Dana DeGiulio + Matthew Girson, with Jean Alexander Frater.
Artist talk for the two-person exhibition *Paintings that have the look of paintings that are looked at.*
Hosted at Material, 2025 West Belmont, Chicago. Saturday, October 17, 2026

Jean Alexander Frater: Well. Welcome, everyone. Thank you for coming, uh, to and for joining us on Zoom. Appreciate it. Um. I'll take it away. Yeah. Um, so it's great to have everyone here. It's a beautiful October day. Just a little bit of information for the people on Zoom. If you have any questions, you can type them in and I'll sort of field those questions as we're going. Uh, so the show *Paintings that have the look of paintings that are looked at* will be open until October 24. And Dana DeGiulio and Matthew Girson are here to talk about their work. We're lucky to have them. Dana flew in from Rhode Island, where she teaches the Rhode Island School of Design, and Matthew is on sabbatical right now from teaching at the art school at DePaul University. Thank you. So anyway, my name is Jean Alexander Frater. This is Material. It's an artist-run project space. Matthew, you're going to be going to a residency soon, and you were able to delay it a little bit.

Matthew Girson: That's right.

JAF: Yeah. Um, so we're all here, so this is great to have you. Um, and typically I have one artist, I work with one artist or I work with one curator who invites an artist to come and have a solo exhibition. Matthew and I have been talking about doing a show and, you know, maybe you want to talk a little bit about how that evolved from what was typically a one-person show and how it moved into this space, like, I don't know if it was a shift in the kind of work you were making, Matthew, or like a consideration, you saw Dana's paintings or Dana's work, and then that made you consider that, and talk a little bit about what's happening here. And for those of you that are on Zoom, since you can't see the show, if you go to materialexhibitions.com, all the images are up there.

MG: Excellent. Thank you. Yeah. We're not really set up with high tech here today. Laptop on a stool. Initially the plan was that— I'm leaving for Paris tomorrow— initially I was going to be leaving earlier in the week, but some changes happened that I was going to be doing this from Paris, but I'm very grateful and happy to have the opportunity to be here with everybody. Thank you all for coming here, and here. It's great to see people from so many different facets of life here. So, Jean and I started talking about me doing an exhibition here, I guess, about a year ago, maybe little bit longer than that. Also, on Zoom, please let us know, maybe drop in a comment if you can't hear anything, and when we have questions or any comments from the crowd here, we'll repeat them so you guys can hear. Initially I had a plan, I made a proposal, I did a little maquette of the gallery with an installation, and then I just decided that I wanted to move away from that particular work into some other paintings that I had been making and not showing, and I decided that it was finally time to start showing them. And since that decision, some of the paintings have already been in other exhibitions now, um, and so important for that work and for so many other things that I'm thinking about is I want my work to be in conversation. I don't want my work just to sort of be the singular voice in a space. Now there's a lot of room for that. I think that's a great opportunity, but I really wanted to sort of play this work off of other work. Dana is a painter who I've known for, dare I say, twenty-five years or more, and somebody whose work I've always admired somebody who, who I've always admired and, and have great respect. And so I floated the idea to Dana less, you know, I don't know what, six, eight months ago, January, and we agreed to, you know, very light parameters, really didn't have many parameters or anything. Um, the show, the title of the show *Paintings that have a look of paintings that are looked at*, um, is a riff on a line in the T.S. Eliot poem, Burnt Norton, which is the first section of the Four Quartets. Um, and the line is "and the unseen eyebeam crossed, for the roses / Had the look of flowers that are looked at." And I think I first heard that when I was seventeen or eighteen and obviously it stuck, I'm sixty. Um, and I've always just loved that idea of the self-conscious idea of looking at something that has the look of being looked at. I don't know how else to frame it, and I wanted to put together my work in conversation with Dana's on a very sort-of simple footing of paintings that are merely to be absorbed, appreciated, viewed, experienced, without

any aspirations or pretensions beyond that, just sort of face to face present, person to artwork. Um, and that's sort of what motivated some of my decisions for moving this forward. I don't know if there's anything you'd like to… At any point, please.

Dana DeGiulio: No. I, okay, I'll speak. Matthew and I did an episode of *Bad at Sports* a couple weeks ago, and we concluded with thanking Jean for hosting, which is not just a point of politeness, but a point of necessity. This is the space in which the interface can actually happen. We're having private dialogic relation with the faces of our objects in our basements or in our studios, wherever we are, but without this display, the encounter being staged in public its like [inaudible]… it's not happening. So it's not, it's not, I'm not just like thanking you to be nice, it's like really, really imperative that the occasion is produced by Jean's choice to keep the space running for so long. Her studio's in the back, it's like really, really real to do this and like, I understand the places that I've lived that aren't Chicago, there's a lot of like energy and seethe and determination to run and operate artist-run spaces is quite impossible, and I want to like, respect the difficulty of doing this, um, the tremendous strain it takes to keep the walls white in both metaphorical and material, practical ways. So, it's like super real. And I think that like, I'm pleased to be set in relation with Matthew's work for sure. I was happy about the meditation. I still am, but I think without the ground, the syntax of this, like nothing's happening. And like, also I don't care as much. You know, I think that like proximity to the street, the sound of the bus going by, which is in my veins, I'm like, all of that, like contributes just as much to the two works in kind of like adjacency, adjacency if not conversation. Um, mhm. Matthew invited me to do this, and I made the work for the show with his work in mind. So this is cool. The title kind of came with it, Matthew had the title. And I think that, it's been interesting for me to examine my own feelings and ideas about reciprocity and what that requires of me, which isn't smiling or acquiescence, but a kind of friction so that something might happen in relation, uh, not just pleasure to be invited, which I have, but I think that once the ground is set and stabilized by Jean, invitation is delivered by Matthew, I'm like, ready to see if we can get a spark like this.

