



*Potholder* (foreground sculpture); *Tabula rasa* (right, on easel); *Purple Painting* (center projection)

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## About About Like So:

Franklin Street Works Group  
Show Explores the  
Influence of Painting

// Danilo Machado

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**A**bout Like So: *The Influence of Painting* tangles and untangles the ways in which the practice and exhibition of painting has shaped contemporary art. It borrows its name from the instructions of Bob Ross and embraces their underlying indeterminateness. The group show at Franklin Street Works, curated by Terri C. Smith, examines paintings as objects, histories, and as concepts in ways that challenge and affect.

Most of the works in the show are not made solely with paint: they are composed of ink printed, of pixels projected, of foam indented. Michael Graeve's *Subsequent Moments Simultaneously, Audibly* (2011) is one of a few in the show that interrogates and ex-



\_like\_4300x5900\_00130 and \_like\_4300x5900\_00097



*Untitled, for Rodchenko*



*Subsequent Moments Simultaneously, Audibly*

pands what materials can communicate a painting. The eight-minute sound composition is displayed through four speakers mounted in front of patches of color. It compliments Augustus Thompson's audio installation in the Café, *Binaural Composition* (2014), and Paul Branca's *Untitled, for Rodchenko* (2013), which pays homage to the Russian constructivist artist and graphic designer in a cheeky inversion of material. Its three color field paintings are embedded in tote bags, expanding materiality like Graeve's and Thompson's sound pieces.

Fittingly, the sculptural work of Brad Tucker (*Potholder*, 2013), Dave Hardy (*Sandbag*, 2014), and Taylor Davis (*TBOX No. 1*, 2012) asks questions about paintings as objects; adamant about taking them down from the wall. Paul Theriault's *Tabula rasa* (2011) is an LED projection of an abstract image created by him painting directly on the glass of a scanner. The screen is disguised as a canvas and mounted on a large easel, a gesture that both acknowledges and rethinks the ways in which paintings are displayed.

Modernist artists abstracted the representational world around them using cubes, dots, splatters, and color fields. Siebren Versteeg's *\_like\_4300x5900\_00130* and *\_like\_4300x5900\_00097* (2014) reverse this process of abstracting. First, Versteeg creates an abstract image using his own algorithm. From this, Google sim-

ilarity image search creates a representational "painting." The Google-chosen representation and the algorithm-created abstraction are displayed in side-by-side canvases, one on top of the other. The works question not only the process of abstraction and representation, but also how our technology is now facilitating it.

*As If We Existed* (2010) explores the romanticized painter's pilgrimage to Italy. The artist in the film is obsessed with painting the same model over and over, marking seemingly infinite and futile canvases with his figure. This worshipping allows the artist—whose studio is lined with as many beer cans as is it canvases—to live detached from the world around him. Ragnheiour Gestsdottir's film emphasizes that beyond the walls of the studio and the act of painting is a country with a struggling economy and, in doing so, addresses many of the criticisms of painting and the painter figure. These concerns are not unlike the ones raised by Tameka Norris in her video *Purple Painting* (2011), which deflates and exposes the narrowness of the "institution" of painting, namely its hegemonic maleness and whiteness.

The most explicit "painting" in the show, John Knuth's Transformation Foresight (2014), evokes the aesthetic of Pollock's drip paintings and of Seurat's pointillism. Like Versteeg's paintings, it is completely free of the artist's hand: flies made all of the warm-colored specks on the metallic canvas. Yes, flies.

They consume the paint (which has sugar added) and then vomit on the canvas to produce the colored splatters. Perhaps most striking is learning that the small bottom portion of the painting remained unsplattered because the flies died before they were able to paint that part of the canvas. Knuth's piece makes one flinch in the best of ways and works to deflate the romanticization of the artist's hand we closely associate with gestural abstract expressionism.

*About Like So* rethinks painting beyond the usual frames, questioning what painting can look (and sound) like, what paintings can be made of, and how paintings can be displayed. It is acutely aware of the history it addresses and grapples complexly with the overwhelming influence of painting in contemporary art, without dismissal or hollowness. Once again, Franklin Street Works is home to a show that is thoughtful and engrossing, one that remains confident and, importantly, curious.

*About Like So: The Influence of Painting* was on display at Franklin Street Works from November 22, 2014 to February 22, 2015. Their current show, *It's gonna take a whole lotta love*, is on view until May 24th, 2014.

Photographs courtesy of Franklin Street Works.