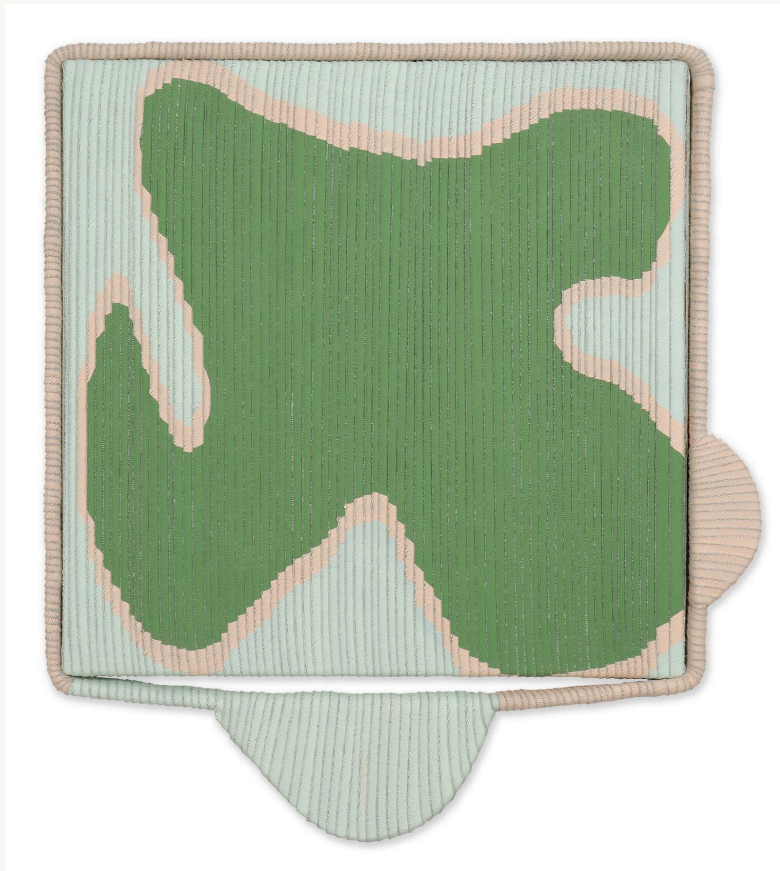


MILLIKEN ART GALLERY · CONVERSE UNIVERSITY

Fall Out

New Work by Jean Alexander Frater



January 8 – January 29, 2026

580 East Main Street, Spartanburg, South Carolina

Losing Composure

Every work in *Fall Out* begins as a rectangle and none of them stays one.

A square of layered canvas hangs on the wall; from its lower edge a tongue of pale cloth drops and thickens, or a lobe swells out of one side, or a bound cord arcs over the top like a handle someone has fitted to a painting so that it could be carried off. The rectangle is still there in every case. It has simply stopped being the limit.

There is a lineage behind that move, and this work knows it. For a stretch of the last century, painting's most productive argument was about its own perimeter: whether the edge of a canvas had to be given in advance or could be chosen, and if chosen, on what authority. One answer was deductive — let the outline follow from the internal logic, let the bands inside determine the silhouette, so that the object's shape arrives as the argument's conclusion. Another was to take the shape from the world, observed and flattened until a single field of color, hung as a panel, works on a wall the way a body works in a room. Both answers made the edge a decision. Both made the painting an object.

Alexander Frater inherits that and changes the terms. Here the perimeter is neither deduced nor observed. It is what happens to a rectangle that has been handled.

Each of these begins with a painting that is destroyed. A canvas is painted and then torn into strips, and the tearing is not a gesture but an act with consequences the work goes on carrying. Every strip holds the evidence. Paint cracks along the rip and opens onto the layers put down before it, so a surface that was covered reads in section. The raw support shows at each torn edge as a pale line of canvas, outlining every strip in the color of the thing underneath. What was beneath the painting is now what draws it.

Laid back down, the strips become lines, and regular ones: even in width, parallel, running the whole way across. Nothing is woven and nothing is folded. Each strip is set down beside and over the last and stops where the next begins, so the surface is built from consecutive separations — and reads, from any distance at all, as continuous. The eye finishes a form the material never joins. The cord that closes each edge is not some other material brought in to tidy the job: it is the same painted canvas, wrapped around a canvas core. The line that runs across the surface is the line that turns and runs around the perimeter, and then keeps going past it. In the older argument the stripe inside a painting rhymed with the outline and confirmed it. Here the stripe becomes the outline, and then it is the thing that gets away.

To compose a form in painting is to decide where it stops, and what it stops against. The rectangle does that work: it crops, so a shape reads either as held inside the picture or as continuing somewhere past it, and it sorts figure from ground. The frame then declares that boundary and hands the painting over to the room. *Fall Out* makes both operations physical. These forms are literally cropped — torn out of larger painted fields and rebuilt — so the cut is an event in the work rather than an assumption behind it. The frame is inverted: it extends rather than encloses, and on many of the works it lifts off, so the boundary itself can be removed. Past the edge, gravity does more than let a form out. Where an extension hangs it draws a new edge, and the order of things turns over — a ground bubbles out, sags, and settles in front of the figure it was meant to sit behind.

