

KYLE JENKINS *Thing's Don't Fall From The Sky*
Alexandra Lawson Gallery - 2019

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Things don't fall from the sky.....but we drag them from one thing to the next

by

Kyle Jenkins

This work was produced for a solo exhibition at Alexandra Lawson Gallery (ALG), Queensland and comprised a series of five monochrome paintings each entitled *Celare*. The artworks titles allude to colour, to cover, conceal, destroy, and hide. This series of works deals with several contemporary issues related to originality, appropriation, authorship, presentation & display, but primarily is about the act of painting. In these works, the actual single colour in the painting is the painting itself.

The design of the exhibition and number of works were proposed as demarcation points within the gallery space. Due to the architecturally interrupted fields of walls within the gallery, where no one section of wall is the same size as it is interrupted by door frames or windows at different points, the aim was to produce five circular paintings that were variations of the same yellow hue. This created a transference or slippage of information from one painting to the next where on first view they appear the same but are not the same – autonomous of each other in their own inception.

The monochrome was first established in early 20th century Modernism with Kasimir Malevich's 'Black Square' 1915, transitioning through the subsequent decades in various incarnations such as Swiss Concrete Art to the Neo-Geo movement in New York in the 1980s. These practices have historically been viewed through a lens suggesting their construction is the removal, not application of paint, because the identifiable representational image in the work has been erased to only present the paintings beginnings. For me this is a misrepresentation of the monochrome and the artist's strategy for using it. Reductive strategies of art are not about the removal of images, marks, and gestures, but are rather, about the reinforced reality of what is necessary without any need for façade and technical magic tricks. Within a monochrome is an aesthetic world that is only based on its

