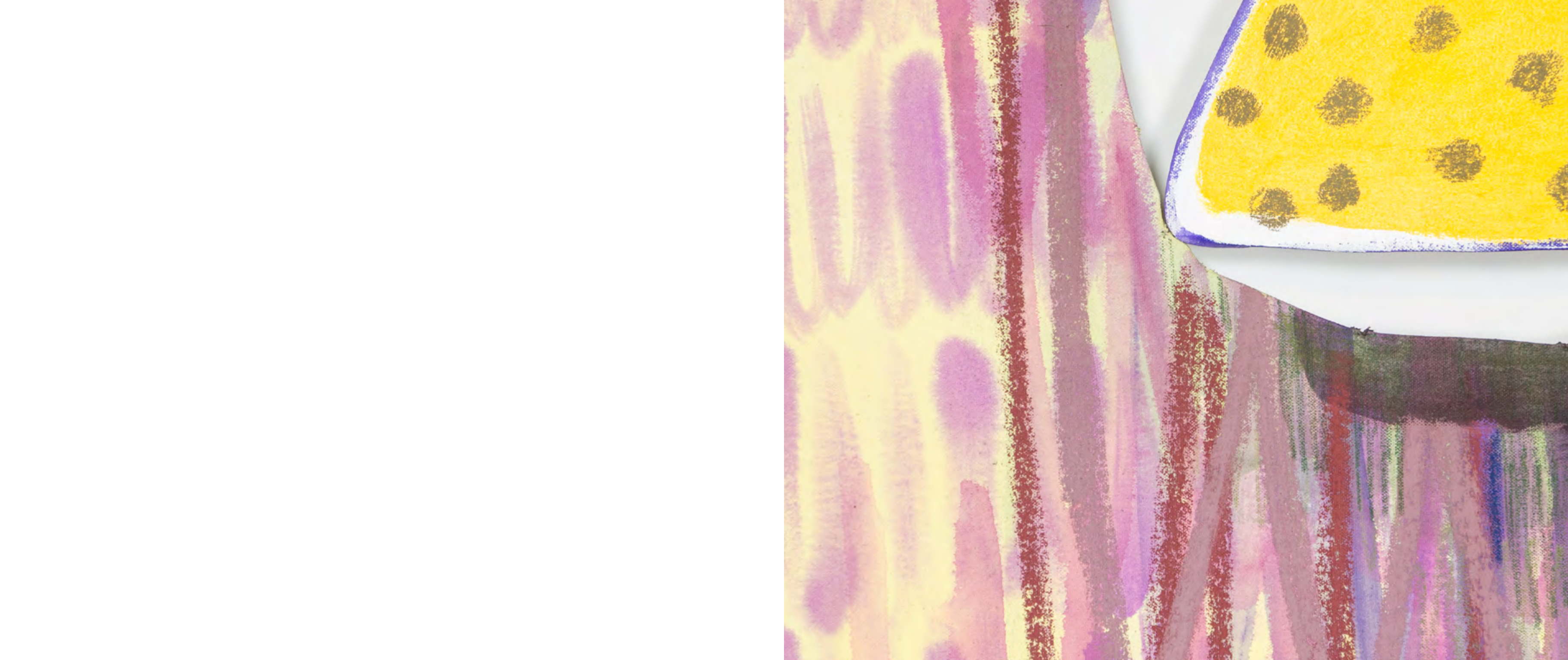




JUSTINE HILL

FREESTANDING





JUSTINE HILL
Freestanding

March 29 - May 6, 2018

Denny Gallery
261 Broome Street, New York, NY

DENNY GALLERY

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Back cover page: Detail of *Bookend 4*, 2018
Opposite: Detail of *Figure, Ground, Background 3*, 2018



JUSTINE HILL: MARK AND SHAPE

by Jason Andrew

It is not such a stretch to think of the poetry of Mallarmé when looking at a painting by Justine Hill. Poetic verses like, “snow-white clusters of perfumed stars,”¹ and “golden galleons as lovely as swans, moored on a broad river of scented purple,”² echo what one might find and feel in the cutout canvases by Hill. Like Mallarmé poetry, Hill’s paintings are ambiguous in their expressions, obscure in their imagery, and function with a clumsy yet graceful syntax.

