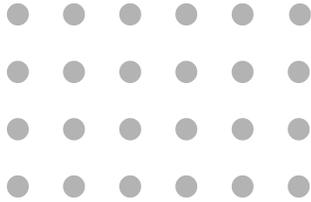
An abstract painting featuring a dense composition of brushstrokes in various shades of red, pink, magenta, and yellow. The strokes are layered and textured, creating a sense of depth and movement. The overall effect is vibrant and energetic.

Surface Impressions

April 4 - June 3, 2007

Curated by Karen Shaw

Islip Art Museum



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Kwang-Young Chun

Judith Murray

Scott Richter

Robert Sagerman

Diane Samuels

Kevin Teare

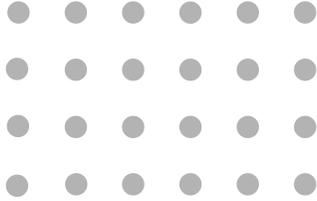
Jim Walsh

Robert Yasuda



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Surface Impressions



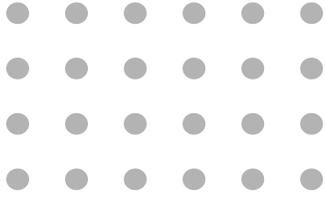
The surface matters to the eight artists in our exhibition to a great degree. The works of Kwang-Young Chun, Judith Murray, Scott Richter, Robert Sagerman, Diane Samuels, Kevin Teare, Jim Walsh and Robert Yasuda are all different and hard to ignore. How can one not respond to the sensuousness of their application and the sheer physicality of their paint? But surface impressions—to refer to the title of the show—are only a part of the story. Many other concepts and concerns bubble underneath their paint and paper.

Kwang-Young Chun covers thousands of triangular elements in century-old mulberry paper that recalls memories of his childhood growing up in his parent's pharmacy in Korea. The herbal medicines his mother and father dispensed were traditionally wrapped in this type of paper. Chun's undulating surface of projections join memories of his native country with contemporary art issues of texture and composition.

Judith Murray's subject is paint itself. Her work appears to be a collage of color laid down in sensuous strokes of varying lengths, one next to the other. In an accompanying film shown on a monitor in the hallway, visitors can learn what inspires her to make these paintings, how she proceeds technically and what decisions she makes as she covers and layers her canvases.

Scott Richter builds up paint upon paint to create spiral structures that seem to reference the Biblical Tower of Babel in ancient times, or Frank Lloyd Wright's iconic Guggenheim Museum in our own century. He regards these structures as paintings rather than sculpture as they are made completely out of paint.

Robert Sagerman's series of paintings are titled *Activity*, by which he means both the activity of physically making the work, and the meditative, mental activity that goes on while making the luscious, thick strokes of oil paint.



Diane Samuels' work is created from a series of molds taken from the actual surface of the alley outside her home in Philadelphia. The title *Sampsonia Way* refers to the street's name. After the molds are completely dry, she pushes special black paper into the mold and burnishes it, creating an archeology of the alley.

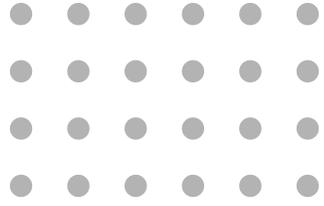
Kevin Teare's inspiration came from seeing the decrepit old buildings of lower Manhattan in the '70's before urban renewal and the real estate boom settled on that area. He was intrigued by the distressed surfaces of the walls of lath and plaster. His work in this exhibition is from the '70's, but most pieces have been reworked more recently.

Jim Walsh may get the prize for the thickest paintings in town. He experiments with paint and various mediums to create rolling surfaces that mimic slap-dash brush strokes and spontaneous gestures. But the works actually take months to make and months to dry. Walsh loves to play with the squishy, tactile material, and his paintings reveal his joy.

Robert Yasuda's work has a very different surface from all the other works in this show. His smooth, minimal canvases exhibit no dramatic peaks and valleys. They are made from numerous thin layers of acrylic paint that magically reflect light and give his paintings both an inner and outer luminescence.

Whether thick or thin, dimensional or flat, the varied works in this spring exhibition make a case for sticking close to the surface of things.

Karen Shaw
Curator



Artists Statements

Kwang-Young Chun

Chun's artwork reflects his intense involvement with both Western art and the rich heritage of his homeland. Begun in the mid-1990's, the series, titled *Aggregation*, breaks away from the conventional use of brush, paint and canvas. His compositions are constructed of hundreds of triangles wrapped in century-old mulberry paper. For those familiar with Korean culture, the mulberry paper used in these compositions offers an additional layer of meaning. Inspired by childhood memories, the wrapped triangles are evocative of herbal medicine bundles, also wrapped in paper, that hung in clusters from the ceilings of his family-run pharmacy.

