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## 24 Hour Portraits

Lee R. Cowan

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# 24 HOUR PORTRAITS

by

Lee R. Cowan

A thesis submitted to the faculty of

Brigham Young University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

## Committee Members

Sunny Taylor – Chair

Fidalis D. Buehler

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Department of Visual Arts

Brigham Young University

August 2010

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## ABSTRACT

### 24 Hour Portraits

Lee R. Cowan

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Master of Fine Arts

I believe an individual can be profiled by their color preferences, but not indefinitely, for a shorter period of time, a 24-hour period of time. A person's state of mind will change continually based on their experiences. These experiences will affect their perception and preference of color.

I developed a model that will map an individual's profile, a portrait, through color. Participants are given a worksheet and a list of terms describing personality traits and states of mind. The worksheet is categorized by event, time of day, duration, impact, and summed term. From midnight to midnight, a 24-hour period, the participant records any event that they encounter providing information-fulfilling categories stated above. I use that information to then map out their portrait of 24-hours through color.

Keywords: Portrait, Profile, Color Theory, Lee R. Cowan, Dr. Max Luscher, Square

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe a debt of gratitude to the entire ‘Masters of Fine Art’ Faculty for having the insight to question my directives and demand to know where the true passion of my work lies. As a student, we tend to question criticism and the authenticity of its source until the moment we realize ‘they were right’. I wish to acknowledge the inspiration of Robert Marshall and Wayne Kimball, the driving force that brought me back to the academia. Special thanks to my committee; Sunny Taylor, Fidalis D. Buehler, Brian Christensen and Wulf Barsch Von Benedikt for sharing and intellectually funding my thesis project. I would like to thank the numbers of faculty and students that offered their time to supply me with the necessary and intimate information that made this project possible. I would like to acknowledge Brigham Young University’s Museum of Art (MOA) Director Campbell Gray and MOA Curator Jeff Lambson for their support and participation in this project. To my family, who would see me for 30 minutes in the mornings and possibly an hour in the evenings for the last two years, this is **our** accomplishment and it wouldn’t have been realized without your understanding, love and support.

It is always easier to sand with the grain, but isn’t always the best solution for the desired result. Sometimes we need to create a few burrs on the surface to initiate individualized dialog. Vielen Dank Für die Erinnerung, um Inspiration zu suchen Wulf.

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## 24-HOUR PORTRAITS

In order to make the proper connections leading to the conclusion of this thesis, the necessity of reverting back to the initial point of departure and explaining the direction this body of work has traveled to arrive at its present state, has become apparent.

Three months into my first semester Attending Art Center College of Design (ACCD) in Pasadena, California, back in the late 1990's, the work that I had produced to that point seemed completely obsolete as I began to see like never before. I began to question and criticize, not only my work, but the work of my contemporaries as well. The exposure to the Museums and Galleries was unlike anything I had ever experienced and really placed me in context to what was happening around me.

The opportunity to travel around the Los Angeles basin and visit contemporary artists in their studios was an insightful experience, and to see the environments in which these artists would create for them-selves in order to produce, intrigued me since issues of environment and conducive working conditions and habits were an area of special interest at the time. It became evident that not only was the environment exclusive to the artist, but their pallet was as well.

In the arena of color theory, would these individualized pallets be another means to interpret and criticize work? Could the possibility of an artist's pallet, as

representational color, be another means to explore a work of art? After presenting this idea to John Seed, a professor at ACCD questioned what my understanding of color, both physically and mentally was. He made the suggestion that having an understanding of my own pallet would be the first step to approaching this question. He suggested that I research the work of Dr. Max Lüscher, a renowned Psychotherapist who uses color as an aid in psychological diagnosis and profiling.

About an hour south of San Bernardino is the college of Mount San Jacinto (MSJC). The Special Interests branch of their library goes into great detail into researching the theorems of Lüscher, I began making the trek to MSJC on a regular basis for months in the hopes to better understand my color psychology by participating in a series of psychological color tests.

One test in particular that had special interest to me was the Lüscher Psychological color Profiling test. Here, through a persons preference between paired colors, Lüscher was able to, in his account, accurately profile ones psyche. The first time I took this tests, which composed of 38 individual pairings of color (in the form of paralleled squares), was simply choosing between the two, which color was preferred. This act resulted in a three and one half page profile of myself. Not being convinced that the results accurately profiled me, I continued to retake the color profile tests. It wasn't until after the third or fourth completed test that noticeable variances began to surface. If these tests were taken by the same individual, but netted different results, then the test in itself must be flawed.

I struggled with this problem for quite some time until on a trip to MSJC, an interesting situation occurred that changed my position about Lüscher, and gave me a

direction in my quest. Transitioning from I-10 to HW79, a car quickly crossed multiple lanes to catch an exit causing me to narrowly miss a concrete support column. With the fury and rage expressed to the driver of that car, I realized that my state of mind was dramatically altered. It became apparent that the altered states of mind caused by such experiences might influence the outcome of these profile tests. It was at this moment that a new direction, one that would question and explore color representation and it's relationship to ones experiences and states of mind, encompassed my work.

Any individual, if asked of his or her favorite color, will be able to tell you with out hesitation. This has been a preconceived absolute in their mind, yet if the same individual were asked their preference between two different hues, the response is instinctive. They aren't able to say 'This choice is because of this situation and that circumstance'. They rely on their instinct. Their instinct is based on their experiences concluding that their preferences will change based on their experiences. There can't possibly be an absolute to ones color preferences enabling any sort of model to accurately map ones psychological profile. This inconsistency, and dozens of other variables including race, gender, geography, age, and ocular color deficiency are the downfall to any such tests that rely solely on an individual's preferences. However, you could in theory accurately map ones profile of a short period of time, a 24-hour period of time where the influences and preferences are based on coetaneous experiences.

This thesis project is based on a model of links between color and psychological traits and states of mind. With this model, I am able to produce (24 hour) portraits of individuals through the representation of color.



There is an abundant offering of published works linking color to personality traits and states of mind. Through countless hours of reading and Internet research, there appeared to be no one complete explanation of physical or psychological representation of color. Compilations of all that was unearthed through these publications, like relationships of color and physical or psychological attachment were paralleled to create a base model. Most published works reduced color representation to the colors ranging no further than the Munsel 10 (Munsell color system consists of purple, blue, green, yellow, red, and five secondary hues), as well as black, white, and certain metallics. This is hardly an adequate pallet for portraits. I worked with this base, and through the means of several dictionaries, the most complete thesaurus published, and a few recommended linguists, I broke down that simple pallet into tints and shades of each hue (12 consisting of three primary [red, yellow, and blue], three secondary [orange, green, and purple], and six tertiary hues) including black, gray and white. The list evolved into 39 hues in all, each with specific personality traits and states of mind attached, 266 links (terms) to date and growing with each participant's 24-hour worksheet submitted.

In order to create a 24-hour portrait, participants are given a packet, which includes a list of the mapped terms (see fig. P1), three copies of a worksheet broken down in to five categories; experience, time of day, duration, impact, and summed term (see fig. P2), and an example worksheet (see fig. P3).

The participants are instructed to begin the documenting of their 24-hour period at midnight, and ending the following midnight. They were asked to document only those experiences they deem would have an impact on their day. As an example, the simple task of brushing teeth in the morning may not warrant being documented, but if while

brushing, a painful sensation in their teeth occurs, that will most likely follow a person for the entire day, as they wonder what might be the cause of the sensation that will lead to the inevitable dreaded trip to the dentist. This type of experience does warrant documentation. They are told to briefly describe the event, the time of day this event occurred, its duration, on a scale of one to ten the impact they felt this event was on their day, and then selecting from the list of mapped terms provided, choose a word that best described that event. They were told that if there is a term that better describes their experience that is not found on the list provided, that they simply write the term down. That term will then be researched and placed where it fits into the model. At the conclusion of their 24-hour period, the participants was asked to reflect back on the day as a whole, and again from the list of terms provided, choose a term or terms that best describe their day's experience as a whole.

