

THE START - INVESTIGATION

Starting off the year 2020, I was very excited yet nervous of the road ahead. Year 13 was essentially the final year in which I would be painting; the end of my long education career in high school. There was a choice between the continuation of the art I had been making the year before or, start from a completely clean slate. I decided to take the second path and begin the year off with a completely new approach to painting.

Architecture and the beauty behind it had always been a part of my fascination. Starting from the year, I had knew that prior to starting the portfolio, my goal was to get into the school of architectural studies. As a result, I decided that one of the main focal aspects of my portfolio would be architecture. I wanted to discover the reason as to why I have such attractions towards certain elements of architecture, wether it be form or structure. This was the beginning of my investigation.

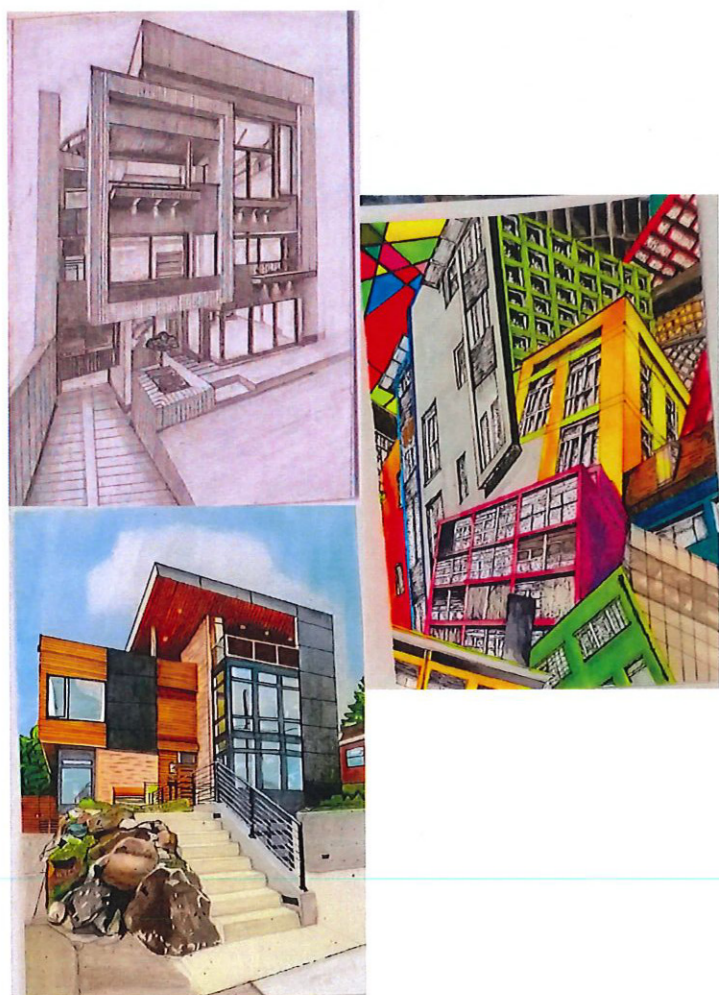


"Forest House" (2016)

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BEGINNINGS



Starting the portfolio, I took on a very linear and subjective approach, with the drawings of modern and aesthetic buildings which then leaned into a some what abstract scene - the combination of buildings. I further sought to develop my work by using photoshop. This lead me to take on a deconstructive approach within my works, breaking down the simple large form and shapes that makes up the architecture of a building. Along with this, came the importance of space and how it was used within a composition. Abstraction also became a very essential piece which progressed and developed along with the creation of my work. The combination of all these elements led me to discover the works of American artist, **Julie Mehretu**.

With my fascination of architecture, I spent a lot of time in the beginning browsing around and looking at different homes. I had looked into the works of many architetechs, and stumbled upon NZ architects **Fearon Hay** whose work "Forest House" really captivated me. Their use of spaces weren't detailed and sophisticated yet brought a sense of calmness. What stood out most was their use of linear wooden lines on the exterior of the house. Both simple and elegant, this was later used to inspire the abstraction patterns that I had painted.



SPACE & THE CASE FOR ABSTRACTION

After experimenting with photoshop, breaking down buildings into their key forms and structure, I decided to continue further developing this by straying away from the subjective aspects of architecture and focusing solely on the pure shapes composed within a structure. I became extremely interested in the works of **Julie Mehretu**, whose works conveys a layering and compression of time, space and place. From initial observations of her works, they seemed quite playful and full, however, slight subtleties of forms and shapes that were brought out in her work, added a completely new space and atmosphere which changed the whole composition. I incorporated many of **Mehretu's** ideas into my own works. Not only that, her use of paint and the techniques that she applied were so different that it made me think differently about how I painted. Many of her works were gestural paintings, built up through layers of acrylic paint on canvas overlaid with mark-making using pencil, pen, ink and thick streams of paint. This led me to explore a more gestural approach to painting, which was applied in blocks of colour.

