

The moment(s) of the painting

Do you ever think about the moment before a picture? Or the moment after? Or the moments that might have been? Noël Skrzypczak's paintings make me think of these moments. They ooze, flow, fling, splash, and squirt. Like those words they describe directional and intermediary events; something on its way from point *A* to point *B*. They are airborne missiles of fissioning colour, torrents of paint frozen before crashing to a destination.

It's tempting to locate her work within the heredity of action painting, because her mark-making is premised on action rather than interpretation. But action painting often seemed like an unevenly matched fistfight, whereas Skrzypczak dances with her opponent to its own strange music. The swelling blobs and eddies of colour appear to be captured rather than created; coveted rather than designed. She would have you believe that she is barely directing events at all.

There is another difference about Skrzypczak's work that makes it peculiar to the digital age: Time is fractured and non-linear. Consider one of action painting's greatest hits; *Blue Poles*. It certainly is a turbulent and recklessly modern beast, but as a series of events it makes for a conventional and linear narrative. I mean that it's a literal accumulation of marks; a pile of gestures made over a consecutive period of time.

By comparison Skrzypczak's gestures behave like quantum particles. They ooze, flow, fling, splash, and squirt in every direction all at once. They weave in and out, stop short, jump-cut, and leap off the canvas. They court the most disastrous painterly chaos while retaining exquisite poise. Because what we see is nothing like *an* action painting; it's more like twenty action paintings spliced together. Each contained in its own envelope of time, crossing with others only in the window of the picture. She selects and edits multiple fragments into choreographed maelstroms where the hot energy of action painting collapses into the cool detachment of montage. The fragments she does include point to vast constellations of beginnings and ends left on the cutting room floor.

These new works contain a ruse, an inviting clearing in the near distance that offers respite from an otherwise tumultuous landscape. But to get there we have to step into the raging lateral currents of paint that threaten to sweep us into more tangled terrain beyond the moment of the picture.

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