MG: Thank you. Um, I don't know if you have anything you want to throw in, but but the, the leaning more and more heavily into I'll say reciprocities of the spaces being offered, and each of us has a history of being involved with artist-run spaces, um, for different reasons I'm sure, but part of it at least is to just be a source for engaging more community and more dialogue and more opportunities for more people. In the context here of a, a show of paintings, um, in this space, um, the space is very singular, and the space is very intimate, I would say. And um, I think the paintings all carry these qualities also. They're very intimate. They're individual singular pieces I think, that operate really nicely on their own, if I may say it about myself and certainly about Dana's great paintings. Um, and I think that the, this idea of reciprocity being something that can open up through the space and through the paintings is something that I, I'm feeling very satisfied about in how it's all coming together. And I think when I first reached out to Dana and I said, I don't know, I'll probably have three or five paintings, you know, let me know what you want to do. And we go sort of settled on four, um, and filled the space without overfilling it, kept it open enough, um, so that everything can breathe nicely. Um. Yeah. And, you know, I don't have, obviously, none of us have anything prepared, and there will be time for questions and comments, um, uh, as we move forward, but I don't know.

JAF: I'll say a little bit about something that you opened up. I mean, like I said before, I'd only shown a single artist had shown their work, worked with one artist to sort of explore this idea of a solo show, what that means for their practice. And, um, you know, it's a space where you can take risks so they can make decisions about what they want to do with their work. And so it's a real conversation between the artist and their work, and where they see it or where they don't see it, and then my, um, what I thought that I brought to it was just, uh, obviously offering the space, but then also all of those other things that come along with it, like documentation and having events and then allowing those kinds of activities to be surrounded around a single person's work as they explore their ideas. And this has been so, um, you know, that's what happens in art practice and our art practices it's like, we, we don't know when the shifts are going to happen and when things are going to open up, and it was really interesting with this idea of conversation between artists, um, which I thought was between Matthew and Dana, happening

and then their, you know, almost insistence of me being involved in this and it's been really, um, you know, I still have a lot of time to think about what that means for this space, where it's taking me, how I approach delivering shows or, you know, selections of work and how that conversation is also about me being in that conversation too, and so I really, um, I'm interested in what's happening with that. The forefront speaking with the background speaking and all of those things together and working here. My studio is in the back and I come here, you know, Monday through Friday, eight to five. I'm here working, and to be able to come into the space and look at the work and live with, you know, these two painters is really been a nice break, a nice time of reflection, etc., observation of looking at paintings that have been begging to be looked at, apparently. Yeah. So I appreciate that very much.

MG: I don't know, begging, but, um, available for, open toward. And again [inaudible reference to technical mastery of zoom]

JAF: Noticing things like brush strokes and, you know, the kinds of conversations maybe that are happening between the two works and like the titles and stuff like that.

MG: I think the materiality of the paint is something that is important for both of us. We both rely on image, but we don't, uh, let the materiality sort of just get subsumed by image; maintaining that quality I, I'll say that it's very important for me. It's something that I feel that in this work of Dana's and others that I'm familiar with is that, um, that aspect of her work is something that I think continues its curiosity for me and continues its strength, and it's something that I want to be part of the conversation in terms of how these things are looked at and again, like their paintings, and, and that paint is a material thing, it's a historical thing, it's a disciplined thing. It's a very slow, fluid thing that can be made into a very fast, fluid thing. It's extraordinarily flexible stuff. Um, and also something that Dana and I both choose to do. We both work representationally. I'm not familiar of Dana ever making a non-representational painting. I could be wrong.

DD: Wrong.

MG: Um, well, okay. Well, okay, it would, it wouldn't be a conversation with me if I wasn't. Yeah. Um, and I certainly have made work that, um, has moved into, uh, pure abstraction, but for the past, I don't know, thirty years, I've always included representational elements. Um, usually for me with a very subtle palette choices. And this work is no different. Um, just talking about that earlier. Um, and um, yeah. So I don't know if there's anything you want to throw in and, you know.

DD: Well, I mean, I think there's, there's lots to throw, but I think that I, I'm, I'm absolutely distracted by wanting to talk about begging so much. I'm going to spend the next forty-five minutes doing all, all begging, I think it's actually like a crucial point to discuss. But first, back, just back, to back to Jean. Like it's a, it's a point of practice and of like both philosophy and politics for me to name the ground on which I figure, you know, there's nothing neutral about the ground. It's figure ground, it's a relationship, all the time. It isn't background. It's the ground on which we are standing. There's a perpendicularity, of course, but it's like important to name that and not take it for granted, ever, I think, not just because I'm trying to be nice. Um, I think that for Matthew's point about like sort of speaking extemporaneously, I feel like that too is a, is a choice or something that I'm sort of wanting to say out loud out of respect for you all, like, doing it deliberately. There were two choices: to do it like a painting to try to, to try to— for me, there's a there's a deep and intense distinction between painting and art. Art is a field of temporary socio-economic relationships. It's about power and structure and place, geography and material. Painting is something else. Um, uh, if we can define the sacred as the private, uh, it's something else. The task of it in time is something that I think that is interesting to talk about. To tell a room full of painters what paint is— It's like, we know what it is, you know, and there's like a lot going on there, and I think a lot of the relationship to the task of painting the painting was super personal and almost inarticulable to a lot of people. Art, I feel like it's our responsibility to be in language. The whole thing is, is a syntactic relation of language. Um, so I think the lack of prepared remarks is about wanting to trust you all with the availability of making a thing in time as though it were a painting, making a talk in time as though it were

