

Brackett Creek Exhibitions

On the Other Ocean

Wally Whitehurst

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25 Jay St. 104 Brooklyn, NY 11201

Brackett Creek Exhibitions is pleased to present *On the Other Ocean*, Wally Whitehurst's second solo-exhibition with the gallery.

Brackett Creek Exhibitions: Where and when did these works originate? Is there a specific historical, art historical or personal genesis for them?

Wally Whitehurst: *These particular works came out of our visit to Ashley Wertheimer's Ranch. We were entertaining the idea of doing a show in one of the large sheep barns. I almost immediately envisioned these large bright windows illuminating the space. Which is funny because despite casually referring to my previous paintings as windows, I've never thought of them as being symbolic in any way. But I liked the idea of there being this color zone where space could emerge and disintegrate, set between the dark interior and the vast, pristine landscape outside.*

BCE: What's your relationship to the "grid" in painting? I can think of at least 4 bodies of your work that explore the "grid" differently, would you talk about the distinctions or rules you set up for different grids?

WW: *I think the way my brain works requires a device like the grid. I need to establish some parameters before working in order to keep things moving in the right direction. I spent years as a lyrical expressionist and was incapable of finishing paintings. I had no idea how to turn off the voice telling me to add or change this or that. Tethering myself to the grid has enabled me to establish what's important in a given work and accept certain limitations. Which isn't to say there's no room for discovery, it just helps me achieve a particular kind of focus which is ultimately what the work is about.*

BCE: Is there a way you feel these paintings should be viewed? Is there content or something else to figure out with them? What should we be doing when we're in front of art objects?

WW: *I hope people look past the point of boredom. That's when I find the most interesting things start to happen to your body in space. There's a fuzzy disorientation or reorientation to the world around you. I'm trying to facilitate that kind of experience as best as I can while staying out of the way as much as possible.*

BCE: These are the first works of yours that include titles, would you expand on what you're thinking about and how the titles relate to the paintings?

WW: *Putting words to my paintings has always been a challenge. My experience making paintings exists mostly outside of language and naming them has felt like an imposition. At the same time, I was feeling some self-consciousness around being an untitled guy and questioned whether I was being*

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stubborn about it. So, I decided to title them as an exercise. It became an exploration of the lines of thought that run parallel to the work and forced me to take a look at how that thinking seeps into it.

BCE: Can you talk about how you approach color and space in your art? Have you been thinking about other artists relationship to color or composition?

WW: I like the spatial ambiguity that's created by the grid. It flattens the picture plane so aggressively, but the colors can't help but push and pull within the structure. There's an internal yoga that goes on while I'm making them where I kind of contort myself with the changing composition to see if I can ease into them. There has to be a certain degree of accepting things as they are because I've locked myself into this format. There's no adding a dash of blue here or there to balance things in just the right way.

I was thinking about the space in Bonnard's paintings. He's obviously after something very different but he does a similar thing. He'll paint a tiled bathroom wall or a landscape through a window that has a total life of its own spatially. It's not so much a flattening of space as it is a lack of insistence that anything exists in a particular place in the picture.

BCE: The works exist as colored grids in images but seeing them in real life there is a variety of surface details. A close look reveals brushstrokes, the tooth of the canvas, different paints and finishes, and glimpses of your pencil work. What do you see as the importance of showing the artist's hand? How do you see the image of the painting as compared to the impression or studied view of the work in person?

WW: I have kind of a nothing-special approach to the surface. I want them to be beautiful, but in a matter-of-fact way. I want the lines to be as clean as I can make them without tape, but not obsessively so. There might be a little nick here or there, but I'm not trying to choreograph them. I'm trying my best to make them clean, but that kind of perfection isn't the goal. Hopefully that gives them a human quality. In terms of paint application, I want the paintings to breathe and to have a softness to them. The lines are hard, and the colors are louder than my pallet would be typically, so I wanted to try and emphasize a sense of stillness as much as possible within that.

Wally Whitehurst (b. 1986, Brooklyn, NY) lives and works in Kingston, NY. He received a BFA in painting from Maryland Institute College of Art.