

The background is an abstract composition of paint strokes. At the top, there's a thick, vibrant pink stroke that drips down the right side. Below this is a textured grey area. At the bottom, there's a solid blue stroke with a fine, vertical-line texture, and a thin, bright green horizontal line just above it.

Matthew Neil Gehring
Mixed Business

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September 3 - 25, 2016

Essay by Thomas Micchelli

On the cover:
"Sound and Vision", 2016,
oil and graphite on linen,
40 x 32 inches, detail

Stout Projects
55 Meadow Street #310
Brooklyn, NY 11206

Director's Forward

I first met Matthew Neil Gehring over a bottle of Dad's Hat rye in Paul's studio in 2013. I was attracted to his work, of course, but perhaps even more so, by the way he talked about the act of painting and what it means to be a painter.

When Matthew talks about painting, there's this mixture of reverence for literature, a respect or desire for poetry and a poetic sensibility to be present in any work that he makes or responds to. It's a romantic tradition of the artist – a certain romanticizing of artists and what they do... how they live and interact with and function in society.

Matthew's work was quite different back then. It consisted of a sophisticated palette and formal arrangements of planes. The paintings were filled with subtleties and optical qualities of color that blurred the edges between forms to harden, recede or diminish and these were set apart on backgrounds that appeared to either project the forms forward or to envelope and bring them back in. Where the old work leaned more towards the meditative, and in my opinion, cerebral, the new current body of work is an eclectic energetic mixture of bent and redirected space, erratic, jolting or meandering line that interact with and embody an exhilarating palette that shows remnants of the old sophisticated sensibility, but more often than not leaves that waiting in the wings, while a newly employed palette of pulsating and energetic color dominates.

Matthew and this show could almost be the embodiment of why I wanted to open a gallery in the first place. This exhibition, the way that it is presented here, provides a deeper look at his work and illuminates connections between the thinking and doing – the formal and the aggressive - the subtle and the electrifying; leaving nothing out as it showcases the making of a body of work - from the very first notion to the final brushstroke. In Matthew Neil Gehring's entire body of work, if we take the time to look, we are shown an artist who plumbs the depths of his interests, influences and experiences and resurfaces with that thing, that painting, that is sometimes misty and sometimes clear as day.

Robin Stout
Director, Stout Projects



Matthew Neil Gehring Studio, 2016

Looped

Thomas Micchelli

Before you dive into Matthew Neil Gehring's new paintings, take a close look at his drawings. In these distinctive works, calligraphic brushstrokes wend their way around a surface collaged with geometric shapes, mostly triangles, some accentuating the direction of the strokes and others impeding it, like speed bumps or, more in the spirit of the work, splintered metal shards across a thoroughfare.

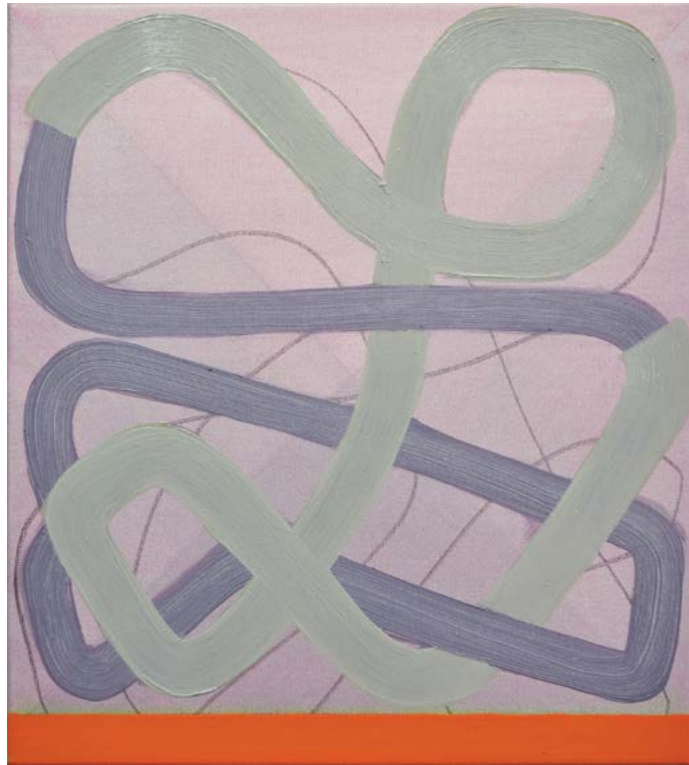
The tangles of lines, stains, and drips are dominated by a large X formed by folding the sheet twice on a diagonal, thus dividing the paper into two sets of inner-directed triangles. The X, physically embedded in the surface, becomes the composition's dominant organizing principle — the authority against which the razor-edged shards and snaking brushstrokes rebel.