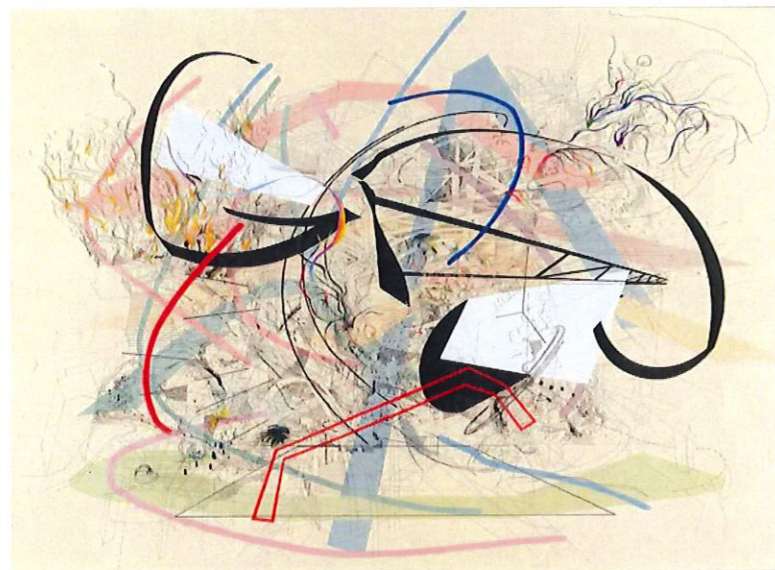
"Mehretu's unique form of abstraction is connected to a deep meditation at the crossroads of mapping social and political sites and actions, shifting points of entry, new visual languages, mediated images, and corporeality. Her



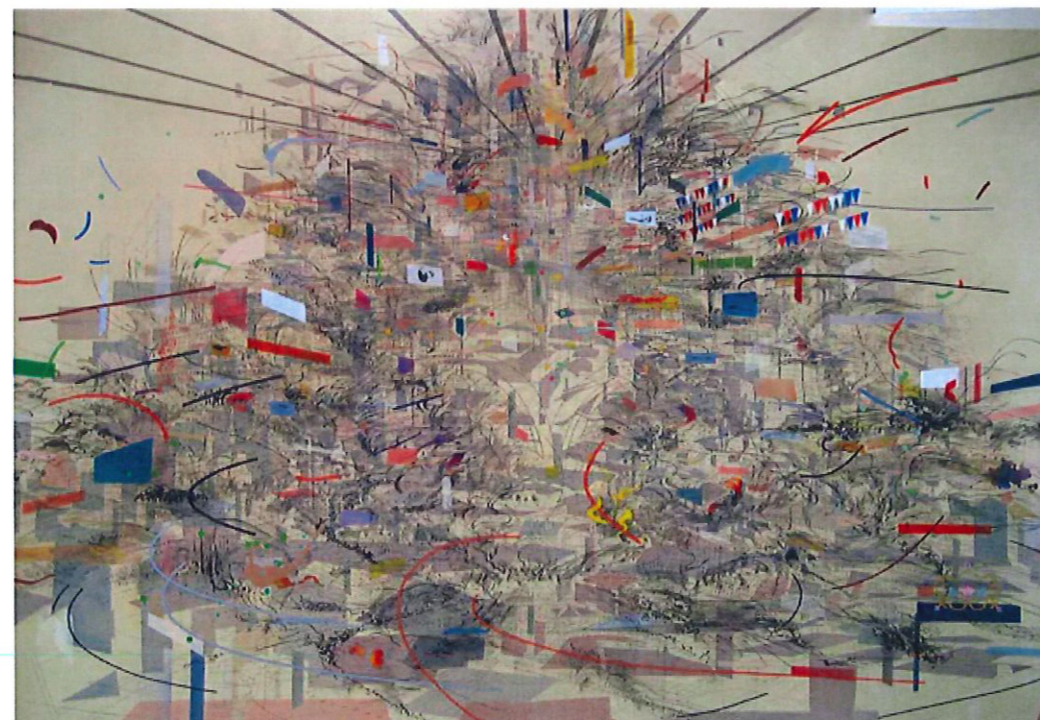
Grey Space (distractor), 2006. Acrylic and Ink on Canvas



Untitled 2 (detail; 2001)



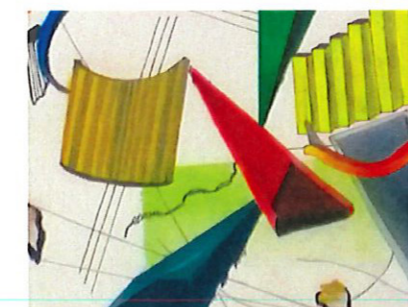
Babel Unleashed, 2001. Ink and acrylic on canvas.



Empirical Construction, Istanbul. 2004



Oil on paper



Oil on paper

It was so exciting seeing **Mehretu's** paintings being formed. Full and bright with colour, the spatial elements that she had within her work were visually entrapping. The work above heavily influenced a lot of the paintings which had a central focal point. It feels as if it's pulling you in.

FREEDOM OF FLOW



Madder Lake Falling, 2020, Oil on canvas, 1500 x 1500



Orange (House), 2020, Oil on cardboard, 260 x 260

After exploring Julie Mehretu and her works, I really felt like pushing the abstraction aspects within my work further. I wanted to try a completely new concept. This led me to explore new artists who strayed from structure and leaned towards organic

I had always loved abstraction but like architecture, I have never come to understand the feeling of seeing such works. Christchurch based artist, **Marie Le Lievre** caught my attention with her amazing and contemporary approach to paint. The interplay between what is revealed and what she as an artist obscures really stood out. Her use of paint led me to think about the ways I could form my paintings. Her aesthetic approach and playful representations combined with her extraordinary ability to manipulate liquid paint into mesmerising sensual surfaces made me want to explore the techniques and ways in which these paintings were created. The beauty within the unplanned, unpredictable and free flowing aspects of her work were a highlight in which I wanted to incorporate into my own. These works lead me to incorporate the use of flowing ink within my works. I started experimenting with the natural flow of paint. This added a sense of movement into the somewhat structured shapes and forms of architecture.

