



WENDY WHITE

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MARUANI & NOIRHOMME GALLERY

## WENDY WHITE IN CONVERSATION WITH JOSH SMITH



**Josh Smith:** It's clear how much planning goes into each painting. The construction seems precise and I imagine it was hard to hold everything together while you were working on these. Its hard to know as a painter how far it's OK to go away from painting. Definitely more sculptural and graphic than in the past. The paintings hung low change the feel a lot as well. The paintings still somehow look light.

The thing about your work, which is most different than my own, is the acrylic paint. Trying to make expressive paintings out of acrylic is different than oil. It's really different. The vinyl seems to help the acrylic distinguish itself and what it can do more clearly.

**WW:** Oil has such a visceral presence. I think my main interest is in the synthetic world, the challenge of trying to humanize it. I deliberately chose shiny vinyl to polarize the raw canvas, to get at the interaction of signs with defacement and street grime. I looked at buildings and took cues from there — where different materials that represent different time periods, attitudes, and aesthetic choices meet. There's really no logic to it in real life, every plot of land has a different building at a different height with a different sign. I think that's maybe where true expression lies, in not caring if your stuff looks good next to other stuff.

**JS:** True expression is an elusive idea. The more you seek it, the further away it moves. There is something similar between expression and style. Style in art is sometimes looked down upon. Especially with the pop-art types of paintings that people are making nowadays. I believe if I am making something with pure intention, with no other reason than to make it, then expression and style won't hardly matter.

With my own work, I have always tried to restrict the amount of materials I use. You are much more open to using non-traditional materials. You want to put the world you know straight into your art. Especially with the sculpture. A lot of artists try to do this, others make their art parallel to the world. You often mix both traditional art materials with things from the world around you. A lot of the struggle in your work seems to come from trying to wrangle different things which interest you into your art.

**WW:** I agree that there is visible conflict in these, or maybe contradiction is a better word. A lot of artists try to solve all their problems with painting, just paint on top of canvas, and I can't do that. Straight pictorial problem-solving alone is not intellectually engaging to me. I'm open to bringing in whatever I need. I see experience as materially hybrid and painting is just one piece of a larger narrative.

When you first met me around 2004, I was making large, mostly abstract paintings and sculptures. They were meant to interact but were physically separate — paintings on the wall and sculptures on the floor. Since then I've combined those impulses to get at what I feel is the real problem of painting, its lack of reconciliation with the wall. So when I add sculptural elements to paintings, it's to accentuate the flatness, to describe the nonsensical nature of making a flat thing that has to end somewhere. The idea that something is supposed to happen within those boundaries, like an epiphany? It's ludicrous. I much prefer the real and palpable intersection of painting and wall, or sculpture and floor, the edges. To me, it's impossible to think about a painting without also thinking about how it connects to the room, the other works in the room, the door, the city...

**JS:** [But] vinyl in New York is mostly faded and worn. The materials in your paintings are fresh and new. I do not immediately think of buildings or even signs when I look at this group of works. I see a lot of things going on first with the materials, and then technically with the paint. In some, the paint really smoothes everything over and flattens it out. In the Fotobilds, the painting underneath is clearly undermined with the bright vinyl sitting right on top. It sort of makes a comment about the ease of painting versus the difficulty of making a strong painting.

**WW:** The moment of newness in New York City is so brief it almost doesn't exist. Everything gets immediately trashed. I wanted to extend that weird potential moment. Plus I can't feign wear and tear. Buildings and signs exist in the world, and they're nothing like paintings. I don't want to attempt to translate anything — I want to make new things, ruthlessly new things. I'm accepting of what happens naturally, so when these new paintings were coming out clean, I thought OK, they're going to be clean because that's how they're coming out.



