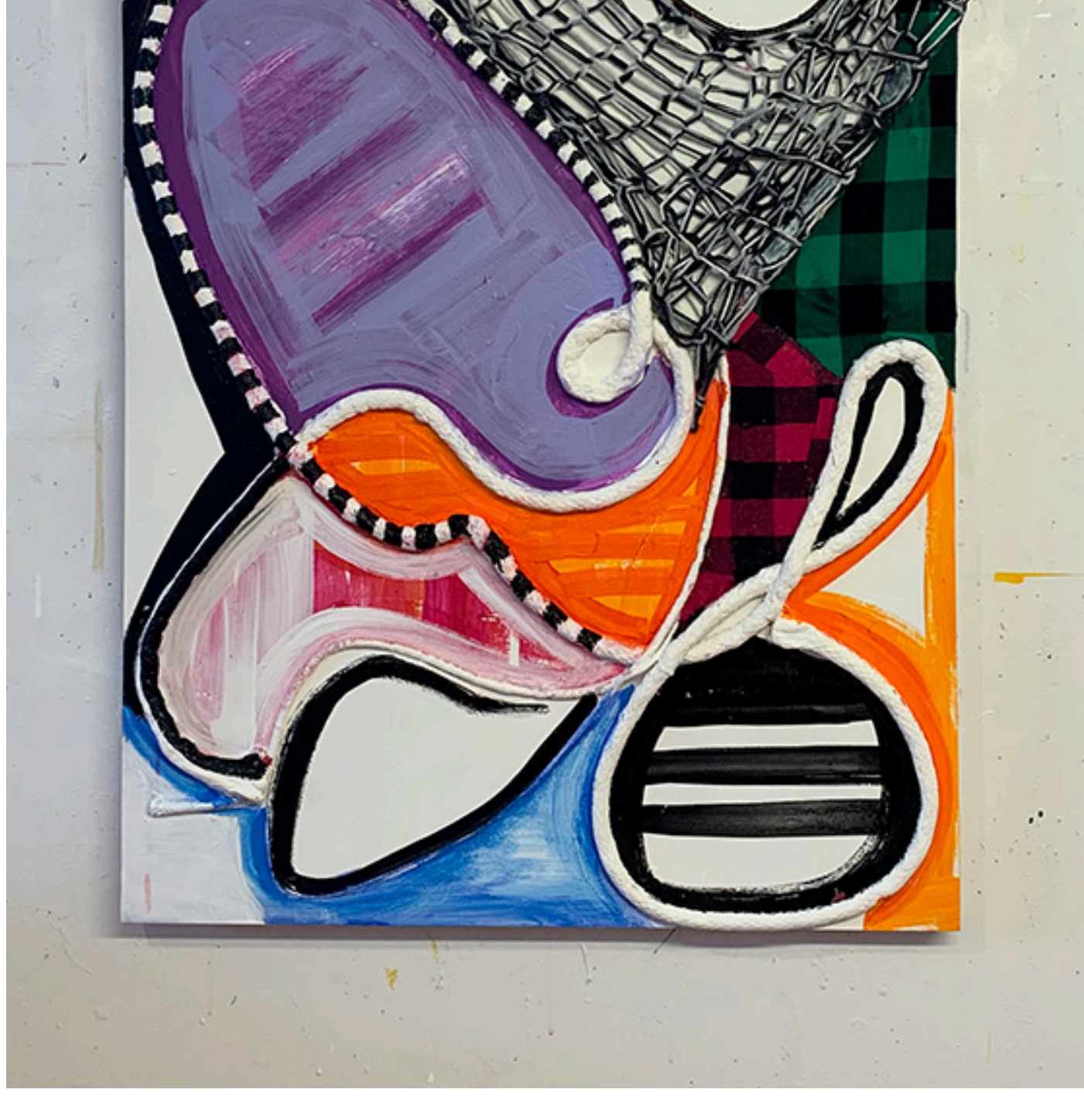
I have a room downstairs which is my studio when in Catskill, and after a week or two, I began to work every afternoon. I poured myself into my work during the day, and began to knit at night to calm myself down. Consequently, my knitting has ended up in my work,



Sufficient Reduction #1, 24"x30", 4/2020, Acrylic Paint, Cord Filler, Yarn, And Fabric On Wood Panel

AS: How has your routine changed?

SM: Because of our move up to Catskill, my routine greatly changed. In Brooklyn every morning I would get on a subway and go to my studio and basically be there all day. I did my artwork there, plus business. When we moved up here, my studio was freezing, and felt very foreign to me at that point. My partner and I have now been up in Catskill for almost two and a half months. It's warmer now, and I enjoy taking walks, and have a new-found appreciation of nature. Though I still feel displaced, I now consider myself lucky.



