

Artist Statement

I believe in *making* as a means to further understanding or thought and am drawn to the physicality and psychology possible in skin and through space. I work from a place of questioning, a desire to understand an unknowable something. Each piece finds origin in the coexistent and contradictory worlds of self-doubt and extreme conviction.

As thought itself or, more specifically, the act of thinking, each piece is the tangible result or residue of a mental and physical processing. The surfaces evolve through a type of sculpting, of physically pushing material around to gain hold or purchase of some fleeting truth. The marks, the residues, result over time, revealing a text of breaths, struggled over, which combine to find insight into some momentary reality of the human condition.

I use painting as a way to search, as a means to probe. In those moments where action becomes both inevitable and impossible, what I find is a compromise, a negotiation, a becoming. The work develops through a continual critical exchange that has resulted specifically in states of fragmentation, ambiguity, veiling or distortion. It is through this processing that boundaries are pressed, subverting or challenging language through tweaks and subtle shifts, moving just far enough away from the norm to hopefully cause a pause, a hesitation. It is about finding those small epiphanies that re-tell, in a new way, what we have always really known.

My imagery is mediated, really found, through thick, questioned marks, which hopefully reveal as much as any narrative element. I deal in residues, in stains and stutters, which emerge from the skin of paint. Both a psychological staging and a means to further challenge representation, the spaces, or *scapes*, develop in tandem with figural elements, back and forth as vertical, horizontal, and diagonal stops, as *holds*. The end product becomes more than pictorial, though is steeped completely in its visual language. Each piece becomes about the vocabulary, the words and grammar, of painting, about pressed limitations.

The underlying mechanism is an acknowledgement, a meditation, on the beauty and horror of the limitations of language. The overarching goal is to use visceral cues and a shifting surface as evidence of the larger human struggle – not in an ideal world but in this world.

Yvonne Petkus, 2008