



CRAIG LEWIS
POSTDIGITAL

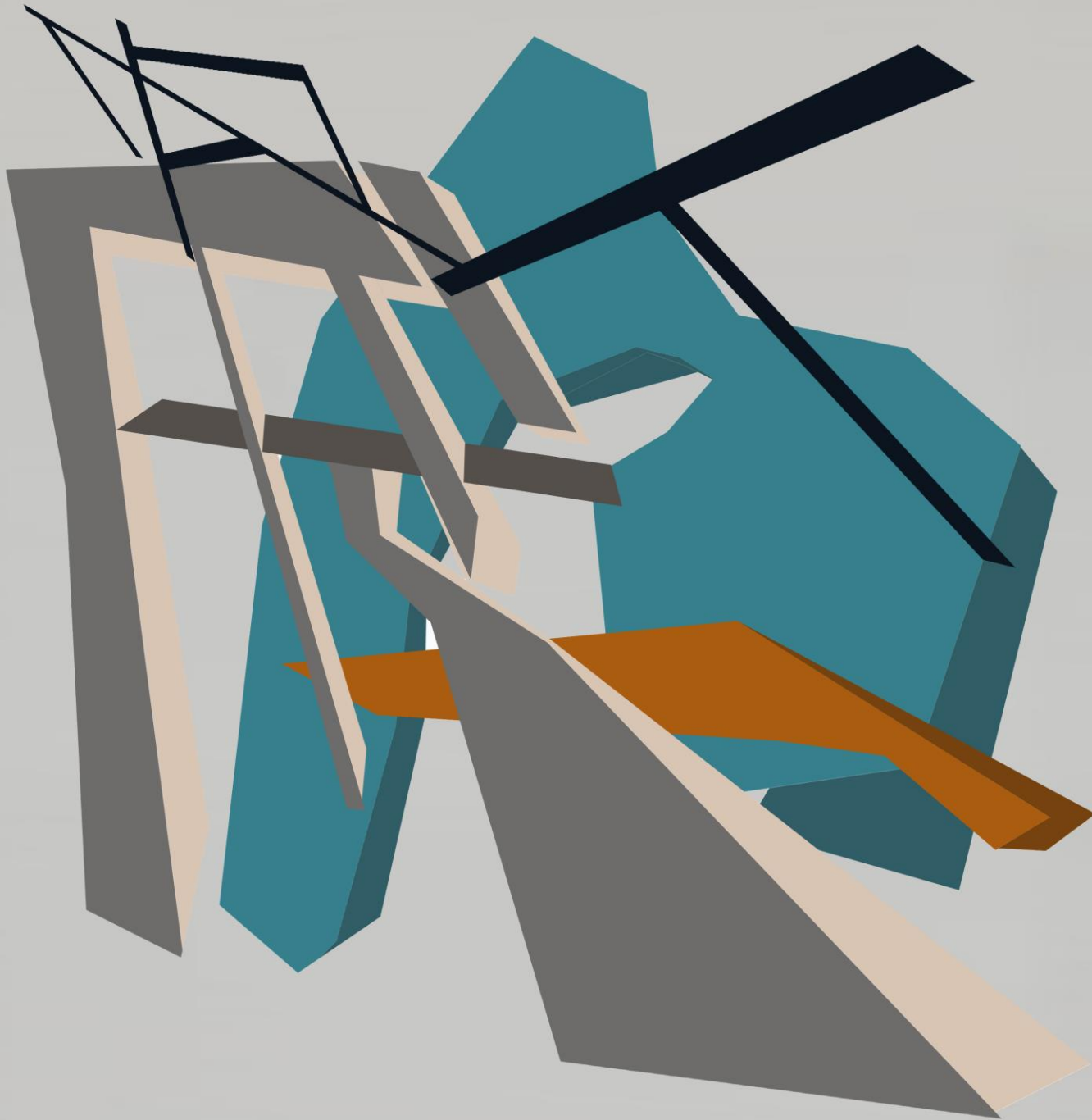


Artist Statement

In an age where the analogue is becoming increasingly dominated by the digital, one questions whether there is still a valuable discourse to be had through painting, or has the information age diluted all meaning?

