



Matthew Kolodziej
Caught in Flux



Cover:
Detail, *Pretense*, 2007
acrylic and ink on canvas
72 x 72in

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72 x 72in

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Caught in Flux

Steve Roden

The phrase that immediately came to mind when I saw Matthew Kolodziej's recent paintings for the first time was "caught in flux."¹ Kolodziej's paintings are incredibly complex pauses, depicting a state of anxiety and extreme suspension through the application of paint and the fragmenting of images. A viewer might feel that if he or she looks away from a Kolodziej painting for a second, this specific visual moment will shift or change and once again become a mass of frenzied activity.

Looking at some online dictionary definitions of flux, one finds a collection of words that clearly relate to Kolodziej's work, such as flow, flowing, fluid, welding, soldering, fabrication, melt, particles, plastics, fuse and energy. Within these definitions are longer phrases that continue to connect Kolodziej's work and process to ideas surrounding the word flux, such as fusible glass; continuous change; expressing the strength of a field of force in a given area; the lines of force of an electric or magnetic field; energy through a given surface; and a flowing of fluid from the body.

Gleaned from looking at Kolodziej's work, words such as flow or flowing suggest ideas of fragmentation, memory, and the perpetual movement of time as in reality, as well as in cinema. Words such as fuse, melt, welding, and fusible glass are connected to the almost alchemical nature of Kolodziej's textured and layered surfaces. His paintings are not only composed of landscapes, but their surfaces literally become landscapes. Energy through a given surface, particles, and an electric field, begin to speak not only of the implied frenetic activity that seems to have generated the work, but also of the visual electricity of Kolodziej's use of color.

In his most recent works, the complexity of Kolodziej's process of reconfiguring fragmented images of construction sites has bubbled more to the surface. By including recognizable images, Kolodziej creates an overall sense of uncertainty, as though the depicted world is neither "realistic" nor abstract, and that the things we see and the spaces we inhabit are covered with auras of gooey resonance and saturated plastic energy that one might call hyperdelic.

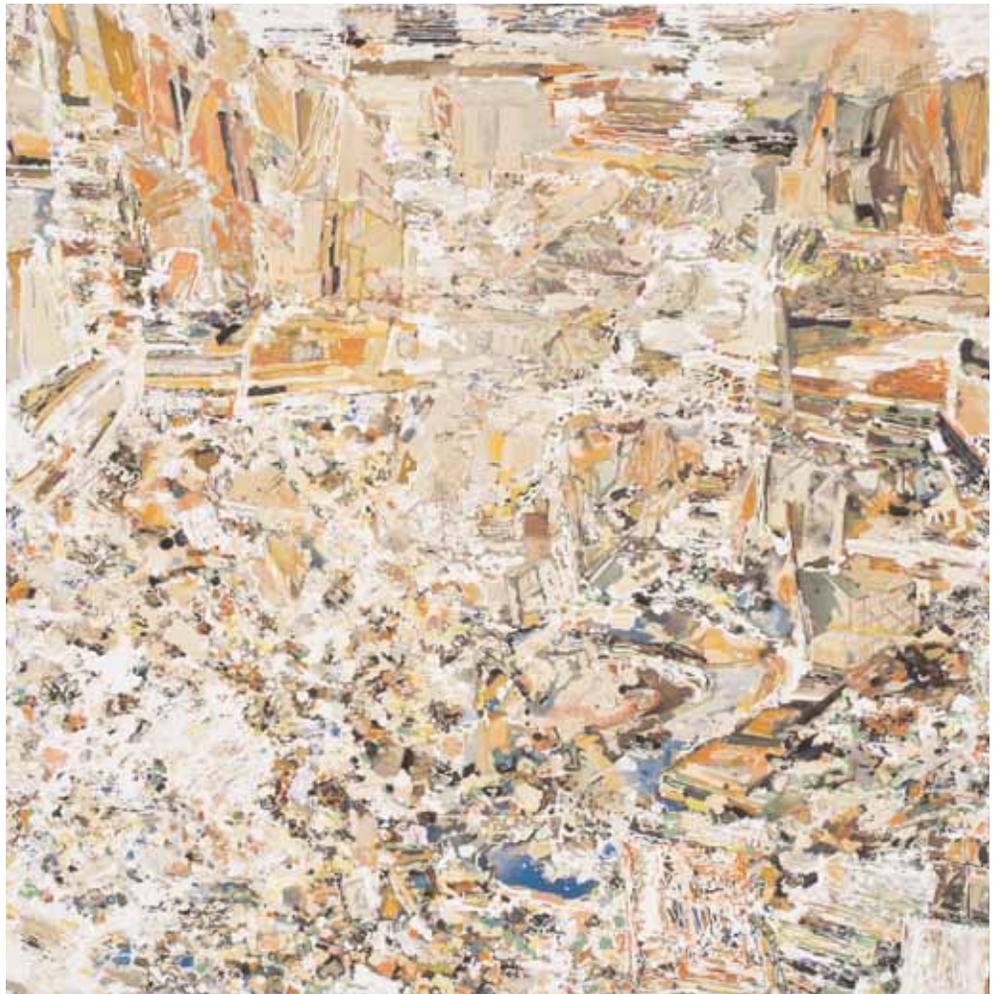
In Kolodziej's work there is a fluid connection between seeing things and feeling things, and between the viewer's negotiation of an image that is represented and one that is an actual physical presence. In the details of a painting, one can see a network of lines depicting a brick wall, but these lines are also thick enough to contain smaller pools of liquid color. Here, the viewer not only sees an image of a brick wall, but also feels the presence of its physical network resting on the surface of the painting.

