

# **WHERE IT LOOKS LIKE ITSELF**

**Cameron Crawford  
Allie Pizarro-Grant  
Marian Tubbs**

curated by **Dana Kopel**

**25th July –  
11th August, 2013**

**{TEMP}  
57 Walker Street,  
New York, NY 10013**

# FORM FOLLOWS ITSELF

Dana Kopel

**WHERE IT LOOKS LIKE ITSELF:** both proposition and question, the phrase suggests a formal, seemingly circular logic. Where wouldn't it look like itself? The exhibition's title designates its focus on appearance and form, especially within a given space.

The artists in the exhibition—Cameron Crawford, Allie Pizarro-Grant and Marian Tubbs—share a conceptual engagement with materiality and media. All three work largely within self-reflexive material practices, in which form and material are carefully considered as such, but also for their social, historical and ideological implications. They often emphasize found and raw materials, then disregard or shift the intended uses of these materials. The works are about what they are made of, how they are made, how they occupy space—form follows a lack of function; form follows itself.

Often the artists work with found and everyday matter, interspersed with luxury materials (silk, pearl) to form haphazard yet formalist structures. For instance Marian Tubbs, who frequently employs found and discarded materials in her object-based installations. Tubbs' Allow time (2013) is made of a series of found carpet tiles, installed in situ,

some lying flat open and “pixellated” with silk squares, some smeared with soft red clay, others rolled and bound by a single gold wire. The tiles cluster together in one end of the gallery, spreading out from the installation's center. Elsewhere in the space, in Ptyx (2013), a grey tile sample acts as a shelf, supporting a boot-like clay form threaded through with golden electrical cord; behind it, a sheet of light-colored silk cascades down the brick-and-plaster wall.

While each work is formally self-contained, they nonetheless have an active relationship with each other and the space in which they are situated, engaging with the excessive visual information—brick and plaster walls, pipes, metal grates, decade-old graffiti—of the gallery interior. The red-orange clay in Ptyx references the red brick wall behind it, as well as the clay-smeared carpets in Allow time; the use of silk further ties those two works to each other, and contrasts the thick, rough weightiness of the clay and carpet. And Tubbs' installation downstairs mirrors, on sheets of slashed vinyl, the remains of a stairway on the opposite wall. The exhibition space is reflected in the work within it; the work's three-dimensionality, its deliberate existence in and of space,

Marian Tubbs: Studio view of Allow time (2013)





Cameron Crawford: *Babies. No Babies. (armpit)* (2010), Southern long fir pine needles bound together with silver chain and mint floss of the following varieties: Satin, Ribbon, Glide, Extra Comfort Tape. Oil on canvas on hard wood. Wing nuts, bolts, rubber washers, pearls, mother of pearl, shell buttons, linen thread, 9' x 12' x 7'

means it “can have any relation to the wall, floor, ceiling, room, rooms or exterior,” in a post-minimal formulation.<sup>1</sup> Or, the surfaces of the work engage those of the walls, the rooms, creating material throughlines crisscrossing the space.

The original version of Cameron Crawford’s massive *Babies. Babies. No Babies. (armpit)* (2010)—constructed of (among other materials) wood, canvas, pine needles, silver chain, dental floss, mother of pearl—echoes, in the inward curve of the canvas, the form of the title’s parenthetical last word. The work has previously been exhibited twice, both in Chicago in 2011; for *WHERE IT LOOKS LIKE ITSELF*, however, Crawford has reimagined it, with most of its components folded up inside of its storage box, partially contained, spilling out, coated in pine needle oil (what he calls “its own viscous effluvia”)—in a sort of formal rebirth. The “reborn” *Babies...* elaborates upon Crawford’s initial consideration of the intersection of that which is formal, structured, and that which is natural, human, beyond control. The work at once regresses, emerges, hides, is transformed: it assumes of the processes of a living (dying) body, suggesting that “the

pursuit of forms is only a pursuit of time.”<sup>2</sup>

“A rectangle is a shape itself; it is obviously the whole shape; it determines and limits the arrangement of whatever is on or inside it”: Allie Pizarro-Grant’s work explores the possibilities of the painted canvas as object.<sup>3</sup> Using chemical pigment dyes intended for the textile industry, applied in varying concentrations and intensity, Pizarro-Grant forms abstract compositions that split into dots of pigment as the dye spreads across canvas. Her larger, more recent works—*Attending Amarna*, *Rockport Report*, *Field of Study* (all 2013)—begin with small-scale studies of art-historical referents—an Egyptian frieze and paintings by Stuart Davis and Theo van Doesburg, respectively—which she then uses repeatedly, as a stencil for dyes on the larger canvas, until the source images are almost completely illegible.

In these, as in her other paintings in the show, the dots of colored dyes spill out in spore-like clusters; they bleed into each other; they deform. The resulting compositions and patterns emphasize the works’ materiality, the restless energies of surface and movement, yet they also refer back to their own history—

of painting, pigment on surface—and to their contemporary analogues: pixels, fragments of digital information in flux. In this their approach to current technologies contrasts that of the three-dimensional objects in the show: part of the tension of formalist work today exists in the apparent uselessness of tangible things in an increasingly digital world.

