

University of Waterloo Art Gallery

East Campus Hall 1239

Hours:

Tuesday–Saturday, 12:00–5:00 pm

or by appointment

Driving:

263 Phillip Street

Waterloo, ON

(Located behind University Shops Plaza

Use South Entrance to ECH across

from Chemical Engineering 1)

Parking:

Meter parking is available behind ECH

Visitor parking is available at Lot N

and Lot UWP or Lot B after 3:45 pm

www.uwaterloo.ca/map/index.php

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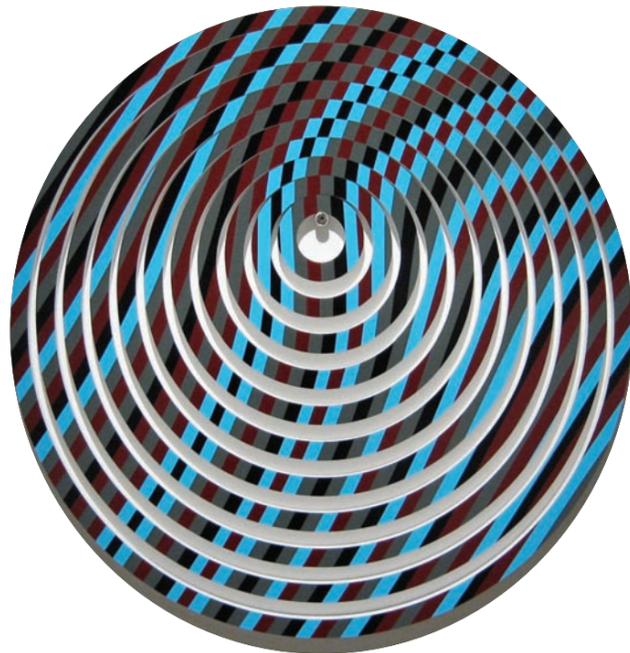
UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

Design: **Scott Lee**

Cover Image: **Derek Sullivan**, *Amnesiacs* (detail), 2005–ongoing, cardboard, plywood, paper, glue, various dimensions. Courtesy of the artist and Jessica Bradley Art + Projects, Toronto.

uwag

SEASON
ONE



Gravity Paintings

Gravity Paintings are a series of works completed by Patrick Cull over the last two years. Combining the meticulousness of hard-edge painting with signmaking techniques, this body of work marks a shift in direction for the artist from making expressive painted assemblages to a more formal engagement with abstraction.

Hard-edge abstraction had its genesis as a movement in California during the 1960s. It was both a critical response and a challenge to the overly demonstrative painting style of Abstract Expressionism, which had by that point been commodified. By formalizing the application of paint and minimizing the occurrence of surface incident, painters like Frank Stella and Kenneth Noland cast aside illusionistic space for flat surfaces in an attempt to reign in the broad mannerisms of expressionism.

Stella’s paintings in particular exhibit a sound design sense. His rigorous use of geometry and lack of painterly effect appears almost machine-like. Furthermore, his innovative use of irregularly shaped canvasses opened up avenues of experimentation that remain relevant. This combination of flatness, geometry and a shaped surface is an important precedent to Cull’s current work.

Cull combines his interests in abstraction with the innate skills he has honed working in the commercial sign industry for almost 15 years. Using signmaking techniques that he has perfected, Cull meticulously layers multiple shades of vinyl directly onto PVC, a common sign material. He then cuts a pattern of concentric shapes through this plastic support using the precise technology of a CNC router. The result is a series of eight fully spatialized geometric forms that neatly stack flush to the wall. Reminiscent of the Spirograph, a familiar childhood design implement that allows one to draw repeated geometric effects,

Artist Biography

Patrick Cull received his BA from the University of Waterloo and is currently pursuing his MFA at York University. His work has been exhibited across Canada and he has recently exhibited at the Ross Creek Centre for the Arts, Canning, NS; York Quay Centre, Toronto; Peak Gallery, Toronto; and Gallery 96, Stratford. His work is in several private collections and he is the recipient of numerous grants and awards, including grants from the Ontario Arts Council and ArtSmarts. He lives in Kitchener, Ontario. Patrick Cull is represented by Peak Gallery, Toronto. www.patrickcull.com

