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White Light

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Tessie Whitmore

The work is about nothing and everything. It is about belief systems engaged with everyday, monotonous theories of repetitious acts that will deliver freedom and freewill or acceptance and enlightenment. These acts become systems, which are bought into with ridiculous dedication. What is left is the void, potential death, fleeting mortality.

I use the highway as a place of investigation and motivation building a relationship between its physical and psychological aspects. I focus on moments from the drive: tension, the possible crash, monotony, and the trance state. I use materials from high culture and low culture to form a cultural bond, a hybrid of daily life. The works carry a mythology, finding the mystical in the mundane and the spiritual in the ordinary. It can appear bodily: often wonky, precarious, and provisional. An absurdity carries through all of the work.

I meld together spiritual aspects of religious monotony and hope for the future. The works are meditative and repetitive, some relating moments of confronting and controlling the steering wheel, looking out the window at abandoned objects, being hypnotized by the dotted white lines, squinting at the bright red-orange glow of tail lights, and reflectors, the blur of the cars and landscape zipping by. Signs on the highway become anthems to the road, like illuminated manuscripts for us all to follow.

The tie-dye effect, a thin wash of oil paint poured and flicked onto the canvas, randomly dispersed with thin washes of repetitively drawn circles, shapes and lines are an element of the meditation. The work speaks of death and hope at the same time. With tie-dye swirls drowned in oil paint and barely coming through, a viewer can relate to the many layers of hope that have come and gone. Utopia leads to dystopia leads to utopia.

I use the shape of the triangle as it is ubiquitous and holds the power of order and containment. It holds secret energies and is thought to have powers of healing. The triangle symbolizes the potential in the past, the tendencies of the present and hopes of the future. The freeway signs read yield, the arrow points us in the right direction. Ideologies have deceived humanity throughout life and the power of the pyramid to heal is just as absurd or truthful as the power of the triangle to yield. We must buy into these beliefs and symbols to lead us to a better way.

I like to think of these actions as a dance; a ceremony. Lie out a rug, lie out a tarp, cover it with paint or tape. Mimic the brushstrokes with placement of objects, things placed on top. Footsteps cover the canvas, dancing on top, spinning and moshing through the studio with paint. Cover all things with things. Unseen possibilities like the landscapes and highway systems that never end. Materials hold their truth, held in gravity, verging on collapse and absurd failure.

It is all and nothing. It is the white light that blinds you on the highway. It is the white light that surrounds you with protection. It is the white light that comes to you in death. It is the white light that leads you down the highway. It is the belief system you wake up to and live by. It is the rules that are followed to lead you down the correct path. It is on the road you feel the way. Are you going down the road feeling bad or are you looking straight into the night?