



FORM AND FACTURE: NEW PAINTING AND SCULPTURE FROM NEW YORK
 PAUL W. ZUCCAIRE GALLERY | STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY | NOVEMBER 1 - DECEMBER 13, 2014

FORM AND FACTURE

“Abstraction is a process of emphasis, and emphasis vivifies life,” wrote the painter Robert Motherwell in 1951. The idea of abstraction as a process of emphasis and the vivacity that comes from this process informs the grouping of artists in *Form and Facture: New Painting and Sculpture from New York*. Presenting new work by six Brooklyn-based artists, *Form and Facture* delves into the conceptual and aesthetic concerns of contemporary abstraction. The exhibition features large-scale paintings and sculptures by Rachel Beach, Paul Behnke, Matthew Neil Gehring, Osamu Kobayashi, Rebecca Murtaugh and Fran O’Neill.

The interest in Form—the elements of art such as line, shape and color—and Facture—the process of how art is made (from the Latin *factura*: a making, a manufacture, a formation)—unites these artists in their aims. What each artist chooses to emphasize in their methods—building up and scraping down layers of paint, balancing positive and negative space, juxtaposing unexpected colors—serves as both a self-reflective process and an aesthetic outcome. With a nod to their mid-twentieth century predecessors, these artists use the tools of formalist modernism to present their particular visions that are deeply embedded in the manufacture of the object.

In Rachel Beach’s six-and-a-half foot tall painted sculptures *Hull* and *Demi*, strong geometric forms call to mind totem poles or protective armor. Yet the fortitude and solidity of the top portions rest almost precariously on thin metal stands, imparting a vulnerability to the works. “I previously thought of my work architecturally, even archaeologically,” Beach says, “I’m now starting to think figuratively.” Specifically, she is interested in how the body relates to architectural forms that surround us. An earlier work, *Canary* soars vertically while cantilevering what seems impossibly far horizontally. Its three parts vary in visual and physical texture, from a raw beam, to a yellow painted surface, to the delicately screenprinted cantilever. The bold geometry and striking color, with an emphasis on the surface

tension between edges of shape and color, keeps the focus on form and the negative space between forms that almost becomes an object itself. In this way, the sculptures relate not just to themselves, but to the objects and images seen through and around them.

Working quickly with acrylics, usually straight from the jar, Paul Behnke’s process of layering and scraping down paint produces a kaleidoscopic effect of intense colors and sharp edges. Irregular configurations of high-keyed color turn and shift in the perception of the viewer. Layers of bright orange, purple, red and green recall the color schemes of Pop art, commercial design and comic books. Behnke’s titles often stem from the forms that emerge during the painting process, lending references to urban mythology, geographic locations, literary figures or the popular culture of his youth. In paintings such as *The Cave and Its Guardian*, traces of previously applied swatches of paint provide glimpses into moments of the painting’s creation. Through layers of intense colors, unexpected shapes and an off-kilter balance of elements, Behnke gives material form and magnitude.

From a distance, the rectangles, squares and triangles of Matthew Neil Gehring’s paintings appear geometrically precise, but from close up, edges waver and shapes float and recede in the surrounding planes of color. Subtle gradations of yellows or pinks intersect with planes of blues or greens, creating liminal spaces that transition between form and formlessness. Colors shift, motion seems to slow down, perception is altered. His painting *And the Vital Vigor Stood Its Ground* takes its title from a line in Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden* discussing visitors to his remote cabin on the edge of Walden Pond. Like Thoreau, Gehring’s work invites communication through simplified, thought-provoking, contemplative gestures.

In his paintings, Osamu Kobayashi creates visual dualities: chance versus control, organic versus geometric, warm versus

cool. Colors meld into one another, or abut sharply. Textured brushwork swoops over flat planes of color. Squares and diagonals retain a fuzzy edge or bleed into one another. Horizontals suggest landscapes and seascapes. The suggestion of forms from the natural world is also indicated by Kobayashi’s titles, such as *Remote Horizon* and *Summit Divide*. Each envelops with an immense, sparsely occupied space, leaving room for contemplation.