applied physical reality, rather than a fictional secondary reality of an image already existing outside in the world somewhere.

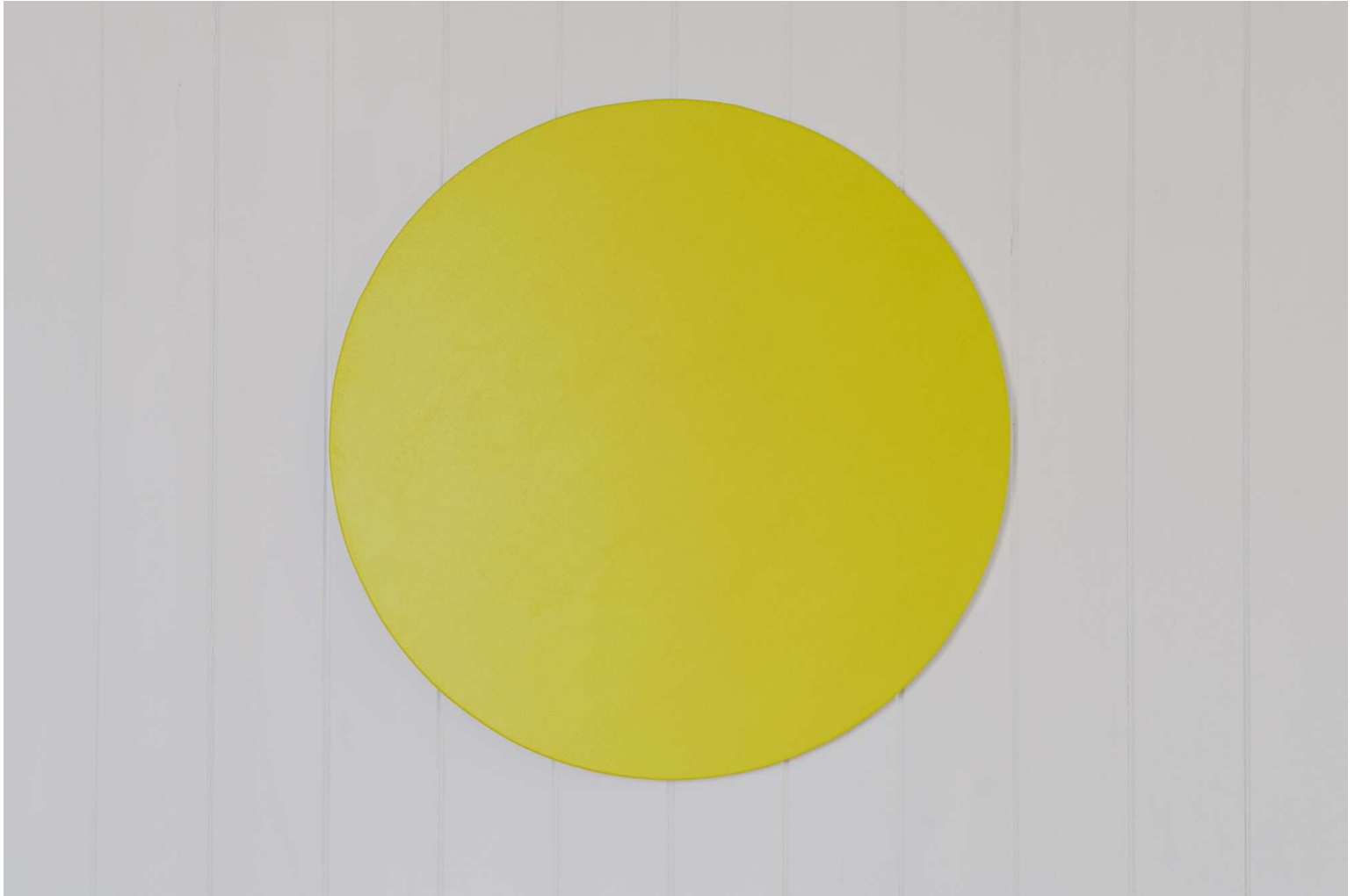
The series of paintings for this exhibition (and other monochromes created in the series) investigate active tropes associated with the very act of painting in both a historical and contemporary context. Instead of figuration and recognizable images (representing objects, scenes, and expressionistic tendencies in art) this work is about non-figurative propositions that engage with history, the marketplace, and the way in which a painting is received in the early 21st century. A constant trope of this form of working is asking the question 'what is of value'? Is it the monetary value assigned that makes something become socially worthy, the 'likes' that validate one's practice, or is it about the identity of painting itself, where the practitioner confronts the definition of what art is and/or can be for themselves, anyone, everyone? With these considerations in mind, the *Celare* monochrome works are about encoding each painting with the very nature of what painting is in relation to its production, perception, reception, and interpretation. In this way, the work is non-disruptive compositionally as it is just one pure colour, but is disruptive socio-culturally and politically within an arts sphere because it questions the currency and value of art. What an audience brings to the work is commensurate with what they get in return, because the work is not about creating illusion based within the technological or representational screen. Instead, it is about looking back at the viewer, offering a sense of reconciled finality through colour relationships and formal limitations.