In the initial tests taken at MSJC, the colors were always presented in squares therefore I chose to use the square format in the portraits I created. On reception of a completed worksheet, the information would be mapped out on a square canvas, broken down by 24-hours. The individual's experiences are also represented in the shape of a square (see fig. P4). The placement of the experience within the composition was based on the time of day the experience occurred, and the size of the square was determined by the impact and duration of the experience. The color of the experience was determined by the chosen summed term the participant felt best described that experience. The end result became a portrait of the individual's state of mind for a 24-hour period represented solely through color (see fig. P5).

This project had its share of challenges. Some of the participants were hesitant to accurately fill out their worksheet because they felt that some of their experiences were too personal or embarrassing to want included in their portrait. There were some circumstances where the worksheet was filled out with the intent to give the impression of a perfect or desired day rather than actual accounts. I found that some of the most interesting and beautiful paintings were the result of a fairly horrific profile, whereas the portraits resulting from idealistically skewed profiles were somewhat boring and discordant.

There was a point where being a participant in my own project became no longer an option. From the conception of the model, a number of personal profiles of myself were completed. There were predetermined days that worksheets would be filled out by my father and I, with the intent of displaying these series side by side, showing the diversity of two individuals experiences simultaneously. I also was intrigued by the notion that a profile of my father, who has the disability of blindness, could be represented solely through the representation of color. It was on Nov. 18<sup>th</sup>, while choosing terms that best represent experiences from a personal worksheet that had only been finished days earlier, I caught myself considering terms based on their appointed color as opposed to the proper representation of the experience as listed in the model, simply for the aesthetics. I realized that I had become too close to the model and found it to be influencing my choices. Only profiles of others could be completed from that point on in order to maintain the integrity of the model.

Most individuals will relate to color at some level, no matter the background. Truck driver, Physician, or color theory professor, through their individual experiences,

their relationships to certain colors are bonded. Wassily Kandinsky, a twentieth-century artist and theorist, professed that colors are boundless, suggesting that the association of color to the body and soul are reliant on factors including senses, cultures, and classes. A motivating force propelling the outcomes of the 24 hour profiles to exhibition, is the possibility that no matter the individual in attendance to the exhibition, a work, based on the arrangement of colors, may reach that individual on a heightened personal level. If only one work in an entire exhibition can achieve such a relationship with that individual, the project, in my mind, is a complete success.

Given the opportunity to exhibit in the B.F. Larsen Gallery in the Harris Fine Art Center on Brigham Young University campus, considerations were made in the arrangement of it's space to engage the viewer while maintaining a balance and flow. Traditionally, exhibitions in this space have been centralized below a light grid that is suspended from rafters three floors above. I witnessed on many occasions, the typical flow of traffic around the exhibition space, disengaging the passer by from the show, restructuring the space to ensure engagement became my primary focus. Rather than creating a race track effect by allowing the flow of traffic to move effortlessly around and past the exhibition, I chose to arrange the walls in a manner that created a cross through effect engaging the viewer, from any direction (see fig. e1-e6). Walls were erected from the mid-point exterior of the space extending towards the center of the gallery. Two other walls in the shape of T's adorned each end of the gallery leaving a vacant space in the center. Here, a large cube (40x40x40") was constructed and placed for the purpose of revealing information about the exhibition only to those who seek it. The intent was to not influence the viewer with information that may alter their initial experience with the

body of work, but to allow for the personal emotion, based on experience, be the first impression. The cube was only marked with '24 Hour Portraits' on two sides and the name of the artist 'Lee R. Cowan' on the two other. Two bound books, simply marked '24 hour Portraits' on the covers, were placed on top of the cube offering information describing the exhibition. By doing this, the viewer was allowed to engage reliant by that only which has been conditioned by personal experience.

Since the 24 Hour Portrait exhibition in March of 2010, there hasn't been any difficulty finding individuals willing to participate. Though his process seems to remain somewhat subjective from the exterior, I fully believe in its ability to represent an individual through this process—a process foreign in its concept to those who participate, but sound in the representation of an individual's experiences through color.

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## **THE PROCESS**





### Terms of States and Traits

Below are a series of terms describing personality traits and states of mind. Please choose the term that best describes the experience you have recorded. If more than one term sums up your experience, list them both, i.e.: Fascinated/Inspiration. If you have an experience that is best described by a term that is not listed, please use the best suited term on your work sheet, then write down that term on one of the blank spaces at the end of this list. I will work that term into the model. Thank you for your participation.

Acceptance	Demanding	Fun	Mature, Maturity	Rushed
Aggravated	Dependable	Furious	Misfortune	Sadness
Aggression, aggressive	Depressed, Depression	Gaudiness	Misleading	Satisfied
Agitated	Desire	Generous, Generosity	Modernity	Security, Secure
Amazed	Diligent	Grace, Graceful	Modest, Modesty	Selfish, Selfishness
Ambition, Ambitious	Diplomatic	Gratitude, Grateful	Mourning	Satisfied
Amused	Disappointed, -ment	Greedy	Mysterious	Security, Secure
Analytical	Discomfort	Growth	Neutral	Sensitive
Anger	Discouraged	Guilt	Noble, Nobility	Sensual
Annoyed	Disoriented	Happy, Happiness	Nostalgic	Separation, Separate
Anxious	Dishonest	Harmony	Nurture	Sexual, Sexuality
Appreciated	Disorganized	Hazard	Offended	Simplicity
Arrogance	Disoriented	Healthy	Optimism, Optimistic	Sincere, Sincerity
Assertive, Assertion	Disturbed	Hope	Organized	Soothing
Authoritarian	Domination	Humility	Panicked	Sophistication
Awkward	Eager	Hurt, Hurting	Passionate	Spiritual, Spirituality
Balance, Balanced	Embarrassed	Ideal, Idealism	Passive	Stable, Stability
Bored, Boring	Empowered	Illness	Peace, Peaceful	Sterile
Calming, Calmness	Endurance	Incensed	Perplexed	Stimulate
Challenged	Energy, Energize	Impatience	Persistent	Strength
Celebrated	Enjoyment, Enjoy	Impressed	Pessimism	Successful
Cheerful	Enlightened	Independent	Playful	Supportive
Cleanliness	Enraged	Inexperienced	Pleased	Sympathetic
Comfort, Comfortable	Entertained	Infatuation	Pleasant	Tentative
Competitive	Enthusiasm	Innocent, Innocence	Positive	Tired
Concentration	Envy, Envious	Innovative	Powerful	Tolerance
Concerned	Evil	Inspiration	Pressured	Trust
Confident, Confidence	Excited, Excitement	Insulted	Produce, Productive	Uncertain
Conflict	Exhilarated	Intelligence	Procrastinate, -tion	Uncomfortable
Confused	Faith	Interested	Promiscuous	Unhappy
Conservative	Fascinated	Intimate	Prosper, Prosperity	Unproductive
Consistent	Fatigued	Intoxicated	Protective	Untouchable
Contemplate	Fear, Fearful	Intuition	Pure, Purity	Uplifting
Content, Contentment	Feminine	Involved	Refined	Vexed
Coward, Cowardice	Fertile, Fertility	Isolation, Isolated	Refreshing	Victorious
Creative, Creativity	Flamboyant	Jealousy	Relaxed, Relaxation	Vigor
Cruel, Cruelty	Flexibility	Joy	Reliable	Violent, Violence
Criticize, Criticism	Flirtatiousness	Kindness	Relief	Vitality
Curious	Flustered	Live, Life	Renewed	Warmth
Danger	Fresh, Freshness	Loneliness	Responsible	Weak, Weakness
Deceit, Deceitful	Friendly	Love	Restrictive	Wealth
Deep, Depth	Frustrated	Loyal, Loyalty	Revolutionary	Wisdom
Defensive	Fulfilled	Masculine	Royalty	Worry, Worried

**Fig P2** 24 Hour Portrait Terms

[For a 24 hour period, the participant will record all their experience, when it took place, the duration, it's impact, and then sum it up with one descriptive term. When the worksheet is finished, it is returned to me. For privacy reasons, I only require the last four columns to be able to continue with the project]

### 24 Hour Profile Worksheet

Name LEE T. COWAN

Date Aug 12, 07

Record every event you encounter within a 24 hour period. Include positive, negative as well as nocturnal events to the best of your ability. Record the event being as descriptive as you can. List the time the event took place and its duration. Using a scale of 1-10, 1 being low impact and 10 being high impact, describe the impact this event had on you. Finally, please sum up the event in a single descriptive term (guide of terms provided). At the bottom of this worksheet, provide a summary of the your 24 hours in one or two descriptive terms. Use additional worksheets as needed.