My practice re-examines the value of painting in a post-digital age of technological over-stimulation and media hyper-interaction. Operating in a time where both analogue and digital forms of communication and self-expression co-exist, painting is faced with the existential challenge of capturing and embodying the spirit of our times, whilst paving the way for its own continued survival. This is where you will locate my practice, somewhere in the hinterland between the two aesthetic extremes of the practical and the computational; between the nostalgic devotion and visceral passion for the 'plastic' traditions of painting and the futuristic idealism of new technology.

My work takes up this challenges by looking at the historical tradition of painting from a uniquely 21st Century perspective. Utilizing theoretical concepts such as atemporality, materiality, post-digital aesthetics and provisionality, I aim to express through the mediums of paint, mixed-media and digital art a deeply personal connection with the physical art object whilst acknowledging the detached anomie of the post-modernist context in which the work resides.



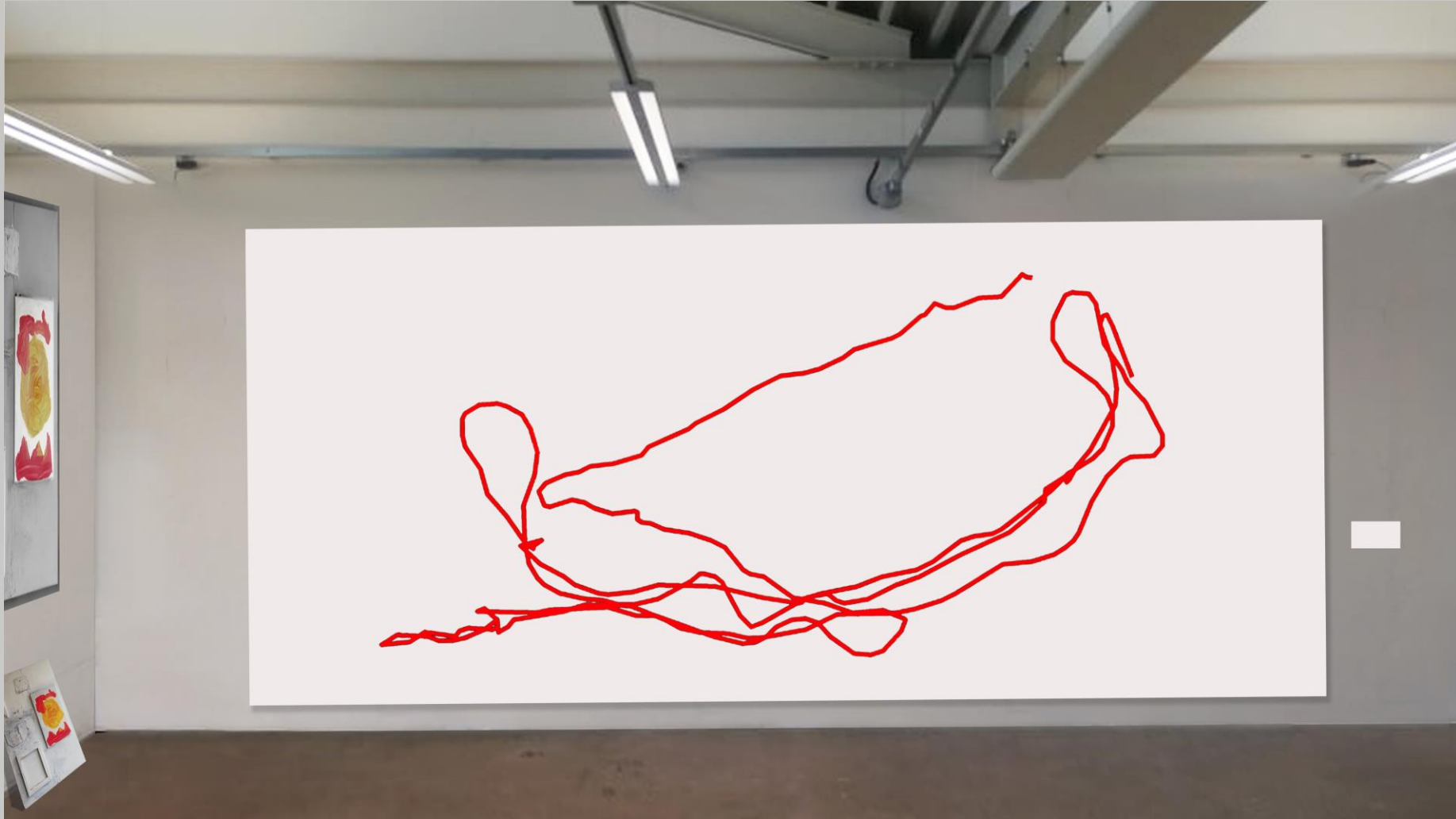
PORTFOLIO

Digital Ghosts



"Digital Ghosts" 1 - 3 " and "Unskilled" 1 - 3. Arranged in juxtaposition to emphasis the provisonality of the paintings and the material relationship between the painted canvases and the digitally-produced copies.

5 hours of Creative Strava Activity



