

New American Paintings

JURIED EXHIBITIONS-IN-PRINT

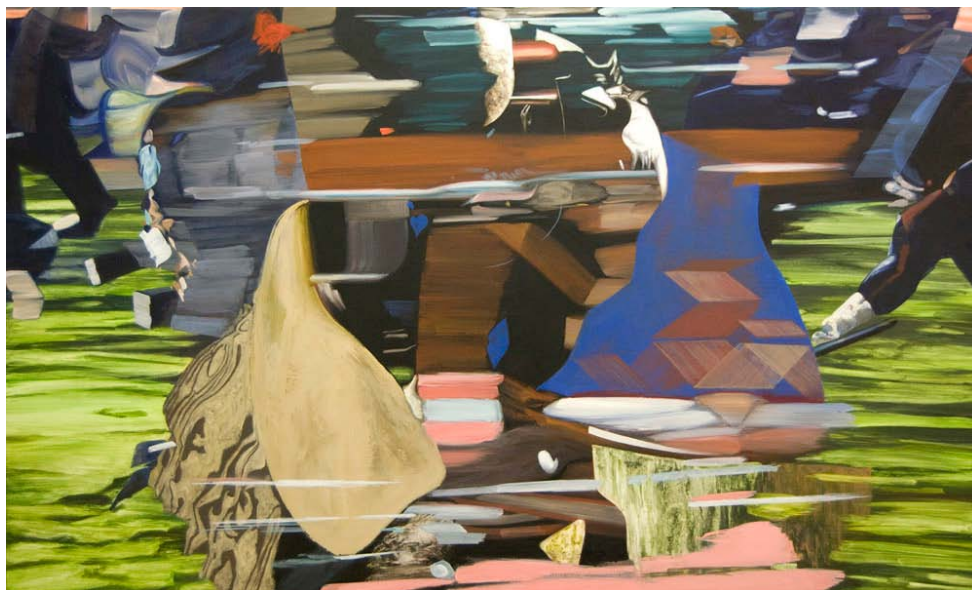
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NEW & NOTEWORTHY: JIM GAYLORD

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Force Field, 2010 | Oil on canvas, 36 x 60 inches. Courtesy Jeff Bailey Gallery, New York.

Jim Gaylord was selected as a Noteworthy artist in edition #86 of *New American Paintings* by Northeast competition juror Monica Ramirez-Montagut, Curator, The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum. I caught up with the Brooklyn-based artist last week to discuss his optically-charged works, which seem as if to use movement as medium.

—Evan J. Garza

EJG: Your work evokes a great deal of movement, and some of your abstractions seem as if captured by a moving camera.

That makes sense because all of the current work is made up of abstract shapes I find in film stills. They're the kind of forms that fly by quickly and are easy to miss, but I slow down certain sequences frame-by-frame and look for something interesting to work with.

The blurring effect that's happening in a lot of the new paintings is a result of the fast-moving subjects, but I'm finding that the motion translates into painterly brush strokes in an interesting way. The trick for me is to make them seem like they just happened spontaneously, while in reality they're planned out. It's kind of a contradiction, but if you think about it, it's not really even a process of abstraction because I'm depicting something that's actually occurring on the screen.

EJG: Did you stare out of car windows a lot as a child?

Sure, and I still appreciate being a passenger in a car or a train. I guess it's like watching a movie, or a campfire.

EJG: The line between representation and abstraction in your work is, quite literally, blurred. How do you approach your compositions and how are they produced?

I've always liked pictures that I had to keep looking at to figure out what I was seeing, but keep changing, so they never settle into one thing. I used to make 'automatic drawings,' like the Surrealists did, just making these ambiguous, stream-of-consciousness forms. But after a while, they all began to look the same, and I wanted to come up with more contemporary ways of image making.



Lapse of Decorum, 2010 | Oil on canvas, 35 x 60 inches. Courtesy Jeff Bailey Gallery, New York.

That's when I started looking elsewhere for shapes that interested me. I was a filmmaker in college, so that's partly what got me started working with film stills. It's a process of layering several frames one on top of the other in Photoshop with different blending modes, until I get a composition I like, and then base the painting on that. There is a lot of trial and error and mixing and matching until it works. Sometimes, I make studies by painting the shapes out on clear sheets of acetate and layering them together physically. It's a less technological way of working that resembles the format of traditional cel animation.

EJG: How do you work in your studio? And how do your works on paper differ, if at all, from your paintings?

I have to set aside time in the studio for scanning through many terrible movies to get the source material. I keep an archive with hundreds of stills, and when I have a composite I want to work with, I print it out and trace it onto acetate. I project this onto the canvas and make a simple sketch of where things will be in the picture, but there's a lot of leeway in the actual painting process. I want the marks to remain loose and painterly, and my work used to be really tight and controlled. I still maintain an element of control by working from a study, but there's definitely a point where you have to stop looking at the study and think of the painting as an independent thing.



Crestfallen, 2010 | Oil on canvas, 20 x 45.5 inches. Courtesy Jeff Bailey Gallery, New York.

Each medium does something different. Gouache can puddle up and soak into the paper to create these nice vaporous areas as it dries, and oil paint can be smeared and pulled across the surface to imply motion and speed.

EJG: Many of your works reference landscape scenes and animals, at least before they're ripped apart in the composition. How do you cull your images and what subjects inform the work?

The landscape element was more or less an accident that came from some of the first film still pieces I did. I was using the movie "Final Destination 2" as source material and there were a lot of outdoor scenes. I just left them in the paintings as a representational contrast to the abstractions in the foreground.

Those movies got me thinking about this obsession in American cinema with over-the-top death scenes, where people get killed in spectacular ways. I wondered what was behind that and it almost seemed like a literal form of figurative abstraction.



Melee, 2010 | Gouache on paper, 10 x 15 inches. Courtesy Jeff Bailey Gallery, New York.

I'm less interested in that aspect of it now and tend to look more generally at action or battle sequences. The high speed is more likely to yield the kind of abstract images I'm looking for, and this could include a movie like "Braveheart" or "Home Alone 2." As a general rule, I don't use films I like because I don't want to pay tribute to them. They are more of a means for coming up with the compositions, and there are usually three to four different source films in each painting.

Right now I'm really into period action movies because the military uniforms and costumes create some really strange and unexpected shapes while in the throes of battle. I almost never include any completely representational figures in my work, but someone once told me there often appears to be the remnants or traces of a person.

*Jim Gaylord will be featured in the forthcoming exhibition **Next Wave Art**, curated by Dan Cameron, at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM), from September 21 – December 19.*

Images courtesy Jeff Bailey Gallery, New York.