



Caitlin MacBride, Soloway Gallery installation view, 2018.

CAITLIN MACBRIDE

In rereading my original == interview with Caleb Considine, I was struck by the similarities between my text-related work from that point and the way it currently manifests. “I am definitely after a formal rhythm with text and abstraction,” I told Caleb in the interview.

In the time since that interview I completely left the text-related work and then somehow looped right back around to the same topic with completely different approaches. My current paintings don’t include any actual written language, but continue to be rooted in an exploration of translation and communication. I’ve been using museum archives to source images of artifacts—primarily fragments blown up many times their original size to create large-scale oil paintings. Via the Anne Carson translations of Sappho’s fragments I became interested in studying visual fragmentation and the possibility that what is lacking or missing might actually create space for intention. Most recently I’ve been painting ceramic pieces and finding myself in dialogue with their original glazes and painted surfaces. It oftentimes feels like working as a translator—finding the right application of paint to communicate the original craftsperson or artist’s labor.

In my original interview with Caleb we discussed the way my labor and day jobs were affecting and influencing the way I made paintings. At that point, I had found my hand completely coopted by the styles I painted in for other artists as an art assistant. I was struggling to develop new systems and processes to avoid this. I still find labor to influence my work, but these days I’ve been phasing out the art assistant work and doing more teaching. As I reread my interview I noticed how I mentioned Julia Kristeva’s concept of the “adolescent novel,” and how this has become part of my experience as a teacher. The “crises structure” she writes of, which values open, flowing borders between identities, has become an important part of my teaching system. I try to cultivate an environment for learning that values experimentation and sometimes failure. I find that material exploration is one of the most useful ways to not only develop a voice but to exist in a place of fruitful uncertainty. Part of my progression from the point I was at in the original interview is owed to my experience of getting my MFA at Bard, which I was preparing to start when I did that interview with Caleb. My paintings have become less about the separation of styles and more firmly grounded in my own voice, which I was able

to once again connect to my hand and to the movements on the canvas. I think often about the idea of affective movement when I paint. Part of my development in feeling “other” has been learning to value my own intuitions and desires in painting—to prize the physical as much as the cerebral.

Last month I had a two-person show at Soloway Gallery with the artist Lizzy Marshall that was very focused on language and communication, yet the works in it were also very different from the paintings I showed in the original ==. In the show, I presented a selection of my ceramic fragment paintings that deal with translation and fragmentation, and Lizzy wrote out selections of Anne Carson’s essay “The Gender Of Sound” on the walls of the gallery. While both the Carson text and my paintings were rooted in an exploration of the female voice in antiquity we were both chilled by how current the issues felt as we were hanging the show. As we installed the works we talked about how the policies of the current administration are affecting women—the repeal of the “Violence Against Women Act” and the ways in which the proposed health care bill would render female bodies preexisting conditions. In “The Gender Of Sound,” Carson writes about an ancient Greek ceremony wherein women gathered to scream obscenities, and to feel the power of their voices. It was a mix between a spiritual experience and “buffoonery.” We aimed to combine this experience with that of silence—with the fragment of language that women are actually allowed in public. ==