Further investigations were made, looking into **Helen Frankenthaler's** breakthrough soak-stain painting. Here she poured thinned paint directly onto raw, unprimed canvas laid on the studio floor, working from all sides to create floating fields of translucent colour. In a similar way, I watered down the ink used, pouring it onto the canvas and creating washes of colour which were layered upon each other, giving the paintings a sense of depth. **Frankenthaler** however used fabric within her works, which gave me ideas which I could later on investigate into.



Flirt, 1995. Helen Frankenthaler

Ink on Card



SUPREMATISM

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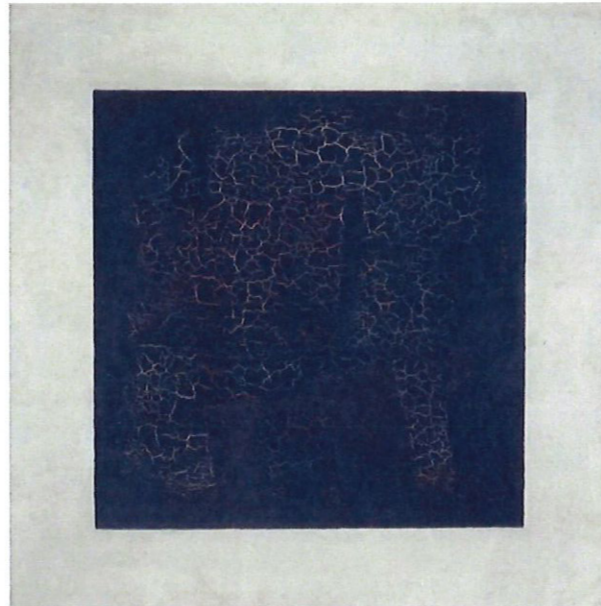
"the supremacy of pure artistic feeling" rather than on visual depiction of objects.

Halfway through the portfolio, I was extremely lost on the sense of direction that I was taking my artwork. I felt as if there was nothing behind the works that I was making. Unlike Mehretu who's abstraction connected to a "deep mediation of crossroads," or Frankenthaler pours which were illusions to the environment. While flicking through a book of Historical art, I stumbled upon the great **Kazimir Malevich**. The philosophy that he had completely changed the way in which I had wanted to view abstract art, it was called, suprematism. This was a focus on absolute abstraction and a disconnection for all things physical. I quote Malevich:

"Under Suprematism I understand the primacy of pure feeling in creative art. To the Suprematist, the visual phenomena of the objective world are, in themselves, meaningless; the significant thing is feeling, as such, quite apart from the environment in which it is called forth."

My past self had a constant yearning for constructivism. I had wanted to see aspects of abstract paintings whilst trying to apply meaning or find the reflection that it was trying to cast. Now that I had seen suprematism and the ideology behind it, I was strongly influenced and this really brought a whole new aspect into the paintings that I had conducted. It made me paint in different ways than I would have imagined and made me think of the one concept to withhold, which was to simply "make a piece of art that looks good." Here I realised that what I had long been searching for - a "meaning" within the beautiful things that I see in my life was no longer relevant. Rather the pure beauty in the things that I see is what matters. Regardless of how it looked, how I had interpreted it was most important when it came to creating art.