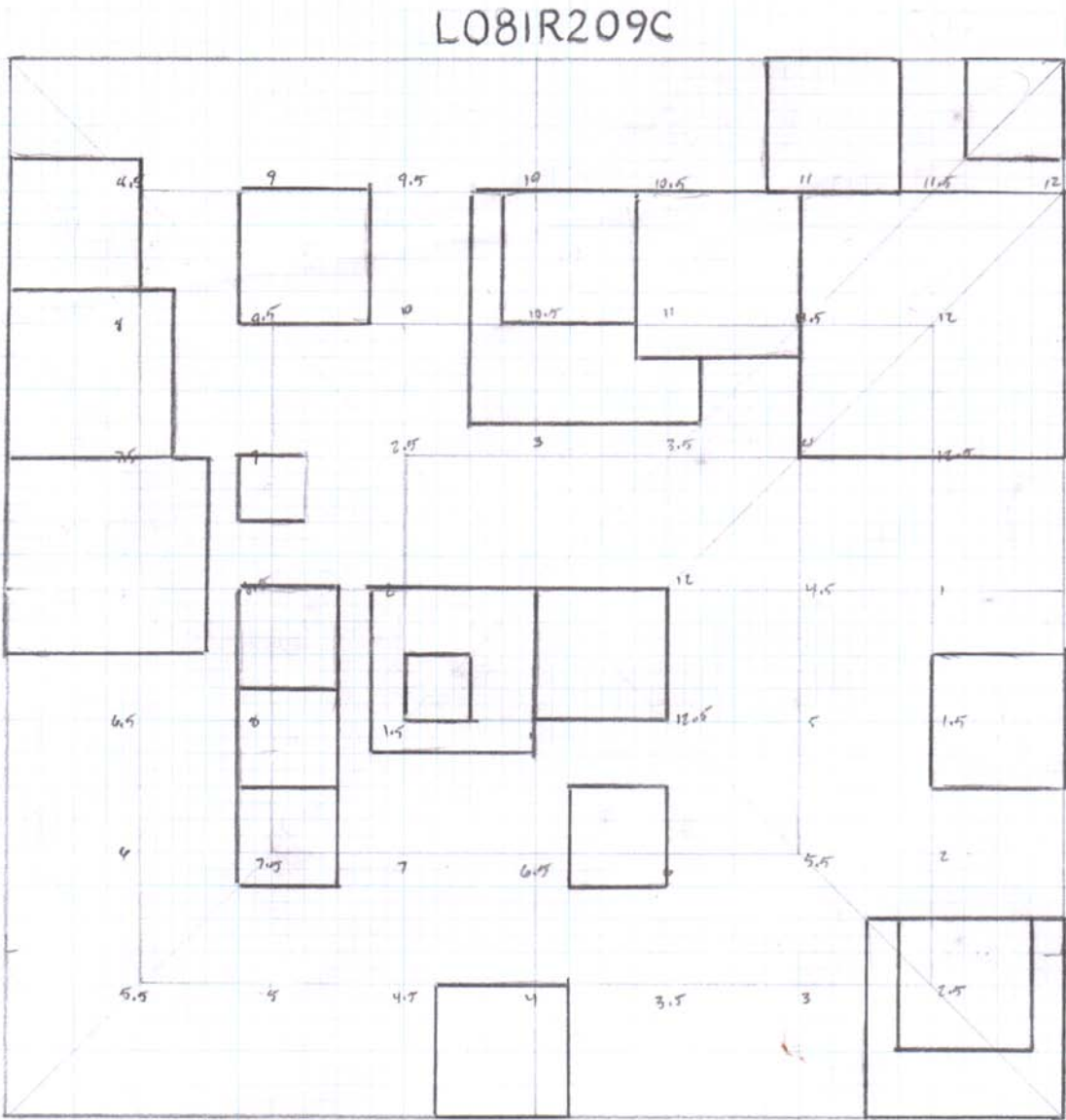
Record of Event	Time	Duration	Impact	Summed term	
TRIP TO WAL-MART SPENT 25 MIN IN LINE @ 12:30a. WHY?	12:30a	30 min	4	AGGRAVATED	
GRADING	1:30a	1:03	2	Frustrated/Concerned	
DEALING w/ VOMITING KIDS.	1:37 a	2 min	5	Frustrated	
WENT TO BED	2:46 a	3h 29m			
Marchie up Vomiting	Back to bed	6:15 a	10 min	3	CONCERNED
Marchie up Vomiting	Back to bed	7:40 a	10 min	3	SYMPATHETIC
Marnie calls	Try to go to bed	8:00 a	5 min	3	AGITATED
Adam gets off on phone	Say he'd wonder if it should get up	8:30 a	23 min	3	FATIGUED
Marnie calls	Get up, clean up, get things going	8:53 a	32 m	2	RESTRICTIVE
Marnie calls	Believe for years that don't eat	9:25	6 min	4	anxious
Go to hospital w/ balloons and food for Chase & Marnie. (Chase is miserable)		10:30	25 min	4	OPTIMISTIC
Went to ER to take care of tuition			moment	7	SYMPATHETIC
Went to WU to do grades - ended up talking to Perry Stewart about policy, faculty etc.		11:00	5 min	5	Relief
Grade portfolios	Need to do other stuff	11:30	2 hrs	5	Doubtful/Annoyed/Annoyed
Phone died while talking to my dad & Marnie calling		1:30	20 min	4	Anxious
Home to grab stuff for Marnie & Chase		2:15	20 min	4	anxious/Frustrated
to hospital. Hung out with Chase. Chase hard to deal with, his attitude.		4:00	2 hr	4	DISAPPOINTED
Home after the store for dinner and a gift and balloons forarchie. Good long on cam (A+)		7:00	30 m	6	PLEASED
Perfect dinner and Marnie is able to keep it down for the most part. (archie had an early episode, after a few bites, and came back for more.)		7:30	35 m	5	SATISFIED
Answer the grading portfolios again		8:05	1h 45m	4	Burdens/PERPLEATED
Good student/Bed bugs					
Back to the hospital. (picked up Del-Taco and slurpees)		10:15			
Chase vomits slurpee & fries. al clean up the mess		11:39	10 m	4	DISCOURAGED
Day ends saying good night to Marnie & Chase		11:57	5 m	3	DISAPPOINTED