a painting, instead of setting up a set of remarks with a requisite attunement to anticipated outcomes, to what the responses might be to, what certain language might be in currency, understanding that we all kind of, even though we're from different places now, understanding our relative, the currency of the realm, if phenomenological means something here, if it has more weight, um, then, the spiritual, for instance, all those things. And there's a lot of things in play about what we choose to say about our work, what we want for it, ah, whether or not the work is begging to be understood, whether or not saying something or being able to say something, to use the container of language, whether or not it's there to circumscribe, narrow, hold, constrain, contain, gentle, or deliver. There's like a zillion things that it can do. I think that we've had interesting, uh, play, play like puppies who are mad but they're puppies, so it's fine, over the making of the show. Ah, for me to occur in language I expect to be legislated against. It's just something about being a person in my body. Um, it doesn't help. It doesn't, it doesn't invite. It's not a pleasant envelope, you know, and painting is kind of the way out or the way out of that for me. Art, of course, puts it right back in. Um, so I think I just want to like say all that stuff too. And like, I'm happy to cop forever to my own, uh, begging to do something in my own absence, which I think is part of what led me to want to do this in the world, it's unpleasant, it's unseemly, it's stupid and childish, and I'm like, totally. I'm…

MG: There's someone at the door.

DD: Does that make sense to you, team in the room? Great. Sorry.

MG: I think it makes sense. And I think it keeps things open. Do you have a, do you paint every day?

DD: No. It would be, no, I don't, no. Do you?

MG: No. I don't, I hope to very shortly but, in fits and starts, maybe, but I think for both of us with the work here, we start a painting and at the end of the day, that painting was either that painting is done right. And that painting is then either done to be destroyed or held on, to maybe exhibited, but it's all within the, within the [inaudible] of between waking up and going to bed. Yeah.

JAF: Is that so you can kind of stay in that state while you're making it so that like, you're like, I mean, I don 't know, I mean, psychologically or just like sometimes you put it away, go to bed and you make different decisions. Is there, is there something that's in that about a kind of, I don't know, flow or of who you are as a person at that particular time that gives that restraint? Or is it just a parameter? I don't know.

DD: Well, there's lots. I mean, I could, forgive me, I think we all have ideas about work and, like, how that's performed and how how it's demarcated and, like, who holds the clock, all of this on that. But I think for me, the constraint of a day is about the image. It's about, it's about exposure and the image, the like aperture opening and closing on one long exposure to something or of something. Um, I think that letting material residue settle on an abstract painting, not wiping it all away or not standing it off properly day after day, it has a different set of criteria. But I think if there's, if I'm setting up an image of something to relate to, something to, to translate, it's going to be I need like time set around it. Uh, not, not to let it like drag out, not drag out but extend.

JAF: It's a nice way of thinking about it like an aperture.

MG: And I would say to respond to that for me. Um, I, I love the language of the aperture, a slow aperture opening and closing. Um, I, there's something about the, what I like to call the urgency of the day of and for me to make the paintings maybe true for others. I think it is, it demands a real intense focus and attention and sensitivity and openness and vulnerability and tenderness and other things, many other things. And what I have found in other paintings is I certainly can go to bed, it turns off, come back in the studio, turn it back on. But and I do that and I have some success with that, and that works, but I'm very, I've become very interested in sort of just allowing myself, forcing myself, begging

myself, I don't know, just to just stay present for this event. And that's what I call it, tt's an event. Um, and it's an event that starts when I get out there in the morning and I start mixing color, and before any marks are put down, I do a bunch of color tests and things, and then I start populating the surface with marks. It does things, some that I want, some that I don't, and then I navigate back and forth, and this is part of the event until I get to a place where either I say, that's it, or I guess, or I'm exhausted and that's it. Um, whether that's something that I consciously say, okay, I've arrived at where I wanted to get as if I knew, which I don't think I ever really do, and then I just get to a place where I say, this is what it is, and it is a uh distillation or a residue of that day, and there's again, an immediacy to that that I feel has, again, I'm using this word a lot, a kind of intimacy that is, uh, valuable for me in staying present for it, with it, uh, for me, with me, um, throughout, you know, from beginning to end there.

JAF: And then what? And also, um, the observation of whatever is in front of you, the still life is assuming that you're, you know, working from something that's getting you going. That's starting that. Whereas, Dana, your paintings aren't that like, uh, the, the flower paintings that you did before sort of operate in that way where you had that image that you kind of referred to and then maybe go back to or lose or whatever you do when you're making still life. But these are different in, in, uh, I guess, in starting point, just in imagine like a line, you know?

DD: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I have to stop before they open their eyes. Haha. That's pretty good.

MG: Hold on to that one.