This painting features a GPS recorded activity taken from the exercise app Strava offering a painting/digitally-based critique on the physical 'residue' of creative activity.

Digital Fingerprint



This work comprises of 8 geometric abstract digital paintings and 24 corresponding fingerprint artworks, thus revealing the invisible gestures inherent in the act of creating digital art.

A Postdigital Discourse Through Provisional Painting



Craig Lewis "Unskilled #1" 2021. Household paint, Mixed media on canvas. 66 cm x 60 cm



Craig Lewis "Unskilled #2" 2021. Household paint, Mixed media on canvas. 66 cm x 60 cm



Craig Lewis "Unskilled #3" 2021. Household paint, mixed media on canvas. 66 cm x 60 cm

Furthering my dialogue with provisional painting, I have chosen to re-purpose my old paintings and modify them to see what additional conversation could be had. I had previously found myself drawn to the colourless aesthetic of Lawrence Carol's off-white paintings, and therefore applied a similar finish of white household emulsion to the canvases. This immediately neutralised the work and left me questioning the degree to which colour defines a painting. By de-emphasising the use of skill and labour, the work asks to the viewer to re-consider their default judgement and to look beyond the canvas surface towards the material qualities of the painting.

An Approximation of Painting through Digital Scanning



Craig Lewis "Digital Ghost #1" 2021. Digitally printed image on board. 264 cm x 240 cm.

