

Constructed Truths

Alexandra Flood, Atticus Gordon, and Andrew Morrow

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Alexandra Flood, Atticus Gordon, and Andrew Morrow share a love of painterly mark-making. Each uses emotive, thoughtful brushwork to build sophisticated visual truths for the digital era. Viewers of *Constructed Truths* are invited to reflect on questions the artists considered as they worked: what does a digital image *feel* like? What does it mean to pose for a portrait over Zoom? And, what happens when we put away our smartphones – and our reference points – and lose ourselves in the luxury of pure colour?

A “freefall into abstraction,” is how Alexandra Flood describes the process which generated her latest works. Flood’s new paintings are filled with mysterious, provocative shapes. The forms invite you to linger over the canvas; her use of colour is at once enchanting and defiant. Flood is intimately familiar with the digital universe; her response as a painter is to isolate the act of human brushwork. Flood’s abstract forms sometimes hint at muscular or industrial entities. Her titles deliberately invite as many questions as they answer. According to Flood, the new works reveal “the residue of human activity.” However, it is up to the viewer to decide whether that activity is a single wrist swiping paint across a surface or a collective effort to leave a human imprint on earth.

Atticus Gordon engages directly with digital culture, often beginning his compositional process with animation and ‘photobashing,’ a form of montage which eliminates the visible seams between different source images. Unlike an animator, however, Gordon creates digital images only at the start of his creative process. Gordon then moves to painting, where he seeks to reveal the ‘truth’ about the digital universe. His latest works reveal ideas sparked by his enrolment in the MFA program at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. References to both American art and Canadian modernism, as well as digital fantasies, appear in his landscapes. Gordon’s graduate training is a sequel to his studies at the University of Ottawa, where he counted Andrew Morrow among his mentors.

Andrew Morrow probes the collaborative spaces between figurative painters and their subjects. Morrow’s newest works reveal his vigorous re-engagement with full-colour oil paints after a long period of monochromatic drawings, gesso and acrylic work. Many of Morrow’s recent portrait sittings occurred while public health restrictions were in place, adding new spatial and psychological complexity to the painter-sitter relationship. Morrow found himself sketching and taking photos of some sitters outside, while other encounters took place over Zoom. On a psychological level, the connection between painter and sitter was profoundly changed by the enforced isolation of the pandemic; both digital and physical encounters had taken on new meanings for his sitters.

Morrow’s colourful, complex figurative works reveal traces of digital encounters even as they center the representation human bodies. Flood and Gordon take different approaches to the challenge of creating paintings which they know will be experienced on Instagram and in the gallery. Seen on screen or in the flesh, these exquisite canvases by Alexandra Flood, Atticus Gordon, and Morrow celebrate the painterly vocabulary of brushwork today.