DD: Yeah. I don't need anything looking back at me. But I have been trying to make that painting though for about ten years. Yeah.

MG: And again, if you're on Zoom, you can go to the Material exhibitions website and see all the work.

Crowd: Good job! It's amazing! Yeah.

JAF: What was so hard about that one?

DD: What was so hard about it? I, I wanted it to be, I wanted it to it to feel real. You know, like, look out the window of the bus that's going and you're looking so hard your breath is fogging up the glass, you draw a partial heart with your finger, but only partial, because you can't draw both halves of a heart because that's not how it works. You know, I can only do half. Oh! yeah! That is what I mean! Turns out, you know.. there's like, there's like this great Laura Owens painting of like, a cartoon or a shitty, like v-shape, bird flying and seven by five footer, and it's like the dumbest, greatest Friedrich for the late twentieth century, but it makes me so sad and it's so dumb and there's like a drop shadow, it's it's, you know, it's horrible. And I feel like there's a, there's a kind of brokenhearted archness to all of that. And I like, I think I have that, but I don't want it in my work. You know, it's like everywhere else, but not when I think a lot of it is, but maybe that's part of the constraint of the day is like trying to have the discipline to like, let painting do what I've needed it to do for me and not do what art does, which I think is like fucked up and charged and entangled on purpose and should be, paradoxical, contradictory, rough, you know, and I think that, like, what if you tried to make… There's this kind of talk that there's not really talking about this, but Paul Celan kind of floats around it for both of us and he has this line, it's in translation, obviously, the Kline translation, that he "wants to be a name sweated down a wall that a wound licks up." Isn't that amazing? That's like such a it's such a like window—

JAF: That a wound?

DD: That a wound licks up! It's that amazing, anyway but I think that like, not, there's so much pain and possibility and specificity and wanting to be like, okay, painting and poetry can do that; the thing that holds it has other work to do. Does that make sense? Yeah. Like protects that like my, my need for the like rawness and even like unpleasantness or even rudeness of like an image like that, but like it takes

place with, it takes place with, I was talking with Steven and Audrey my friends last night, like Montaigne has this thing about good and bad needing to be played together in a chord. If it's just good, it's ridiculous. If it's just bad, get out of here with that, you know? But but wanting to keep the chord and maybe I can't hold it for more than a day without the, like, world **keep**ing it. It's not about losing contact with the world. I want to be able to hear it outside, but not look directly at it. Does that make sense?

MG: That connection that you make between poetry and painting, which is one that I consider often, I mean, um, uh, one of the things that keeps me reading poetry is that the rules of literature don't apply, necessarily. Um, and the rules of grammar don't apply. And the space for invention and personality, um are always, um, in flow and in flux. And I think that's also something that is ideally happening for me when I'm painting. And it's interesting the distinction that you make between painting and art. Um, I have been thinking consciously about poetry and literature, which maybe there's resonance there or not, but in either event, it's a matter of like stepping up into a process of making something with a certain set of tools or material, tools and material, um, and sort of just tipping it at the top of the hill and seeing where it's going and then letting it hit its bumps, topple over, or ride or glide. Um, and again, staying present and true to that as it goes through. In a sense, without trying to steer too much. Um, I, I love the idea of not steering when I'm making the work, although I know that I'm constantly steering, but the idea of being attentive to all the other elements that are beyond my conscious will or technical ability, um, and allowing them to be as present and, um, necessary as everything else, um, so that those distinctions between painting and art, poetry and literature, um, the Celan example you give is, is terrific. And one of the ways that he was introduced to me, Paul Celan, uh, poet, Romanian chose to write in German his entire life, chose to live in Paris for the last twenty years of his life before, sadly, he killed himself. Um, but somebody. Before I really got to know someone, somebody said, yeah, his syntax is almost autistic. And and I didn't know what that meant. Um, I, I still don't know what that means. I mean, that was thirty or forty years ago when that line was said to me, obviously, I still remember it, and just the idea of thinking about who writes the rules, who comes up with a label, as if the rhetoric of autism is a limitation or anything negative. Um, the poetry of Celan isn't always easy, um, but what good things really are. I mean, it demands, it always demands my direct, immediate attention, um, and again, I feel that that's in the great, in the things that I love paintings, other artworks, that's part of it. It keeps tickling my curiosity or sticks between my teeth in a certain way that I keep trying to. What is that in there? And how do I get it out and what… you know, what is it? Where did it get here? You know, like, um, what snack or meal was I eating that lodged it there? Um, and then just, um, staying present with it and trying to, you know, work things out around and through it. Um, I think is where for me when I'm working well in my studio, this is stuff that's really percolating with a lot of a lot of energy.

DD: That's super. I, I like, I like, I appreciate hearing it. I feel like work that I love in the world knows that I'm begging.

MG: Wow that's good.