Summarize your 24 hour period in or two descriptive terms

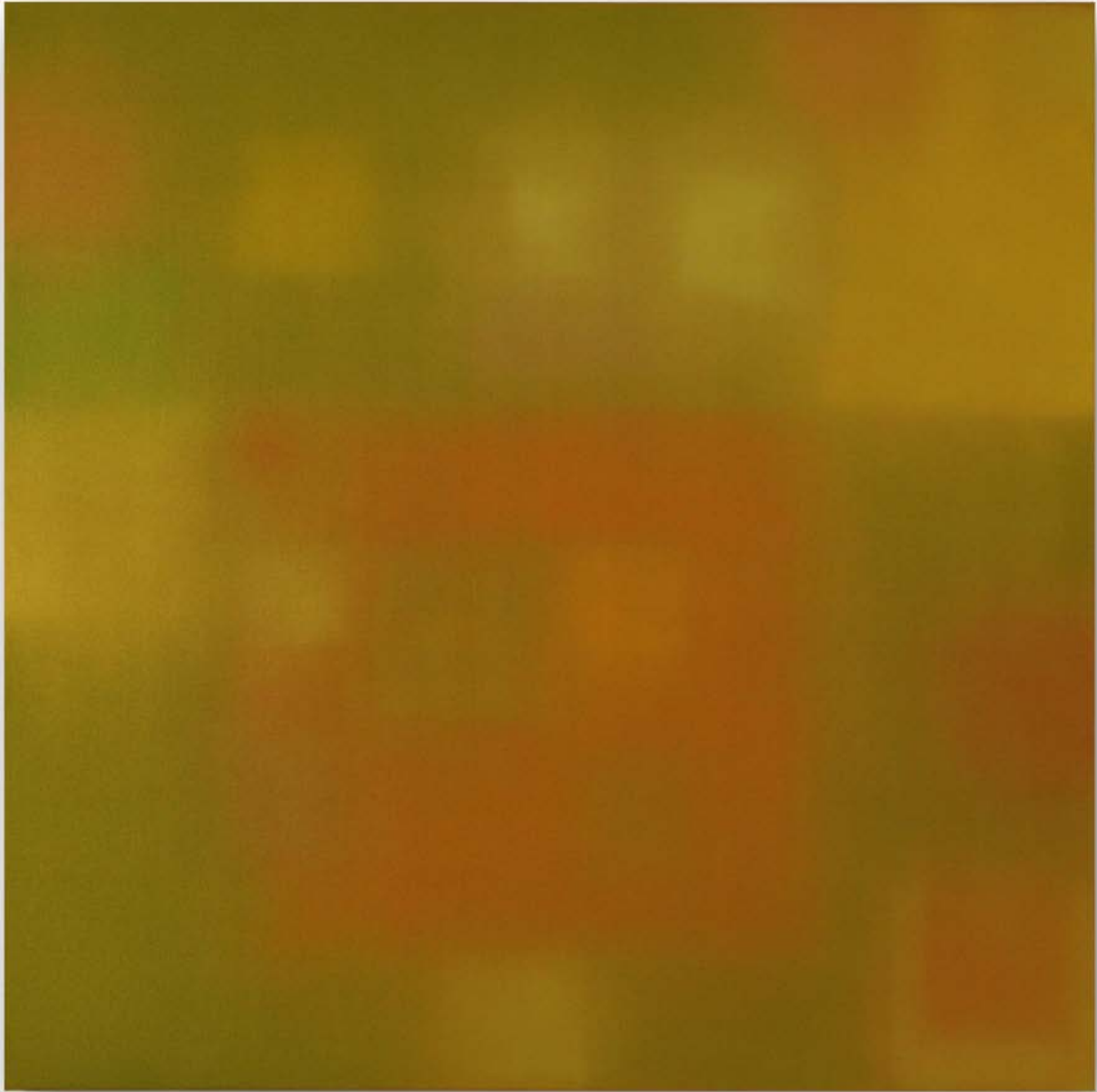
Frustrated      Sympathy

Fig P3 24 Hour Profile Example Worksheet

[The information gathered is then translated into squares. Size and placement are relative to the experiences]



