

THE REVOLUTION WILL BE PAINTED

Late in 2014 I wrote an ode to painting making my case for the medium's enduring expressive power and intellectual reach. To compose my anthem—which is homage to Gil Scott-Heron's well-known protest rap—I remixed phrases cropped from the canon of critical writing about painting. Published in *ART21 Magazine* it reads in part:

*The revolution will be painted.
The painted marks will tell of surfaces
simultaneously combining touch and sight.
In each painting a layer of chaos will show
not everything is fully worked out.
You will see the potential in the speed of the moving line,
the encapsulation and entanglement of shallow space
and the sheer beauty of the painting's literalness.
The revolution will be painted. [1]*

The written piece became an open blueprint for the artwork I subsequently created in my North Fork studio. I wanted to bring together the essence of my recent experiences with collaborative performance pieces outside my studio and my reinvestigation of the tradition of painting. Last spring, I gave the title of my tract, *The Revolution Will Be Painted*, to this body of work. Concentrating for long, uninterrupted stretches of time in the country allowed me to identify and dispense with obsolete work habits. Seph Rodey wrote about my paintings in *Hyperallergic*, "The work is visually enthralling, partly because of the tension between the visual motifs of organic and geometric: the Dionysian bacchanal of nature's uncontrollable growth and change, and the incursion of Apollonian rigor and theoretical organization; the head vying with the heart." [2] Ultimately, I found more genuine possibilities in a pared down painting vocabulary focused on color and form.

David Cohen, *artcritical* editor, wrote of one of my solo shows in New York City this year, "Six powerful, lyrical at once absorbing and theatrical canvases...hang unstretched like baronial tapestries in a raw white cube in Bushwick." [3] Since 2012, I have integrated interactive programs of performance and discussion with exhibitions of my paintings. The events I curated within a Brooklyn installation of work included dance, music and sketch comedy performances and group conversations on literature, art and activism.

Another reviewer, Pat Rogers from *Hamptons Art Hub*, highlighted the connection between my audiences' collective experience and the visual effects in my most recent work, "Possessing a raw and unfinished sensibility is part of the ideology that the paintings contribute to a larger and collaborative creative act." [4] I have found that bringing together the written word, the unique object and the live event, are all intrinsic to my quest to make credible paintings.

[1] *ART21 Magazine*, "[The Revolution Will Be Painted](#)," by Anne Sherwood Pundyk, December 22, 2014

[2] *Hyperallergic*, "[The Rebellious Spirit of Paint](#)," by Seph Rodney, April 28, 2016

[3] *artcritical*, "[ARTCRITICAL PICK, Anne Sherwood Pundyk at Christopher Stout Gallery](#)," by David Cohen, April 15, 2016.

[4] *Hamptons Art Hub*, "[Moving Paintings Beyond Object: Anne Sherwood Pundyk's Revolution](#)," by Pat Rogers, April 28, 2016

THE REVOLUTION WILL BE PAINTED

By Anne Sherwood Pundyk

You will not be able to not know.

You may not just be present.
You will not be able to plug in, turn on, and cop out.
Because the revolution will be painted.[1]

The revolution will be painted.
The painted marks will tell of surfaces
simultaneously combining touch and sight.[2]
In each painting a layer of chaos will show
not everything is fully worked out.[3]
You will see the potential in the speed of the moving line,
the encapsulation and entanglement of shallow space
and the sheer beauty of the painting's literalness.[4]
The revolution will be painted.

Painting will no longer create space as a theatre;
it will give space itself a theatre.[5]
The paint will meet the surface sensuously,
In a broad, flat engagement of the palm, by fingertip daubs,
and through varieties of clawing and caressing.[6]
Painting will always tremble, but very precisely.[7]
There will be no difference in the world between
planning airily away from the canvas
and actually taking your brush and making the first mark.[8]
The revolution will be painted.

You will become aware of small transformations.[9]
Precision and incoherence will be improvised with dazzling speed
into chattering, chanting, and excoriating fields.[10]
Painting will put us in touch with what is ungovernable in the body.[11]
Each line will be the actual experience of its own innate history.[12]
The brushstrokes will lack consistency and be loosely disposed
over the surface of the canvas.[13]
Every element will have a rising, hovering, or sagging weight,
achieved by finesse with relative densities
and by a supreme sense of color.[14]
The paint will be overtaken by an extraordinary density
securing a complete interlocking of image and paint.[15]
The revolution will be painted.

The brushwork will no longer function as a mere record of perception,
but as a shorthand equivalent for perceptions of the tangible world.[16]
Painting will be more tangible in its articulation of nature.[17]
The string of images layered within each painting will
begin to communicate the inaudible truth of the inner self.[18]
The naked or otherwise vulnerable bodies of women
will read as retribution for centuries of less attuned representations by men
and also for the supposed neutrality of abstraction.[19]
The revolution will be painted.