Conceptually, Hill’s multi-paneled constellation-like-abstractions speak to the relationship of figure, background, and landscape, yet they remain unlinked to any exacting subjective form. They float in a flattened ambiguous space. It’s in this ambiguity that the work takes on Surrealistic themes and Symbolist narratives.

Continuing along a Symbolist thread, it was the painter Odilon Redon who found he could unlock the hidden realm of the imagination by yielding, in his own words “to the secret laws that have led me to create, according to my dreams, things into which I have put my whole self.”³ What we see and what we experience with Hill’s paintings is a consistent yielding to this mysterious dreamlike place.

Despite Redon’s involvement with literary Symbolists, he “succeeded in creating a suggestive art which requires no translation into literary terms, which depends on visual imagery derived from sight and imagination.”⁴ This art can only be described as Symbolists “if the word is understood to denote a type of resonance arising directly from the visual terms in which the artist renders his/her sensations.”⁵ Like Redon, Hill has found a way of making her subject the sensation of mark and shape.

Born in Tarrytown, NY, Justine Hill moved to the historic town of Taunton, MA. Hill’s mother was an art teacher and as a child she was encouraged to draw and “make things.”⁶ She visited museums and historical sites, and while these experiences were life affirming, don’t look for them as source material in her art. “I don’t think much about where I grew up, except that it’s very different than New York City,” Hill says, “To be completely honest, I feel very disconnected to it now in my life. I do miss seeing open spaces and nature sometimes, but I take few steps to rectify that.” Dreams and dreamlike landscapes are what inspire her.

Sometime around 2014, while on a visit to the Metropolitan Museum of Art here in New York City, Hill discovered the work of William Baziotes and in particular his painting *The Flesh Eaters* (1952). Baziotes, who very well could be Redon’s Symbolist heir, was fascinated by the power of myth and in *The Flesh Eaters*, he paints the scene from Homer’s epic poem where the one-eyed giant devours Odysseus’s sailors.⁷



Justine Hill, “The Flesh Eaters”, 2015, Acrylic and pastel on canvas, 60 x 72 in. (152.40 x 182.88 cm)



Elizabeth Murray (1940-2007), “Wake Up,” 1981, Oil on canvas (three parts), 111-1/8 x 105-5/8 x 3-3/4 in. (281.94 x 267.97 x 9.5 cm), © The Murray-Holman Family Trust / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Soon after seeing *The Flesh Eaters*, Hill painted her own. Working on a rectangular canvas, she focused essentially on the forms and shapes of Baziotes’ original. Hers not only took on the pastel surreal space, but also personified a creature-like shape of her own. And she gravitated to “the squiggly, vertical lines that divide the painting. I like the other worldliness, the floating spaces and the odd animated shapes that move around,” she says, “I like the obscurity of them.”

It didn’t take long for Hill to free her “odd animated shapes” from the rectilinear constraints of the traditional picture frame. Not so unlike what the painter Elizabeth Murray realized with her dramatic break, Hill discovered that her ideas take on a more abstract meaning within a shaped canvas. And like Murray, Hill’s work was gradually moving into a third dimension. “I’ve been working on shaped canvases [...] working on ways to break out of the rectangle,” Hill explained in an interview in 2016, “It’s hard to get rectangles to interact with the space around them [...] And then I started to pull shapes out from the rectangles, which is where the cut-outs came from.”⁸

Recently, Hill was subconsciously drawn again back to Baziotes’ one-eyed giant. Its bio-morphic shape reappeared in Hill’s *Cyclops Set* (2017). For Hill, this shape became her figure in a landscape. “I always defined myself as a landscape painter,” Hill explains, “when I started using shape canvases, they began to feel more like creatures. I liked that.”⁹ Speculating on what caused her to revisit Baziotes. Hill said, “I think I wanted to create painting that looked more like portraits and for some reason Baziotes came back into my head.”

While this “Set” and a related work called *Dwarf Set* (2017) are inspired by Baziotes’ shapes, they establish

for Hill an independent creative identity like the early *Spectres* paintings by Eva Hesse, who at the age of twenty-four painted nineteen oil paintings featuring odd, otherworldly creatures that had a distinct resemblance to the artist herself. While Hesse was attracted to the body visceral, Hill is pulled to the shape physicality.