**JS:** I like the idea of you making ruthlessly new things. I have never thought like that before. Your paintings are much more constructed than mine. I think of painting as narrative itself and do whatever I can to keep it as straightforward as possible. I don't like adding things onto canvases, or cutting things up. I want my painting to be sharp and simple, and I feel like dwelling too much on processes or steps instantly begins to kill the spirit of what I am attempting.

**WW:** Well it depends on what one is attempting. You might think my work is super planned but the entire process is stream of consciousness. Regardless of whether I add a sculptural element, I don't follow a preconceived plan.

**JS:** Why not just keep it flat, and fight your battles on a level field? What I have always liked most about your work is the way you paint and make marks on the canvas. I love the way you use acrylic paint.

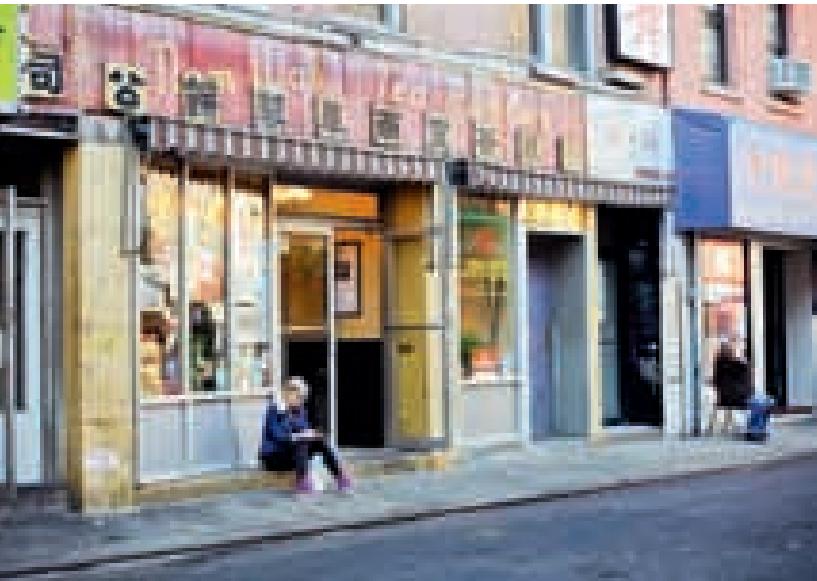
**WW:** Thank you. To me, all of the elements are valid gestures, whether they're made from paint or not.

**JS:** It's a stretcher and some canvas. The vinyl is just a shinier kind of canvas. You hardly talk about the painting at all. It is all about explaining the look of the work, the way its constructed and everything.

**WW:** That's because the way it's constructed is everything. Whether canvas is primed or unprimed, painted in oil or acrylic, that stuff matters. Those decisions carry meaning. You're totally right, vinyl is just a shinier kind of canvas, so a strip of vinyl with a digital mark is just another kind of painting. If that calls the purity of painting into question, that's good!

*Josh Smith is an artist living in New York City.*

## WENDY WHITE EN CONVERSATION AVEC JOSH SMITH



**Josh Smith:** Il apparaît clairement que chaque peinture est minutieusement préparée. La construction semble précise et j'imagine qu'il était difficile de tout maintenir ensemble pendant votre travail. En tant que peintre, il est difficile de savoir jusqu'à quel point on peut s'éloigner de la peinture. La démarche est résolument plus sculpturale et graphique que par le passé. Le fait de suspendre les toiles si bas change aussi beaucoup le ressenti. D'une certaine manière, les peintures rendent malgré tout un sentiment de légèreté.

Ce qui distingue le plus votre travail du mien, c'est la peinture acrylique. Essayer de rendre des tableaux expressifs avec de la peinture acrylique, c'est très différent du travail à la peinture à l'huile. C'est vraiment différent. Le vinyle semble pousser la peinture acrylique en avant, avec ce qu'elle peut rendre plus nettement.

