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Harbor Island

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Joe Lloyd
Artist Statement
March 2012

There is an artificial island in the Puget Sound, an industrial island built in the shape of a trapezoid and paved from end to end. It is located at the mouth of the Duwamish River, which has been diverted and dredged into an industrial waterway with straight concrete edges similar to the Los Angeles River. Rectilinear driftwood, which is actually old lumber and plywood garbage, is floating nearby. The island, river, and driftwood share similar geometric shapes, embodying the human mark on the Earth.

This world exists in a constant state of failure and we cannot perfect it through geometry, despite humanity's best efforts. Geometry fails to perfectly exist in tangible form because the finest forms we fabricate that are based on geometry still have bumpy edges and other imperfections at a microscopic level.

My paintings are informed by how I see the world: a series of manmade geometric forms imposed on natural topography.

By making collisions of shapes and distorting them with tool marks and art supplies, I create the failure of geometry. Lines are made with a commercial paint shield. Color is applied with a palette knife. Through the processes of erasing, painting over, and redrawing, the subject on the canvas is revealed and concealed. Evolving this work out of a past body of landscape paintings and by the horizontal format of the canvases, this is more than abstract paint on canvas; this is the world we live in.

Paintings within this body of work evolve from themselves. Looking at the previous painting, I start a new painting. I stopped using photo references because I realized that I already knew what I wanted to paint and that my intuition is more important than images that already exist in the world. As a result, the paintings continue to move away from observational space towards something more artificial. The paintings become about the two-dimensional place on the canvas rather than some real place out in the world. This transition is seamless for me because geometry equally exists in two-dimensional and three-dimensional form.

My ideas of this place are better in a stage of not being written down yet. Painting allows for the communication of these sorts of ideas because it translates visual ideas while keeping them visual, without requiring a supplemental medium of text or other documentation. I choose painting because, like manmade geometric forms, it is a place where we see the impossibility of geometry, the tension between concept and form, and the attempt of an idea and an object to become the same thing.