In Hill's most recent set of paintings titled *Bookends*, her figure morphs and shifts as it plays in an animated landscape of shapes that lock it into place. In *Bookend 3*, the figure crouches under an over hanging panel of purple and in *Bookend 4*, the figure spotted and yellow, swirls and tucks into the top of the composition. Hill poetically surrounds her central figure with an environment of enchanting forms reminiscent of composition structured by Redon in his *Pandora* (c. 1910) and *Andromeda* (1912). For Redon, these subjects and others were regarded by the artist as little more than pretexts for his imaginative inventions.¹⁰ The symbolic content is melted into a fresh vision of unusual means—supporting panels of abstract marks and gestures for Hill and layers of flora and fauna for Redon. In each of the sets of six paintings to date, Hill's figure is stylized and stable, fixed to the central axis of the composition by two adjoining shapes.

This theatrical environment is made even more evident in Hill's *Backdrop* series where multi-panels dance within a painted proscenium of unstretched canvas. These works bridge into the field of installation where painted elements toss and tumble in a canyon of color and even touch the floor. *Backdrop 3* features Hill's figure painted blue in the foreground while a fiery orange shape acts as a sunset offsetting a jagged mountainous horizon.

Not to be overlooked is Hill's "mark," a signature of her work. Hill has mastered a process involving the entire composition. Freehand sketches are turned into digital representations in Photoshop where they can be manipulated without mixing paint. She returns to her computer in a back and forth analysis of shape



Installation view of Justine Hill's "Dwarf Set" and "Cyclops Set"



Jack Tworkov (1900-1982), "Idling III (SR-PT-70 #9)," 1970, Oil on canvas, 80 x 70 in. (203.2 x 177.8 cm) Collection of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA. Gift of the artist (80.98) © Estate of Jack Tworkov / Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

and mark. Her process almost entirely eliminates any automatism. Impulse and spontaneity are replaced by a deliberate deliberation of design. Almost systematically, Hill makes wide space vertical lozenges of paint read as background while repetitive looping strokes read as foreground. This is largely apparent in Hill's most recent painting to date *Figure, Ground, Background 3* (2018). In all instances, there is a clear distinction between mark and pattern that rest somewhere between what the painter Jack Tworkov established in his late works as analytic and meditative, and what Eva Hesse suggested as organic, psychological, and sexual.

Hill's combination of mark and shape or mark on shape goes beyond the spatial and the decorative. Her paintings offer contrasting moods: pain and ugliness of the real with beauty and happiness of the ideal. Overall, her paintings suggest that paint on a flat surface is more specific than actual space because it can mean anything from inert materiality to intense sensations, dreams, and emotions. And what's fun about Hill's paintings is that she confesses neither while hoping for both.

-Jason Andrew, Brooklyn, 2018

Jason Andrew is an independent curator and the Founding Partner of Artist Estate Studio, LLC, the entity that manages the estates of Elizabeth Murray, Jack Tworkov and Edith Schloss among others. He is also the Co-Founder of Norte Maar, a non-profit arts organization based in Cypress Hills, Brooklyn that promotes collaborations among the visual, literary, and performing arts.

¹ Stéphan Mallarmé. From poem entitled "Apparitions" (1862).

² Stéphan Mallarmé. From poem entitled "Les Fenêtres" (1863).

³ Quotation from "Confidences d'artiste" in his journal, *A soi-même*, Paris, 1922. English translation in: Klaus Berger, Odilon Redon, *Fantasy and Color*. New York, 1965.

⁴ Wilson, Michael. *Nature and imagination: The Work of Odilon Redon*. Oxford: Phaidon Press Limited, 1978, p. 78.

⁵ *ibid*, p. 78.

⁶ All quotes by Justine Hill were gathered in conversation with the author, March 2018.

⁷ Incidentally, Redon painted the Cyclops Polyphemus as it spied on the sleeping Nereid Galathea in his work "Le Cyclope" c.1914, oil on cardboard mounted on panel, 25 ½ x 20 1/8 in. (64.1 x 51.1 cm) Collection of The Kröller-Müller Museum.

⁸ Sharon Butler. "Interview: Justine Hill in Bushwick." *Twocoatsofpaint*, 13 May 2016, 2:29 pm, www.twocoatsofpaint.com/2016/05/interview-justine-hill-in-bushwick.html.

⁹ *ibid*.