Black Square, 1915, oil on linen, 79.5 x 79.5 cm



Suprematism, 1916-17

A CHANGE OF VIEW

PROPOSAL

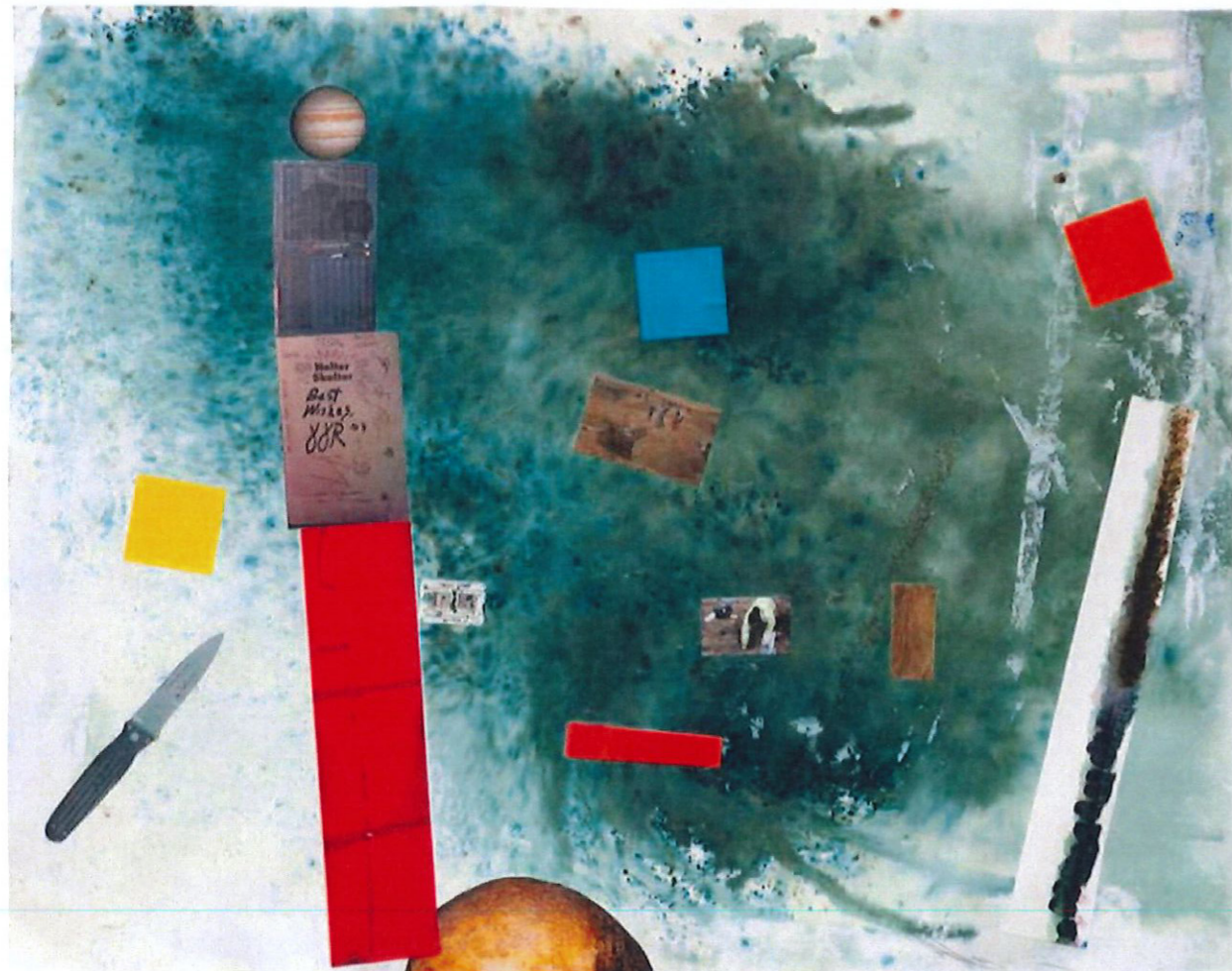
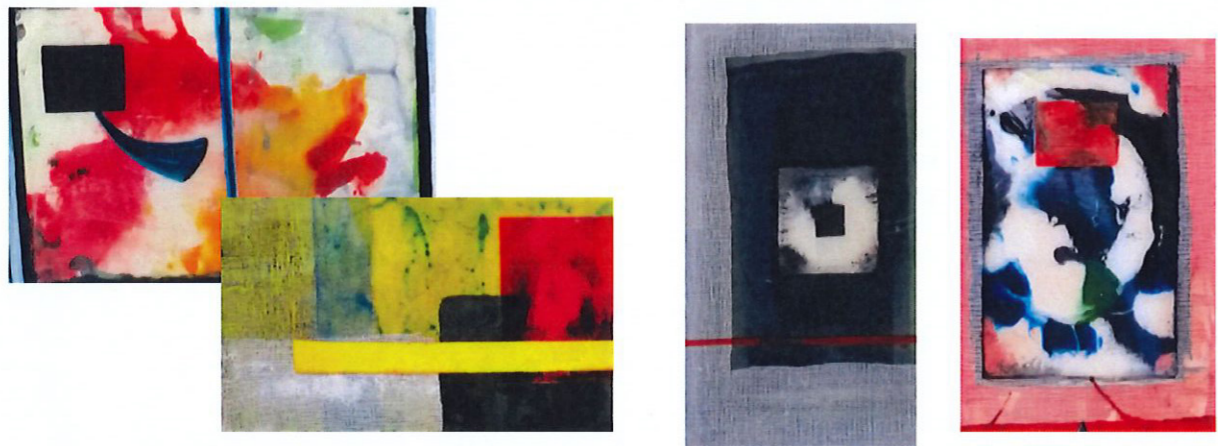
I feel as if most of us all try to find meaning within something we see. We want the things in life to be meaningful to us, no matter what it is. If it doesn't mean anything then, what is the point of having it.

This year in my portfolio, I want to strongly challenge the idea of meaning and, especially the role it plays within abstraction. I want viewers to see that perhaps the very simple forms that you see in front of you is all there is to it. Nothing more, nothing less. Through this, I hope to explore the beauty of architecture and the simple and geometric forms. I encourage viewers to solely appreciate the art that is presented in front of them and not think too much about what it could potentially be or relate to.

