

Noelle Africh

Face Value, 2025

Distemper on linen over panel

12 x 12 in

The ancient painting medium of distemper situates Noelle Africh's practice within a space of instability and deep history. Made from rabbit skin glue, pigment, and calcium carbonate, it is fragile and unpredictable, drying to a matte, plaster-like surface that can always be reactivated with water or heat. Africh is drawn to this mutability: layers appear, fade, or crack on their own. There is so much loss wrapped up in this process, as forms emerge only to disappear again. Working with distemper becomes about accepting the complex relationships between materials and the forces that act on them; waiting for images to reveal themselves, often only in hindsight.

For Africh, painting becomes a way to hold contradiction. Distemper is forgiving and exacting, final and malleable, as ephemeral and tangible as a living body. Its unstable nature forces the artist into a physical, body-driven process that relies on acceptance of and curiosity toward uncertainty. The paintings' fragile surfaces demand care, reflecting our shared material condition with painted objects.

The artist's engagement with paint is also a conversation with history. By using an ancient medium that looks aged and weathered as it dries, they signal to the past even as they work in the present. For Africh, painting alone can look backward and forward in time at once, creating images that remain unsettled until they reveal themselves in the present. Navigating through the instability of distemper, they practice attention, remaining open to what reveals itself.

Damien H. Ding

PP : Under, 2025

Egg tempera on panel

16.5 x 16.5 in

For Damien Ding, painting holds the most power where it reveals its limitations. Working in egg tempera, he values the medium's inability to become fully concrete. It allows for a subtle, delicate texture while avoiding the overtly sculptural weight of oil or acrylic impasto. As light moves through its thin, translucent layers, tempera glows with a depth and spatiality of color that few other mediums can achieve. The short, ever-visible brushstrokes of the fast-drying medium give the images a quiet, deliberate precision; a way to build pictorial complexity without succumbing to material excess.

Ding approaches each picture as a totality in which no single gesture or formal choice carries meaning on its own. Every mark, surface, and color exists only in relation to the field of signs he constructs within that particular painting, and meaning emerges gradually through his careful deliberation over this system of relations.

What draws him most to painting, however, is its capacity for failure. It stands close to language yet communicates less clearly; approaches objecthood yet lacks the solidity of sculpture; relies on the inherent pleasure of color yet utterly fails to rival the richness of the natural world. These shortcomings give painting something humble and human, something that ultimately becomes the source of its vitality. Ding keeps returning to the image, not to resolve its limits but to inhabit them.

Anna Gregor

After Botticelli V, 2025

Egg tempera, shellac, and oil on muslin on panel

7 7/8 x 11 3/4 in

Anna Gregor's practice is located at the focal point of painting's materiality and its history. She is drawn to the physical qualities of traditional media like oil paint, oil ground, rabbit skin glue, gold leaf, and egg tempera, and studies their distinct properties to understand their innate potential to cure and harden into meaning. For Gregor, the richness of painting lies in its capacity to form coherence out of something as rudimentary as colored paste, and to find in such basic materials a significance sedimented through deep historical time yet latent until activated in the contemporary viewer.

Paint continues to hold her because it resists mastery. Each pigment or binder behaves according to its own nature, revealing subtleties that become more intricate and demanding the longer she works with them. Painting thrives in this tension: knowledge deepens, and so does unpredictability. Marks thickly laid on, scraped flat with a razor blade, or luminously glazed all form a complex meshwork of active interrelationships. A painting, in her view, is not the translation of an idea into image but the crystallization of material decisions into a significance that could not have been anticipated. This makes the relationship between painter and paint feel alive. The act of painting grows, changes, and manifests forms according to its own instincts.

Her engagement with painting is inseparable from its history, which she approaches not through eras or -isms but through long, focused encounters with individual works. Each painting she seriously studies eventually discloses what has been achieved and what possibilities remain latent, waiting to be carried forward. To paint well today is to accept the absence of a single living tradition while choosing to thoughtfully build from the depth and breadth of painting knowledge available to us, drawing connections across centuries of pictorial decisions and material encounters. Painting is endlessly familiar and impossibly difficult, demanding again and again how significance is to be made from the smearing of colored paste.