**WW:** La peinture à l'huile a une présence véritablement viscérale. Je pense que mon principal intérêt réside dans le monde synthétique, dans le défi d'essayer de l'humaniser. J'ai délibérément choisi le vinyle brillant pour polariser les toiles brutes, pour représenter l'interaction des enseignes avec la dégradation et la saleté de la ville. J'ai regardé des immeubles, et y ai puisé des idées, où des matériaux différents représentant différentes périodes, comportements et choix esthétiques se rencontrent. Il n'y a pas réellement de logique dans la vie réelle, chaque parcelle de terrain est occupée par un immeuble différent, d'une hauteur différente, avec un panneau différent. Je pense que la véritable expression est peut-être là, dans le fait de ne pas se préoccuper de savoir si votre travail donne bien à côté du reste.

**JS:** La véritable expression est une notion insaisissable. Plus vous la cherchez, plus elle vous échappe. Il y a une certaine similitude entre expression et style. Le style dans l'art est parfois considéré avec condescendance, en particulier en ce qui concerne les œuvres « pop art » actuelles. Je crois que si je fais quelque chose avec des intentions pures, juste pour l'acte lui-même, expression et style seront de peu d'importance.

Dans mon travail, j'ai toujours essayé de limiter la quantité de matière que j'utilise. Vous êtes beaucoup plus ouverte à l'utilisation de matières non traditionnelles. Vous voulez placer le monde tel que vous le percevez

au cœur de votre art, particulièrement avec la sculpture. Beaucoup d'artistes s'y essaient, d'autres réalisent leur art parallèlement au monde. Vous mélangez souvent des matières de l'art traditionnel avec des éléments du monde qui vous entoure. Une grande partie de l'effort de votre travail semble provenir de votre acharnement à y intégrer différentes choses qui vous intéressent.

**WW:** Je pense effectivement qu'il y a là un conflit visible, ou peut-être que le terme de « contradiction » serait mieux choisi. Beaucoup d'artistes essaient de résoudre tous leurs problèmes grâce à la peinture, en couvrant simplement des toiles, mais moi je ne peux pas. Résoudre mes problèmes par la peinture n'est pas intellectuellement stimulant à mes yeux. Je me laisse la liberté d'y apporter tout ce dont je pourrais avoir besoin. Je considère l'expérience comme matériellement hybride, la peinture n'étant qu'un élément d'un récit plus large. Quand nous nous sommes rencontrés pour la première fois en 2004, je réalisais de grandes peintures et sculptures essentiellement abstraites. Elles étaient conçues pour interagir, mais physiquement séparées : peintures au mur et sculptures au sol. Depuis lors, j'ai combiné ces concepts pour cibler ce que je crois être le vrai problème de la peinture : l'absence de réconciliation avec le mur. Dès lors, quand j'ajoute des éléments de sculpture à la peinture, c'est pour accentuer le côté plat, pour décrire la nature absurde d'une œuvre plate qui doit être délimitée quelque part. Cette idée qu'il devrait forcément se passer quelque chose dans ces limites, comme une révélation ? C'est ridicule. Je préfère de loin l'intersection réelle et tangible entre la peinture et le mur, ou entre la sculpture et le sol, les contours. Pour moi, il est inconcevable de penser à un tableau sans penser aussi à la manière dont il interagit avec la pièce, les autres œuvres de la pièce, la porte, la ville...

**JS:** [Mais] le vinyle à New-York est souvent délavé et usé. Les matières de vos tableaux sont fraîches et neuves. Je ne pense pas immédiatement à des immeubles ou à des panneaux quand je regarde ces œuvres. Je vois d'abord beaucoup de choses qui se passent avec les matières, puis techniquement avec la peinture. Sur certaines, la peinture lisse vraiment l'ensemble et l'aplanit. Sur les « Fotobilds », la peinture du dessous est vraiment éclipsée par le vinyle brillant qui la recouvre. D'une certaine façon, cela illustre comment il est facile de peindre et difficile de donner de l'intensité à la peinture.