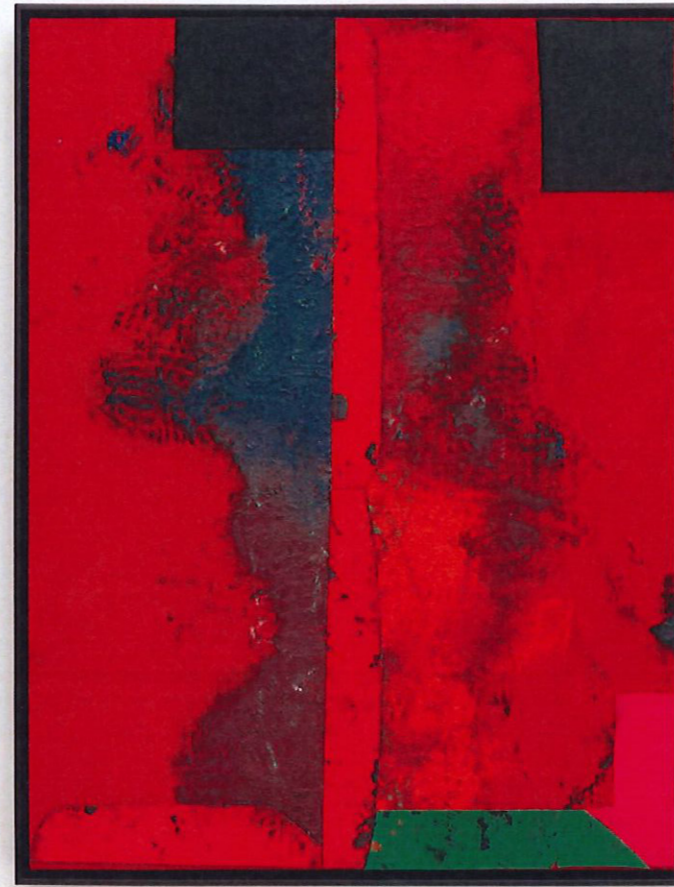
Through the many different art techniques, I wish to create highly experimental abstract pieces with the use of different mediums, including plastic and fabric. I hope to find beauty, whether simple or complex within what is created.

LAYERS & MATERIALITY

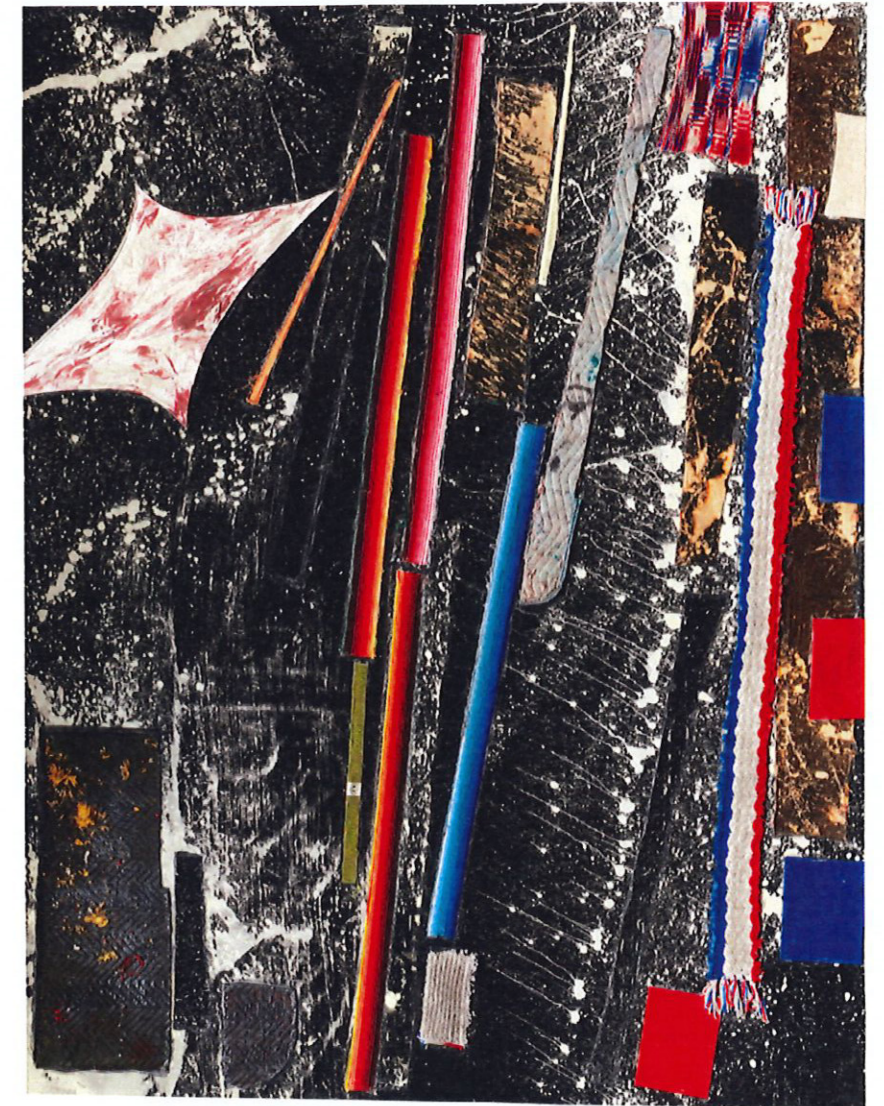
Sterling Ruby's influence. With my further research into artists, I came across **Sterling Ruby** and his collages. For him, the collages are a place for unhinged creative experimentation, combining found images, sketches, and gestural smears of pigment. **Ruby** inspired me to use different mediums, scraps (all of which were compiled from different works I had previously done).



