

Peter Shear's paintings are ghost towns along a highway, ambient zones ripe for meditation. Boundaries endure, though always loose. The works are either self-contained within the frame or else they open outward, beyond the canvas; touch and then go. He produces apertures into his own world and the one at large. Shear is receptive to varied histories and his surroundings, allowing for generative energies to move his paintbrush from one corner to another and from one canvas to the next. He succumbs to the "hopeless gesture" in action and production; The emergent painting is complicated by the brushwork that produced it.

Shear's compositions are resolutely inchoate, reflecting an always-becomingness. He has expressed that his paintings are consistently produced without agenda, thus allowing for ubiquity. Moments of recognition coincide with moments of action while he paints. His nimble process yields equivocalities, proposals without certitudes. He drives each composition to an intersection then abandons it, lending the viewer an opportunity for a chance encounter. Shear hangs ideas on the viewer's poetics. In this respect, a painting's potential successes and failures rest squarely upon those who ponder it.

Drum is an arid landscape, the view from within a plume of smoke, the last of a snail slinking away. *Draft* is a flock of seagulls, the climax of sea spray, connect-the-dots culminating in the head of a rat. *Quarry* is a tree interrupting the dark expanse of night, a bird's-eye view of a fractured highway with a quick succession of dead end roads, the Chicago skyline. Rorschach tests. The exhibition's title contributes to this ambivalence. "The Cat Came Back" is pulled from Harry S. Miller's 19th century folk song, though on a linguistic level, lends to a pliancy of space, a "here" that one may abandon and then return to.

The works on view are recording devices and containers for thoughts. Some paintings are punctuation marks, others run-on sentences. The viewer can then come and finish sentences or else engage in a Mad Lib, filling in blanks here and there. Shear therefore denies an objective and instead offers ruminations on colorfield. *National Garden* presents an encounter between hot pink and maroon, while *Honey* pushes cerulean to its logical conclusion. The latter painting brings to mind a poem by James Tate where he details the fluttering of a butterfly with "a celestial blueness to soothe the weary heart." With Tate as a reference point, Shear explores open endedness and bedrocks for interpretation. He's not committed to high stakes, but rather a methodical and enduring approach to his practice. It's easier for the painter to *do* than to get stuck in meditation.

Shear kicks a can down automatism's road, allowing for paintings to "push back" here and there. The ideas stored in these compositions are not reverse engineered, but rather emergent. Propelled by exploration and curiosity, Shear inhales content and exhales expression, following paintings around corners and indexing styles along the way. A marked consideration of precedents persists within his practice. By situating Mary Heilmann, Jasper Johns, and Cézanne on the same horizon, temporal and conceptual fractures occur. The canvas becomes a receptacle for the work done prior to the application of paint-on-surface; mind as an organizing tool.



PETER SHEAR

Born 1980 Beverly Farms, Massachusetts Lives and works in Bloomington, Indiana

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2021: Recording, Fortnight Institute, NY

2021: Empty Boat, KOKI Arts, Tokyo, Japan

2019: Time Stamp, Herron School of Art + Design, Indiana University 2017: Magnolias All At Once, Fortnight Institute, New York, NY 2017: Editions of You, Devening Projects + Editions, Chicago, IL 2017:

Opportunity Cost, A\M Projects, Indianapolis, IN

2016: Family Resemblance, ATM, Austin, TX

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2021: Angle of Repose, Poker Flats Gallery, Williamstown, MA

2021: A Wild Note of Longing: Albert Pinkham Ryder and a Century of American Art, New Bedford Whaling Museum, New Bedford, MA

2021: Downtown, curated by Sam Gordon, La MaMa Galleria, New York, NY

2020: Maelstrom, curated by Fortnight Institute, 303 Gallery, New York, NY

2020: Zwag Curated by Kylie Manning, CG Boerner, New York, NY

2019: Adrian, George, Peter, Sofia e Tamina, P420 Galleria, Bologna, Italy

2018: Locus Focus: Peter Shear and Arvind Sundararajan, curated by Emil Robinson, 840 Gallery, University of Cincinnati.

2018: Lonely Planet, curated by Andrew Brischler, Gavlak Gallery, Palm Beach, FL

2017: Say Yes, curated by Kimia Ferdowsi Kline, Elaine L. Jacob Gallery, Wayne State University, Detroit

2017: ONLY Small Paintings, Fortnight Institute, New York, NY

2016: Basic Instinct, Peter Shear and Ellen Siebers, FJORD, Philadelphia, PA

2016: Good Bad Brush: Peter Shear and Matthew Wong, The Occasional Gallery, Burlington, WA

2016: Katelyn Eichwald and Peter Shear, Alter Space, San Francisco, CA

2015: Peer Review, Blyth Gallery, Imperial College of London, England

2014: Brute Moderates, Clinton King & Peter Shear, Firework Space, Brooklyn, NY

2013: The Double Down, curated by Trudy Benson and Jason Stopa, Trestle Gallery, Brooklyn, NY

2013: Reason & Romance, curated by Alain Biltereyst, 6b Gallery, Elingen, Belgium

BIBLIOGRAPHY

2019: Mousse Magazine | Sofia Silva | February 2019

2019: Art Viewer | George, Peter, Sofia e Tamina at P420 | February 28, 2019

2018: FieldTrip, 'A Conversation with Peter Shear', interview with Ryan Kerr,

2018: Observer, 'The Artists Busting the Myth That Big Paintings Sell Better', Margaret Carrigan

2017: Magnolias All At Once, published by Fortnight Institute, 2017

2017: Artdependence, "The beginning of the 21st century is a great time for the world's autodidacts."

2017: New York Times, Roberta Smith, 2017

2017: New York Magazine, 'The Art World Needs a Jolt. The Electricity Is Coming From Some Surprising Places.' by Jerry Saltz.

2017: Hyperallergic, 'The Homages and Inventions of a Self-Taught Painter' by John Yau, 2017

2017: Hyperallergic, 'The Studio Visit That Wasn't Exactly a Studio Visit: Dan Devening, Mie Kongo,

2017: New City Chicago, 'What's the Point of Abstraction These Days?' by Alan Pocaro

2017: 'Suspect Poetics' by Brian Leahy, 2017.

2016: 'Peter Shear: Some Thoughts, Open Not Closed' by Chris Ashley.

2013: Sensitive Skin Magazine #10.