**Fig P4** 24 Hour Portrait Mapped Profile



**Fig P5** 24 Hour Portrait “L081R209C”

## **24 HOUR PORTRAITS**

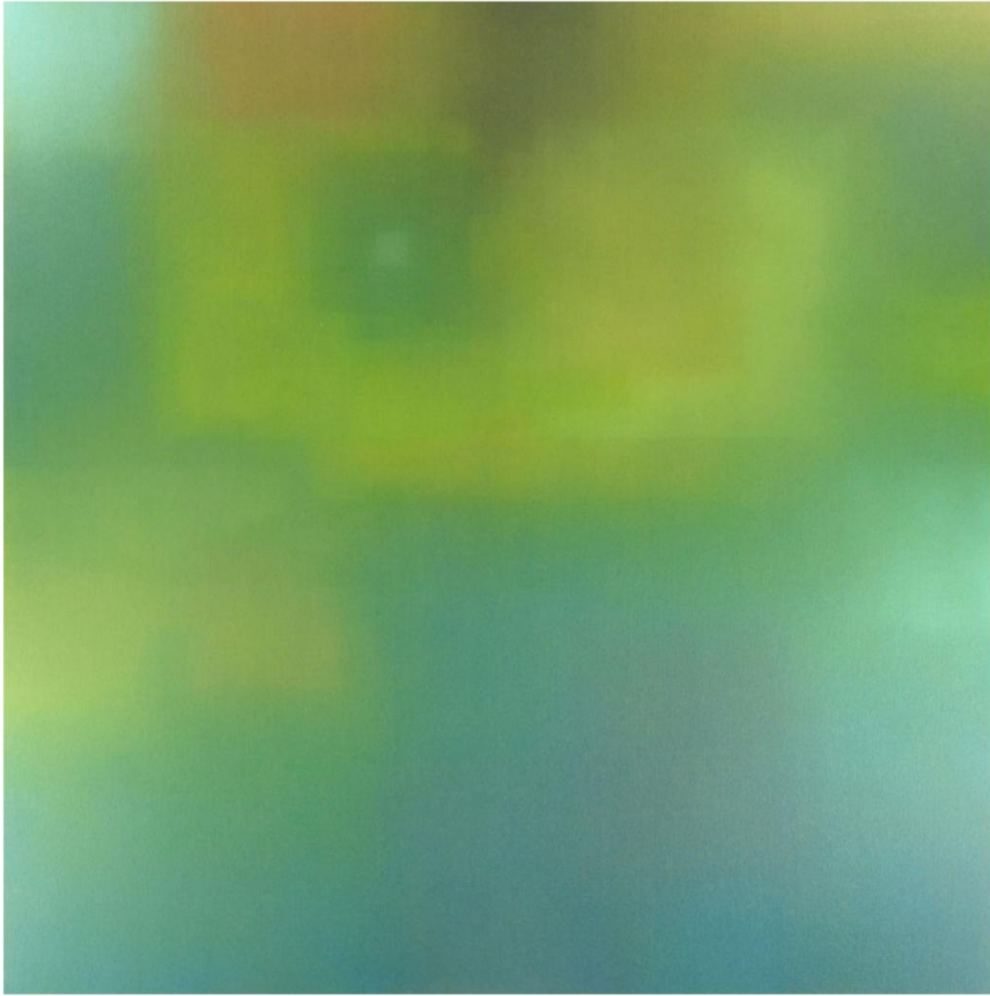


PLATE 1





PLATE 2



PLATE 3



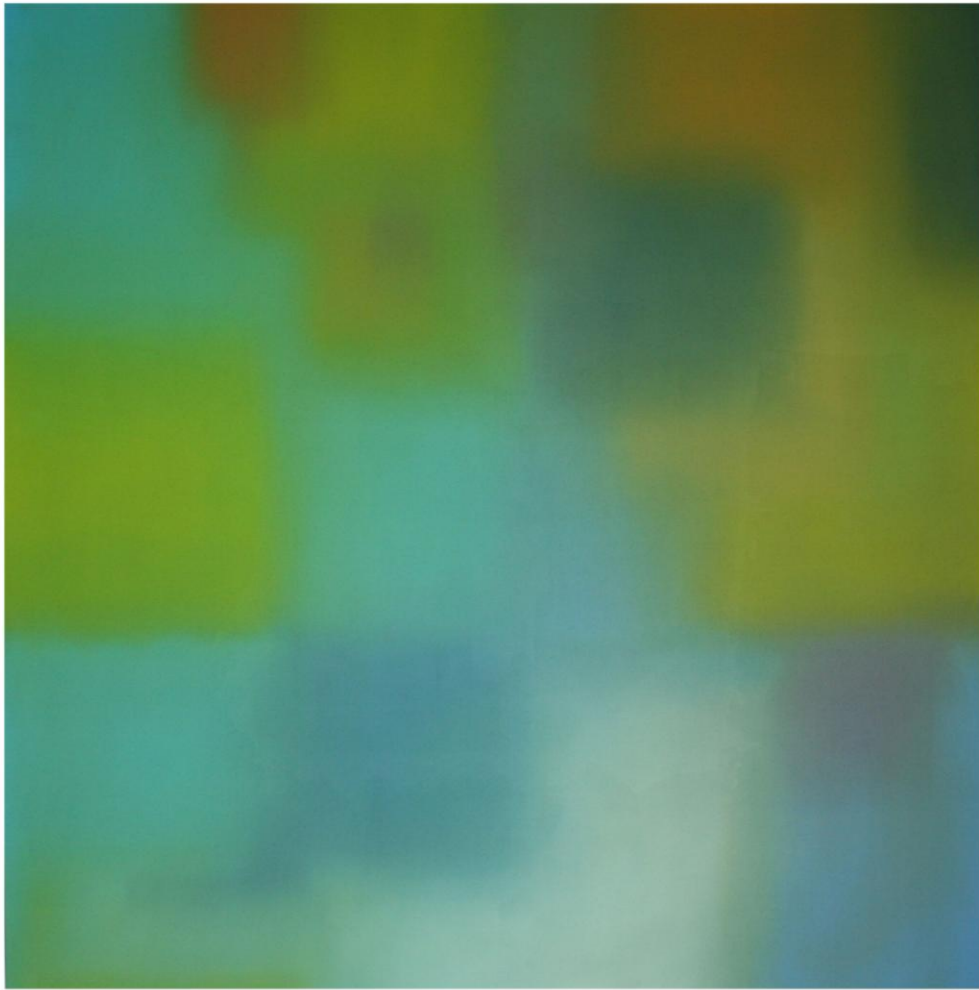


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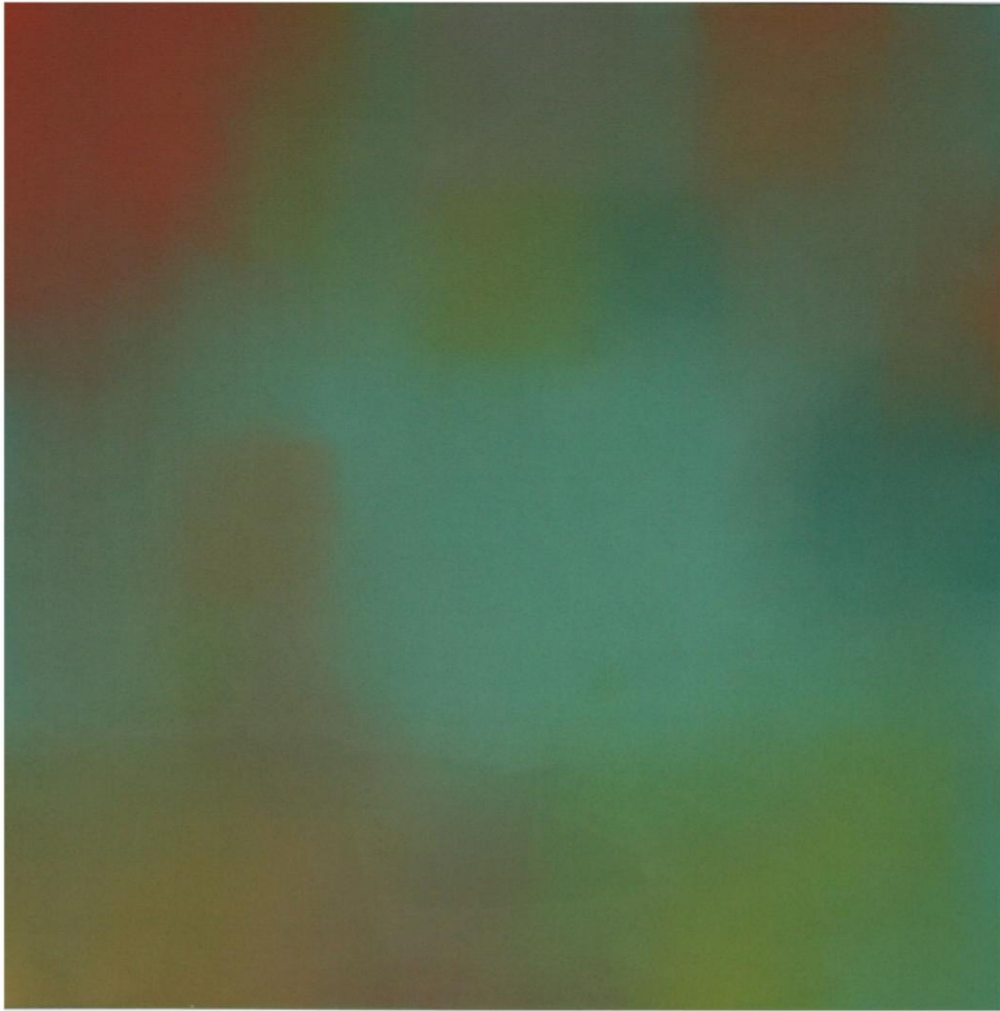