**WW:** La nouveauté a une durée de vie si courte à New York qu'elle existe à peine. Tout est instantanément bon à jeter. Je voulais prolonger cet instant éphémère. Sans compter que je ne peux pas simuler l'usure. Il y a des immeubles et des panneaux partout dans le monde, et ils n'ont rien de peintures. Je ne veux pas essayer de traduire quoi que ce soit : je veux faire des choses nouvelles, impitoyablement nouvelles. J'accepte l'œuvre de la nature, et dès lors que ces nouvelles peintures sortaient propres, je pensais « D'accord, elles vont être propres parce que c'est comme cela qu'elles me viennent. »

**JS:** J'apprécie l'idée que vous créez des choses impitoyablement nouvelles. Je n'ai jamais pensé comme ça auparavant. Vos peintures sont beaucoup plus construites que les miennes. Je considère la peinture comme narrative par essence et fais tout ce que je peux pour qu'elle reste aussi directe que possible. Je n'aime pas ajouter ou découper des éléments sur des toiles. Je veux que ma peinture soit précise et simple, et je crois que trop s'attarder sur des procédés et des étapes tue instantanément l'esprit de ce que j'essaie de transmettre.

**WW:** Et bien, cela dépend de ce qu'on tente de créer. On pourrait penser que mon œuvre est super planifiée, alors qu'elle relève d'un processus spontané. Peu importe que j'ajoute un élément sculptural, je ne suis pas un plan préconçu.

**JS:** Pourquoi ne pas rester à plat et combattre sur un même terrain ? Ce que j'ai toujours particulièrement aimé dans vos œuvres, c'est votre manière de

peindre et de marquer les toiles. J'adore votre façon d'utiliser la peinture acrylique.

**WW:** Merci. Pour moi, tous les éléments sont des gestes utiles, qu'ils proviennent de la peinture ou pas.

**JS:** C'est un cadre et une toile. Le vinyle n'est rien de plus qu'une forme de toile plus brillante. On parle à peine de la peinture. Il s'agit en définitive d'expliquer l'apparence de l'œuvre, la manière dont elle est construite, etc.

**WW:** C'est parce que tout est dans la manière dont elle est construite. Avec ou sans apprêt, à l'huile ou à l'acrylique, tout cela a de l'importance. Ces choix ont un sens. Vous avez totalement raison, le vinyle est juste une forme de toile plus brillante, dès lors une bande de vinyle avec un marquage numérique, c'est juste une autre sorte de peinture. Si cela remet en question la pureté de la peinture, tant mieux !

*Josh Smith est un artiste vivant à New York.*

WORKS

*By the D, 2013*

*acrylic on canvas, steel frame, inkjet print on vinyl*

*198 x 262 x 10 cm*



*Between Canal & Grand, 2013*  
acrylic on canvas, steel frame, inkjet print on vinyl  
198 x 262 x 10 cm



*Forsyth Near the Park, 2013*  
acrylic on canvas, steel frame, inkjet print on vinyl  
203 x 262 x 10 cm