¹⁰ Wilson, Michael. *Nature and imagination: The Work of Odilon Redon*. Oxford: Phaidon Press Limited, 1978, p. 58.



Installation views, "Freestanding", Denny Gallery, March 29 - May 6, 2018.

Bookend 3, 2018
Acrylic, pastel and pencil on canvas
42 x 31 in/107 x 79cm

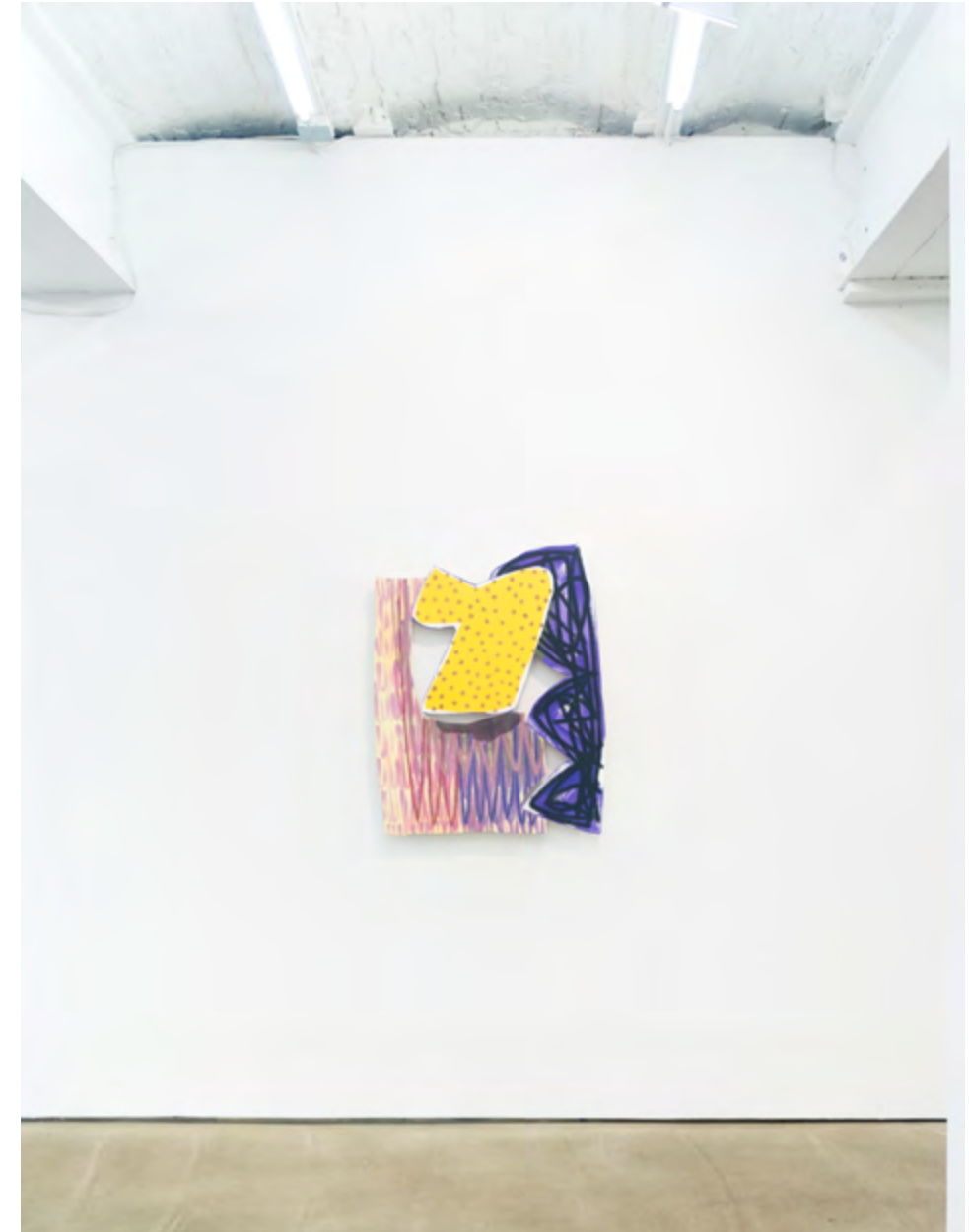


Bookend 4, 2018
Acrylic, pastel and crayon on canvas
38 x 30 in/97 x 76 cm





Installation views, "Freestanding", Denny Gallery, March 29 - May 6, 2018.



