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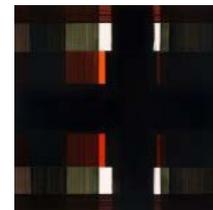
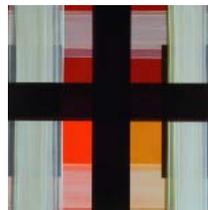
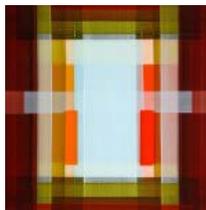
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Elusive Space

by Sara Carter

Sara Carter's paintings are a contrast between light and dark. The layering of geometric forms in Carter's work are used to convey space. Within this framework of constructed layers emerges a highly personal description of an environment charged with logical sequencing and subtle emotion. This month visual editor Noah Post engages Carter in an attempt to see through the layers of this veiled spatial language.



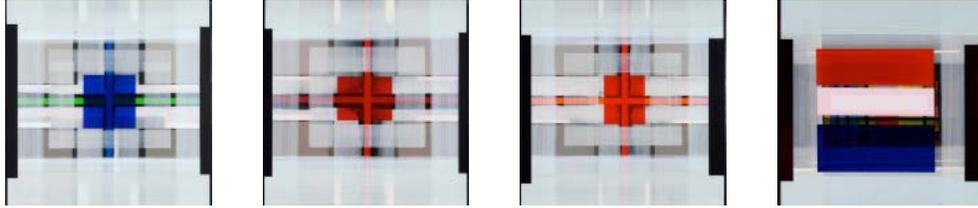
Noah Post: Upon visiting the Pulse Art Fair in New York, I was really taken aback by your paintings. There are vibrant, overlapping color bands that make potent, grid-like compositions. This issue of Glasschord is themed "Masks". There is strong element of "Masking" in your paintings – one color "masks out" another. Your process of overlapping seems like a key element of your work. How did this style develop?

Sara Carter: In my paintings, glazing, overlapping, and evidence of layer upon layer all play an integral part in the illusion of depth as well as actual creation physical depth. The implementation of this method pictorially and metaphorically represents the idea of an individual life experience; that being the interplay of subjective experiences as it interfaces with the collective consciousness. The constant, inevitable overlay of opposing directions and influences in life, when depicted in my work, are that of a complex grid system. Such a system ultimately distills the fundamentals of who we are to the fore, forever shaping and recreating our proclivities and thus our potential...for anything and everything. From the substrate of existence to the elegant and inelegant complexities of our human experience, the grid is ever present.

NP: You paint with a comprehensive color range. Each new series has a different palette than the last. Is color-mixing the predominate factor to your method?

SC: Color is supportive of the predominate factor in my work, that factor being the creation of space, or as I

tend to feel, the discovery of space. The role value plays in much of my work is paramount to that of hue. From stark contrast to subtle variations, the value of color is more effective in the communication of depth of space than color. While in specific instances I will employ color for color's sake, and while it is a very important aspect of my work, it ultimately supports the reading of contrast and space. I have found in my years of painting, studying, and appreciating art color in and of itself is incredibly seductive. This single seduction can lead, I believe, the artist and the viewer into shallow ground with a, perhaps, ephemeral appreciation of the interaction.



NP: In most of your paintings there is a background color that is shining through the strong dark areas that dominate the canvas. When looking at some of your older works in the Travel, Humidity, and Camden series, I see this start to happen. There is even a small window of red – similar to the Heat Series red – centered in “Humidity #6”, a painting from 2002. Do you feel that you had a breakthrough painting or series that changed the way you work?