DD: Knows that I like came to it begging, and has a position on that, like not to gratify or satisfy me. I was talking to my students last week about like, how, having to admit how much I love being refused, or not like given up to whole. I am nervous about hospitality from a work of art that just gives and gives. I want to be refused, a little. Um, I think that, Judith Geichman is here and has a gorgeous show up at Regards, and the thing about your work, Judith's, relationship to my own begging is really beautiful and generous and intense for me, it's like, it lets you find the mica in everything, but you have to fucking find it. You have to find it through the trash and the footprints and everything else. And like, you know, I was taught, I was taught by great Taoists, Grabner and Susanne Doremus being the others, who were just willing to just like, let things fucking drop in the stream and float and like, I can't hold everything, I can't save everything because it's liquid, you know, like if, if longing is going to be a cupped hand, Martin Buber has this, you know, it's not going to hold water and hold a clump of Vaseline, something else, some grit from the world, but like, you know, artists that I love do stuff to get the thing to stay in your hand, not flowing through you. It's real. It's real, you know, but, but I think, I think the begging is actually really important. People have come to this little shop to see these paintings on the walls. What the fuck,

it's very interesting, and I think about this all the time. It's like I'm coming to the museum because I was like beautifully educated to be able to understand what my own need might want. You know, I can, like, be, like, fucking Matisse, that little blue triangle at the top of the Matisse lemons, that's it, that's the rest of the whole world, because someone taught me that I can like cathect like that on to the thing, that there actually is not just a material and gestural program, but a philosophical program inherent in all these things and Celan, too, that's why I like it's not it's not your word, I understand, but like twisting at the word "autism" as though it were an accident. It's like, these are programs, these are programs that help people feel, they're sites of cognition to help you metabolize your way through this life, you know? And I feel like it's really goofy as hell if people are like beauty! I'm like, what? What are you talking about? I mean, no one here is talking about that, but I just, but it's interesting to me, like what, what, what this site is and what the expectations of the encounter are, like how one expects to be gratified and the, the, the, the Beckett *Not I* like all this, the recitative, one of the repeaters, is "so much begging in the brain." It's like, yeah, like I think that that's why so many people when we're young go to art to begin with. It's a way to be alone in anticipation of company. It's quite intense.

MG: Can I ask you, um, you used the word "hospitality."

DD: Yeah.

MG: You used it also toward the end of our Bad at Sports— *[welcomes new people entering the space*]. You used word "hospitality" here, and you used it also in our toward the end of our Bad at Sports interview, which I hope everybody has a chance to listen to, it's on the website and it's on of course the Bad at Sports website.

DD: If you're ever at the DMV.

MG: If you're at the DMV.

DD: We've got you for fifty-five minutes. Sorry.

MG: Um, but um the, the idea of hospitality in relation to sort of floating into this idea of begging, um, and the works of art that you go to see that um, are I forget exactly how you said, um, asking you to beg or

DD: No, no, no, no, no, I'm coming in begging. They're not asking me to do it.

MG: Okay. Coming in. Begging. Yeah. No. But how does that relate to hospitality or does it or…?

DD: Well, I think that that's like the thrill of still life, of genre and of the proscenium, right? We like talked about that a little bit like in, in, in your work at the end of the podcast, Matthew, just like the table is prepared for you. Like, it's a cup, but it's not a cup. It's not for your hand. It's instead of for your hand. You know, I think that there's a way in which flatness kind of forecloses an actual encounter and presupposes a sort of fantastical one. What if this cup was for you? You know, and I think that, like what is it to lay a table that's not real. What is it to lay a *trompe* or a trick of a table, of abundance, of offering? You know, what kind of offering is this? Hospitality is fascinating. Um, because a lot of people who are painters, I think, want to give a lot and like, don't know how and don't know what and feel like the thing you're giving might just be like a kitten with peanut butter all over it. Here! it's like, I don't want that what are you doing? I mean, I'll take care of it, but I guess, it's it's not wanting the objects to be like vectors of automatic sympathy, like wanting them to be like, available to like, refuse, to exchange, to like give you something you might not want. You know, I think that there's like some real intensity there. And I think that like the, the occasion of a talk is so interesting because it's like… I feel so I, the, the work isn't going up unless I'm so far gone from it, you know, like I remember it like a shed skin. It could be a photograph of me in eighth grade, you know, like, like I remember who I thought about when I was making it and I just made it and like, but it's still like, it's not me. And I know it's not me, you know? And I think so if

anything is there for anybody else, it's something that I left there before I left, but I left, you know, in favor of a n exchange that is not with my absence and the… my absence shouldn't be standing between the viewer and the object. It's just absence, it's just you and the thing then. Oh yeah. I think for hospes. Hospes will be, yes, it's really interesting.

MG: And so is, is there any kind of like distillation or evaporation in that process?

DD: What do you mean? Sorry.

MG: Well, I'm not fully certain, but, um, that the event is between the audience and the thing that they're looking at that you've maybe made, and, uh, the things that you brought to it aren't present, are present for them. But you've pulled yourself back.

DD: They're, they're out of my hands.

MG: Yeah, yeah.

DD: It's out of my hands. And I, and I think that like, I'll answer the question, but like, uh, if anyone is ever like sweet enough to be like, I love your work. It has like nothing to do with me. It's, it's, it's that in relation. If there's something there that like makes you feel something like love or something like disgust or whatever, it's not, it's just like me, oh, you love apples and apples. I haven't had an apple a while. That's like, rad, it's for you. Cool. Yeah. I think that like, because we're doing, I know, I know, we're both like thinking about this a lot and trying to put something in the world that the world didn't ask for it and we think that it needs, that breadth or scope or range of that need is like private, but every time I have any show at all, I'm like, why hasn't the world changed utterly? Like I, I expect like, you know, there's this, there's this Agnes Martin poem that ends, um, the wiggle, "the wiggle of a worm is the same as the assassination of a president." And I was telling my friend Andie, and I was like, damn, if I believed that I would have to leave the world. I, like, want to believe that, but I know I don't actually. I can't actually get all the way there. I can get almost there. But I don't actually know that I accept that like one, one leaf flipping from the sidewalk to the curb is the same, but it might be. I feel like people get [several words inaudible] the extent to which it matters, I've been wandering around about it.