We live in a contemporary world where the over-saturation of imagery has become a form of visual baggage that artwork and arts practitioners must increasingly deal with. These artworks are about dealing with and challenging that visual saturation through addressing historical painting structures, about the history of place, space, aesthetics, and time. The exhibition is about questioning the nature of painting but is also about engaging in what painting could be as the works challenge the bombardment of contemporised imagery and through encouraging contemplative processes of seeing, mediating, and knowing. The exhibition also deals with the conceptual problems of working through those structures related to history, culture, aesthetics, and ways of looking about what is being felt, understood, and considered in artwork. The *Celare* paintings align with a

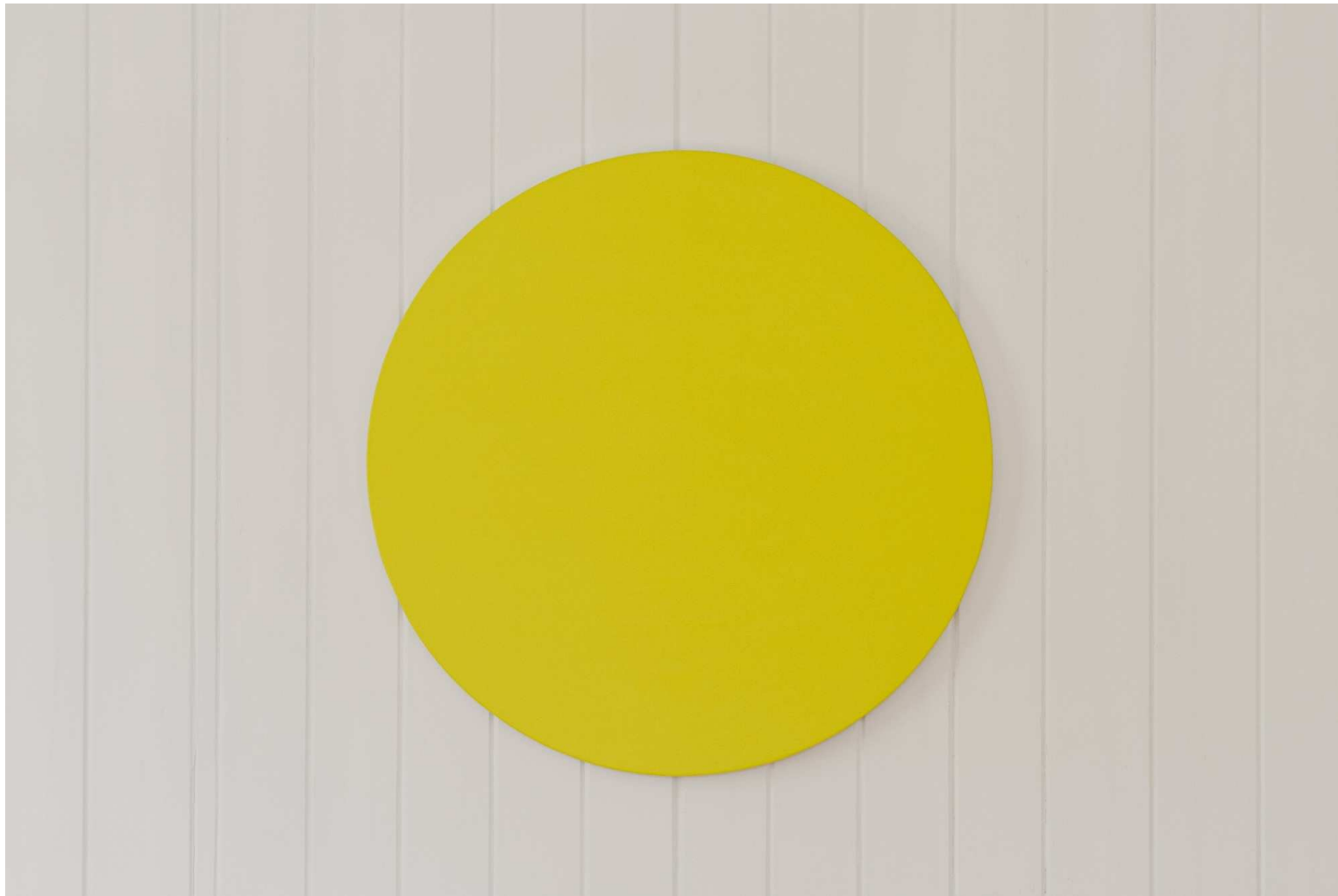
personal 28-year international exhibition history of artwork that aims to expand upon the aesthetic possibilities of structures. Ultimately, they examine aesthetic possibilities through a procedure of sampling and layering space, concepts, and theories related to Geometric Abstraction, Concrete art, non-representational art & conceptual based painting strategies.