High Wire 4, 24"x30", 4/2020, Acrylic Paint, Cord Filler, Yarn, And Fabric On Wood Panel

AS: Can you describe some of your feelings about all this?

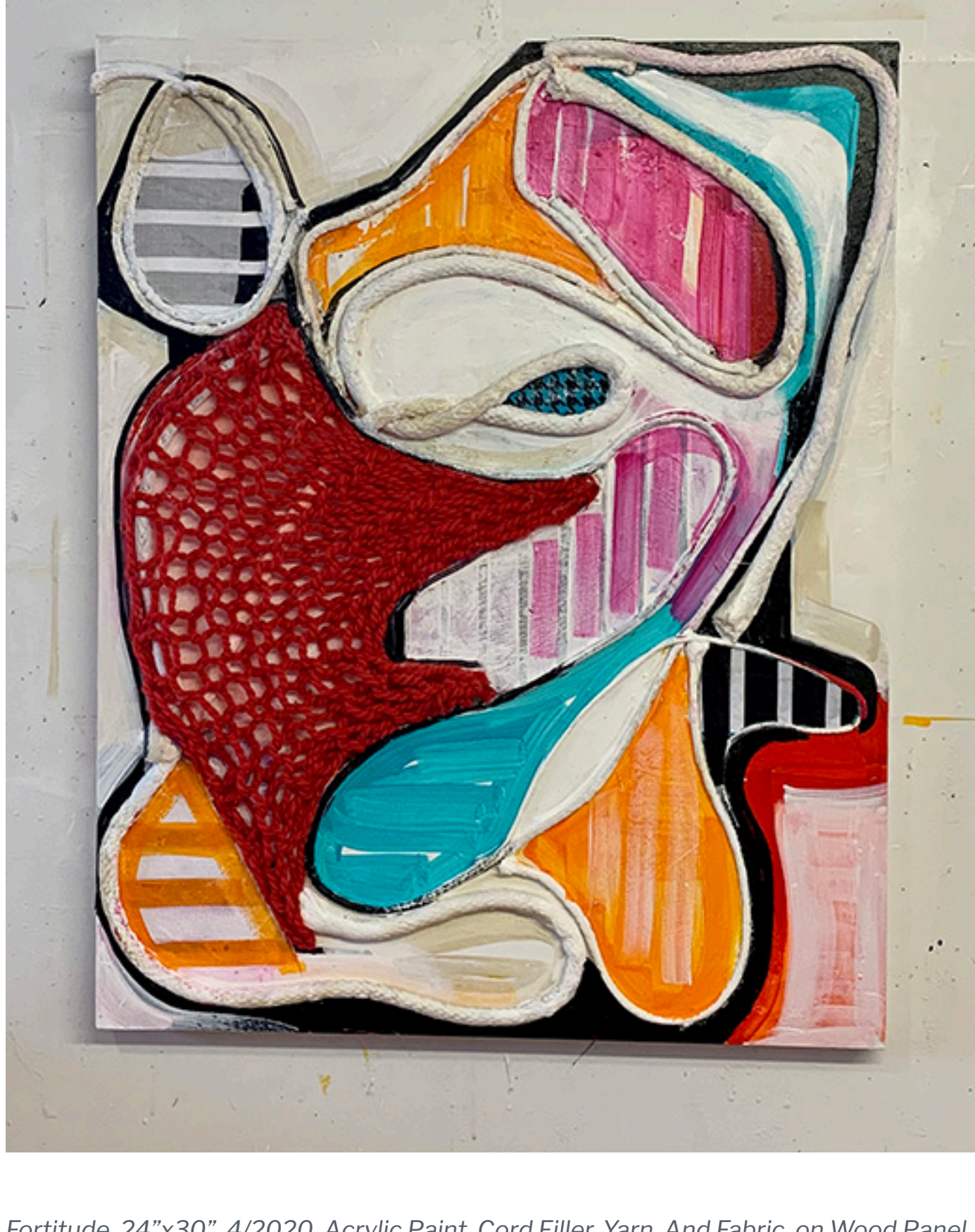
SM: By the middle of March, I was anxiety ridden and terrified. We have a leader who is incapable of seeing the reality of the situation, who refused to take action when and where it was needed. Thanks to others in charge, at present the virus is more under control, and I have forced myself not to think of the future.



Caverns And Crevasses, 24"x30", 5/2020, Acrylic Paint, Cord Filler, Yarn, and Fabric on Wood Panel

AS: What matters most right now?