Bookend 5, 2018
Acrylic, pastel and pencil on canvas
40 x 32 in/102 x 81 cm



Bookend 6, 2018
Acrylic, pastel and crayon on canvas
39 x 32 in/99 x 81 cm



Backdrop 3, 2018
Acrylic, pastel and pencil on canvas
78 x 61 in/198 x 155 cm





Detail of *Backdrop 3*, 2018



Detail of *Figure, Ground, Background 3*, 2018

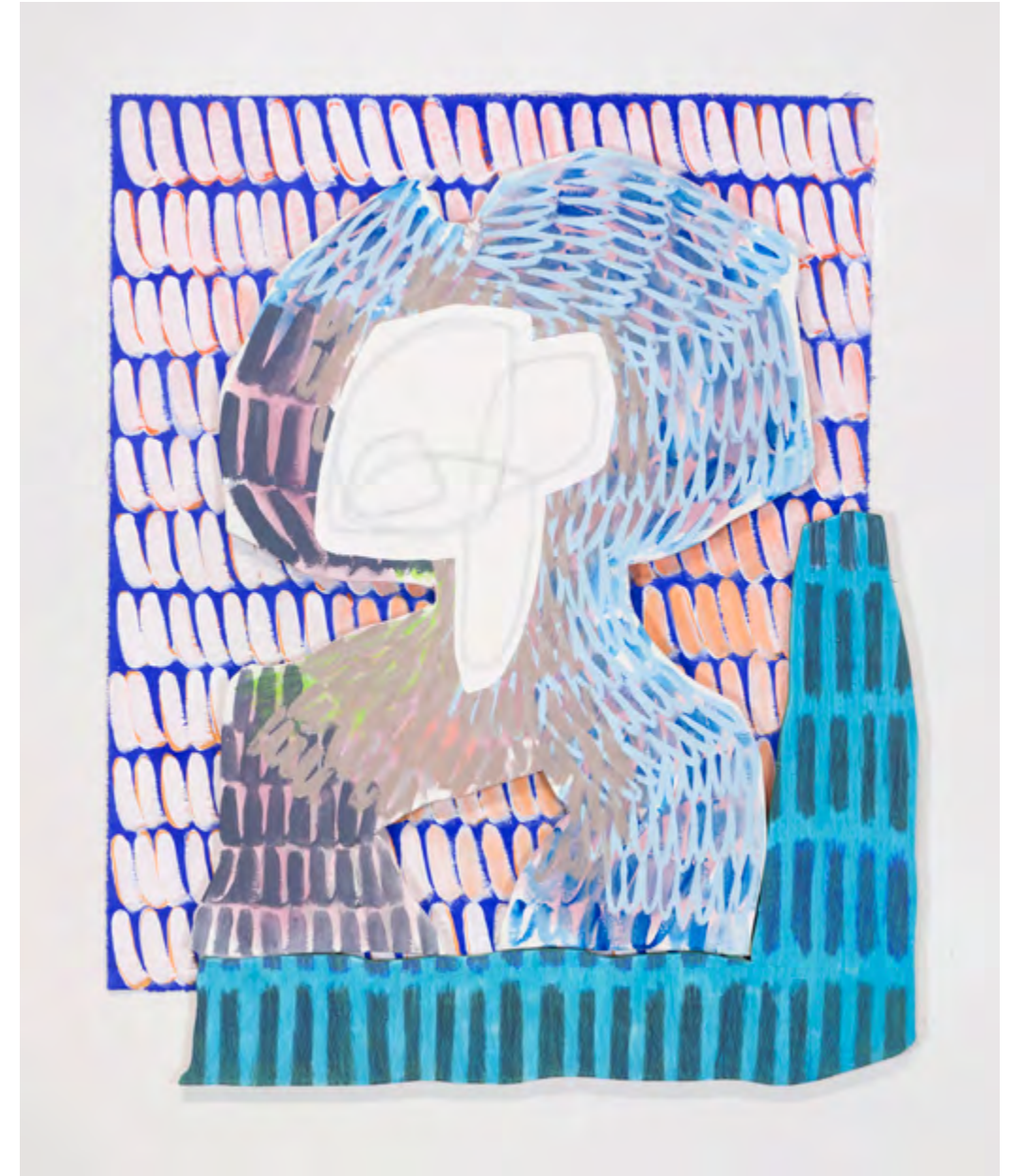
Figure, Ground, Background 3, 2018
Acrylic, pastel and marker on canvas
74 x 109 in/188 x 277 cm

