

Melissa Chandon
164 Cleveland Street
Woodland, CA 95695
Advisor Professor Michael Newman

<http://mmchandon.blogspot.com/>
mmchandon@gmail.com

Defining Moments in My First Art Institute of Boston at Lesley University Residency



AIB Residency Critique space



AIB Critical Theory 1 – Jackson Pollock

My residency had a definitive starting moment which was during my first group critique, here after referred to as a critique, with my critical theory professor Stuart Steck. His comment about my work was, “nice, but how does this relate to current cultural issues”. This is an ongoing concern and one I hope to address and resolve during the Masters of Fine Arts program.

The group critique and the one-on-one crits were a wonderful time of revelation for me. The sharing of ideas with other students about their works, along with insight that came

to me during the process of speaking about my body of work, combined with the many ideas and suggestions the faculty was an amazing experience. The overall consensus and recommendation was to view my current work in two separate categories, studio work for my galleries and my research. I feel that through a series of questions, honest dialog and experimentation, I'll be able to begin the journey of what I need to do in order to accomplish my goals during this two year program. I know the time will go quickly. Before starting the MFA program I had a lot of time to think about my work and to think through the importance of this process and my ultimate personal goal as an artist. After starting the program I feel confident that the structure will allow me the time to experiment. With the critical theory classes, research and reading lists, I'll be able to contextualize my work and hopefully effectively communicate my concerns and address contemporary social issues.

During the residency my elective seminar was Public Practice with Julia Scher which I found very interesting. Our class covered many topics, conceptual ideas, materials and site specific works. Large scale public art really is attractive to me. I have had some experience with commissions for public spaces. It is really exciting and interesting to see how the works of painters can morph into a different medium to produce a piece that can work well for a public space. The criteria for art in a public space are heavily based in materiality and durability and can present challenges for a painter. Just shortly before starting this graduate program I attended an exhibition of Squeaks Carnwath's retrospective exhibition at the Oakland Museum and an exhibition at the Turner Carroll Gallery in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

She has started to experiment with tapestry as a medium for her work. The gallery in Santa Fe was exhibiting tapestry works by Squeak, Chuck Close and Hung liu. Recently in the public art arena painters have been using tapestry as an acceptable medium. Seeing the work answered a lot of questions that I have and it was very helpful seeing these works in person. Another artist I look to for inspirational is abstract painter Charles Arnoldi. His works are often very large, often multiple surfaces to create a single piece. He has a public art piece in the entry area of a building in San Francisco; I plan on going to see the work this semester. My all time favorite large scale commission which I was able see two years ago, shortly after the reopening of the Musée de l'Orangerie Jardin des Tuileries in Paris is Claude Monet's, Les Nymphéas. In our class we talked about the idea that a successful public art piece creates a complete environment for the viewer.

The artist talks during the residency were fantastic. It is interesting to hear individual artist contextualize their body of work. Cory Arcangel's talk was in many ways my favorite, spontaneous, insightful, random, funny, and articulate at the same time. I completely identified with his story about Tiger Woods and his process of reworking his swing. New York painter, Susan White had an interesting approach of showing the small rotating images of fashion, graffiti, other artist work, along with seemingly random photos during her talk. This was for me more effective in contextualizing her work than her actual talk. The detail images that Laurel Sparks used in conjunction with the large images of her paintings was very effective in showing the process and gave you information to understand the sculptural

elements she combines in her paintings. I have listened to many artist talks but knowing I am now preparing for my final MFA presentation, I now regard the talks in a very different way.

During my first semester of studio work the overall consensus during the group and individual critiques is to use this time wisely and experiment. Some of the ideas that were suggested as areas to explore are: abstraction, surface, (texture, smooth), paper, canvas, wood, metal, beauty, ugly, brushes, brush strokes, distance from the painted surface while painting, color, black & white, color, line, line as form, removal of paint: sanding, scraping, shiny, flat, edit, space, light, dark. My goal for the end of the semester is to set myself free to explore, and be adventurous. It will be interesting to see where my work takes me when I am not dictated by gallery needs and expectations. I hope to have quite a lot to show when return in January.

As my first mentor I have chosen Tom Holland, he has taught at University of California, Berkeley and the San Francisco Art Institute and currently has a studio in Berkeley which is not far from where I live. His work is non representational, both two and three dimensional paintings on metal. He has a very strong sense of color and form. I consider him less a painter and more of a sculptor. Our first meeting was just a few days after returning from Boston. Upon Tom's recommendation for my initial work is to produce lots of small works on paper, using tempura paints with glue and water as the medium. I must admit it is fast, fun and interesting. I feel less worried about the outcome and the semi preciousness that

the works that I paint for galleries have. This is a great starting place to begin my research and experimentation.

For the academic portion of my semester I would like to read many books on a wide range of artist and hopefully gain insight on their philosophical approach to their work. I am hopeful that in doing this the knowledge I gain will give me the necessary skills needed to bridge the gap that Stuart Steck so poignantly mentioned during my first group critique, how does my work address currently social issues. I hope to write a comparative essay on a painting by Squeak Carnwath and a painting by Cy Twombly. I would like to also investigate a painting from Richard Diebenkorn's Ocean Park series and a painting by Henri Matisse.

The artists that were recommended for me to investigate during this semester are: Gerhard Richter, Peter Doig, Mark Rothko, David Hockney, Squeak Carnswath, Maureen Gallace, Nicola Tyson, Edward Ruscha, Henri Matisse, Charles Arnolli, Cy Twombly.