



SHANNON FINLEY: "Shannon Finley's Mixed Media Paintings are Geometric Beauties"

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The terms "typical" and "abstract painting" don't usually cross paths, and artist Shannon Finley continues that dichotomy with his vibrant, geometric work. Since his art debut in Berlin, the Canadian (by-way-of-Deutschland) has been dazzling the art world with his digitally-integrated acrylic paintings, breathing a new media edge into his classically-minded abstract artwork. His new show, the artist's first solo exhibition in New York, showcases thirteen vibrant acrylic-and-gel pieces, each with its own nods towards the past, present, and future of abstraction. We spoke to Finley about his work, his process, and why the integration of technology into the visual arts is less a break from the history of abstract art than a beautiful evolution.

The Creators Project: Your exhibition's press release notes that your work nods at both the past and future of abstract painting. How do you feel about this, and can you name a few sources of inspiration for your work?

Shannon Finley: I feel a strong connection with the history of painting and its relationship to the hand, however, I construct the works in a way which is also facilitated by digital tools, or with a sensibility that comes from working in the digital realm. The paintings develop out of both digital drawings and hands-on improvisation. When planning a show, I often begin by working out the scale of the works with digital mockups, overlaying previous paintings onto installation shots of the project space.

Can you tell us a little more about the processes behind your compositions? What software do you use, and do your final products always reflect the images you create on your computer?

When working on the paintings, I draw, use printmaking, the web, and animation design software. I often start with a rudimentary hand-drawn sketch, and then document each stage of production, digitally editing images of the actual work, and overlaying colors on top of the painting as it's worked on in the studio. It's an intuitive process, and I'm usually only happy when the unexpected occurs.

Do you find digital imaging software more frustrating or rewarding than physical painting?

In the digital space, everything is dematerialized and infinitely editable so it's sometimes hard to "fix" things and get down to work. The hardest thing about physical painting is that there is no "undo" button.

Do you maintain computer blueprints for your final pieces? I think it'd be cool to see the "befores" and "afters" of your work.

There's no before and after for the paintings; the computer drawings grow together with the paintings, layer by layer. The digital is completely intertwined with the handmade, and both feed off of and inform the other.

In this way, you're both a digital artist and a "classic" abstract painter. Does maintaining this duality enhance or inform your creativity, or allow you to think about your artwork through multilayered lenses?

The digital aspects of production help to create a bit of distance or mediation with the works, and I guess that is the multilayered lens you speak of. It speeds things up, and conversely lets my practice be more reflective. I spend a lot of time just simply looking, after which it's very easy to try a couple of things out on the computer and simulate various possibilities or ways to proceed with the painting.