

Julie Umerle: New Paintings

The first thing I noticed when looking at these works, was the utter frankness of their construction. They exist by virtue of their process, yet this is not a process painting from 1970. Rather, there appears to be a new way of thinking with abstract painting. It lies in asking the epistemological question. What can paint do as a material abstracted from its support?

Julie Umerle's process explores several layers of cognition, setting up conditions for chance, and responding to the natural physicality of paint itself. After all, paint is an inherently expressive medium. Her decision making process highlights how far the accident will go to create an interesting material surface. Umerle arrives at this via a hyper formalism that makes no distinction between medium, surface, and support. The formal apparatus is gravity's gesture, its pull downwards. Illusionistic depth is achieved by the layering of the medium, which is an interesting nod to history. The physicality of the layers bears a relationship to the baroque curtain; here it is a curtain that is divided into strands of acrylic. It has the effect of suspending time, as the paint tends to conceal and reveal, stretching away from the viewer into infinite space. This is especially the case in a stunning work like *Red/Violet*. It is primarily the color, vermillion and purple, that effuses a sense of shimmering intensity, blurring any focal point.

In a way, this work serves as a record of time and space, both complimenting each other in equal parts. In exciting fashion, these two distinct aspects of a painting coalesce into a structure that is both familiar and strange.

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