MG: The extent to which what matters?

DD: Any of this. You know, like like like what, what it's for because we could be like: attention, sensation, perception, presence, the gift, generosity, all this, uh, interface. Uh, it's like, yeah, like things that were like, we've identified a lack in the world. Yeah, yeah. I'm like, who, who's coming in here? Like, I want to go grab all the people getting their nails done. You know? What's this for? We should trade. And then this is, this is where the problems of art begin.

MG: Right, right. No. But also, I think like we wake up in the the morning for some reason, we decide to make something and we bring something that maybe the world will care about on any given day. Maybe we care about it any given day and then whatever. The next day we wake up and do the same thing again.

DD: Yeah. Yeah.

MG: And, and just the, the notion of, of lack for me in relation to loss and absence, which are things that I'm always thinking about how they operate and how they, where the boundaries between them are crisp and where they blur and where they completely dissolve into one another, um, becomes really a very curious and I'll say maybe even an inspiring space of, um, yeah, I wake up and I guess the world's, the world could be more complete if I make something like, how audacious is that?

DD: Yeah, that's so interesting. That's, I mean, is it world? It's world when you wake up?

MG: Um, I think so.

DD: Is world for you, everybody that is like inside of your body?

MG: Not necessarily. No. No, but I mean, you know, like I wake up and there are terms that are present for me, you know, going down to make a cup of coffee or opening the newspaper, taking a step outside into the garden. This is what I mean by world, you know, my, my, my wife, my son, my immediate circles of people, friends that I love and care about, strangers that I see. I just saw as I was walking here, there was a, a young mother putting a baby into a, from a stroller, into a car seat and the kid gave me the biggest smile, I swear, it was great. Yeah. So that is world for me. And again, like, I wake up in the morning and I'm going to make painting. Um, and maybe it'll be recognized, maybe it won't. Maybe again, I will deem it worthy of leaving the studio. Maybe I won't. Uh, many things get made that nobody ever sees. Um, and then once in a while, they leak out or they're invited out. Um, and, you know, does it matter? Like what, different like, like some of the things that you were pointing to, but I'm going to go, I'm going to get up and do it again tomorrow, um, and I look forward to it. I can't wait in many ways. And you know, that that's, uh, that's just part of my ritual, or my practice or my, my exercise of being a maker of things. Um, but I do think that world is a part of it. I'm really interested in the way that you talk about hospitality and *hospes* and the different ways that the root of that word has sort of strung out in different directions in our culture and society and conversations and, um, how important it is and what role we get to play in it for some people who we get to encounter or may encounter our work.

DD: Yeah. That's that's interesting. Yeah. It was a real question about world. I think that for me, I'm just like thinking about my friends, like my friends and my spouse was also my friend. You know, I like wake up, I love painting, I want to make a thing that my friend likes, and I want to send her a picture or like after I paint in the basement or in the shed in the yard sometimes my wife will come downstairs and be like, oh! and but then like, maybe that's it. I feel, I feel like I asked you for real because world is such an art concern for me. For me, world is like a philosophical term. You know, like it's like world, you know, and I can, like, make my own like, address, I think, my own primary set of addressees at my work are like, people like, actually know and love who I want to like, do right by and be honest with and like not wanting the like arch art approach to be like, you know, I want to not be full of shit to like people I love, you know, and be like and that includes like being nice when I'm not nice, you know, that includes like being hospitable when I'm not hospitable, or my version of hospitality, uh, contains some sharpness, you know, some, some, some like, uh, require some words to the terms of the exchange.

MG: No, no. But this is great because as you're articulating it, as far as I understand, you are keeping things in the immediacy of direct relations. And I use the word art, or I use the word world and make the distinction between painting and art, and it instantly sort of like pulls away from that and it tries, it would seem to me to, um, uh, this is, you know, a metaphor that I grew up with, you know, throw the long ball as opposed to just saying, hey, let's just hang out and, and be present together. Um, as opposed to sort of saying, take it deep, take it, you know, go philosophical, bring all this meaning or all this other stuff to it. No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. Before that, like, here we are, thirty humans in this room, maybe forty. Wow, look at this, and a dozen people online. Here we are in the same space at the same time in one way or another. Um, Having an exchange, and we will open it up for more people that are interested, soon. Right? Yeah. Yeah.

DD: Immediately.

MG: Immediately. Um, yeah. No. And this, this has value. Full stop.

DD: Yeah. It's nice to be in a room with people, you know. It's nice to have an occasion, to have produced an occasion. Yeah. Thank you for attending our talk.

JAF: No, I think this is great.

MG: So, um, if there's comments from anybody or questions from anybody on Zoom, we'll pull them up here. If there's comments or questions from anybody here will repeat them so that everybody there can hear them. And uh, again, thank you, everybody for coming. Thank you, Jean, for offering us this opportunity. Thank you, Dana, for engaging and participating in such a meaningful way.

DD: Oh man, thanks, thank you for inviting me! It's been very interesting.