List of Works

Isosceles Target One, 2010
Vinyl on PVC, 143 x 51 x 1.27 cm

Isosceles Target Two, 2010
Vinyl on PVC, 140 x 71 x 1.5 cm

Isosceles Target Three, 2010
Vinyl on PVC, 143 x 89 x 1.5 cm

Gravity Painting (Black Diamond), 2010
Vinyl on PVC, 81 x 81 x 1.5 cm

Gravity Painting (Black Bandwidth), 2010
Vinyl on PVC, 58 x 58 x 1.5 cm

Gravity Painting (Campground Teal No. 2), 2009
Vinyl on PVC, 119 x 124 x 1.5 cm

Gravity Painting (Afghan), 2009
Vinyl on PVC, 113 x 113 x 1.5 cm

Gravity Painting (Bezier), 2009
Vinyl on PVC, 117 x 145 x 1.5 cm

Cull’s multi-hued stacks are as much shallow reliefs as they are paintings. In fact, several, including *Bezier* and *Isosceles Target Two*, demonstrate the tug of gravity as a both a compositional strategy and as an external force that drags the entire support into its final form.

Layers of coloured vinyl overlap multiple tiers of precision-cut PVC to create a subtle but insistent optical effect. As the eye is inevitably drawn along the multicoloured bands it is also disrupted by the serial interruptions to the surface of the picture plane. The eye is constantly pulled through the work to the supporting structure of the wall behind. The end result is a visually arresting decomposition of the usual boundaries between canvas, stretcher and support.

Ironically, by combining his painterly concerns with those of a signmaker, Cull’s approach addresses many of the same concerns that post-painterly abstraction wrestled with: flatness, optical clarity and the lack of gesture. By turning formalism into theatre his work tackles the crisis of abstraction head-on.

Ivan Jurakic

Image: **Patrick Cull**, *Gravity Painting (Black Bandwidth)*, 2010, vinyl on PVC. Courtesy of the artist and Peak Gallery, Toronto.

November 11–December 18, 2010

Gallery One

Derek Sullivan

It is More Difficult to Hit

a Moving Target

Gallery Two

Patrick Cull

Gravity Paintings



uwag



*Art Movies Posters Books
I like to make things that are already something else.*
– Allen Ruppersberg

It is More Difficult to Hit a Moving Target

Derek Sullivan uses quotation as the basis of his artistic practice. He makes art predicated upon the use of recognizable tropes from Modernism to Conceptualism. The artworks themselves range from books and posters, to drawings, sculptures and works in textile. There’s a restless and inquisitive quality to each that makes them both fascinating and at the same time often frustratingly difficult to read.

Sullivan samples the vocabulary of art as readily as one might download songs and press shuffle on an iPod. In this sense, his approach has something in common with the writings of Nicolas Bourriaud, who posits *mixing* as the shared language of a generation of artists who use sampling and mash-ups as a way of creating new forms out of the proliferation of available visual information and media.¹ A broad range of references are scattered like so many breadcrumbs throughout Sullivan’s work; from John Baldessari, Bridget Riley and Daniel Buren to Radiohead and Oasis.

Allen Ruppersberg is another name that frequently surfaces. Affiliated with the first generation of West Coast Conceptualists, Ruppersberg has in recent years been rediscovered by a younger generation of artists like Sullivan. Something of a pioneer in the use of the everyday, Ruppersberg is a contrarian whose work has a deceptively laidback vibe and an open-endedness that softens the hard edges often associated with Conceptual art. This looseness is intentional. It encourages engagement in a way that boxes and grids do not.

