

Sean Griskenas

Artist Statement

My work is about providing new thought on what a painting might be. My paintings investigate and challenge the conventional idea of painting as a flat rectangular two-dimensional surface that uses illusion to create depth. Using large-scale painted voiles (as large as 10' x 30'), I create multidimensional works that invite the viewer to walk in, around, and through the painting.

The basic technique examines the medium of paint by creating both the illusion of overlapping color and form, and actual overlapping of color and form. The illusion is created by brush painting acrylic washes on raw canvas. The actual overlapping forms and color are created with layers of painted voiles hung in front of each other and then placed in front of prepared painted canvas. The voiles act as scrims and depending on the direction of the light and point of view, are transparent, translucent, or opaque with moirés throughout. Additional images and colors are created by painted voiles interacting with the colors and forms painted behind them.

Building on the idea of multidimensional, interactive painting, I also create walk-through pieces by using painted voile and canvas to construct large-scale environments: a garden, a screen, a room. In these works, I cut shapes into voiles, cut shapes out of the voile, cut canvas, and create collages from canvas and voile. The imagery is abstract as well as loosely referential to the figure and to common, recognizable objects.

The works afford the viewer the opportunity to see the inside and the outside of a painting in addition to everything in between. Viewers create the piece as they mender through the work, shift points of view, and directly experience being surrounded by color and form. These works explore the relationship between the viewer and the object and how they influence one another mutually and reciprocally – a continuous influence that happened consciously and unconsciously as long as the viewer is engaged in the activity of looking.

In my smaller works, I challenge the conventional rectangular painting on its own terms. First creating traditional stretched canvases, I paint both sides then slash them to reveal the composition on the back. The opening is filled with an additional composition of canvas or voile. These seem to burst open as if to show graphic dissatisfaction with the accepted and conventional definitions of painting.