Situated near the edge of visibility,
painting will exude a stillness and lapse into immobility.[20]
The conditions of seeing will come into focus.[21]
Painting will be in the present tense.[22]
The stained or brush-worked canvases will be

lurid in subject or color.[23]

A painting will be unexpectedly altered in the process of its viewing.[24]

You will become aware of the paradoxes of symmetry.[25]

A painting will never know where else it might go,

and will be incapable of closing down the possibility of an exit from
wherever it happens to be right now.[26]

The revolution will be painted.

The slippery bliss of the paint will be revealed in slipping glimpses.[27]

In a new form, paintings will house the sequence of recognized moments, ready for reception and interpretation.[28]

The feeling in painting will no longer be a taste for horror,
it will be pity, a pity for flesh.[29]

The body will be the source and destination of sensation perceived and painted.[30]

A field of seemingly incongruous gestures will come
together to form one distinct image.[31]

The outpouring of fervid color will be seen as a resurgence
of an expansive levitation that will deny the heaviness of physical concern.[32]

The revolution will be painted.

Each layer will remain a sketch, often visible through the one that covers it.[33]

Painting will create a whole from parts

in an unsettled and unsettling relationship.[34]

The resonance between body and landscape will reverberate
through choices of browns, pinks, reds, and whites.[35]

Painting will be irresponsible to gravity.[36]

A gestured brush drawing on top of painted forms
will define and relocate specific contours.[37]

The painting will be waiting to be recognized.[38]

The painting will bear the marks of its making.[39]

The revolution will be painted. 1. Variation on lyrics from Gil Scott-Heron's "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised," Flying Dutchman, 1971, B-Side 7" single vinyl record.

2. Anne Coffin Hanson, "Manet's Pictorial Language," in *Manet: 1832–1883*, ed. John P. O'Neill (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1983), 21.

3. Anne Sherwood Pundyk, Barry Schwabsky, and Kara L. Rooney, *stadia: Anne Sherwood Pundyk* (New York: Blurb, 2014), 50.

4. Frank Stella, *Working Space* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 60.

5. Clement Greenberg, "Cezanne," in *Art and Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), 54.

6. Kirk Varnedoe, *Cy Twombly: A Retrospective* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1994), 35.

7. John Elderfield, "Space to Paint," in *De Kooning: A Retrospective* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2011), 14.

8. Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (London: Harcourt, 1927), 161.

9. Robert Evrén, "Dispatch from the Tropic of Flesh," in *Cecily Brown* (New York: Gagosian Gallery, 2000), 10.

10. Roberta Smith, "[Collisions on Canvas That Still Make Noise: Jean-Michel Basquiat](#)," *The New York Times*, March 11, 2005.

11. John Kelsey, "To Be the Knife: Notes on Rita Ackermann," in *Rita Ackermann* (New York: Skira Rizzoli, 2010), 71.

12. Cy Twombly, "Documenti di una nuova figurazione: Toti Scialoja, Gastone Novelli, Pierre Alechinsky, Achille Perilli, Cy Twombly," *L'Esperienza moderna*, no. 2 (August–September 1957): p.32, quoted in Varnedoe, *Cy Twombly*, 27.

13. Hanson, "Manet's Pictorial Language," 25.

14. Peter Schjeldahl, "[Tough Love: Resurrecting Joan Mitchell](#)," *New Yorker*, July 15, 2002.

15. Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota

Press, 2003), 17.

16. Hanson, "Manet's Pictorial Language," 25.

17. Greenberg, "Cezanne," 51.

18. Pundyk and others, *stadia*, 44.

19. Roberta Smith, "[The Body Politic: Gorgeous and Grotesque: 'Marlene Dumas: Measuring Your Own Grave'](#)," *New York Times*, December 11, 2008.

20. Evrén, "Tropic of Flesh," 10.

21. Ibid.

22. Anne Sherwood Pundyk, "Bushwick Art Crit Group" (lecture, Fireproof Art Gallery, Brooklyn, NY, October 14, 2014).

23. Smith, "Body Politic."

24. Elderfield, "Space to Paint," 16.

25. Evrén, "Tropic of Flesh," 10.

26. Bonnie Clearwater, "Rita Ackermann," in *Rita Ackermann*, (New York: Skira Rizzoli, 2010), 21.

27. Elderfield, "Space to Paint," 37.

28. Pundyk and others, *stadia*, 44.

29. Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, xxix.

30. Pundyk and others, *stadia*, 46.

31. Michael Auping, "A Long View," in *Howard Hodgkin: Paintings* (Fort Worth, TX: Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, 1995), 20.

32. Varnedoe, *Cy Twombly*, 35.

33. Hanson, "Manet's Pictorial Language," 27.

34. Elderfield, "Space to Paint," 16.

35. Varnedoe, *Cy Twombly*, 35.

36. Ibid.

37. Hanson, "Manet's Pictorial Language," 26.

38. Auping, "A Long View," 18.

39. Hanson, "Manet's Pictorial Language," 28.

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