His work never denies the importance of criticality or rigour but allows for, and eagerly incorporates, notions of play, juxtaposition, quotation and the use of common forms such as the poster.²

Like Ruppersberg, Sullivan uses posters as a basic building block: an inexpensive, easily reproducible medium of distribution. It is one of the central motifs appearing throughout his works in various media. In the near-monumental *Endless Kiosk*, the poster is used as a means of overwriting the iconography of Constantin Brancusi’s *Endless Column*. Sullivan turns this Modernist icon into a vertical billboard by inviting viewers to add their own posters, handbills and ephemera to the mix just as they would on a common telephone pole. The papering disrupts the clean lines of the column and by association its utopian promise. By thickening the iconic column, Sullivan turns it into a readymade forum for social exchange.

Drawn using the unassuming media of coloured pencils and gauche, Sullivan’s *Poster Drawings* suggest a survey of the various art movements that marked the zenith of Modernism. From Post-painterly abstraction to Minimalism, Sullivan underscores each with a deliberate use of mark-making that acknowledges the artist’s hand, while simultaneously maintaining a tightfisted restraint. Nothing is overtly expressive. His drawings of gingham fabric patterns are particularly evocative, and similarly bring to mind the 1960s, an era in which art, music, fashion and design seemed to speak the same language.³ The addition of a series of black and white images behind the framed drawings acts as both a diversion and backdrop. The printed posters shift attention away from the individuality of the *Poster Drawings* while further reinforcing the layering of pattern and quotation that animates the work.⁴

Manuscript for Wattle and Daub may be Sullivan’s most ambitious, and perhaps most exasperating work. The installation is a compilation of studio experiments that the artist likens to drafts-in-progress completed between 2004 and 2009. The whole is assembled out of sixteen components that themselves often

contain multiple disparate elements.⁵ The accretion of objects, experiments and failed attempts at furniture building, are stacked to resemble a collection of unrelated items one might find stored in a basement, attic or artist’s studio. Combining a broad range of informal quotations—from Gerrit Rietveld’s *Berlin Chair* to hasty snapshots of Kurt Schwitters’ collages and an aluminum cast that evokes the iconic Rainbow Tunnel alongside the Don Valley Parkway—the assemblage is equal parts dada, De Stijl and thrift store.

The choice of title is significant. Wattle and daub is one of the oldest known methods of construction, in which wooden stakes (wattles) are woven with twigs and branches before being daubed with mud or clay. The handmade irregularities of the material are an intrinsic function of the techniques durability and charm.⁶ This underlines both the handmade quality of much of Sullivan’s work and his interest in weaving together disparate elements as part of a larger whole. The accumulation of mismatched ephemera is a document packed full of his personal interests and influences. He deliberately calls it a *manuscript*. It is an original, not a reproduction: *a written or typewritten composition or document as distinguished from a printed copy.*⁷

Sullivan mixes and matches his inspirations as a way of generating new ideas: *he likes to make things that are already something else*. His process might be likened to the game of Chinese whispers. One person tells another a story. This person tells the same story to another, who in turn repeats it to another. In the process of retelling the story inevitably changes. Whether unconsciously or through omission, details tend to get exaggerated or obscured. The meaning, substance and context of the original are altered. If the end result is a perplexing example of the fallibility of communication and memory, it may also serve as a useful model for generating change. Sullivan’s work shares a similarly optimistic disposition.

Ivan Juracic

Artist Biography

Derek Sullivan completed his BFA at York University in 1999, and his MFA at the University of Guelph in 2002. His recent solo exhibitions include Jessica Bradley Art + Projects, Toronto; Southern Alberta Art Gallery, Lethbridge; Galerie Florence Loewy, Paris; White Columns, New York; and Tatjana Pieters, Gent, Belgium. He has participated in numerous group exhibitions, including *Sobey Art Award Ontario Shortlist*, Cambridge Galleries; *P2P* at Casino Luxembourg (curated by Le Bureau), and *Citizen, Denizen, Resident* at Tatjana Pieters, Gent, Belgium. The artist lives in Toronto, Ontario. Derek Sullivan is represented by Jessica Bradley Art + Projects, Toronto.
www.dereksullivan.ca