Drifters, 2012



WIDW. RED SPITTING., 2018, by Sterling Ruby, acrylic, oil, cardboard, and fabric on canvas.



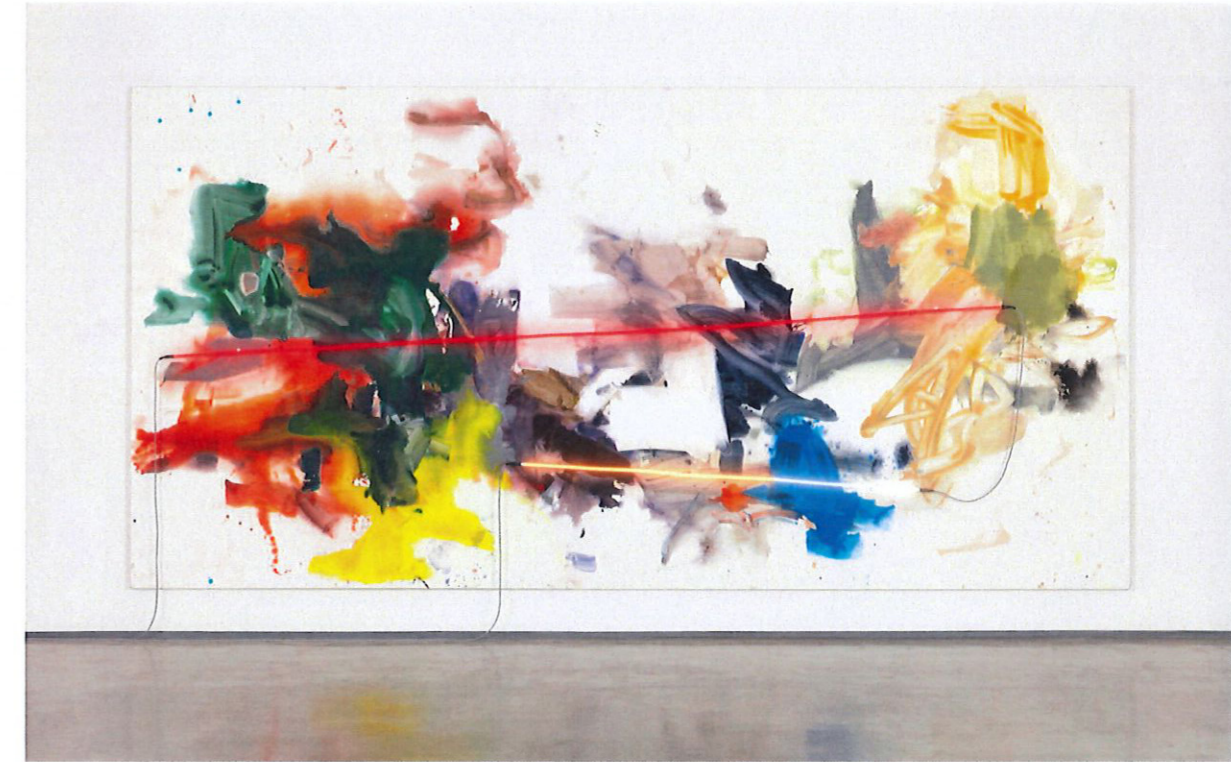
BC (4031), fabric, paint, glue and bleached canvas on panel

Learning from the works of **Ruby**, I once again found myself bursting with different ideas. I once again saw the infinite of what art could be. I began to take different abstract approaches to my paintings. Trying out whatever I could find; whether it be scrap paper, cut out materials of film, plastic sheets, fabric etc. By approaching my work from a collage perspective, I was able to further develop and combine distinct structural forms with (several) organic layers of paint (through compression)- which was a new approach compared to the previous free flow of paint. I began painting in quite a childlike way, sticking bits and pieces using glue to the paper/canvas.

"My new paintings reveal how current events visually play themselves out in my mind. I see bars or windows. Are we on the outside of those bars, peeking in, or trapped behind them, staring out into the unknown? You'll have to go and see the paintings to find their truths, embedded in the fractious layers of their canvases."