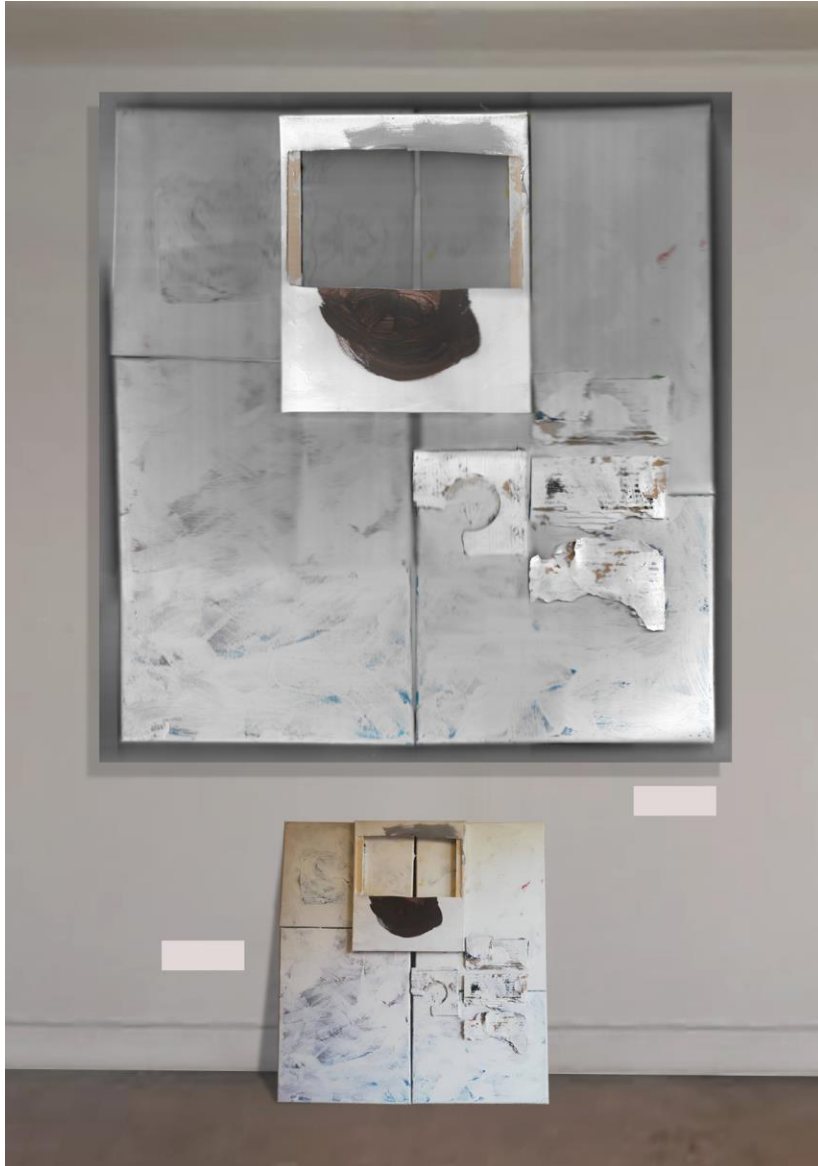


Craig Lewis "Digital Ghost #2" 2021. Digitally printed image on board. 264 x 240 cm.



Craig Lewis "Digital Ghost #3" 2021. Digitally printed image on board. 264 x 240 cm.

In an effort to add another layer of context to my discourse on painting, I used an A4 digital flatbed scanner to transfer the original paintings in to the computer. This required the paintings to be placed on the scanner in section due to their size and re-assembled in photoshop. The resulting images are a clear distortion of the original paintings with the colour and clarity fluctuating between high and low resolution across the whole of the painted surface. Through this very basic of processes, the work served to highlight the disparity between the way humans and machines view a painting.



Joseph Kosuth *One and Three Chairs* 1965

In this work I am asking the same question that Joseph Kosuth asked in "One and Three Chairs", what is the nature of the object you see before you?

Whilst Kosuth invites us to consider the different degrees with which we understand the concept of a 'chair', I am asking the viewer to consider the different value judgements they make alongside this understanding.

Has the value of the painting changed during the digitised process and which version of the painting do we accept? Am I giving the larger, printed version higher status than the original, or has the copy's presence enhanced the original painting's appeal?

Applying Contextual Research to my Critique



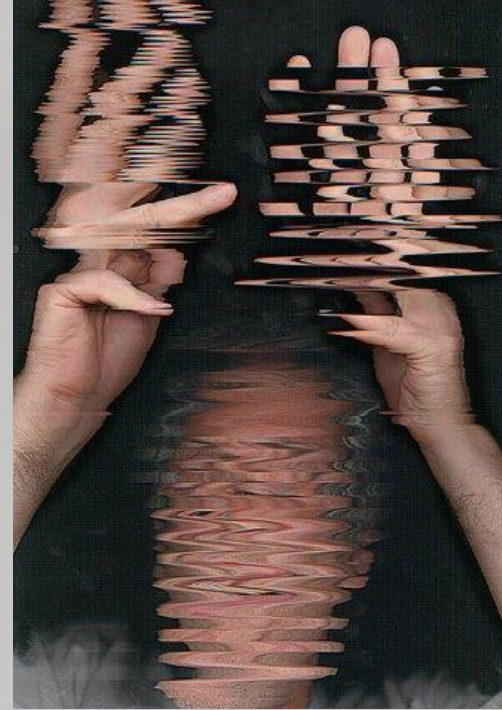
Lawrence Carol "Untitled" (Slip Painting) 2006. Oil, wax, house paint, staples, canvas on wood. 313 x 235 x 25 cm.

I am fascinated by Lawrence Carol's use of household materials and paints. Although his work came before provisional painting, I like the way that his aesthetic could be considered provisional, which is a very atemporal position to be in.



Richard Aldrich "Untitled" 2017. Acrylic on cut canvas. 70 x 50 cm.

Richard Aldrich's cut canvases, for me, sum up provisional painting perfectly. The exposed frames and visual dialogue that the work engages in, speaks volumes about painting's importance to contemporary art in the 21st century.