Audience question 1 (from Judith Geichman, JG): I have a question! I'm looking at your pictures, I kept thinking I'd love to ask could each of you talk about where you were and and what drove and directed you to paint these pictures we're looking at? Being more specific of, you know, we're all changing every moment, every second, but where you were when you made these pictures. I'd just like to hear from each of you about that.

DD: You have a time stamp on your titles!

MG: I have a time stamp on my title? The number…

JAF: 4 a.m.

DD: They're all proudly proclaiming 4 a.m. Is it 4 a.m.?

MG: Um, I wake up usually around 4 a.m. I don't, I'm not necessarily painting at four a m. Um, but so, so there is a time stamp there, right, I forgot.

JG: So far, you have really explained a lot of it, but just looking at the pictures, talk about them.

MG: Yeah. I set up still lives. I set up still lives of chosen objects, often with floral patterns, although not always, but most of them have a floral pattern and at least one floral pattern in each of my things. There's no flowers in them, but, um, and I try to render them, um, in a shallow space, a darkened space, I almost want to say like a numbed visually space, but by the, the way that I use color. All of the paintings actually have a lot of color, although it's all mixed through gray. The painting in the center back there is the only one that's straight up monochrome. Um, but the series, I think I'm on like number thirty-seven or number thirty-eight. They all have color except for that one. Um, and for some reason I keep making them and, um, I don't know if that satisfies your question, but

JG: Can you talk over about the space and what you were after in, in making that space and the materials and the substrate, you, sort of, you know, like we're from Mars and you're taking us to the beginning of your working?

MG: Um, they're all old-school oil painting techniques, um, on Yupo, which is this plastic material that amazingly takes paint really well. It also takes ink really well. It takes so many media really well. Um, and I prefer it because marks don't get absorbed into it. They sit on top. Um, and this is true for other media, but most traditional, like, on canvas or on wood or a gessoed surface, that substrate will absorb materially and pull back on a molecular level, like on a tiny, tiny, tiny little level, but without that, these paint sits on top a little bit more. And for me, reveals a little bit more of that process of like, you can actually see where this mark begins and ends, with, I think, all of the marks in these paintings that, I really like that quality. The space of them, you know, I'm, I'm haunted by the flatness of twentieth-century Modernist painting. And, um, I choose not to make stick to the traditional, to the subjects of Modernist painting. I'm making subjects that we, I'm making paintings that refer to subjects prior to and after that, but I want the space to be, haunted might not be the right word, but, um, invested in sort of the flatness of Modernism.

JG: Thank you. There's subtlety and the idea of touch, and a subtlety in your choices, and it's so very delicate, and you were, you were kind of talking about that in your conversation in many different ways. So, yeah.

MG: Thank you. I'll just say one word. Yeah. The only brushes I'm using are egberts. [Oh!] Egberts are long filberts. Oh, okay. So, uh, there's the wooden handle. There's the metal thing that has a name. I forget what it's called. The, the ferrule that the bristles are stuffed into. Um, thank you Rivaa. It's it's pinched. So they're flat. And then the bristles are not that long. The bristles are long and then cuts in a curve as opposed to shorter brights or regular filberts. And in my experience, the agate brush, in some ways, I think it's the most difficult brush for me to use, but it allows the most range of touch. And so every mark on all these paintings is done only with I've got like forty of them or, you know, however many I've got, I sort of just buy them whenever I see them. Um, and I always want to demand that that kind of range of touch is available every time I bring paint to the surface.

DD: Cool. That's cool. Um, thank you for asking this question. I'm psyched about it. You're like, can we get to the painting part? Yeah. Like. Hours later. Uh, uh, blue one is just gesso, but everything else is canvas board, two thin Gamsoled out layers of oil ground on top of gesso, oil paint, safflower oil, synthetic bright number eight. And that's it.

MG: Synthetic bright number eight is your brush.

DD: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's all. Oh, mounted on hand-cut masonite because I haven't bought a saw.

JG: This first one looks more direct. Were you, like, how did you paint the back of a head? Or is some of these invented and, you know, imagined or are they kind of…

DD: Yeah. I think about men a lot and it makes me so sad, and I love the film *Stand by Me*, there's these little boys and they're scared and they touch each other's hands so much. It's like really beautiful. Feeling really sad about the boys, now, I don't want anyone to have to become a man, the way a lots of men are, now. So I was thinking about that, just thinking about it, and then like, this little sad monk, and this other little boy that I called a *Clown* appeared, they kind of just appeared after, like, moving, moving stuff around. I'm not, I'm not really looking for anything, I'm just kind of listening, trying to figure out what's on the radio, you know, seeing you know, what's coming. Um, sorry, I'll stay on track, um, the back of the head. I was thinking about, ah, I was thinking about my, my friend, like I have I'm lucky enough to have friends that some of them are taller than me and they listen to me while I, like, look down and talk about something that's too hard to talk about, and I think there's a lot of, uh, protect your neck in this life, you know, [inaudible], and help with that, and I think a lot about the charge, like reverse magnet between intimacy and proximity, just because you're physically close doesn't mean you're intimate, to be that close to someone on the subway, you are exposed like the back of the, their ears, I don't think I, [inaudible], I don't think empathy is real. I think sympathy is real. I'm just trying to think about that and like not wanting the interface with the painted surface to be total availability, but a kind of like turning away, and what does that mean? It's still a head. The back of a head. I think that that stages questions of responsibility differently to me than the presentation of the face, it's important that these two faces are fictive, or invented. This is kind of floating away from the body that's trying to hold it. Um, and then the bus window is the bus window. There's a lot of like, I have another show up right now, with Michelle Grabner in New Hampshire, and there are thirty little figures that are just like listening figures, just like moving stuff around. I have a lot of Jansen and, like, Stokstad history books to cough up. There's a lot of like sixteenth century, seventeenth century European painting in there that wants to get out, that like eeks out after being stuck in the gullet for a long time. So these figures are all kind of new and scary, but I super appreciate everything Matthew has said and done here, the occasion to like deal with the terms of the show as, What do I want to put as much as like—you didn't say this, but there's a lot of like, how about some flowers? And I'm like—
MG: I did say that I, actually,