While talking to Kolodziej on the phone, he brought up an artist I would never have initially associated with the work... Buster Keaton.² Thinking about it over time, I realized Kolodziej's mention of Keaton is actually right on the mark. Kolodziej's paintings share much with Keaton's work, particularly a somewhat misleading state of clumsiness on a surface that masks a highly choreographed project of grace.

Kolodziej mentioned "the poetry in stumbling" and how Keaton made physical comedy human. By this I believe he meant the kind of human qualities that exist in Richard Tuttle's work—which also has much stumbling potential—or the video by Peter Fischli and David Weiss, *The Way Things Go*. I believe it is these ideas that have kept the work honest. It doesn't rely on the development of technique as much as it experiments, shifts, and evolves.

Kolodziej's paintings feel a bit like visual equivalents of the aftermath of an elaborate Keaton stunt. The leading man is standing amidst a fallen building in a window hole, while dust and debris from the recent collapse feel sculptural in their choreographed disorder around him. I would think that from Keaton's view, the landscape would look a lot like one of Kolodziej's compositions.

Kolodziej also mentioned the "sincerity of acknowledging the tenuous nature of making." This felt like a key to his work and his process, as the paintings have a wonderful sense of instability to them. It led me back to the idea of being caught in flux. I imagined one of those old films of a large hotel in Las Vegas being dynamited in slow motion. It made me think how, without the motion—for example, if one randomly paused



Restoration, 2007
acrylic and ink on canvas
72 x 72in

the film—a single frame could yield something that suggests the logic of gravity yet also the opposite, that is, where logic plays no role in the visual suggestion of a fragmented moment in time.

In the end, Kolodziej's work is about a kind of impossibility of focus and stillness in the context of today's particularly fast-paced environment. Our visual world is moving so fast that we can barely stick our heads out of the window to capture a single view. Kolodziej's paintings acknowledge this anxiety but are generous and perhaps optimistic enough to infuse this tension with a much-needed dose of saturated beauty.

Steve Roden is an artist living in Los Angeles.