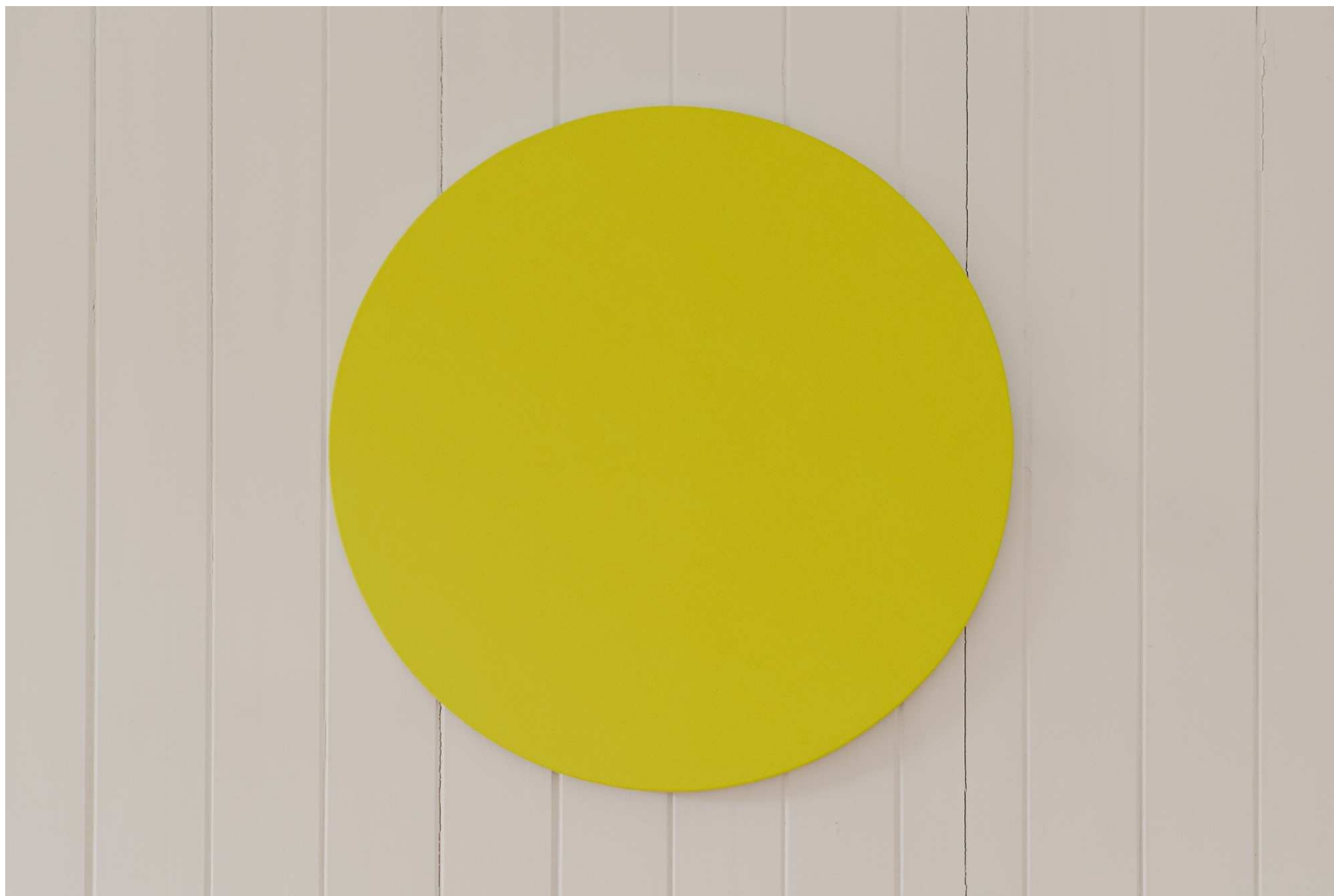
PAINTING (Celare) #19
2019
acrylic on canvas
60cm diameter



