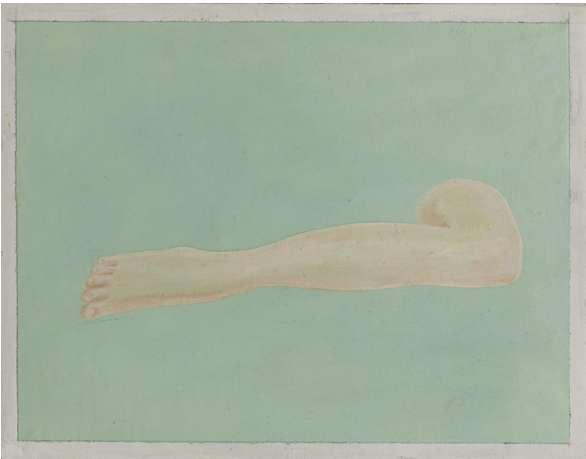


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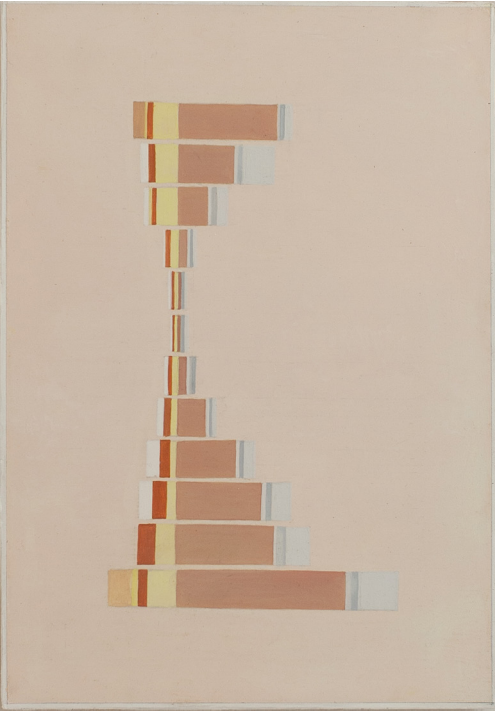
Melanie Smith Abandoned Bodies and Uncertain Futures



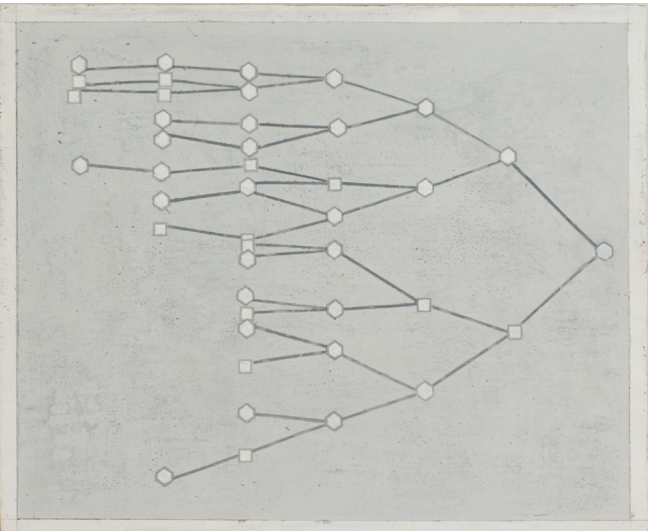
Melanie Smith, *Empty Body 4*, 2015. Oil and encaustic on wood. 12 5/8 x 9 7/8 in.



Melanie Smith, *Cat 4*, 2015. Oil and encaustic on wood. 11 7/8 x 12 5/8 in.



Melanie Smith, *Diagram 47*, 2016. Oil on wood. 10 5/8 x 15 in.



Melanie Smith, *Diagram 49*, 2016. Oil and encaustic on wood. 14 3/16 x 11 3/16 in.

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These days, our main force of production takes place through the mapping of our senses within the brain. This seemingly conformed map has no actual territory or prescribed boundaries, but it does change our internal map on an emotional level. Many questions arise. This is a big one, and we all have it: what can we do about dissolution? After making *Aztec Stadium* (2011), one of the biggest concerns that lingers resides in the last image of the video in which the people that make up Malevich's Red Square dissolve into nothing on the sides of a football pitch. After the Arab Spring uprisings that same year, how can we think about new forms of being in a world where it seems impossible to create forms of self-organization? The collective body—a constant spatial discontiguity caused by the Internet—makes physicality and unity difficult. We are alone at our computers, colonized by dematerialization and prepackaged algorithms.

These new works are made up of hollow body parts, gestures, animated diagrams and uninhabited logos that oscillate between movement and stasis—between image and impermanence. The diagrams in this work exist as a kind of mapping of something that does not yet exist in the world. By taking away any references as to what conclusions these diagrams come to—or what they even refer to—they become speculative. They are at once graphic representations of capital growth, of networks, of ecosystems, quantum physics and abstract connections.

If art does indeed operate as a kind of “other-worldly blink,” it presents potentiality through its apparent difference from what already exists. These works trace a world that exists in our psyche, not in our physicality. Abstraction, in this sense, is not of this world at all but can it prefigure a world yet to exist? Can it sidestep politics as a means of the production of speculative thought?

Can there be some kind of unity in this cyber abstraction we live in? An abecedarian faithlessness seemed to have measure when making these paintings. Working with Internet and stock images permitted me to recompose them into a visual essay of misaligned elements. For me, this is the first time painting became like the film frame—an edited, chopped up narrative—abstracted representations of our present and possible future conditions of being. The body in these paintings is empty: a cut off, truncated body devoid of the capacity to be touched or moved. This is an indifferent body; a collective, uniform body with no soul. How do we bring back the erotization of the lived experience and still be able to map such singularities?

And yes, cats. Cats are deposits of affect, giving us the ability to deal with our own emotions. They are the Internet's darlings because their posted antics are so stunningly vacuous and unfathomably popular that they suck up our collective slag.

So these works are a contingent series of dots and dashes to be joined up (in your brain, not mine). Our ability to make decisions is constantly shortened by our speedball world. Our collective brain is unable to go that fast, producing a new form of pathology: neurological disturbances that manifest themselves in indifference. When will we have the time to wonder again?

Paint still holds a relationship with tangibility, with the allure of surface.
No, I'm not suggesting a return to painting.

BUT...if we think of painting as an act that actualizes or grounds an image in the world through slow, solitary time and the video image as something virtual that floats or circulates in the world, then this body of work contends that it is not the actual nor the virtual that should hold our attention but rather the seeping edges between the two. In this case, I am thinking of painting as a

zero point of stasis as opposed to its moving counterpart, video, and its various forms of virtual circulation. Can we see painting / stasis as a special kind of movement, a movement where we have time to reconsider, to remap our affective relationship to the world? Or, on the other hand, can we see the virtual as something that does not lack reality, but merely as something that is yet to be grounded?

Melanie Smith

b. 1965, England

Melanie Smith, born in Poole, England, received a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Reading, where she studied painting. In 1989, she moved to Mexico City, joining an international community of artists and writers. She continues to live and work there today. Important museum exhibitions of her work include Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, The Netherlands; the Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston; the Milton Keynes Gallery in Buckinghamshire, UK; Museo Amparo, Puebla, Mexico and the MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, MA. Melanie Smith represented Mexico in the 54th International Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy in 2011. Her paintings are included in many prominent public and private institutions including the Tate Modern, London, England; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; the Tamayo Museum, Mexico City, Mexico and the Jumex Collection, Mexico City, Mexico.