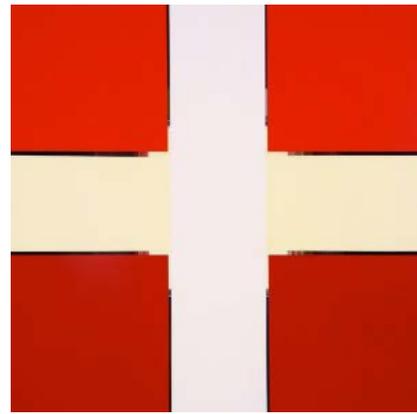
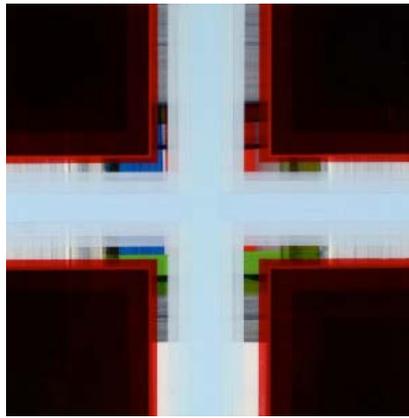
SC: While I strongly feel every series is a result of a breakthrough and a culmination of all that comes before, always leading to the next breakthrough, I can say the Travel series, from a compositional perspective, could aptly be considered a seminal breakthrough. The technique of creating the spatial relationships within the Travel series was, and continues to be, fundamental to an ongoing process that underlies every series since.

NP: Painting with acrylics can sometimes be difficult because the color changes as the paint dries. You seem to have a good understanding of how to use water-based materials. These paintings are dense and glossy, more like oil paintings. Why do you use acrylics? And what types of materials and techniques do you use to achieve this richness?

SC: I began using acrylic paints in 1992. I started noticing a toxic reaction to turpentine that necessitated a switch to water based mediums. However, with the glazing technique I had begun to use throughout my works, a faster drying time for individual layers became crucial. Acrylic paints and mediums are excellent for this objective. Acrylic paint has come a long way in the last two to three decades. With the advances in its quality, it is no longer considered the ugly, lesser step-sister to that of the quintessential, hailed oil. Acrylic is a completely different beast in the working process, yet in the end there can be little discernible difference in the luminous to textural aspects of acrylic versus oil.

NP: Some questions about your studio: Do you consider yourself to be a messy painter constantly reworking canvases and spilling paint, or are you more of a methodized painter with an organized palette and clean brushes?

SC: Well I'm basically in between. Sometimes, while in the passionate throes of wielding paint, things can get pretty messy. Paint everywhere and on everything. Yet, mostly I'm disciplined about keeping brushes clean. My process dictates I clean them often within a painting day, as I use them over and over for different paint/medium mixtures. The floor of my studio, which can be seen on my website, is caked with eleven years of excess paint. In that I paint predominantly with my canvases on the floor, this makes for a spectacular mess of glorious color.

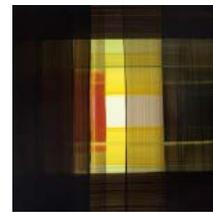


NP: Do you simultaneously work on different canvases?

SC: Yes. Always. I will have anywhere from three to five canvases in the works at one time. It keeps the process of actually painting flowing. When a layer is drying on one painting, another layer is being applied on the next.

NP: Is natural light a necessity in the studio? Do you prefer to paint at day or night?

SC: I have a specific crossbeam of warm incandescent and cool halogen light in my studio. I prefer this over natural light which, in most cases, in my experience creates a glare making it impossible to fully see that which needs to be seen. I paint day and night. I prefer day, as that is when my energy is highest, yet with the very busy life I lead, painting nights happens frequently.



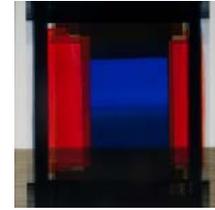
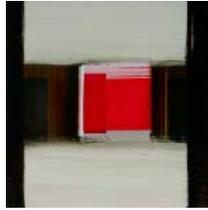
NP: Music you have been listening to lately?

SC: Just as is the inspiration to create and to express through painting, music is a rich accompaniment to the whole of my life. As it pertains to time spent in my studio, I will listen to music that reflects and supports the mood of the work in the moment. Contemplative to evocative to provocative to silence and much in between. Brian Eno, Harold Budd, Arvo Part, YoYo Ma, Stephane Pompougnac's Hotel Costes, Beck, Jeff Beck...the list could go on and on.

NP: Any artists whose work you have recently become interested in?