Alternating between ink, wash, and gesso, the brushstroke is partitioned into linear sections of black, gray, and white. Looping in and around itself with skewed, erratic asymmetry, the stroke makes hash of the unyielding order imposed by the X, its anarchic surge aided and abetted by the ink-stained collaged cutouts caroming across the surface. Simultaneously circumscribed and chaotic, the shattered picture plane implodes like the space between two cars hurtling into a head-on collision.

Gehring elaborates and refines the blast of inspiration coursing through the drawings in a series of oil paintings, some with self-descriptive titles ("Delirious," "Slider," "Whiplash") and others remaining enigmatic ("Sound and Vision," "Mixed Business"). The translation from drawing to painting inescapably involves much more than a change of medium and scale. For Gehring's drawings, whose titles are purely indexical ("d1627," "d1628," etc.), the transition bridges the distance between thingness and metaphor, spontaneity and deliberation, and reality and illusion, all within the realm of pure abstraction.



"Untitled d1627", 2016, ink, gesso, graphite and collage on paper, 13.5 x 11 inches



"Flute Loop", 2016, oil and graphite on linen,
19 x 17 inches

A case in point is the drawings' domineering X, which resurfaces as the ground upon which Gehring builds his multi-layered oil paintings. At first glance, the paintings' X comes off as an illusionistic echo of the drawings' physical fold, but closer inspection reveals that it is actually the result of overlapping glazes, which migrates the physicality of the crease from opacity to translucence.

Equally divergent is the fate of the paper shards, which disrupt the drawings' surface as they assert its presence in real space. Rather than extend the idea of collage into the oil paintings (as Lee Krasner once did to spectacular effect), Gehring eliminates them altogether, ushering in a profound shift in the paintings' aesthetic stance. By jettisoning one of the three key elements characterizing the drawings (collage, fold, and brushstroke), the artist has embarked on an uncharted and potentially self-sabotaged course of action.

By refusing to duplicate techniques within a

formal continuum, Gehring is ripping up his playbook even as he recommits to the principal of corporeality manifested in his previous use of collage.

Compared with the jagged, bristling drawings, the paintings are nothing if not streamlined; the broad brushstroke, so thoroughly fractured by the collaged triangles, now zips around the surface virtually unhampered; the only overlay affecting it is a second, slightly wider brushstroke in an alternate color or two, seemingly encasing the original like a sleeve.

In canvases such as "Flute Loop" and "Whiplash," the calligraphic strokes, in putty gray and muted violet, glide across a nearly empty salmon-colored ground, with freely drawn graphite lines distantly echoing their movements. In contrast, the diptych "Salt Peanuts" features a pair of muted green and pastel blue brushstrokes hard against an irregular field of eye-peeling orange paint spreading across the surface and all but obliterating the original X.

Forgoing the element of collage, Gehring has transferred the physicality of the drawings onto his juicy, ridged brushstrokes, which are frequently compressed and reinforced by brightly colored vertical or horizontal bands along the canvas edge, and his monochromatic expanses of paint — the amorphous orange field in "Salt Peanuts" or the wide, horizontal magenta bands behind yellow and gray strokes in "Sound and Vision."