*Grand*, 2013  
acrylic on canvas  
104 x 135 cm



*East of Ave D, 2013*

*acrylic on canvas*

*129 x 99 cm*



*Forsyth*, 2013

acrylic on canvas

99 x 132 cm



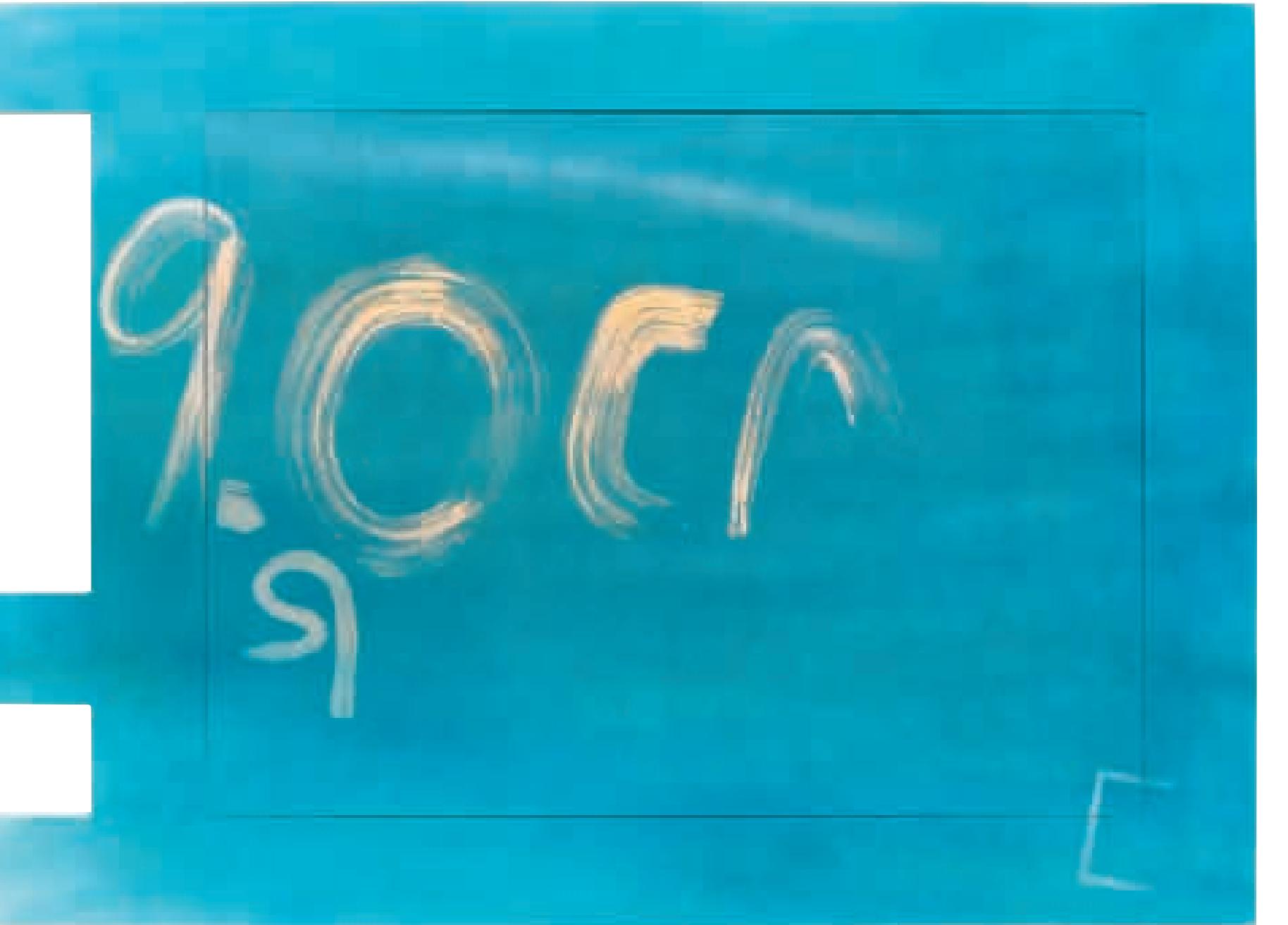
*Underpass, 2013*

*acrylic on canvas*

*132 x 102 cm*



*Ocean Star, 2013*  
acrylic on canvas, pvc  
119 x 165 cm



*Delancey*, 2013  
acrylic on canvas, pvc  
119 x 165 cm



*Grand Street*, 2013  
acrylic on canvas, pvc  
66 x 71 cm



*F87, 2013*

*acrylic on canvas, pvc*

*66 x 71 cm*



*Mechanics Alley, 2013*

acrylic on canvas, pvc

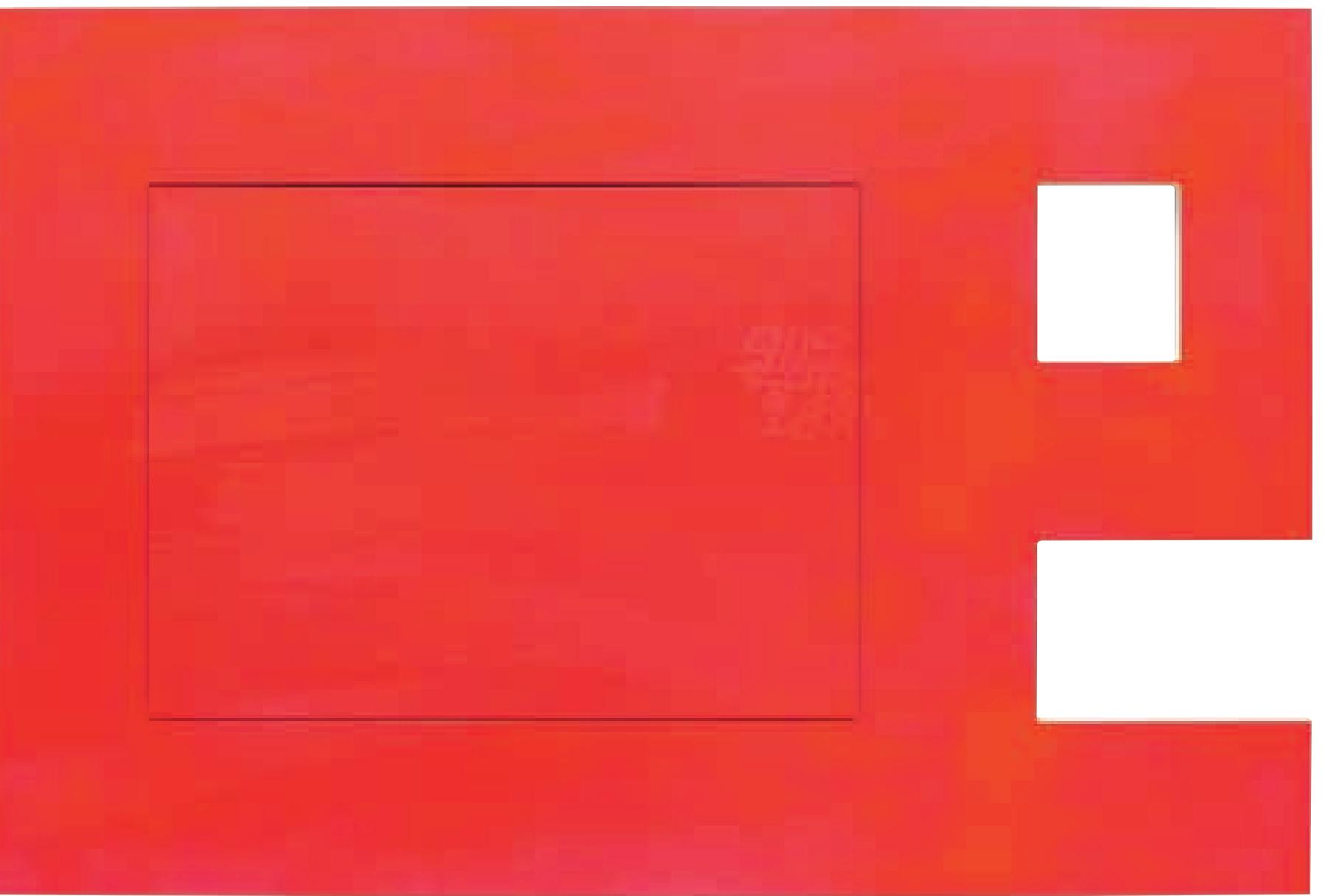
61 x 81 cm



*Two Bridges, 2013*

*acrylic on canvas, pvc*

*76 x 114 cm*



## BIOGRAPHY

## WENDY WHITE

Born 1971, Deep River, CT  
Lives and works in New York, NY

### SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2013 Wendy White, Maruani & Noirhomme, Brussels, Belgium (catalog)  
2012 En Asfalto, Galeria Moriarty, Madrid, Spain  
2012 Pix Vää, Leo Koenig Inc, New York, NY  
2012 Radio Lampor, Van Horn, Düsseldorf, Germany  
2011 6 Years/6 Works, University of Tennessee, Chattanooga, TN  
2010 French Cuts, Andrew Rafacz Gallery, Chicago, IL  
2010 Up w/Briquette, Leo Koenig Inc, New York, NY (catalog)  
2009 Feel Rabid or Not, Galeria Moriarty, Madrid, Spain  
2008 Autokennel, Leo Koenig Inc., New York, NY  
2006 Chunk Lite, Solomon Projects, Atlanta, GA  
2006 Wendy White, Sixtyseven, New York, NY  
2003 Silver Tongued, Solomon Projects, Atlanta, GA  
2000 Spilled in Spaces, Solomon Projects, Atlanta, GA

### GROUP AND TWO PERSON EXHIBITIONS

- 2013 Painted Perfect, Anonymous Gallery, Mexico City DF  