PAINTING (Celare) #20
2019
acrylic on canvas
60cm diameter



PAINTING (Celare) #21
2019
acrylic on canvas
60cm diameter

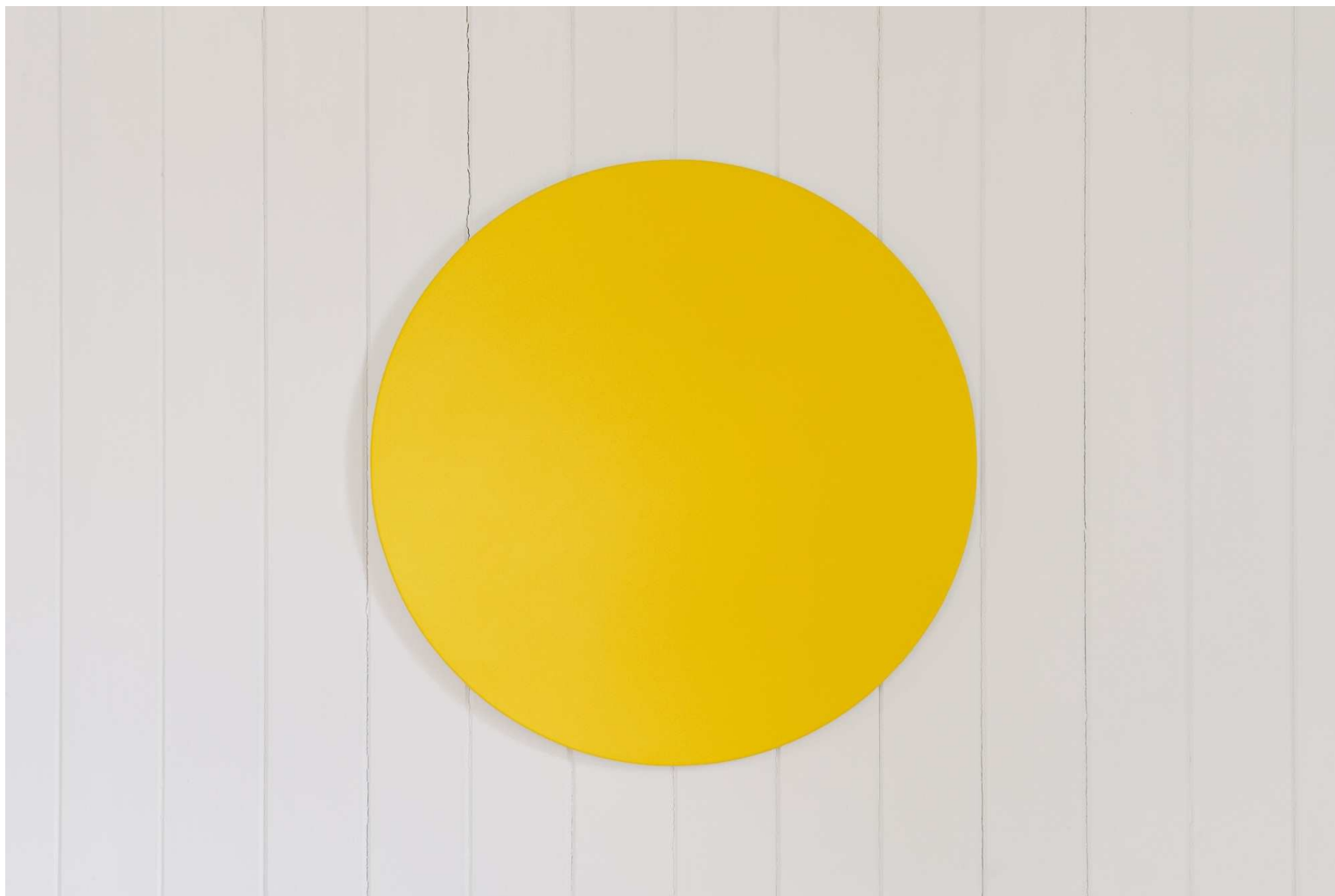


PAINTING (Celare) #22

2019

acrylic on canvas

60cm diameter



PAINTING (Celare) #23
2019
acrylic on canvas
60cm diameter



PAINTING (Celare) #19, #20, #21
2019
acrylic on canvas
60cm diameter



PAINTING (Celare) #19, #20, #22, #23
2019
acrylic on canvas
60cm diameter



PAINTING (Celare) #20, #21, #22
2019
acrylic on canvas
60cm diameter



PAINTING (Celare) #21, #22, #23
2019
acrylic on canvas
60cm diameter

Kyle Jenkins

Things Don't Fall From The Sky - Q&A

by Alexandra Lawson

AL - Could you describe the show?

KJ - The exhibition consists of 5 circle monochromes, in different hues of yellow that sit next to each other on the colour spectrum, and shaped circle canvases are spread around the gallery space.

AL – why have you chosen the 5 yellows Kyle? Is this an aesthetic or conceptual decision?

KJ - Well I wanted to take a step forward by taking a step back. I was making yellow based paintings and paintings 'as' objects approximately 20 years ago just out of art school and I chose yellow at that time because for me it was firstly a primary colour so had this type of core baggage of colour theory attached to it and secondly, it's not a colour / pigment that's easy to work with. Anyone who has painted with yellow will tell you it takes lots and lots of coats to create an intense solid coverage of the colour because it is so transparent and so I like the idea of labouring over this colour, in a kind of trade like application, of attempting to make it complete. Also, the colour resonates with spring for me, and I am a fan of spring and autumn because

they are the seasons that are in between the dominant. It's those grey areas that can always be interesting. All these things were present in these works, but also, I liked the way the colour resonates with both natural and artificial light without changing the physicality of what the work was which is a singular colour placed onto a surface of some form or type.

AL - What ideas are you referencing through the work?

KJ - The history of painting – the problems every person is dealing with when making a painting, that of the problems of colour, shape, composition, weight, tonal value, scale, flatness, the frame of support etc. Instead of adding and adding, these aesthetic issues are just all collapsed into one colour on one canvas as one composition as one painting for me, times five options (artworks) in this show. Basically, it's the activity of adding or applying a colour onto a canvas surface, which is a painting.