Baoying Huang

The Stranger, 2025

Oil on linen

40 x 30 in

Baoying Huang's commitment to painting began in China, where drawing and painting were taught more as academic skills than as forms of personal expression. She mastered technique early but only later came to see painting as an artistic language in its own right, one deeply embedded in her body's felt experience. While she first worked in acrylic and gouache, Huang turned to oil painting for the deeper sense of materiality and time it offers, and it has remained central to her practice.

Oil paint opens for her a space of slow revision, adjustment, and discovery. She carefully adjusts oil and solvent consistencies, layers transparencies, and studies how acrylic grounds affect tactility, absorption, and the movement of oil across the surface. The decisions around brushwork, layering, and application are never purely technical, for they shape how the image is felt, giving painting a physical immediacy closely tied to her emotional presence before the work.

Huang's engagement with painting is inseparable from its history, which she approaches through close looking at individual works and their surfaces. Within the discourse of contemporary art, her practice situates itself in continuity with painting's lineage by emphasizing its physical and sensory qualities as the medium's essential language. Influenced by Catherine Murphy, Sylvia Plimack Mangold, Vija Celmins, and Jennifer Bartlett, she admires not only their paintings but also the long dedication each has given to a lifetime of work. Painting, for Huang, matters less for its capacity to astonish than for its ability to endure, carrying her through a deliberately paced negotiation between material and perception over time.

Scott Hutchison

360, 2005

26 oil paintings on paper (6 on display) and LCD

8 x 10 in each

Scott Hutchison's loyalty to oil paint is evident in the stubborn focus he has given the medium, which in turn has enabled him to achieve an extensive body of work spanning decades. His description of oil painting has deepened with the time and effort spent on understanding its capabilities. For Hutchison, oil is not simply a material but a partner in dialogue, one to push against, explore with, and learn from. Early struggles with the medium shaped a patient and intimate approach, and over time his relationship has evolved into one of constant seeking, experimentation, and imagination.

For his video pieces, Hutchison's approach is looser and more fluid, responding to the moving nature of animation and of humans. In still paintings, he slows the process, building layers and textures that reward careful observation. His brushwork embodies the nuances of gesture, presence, and material, producing works that feel complete, dense, and alive. Oil paint's resistance, its texture, and its ability to reveal and conceal create a complexity that no other medium can replicate. Hutchison's work is in conversation with both history and contemporaries, from Rembrandt's careful flesh tones to the sweeping energy of Bacon and Freud, as well as peers like Cecily Brown.

For Hutchison, painting is an act of resistance against distraction and against forgetting. Oil offers a sandbox for discovery, a space to experiment, test theories, and build worlds that bridge the real and the imagined. It consistently expands and challenges, demanding patience, attention, and presence from both maker and viewer. In this way, painting is not just a method of depiction but a practice of endurance, transformation, and sustained engagement, a medium where material, hand, and imagination coalesce.

Xiaohan Jiang

Shared Smoke, 2025

Oil on felt over panel

8 x 8 in

The medium of oil paint anchors Xiaohan Jiang's practice in a space of slowness, where childhood memory, emotion, and the sensuality of material meet. Its depth and flexibility allow her to move between softness and intensity, letting color sink quietly into delicate fabrics or hover on their surface. She applies paint to silk, velvet, polyester, and grasscloth, treating fabric as more than a support, as each surface holds its own presence, absorbing or resisting the paint in ways that reach us through direct sensory channels.

Jiang approaches color and surface with the attitude of a poet, likening her process to wrapping a gift for a friend. Having written poetry since childhood, she seeks in painting the same sense of open-ended ambiguity—where memories of her Northern Chinese village upbringing seamlessly fold into her active, colorful imagination. The quiet, slow process of building translucent layers mirrors the fragility of recalling the past, and the way emotions toward it shift over time. Her paintings evoke a world felt through ambiguity, like a dream.

The artist's relationship to painting is informed by both poetic and painterly traditions. The writings of Rainer Maria Rilke resonate with her process of holding uncertainty and "living into the questions," while painters such as Hilma af Klint, Agnes Pelton, Milton Avery, and Wu Guanzhong remind her that gesture, emptiness, and color can carry emotional and spiritual depth without words.