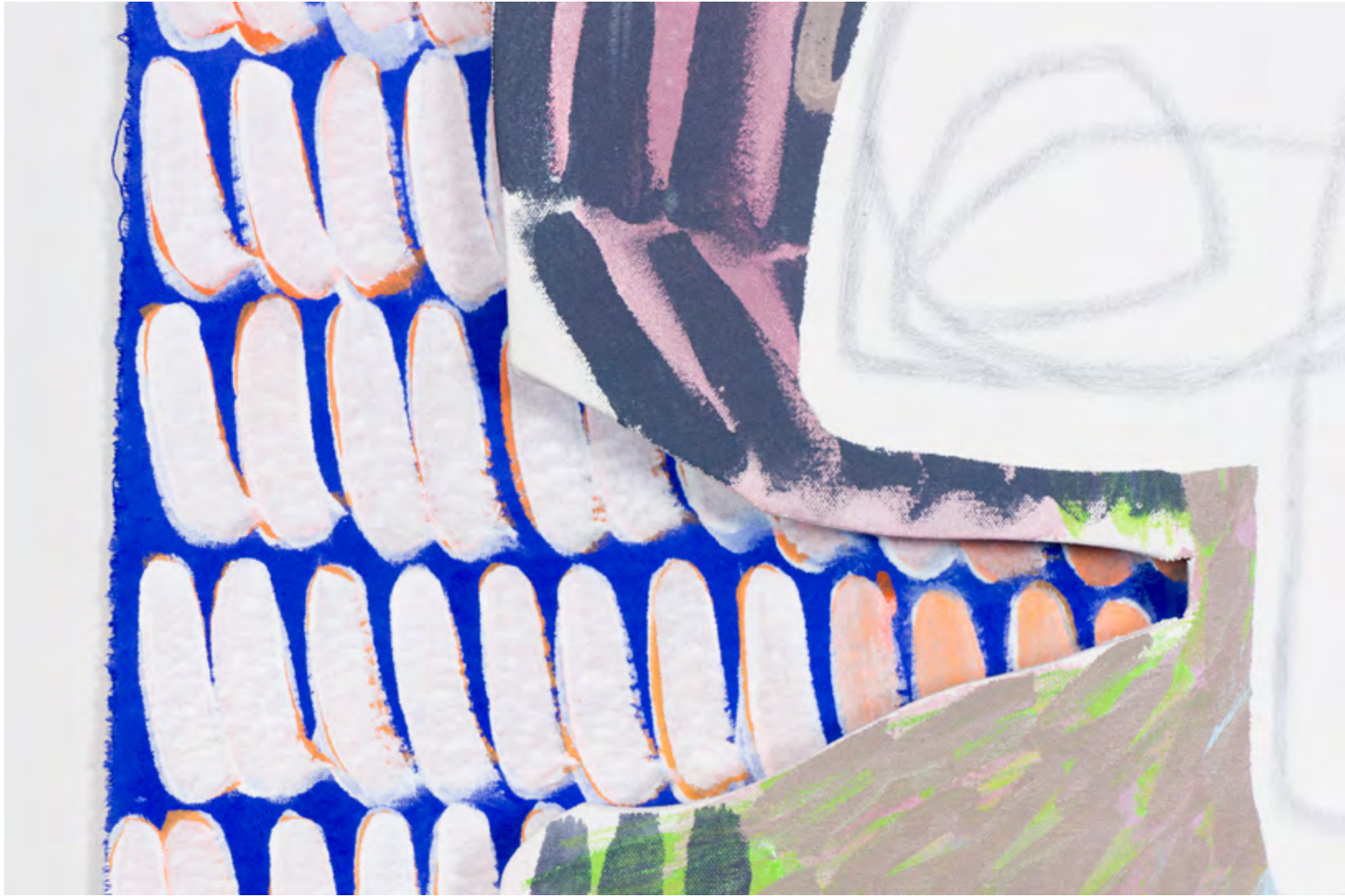




Installation views, "Freestanding", Denny Gallery, March 29 - May 6, 2018.

