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Every Collection Tells a Story

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WILLIAM BRADLEY

Color, form and abstraction – William Bradley's work takes on a pure abstract language. Using a whole range of references and quotes from art history, his paintings deconstruct the role of abstraction in both modernism and contemporary art practice. We are visiting William, who recently moved to New York City, in his LA studio. Here, Bradley speaks to Julia Rosenbaum about tradition, digital influences and the importance of fantasy in his work.

YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF BEING A "TRADITIONAL PAINTER" BUT LATELY STARTED TO INCORPORATE DIGITAL IMAGE EDITING IN YOUR WORK PROCESS. CAN YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT YOUR WORKING PROCESS?

Digital editing has become more and more important to my process but it is purely a tool to inform the painting. I begin with intuitive ink and watercolor drawings calling on and abstracting images from memory and direct sketches made of seen things. These drawings are then scanned into photoshop and manipulated and edited and reworked to take them a step away from the immediacy of the drawings. These digital images then become a plan for the paintings. After applying a flat base color I transcribe the black lines from my digital plan onto the canvas. This provides the basis for the final oil painting.

HOW DO YOU NAVIGATE IN THE DIGITAL WORLD? DIGITAL NOSTALGIA?

I feel like I can't separate the digital world from the 'real' world. Be it checking Facebook and Instagram or viewing an art exhibition on the other side of the world. It is constantly there. I am part of the first generation to grow up with the internet and that provided so much of my exposure to art, design, culture. But also, growing up with games consoles and then eventually the smart phone. These works draw on a kind of digital nostalgia in that I'm referencing more the hyper colors of Mario and Sonic, the games, the graphics, the design I grew up with.

THE PROCESS YOU ARE DESCRIBING HERE IS VERY PLANNED AND PREDESTINED. AT THE SAME TIME THIS NEW BODY OF WORK IS LOOKING EXTREMELY VIBRANT AND COLORFUL, THE FORMS BECAME MORE FREE AND MOVING. IS THIS CONTRAST IMPORTANT TO YOU?

By approaching the painting in this way I have the information I need, the confidence to make the marks right first time, to achieve the vibrancy of color I desire. This gives the work a boldness, a free flowing look as there is no evidence of working and reworking the painting which for me would muddy the image. The painting of course takes over and the results of the painterly process move the work away from the digital plan. This is something that really interests me, the preplanned and the more immediate intuitive elements coming together. Each work plays around with this as I find the right balance of the two.