LAYERS & MATERIALITY 2

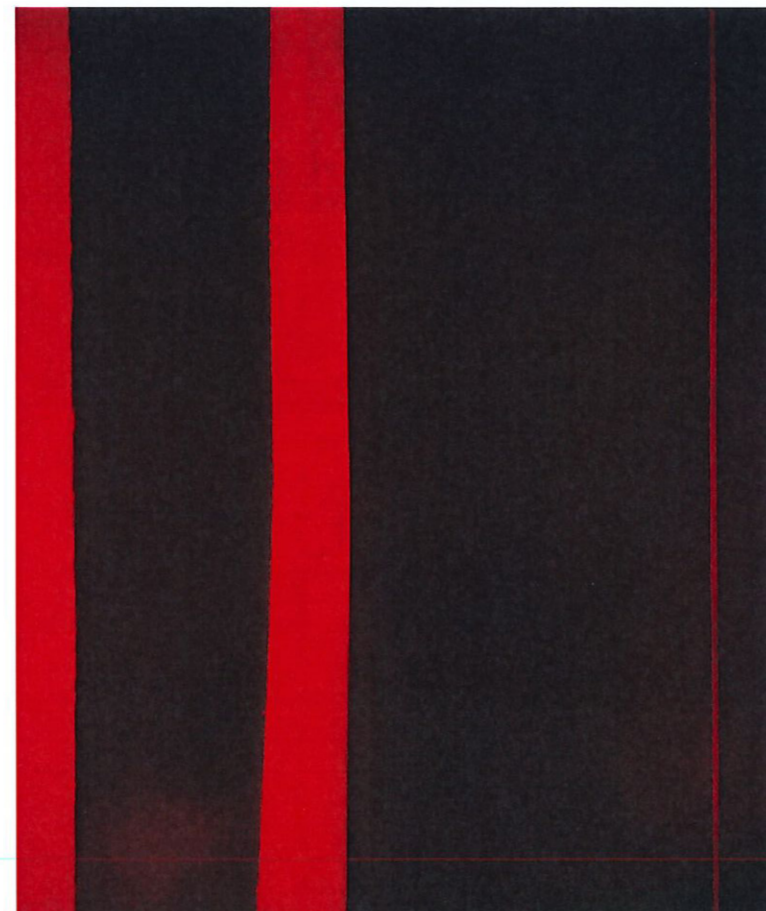
Further looking at artists models, other major influences include the works of **Mary Weatherford** and **Barnett Newman**. The works that I had now made were mostly composed of square/rectangular shapes that were layered upon each other upon many different mediums of paint/fabric and plastic. **Weatherford's** neon works brought another whole aspect and layer into my works. In "Ruby II," her overlapping pools of diaphanous blue paint and orange paint are divided by the brilliant line of red neon tube that hovers over the surface of the canvas. This gave me the idea of building lines into aspects my paintings where layers were muddy, which overall help improved the composition as a whole. Merging techniques with **Ruby** this help develop the overall composition of my final works. The use of colours that contrast each other was also a huge factor that played out throughout my works. The ideas of Warm vs Cold and vice versa. **Barnett Newman** was also a huge influence moving forward. In his work, titled, "*Shimmer Bright*" I was fascinated by the black border that he had chosen to paint around the piece. To me, it gave it a sense of completion, and so the works shown also follow this bordering theme, which was an critical part of the work. It added another dimension which played along well with the layers/stripes.



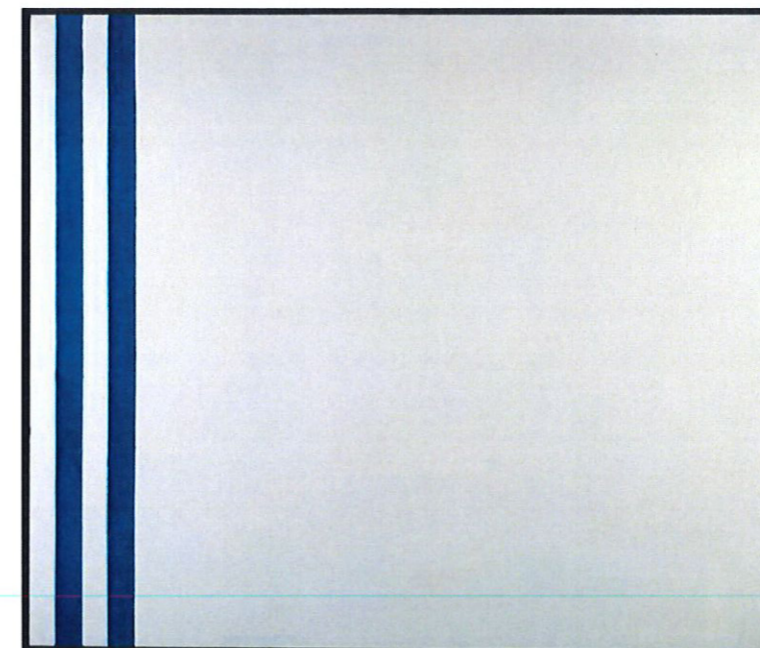
"City", 2017, layers neon over fields of paint.



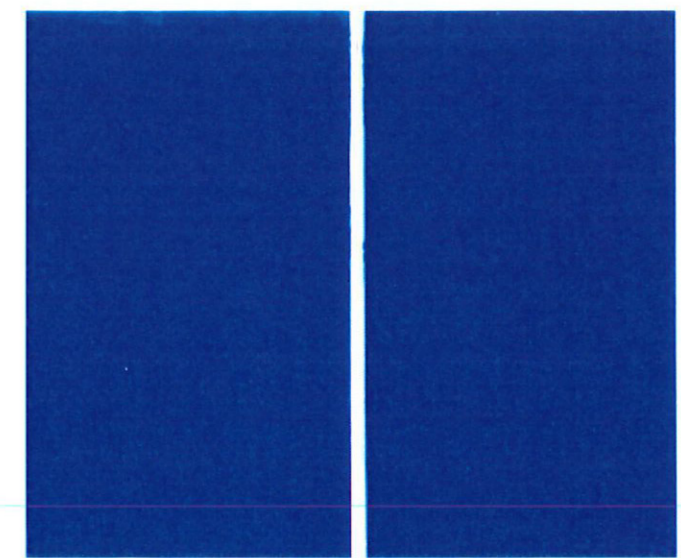
"Ruby II (Thrifty Mart)," 2012.



