Ashley St Pierre

Artist Statement 2013

Much of my time is spent pondering questions in epistemology, metaphysics and philosophy of language, such as ‘what is it to know?’, ‘do we have any knowledge about the external world at all?’, ‘what is the nature of reality?’, ‘how can we come to know this reality?’ and ‘might the relationship between epistemology and metaphysics be linked to and metaphorically expressed by theories about meaning, communication and truth?’. Since 2010, these questions and explorations have taken the form of sculptures, and more recently, paintings, and come together under a concept that I have been calling *The Space Between*. What I am interested in describing with this concept is the experience of sensing the existence of something which is concrete and objective, but which can only be understood via glimpses or snapshots that singularly do not reveal its totality. The interesting part of this experience is not the subject or the object, per se, but what happens in the spaces between them. Perhaps, the essential aspect of reality is not even composed of parts, but of relationships.

To express this concept, I create artworks that explore and describe the mystery of their own content, works that expand and compress, reveal and hide, present and distort. In this way, they speak about our epistemic limits yet rejoice in the wonder of that mysterious space between reality and what we know of it. My paintings involve dancing, script-like, repetitive string patterns layered between applications of Rhoplex, a transparent and reflective material. The result is that each layer of paint is distanced from the subsequent layers and from the surface of the canvas. At times, these layers appear to blur and intermingle, while at other times they seem to float on one another, and thus, the place where the painting begins and ends becomes obscured. The painting’s content is not merely the painted patterns, but also (and more importantly) what lies between them, and in what exists within the imagination of the viewer. A dialogue takes place between layers, and between the artwork and the mind. The mind contributes to the forms that appear and disappear. This mystery and distortion of form and image is integral to the idea of the space (and ultimately reality) and our perception and pursuit of it.

My paintings and sculptures are somewhat transitional, somewhat ephemeral and somewhat hidden, as walking around in front of the works or even shifting slightly in one place causes their patterns and structures to fluctuate and transform. One can see through the surfaces, and yet, light reflecting off of the works both creates and hides form. One cannot grasp the works in their entirety from one position. We are therefore propelled into motion. Space is not necessarily held or filled but simply alluded to and fractured, consumed and emptied. The paintings and sculptures extend out into their surrounding area, taking those surroundings into themselves. These characteristics describe my concept of the ‘space between’. *The Space Between* is an attempt to approach an understanding of our own essence and the essence of that which is external to us. This space is everything and nothing.