Cyclops Set, 2017
Acrylic, pencil and crayon on canvas
39 x 32 in/99 x 81 cm





Detail of *Cyclops Set*, 2018



Detail of *Dwarf Set*, 2018

Dwarf Set, 2017
Acrylic, pencil, marker and pastel on canvas
39 x 33 in/99 x 84 cm





Figure, Ground, Background, 2017
Acrylic, pastel, pencil, and crayon on canvas
57 x 58 in/145 x 147 cm
Exhibited at NADA New York, 2018.



Figure, Ground, Background 2, 2018
Acrylic, pastel, pencil, and crayon on canvas
55 x 60 in/140 x 152 cm
Exhibited at NADA New York, 2018.



Bookend 1, 2017
Acrylic, pastel, and pencil on canvas
41 x 33 in/104 x 84 cm
Exhibited at NADA New York, 2018.



Bookend 2, 2017
Acrylic, marker, pastel, and pencil on canvas
41 x 33 in/104 x 84 cm
Exhibited at NADA New York, 2018.



Installation views, Justine Hill and Ali Silverstein in "Movers and Shapers" at Victori + Mo, January-February 2018.



Backdrop 1, 2017
Acrylic, crayon, marker and pencil
on canvas
95 x 61 in/241 x 155 cm
Exhibited in "Movers and Shapers"
at Victori + Mo, 2018.



Backdrop 2, 2017
Acrylic, pastel, crayon and pencil
on canvas
95 x 65 in/241 x 165 cm
Exhibited in "Movers and Shapers"
at Victori + Mo, 2018.



Untitled San Francisco
with Denny Gallery,
January 2017.



Justine Hill during her
residency at The Studios at
Mass MoCA, December 2016.



Using the trellis 4, 2016
Acrylic and pastel on canvas
79 x 96 in/201 x 244 cm
Exhibited at Untitled Miami Beach with Denny Gallery, December 2016.



Some people like boundaries 2, 2016
Acrylic and pastel on canvas
66 x 54 in/168 x 137 cm
Exhibited at Untitled Miami Beach with Denny Gallery, December
2016.



Colorform 1, 2016
Acrylic, pastel and pencil on canvas
43 x 29 in/109 x 74 cm
Exhibited in "They Just Behave Differently",
Denny Gallery, May - June 2016.



Colorform 2, 2016
Acrylic, pastel and pencil on canvas
40 x 30 in/102 x 76 cm
Exhibited in "Robert Burnier & Justine Hill",
David B. Smith Gallery, January - February 2018.



Colorform 3, 2016
Acrylic, pastel and pencil on canvas
44 x 30 in/112 x 76 cm
Exhibited in "They Just Behave Differently",
Denny Gallery, May - June 2016.



Installation view of "Inseparable" in "They Just Behave Differently", Denny Gallery, May - June 2016.



Paper Doll 3 (Tiki), 2015
Acrylic, pastel and pencil on canvas
40 x 24 in/102 x 61 cm
Exhibited in "Metamodern", Denny Gallery, July - August 2015.



There's More Than One of Everything II, 2015
Acrylic and pencil on canvas
112 x 94 in/284 x 239 cm
Exhibited in "Immediate Female", Judith Charles Gallery, January - February 2015.



Detail of *There's More Than One of Everything II*, 2015.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Lives and works in Brooklyn, New York
Born in 1985 in Tarrytown, New York

EDUCATION

2011 Master of Fine Arts, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA
2008 Bachelor of Arts, Visual Arts: Studio, College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, MA

SOLO AND TWO-PERSON EXHIBITIONS

2018 *Freestanding*, Denny Gallery, New York, NY
Movers and Shapers, Two-person with Ali Silverstein, Victori + Mo, Brooklyn, NY
Justine Hill and Robert Burnier, David B. Smith Gallery, Denver, CO
2016 *They Just Behave Differently*, Denny Gallery, New York, NY
2015 *Made In New York* - Projectspace, Blueshift Project, Miami, FL
2014 *Pick-and-Place*, Kathryn Markel Fine Arts, New York, NY
Boxed in Plastics, Galerie Protégé, New York, NY