- 1 *Caught in Flux* is the title of the seminal 1981 LP by the band Eyeless in Gaza.
- 2 Artists I would have expected him to mention are Robert Smithson, Julie Mehretu, Terry Winters, Fabian Marcaccio, Wayne Thiebaud, Thomas Noskowski, Ingrid Calame, or Franz Ackermann.

Intent and Design

William Busta

When artists choose to depict buildings in their work, it is often because they are attracted to the possibilities of painting plane and intersection, with texture indicated by materials and with shading suggested by orientation to sources of light. And audiences often respond well to these works because of the nature of architecture as a human creation, concretely realizing our ambition (as modified by resources and technical capability).

The paintings of Matthew Kolodziej sidestep these possibilities and avoid the easy opportunity to please. The structures that engage his interest are in the process of construction and demolition, without curtains of exterior material to mask internal systems and structures. As these buildings grow or tremble, there's a nakedness that reveals intent and design; there's a life that excites with the vitality of change.

When Kolodziej projects images of building sites onto canvas and starts to trace with a pen, he is documenting the potential of indefinite moments in time as much as he is describing a place. He follows the tracings with acrylic matte medium, creating subjective and objective structures that sometimes contain and sometimes cannot contain the paint that he pours on the canvas. Without illumination from a specific light source the color pulses with its own energy.

The artist has not made his effort to simply represent something that exists in the physical world, nor to portray the dexterity of his imagination. Rather, the paintings are both an invitation and a strategy for the artist (and each of us) to engage all of our possibilities.



Details from
Restoration, 2007
acrylic and ink on canvas
72 x 72in



Matthew Kolodziej



Orient, 2007
acrylic and ink on canvas
72 x 72in

My paintings use references to architecture to project a sense of dislocation, which is a central theme in my work. The tension created between solid and dysfunctional structures in these paintings places the viewer in an unstable negotiation of space and time. These improbable structures fluctuate between forming and deteriorating synapses. The forces of entropy are present in the fragments, fissures, and residues on the surface of the paintings, evidence of the negotiations, risk, and choices made at intersections in both psychic and physical landscapes.

My process, akin to the way an archaeologist works, begins with documenting construction and demolition sites with photographs and reconstructing these sites using the computer. The states of transition, dilapidation and rejuvenation, evident in the texture, physical structure, color, and light of these labyrinths provide the foundations for my images. The projected images of temporary molds, scaffolding, and debris are mapped to form a network of intertwined structures. The reconstructed images of the site present a space that alternates between a tenuous and fragile façade and a believable illusion of stability.

Collaging multiple conflicting points of view accentuates the disorientation of the viewer. Multiple levels of definition further complicate the viewer's ability to find a foothold in the image. In recent work, I trace over the drawings with gel medium and pour paint between the lines. The effect is a solid cast, or enduring fossil, of the original structures, but defined paradoxically with artificial color and material. Cracks mimic lines. Paint yields to or overflows from the banks of the raised drawing. There is a constant dialogue between the fixed structure chosen from the photographs and the editing and decomposing of that structure in the medium of paint.



Synapse, 2007
acrylic and ink on canvas
72 x 72in



Detail, *Compass*, 2007
acrylic and ink on canvas
72 x 72in



Compass, 2007
acrylic and ink on canvas
72 x 72in

Matthew Kolodziej

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Visual artist and Assistant Professor of Art,
Myers School of Art, University of Akron

Education

- 1993 MFA in painting with honors, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI
- 1988 BA in economics, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL

One Person Exhibitions

- 2007 William Busta Gallery, *Caught in Flux*, Cleveland, OH
- 2006 St. Michael's College, *Paintings*, Colchester, VT
- 2005 Hiram College, *Fissures: New Paintings*, Hiram, OH
- 2004 Kent State, Stark Campus Gallery, *New Work*, Stark, OH
- 2001 The Dean's Gallery, MIT Sloan School of Management, *Dissolved Presences*, Boston, MA
- 1999 Doll-Anstadt Gallery, *Paintings*, Burlington, VT
- 1998 Doll-Anstadt Gallery, *Neon Gardens*, Burlington, VT
- 1996 University of Leeds, Bretton Hall, *Paintings*, West Yorkshire, England
- 1994 AS220, *Paintings*, Providence, RI
- 1993 Sol Koffler Gallery, *Seeing Not Doing*, Providence, RI
- 1992 Sol Koffler Gallery, *Location*, Providence, RI