Rebecca Murtaugh’s richly textured forms embody both sculpture and painting. Starting with a three-dimensional structure (adjoining triangles, rectangle within a rectangle), she coats layer upon layer of a thick, malleable material mixed with bright paint in stripes or bands. Her process transforms geometric shapes into thickly surfaced organic forms, with a certain affinity to moss growing on brick, if moss came in colors such as *Fusion* and *Radish*. The colorful titles, in fact, come directly from the cans of reclaimed house paint with which Murtaugh coats her pieces, lending a playfulness to her work. In her *Aperture* series, a rectangular opening frames the negative space, inviting viewers to see through and beyond the object itself.

In Fran O’Neill’s lush paintings, swooshes of brushwork create movement and rhythm evocative of the forces of nature. Rich purples storm over delicate greens, drips of green and white rain down upon pinks and reds, and rings of fiery orange or celestial silver conjure the power of the cosmos. For O’Neill, the process of painting has an affinity with life cycles, changing over time. Grand brushstrokes envelop intimate gestures of line, their intersections in space suggesting a metaphysical coming together of place and time. The all lower-case titles of her works, such as *earthly delight* and *ring of fire*, humble the grander evocations of the paintings themselves.

– Karen Levitov



RACHEL BEACH

Rachel Beach was born in Canada and is currently based in Brooklyn, New York. Her works have been exhibited in New York at Blackston, Lennon Weinberg, Mixed Greens and Smack Mellon, throughout Canada at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, PlugIn Institute of Contemporary Art and Eyelevel Gallery, and internationally in Germany and England. Beach studied at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and received a Master of Fine Arts from Yale University. She has received numerous awards including fellowships from Yaddo, Socrates Sculpture Park, the Lower East Side Printshop and Vermont Studio Center, and grants from The Canada Council for the Arts and The Pollock-Krasner Foundation. Her work has been reviewed in *The New York Times*, *Art in America*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *Interview* and *C Magazine*, among others.

Hull and Demi, 2014
Opposite: Canary, 2014





Photo: Robin Stout

PAUL BEHNKE

Paul Behnke was born in Memphis, Tennessee, and received a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Painting from the Memphis College of Art. Behnke's work has been exhibited widely in the United States and internationally including shows in New York, Cyprus, London and Dublin. He has attended residencies at the Vermont Studio Center in Johnson, Vermont, and the Sam and Adele Golden Foundation in New Berlin, New York. Behnke lives in Manhattan and maintains a studio in Brooklyn.

Clockwise from upper left: *Alter Ghost*, *The Cave and Its Guardian*, *Magenta Vampyr*, *The Siren's Eye*, all 2014
Opposite: *Space 1999-HHA*, 2014