2012 Hue & Cry, Sotheby's S2, New York, NY; curated by Vladimir Restoin Roitfeld  
RAW, Ille Arts, Amagansett, NY; curated by Liz Markus  
Performing Painting (with José Parlá), Savannah College of Art & Design, Savannah, GA  
News from Chicago and New York City, Fiebach, Minninger, Cologne, Germany  
Against Interpretation, organized by Whatspace, Tilburg, NL + Onomatopee,  
Eindhoven, NL  
So Athletic (with Henning Strassburger), Kunsthalle Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz, Berlin,  
Germany (catalog)  
Idealizing the Imaginary: Invention and Illusion in Contemporary Painting, Oakland  
University Art Gallery, Rochester, MI; curated by Dick Goody (catalog)
- 2011 Let Your Light In, Country Club, Los Angeles, CA  
BNA: Brooklyn to Nashville, ZieherSmith pop-up gallery, Nashville, TN  
A Painting Show, Harris Lieberman, New York, NY  
Gold Records, Daily Operation, New York, NY; curated by Jon Lutz
- 2010 Informal Relations, Indianapolis Museum of Contemporary Art, Indianapolis, IN;  
curated by Scott Grow  
Vivid, Schroeder Romero & Shredder, New York, NY; curated by Janet Phelps  
Painting Comes Alive!, Artjail, New York, NY; organized by Erik den Breejen  
Graphic Abstraction, Moot Gallery, SCAD Hong Kong  
Third Thoughts, CCA Andratx, Mallorca, Spain; curated by Barry Schwabsky and  
Carol Szymanski  
I'll Let You Be in My Dreams If I Can Be in Yours, Fredericks & Freiser, New York, NY  
Shape Language, Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery, New York, NY  
Platinum Metre, Aschenbach & Hofland, Amsterdam, The Netherlands; curated by  
Koen Delaere
- 2009 Quick While Still, Motus Fort, Tokyo, Japan; curated by Kadar Brock  
