

TUSSLE



STREET CORNER CONVERSATIONS

SHARON BUTLER, WENDY FULENWIDER LISZT, AND ARIEL MITCHELL at [McBRIDE/DILLMAN](#)

by Taylor Bielecki, February 20, 2026

While entering this exhibition, I am greeted with the works of three artists. Each of them have a different take on abstraction, process, and building layers and spaces that we can explore. Both the larger works and the smaller works carry their own energy, and bounce off each other in their own conversations next to and across from each other in the gallery. With the gallery being more intimate, I appreciated the opportunity to get up close to each work, studying the surfaces, how some colors peer through, and how some linen pieces are covered in a subtle glossy sheen. A detail I only noticed when I approached the work on an angle to admire the crisp corners. While all of the works do not offer exact images, I am given the opportunity to build up my own idea of what the space within the works resembles to me- this interaction helps understand some of the choices these artists have made while creating the works.

Sharon Butler's works are atmospheric and ethereal. The open canvas spots offer quiet moments to hold the instances of energy with color or shapes that Butler presents. It is refreshing to see color remnants as some washes sink into the canvas, some pigments to show more vividly than others, while the canvas material itself becomes a container of space just as much as the painting is. The piece such as *Neptune Park*, expertly illustrates decisions that Butler makes while in the studio, choosing colors, transparencies and layers to build interest and allow us the opportunity to enter her conversation of abstraction. The conversations we have about Butler's works offer an intersection where lines of thought, gesture, and experience converge, overlap, or pass each other alongside the other works in the exhibition.

Both Butler and Mitchell's works test their material's strength and capabilities. Process and experimentation open up into discovery and possibilities as each artist tests a raw surface, and trusts empty space to speak as much as a full space does. When Butler tests directly onto the canvas, Mitchell uses a primed layer first to create an armature with which color can go into. This white underpainting allows transparent yellows to glow more, such as in the piece titled *Growth Edges*, and the other colors gain vibrancy and meld into each other. Mitchell uses the underpainting to meld both abandon and restraint into process, where the underpainting is a foundation and both the colors and how they interact build up a new form upon the linen, extending upon the conversation about fixed forms. The painting no longer feels contained, the shapes grow.

Wendy Fulenwider Liszt's paintings layer and build up the surface of the canvas to allow for experimentation and discoveries. When I got to delve deeper into these works, I noticed forms that resemble architecture in nature, forms that are broken into with other layers, shapes, colors, scraping and coverings. It's as if I am watching Liszt excavating, covering and trying new layers in real time. Such as in the large work titled *Ridin Shotgun*, Liszt allows spots of the canvas to show, places where an underpainting color emanates through a transparent overlay - experimentation is an important aspect. While the forms on the canvas aren't fixed or anchored in exact meaning, they float and drift between legibilities. It's as if each piece carries its own life, its own evolution as Liszt works through them within the studio.

Surface is an integral aspect to the conversation- Butler's pinpoints of color or rings of pigment allow a radiation of energy that dissolve within the conversation occurring on the surface. Mitchell uses her surfaces to build upon and create new, dynamic forms, allowing her ideas to continue to grow. To not be contained. And Liszt uses additive techniques and subtractive techniques to build up and mold her surfaces. Added paint layers and sanding and scraping create a dance between each other as the end result becomes a dynamic conversation about surface and how it intertwines within the conversation of abstraction.

Together, these three artists share a deep commitment to material, process, and form. The foundations of painting (line, form, value, color, etc) become important pillars within these processes. Each is staking out her own vocabulary of abstraction while expanding the possibilities of what the medium they each use can hold. With each painting, they evolve the process of painting. They reveal painting not as an escape from the present, but as a space where thinking can be embodied, explored, and where form becomes a mode of conversation amongst artists. A place where discoveries become important additions to this ongoing conversation.

The title of this exhibition caught my attention, especially after experiencing the works. *Street Corner Conversations*- a place where casual carries prominence. Testing the unknown becomes an adventure where you want to see the results just so you can push those even further. That's what these three artists do. They push the boundaries and let the piece evolve into its own as if the artist is having their own conversations not only with viewers, but their works. The works come together to build up a cohesive study on abstraction- one where I want to continue to learn more. I want to join in the conversation these artists are sharing with us.



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