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2018 NADA New York, with Denny Gallery
2017 Untitled Art Fair, San Francisco, with Denny Gallery
Small Painting, C O U N T Y, Palm Beach, FL
2016 Untitled Art Fair, Miami Beach, with Denny Gallery
The City & The City, Denny Gallery (Pop Up), New York, NY
2015 *Metamodern*, Denny Gallery, New York, NY

2013 *Immediate Female*, Judith Charles Gallery, New York, NY
Currently Untitled, Galerie Protégé, New York, NY
Everything Has Its Place, Kathryn Markel Fine Arts, Bridgehampton, NY
Spark: Selected Alumnae Artists from Holy Cross, Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Art Gallery, Worcester, MA
No More Rock-Stars, Galerie Protégé, New York, NY
2012 *It's a Small, Small World*, curated by Hennesy Youngman, Small Business Gallery, New York, NY
2011 *MFA Thesis Exhibition*, The Icebox Project Space, Crane Arts Building, Philadelphia, PA
Fire and Smoke, Project Space 240 Church, Philadelphia, PA
Inaugural Exhibit, Project Space 240 Church, Philadelphia, PA
Paradiso, Morgan Gallery, Philadelphia, PA
You Wish You Were Here, Meyerson Gallery, Philadelphia, PA
2009 *AEIOU, Sometimes Y, and Maybe W*, Charles Adams Gallery, Philadelphia, PA

HONORS AND AWARDS

2009-2011 PennDesign Departmental Grant and Scholarship
2008 John Paul Reardon Award, College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, MA

RESIDENCY PROGRAMS

2016 The Studios at Mass MoCA, North Adams, MA
2015 Vermont Studio Center, Johnson, VT

SELECTED ARTIST LECTURES AND PANELS

2016 Panel Discussion: "Painters Painting," UnionDocs, Brooklyn, NY
2013 Panel Discussion: "Art After Holy Cross," Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Gallery, Worcester, MA

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Gotthardt, Alexxa, "50 Must-See Artworks at UNTITLED, Art Miami, NADA, PULSE, and More," *Artsy*, November 26
Kinsella, Eileen, "9 Must-See Summer 2016 Group Gallery Shows," *Artnet*, June 30

Lesser, Casey. "15 New York Gallery Shows Where You'll Find Exciting Young Artists This June," *Artsy*. June 2
"To Do: May 18 - June 1: See *They Just Behave Differently*," *New York Magazine*. May 16
Butler, Sharon. "Interview: Justine Hill in Bushwick." *Two Coats of Paint*. May 13
2015 Micchelli, Thomas. "Going Meta: Art after the Death of Art." *Hyperallergic*. August 22
Arnold, Kristi. "Metamodern." *On Verge*. August 19
Frank, Priscilla. "10 Badass Emerging Female Artists You Should Know." *Huffington Post*. January 22
Gray, Steve. "Immediate Female at Judith Charles." *Widewalls*. January 18
2014 Ernst, Eric. "ART REVIEW: At Kathryn Markel, a Window into Abstraction & Non-Figurative Approaches." *Hamptons Art Hub*. June 14
Martinez, Jamie. "Boxed in Plastics by Justine Hill at Galerie Protégé." *Arte Fuse*. May 1
Martinez, Jamie. "Interview with Artist Justine Hill." *Arte Fuse*. April 2
2013 Frank, Priscilla. "4 Contemporary Female Artists Who Are Shaping The Future Of Painting." *Huffington Post*. December, 19
Rogers, Pat. "'Everything Has Its Place' at Kathryn Markel Fine Arts." *Hamptons Art Hub*. June 13
"04.13 Cantor Art Gallery to present 'Spark: A Celebration of Alumnae Artists' from Holy Cross." *The Pulse Magazine*. April 13
Heinrich, Will. "'No More Rock Stars' at Galerie Protégé." *Observer*. January 8
Laluyan, Oscar A. "Rocking it out at Galerie Protégé." *Arte Fuse*. January 7

CHECKLIST FOR FREESTANDING

Bookend 3, 2018
Acrylic, pastel and pencil on canvas
42 x 31 in/107 x 79cm

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39 x 33 in/99 x 84 cm



Detail of *Bookend 3*, 2018.



Hill's studio, Brooklyn, New York, March 22, 2018

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