AL – You mention that the monochrome references the history of painting Kyle? Do you think the monochrome is representation of all the theoretical and conceptual ideas inherent within 'painting' as a whole? Is this why you keep coming back to the monochrome?

KJ - Maybe. I feel it offers me everything and nothing at the same time. We live in more of a world now than 20 years ago when I started them, where

the over saturation of imagery has become a form of visual baggage that artwork more than ever must deal with. But in saying that, let's face it, the best thing about making work is that you get to invent something into your personal lexicon that hasn't existed previously and this changes and reshapes you and how you look at the world with new eyes.

AL – Are you interested in how the monochrome relates to the rest of your work?

KJ - Well I am a painter that makes paintings and so that's the line that connects it all because I make all the work, I don't have an assistant. My work as an overarching practice is about structures. The early monochromes were about addressing architectural structures, then there were paintings I did on Audrey Hepburn and Cary Grant which was about popular culture based structures, then there were series' of works about geometric historical painting structures, more architectural structures, structures about the history of places / spaces and time and now I have three series of works running at the same time: one about punk/DIY music and geometric abstraction and how they are connected, which is about simultaneity and underground / subcultural structures being brought together into a form of work, then there are want of a better term abstract paintings which are just the relationship of colour, shape and composition, then there are a variety of

text based painting, wall painting and collage works and then finally there are these monochromes which are about painting as an activity.

AL – Do you think the presence of monochromes in your painting practice impacts upon how your other work is read?

KJ - I can see how aesthetically people could feel confused by them because they aren't like the other work, but for me it's about making art that is about addressing the aesthetic situation I am currently in. So, you deal with that because that's what artists do, they make things as a way of addressing the place and space they are in at that time. It's how I deal with or address the world and so for me monochromes and the act of making them has become of interest for me again because I am tired of being bombarded with imagery and monochromes are a contemplative process of looking, seeing, knowing, and feeling. It's like pressing pause on all things and everything.

AL - Does the space you're showing in impact upon the work you decide to make? And does it affect the reading of the work?

KJ - Yes and no. Yes, in the sense that I thought architecturally your space ALG Gallery has distinct areas of wall space between windows and door frames. So, I wanted to accentuate these architectural features through each

work being isolated and compartmentalised in between these architectural features but to also see the entire space as one body of work in one space. No, because the internal structure of the painting is not changed by the wall because it's not dependant on the space being an essential material in the construction of the work like installation art.

AL - I love the title, how does this refer to your work and overall ideas?

KJ - The title relates to the fact that artists don't just choose to do monochromes. This type of painting chooses you because you must be committed to making this type of work. For me it was simple because when I look at monochromes, it represents all possibilities in art at once but for others it probably doesn't mean anything. The title relates to the fact that this is also not the first time I have made monochromes, or that I also make a variety of other works as well that aren't monochromes. To understand the work, you need to understand my 28-year painting practice but then again if that bores you then you can just look at what's in front of you and see where that leads you. Whatever people feel is what they feel. The title refers to the idea that anything and/or everything doesn't come from nowhere, that it is a result of a collation of personal history of making and experiencing. Every time I make a new work, the history of old work is dragged with it so you can look at any work for what it is and for what it is a part of.

AL – you mentioned over a coffee Kyle that you may have more to add surrounding the choice of ‘Things Don’t Fall From The Sky’ as a title?

KJ - Well the title comes from the idea that everything comes from a collation of something and in this case my personal history of making art. I chose these monochromes because they are a result of 28 years of exhibition experience and all those past works that have been made. Even though the audience doesn’t see it in these 5 circular monochromes because they view the work for what it is, I look at the exhibition regarding previous works I have made, and also the show is the show, and these works are singing their own tunes on this stage at this moment in time.

AL – Could you expand upon how the monochrome chooses you Kyle? Do you mean that a painting practice can reach a conceptual point where the only solution to the problem is a monochrome?

