



Andrew Huffman

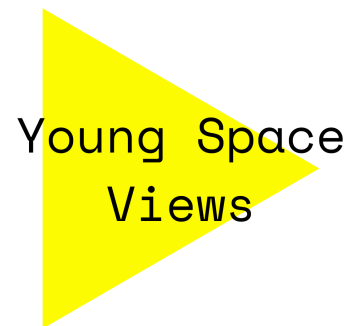
IN INSTALLATION, PAINTING ON 23/06/20



Can you tell me a little bit about you?

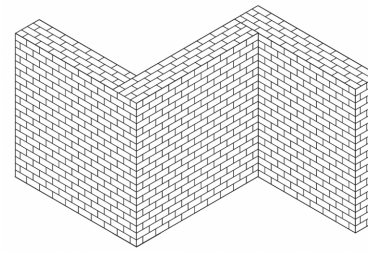
Originally I grew up in the college town of Lawrence, Kansas, then headed off to art school at the Columbus College of Art and Design in Columbus, Ohio. After I received my BFA in 2008, I moved to Yosemite, California, for a year living without running water or electricity while enjoying the High Sierra Mountains. As my time in Yosemite was wrapping up I spent some time in Western China, then headed back to Columbus, Ohio, for a 7 month artist-in-residence program one of my best friends, and mentor, Craig Drainsfield, offered me at his experimental DIY space called ChopChop Gallery (now Abnormal Allies) back in 2009. After that I completed 3 years of graduate school at Kansas University in my hometown and moved to Denver after my MFA show in 2012.

Another fun fact is I used to play the guitar in a band called "Wheatbread" in college. It was a two-piece band , just me and a drummer. We would wear masks and play meandering, improve, melodic, funky-jazzy-psychedelic music and sometimes just plug in unannounced in and around downtown Columbus, Ohio.



When did you first discover art, or realize you wanted to make it yourself?

Luckily for me at a very young age art was everywhere given that I was the youngest of five artistically interested kids. This could mean anything from drawing and painting to wrapping each other up into blankets and rolling one another down the stairs. There was always an inherent curiosity in art and it helped that music and books with stimulating illustrations were everywhere in our house along with my father telling us inventive bedtime stories. My two sisters and I shared a room for a 3-4 year period and I recall sitting on my sister Rachael's feet with her back against the wall and going up and down (we called this the ferris wheel). It did not take much to be entertained back then. I don't know exactly when I first discovered "art" as it was there as long as I can remember.



As a Junior in high school I was selected to be apart of the Marie Walsh Sharp summer program for students around the United States that used to be based out of Colorado Springs (funded out of NYC) but has since stopped this program. Further impactful for me at that time was a month-long summer program at the Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design I completed after my sophomore year of high school (for a 3hr college credit).

What ideas are you exploring in your practice?

The current body of paintings are building off of my last solo show I did with the David Richard Gallery in Santa Fe, New Mexico in August of 2018. That body of work was titled "Modulated" whatever number of colors were used to perform in a given painting. For example, a 30-color painting would be called "Modulated 30". I was investigating a lattice structure for most of those works and probing the possibilities of how color and structure could lead to content, and exploring various other concepts and content to abstract. I was exploring a sentimental beaded necklace I gave to my sister before she moved to Berlin, Germany, for instance, before I conceptualized the lattice weave paintings.

My current work has grown and changed in some ways since then. I started to feel like the Modulated titles – although I enjoyed that they do not give away too much to the viewer as far as what they should or should not think about- were feeling a little test-tube-like as far as the title was concerned. With the current body of paintings, I want the titles to be more whimsical and to reference music and also utilize titles that would elicit something of a song title while giving some bit of a setting of theme for the viewer to navigate.

Themes of camouflage to prevent danger and disguise have been at work along with thinking about certain times of day and lighting for the hues to evoke. I am also currently investigating ways pattern along with color can elicit both directional movement and read as visual chords, rhythms, and harmonies and what this means in the context of my art. Sometimes the titles reference the movements in the painting and in music such as "(A) Ascending Swimming Hole", or "(D) Descending Datura". Lastly, space exploration as a whole is extremely important to my work and conceptualizing it similar to a landscape with atmospheric perspective. I want to be surprised by the end results of the paintings so they feel alive when I am working them through.

What is your process like?

My process varies a ton but there is always a great deal of planning in advance and research in both my string installation work and painting. I am always interested in an innumerable amount of themes and ideas. Never stops. I typically work pretty dang intuitively.

Typically my paintings take me between 70-100 hours to complete. My process for painting has been developed over the last 16 years. Most of my paintings almost always start with a sketch first on graph paper to achieve a basic-frame or skeleton that I think would make for a high impact painting. Now, given that my paintings are in the realm of hardline-abstraction, I have developed a specific painting and taping method that utilizes burnishing tape, clear coating, then painting each color you experience twice to achieve maximum opaqueness and quality while performing with the other hues. I work on many paintings at once because they all influence one another and I find this method makes the body of work as a whole stronger.