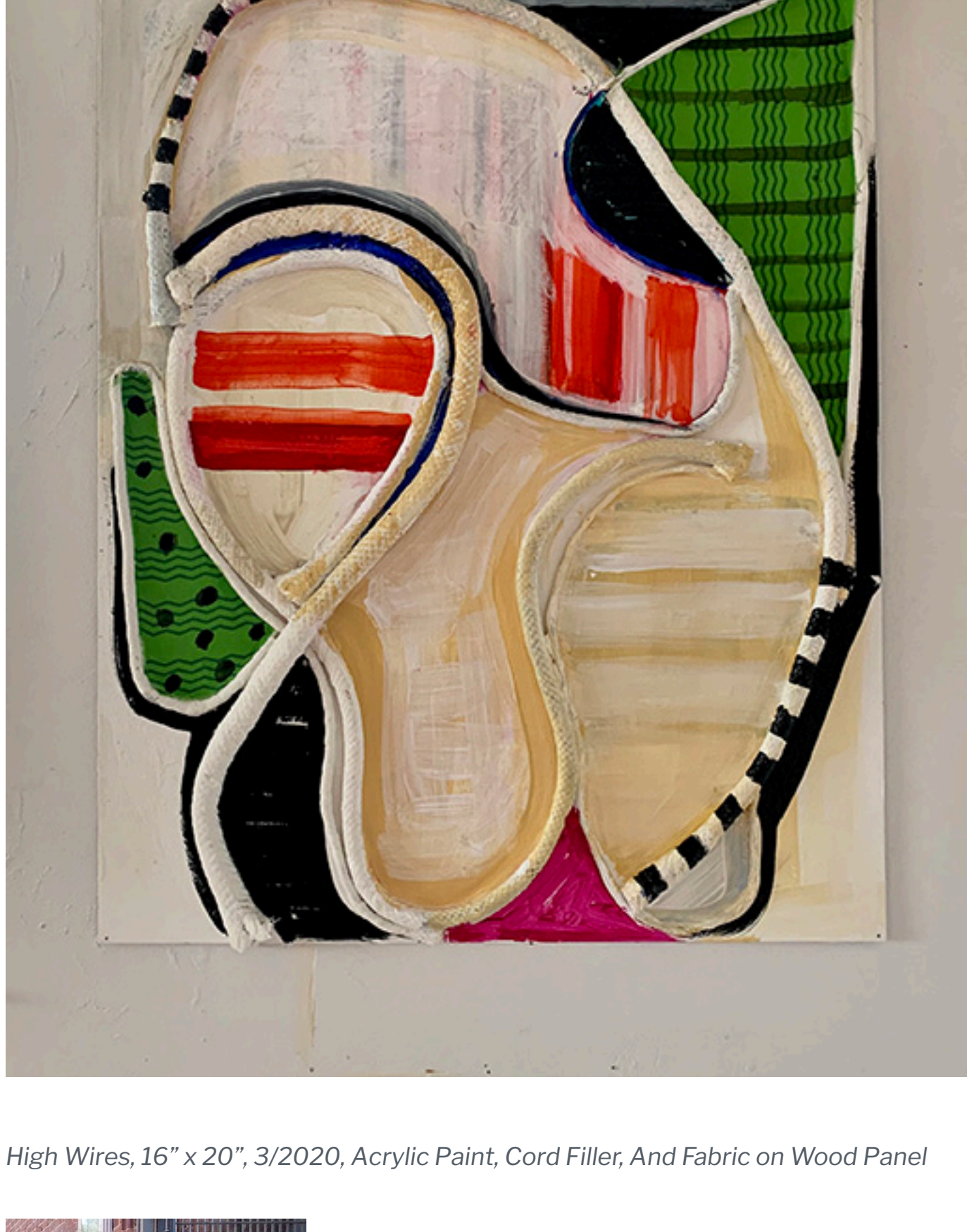
SM: Staying healthy is my main priority. It's also essential to stay in touch with friends and family, and to stay engaged with what's happening in the world, no matter how disgusted I may feel. Not knowing what the future holds, living in the present has become my goal, with a focus on inner resources, which define who I am. Being able to work every day stabilizes me emotionally, and I see myself as very lucky to have a creative outlet, and to currently have a place to work.



Fortitude, 24"x30", 4/2020, Acrylic Paint, Cord Filler, Yarn, And Fabric, on Wood Panel

AS: Any thoughts about the road ahead?

SM: We have no idea what the road ahead will be, or when it will be safe to comfortably go about our lives again. I think it could take a long time, and even then, we will never go back to life as we knew it before the pandemic. I'm focusing more on the "now" than what could happen in the future, but I do have the hope of returning to my studio in the Gowanus, and resuming our lives in Brooklyn by the fall. It's a hope...



High Wires, 16" x 20", 3/2020, Acrylic Paint, Cord Filler, And Fabric on Wood Panel



Catherine Kirkpatrick is a writer and photographer based in New York. She wrote the introductions to Meryl Meisler's two books, and is currently working on an oral history about recent changes in photography.



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