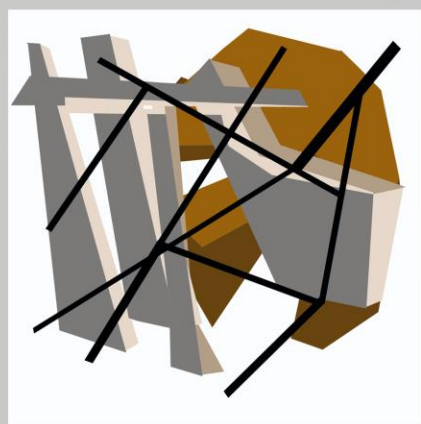
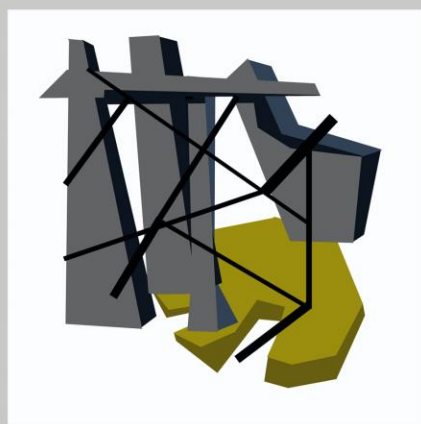
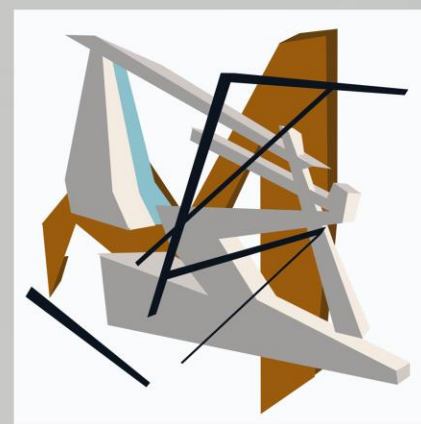
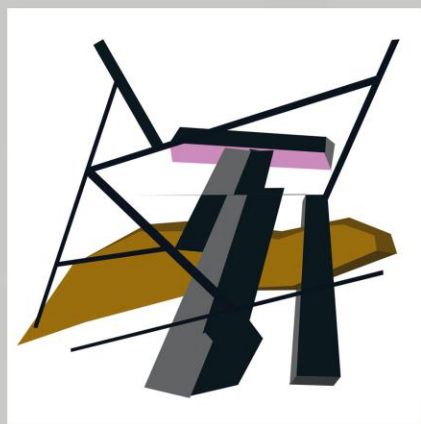
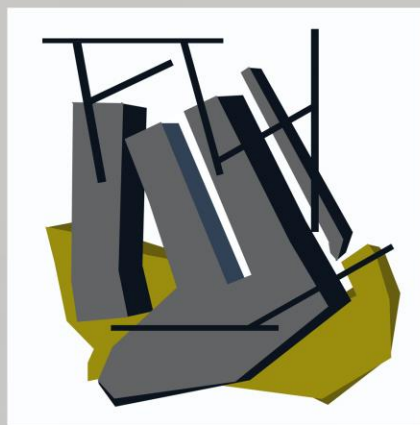
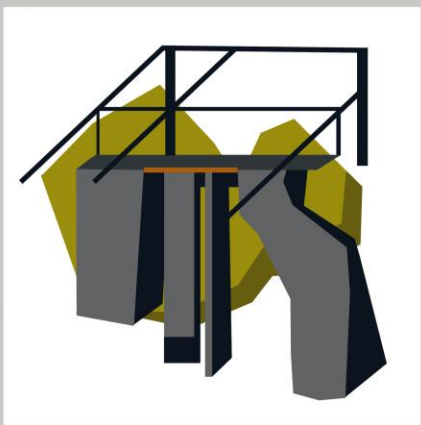
Kurt Novak "Self Portrait" 2016. Flatbed scanner. 25 x 30 cm.

Kurt Novak's use of the flatbed scanner and his ethereal, ghost-like portraits inspired my use of the scanner as a first-hand medium for presenting and communicating my digital concept in the way I have.