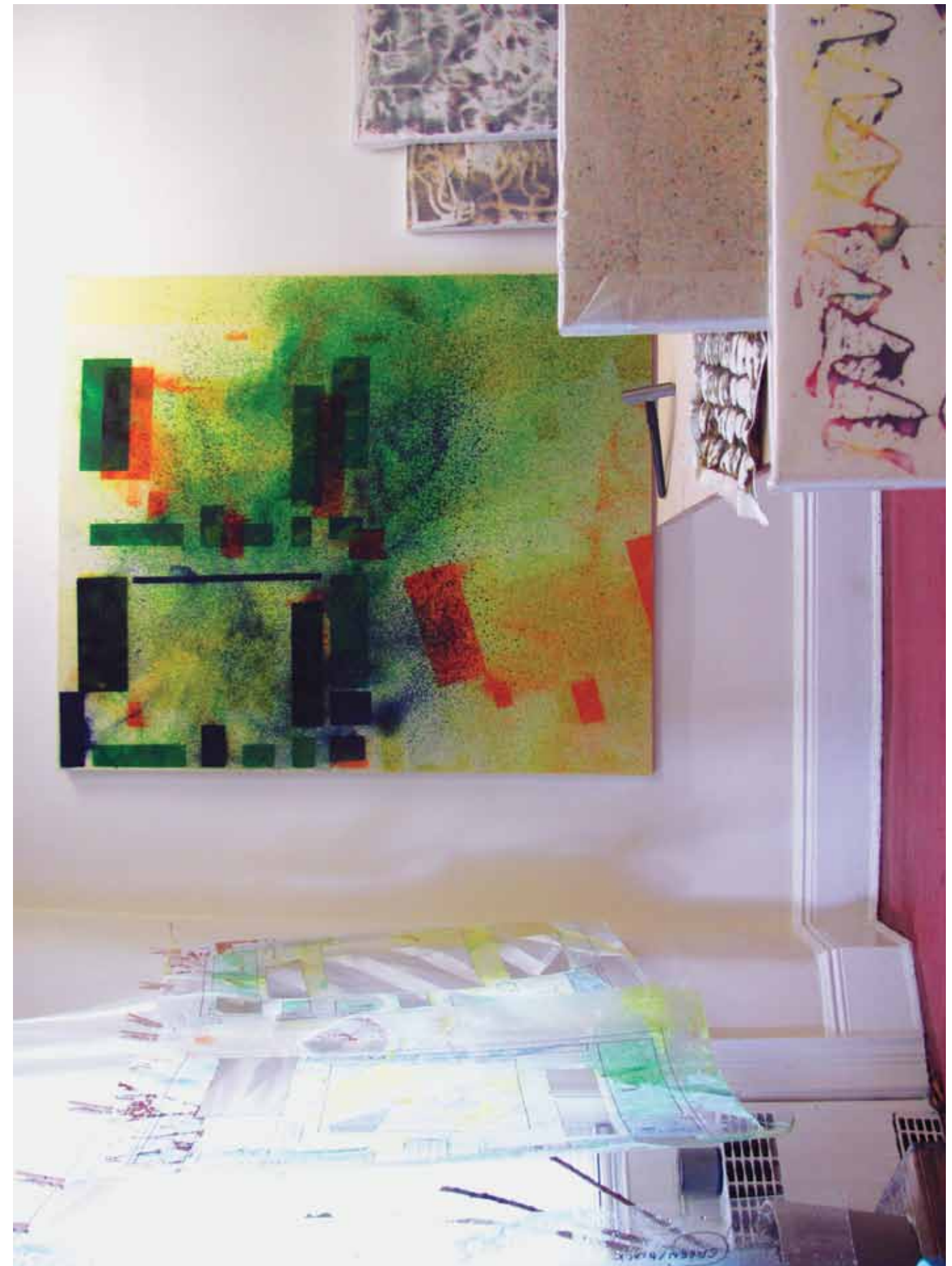
The works here are (in part, to generalize) about their own existence, the banality of the things they are made of and the irrationality of the processes by which they are made. It is impossible to write about them without the sentences turning back on themselves—because that’s what the works do, inhabit a language (visual, material) and turn it back on itself. In a way they are constructed as language is, made up of open signifiers—wood and carpet and silk and dye and cord—that in combination form something that might settle into meaning. But never (and this is crucial) a single or exact meaning: rather, they delineate a space for questions without resolution, for material possibilities.

The tautology of the title, then, is formal but also critical: “Art takes the form of a paradox, an apprehensive subject, simultaneously

revealing information and resisting interpretation with subversive ambiguity and rebellious irreverence.”<sup>4</sup> Though assembled of recognizable bits of debris, thus tied to the world outside art, the abstraction of a work like Tubbs’ Allow time or Crawford’s reimagined Babies. Babies. No Babies. (armpit) lets it evade a particular decision or claim, leaving it open to the poetic immateriality at its core.

1. Donald Judd, “Specific Objects (1965),” in Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art, ed. Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 116.
2. Paul Virilio, The Aesthetics of Disappearance, trans. Philip Beitchman (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2009), 24.
3. Judd, “Specific Objects (1965),” 115.
4. Yasmin Raymond, “Contending with Comfort: The Possibility of an Abstract Resistance,” in Abstract Resistance. (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2010), 16.

Allie Pissaro-Grant: View of the artist’s studio, Ridgewood, NY (2013)



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## COLOPHON

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Marian Tubbs

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