

Mariejon de Jong-Buijs

Three works, New Jersey 2017-2020

When we think about painting and time, what we might call the time of painting, it's usually in terms of registration and indexicality: the paint as sign of process, as trace, evidence of the hand or tool, an indicator, ultimately, of the artist. To think of paint as index is to forget for a minute about the paint itself, reduced now to evidentiary marker of its manner of application. But pigment doesn't only drip or splash, it can bleed and pool, seep and stain, marks more difficult to mine for their indexical lode. Indeed it's tempting to see these marks as the action of the paint itself, the paint painting rather than being painted.

All of this is invited by Mariejon de Jong-Buijs's group of paintings made in New Jersey where she lived from the end of 2017 until mid-2020. Dutch-born and Basel-based, de Jong-Buijs had anticipated a longer stay in the Garden State but the demands of her husband's working life and the travel constraints imposed by covid-19 forced an earlier than anticipated European return. Her sojourn in a largely rural part of the state resulted in three big works, paintings produced by various means, all predicated on an attention to process as an unfolding in time, as a procedure for the performance of specific actions making manifest the vicissitudes of paint.

*Folded Painting 04 (Molasses Hill)* (2018) was painted outside on the ground over three weeks in the 2018 summer. Running some 82 feet of cotton fabric which was piled into a crumpled mound of folds and sprayed, one color at a time, with a back sprayer, the work includes the various natural materials adhering to its surface, gritty residues of its outdoor production. After each successive spray de Jong-Buijs unfolded the length of fabric to let it dry, noting how the paint reached only those spots randomly exposed to the sprayer's nozzle. This combination of randomness of painterly effect and the repetitive nature of her process, in this work the piling of the canvas, its spraying, drying, and unfolding, features in all her New Jersey works.

De Jong-Buijs likes to describe *Hopewell Woods* (2019) in terms of time, a week during the early days of the pandemic, during which a different tool was used each day on a 10 meter (32.8 feet) length of unbleached cotton stretched between three trees. Each day a different tool, each day a different colour and gesture. Using various sprayers, brushes, and a sweeping broom de Jong-Buijs moved across the cloth, marking her presence that day. Sprays turned to drips pulled downward, sprays wrote circles, the broom scrubbed allover, and brushes swept and striped. While she knew the gestures she would make, each day's outcome was spontaneous, happenstance, a result of working with the cloth's billowing and bowing in springtime gustiness. The translucency produced by raking morning light meant that background tree trunks marked

the canvas before the paint. Her process here was less about making paintings in new ways—in 2015 she'd used a tractor to make *Accumulated Experiences*-- than marking time and her presence during lockdown. As photographed by Grant Peterson we see the work as a screen, a wall of diary entries, a view she's made.

*Hopewell Woods* has another mode of existence, one analogous to the artist's traveling life. As de Jong-Buijs has written, "The act of folding, closing, stacking and unfolding is part of my traveling existence. After a week outdoors the canvas was folded together with my accumulated memories into a transportable container that traveled with me to a new place." In Basel this work will be cut and stretched, becoming five separate paintings.

In the last of the big New Jersey works, *Repetition 9, folded paintings* (2020), de Jong-Buijs limited herself to two tools—a large brush and a wooden stretcher approximately three foot square—while adopting a more complex mark-making procedure on each of the work's nine canvases. Working on one canvas at a time, she used the small stretcher like a stencil, folding the canvas around it, painting the enclosed area, drying it, un-stretching it and repositioning the stretcher again until the canvas had received nine discrete areas of paint. The final canvases show more than this layering of paint as staple holes are visible along with swipes from the wooden stretcher and cracks caused by repeated folding. Loose threads fringe the canvas edges. Rather than hang flat against the wall, each unstretched canvas is secured at one point by a wall-mounted clamp so it drapes itself like a cloak, refolding itself in singular arrangements that conceal as much as they reveal.

In their foldedness these works invite us to think about time and painting in another way as well. A fold interrupts flatness, enclosing volume so that the painting's surface is understood as pliable, indeed as something packable and unpackable as it exists in stretched and unstretched formats. What De Jong-Buijs writes of *Repetition 9* applies to all her work: "My intention is to let the viewer wonder what they're looking at and what remains hidden. These boldly colored and refined containers I can take and display anywhere in the world, regardless of space and time, regardless of where I am coming from or where I am heading."

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