The expressive urgency of paint grows more agitated as the work evolves. The orange-on-orange brushstroke in "Ohm" madly spirals into the shallow space behind the picture plane, while "Little Miss Lover" and "Spanish Castle Magic," the two most recent works, erupt into a burst of knifed-on, clotted yellow—cadmium yellow in the former and lemon yellow in the latter — that obscures the center of the tangled strokes, with whirling lines incised into the pigment by the back end of the brush.

The aggressive materiality infusing these works comes full circle, looping back from the literal, physical object made of paper, through the illusion of planar space, to the gravelly concretion of crusted-over oil paint. The intimacy of drawing moves into the larger arena of paint on canvas with its spikiness intact, gathering the force of metaphor to confront an unhinged historical moment with parallel waves of discernment and dismay.

Thomas Micchelli is an artist, writer, and co-editor of Hyperallergic Weekend.



"Little Miss Lover", 2016, oil and graphite on linen,
19 x 17 inches

"Working for the Man", 2016, oil and graphite on linen, 19 x 17 inches



"Spanish Castle Magic", 2016, oil and graphite on linen, 19 x 17 inches



"Delirious", 2016, oil on linen, 19 x 17 inches



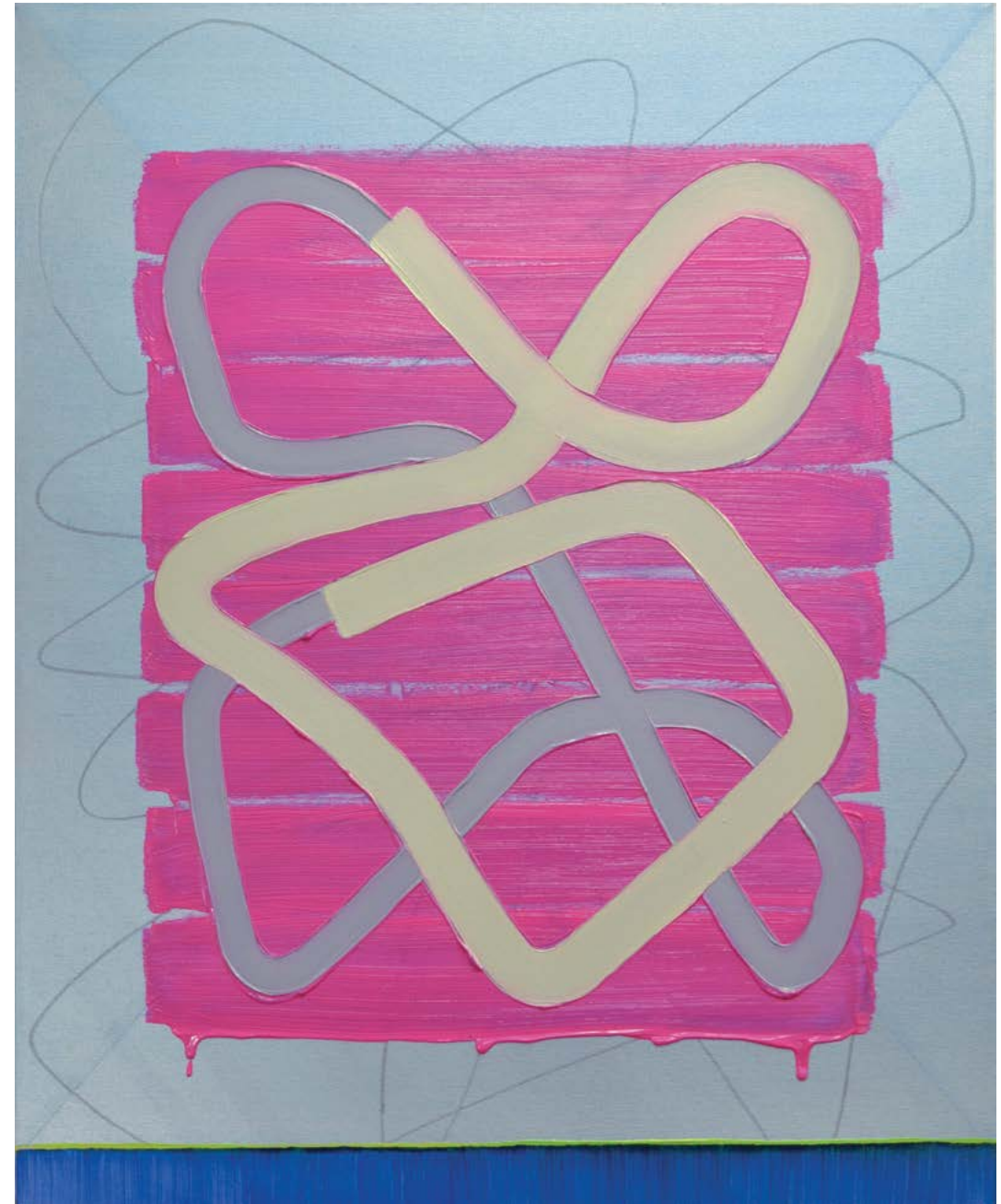
"Slider", 2016, oil and graphite on linen, 19 x 17 inches