Lindsay Mueller

Drawing Debris, 2025

Oil, acrylic, paper clay, and paper on panel

22 x 21 in

Lindsay Mueller approaches painting like a scientist or archaeologist, excavating through layers of material to understand what lies beneath. She describes paint as “mushy” yet “geological,” emphasizing its weight and physicality. Over time, her process has expanded to include plaster, allowing her to build a painting before color is even introduced. This merging of painting and sculpture reflects a desire to reconcile the two while remaining committed to the wall-bound plane. The result is work that both emerges from and sinks into the surface, exploring the shifting boundary between image and object.

For Mueller, painting is a form of linguistic and material inquiry. “If the painted images are words,” she says, “then the surface, brushwork, and application are the tone, how it’s said.” Her attention to the inflection of paint reveals how meaning is shaped not only by what is depicted but by how it is built. She uses oil and plaster to test the limits of depiction, questioning whether solid, organic matter can be made to feel fleeting or whether the immaterial, like light or shadow, can be given tangible form. One has to wonder whether she is enshrining nature, almost as if to immortalize what will no longer be.

Mueller’s ongoing engagement with the lineage of landscape painting reflects both reverence and critique. Influenced by artists from Cézanne to Hurvin Anderson, she sees her work as part of a continuum of painters who explore how humans perceive and shape their environments. Painting offers her a space for experimentation and reflection, a means to test perception and translate the living and non-living into a shared visual language.

Elaine Qiu

Hindsight #12, 2025

Charcoal made by the artist, and gouache on Arches paper

12 x 12 in

Elaine Qiu paints in a language older than words. Her practice emerges from the principle of 書畫同源, or the shared origin of calligraphy and painting, foundational to traditional Chinese painting. Within this tradition lies the genre of 寫意, or “writing idea,” where painting becomes an act of writing that is direct, intuitive, and unmediated. Qiu recalls her earliest memories of holding a brush as a child, sensing ink flow across paper, learning that mark and meaning could be one and the same. Painting, for her, is an honest and innate form of creation, where thought and image meet without mediation.

She first trained in oils but now works primarily with water-based paint, embracing its fluidity, spontaneity, and the fast-drying medium’s special way of recording the presence of her hands. Water carries pigment, evaporates, and leaves a lingering stain, a memory of the moment. Lately, she has also begun making her own pigments, collecting earth, plants, and charcoal from meaningful places, so each painting carries the material trace of its origin.

Qiu positions her practice within an ancient lineage of seers, from the anonymous painters of Dunhuang’s Mogao Caves to the makers of Lascaux who she says “traced something beyond animal form.” These makers likely treated art as devotion, as a way of giving form to the unseen. Continuing this lineage, Qiu looks to modern and contemporary artists who create from what she calls a “shared consciousness.” She finds resonance in Agnes Martin’s grids, which invite silence and collective stillness, and in Anselm Kiefer’s materially charged surfaces, where memory and myth are embedded, layered, and made resilient. Like these artists, Qiu uses paint to reach beyond language. She inhabits the moment of creation and offers a ritualized encounter between material, hand, and mind.

Olivia Isabel Rosato

Underpass, 2023

Oil on panel

14 x 11 in

The medium of oil paint situates Olivia Isabel Rosato's practice in direct conversation with drawing, the root of her work. Drawing remains her most immediate tool, fluid, physical, and accessible, while painting allows her to expand upon its possibilities. On smooth surfaces such as oil-primed panel or YUPO paper, she layers and removes pigment, carving images reductively so that light seems to emerge from within. This embedded luminosity, created by wiping away paint, achieves a depth that drawing alone cannot.

Rosato's background in photography and sculpture informs her sensitivity to form and light. The paintings often seem to exist between worlds, hovering between representation and abstraction, perception and imagination. Large graphic moments and sculptural passages of paint give the surfaces a quiet drama. Their scale feels intimate yet commanding.

For Rosato, painting is demanding, unpredictable, and at times even frightening. Each layer carries the risk of failure but also the chance for the unexpected to appear. What keeps her invested is painting's ability to destabilize representation, to slip between clarity and atmosphere. Unlike photography, it is not accountable to the world but instead constructs its own vision, a logic entirely its own where perception, imagination, and the long history of the medium converge.