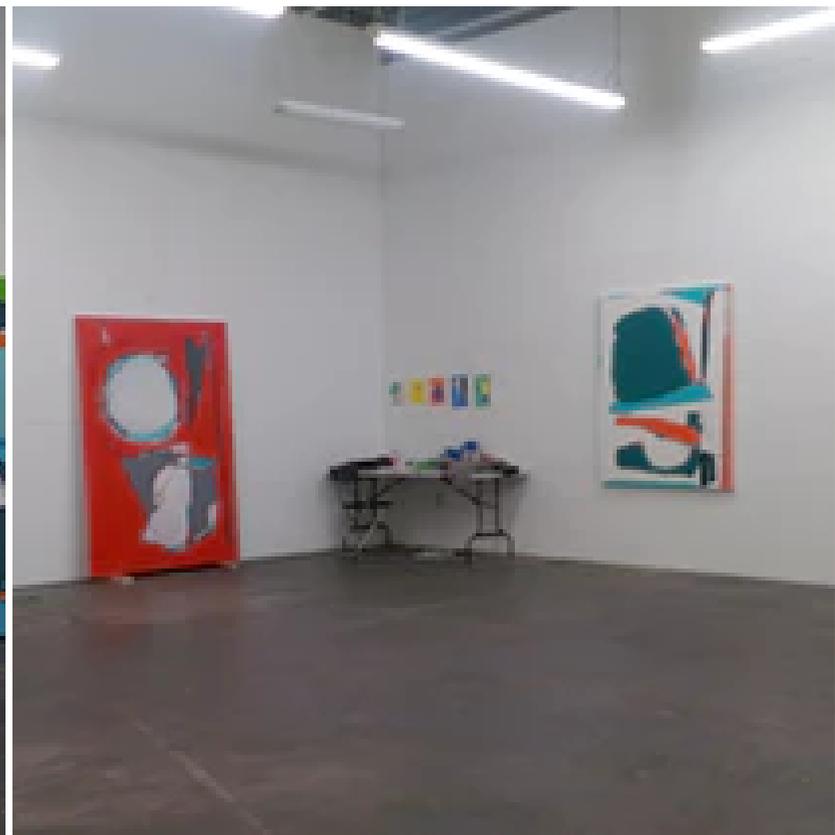


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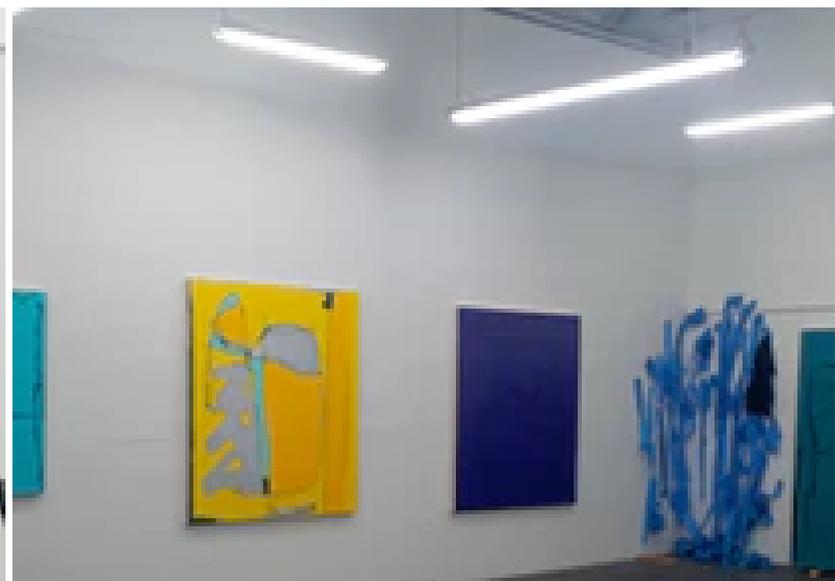
*William Bradley's studio
Courtesy the artist*



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TWO MAJOR RESIDENCIES HAVE CHANGED YOUR COLOR PLATE – HOOPER PROJECTS IN 2015 AND THIS ONE IN BERLIN WITH 68PROJECTS. CAN YOU TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT THESE CHANGES AND YOUR NEW COLOR CHOICE?