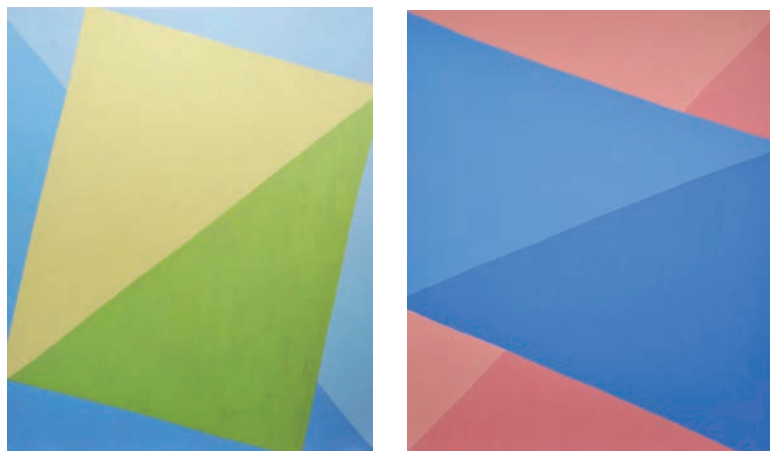


PAUL BEHNKE

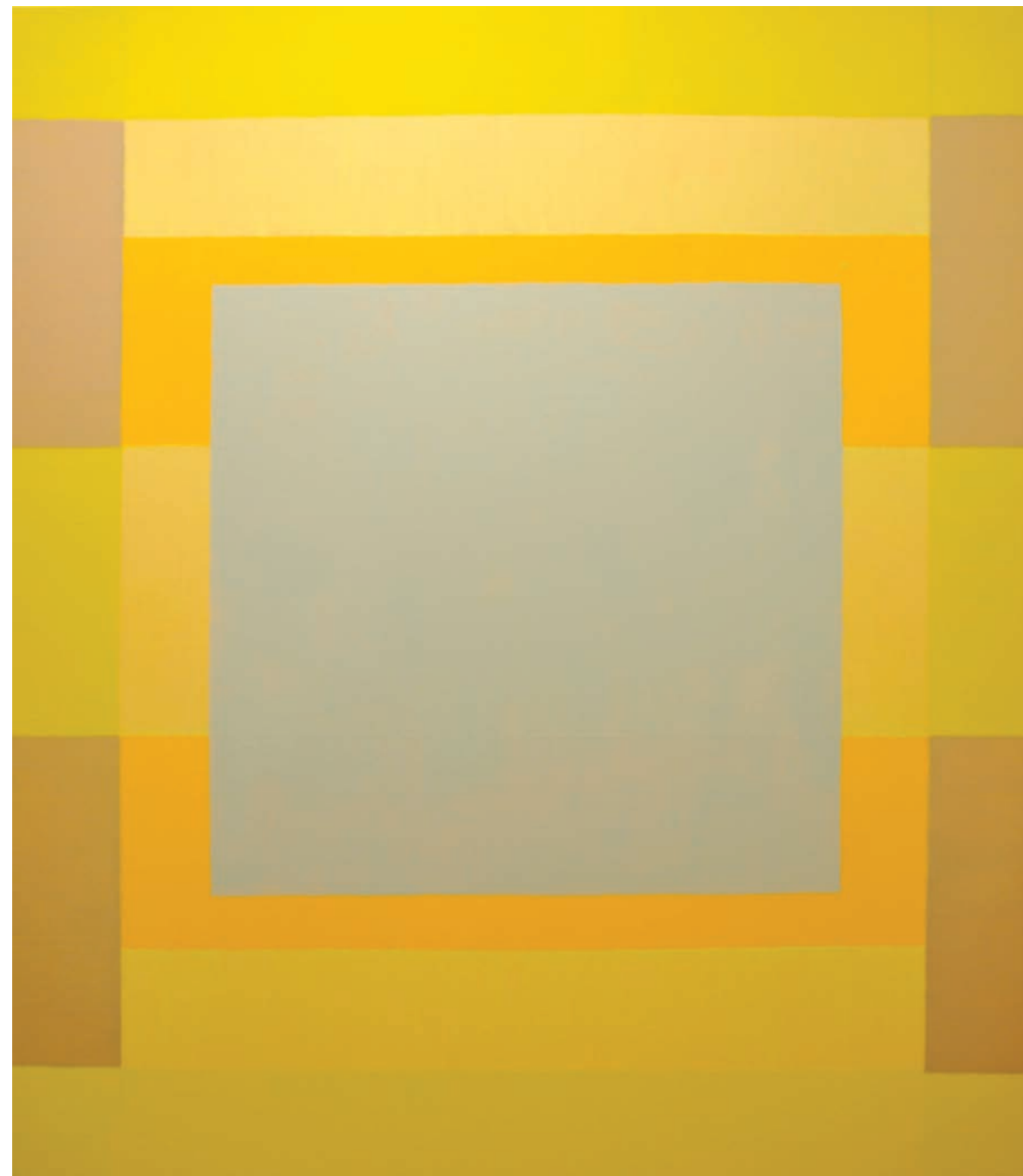


MATTHEW NEIL GEHRING

Matthew Neil Gehring received a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Southern Indiana on a Society for Arts and Humanities scholarship, attended the Skidmore College summer program, and received his Master of Fine Arts from the University of Delaware on a full Graduate Assistantship. He has lived in worked in northern California, Syracuse, New York, and currently in Brooklyn, New York. He has exhibited in numerous group exhibitions and eight solo exhibitions, including recent solos at the Dishman Art Museum at Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas, and at the Islip Art Museum in East Islip, New York. He has an upcoming two-person show at c2c Projects in San Francisco, California. Gehring's work has been featured or reviewed in publications including *The New Criterion*, *Art Journal*, *Art Review* and *ArtWeek*. He is currently an Associate Professor of Visual Art at SUNY Suffolk where he is Head of Visual Art and the Director of the Flecker Gallery.



Clockwise from upper left: *First Turn*, *Vantage Advance*, *Two Step*, *Lingua Vernacula*, all 2014. Opposite: *And the Vital Vigor Stood Its Ground*, 2013



MATTHEW NEIL GEHRING



Photo: Brendan Coyle

OSAMU KOBAYASHI

Osamu Kobayashi was born in Columbia, South Carolina, and lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. He has exhibited widely in the United States and abroad, including solo exhibitions at the Greenwich House in New York, AplusB Contemporary Art in Italy, and John Davis Gallery in New York. He was recently awarded the Hassam, Speicher, Betts, and Symons Purchase Fund from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and is a recipient of the Morris Louis '32 scholarship.

Clockwise from upper left: *Neapolitan*, *Molten Channel*, *Pink Waterfall*, *Summit Divide*, all 2014
Opposite: *Park Breeze*, 2011