PLATE 5



PLATE 6



PLATE 7

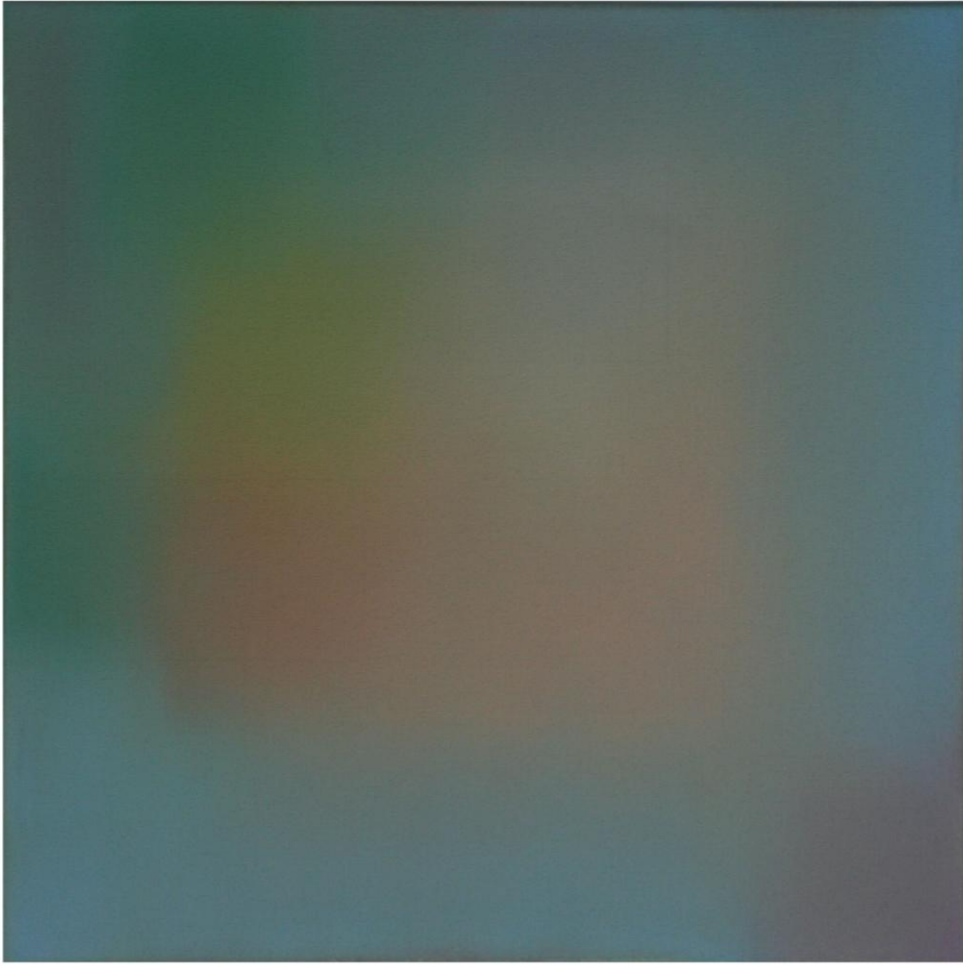


PLATE 8



PLATE 9



PLATE 10



PLATE 11



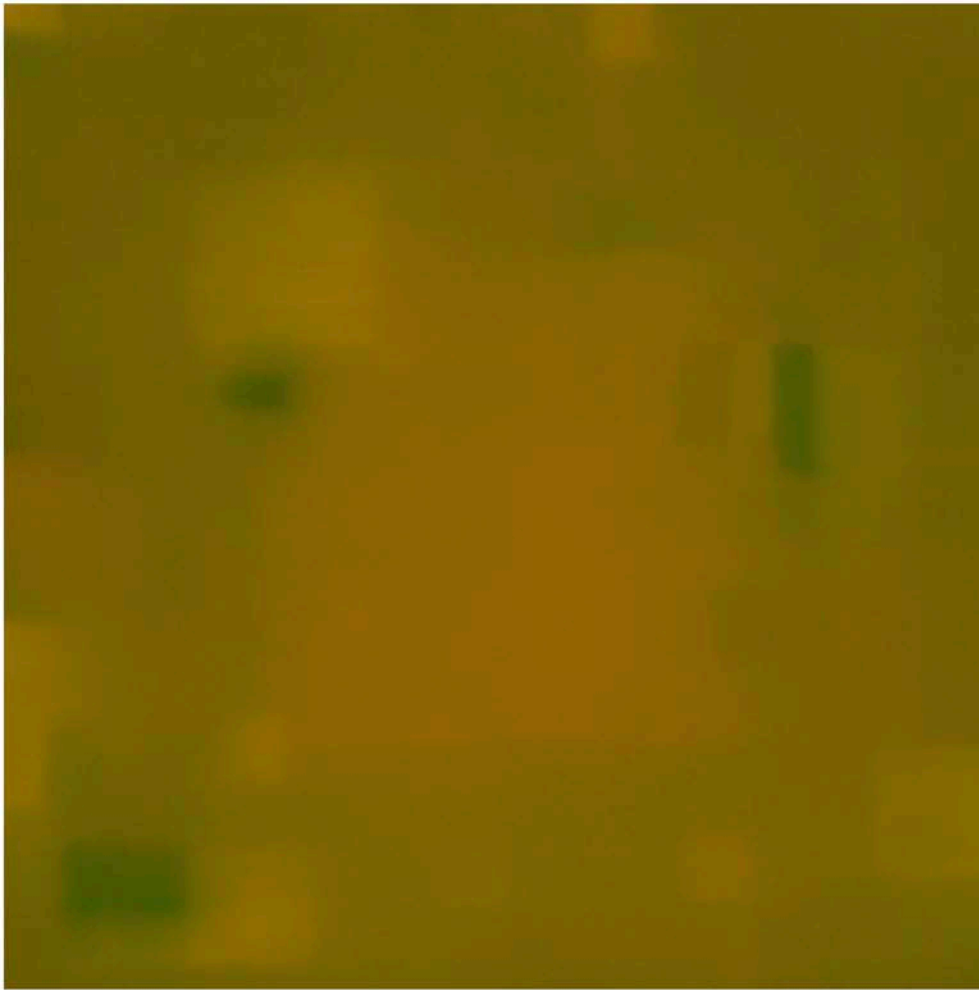


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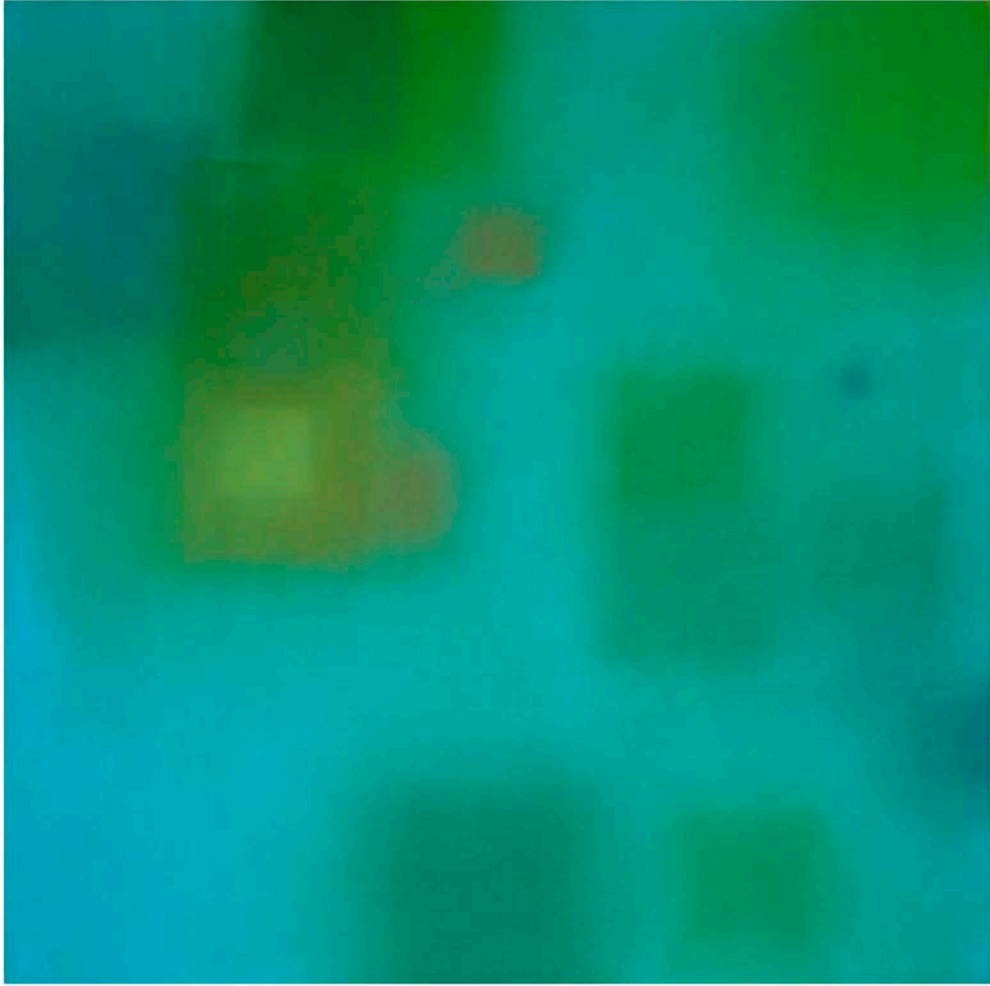


