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Melissa Gwyn

Painting is a way to explore contradictions. In all of my works since 1985 I've ruminated on the dualities of what is real and what is depicted. Paint is the obvious real element and I exploit its oily tactility by pouring, brushing or extruding it onto a panel until the surface has dimension, like a bas-relief. Sometimes I preserve the gestural sweeps of paint I make at the beginning of the process, while other areas get scrubbed, scraped, cut open or repainted.

These days I stamp letters and words onto my paintings and press numbers into the drying paint skin that's like a clay tablet. Other times I mix up runny oil paint and squeeze letters from eyedroppers. I do this because in these political times where we have few trusted news sources, I'm anxious not knowing what is true. I make my painted words to somehow compensate for the confusion. I give them mass and volume, and in the right light they even cast a shadow.

My painting for this exhibition is titled "Fabricator." It is a painting about many things: shapes that fall and agglomerations, and things that grow and rise. While I worked on it I was ruminating on subjects of creativity, science and truth.

Thirty years ago, before the rise of anti-science activism associated with George W. Bush and the Conservative Right, I was making paintings inspired by elementary school science pedagogy. In my paintings I depicted models of molecules representing sex hormones and paintings of chemicals associated with growth and decay. In my pieces the chemical denoted by the molecular models became the title and subject matter for my paintings. I thought of those pieces as still life depictions of words.

In the mid 2000's public education in the rustbelt, where I'm from, faced serious challenges from emboldened creationists and anti-science educators. I did what I could from my university position to join the resistance against Bush's faith based educational policies. However, I did not realize, until I recently read an article published in 1997, that a different form of anti-science pedagogy already had a foothold in higher education. "Fabricator" is informed and inspired by an article by Barbara Ehrenreich and Janet McIntosh entitled "The New Creationism: Biology Under Attack." It's a very good read. I recommend it.