

Jessamyn Plotts  
Phone (512) 650-0782  
Email: jessamynplotts@gmail.com  
jessamynplottz.com

### Artist Statement

My art practice centers on the idea of boundaries. What separates a mental image from the physical painting it becomes? What separates my experience from your experience? How can my art practice show the ambiguous points where these and other separations appear less distinct? I feel the navigation of this territory is a task to which painting is particularly suited because of its ability to engage private, mental experience, metaphor, and physical reality simultaneously. My work includes three areas of focus. Intuitively made paintings and drawings comprise one area. These paintings often occur to me as fully formed mental pictures which I quickly translate through drawing and painting. I also make paintings from observation which are often of my studios or living spaces. I take a methodical approach to this area of my practice, relying on a set of physical, observational, and organizational limitations as I work. I do not attempt a photographic quality in my observational paintings. Instead, I attend to the state of my body, mind, and vision as I work in a particular space, and this I see as observation. My performance practice came out of a need to bring my experience outside the picture plane so that I could address the lack of power I felt in my body and in society. I wanted to mobilize my images and merge them with real-time experience. Intersectional feminism underpins all of my actions as an artist. My interest in how images are used politically and socially led me to evaluate constructions of white femininity as they appear in art and pop-culture. In addition to painting and performance, I have used drawing, writing and sound to dissect unsettling tropes that won't leave my mind. Memoirist Cat Marnell, Taylor Swift, and Miley Cyrus have been subjects of my writing and sound work, as have the shows *Forensic Files* and *Law and Order SVU*. I am particularly interested in how images facilitate the physical destruction of the white girl body through abject sexual experience and addiction. I see this interest as related to the work of Sylvia Plath, Virginia Woolf, Kathy Acker and others.

Carolee Schneeman and Andrea Fraser are influences, but I also pay close attention to traditional artists and thinkers well outside the visual area. I frequently turn to Rackstraw Downes both as a writer and painter for questions involving the nature of looking and the optical experience of painting. The visions, writings, and music of Hildegard von Bingen have recently guided my intuitive painting practice. I read philosophers Brian Massumi and Maurice Merleau-Ponty to help me understand relationships between sensation, perception, and affective phenomena in the mind. Phillip Guston has also shaped how I think about painting. In the Spring of 2019, I was invited to present my writing on Philip Guston and his struggle with the activist potential of painting at the conference "Beyond Vision: the Sensorium in Art" at Southern Methodist University. This paper deals with levels of engagement activated by spaces in which paintings are made, from the studio—commonly a private space—to the gallery or museum, where the interface becomes irrevocably social. In this vein, I have begun to experiment with an inversion of the traditional studio-precedes-display dynamic by choosing at times to move the private space of the studio to the public sphere. The works I have made so far from this idea are titled collectively as *Victoria Saint* (2019-present).

Work made from 2016-2019 explores representations of white femininity through painting, drawing, and performance work. In 2016, I began a series of drawings that mined pop cultural sources for hyperbole, intuitively rendering characteristic features of femininity such as infantilization and hysteria through expressive painting and drawing techniques. This work gradually evolved to include the performances *Game Day or Rape, Interrupted*, *In Search of the Dumb Cunt's Lost Memories*, and *Walk of Shame*, each of which addressed representations of white femininity and propagation of rape, death, and destruction fantasies around that image. This work culminated in a solo exhibition at Inner Space: A Chamber Gallery, an artist-run space in Dallas, in 2018. I continue to make work along these lines, often painting and drawing pop-culture idols who I enjoy including Miley Cyrus, Lana del Rey and Cat Marnell. *Daylight*, a performance and sound piece that compares the image and art of Taylor Swift with a darker experience of desire, sex, and physical embodiment, was presented at the ICOSA Collective gallery in Austin's Canopy complex in 2020.

Since then, I have begun to merge my observational and intuitive methods on the picture plane. I do this by organizing the space of the picture plane using an observational rule. When the space has been divided using this rule, I use the contained areas to unleash my intuitive painting energy. The result is a diverse rectangle subdivided mostly by diagonals, such as in the paintings *mind, room, studio* (2019) and *The Boys* (2022). In this case, I use drawing to define boundaries between different ways of thinking within single images rather than separating my different approaches into distinct bodies of work. I hope to bring this method out of the studio and into a public environment as part of a new iteration of the *Victoria Saint* piece soon.