

## Language, Invention, Process: New Paintings by Margaret Glew.

Widely exhibited across Canada and the USA, Margaret Glew holds a rare place in contemporary art. She makes paintings of great imaginative and intellectual depth and ambition. In an era when much contemporary abstract painting is content to reiterate and rehearse the conventions of well travelled modernist tropes, under a cloak of ironic positioning, the work of Margaret Glew is like a beacon that illuminates a path to a high seriousness in art for our times. In doing so, her paintings epitomize a recognition of the immense possibilities of abstract painting as a viable and important practice, way beyond postmodernist game playing. For this her work will reveal itself to be of art historical importance.

Margaret Glew works in series, groups of paintings with recognizable continuities that relate to a particular emphasis, mood or aspect of her process. Sometimes a series may be rich in colour, or at other times, she may emphasize a more monotone palette with dramatic contrasts in tone. At all times, she is engaged in pushing the boundaries and the possibilities of abstract painting.

For Margaret Glew, each painting is a journey. As she writes:

*Painting never happens in a straight line. The road twists and turns and often doubles back on itself, so that sometimes after a period of intense effort, I find myself back where I started. Other times I forge ahead. This seems right to me. Painting is a journey and journeys are always more interesting when there are unexpected detours, when the journey itself and not the destination is the goal.*

There is an ongoing willingness in her work, to take risks, to constantly explore, to be fearless and tireless in the pursuit of what, she shows, are in fact, the endless possibilities of Painting as an important art form. Her immense achievement in the paintings that result from this marks her out as a major and important Painter, both in Canada and beyond.

The “journey” that Margaret Glew makes in each of her works comes with a deep understanding and knowledge of the materials, the precedents, the possibilities of invention in Painting. Her paintings are multi-layered, not just in terms of application of paint and mark making, but also in the depth with which she uses visual language.

Glew’s artistic process has its roots in Abstract Expressionism. Like the New York School, she broadly works with “all-over” composition, beginning with a blank canvas, and without preconception, building to the finished work. Yet her work does not depend upon any of the theoretical underpinnings of “classic” Abstract Expressionism – the surrealist derived automatism of

Pollock for example. Yes her brush strokes and mark making are vigorous and executed with a directness and immediacy that makes the paint appear to “sing” and her application of paint is highly expressive - but it is not “expressionist”. She has more in common with the thoughtful abstraction of Robert Motherwell than the gestures of Jackson Pollock.

It is this quality of expressive thoughtfulness that is central to Margaret Glew’s painting. The philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty wrote that, “Language signifies when, instead of copying thought, it lets itself be taken apart and put together again by thought”.

Margaret Glew, through a constant re-thinking of the elements of painting – line, form, shape, surface, colour, movement, stillness – essentially deconstructs abstract visual language to bring the constituents together again, in order to reveal the core possibilities of language itself. She does so in paintings that, in their integrity of process, their vitality and expressive intelligence, are consummate.

In her ambition for the possibilities of what Painting can express, how Painting can speak, Margaret Glew’s work stands out from so much contemporary abstraction. She does not resort to notions of appropriation or quotation; her practice is about re-inventing language in Painting.

This does not mean that a line, a colour sequence, a shape she may use is previously unused or unique in history. Rather it is about how she fuses the constituents of her painterly elements into forms, passages, sequences that are forged in both the heat and yet, at the same time, the cool deliberation, of her creative process. If these elements are like words, she combines them in new, genuinely innovative, compelling and beautiful formations and compositions that are the true equivalents of the giants of Modernism. Rather than be content to make small variations on the work of earlier generations, Margaret Glew dares to envisage an art that can challenge the achievements of a Twombly, a Motherwell or a Tapies. In doing so she represents the possibility that our present era in Painting will be remembered for more than contextual manipulations of earlier language.

- Geoffrey Nawn, Toronto, 2016

gnstudio | contemporary art

GNSTUDIO CONTEMPORARY ART presents monthly exhibitions of serious and collectable contemporary art. We are a new gallery for serious contemporary art aiming to foreground ambitious artists whose work speaks to an ongoing conversation about what is possible in art.

We offer full art consultancy services to both private and corporate collectors. We invite you to our opening receptions and other art and design orientated events at our downtown Oakville gallery.



Language, Invention, Process  
New Paintings by Margaret Glew

GNSTUDIO | Contemporary Art.  
123 Lakeshore Road West,  
Oakville, ON, L6K 1E2

gnstudio | contemporary art