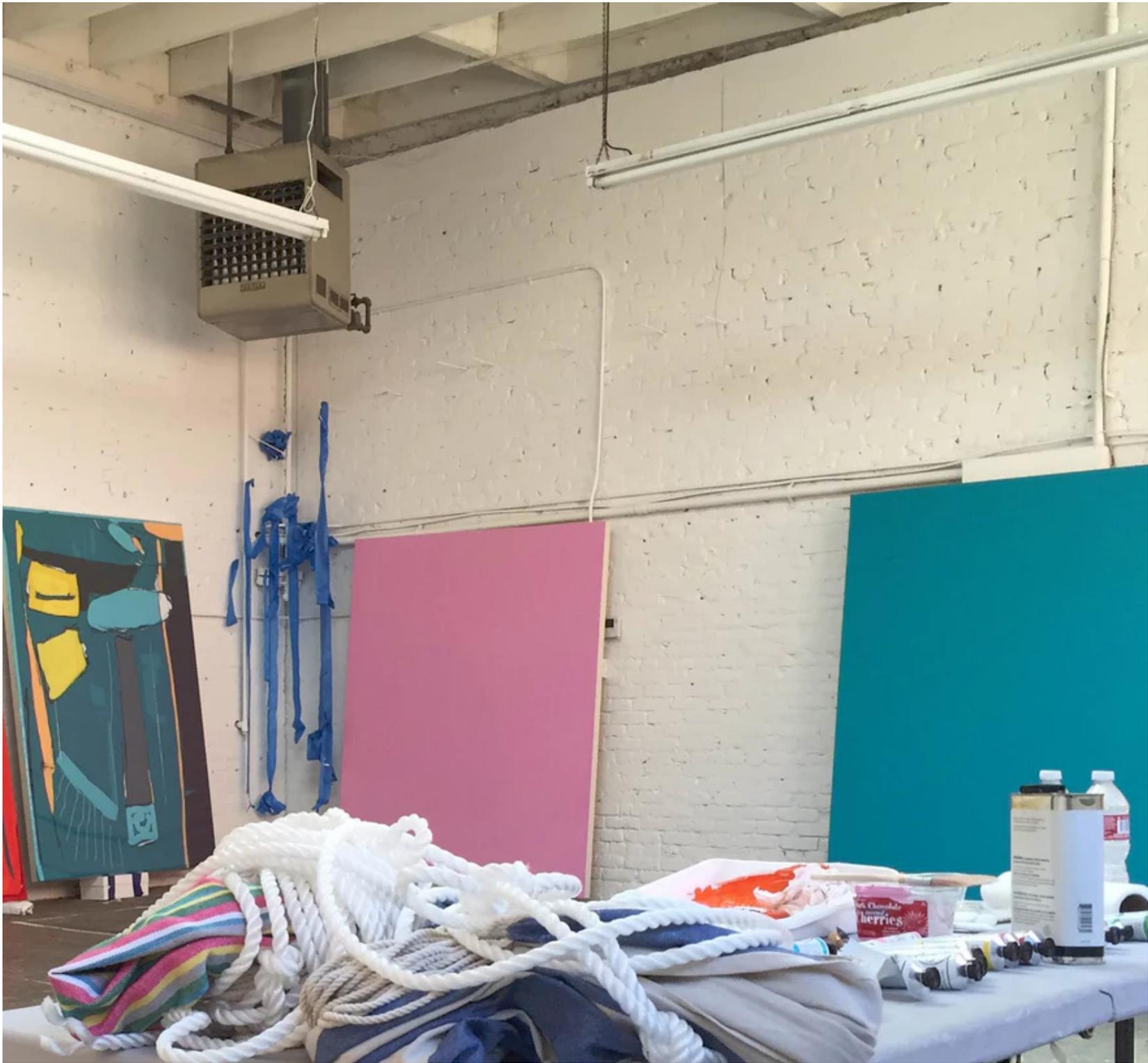
Immediately when I entered the building at Hooper Projects I knew something had to change. The first thing that hit me was scale but quietly a new sense of color began to move to the forefront of my approach. Just the environment in Los Angeles, the people, my fellow residents, a feeling of belonging, it all combined to inform a much bolder color palette, often fresher and more vibrant. I was one of 68Projects' first residents back in 2014 and my time in Berlin then helped to begin to free up my composition. This time being in Berlin to prepare my solo show allowed me the calm space to really focus on the things I had learnt during my last year in Los Angeles. This atmosphere, which always makes me happy, provided the perfect environment for the most vibrant, bold color to date. Color which relates more strongly to the digital than ever before.

HOW DID THE TIME SPENT IN BERLIN IN PARTICULAR INFLUENCE YOUR PRACTICE?

I've been lucky enough to work in several places over the last few years. Each one has filtered into the practice in many ways, obvious and indefinable. My work is heavily driven by experience and place can play such a role in that. Berlin is one of my favorite cities, there is a calmness there but also a great energy which combine in a very inspiring mix. My two prolonged stays in the city have been some of the most prolific times for my practice.

YOU SAID YOU ARE MORE INTERESTED IN THE "FANTASY" OF THE VIEWER. COULD YOU EXPLAIN THAT TO US?

For me the idea of the artist conveying their inner thoughts and feelings purely through their gesture and color choice became problematic. The viewer brings their own history, their own emotion, their own knowledge to a work and thus they bring their own reading and interpretation of the work. They complete it, the work reflects back at them their own thoughts, their own emotions and it is at this point when a painting truly becomes meaningful.