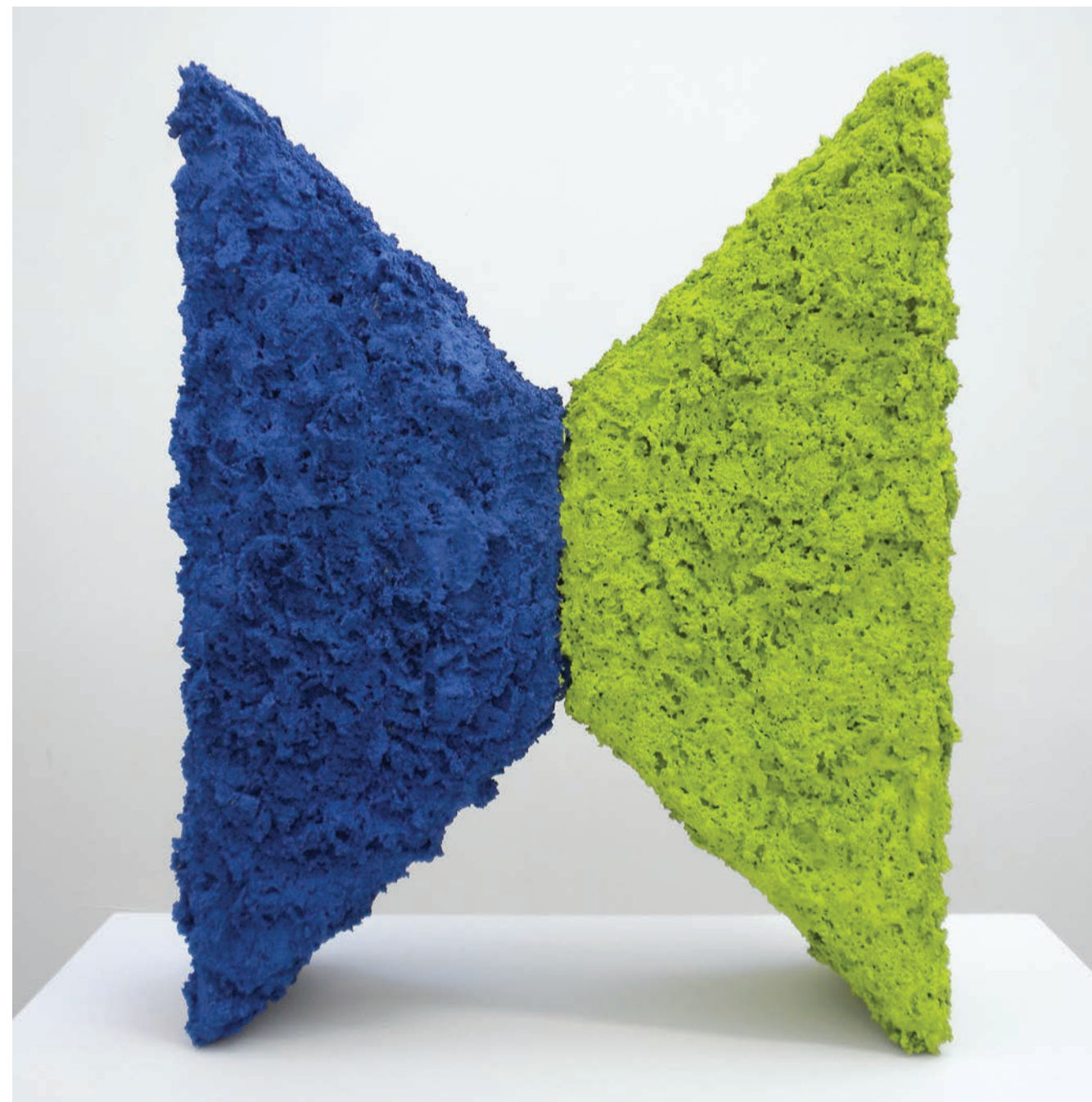
OSAMU KOBAYASHI



REBECCA MURTAUGH

Rebecca Murtaugh earned a Master of Fine Arts degree from Virginia Commonwealth University and a Bachelor of Science from the Pennsylvania State University. She also attended Maryland Institute College of Art and the Corcoran College of Art and Design. Her work has been exhibited nationally in solo and group exhibitions in New York City, Philadelphia, District of Columbia, New Haven, Cleveland, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Richmond, Nashville, Seattle and San Francisco. Murtaugh's work has been written about in *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *The New Criterion*, *Seattle Post Intelligencer*, *Artweek*, *Stone Canoe* and *Shamenet Magazine*. She holds the position of Associate Professor and Art Department Chair at Hamilton College and lives and works in Brooklyn.

Clockwise from upper left: *8 Foot Leaner*, *Aperture: Fusion* and *Radish*, *Aperture: Gladiolus* and *Calypso*, *Aperture: Waterfall* and *Saffron*, *Aequalis: Vegan* and *Heliotrope Purple*, all 2014. Opposite: *Aequalis: Blueblood* and *Fusion*, 2014





FRAN O'NEILL

Fran O'Neill received her Bachelor of Fine Arts and Post Grad studies from Monash University, Melbourne, Australia; Master of Fine Arts from Brooklyn College and Certificate from New York Studio School. Solo exhibitions include: John Davis Gallery, New York; Perimeter Gallery, Maine; New York Studio School, and Sussex College, Hastings, United Kingdom. She has solo exhibitions scheduled at Life on Mars, New York, and Simon Gallery, Morristown, New Jersey. Her work has been included in various group shows throughout the United States and in Australia. Awards include the Joan Mitchell Foundation Fellowship, Hohenberg Travel Award and Acker Award. She currently teaches at the New York Studio School. Her work resides in private collections in the United States, Australia and United Kingdom.

Clockwise from upper left:
ring of fire, *chime in*, *icing*, all 2014;
earthly delight, 2012
 Opposite: *additive*, 2014



FRAN O'NEILL

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

ALL WORKS COURTESY OF THE ARTISTS UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

RACHEL
BEACH
Courtesy of the artist and
Blackston gallery

Canary, 2011
Oil, screenprint, plywood,
reclaimed beams
70 x 96 x 18 in.