Though herbal medicine is a dying art in his native country, Chun is keenly aware of the historical and personal resonance of his chosen medium. He orchestrates thousands of units to produce variations of surface, texture and composition. In the artist's hands, the richly evocative material he uses transcends its tradition. While imbued with Korean nostalgia, Chun's unique constructions speak on many levels and on universal terms.



Kwan-Young Chang
Aggregation 001 2001
Mixed media and Korean paper
64" x 52 x 2

Judith Murray

When I was very young, I was given a gift of a paint box that contained oil paint, brushes, mediums, canvas boards. This was how I discovered the physical density and sculptural quality of oil paint itself, which has continued to this day to challenge, engross, and give me extreme pleasure. The paint itself has become part of the subject of my paintings. Because of that, abstraction seems the clearest and simplest way to express feelings that are impossible to express in words.

To make something happen in an abstract painting is a different way of thinking about image-making, where that which is indefinable becomes the subject of the painting. Those same qualities of challenge and pleasure that have kept me passionately involved are what I want to give to the viewer of my work.



Judith Murray
La Forza del Destino 2004
Oil on canvas
60" x 60"

Scott Richter

When discussing my work, I am often asked whether it is painting or sculpture. Even though the pieces may have sculptural elements, in fact, my primary interests are not sculptural. And while I am very interested in painting, these are not paintings. They are, however, about painting...the “process,” but not the “product.” Someone said to me that they felt my work was like getting into a car, with no particular destination. With no place to go, one focuses on very different aspects of the ride—which I think is true. My pieces always start with a title. Color and subject are an issue, but that’s where it stops. The paint never leaves the palette...the studio day ends. Ultimately, it is the metaphor that serves the piece. Each piece also comments on the repetitious nature of painting. There is some irony here: while trying hard to avoid the product, I seem to end up with one.

Contrary to some thoughts in the former paragraphs, the work in my last show had a subtext, that being the war in Iraq. I have always been interested in The Tower of Babel as a shape, along with its mysterious purpose, which was spiritual in nature (although it seemed to also allow one to see just who’s coming to dinner earlier as well!). I used that vocabulary to clarify and compliment the other pieces in the show. I am willing to include its sculptural context, but just this time.



Scott Richter
Attempt to Babel #5 2002
Oil, paper and palette table
49" x 36" x 24"

Robert Sagerman

The title “activity”, which I give my works, operates on several levels. On the straightforwardly perceptual level, these works are intended to present the viewer, in the words of Michael Fehr, with “...an indissoluble thicket in which the eye becomes entangled and perception may become an...intense experience of seeing.”¹ The word “activity” in this regard refers to the opticality of the work. I seek to lead the eye around the surface charged with an emphatic materiality and with often vibrant color interactions.

On another level, the word “activity” refers specifically to the practice of making these works. This activity is not properly encapsulated fully in the term “painting.” Certainly, the works qualify as painting. They are comprised of oil paint on canvas, and they clearly partake of the venerable tradition of abstract field painting. But the repetitive (and sometimes laborious) activity of their making is meditational in nature. At some point the process becomes disengaged from the traditional formalistic concerns of painting. The work simply grows, incrementally, and seemingly at its own pace. The sense in which I refer to the work as “meditational” relates to the analogy that I am inclined to make with medieval Jewish meditational practices, the subject of my current doctoral pursuit. It is the encounter with the ordinary imperceptible and immaterial substratum of everyday reality that interests me. The accretion of sometimes vibrantly sensual material as a method for such an objective is paradoxical, but appropriate, for the material itself may ultimately be subsumed in the immateriality of the field that it constitutes. In this way, I work to thwart the material nature of the substance with which I work, to make a lie of this exaggerated sensuality.

On the other had, the analogy to some medieval Jewish mystics relates in one final way to the term “activity.” The kabbalist Abraham Abulafia, the subject of my doctoral dissertation, pursued the mystical encounter with the so-called Active

Intellect. Abulafia loosely adopted this terminology from Aristotle, who coined the term Active Intellect to indicate that feature of the divine realm from which humanity's intellectual capacities derived and through which one might return to a state of communion with the divine. Abulafia's method of pursuing this mystical return to the divine centered around operations referred to as "letter permutations." The numerical values of Hebrew letters served as the basis through which, by a ritualized and methodical practice of ceaselessly combining and recombining these letters, they themselves could be returned to their originary nature as divine numerations. My work activity in its purest form centers ultimately for me around the counting of each stroke for each color that comprises each painting. For me, the numbers themselves are the most direct expression of my work activity: it is they that suggest the immaterial essence of the work. The extent to which such an immaterial reality is objectively real, as against its status as a subjective projection, is one over which I puzzle.