PLATE 13



PLATE 14



PLATE 15



PLATE 16



PLATE 17

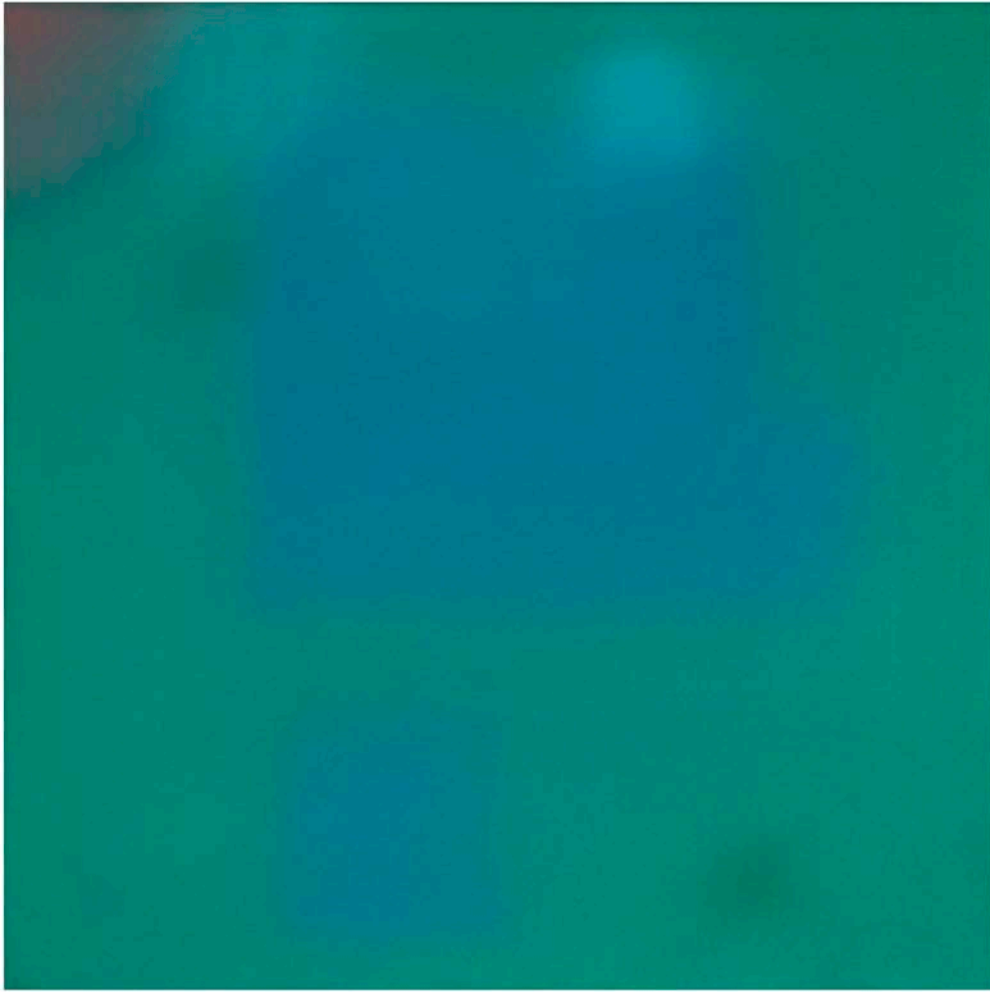


PLATE 18

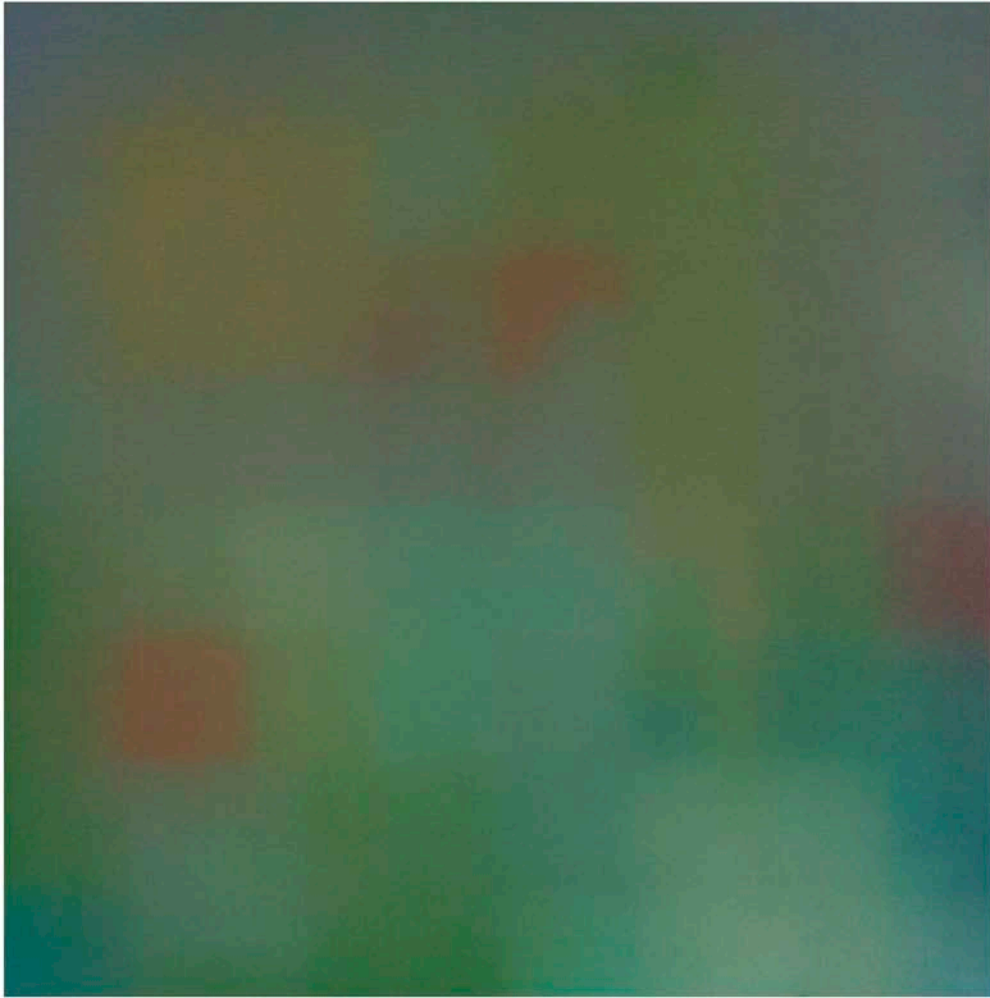


PLATE 19





PLATE 20

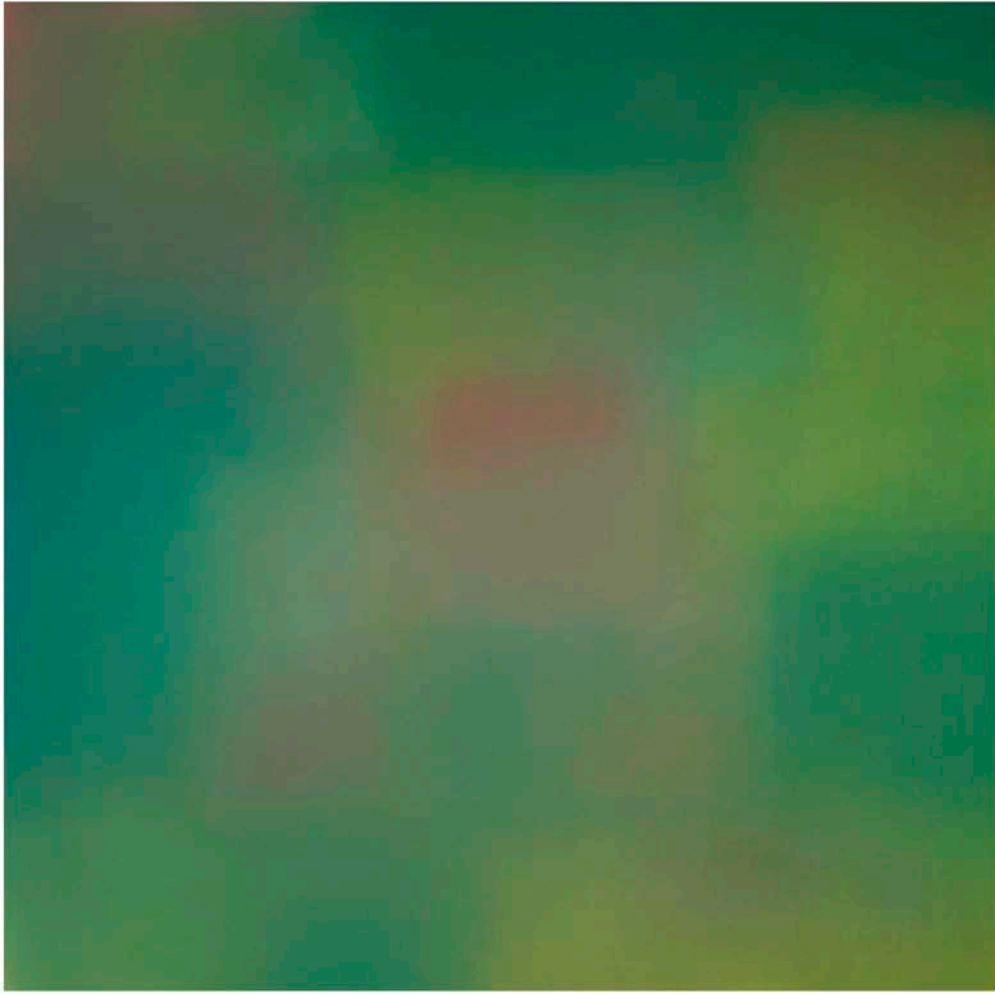


PLATE 21

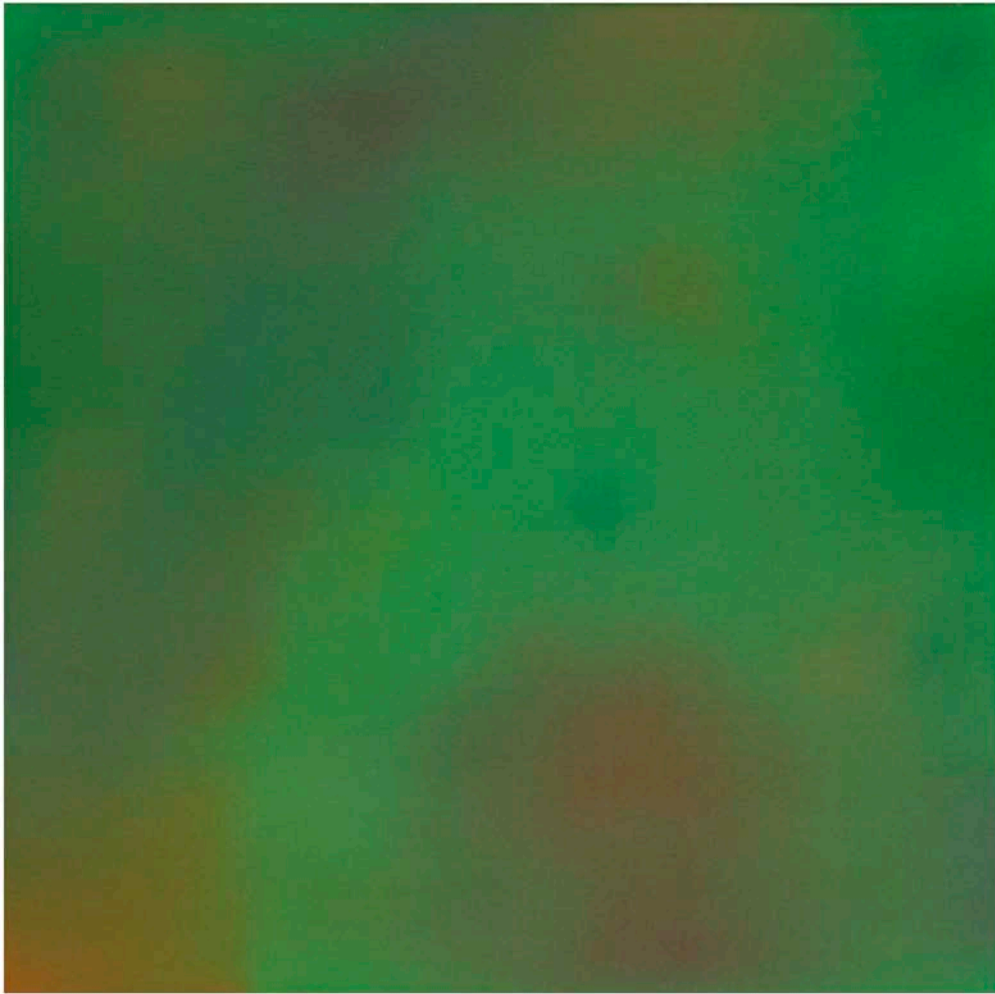


PLATE 22