Demi, 2014
Oil, acrylic, plywood, metal stand
78 x 24 x 18 in.

Hull, 2014
Oil, acrylic, plywood, metal stand
78 x 24 x 18 in.

PAUL
BEHNKE

Alter Ghost, 2014
acrylic on canvas
60 x 58 in.

The Cave and Its Guardian, 2014
acrylic on canvas
60 x 58 in.

Magenta Vampyr, 2014
acrylic on canvas
48 x 50 in.

The Siren's Eye, 2014
acrylic on canvas
60 x 58 in.

Space 1999-HHA, 2014
acrylic on canvas
48 x 50 in.

MATTHEW NEIL
GEHRING

*And the Vital Vigor Stood
Its Ground*, 2013
oil on linen
94 x 80 in.

First Turn, 2014
oil on linen
80 x 67 in.

Lingua Vernacula, 2014
oil on linen
72 x 84 in.

Two Step, 2014
oil on linen
60 x 44 in.

Vantage Advance, 2014
oil on linen
84 x 72 in.

OSAMU
KOBAYASHI

Molten Channel, 2014
oil on canvas
72 x 72 in.

Neapolitan, 2014
oil on canvas
66 x 60 in.

Park Breeze, 2011
oil on canvas
72 x 72 in.

Pink Waterfall, 2014
oil on canvas
78 x 84 in.

Summit Divide, 2014
oil on canvas
72 x 72 in.

REBECCA
MURTAUGH

7 and a Half Foot Leaner, 2014
reclaimed house paint,
wood, and mixed media
90 in. tall

8 Foot Leaner, 2014
reclaimed house paint,
wood, and mixed media
96 in. tall

*Aequalis: Blueblood
and Fusion*, 2014
reclaimed house paint,
wood, and mixed media
20 x 16 x 7 in.

*Aequalis: Vegan and
Heliotrope Purple*, 2014
reclaimed house paint,
wood, and mixed media
25 x 19 x 9 in.

*Aperture: Fusion and
Radish*, 2014
reclaimed house paint,
wood, and mixed media
68 x 33 x 12 in.

*Aperture: Gladiolus
and Calypso*, 2014
reclaimed house paint,
wood, and mixed media
69 x 24 x 9 in.

*Aperture: Waterfall
and Saffron*, 2014
reclaimed house paint,
wood, and mixed media
36 x 19 x 7 in.

FRAN
O'NEILL

additive, 2014
oil on canvas
70 x 100 in.

chime in, 2014
oil on canvas
66 x 66 in.

earthly delight, 2012
oil on canvas
72 x 72 in.

icing, 2014
oil on canvas
84 x 84 in.

ring of fire, 2014
oil on canvas
84 x 84 in.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Form and Fracture: New Painting and Sculpture from New York and the 2014-2015 Paul W. Zuccaire Gallery schedule is made possible by a generous grant from the Paul W. Zuccaire Foundation. Additional funding is provided by the County of Suffolk and the Friends of Staller Center. I am very grateful for their support.

I would like to express my appreciation to the staff of the Staller Center for the Arts, especially Alan Inkles, Director. Also thanks to John Lutterbie, Chair of the Department of Art and Theatre Arts; the faculty of the Art Department and the Gallery assistants.

Finally, I would like to thank the artists for their enthusiastic participation in the exhibition and for creating beautiful and innovative new work to share with the Stony Brook community.

Karen Levitov
Director and Curator

Paul W. Zuccaire
GALLERY

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Gallery Hours
Tuesday–Friday, 12-4 pm, Saturday, 7-9 pm
Free Admission
Also open during intermission and one hour prior to most Staller Center season performances

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Brochure design: MACOMEA@optonline.net

ISBN: 978-0-9909614-0-6