KJ - Well I like looking at paintings and I like looking at my paintings and painting creates a pause in time for you to just stand or sit still in a place and think about what is happening. When I start each painting, it is mine because I make certain aesthetic choices but after a while the painting takes over where it becomes its own self and so I am now just an assistant working for it. It’s not my painting anymore and instead the painting takes over and tells me what needs to be done for it to be what it needs to be. The very act of

making takes over where I mix up paint in a container and then apply this to the canvas and that's what it is. It is one of the reasons I do not like the word 'reductive' to describe the work because the act of reduction is the removal or taking away of information to find an essence that is left behind: the core belief. I am not taking away; I am adding on. It's the same process writing songs, where you have a set of chords and over repetition they start to inform where the song needs to go and then this informs the lyrics and by the end you end up with a singular work: a song which for me is no different from a monochrome. You have a relationship with these things like you have a relationship with people. And so, it's interesting to have exhibitions because it's a way of looking at the work unaffected by the world where its reality becomes your reality for a short period of time in that space.

AL – You mention being committed to making monochromatic work, do you think a commitment must be made because the monochrome has such a strong theoretical history within painting? Or do you think it is because it can be difficult for people to read?

KJ - Both. I feel you need to be committed to this type of painting because it has so many aesthetic options and you need to be committed to its potential not as a last resort because you've run out of ideas. For me it's about questioning what is painting but also engaging in what painting could be. As

for the viewer, I think people can be both offended by it because they see it as not really being what painting is supposed to be which is representing reality through artistic ability. But it's my reality and this form of painting is not a secondary reality of what is real because the monochrome painting is real as the original form because it is not copying anything else - a moment in time held in stasis but can be reread continually. Also, people can feel intimidated by the monochrome because it's not offering you straight away anything other than what it is, and this can potentially make people feel like they don't know enough about art history to understand the work, or they feel the work is making a joke about art. But the way I see it, children look at clouds and invent imaginary pictures out of what they are seeing, and they aren't trained in nephology, so why can't anyone come to a monochrome with an open mind and open heart and see where it leads you.

AL- When you say, to understand your 28-year painting practice or look at what's in front of you and see where that leads you, do you mean, you're open to people taking whatever they will from a monochrome? Or do you think one receives a greater reading of the work from knowing about the ideas within your overall practice (I love that in some way the monochrome could reference all the other work that you make and your ideas.)

KJ – I am very open to people taking whatever they will from the paintings.

Really painting is a form of failure because it can't say everything you want to say as an artist. That's why I make another one and another one and another one etc. So, because failure is built into the work it now has the freedom to be whatever it wants to be because it can't be what it isn't. It's a way of not being satisfied with what you are doing but to also be open to what the paintings are. By not being satisfied allows for the next work to be generated as a way of finding a new answer but at the same time allowing the current paintings to be 'an' answer that is dragged into subsequent work in the studio.

AL - Could you tell me about the use of the different yellows?

KJ - When making monochromes, people always say 'I could do that' but they never do because it takes a certain decision to make a painting in one colour and say that is all there is. People always add more and more into their paintings but for me that is just decoration that I am not interested in at all. The paintings have a playful austerity in their act of being. A circle is in our lives as soon as a child we understand that a circle has so many aesthetic and life positioned options. The circle we grow up with as this visually functioning object of adaptability. It is a portal (frame/window) into another world or a way to look out and for the outside to look in. It is a wheel on a car drawn on a piece of paper, a dot to cover what is hidden behind, a

head on a stick figure, a marker of an artwork sale, a plate, a frisbee, the sun etc. You get the idea. A circle is whatever you want it to be, and its context is where you position it on a piece of paper or in your life. As for the yellow depending on psychologically what you believe it's a sign of genius and a sign of insanity. Yellow for me is just a happy colour. A colour that represents a new season.

AL - Could you expand on what you mean by 'adding decoration'? When is a painting decoration?

KJ – Maybe all painting is decoration when it's matched with the curtains and the couch. For me I don't necessarily make work that is about representing other things because the original already exists in the world and whatever I may have made based on it would be a watered-down copy of the original. If you want the original, then go get it, be in it or look at it. For me painting has its own problems and I am just working through those structures related to history, culture, aesthetics, and ways of looking and feeling about what is being felt.

AL – Kyle you have mentioned that a child may 'get' the paintings more so than an adult?

KJ - Well a child has utopian vision. They see shapes as explorative things

they can through their imagination turn into whatever they want them to be. As adults we tend to carry the load of our everyday histories with us when we view and experience anything. It stops us from seeing the possibilities and realities of things because unlike a child we are terrified of failure. So, with works like this people may feel they don't know enough about this form of art to discuss it. However, a child doesn't care they'll tell you what they think. Failure isn't an option for a child because it is not present. I like that type of bravado – of just doing something because you want to do it.