Fabian Marcaccio, "Paintant Stories" 2000. Paint, digital printing. Installation.

Fabian Marcaccio's concern for painting's survival in the digital age reflects an anxiety that resonates with my practice. His use of large-format digital printing combined with real media raises important questions about the boundary between painting and the digital.

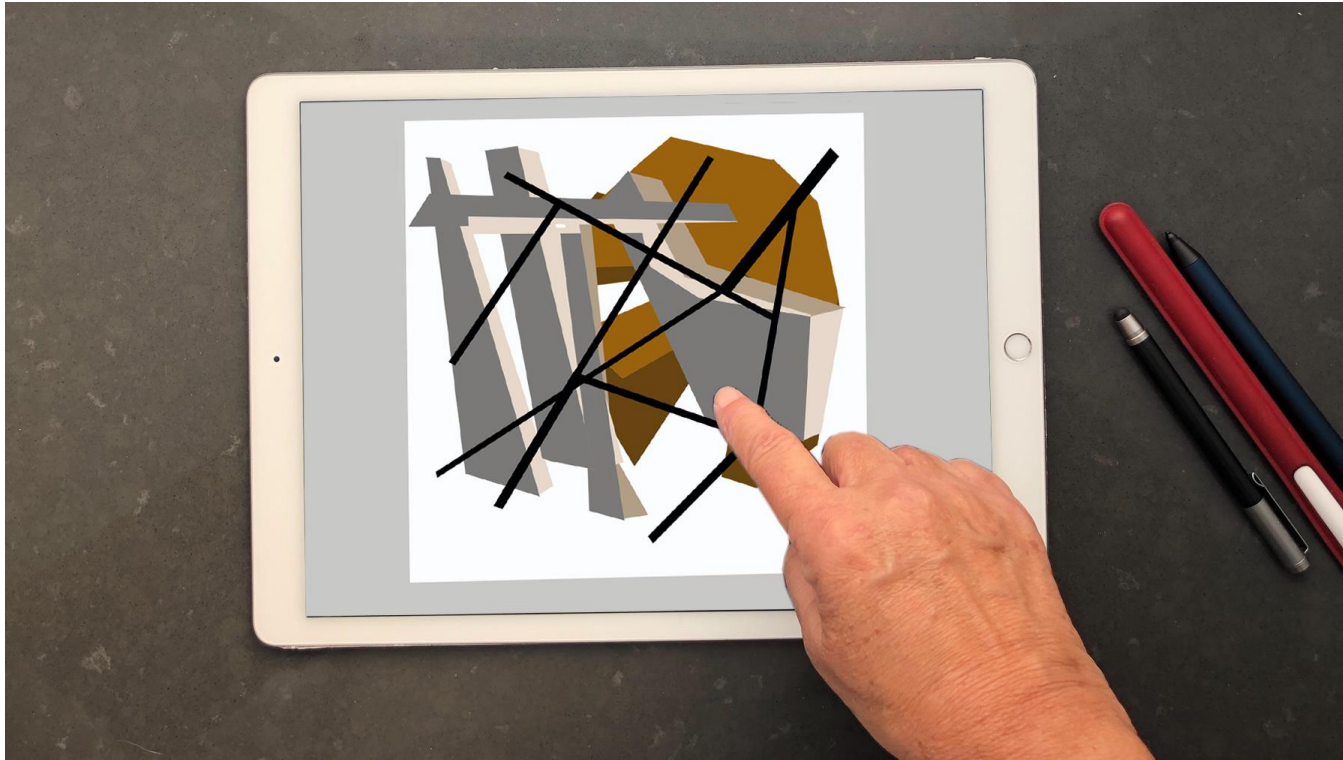


Formulaic Digital Art

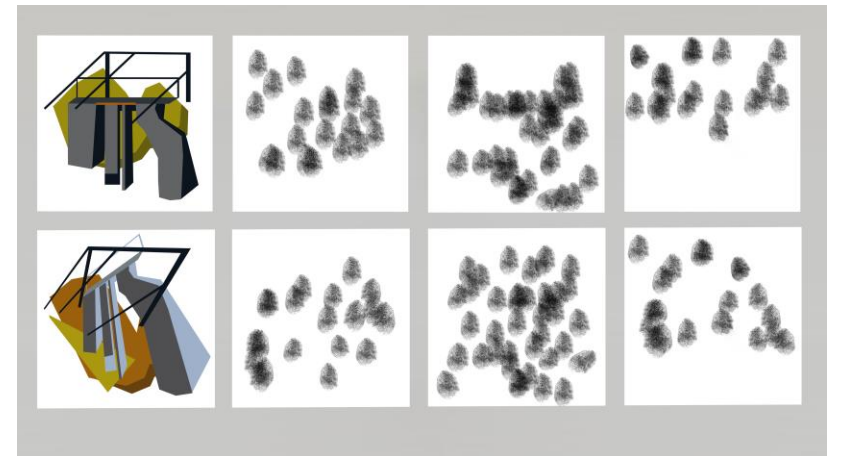
Continuing with my exploration of the nature of abstract painting, I started looking at the fundamental mechanics of creating a digital artwork and how formulaic I could make the creative process. In this series of geometric images, I employed the technique of combining intuitive gesture with formulaic repetition, to see how many variations of the same design I could produce before losing interest. I created 12 in total, but would have happily produced more. I found the process quite cathartic, but I did begin to run out of ideas for new variations.