Some installations will take me 7-14 days. This process usually starts with a measuring tape and reacting to specific architectural elements. Then I draw out the installation on graph paper. After that, I draw the installation on the actual wall and mathematically measure everything. For my string sculptures I sometimes shoot staples right into the wall to hold the strings, while in other cases I make a substructure off-site with the strings arranged, which is then installed.

What is your favorite material to work with, and why?

I would say paint, air, shadow, and string.

Paint: love the viscosity and chemistry of color along with the process of painting. The act is meditative to me while I enjoy discovering color harmonies I have never seen before. Similarly my favorite music is music I have never heard before.

Air may be the most enigmatic medium in my work and most challenging to utilize in my string installations. I enjoy the plethora of content that can be investigated in air or matter, initially undetectable to the eye. It is a challenge.

Shadow is also one of my favorite elements due to the fact it moves as the viewer moves and can move with the sun.

String is a line that can be manipulated in space and in varying proximity- density to influence visual movements in space. I enjoy how acrylic yarn plays with shadow and depth, while also elevating and transforming one's idea of a fairly simple, low-brow material.

What is the last thing you read?

I read all the time. I read the news every day but I've been trying to not read as much about Covid-19 recently to boost my optimistic thoughts; however, I still read much about that. Also, I have been reading in solidarity stories surrounding the Black Lives Matter Movement and protesting about the senseless death of George Floyd and many others young black men and women.

I have been reading a fair amount of guitar music theory books recently.
I just finished reading : JUST KIDS by Pattie Smith.

What are you passionate about?

Family, Friends, Food, Art, Biking, Music, Skateboarding, Fishing, Film, Humor, Reading, Poker, Fishing, Camping, The Environment, Teaching, Learning, Smelling, Feeling, Listening, backyard fires.

I really like not knowing. Knowing is an overrated concept in my book.

What is the most surprising response you've received about your work from someone?

I was doing a painting demo at the Denver Art Museum and an older man came up to me who had also traveled to Colorado Springs, BMOCA, MCA, and Redline to view my work. I thought that was inspiring to get a response like that, and also awesome to be able to shoot the shit a little bit and show my appreciation and ask him about his life and just be accessible.

How do you spend your time when you're not making work?

I have been applying to tons of grants right now and juried shows, etc.

Enjoy playing music, riding my bike to Golden, and skateboarding. Also, I enjoy spending time with my wife,

Kristina, and our cattle dog, Luna. I've been staying active and listening to a load of records. And I'm always a sucker for some great documentaries.

How has your work evolved over the last few years?

My work has evolved a great deal with lots of media shifts and conceptual shifts. Scale shift is the main change, probably. I'm doing larger works and projects these days, so the logistics are getting more ambitious!

Do you have a day job or other work that you split your time between?

I teach one 3-credit hour class twice a week at Metropolitan State University. I have taught as much as three before. I enjoy not only being able to teach someone methods but also encouraging a path and lifelong endeavor to art. Being a mentor is priceless in that I am fortunate enough to greatly impact a student's life in such an influential way. I am a full time artist however and enjoy a little bit of teaching to balance out the studio hours.

Is there any piece of advice you would offer to others?

Do not worry about what other people are doing. Do not be scared to be unsure about what you are doing. Do not forget to get lost in what you are doing. Do not forget to enjoy what you are doing!

Do you have any routines or rituals in the studio that get you into the mode or mindset to make your work?

Coffee, always always music..... good food in the body. Love comedy podcasts!

Before Covid-19 8-13 hours a day sometimes more... and try to take family days too -that is so important!

How significant has attending art school been on your practice?

For fundamentals it is HUGE! Also for exposure to concepts and reading etc. I think going to a specialized, proper art college was huge for me. If you want to teach art obtaining an MFA is smart as it helps you challenge your belief systems with other academics. I think academia can also cause harm if you strive to over contrive all your work with total bullshit.

Big plus of not pursuing advanced degree: NO DEBT! 😞

My education has been a culmination of good-old-fashioned classical training mixed with peers, friends, family, and various other things such as my time spent at RedLine for a 2-year artist in residence program in Denver, Colorado. Most of my training has to do with thousands of hours spent doing work and shaving off the "fat" in my processes and aesthetics.

What do you find most daunting, challenging, or frustrating about pursuing art?

It can be economically difficult to sustain. This is so important though. I have made my living off of my art for the last 5+ years and it is really important to find studio/life balance and strive for sustainability.

How would you define "success" in art?

You enjoy it, you are yourself, you are humble, you are stimulated, you are challenged.

What are you working on right now?

I have been working on a solo show of paintings for an upcoming exhibition that was set to open in East Harlem NYC, May 17th, at the David Richard Gallery. Due to the sadly devastating severity of Covid-19 across NYC and

New York state that date has been pushed back until it seems safe and responsible to do so, sometime in September. Also I've been writing grants! And I will be starting a new installation commissioned by the Denver Art Museum starting throughout June and opening in July.

Find more at andrewhuffman.com and on Instagram [@andrewhuffman7!](https://www.instagram.com/andrewhuffman7/)

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ABOUT KATE MOTHES

Kate Mothes is a curator and arts organizer currently based in the Midwest.

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