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2007 FAVA Gallery, *Noticing the Unseen*, Oberlin, OH
- 2006 Art Advisory Boston, *New Paintings*, Boston, MA
Rockford Art Museum, *Rockford Midwestern*, Rockford, IL
Harris-Stanton Gallery, *New Work*, Akron, OH
- 2005 Cleveland Museum of Art, *NEO Show*, Cleveland, OH
Akron Art Museum, *New Master Drawings*, Akron, OH
- 2004 Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland, *Small Monuments*, OH
Heights Arts, *Painting 2004*, Cleveland Heights, OH
- 2003 The College of Wooster Art Museum, *Convergence*, OH
Florida State University Museum of Art, *Combined Talents*, Tallahassee, FL
Oberlin College, *Mediated Nature*, Cleveland, OH
- 2002 Art Center of Northern New Jersey, *Group Exhibition*, New Milford, NJ
- 2001 Art Institute of Boston, *Faculty Exhibition*, Boston, MA
Louisiana State University, *Painters Pick Painters*, Baton Rouge, LA
- 2000 Discovery Museum, *Mandalas*, Bridgeport, CT
Rhode Island School of Design, *Faculty Show*, Providence, RI
- 1999 Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, *Louise Foster Exhibition*, Waltham, MA
Ukrainian Institute, *Group Show*, Chicago, IL
Montserrat College of Art, *Biophilia Connection*, Beverly, MA
- 1998 Attleboro Museum, *Sense of Place*, Attleboro, MA

Public Collections

American Greetings, Cleveland, OH
Squire, Sanders & Dempsey LLP, Cleveland, OH
Ohio Savings Bank, Cleveland, OH
Fidelity Investments Inc., Boston, MA
Nokia Corporation, Boston, MA
The Providence Group, Providence, RI
University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA
CSC, Waltham, MA
Edwards and Angell Law Offices, Providence, RI
University of Leeds, Leeds, England

Bibliography

- Utter, Douglas, "Noting the Overlooked," *Cleveland Free Times*, March 2007
 - McQuaid, Cate, "Matthew Kolodziej at Art Advisory Boston," *Art In New England*, June 2006
 - Shinn, Dorothy, "Freshest of Fresh Art Show," *Akron Beacon Journal*, May 2006
 - Heath, Benita, "Fragmentations," *Lexington Herald Leader*, February 12, 2006
 - Bracken Sparks, Amy, "NEO Show," *Angle Magazine*, September, 2005
 - Litt, Steven, "Neo Show," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 10, 2005
 - Shinn, Dorothy, "Art Space Shows Off Drawings," *Akron Beacon Journal*, May 22, 2005
 - Tranberg, Dan, "Painting 2004," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 10, 2004
 - Bracken Sparks, Amy, "Small Monuments," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 2, 2004
 - McQuaid, Cate, "Abstract Pair," *Boston Globe*, June 22, 2001
 - Cohen, Joyce, "Rose Art Museum," *Art In New England*, April–May, 1999
 - McQuaid, Cate, "Rose Show Stretches Abstract's Boundaries," *Boston Globe*, February 21, 1999
 - Sherman, Mary, "Rose Art Museum, A Quiet Revolution," *Boston Herald*, February 4, 1999
 - Faxon, Alicia, "Attleboro Museum," *Art In New England*, August–September, 1998
- ## Grants and Awards
- 2007 Ohio Arts Council, Individual Excellence Award
 - 1995 Fulbright Scholar, Research and Painting Grant, England
 - 1994 Rhode Island State Council for the Arts Painting Fellowship