

In 1966, after ten days of heavy rain, the Arno river flooded Florence. Rushing water burst through the riverbank, rising in some places up to twenty feet, infiltrating all structures in its path. Dozens of human lives were lost, as were millions of rare books and cherished artworks in the treasured birthplace of the Renaissance and vast repository of tangible cultural heritage. This would set off a chain of events that would give birth to new conservation laboratories and strategies. The water receded nearly as swiftly as it arrived, but the impact would be felt for much longer. The *angeli del fango*, or mud angels, came forth from near and far to offer their services, tending to the material remnants and attempting to salvage artifacts in earnest over the course of a year and a half, with some restoration efforts remaining active until as recently as 2013.

In Katie Lyle's paintings, forms are suspended by planes of grout. This common building material, a composite of water, cement, and sand, is typically used to fill the voids in structural elements, sealing critical joints or openings. Reinforcing structures against, for one, water, an element that brings irrevocable change and alteration. Yet it is loss, lacuna, and revision that drives Lyle in the works that come together in *The Nouns*. Picking a scab reveals the wound, the flaking of a painting's surface reveals an earlier moment of mark making. The pale, textured surface of the grout encroaches on figures (and their fragments) that flirt with their very legibility-arched feet and extended arms.

The grammar of Lyle's practice emerges from her relationship to materials; the ordering of subject, object, and verb negotiated through addition and subtraction, accumulation and dispersal. Always in relation, she responds to the material conditions of her studio practice. A noun is a thing, an animal, a place, but it is also an idea, an action, a person-the artist, the conservator, the viewer. *The Nouns* are the found shelving unit, an abandoned concrete form, the thread that binds collaged bits of canvas back together. Bodies among (non-human) bodies.

Even in the absence of a flood, time is a medium in all art objects. Invisible to the naked eye, *The Nouns* are always already eroding. The idea of permanence, of stability, is just that-an idea, a construction, a contradiction. Artworks, even in "traditional" media, are durational entities. When does restoration become replication? When does change become damage? When does revision obscure the original? When does destruction build something new entirely?

- Katie Lawson, 2024

Katie Lyle is an artist working across painting, drawing, and performance. Selected presentations include: NADA House, Governors Island, New York presented by Franz Kaka; The School of Art Gallery at the University of Manitoba; La Datcha, Berlin; Franz Kaka, Toronto; Susan Hobbs Gallery, Toronto; Erin Stump Projects, Toronto; Daniel Faria Gallery, Toronto; Pangée, Montreal; The MacIntosh Gallery, London, ON; 67 Steps, Los Angeles; Oakville Galleries; the Nanaimo Art Gallery. Lyle has worked collaboratively with Toronto-based dancer Shelby Wright since 2014. Selected presentations of their co-authored work include: the Toronto Biennale, SummerWorks Festival, and the Canadian Art Foundation. Lyle is based in Toronto.