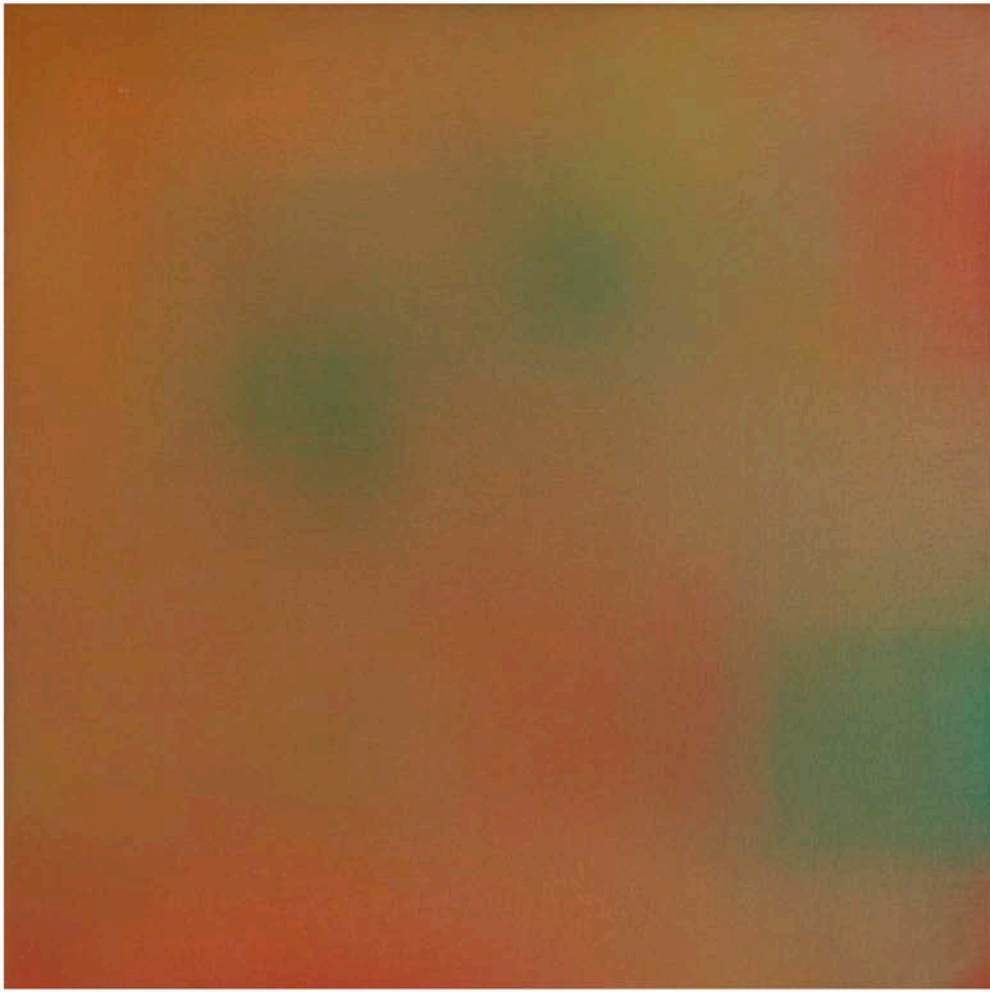


PLATE 23



PLATE 24

## **THESIS EXHIBITION**

EXHIBITION RECEPTION MARCH 19, 2010

B.F. LARSEN GALLERY, HFAC, BYU



THESIS EXHIBITION MARCH 19-30, 2010  
B.F. LARSEN GALLERY, HFAC, BYU





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