Jettison: New Ideas in Abstraction, Austin Peay State University, TN (catalog)  
Maximal Minimal, Art Advisory, Lugano, Switzerland; curated by Nini Bonavoglia  
Rattled by the Rush, Andrew Rafacz Gallery, Chicago, IL  
Sick Shape, Daily Operation, New York, NY; curated by Jon Lutz  
Mergers & Acquisitions, Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, Atlanta, GA; curated by  
Stuart Horodner
- 2008 Pure Optic Ray, Fred, Leipzig, Germany  
Accident Blackspot, Freight + Volume, New York, NY and Galerie Markus Winter,  
Berlin, Germany; curated by Rob Nadeau & Jim Lee  
Insideout, Galeria Moriarty, Madrid, Spain  
Some Abstraction Occurs, 65GRAND, Chicago, IL; curated by Tiffany Calvert  
Freeze Frame, Thrust Projects, New York, NY; curated by Elizabeth Cooper
- 2007 Late Liberties, John Connolly Presents, New York, NY; curated by Augusto Arbizo  
The Show's So Nice, Monya Rowe, New York, NY  
Material Presence, Herron School of Art, Indianapolis, IN; curated by Scott Grow  
Emergent Behavior, Martin Art Gallery, Muhlenberg College, Allentown, PA; curated  
by Amze Emmons (catalog)
- 2006 Norf\*kneasters Take Pluto, Pluto, Brooklyn, NY; curated by Nicole Eisenman  
Twist it Twice, Moti Hasson Gallery, New York, NY; curated by Franklin Evans  
Le Show, V&A Gallery, New York, NY  
Boat Show, High Energy Constructs, Los Angeles, CA  
Open for Business, V&A Gallery, New York, NY
- 2005 Wendy White, Wendy Cooper Gallery Project Room, Chicago, IL  
Twenty Eight Days, Wendy Cooper Gallery, Chicago, IL
- 2004 So Few the Opportunities, So Many the Mistakes, Champion Fine Art, Brooklyn, NY;  
curated by Josh Smith