Marina Ross

Peerless, 2025

Oil on linen

12 x 9 in

Painting has a way of recording time and self, according to Marina Ross. Oil paint allows her to leave an imprint on a stationary surface, much like the way we leave traces of ourselves on life as we move through it. The sensitivity with which Ross negotiates with paint reflects a deep awareness of its possibilities and limitations. Working wet-into-wet, she allows color and value to blend freely, creating loose, spontaneous, and atmospheric surfaces. The images feel fluid and provisional, echoing the unfinished quality she admires in Cézanne and others, and invite viewers to engage actively, navigating between presence and absence.

Ross's recent work confronts the instability of life and the experience of profound loss. Using the Wizard of Oz as a cultural icon, she found a way to process the death of her two-year-old son without literal depiction. The beloved, ubiquitous character allows her to lead viewers into difficult, often taboo territory, creating a pathway for reflection and trust. Painting becomes a companion through brutal life cycles, a means to witness and hold grief when language falls short. Influences such as Tuymans and González-Torres reinforce this approach: both address devastating subjects indirectly, demonstrating that imagery can contain memory and emotion without explicitly representing tragedy.

For Ross, painting offers a quiet but powerful form of presence that other media cannot replicate. Unlike performance, which confronts viewers directly, painting slows perception and demands sustained attention. Its materiality, the gesture of the hand, and the blending of pigment carry both time and memory, embedding emotion within the surface. In this way, her work becomes a ritual of witnessing, where loss, impermanence, and life's fragility are made tangible. Painting allows Ross to translate the unspeakable into visual form, giving shape to grief while offering viewers space to sit with ambiguity and reflect on their own experiences.

Eric Uhler

The Broad Plank Top, 2025

Oil on linen

20 x 24 in

The commitment to oil paint is central to Eric Uhler's practice. He works with oils because they hold both immediacy and history, allowing him to move between transparency and opacity, gesture and precision. Their slow-drying nature invites layering, revision, and excavation, embedding a sense of time directly into the surface. "Paint insists on surface, on sensuality, on the fetish of the gesture," Uhler notes. "In another medium, these images would collapse into information; in paint, they become seductions—signs without stable referents." Early in his career, he treated paint as a vehicle for representation. Today he approaches it as a partner in crime, pushing against it, exploring it, and welcoming its resistance, unpredictability, and material presence.

Uhler's work is in conversation with the history of painting, from the allegorical rigor of Jacques-Louis David to the sensuality of Jean-Honoré Fragonard, and with contemporary peers such as Cecily Brown and Adrian Ghenie. Rather than replicate history, he extends it, layering fragmentary historical resonance into contemporary questions. His brushwork, sometimes aggressive and sometimes lyrical, embodies both nature's vitality and the turbulence of human experience. The physicality of oil rewards close looking and sustained engagement, allowing images to gain presence and sensuality in ways other media cannot.

For Uhler, painting is a form of resistance. Its slowness opposes the acceleration of digital culture, creating space for contemplation, ritual, and meditation. Painting allows him to wrestle with history, with nature, and with perception itself, while offering viewers a tangible encounter with time, material, and presence. In oil, he finds both subject and sanctuary, a means of asserting endurance and making memory visible.

Sharon Yaoxi He

Swinging, 2023

Acrylic on canvas

36 x 48 in

The quick-drying medium of acrylic paint situates Sharon Yaoxi He's studio practice firmly in the present. It allows her to work with immediacy, building abstract shapes from one part of the canvas to the next, layering one shallow film of paint beside or directly upon another. Without pause or filtration, the artist adjusts, builds, erases, and reimagines the compositional logic of her surfaces.

He understands color to be deeply personal, seeing it as a direct reflection of her sensibility, psychology, and presence. She uses color for its ability to carry emotion, temperature, rhythm, and even narrative without the need for language. She mixes gesso into those colors to achieve a dusty matte surface that eliminates the usual plastic sheen of acrylic paint, grounding us in an immediacy both chromatic and tactile. The absence of reflection draws us slowly across each mark, eventually bringing our awareness to the delicately applied underlayers, which reveal themselves in their own time with gentle vibration and soft dissonance.

The artist is fascinated by the way classical Chinese landscape paintings construct space through a multiplicity of viewpoints that unfold rhythmically across the surface. She perceives a psychological interiority and movement in those works that resonates with the spaces she produces within the compositional geometry and chromatic atmosphere of her abstract painting practice.