In the experience of the kabbalist Abulafia, the encounter with the Active Intellect manifested as a dialog in which the divine entity stood before the mystic and imparted otherwise inaccessible insights into the Scripture, insights whose objective truthfulness suggested clearly an encounter with a bonafide transcendent reality. Yet objectivity and subjectivity merged for Abulafia, as he reports that the Active Intellect that appeared before him is none other than he himself, his mirror image.

It is this quality to Abulafia's experience that perhaps most intrigues me, as I recognize the artwork that is the product of my activity as simultaneously both a self-projection and a conduit.

1. Catalogue essay, "Indeterminate Painting: thought on the Work of Robert Sagerman," Munich 2006; p. 12



Robert Sagerman
15,027 2007
Oil on canvas
48" x 46"

Diane Samuels

Mapping Sampsonia is based on the people, the place, and the history of an alley, Sampsonia Way, where Samuels has lived since 1980. It is an 828-foot long street dating back to the eighteenth century when it was populated by first generation Americans from Europe. Over the years the surface has been marked by the accumulation of cracks and potholes that trace the archeology of the alley.

I made a five foot by fifty-six foot casting of the alley in front my house. My goal was to capture the exact texture, especially the cracks and lines in the road surface. I made the casting by pressing clay onto the alley in a consecutive grid that I pre-marked. I brought the pressings into my studio, put each into a jig, then poured plaster onto the clay squares. When the plaster was dry, I removed the clay pressings. When the plaster was very dry (months later), I placed many consecutive plaster squares on my work table and then centered a page of black Somerset Velvet paper onto the plaster casts. Using a tiny metal burnisher, I rubbed the entire back surface of the paper, pressing it into all the cracks and crevices of the plaster. The plaster transferred onto the black paper. So the rubbing is a kind of chalk.



Diane Samuels
Sampsonia Way (first eight feet) 2007
Black Kozo paper, white gypsum
18' x 19''

Kevin Teare

These works from the middle and late seventies were the first mature works I ever made.

They were inspired by my first trip to New York in 1974, while visiting the studios of Max Gimblett, Jim Huntington and Cornel Verlaan. I was not only struck by their work but by the conditions of their workspaces. Most of the hundred year old buildings in my hometown, Indianapolis, had been razed by urban renewal. In Manhattan, I saw the dilapidated interiors and distressed surfaces that would give birth to this series. I was particularly interested in the exposed lattice and mortar structures beneath the aging plaster walls. It was at this time that I started experimenting with industrial materials not usually found in art supply stores.

After returning to Bloomington, I met Julius Tobias, a sculptor visiting Indiana University. He encouraged me to move east, which I did in June of 1976. A year later, Julius offered me a spot at 55 Mercer Gallery showing next to one of his minimal concrete installations. The painting *Base on Balls* is from this series. The four paintings I showed in 1977 were all based on the nine square grid and were titled after baseball terms and that sport's relationship to the number 9. For this series, I received a National Endowment Award. The two others shown here, *The Praise/Blame Trip* and *Radio Free Noyac*, were started in 1978 and reworked in 2006.