### EDUCATION

- 2003 MFA Mason Gross School of the Arts, Rutgers University, NJ  
1993 BFA Savannah College of Art + Design, Savannah, GA

## AWARDS

- 2012 Painting Fellowship, New York Foundation for the Arts, New York, NY  
2008 Grant, Artist's Fellowship Inc, New York, NY  
2005 Grant, George + Helen Segal Foundation, New Brunswick, NJ  
2004 The Space Program, Marie Walsh Sharpe Art Foundation, New York, NY  
2001 Leon Golub Scholarship, Mason Gross School of the Arts, NJ

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## SOLO EXHIBITION CATALOGS

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2010 Wendy White, published on occasion of the exhibition "Up w/Briquette," Leo Koenig Inc., New York, NY.

## GROUP EXHIBITION CATALOGS

2012 Idealizing the Imaginary: Illusion and Invention in Contemporary Painting, essay by Dick Goody, Oakland University Art Gallery

2010 Quick While Still, essay by Colin Huerter, Heist Gallery, New York, NY

2009 Jettison: New Ideas in Abstraction, essay by Ruth Crnkovich, Austin Peay State University

2007 Emergent Behavior, Martin Art Gallery, Muhlenberg College

## WRITING

2012 MFA Thesis Catalog essay, School of Visual Arts, New York, NY.

2007 Exhibition catalog essay, "Jered Sprecher, Truth in Tension," The Art Gallery of Knoxville, TN.

2006 Exhibition catalog essay, "Raoul de Keyser: Iconoclast," David Zwirner Inc., New York, NY.

## COLLECTIONS

Progressive Art Collection, Cleveland, OH  
ARCO Foundation, Madrid, Spain  
UBS Art Collection  
Jimenez-Colon Collection, Puerto Rico  
Saks Fifth Avenue  
Savannah College of Art & Design  
Torys LLP, Toronto, Canada

## EXHIBITIONS CURATED

2013 Deep Cuts, curated by David Humphrey and Wendy White, Anna Kustera, New York, NY

2012 Division 169, curated by Justin Adian and Wendy White, Rawson Projects, Brooklyn, NY

2011 New York Area MFA Annual, Mason Gross School of the Arts, curated by Wendy White, Hunter College/Times Square Gallery, New York, NY

2010 De-Nature, curated by Wendy White, Jolie Laide Gallery, Philadelphia, PA

# WENDY WHITE

Catalog and exhibition  
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