In some respect the work is striving for meaning beyond its formal qualities. I feel that this can be achieved by incorporating an analogue element in to the discourse.

Digital Fingerprint



The following body of work explores the physical byproduct of our interaction with digital art through a handheld device. Utilizing a simple fingerprint tracing technique, I was able to create a physical record of each gesture every time my finger touched the ipad screen. I divided the designs in to 3 photoshop layers and made a fingerprint record of each layer. Through this process I was able to reveal the hidden gestures behind my digital activity, and to show the 'smudged face' of the highly-rendered digital aesthetic.



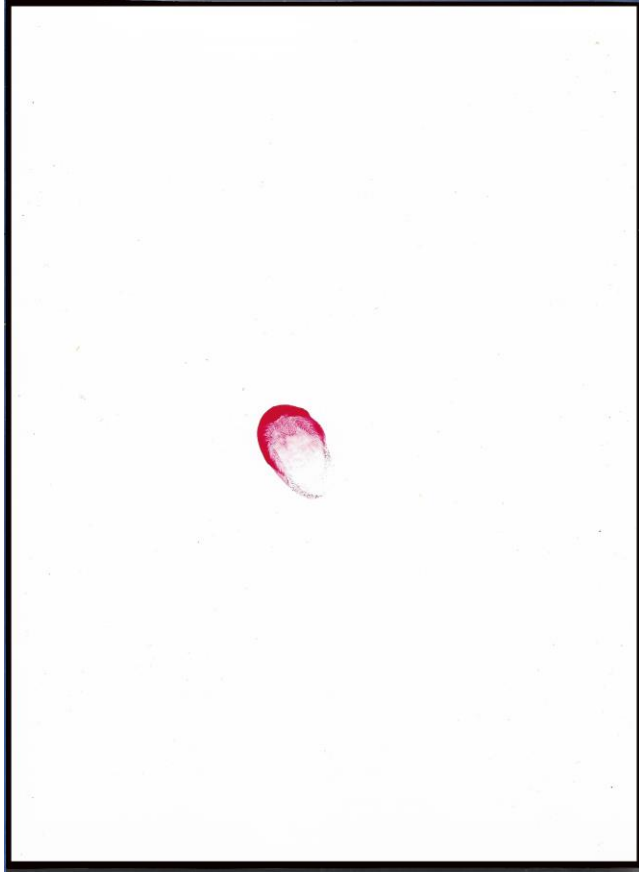
Mapping the Creative Process with GPS Technology

Craig Lewis "5 hours of creative Strava activity" 2021 Acrylic Paint on canvas. 457 x 244 cm.