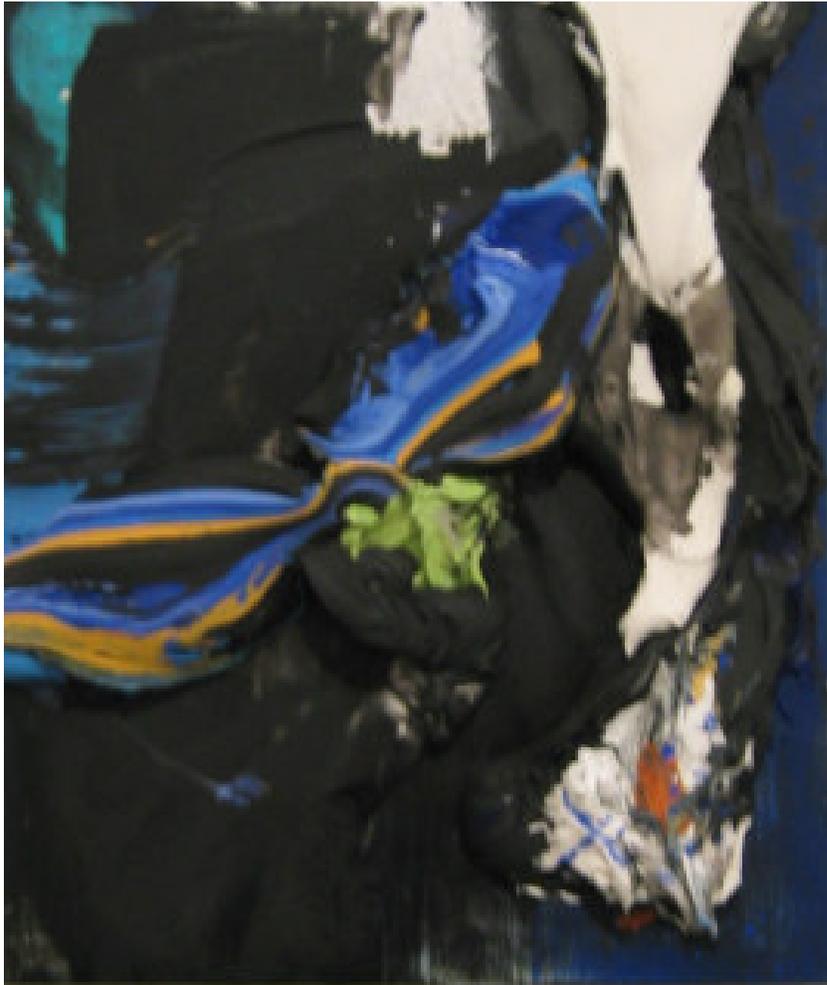


Kevin Teare
Radio Free Noyac 1978-2006
Oil, wood, mortar
6' x 6'

Jim Walsh

I am constitutionally averse to artist's statements. They are typically unbearable. Instead, I am able to add "accompanying remarks"—otherwise terms like "haptics" or "tectonics" start creeping in and they don't add anything for looking at or feeling the art.

For about thirty years, my paintings have had a lot of material on them—surface on them. I have a lot of stuff around me when I am making paintings—an abundance of cold, wet, squishy paints and mediums. Using these materials slows me down and I look and look-like the joke says-watching paint dry. My paintings take forever to dry...months. The density and thickness of the materials I use are, for the time being, containing the scale of the work within pretty much arm's reach. Who knows what will happen next, though? Every square inch matters or what's the point? Scale relationships rule in life and in art.

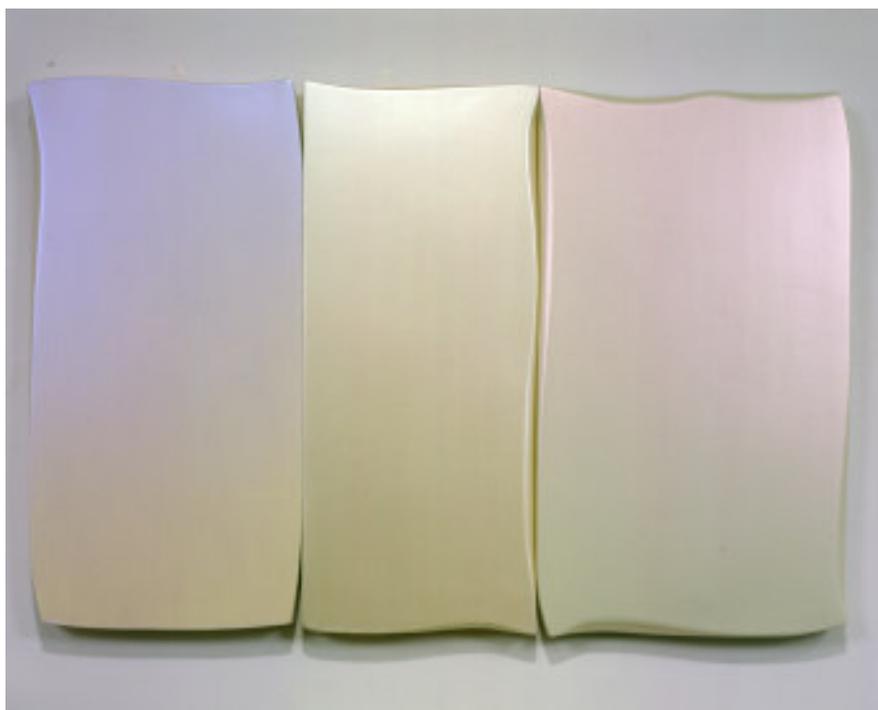


Jim Walsh
The Dark Fantastic 2007
Oil on canvas
28" x 24"

Robert Yasuda

In the late 1960's, I changed my primary medium to acrylic polymer from the slower drying oil paint that I had been using. This came as a result of time constraints creating several large scale painting installations in public spaces where the preparation time was at a minimum. At this point, I realized that I could do things with fast-drying acrylic that I could not do with oil.

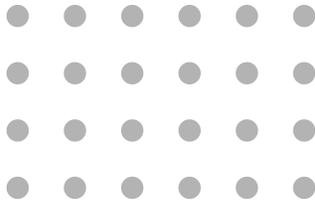
Over the years of development, the multiple layer approach to color and surface expanded to the point where some paintings have more than a hundred transparent layers and the final color is a visual summation of the process.



Robert Yasuda
Primaries 2006
Polymer on fabric on wood
28" x 48" x 2"

(image to the right)
Half Full 2006
Polymer on fabric on wood
80" x 5 1/2" x 1 1/2"





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