The titles are the surest guide to what that escape means. *Falling Out. Weak Knees. Tumble. Got Caught. Things Changed.* These are not names for geometries; they are names for bodies that have lost their footing, been caught at something, or given way at the joint. Alongside them run the reaching titles — *Curious Climber, Furry Reach, Pulling Verse, Captured Spiral* — and a third group that is pure atmosphere: *Misty Form, Glow Storm, Eno's Still.* Shape, across all three, is posture. A work here does not have an outline so much as a stance, and most of these stances are unsteady. *Fortunate Encounter* and *Exuberant Forms* name the other possibility: that when forms meet, it might go well.

Several of the paintings hover at the edge of a recognizable object — a bar on a stick, a hand mirror, a paddle, a mitten — without ever committing to it. This is the comic body that abstraction keeps almost becoming, and the near-resemblance is doing real work. It keeps the paintings from settling into pure shape, and it licenses a scale of feeling — exuberance, clumsiness, appetite — that geometry alone cannot carry.

What leaves the rectangle does not only leave. Where an extension hangs it draws a new edge, a separation nobody composed, and the hierarchy the rectangle had settled comes apart with it. A ground bubbles out, sags, and comes to rest in front of the figure it was meant to sit behind. Painting can depict that reversal. These works perform it, because the ground here is cloth, and cloth has weight.

The instability is structural, not metaphorical. Paint dries into the cloth until a strip will hold a curve,

and a wrapped edge holds one only so long; the appendages hang because they are heavy. Several of them are also demountable. The frame is an ornament as well as a boundary, and the ornament comes off, which means each silhouette is provisional — a thing the work is wearing rather than a fact about it.

Set against all that stress is an unmistakable carefulness. Nothing is left in pieces. The strips go back down in order, the image reformed smaller than it was and shifted up or down from where it started, the edges wrapped by hand until the object is sound. The reduction is what buys the expansion: the picture contracts, and in contracting it thickens, lifts off the wall, and puts out the parts that will not stay inside it. This is the work of someone who knows exactly what the material will do, and the knowledge shows in the dexterity of the rebuilding rather than in any smoothing-over. Destruction is the method; construction is the finish. Both stay in the object, and neither is allowed to win.

Hung, they stand off the wall and throw shadows, so the wall stops being backdrop and becomes the ground a body leans against. The room enters the painting at about the rate the painting enters the room.

What is refused here is the clean break. The rectangle is not discarded, transcended, or blown apart. It is kept, loaded past its capacity, and allowed to sag and reach and slip while remaining legible underneath. That is the harder position to hold, and it is why these read less as shaped paintings than as paintings caught in the act of changing shape.



Installation view, *Fall Out*, Milliken Art Gallery, Converse University, 2026



Falling Out

2024 · LATEX AND ACRYLIC PAINT ON CANVAS · 18 × 40 IN



Captured Spiral

2023 · LATEX AND ACRYLIC PAINT ON CANVAS · 19 × 12 × 3 IN



Installation view, *Fall Out*, Milliken Art Gallery, Converse University, 2026



Got Caught

2025 · LATEX AND ACRYLIC PAINT ON CANVAS · 33 × 20 IN



Curious Climber

[] · LATEX AND ACRYLIC PAINT ON CANVAS · 28 × 23 IN



Installation view, *Fall Out*, Milliken Art Gallery, Converse University, 2026



Exuberant Forms

2025 · LATEX AND ACRYLIC PAINT ON CANVAS · []



Eno's Still

2025 · LATEX AND ACRYLIC PAINT ON CANVAS · 25 × 25 IN



Installation view, *Fall Out*, Milliken Art Gallery, Converse University, 2026

Glow Storm

[] · LATEX AND ACRYLIC PAINT ON CANVAS · []



Pulling Verse

2025 · LATEX AND ACRYLIC PAINT ON CANVAS · 28 × 21 IN



Installation view, *Fall Out*, Milliken Art Gallery, Converse University, 2026



Misty Form

2025 · LATEX AND ACRYLIC PAINT ON CANVAS · 22½ × 19½ IN



Furry Reach

2024 · LATEX AND ACRYLIC PAINT ON CANVAS · 21 × 24 IN



Installation view, *Fall Out*, Milliken Art Gallery, Converse University, 2026



Weak Knees

[] · LATEX AND ACRYLIC PAINT ON CANVAS · 36 × 29 IN



Things Changed

2025 · LATEX AND ACRYLIC PAINT ON CANVAS · 24 × 20 IN



Installation view, *Fall Out*, Milliken Art Gallery, Converse University, 2026



Tumble

2023 · LATEX AND ACRYLIC PAINT ON CANVAS · 34 × 34 IN



Fortunate Encounter

2025 · LATEX AND ACRYLIC PAINT ON CANVAS · 26 × 24 IN



Installation view, *Fall Out*, Milliken Art Gallery, Converse University, 2026

Jean Alexander Frater

Jean Alexander Frater experiments with the materials inherent to painting and then integrates other histories, traditions and language into this form. She was a 2017–18 BOLT resident at the Chicago Artists Coalition, received an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and a BA in philosophy from the University of Dayton, Ohio. Her work has been exhibited internationally.

She is the director of Material, an artist-run not-for-profit project space in Chicago, and is represented in Chicago by THE MISSION.

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PUBLISHED ON THE OCCASION OF *FALL OUT*, NEW WORK BY JEAN ALEXANDER FRATER, MILLIKEN ART GALLERY, CONVERSE UNIVERSITY, SPARTANBURG, SOUTH CAROLINA, JANUARY 8 – 29, 2026. ALL WORKS LATEX AND ACRYLIC PAINT ON CANVAS. PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF THE ARTIST. ALL IMAGES © JEAN ALEXANDER FRATER.