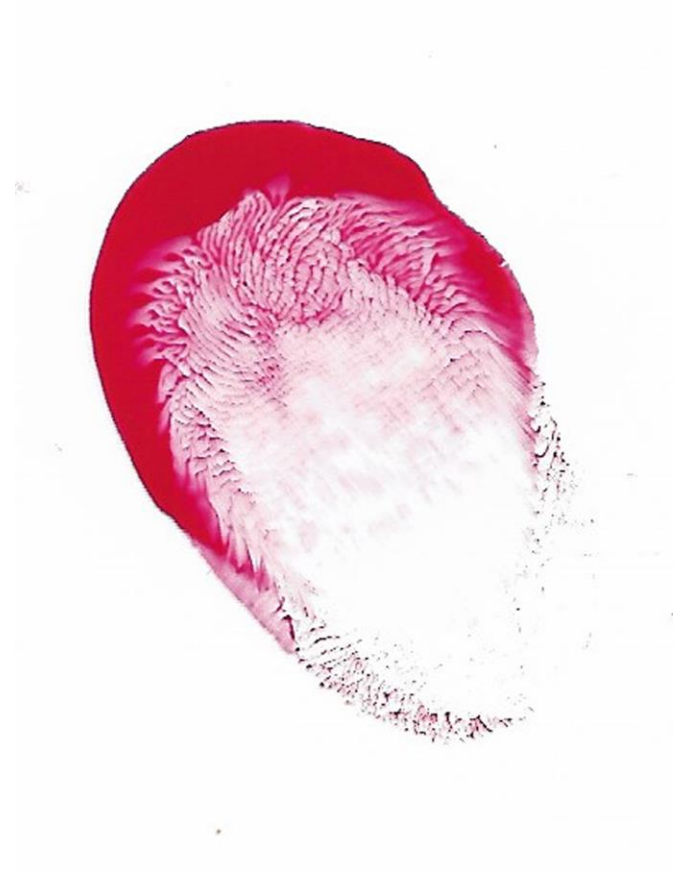


To further my investigation in to the relationship between painting and digital technology, I used the Strava app to record my movements around my art studio and my house over a 5 hour period. I recorded large periods of time spent on the computer making digital art, I combined this with several breaks, walking around the house, using the scanner and printer and entering and leaving my garden studio, in which I spent another period of time working on a provisional painting. I then transferred the recorded Strava route on to a large white stretched canvas with red acrylic paint. The intention here is to explore the interaction of a tracking device with the physical act of making art and then to produce a work of abstract art from the outcome. This is a continually evolving process in which the artwork produced during the experiment is treated as a byproduct of the 'activity', whilst also being intrinsic to the narrative.

The Threshold Between Painting and Digital Technology



Craig Lewis "Threshold" 2021.
Digitally printed image on board. 243 cm x 182 cm.



The fingerprint is an identifying feature of our humanity. Much like the handprints of the early cave paintings, the paint thumbprint in this work is making a statement about who we are as a species and where we stand in relation to our evolutionary path. The scanned image you see here is evidence of the direct point of contact between technology and painting. An immediate interface between the plastic tradition of gestural abstract painting and the visual aesthetic of digital imaging (painting directly on to the scanner bed). You could say it is an interface between human self-expression and a machine's limited understanding of conceptual art - the flatbed scanner serving as the eyes and the digital process (converting the image into pixels) serving as the mind. This collaboration of organic and mechanical components strives to create something original and unique - something that speaks simply, but profoundly about our place in time and history - from two age-old components, the human thumb and paint.

Applying Contextual Research to my Critique



Evan Roth, Angry Birds All Levels 2012.
Ink on tracing paper 188cm x150cm

I have been researching the work of Evan Roth, who first began recording his fingerprint gestures whilst playing games on his iPhone. His critique however, focuses on the everyday use of technology and the internet, whilst I am more interested in the way technology relates to painting and the creation of abstract art.



James Bridle, The New Aesthetic 2012. Blog Post

James Bridle's work looks at the way in which the digital overlaps with the physical world and the visual form this takes. His area of interest is drone, GPS and network technology, which follows along similar lines to my practice, but I would say my aesthetic is more abstract and art-based than representational and political.



Richard Dupont, Untitled (5), 2008.

Richard Dupont's sculptures illustrate the overlap between analogue art and the glitchy side of visual technology, which on a conceptual level aligns with my practice.



Links to Online Exhibitions

- <https://www.behance.net/craiglewis6>
- https://www.instagram.com/csad_mfa/
- <https://www.saatchiart.com/dadism>

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