[\(/interviews/william-bradley/image/cj4tzpezo00l31df76xa36ecc/william-bradleys-studio\)](#)

*William Bradley's studio
Courtesy the artist*

WHAT HAS BEEN THE MAIN DIFFERENCE FOR YOU MOVING FROM LONDON TO LOS ANGELES IN REGARDS TO YOUR SALES? IS THERE A DIFFERENCE IN THE COLLECTORS APPROACH?

I have found that collectors in America can be quicker to act and then like to follow your progress and maintain a relationship. As a result they tend to collect more in depth rather than one or two pieces. This isn't to say I don't have similar relationships with collectors in Europe, I have just found this approach more prevalent in the States.

HOW IMPORTANT IS IT FOR YOU TO SEE HOW THE WORK IS HUNG WHEN SOMEONE HAS PURCHASED IT? AND IS IT EVER DIFFICULT TO SEE A WORK GO?

From the beginning of the process to the work leaving for an exhibition can take several months, living with the work, the personal events that feed into them during this time, and so the connection to the work makes it very difficult to see the paintings leave. When a collector then invites you into their home to see how they are living with it, the new lease of life, can make it so much easier.

CURATED BY JULIA ROSENBAUM, STUDIO VISITS OFFERS AN EXCLUSIVE AND INDEPENDENT JOURNEY INTO THE WORLD OF ARTIST'S STUDIOS. FIRST-HAND STUDIO TOURS FOCUS ON PERSONAL DIALOGUES REVEALING ARTISTIC INSIGHTS FROM THE VERY BEGINNINGS TO THE END RESULT; TO HELP UNDERSTAND THE ARTISTS' CREATIVE PROCESS, INSPIRATIONS AND CHALLENGES.

CONTRIBUTORS



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Los Angeles & New York



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William Bradley

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INTERVIEWS

LAURA BRUCE

As many others before and after, the American artist Laura Bruce came to Berlin because of love. Art...

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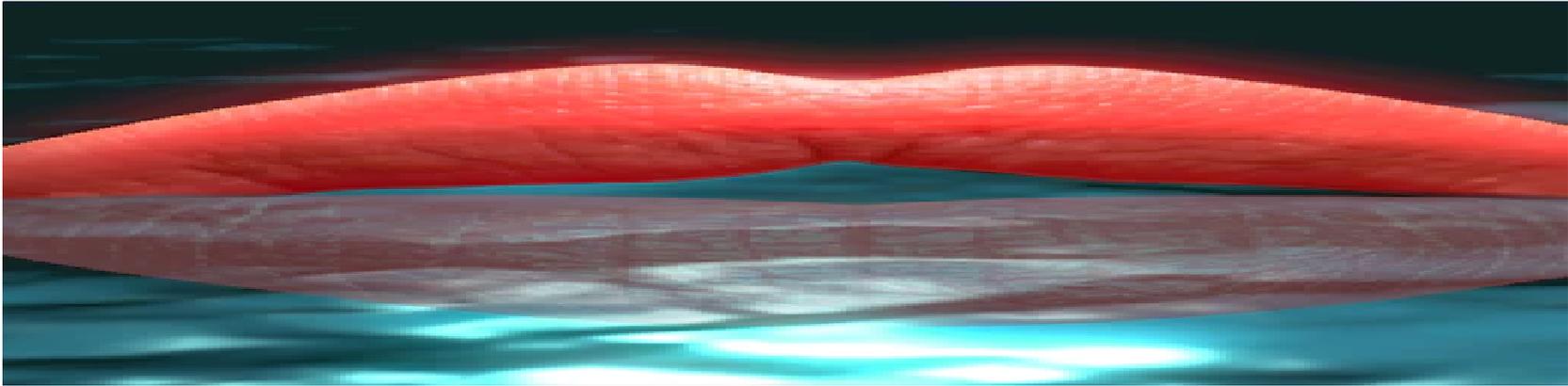


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With a strong focus on topics that surround identity, social commentary, injustice and appropriation...

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REBECCA RUSSO - THE VIDEOINSIGHT® METHOD PART II

Rebecca Russo is a philanthropist, art lover, producer, "maecenas", art collector, and President of...

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