"Mixed Business", 2016, oil and graphite on linen, 40 x 32 inches



"Sound and Vision", 2016, oil and graphite on linen, 40 x 32 inches



"Salt Peanuts",
2016, oil and graphite
on linen, 40 x 66 inches,
dyptich



"Ohm", 2016, oil and graphite on linen, 84 x 72 inches



"Untitled d1628", 2016, ink, gesso, graphite, and collage on paper, 13.5 x 11 inches



"Untitled d1631", 2016, ink, gesso, graphite, and collage on paper, 13.5 x 11 inches





Matthew Neil Gehring lives and works in Queens and Central New York. This exhibition at Stout Projects is his first solo show in New York City. Matthew has exhibited widely, participating in numerous group shows and eight solo exhibitions, including a recent one-man show at the Dishman Art Museum at Lamar University in Beaumont, TX. His recent group exhibitions include, *Ocko Socko* at Stout Projects, *Abstraction and its Discontents*, at Storefront Ten Eyck, Brooklyn, NY; *Form and Fac-ture* at the Paul W. Zuccaire Gallery at Stony Brook University; *Eight Painters* at Kathryn Markel Fine Arts, New York, NY; and a two-person show at c2c Projects in San Francisco, CA. Matthew's work has been featured or reviewed in publications including *The New Criterion*, *Art Journal*, *Art Review*, and *ArtWeek*.

He received his bachelor's degree from the University of Southern Indiana on a Society for Arts and Humanities scholarship, and his MFA from the University of Delaware on a full Graduate Assistantship. He relocated to the Northern California coast in 2001 after completion of his degrees where he lived for two years, making and exhibiting artwork while teaching at Humboldt State University. In 2003, he accepted a faculty position in the Art Department at Syracuse University where he lived and worked for the next four years. In 2007 he relocated, to Brooklyn, NY where he lived for nine years, maintaining an active studio practice and exhibition schedule, preceding his recent move to Queens, NY. He is currently an Associate Professor of Visual Arts at Suffolk County Community College where he is Assistant Chair of Visual Arts and Director of the Flecker Gallery.

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<http://stoutprojects.net>

<http://matthewgehring.com>

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Foreword by Robin Stout

The artist wishes to give special thanks to Robin Stout, Thomas Micchelli, Rebecca Murtaugh, Paul Behnke, Karen Murtaugh, Tim and Cindy Gehring, Cyna Gehring, and Maria Cherubino.

Images appear courtesy of the artist.

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