Endnotes

1. Nicolas Bourriaud, *Deejaying and Contemporary Art*, reprinted in *Appropriation: Documents of Contemporary Art*, edited by David Evans, co-published by Whitechapel Gallery and The MIT Press, 2009, p. 158-162. Extract from Nicolas Bourriaud, *Postproduction/ Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World*, translated by Jeanine Herman (New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2002), p. 39-45; first published in English. French edition published by Le Presses du réel, Dijon, 2004.
2. Allen Ruppersberg, *The Secret of Life and Death, Volume 1, 1969-1984*, essays by Howard Singerman and Julia Brown Turrell, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, Black Sparrow Press, 1985; *Los Angeles, 1955-1985: Birth of an Art Capital*, supervising editor Catherine Grenier, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 2006, p. 195, 266, 357; and Allen Ruppersberg, *The New Five Foot Shelf*. <http://awp.diaart.org/ruppersberg/>
3. For complete details read Pamela Meredith’s essay from *Derek Sullivan: We May be Standing on the Shoulder of Giants but Some of Us Are Looking at the Stars*, Southern Alberta Art Gallery, 2008.
4. The poster image is a detail from a painting by David Hockney called *Looking at Pictures on a Screen*, featuring a portrait of influential 20th century contemporary curator and art historian Henry Geldzahler.
5. Derek Sullivan, *Manuscript for Wattle & Daub*, self-published, 2009.
6. Ian Pritchett, *Wattle and Daub*, article reproduced from *The Building Conservation Directory*, 2001. <http://www.buildingconservation.com/articles/wattleanddaub/wattleanddaub.htm>
7. *Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster Inc., 1986.

List of Works

Manuscript for Wattle and Daub, 2004–2009
Various materials, variable dimensions

Endless Kiosk, 2005–ongoing
Plywood, gatorboard, paint, glue, advertisements, 550 cm tall, endlessly expanding girth

Amnesiacs, 2005–ongoing
Cardboard, plywood, paper, glue, various dimensions

I Don’t Know, 2009
Lambda print backmounted on laser-cut Plexiglas, 147 x 33 x 0.3 cm, edition of 20, published by Bywater Bros.

We May Be Standing On The Shoulder Of Giants But Some Of Us Are Looking At The Stars, 2007
Laser-cut fabric, variable edition of 3 (+1 AP)

Proposal for a painting to occupy bars, restaurants, libraries, universities, offices, dining rooms, board rooms and museums around the world (after Poul Gernes), 2006
Eight Arne Jacobsen Model 3107 chairs, paint, variable dimensions

Every Letter in “The Sunset Strip”, How I Wrote Certain Of My Books, Landscape Manual #1, Landscape Manual #2, Landscape Manual #3, Robert Smithson, The Booklover, Two-Day Hangover, -esque -ish -like -ness, 2008–ongoing
Print-on-demand books

#1, Standing on the Shoulder of Giants, an errant ess, My Tailor is Rich, 2006
Gouache and coloured pencil on paper, 127 x 98 cm

#13, Standing on the Shoulder of Giants, an errant ess, County Rock, Jenifer Papararo, 2006
Coloured pencil on paper, 127 x 98 cm

#14, Standing on the Shoulder of Giants, an errant ess, Lions and Shadows, 2006
Plexiglas, 127 x 98 cm

#23, Standing on the Shoulder of Giants, an errant ess, What have I done to deserve this?, 2007
Coloured pencil on paper, 127 x 98 cm

#42, Monochrome with Void, Red Shoes on a Thursday, 2009
Coloured pencil on paper, 127 x 98 cm

Images: (Left to right) **Derek Sullivan**, *Endless Kiosk* (detail), 2005–ongoing, plywood, gatorboard, paint, glue, advertisements, 550 cm tall, endlessly expanding girth. **Derek Sullivan**, *#1, Standing on the Shoulder of Giants, an errant ess, My Tailor is Rich* (detail), 2006, gouache and coloured pencil on paper, 127 x 98 cm. **Derek Sullivan**, *Manuscript for Wattle and Daub*, 2004–2009, various materials, variable dimensions. Courtesy of the artist and Jessica Bradley Art + Projects, Toronto.