AL - Where is this work situated within your overall practice?

KJ - Well I use to make shaped monochromes in my early twenties, which were based on architectural motifs, so they were representational but non-representational at the same time. Again, like the *Position Point* paintings this was a type of work that embodies two parallel characteristics. Then I did them again in my thirties and now they are back again. I am always drawn back to the monochrome because they represent everything painting can be while offering nothing other than what painting is.

AL – it is super interesting that you speak about all these other ideas relating to a circle and the colour, often when people look at a monochrome, they don't think it references ideas or is a way in to thinking about a set of ideas

or what it is that a circle can represent. Beyond the Monochrome referencing painting's history, do you think the monochrome is always conceptually imbued with another set of ideas from the artist?

KJ – Well it's a little bit difficult to defend the monochrome because it's just what I am doing and there are other individuals making monochromes for whatever personal reasons they need to make them and let's face it is a selfish activity. Applying one colour onto a canvas is selfish, but all art is selfish because you get to completely do whatever you want to do, and you don't have to take anyone else's feelings into consideration. I make them and work through ideas within them as a way of understanding what painting is and through that process hopefully it leads to something else.

AL – Following on from the previous question, are you interested in the monochrome being a conduit referencing another set of ideas? Maybe that's a silly question and art always does that?

KJ - I think that's a good way to look at it, that it's a conduit for what it is, what it could be and what is to become.

AL – You mention that the Position Point paintings deal with two parallel characteristics? Could you expand upon that?

KJ – Well as stated previously they are dealing with concepts in punk/DIY

culture that I grew up in and how for me issues of immediacy and practice that are in this form of music / culture are reflected in conceptual based painting.

AL - how did this type of work first appear in your practice?

KJ – If you are speaking about *Position Point* then they came out of me making a fanzine called ‘Dark Body Smell’ that was about punk and DIY music in Sydney in the 90s. Back then I was far more interested in that than anything else. The fanzines became a vehicle to engage with musicians, bands, the live performance culture, and the many characters within it. There seemed to be a cross over for me between the music and art fields, which let’s face it is not an original move because art and music has always had its blending of individuals and outcomes but for me it was less about making a grand statement of different artistic forms coming together and rather about a personal engagement in the two.

AL - The way each monochrome sits conceptually is obviously related to the way it sits within the artists practice, I’m interested in the way you make multiple types of work at once, I know you deal with Structure in your overall work, how does the monochrome deal with the same ideas as say, the Fanzine paintings?

KJ – It’s about immediacy. For me, that is an important word because I want the work not to be a façade for something else (a narrative, story etc.). Instead, the work isn’t about hiding its intentions from the viewer but instead offering what it is as well as options in its simplicity of means and construction just like the fanzine and the music and cultural content it imbues. I look at different methods of practice and they just represent different types of songs that are each their own vehicle but collectively come together in an album or a fragment of a career. As you stated in your question, all the works, regardless of aesthetic outcome are dealing with structure and what this means within the field that artwork is engaged with.

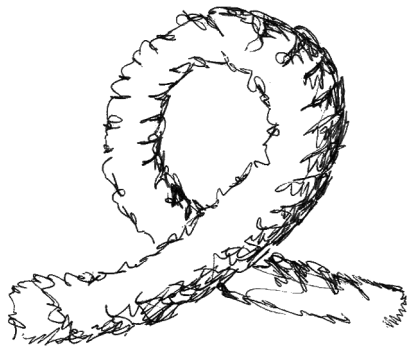
AL - Does your art practice and music deal with the same ideas?

KJ - I felt for a long time that they were mutually separate even to the point that friends in art didn’t know I played music and friends in bands didn’t know I painted. This is still the case in some way, however if people ask, I feel fine about admitting I do both. The *Position Point* series of paintings that started in 2016 was the first time the two met where I was taking the punk/DIY fanzine culture that I was doing in my late teens/early twenties in music and was brought into conceptual/geometric-based painting field. Merging aspects of immediacy, simplicity, and energy in the composition of the paintings really mirrored both histories for me. Also, all the images of musicians I

choose for the creation of the collaged paintings I conceptually identify with aesthetically and emotionally.

AL – I wonder if this idea/crossover is something that will continue to appear in your work Kyle?

KJ – Well I'm not dead yet so probably. The older I get the more I feel it's not necessary to separate anything because why would you?



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