"Adam," 1951-1952.



Shimmer Bright (1968)

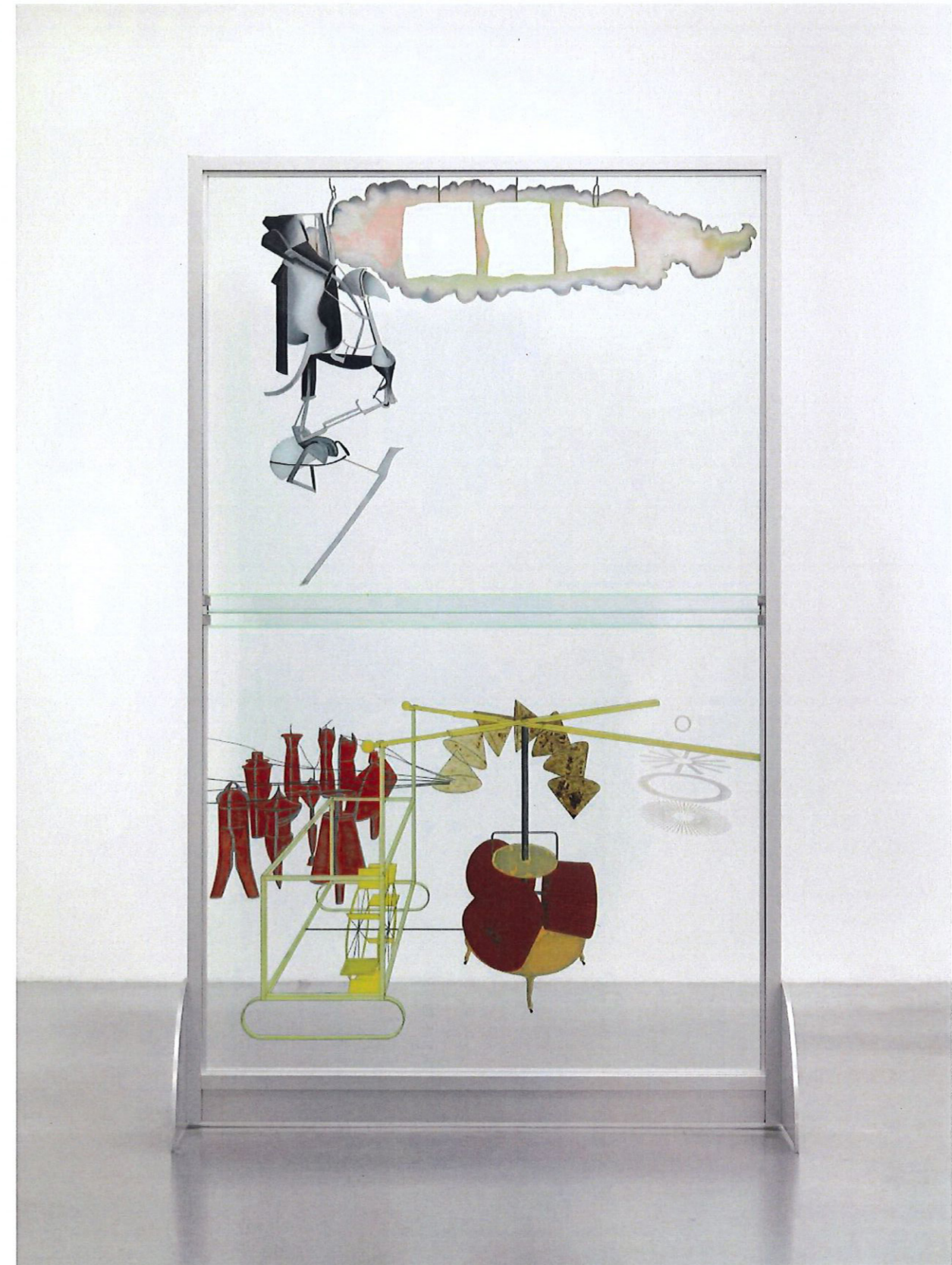


Onement VI (1953)

LOOKING AHEAD

My final painting was a combination of all the artists that had influenced me throughout the turbulent year of 2020. Grabbing aspects and ideas of architectural form and merging through collage with organic forms of paint. Several layers occupy the piece and the space that is created is one that is closed and draws you in. I believe that this is just the beginning and that there are many further steps to take looking into the future. Moving ahead, I can look into the famous "Large Glass" created by artist **Marcel Duchamp**. Combining layers of paint and forming forms through perhaps the layering of glass or plastic on top of each other. Sculptures of the paintings could also be an idea. I could continue to further develop my works but on a much larger scale, continuing with the collage aspects of the works. All of these experimental ideas are nice in a way but I feel that after creating all this work, my innate subconsciousness still craves to express something within the work. I believe that I should slowly move away from the philosophy of suprematism which would once again open my eyes to a much more expressionist way of thinking. This would perhaps change the way in which my art is composed. Throughout this year and the experience, I have really learnt that even though on a conscious level, I haven't been able to determine what I am painting, on a deeper level, it is yet to be revealed what made me compose and make the art in the way that I had made it.

"It's easy to make an abstract painting, It's very hard to make a very good abstract painting." - Laura Hoptman



The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (1915-1923)