SC: Callum Innes is of great interest to me. I find the elegance of his work vibrant while serene, oscillating depth of color while also quiet and still. The excitement I feel looking at his work parallels the excitement I feel from my own creative process. Kristin Baker is an artist whose work is quite intriguing to me as well. The dynamic quality of light she renders from her process of painting and collaging is quite beautiful and enthralling to my senses – I love looking and looking at her pieces. Her large works at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston are spectacular. Yet, I don't think of the term 'recent' when I think of artists I admire. I believe one can return to paintings discovered years before and see something entirely new, or develop a new perspective and thus appreciation for familiar aspects of the work. Just as I continue to discover and

uncover my own creativity and artistry, I am constantly rediscovering the work of Mark Rothko, Richard Diebenkorn, William de Kooning, and Barnett Newman, to name but a few.

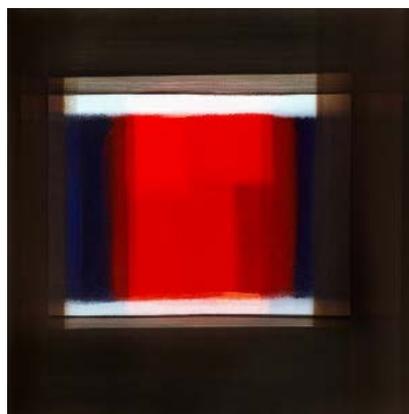


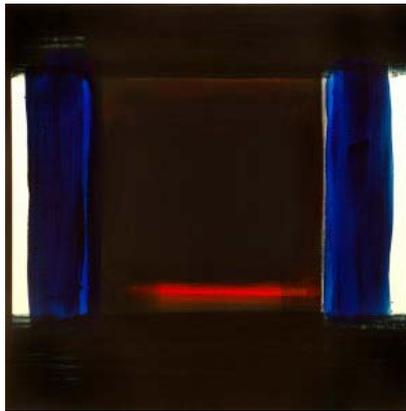
NP: Not including artists or artistic movements, where do you find inspiration for your work?

SC: The inspiration behind my work is a fundamental aspect of who I am. It has been with me always and touches pretty much everything I do. The discipline of painting – this form of inspired living and communicating – comes from a deep and profound facet of my being. The abstract, concrete, and physical nature of intense psychic and emotional remembrances ineffably fuel all that I create. These qualities of inspiration stem from an intense hunger to see and live the bigger picture, while swimming in the ecstasy of it all, even if for just a moment in time. I find the topic of inspiration, if touched truthfully, requires a willingness to burrow deeply into an esoteric construct – one can get lost in the labyrinth before emerging on the other side.

NP: You are currently living in San Francisco. I have noticed lately (via the Internet) that there is a cool Art/gallery scene happening in the Bay Area. It doesn't seem uptight like it is here, in NYC. San Francisco has always been known for being an artists' city, but what has been happening lately that makes the city such an inviting place for artists to settle there?

SC: Obviously, the visual traffic in San Francisco cannot compare face to face with NYC. Nonetheless, there is a unique energy in San Francisco that is more laid back, probably because there isn't the same pressure as NYC. While it can seem a bit provincial at times, if you look closely you are likely to find pockets of very interesting trends occurring. When the new San Francisco MOMA opened nearly 15 years ago, it brought a new seriousness to the Bay Area that gave a new level of credence to the arts. After the Tech Bubble burst, property values began to fall, making housing more affordable. This affordability is but one aspect of what has made San Francisco an inviting place for artists to settle.





3 Responses to *Elusive Space*

Sandy Robinson says:

June 21, 2011 at 11:59 am

Thank you for interviewing this artist. I have seen some of her work hanging in large corporate offices downtown and have long admired her work! I have to say, rather than feeling that her work “wears a mask” I feel that her canvases are more about “opening doors” and “exploration”. I feel the joy and hope emerging, even out of the darkest places.

Sanjiban Sellev says:

June 23, 2011 at 8:50 pm

These images are stunning and alive. They vibrate and invoke energy to move inside my body. Profound. They offer psychic information readily available. I was impressed with your insightful words about who you are. You are holding your blessed predicament beautifully.

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