DD: I actually wanted to relieve you of that. But I'm like, no, it's not, it's not that, but I was like, having to negotiate with myself with why not is very helpful and interesting.

JAF: Interesting. There's a yeah. Thank you. There's a couple, let's see, comments: [*reads Zoom chat aloud, multiple comments: "*I enjoyed hearing the artists facing the reality of their art and that each work doesn't remain independent and alone. Uh, thanks for this. Very engaging, thought provoking. How can we get access to the Zoo, recording? Okay, that will probably be on the material website. We'll figure that out. Also, the bad at sports and the images will also be on the material. Exhibitions dot com and um, more documentation on Instagram at material exhibitions. And it shows up until Saturday. I'll be here. So yeah, a week from today. So you contact me. Uh, I like that you first said haunted about your relationship, Matthew, to the flatness of much of the twentieth century modernist painting. To me, it seems more visceral than engaged. Can't wait to see the gallery in person. Thanks for doing this."] Yeah. Thank you, everyone for being here.

DD: So bold to just read that. I was like, God, what are you doing? This. Such trust.

MG: Well, yeah. I mean, yeah, it's we it's a little bit it's we've been here for an hour. We're grateful again for everybody's space and time and patience. Um, anybody have anything else they want to offer or I, um. Thank you.

Audience question 2 (Jess Zawadowicz, JZ): I was thinking about the squiggle, or the wiggle of a worm is the same as the assassination. I think it's interesting, because I think of those as, like, one seemingly very small nothing, and one is a very big X in a large way. And I'm wondering if you both think… How you think of painting in that, I don't know if it's a spectrum or a scale, but is it, like a wiggle, or is it an assassination? Like, is it, can it be both? Is it larger and smaller sometimes?

MG: Yes, and. I mean, I think that there are like, [inaudible], I don't want to do the Bad at Sports thing. You know, Dana makes the distinction between the paintings at Versailles and cave painting, right, and it's also between go home, make a painting and give it to somebody special. None is better than the other. The flexibility of the medium is astounding. Astounding. The things that can be done with it. And so go, right. So that's how I would respond to that.

DD: Ah, I think that the problem is that like caves and Versailles are just on a continuum. And I can't like elevate. But, where is it? It's like as big as a shoe, it's a shoe. Yeah, an empty shoe. A single shoe. [inaudible]

JAF: I think you mentioned like Beckett earlier or maybe I, and, uh, and I was thinking about like, how, how he had said something like, you know, you write the first word and then the word, then the next words follow and come after that, and so in relationship to maybe to what you were talking about, like thinking about painting, like you make the first mark and then the marks come after that and maybe then, it leads to some kind of space. I don't know.

DD: Well, yeah, totally. And it's like, yes, yes. And like—

JAF: So it's that wiggle.

DD: YEs, yes and Jess has heard me go on about the shoe before in our recent past, but like. Here. Hospitality! I have a shoe for you. And you're like, I have on… I have on shoes. What am I going to do with this third shoe? And it's like, I don't know, hold it, put something else in it, can't really drink water from it. It's just kind of like, now you are… now you're holding a shoe. Now there's an extra shoe. There's another shoe in the world without a mate. Yeah.

MG: That also implies a lost shoe.

DD: Sure does.

MG: And it makes me think of, you know, the tragic gloves of winter in the snow…

DD: Shoes are far more tragic than gloves.

Audience question 3 (from Riva Lehrer, RL): So, it's a little hard to formulate, but you both have so much restraint and almost a secrecy in your work. We're touching on it earlier, but those are two different kinds of withholding happening, and I'm wondering how the two of you view each other's, uh, strategies of withholding. Matthew completely occupies his surfaces. You can get almost microscopic with looking at the the rhythm of the strokes, the relationship of the strokes. Your work [to DD], and I haven't seen much of it in person, but, um, it's so blindingly immediate or appears to be. And each time I see a painting, I imagine you turning around and walking away. [inaudible] but I can see you turning away. And, you know, as a painter, I have to deal with a lot of self-abnegation for different reasons. But, um, and you're to more or less different genders, and I'm not going [inaudible] but they act differently in the world, both the restraint and the secrecy act differently, and you guys chose to show together, so I'm wondering what you think of each other's strategies in that direction.

DD: Thank you, thank you, thank you. Good read. That's right. All right.

MG: I don't try or care to qualify Dana's restraint as a painter, but it's there, and it's one of the things that I appreciate about it, and I think it's something that I appreciate with a lot of things that are made in the world with restraint. Um, and I tend to prefer the restrained expressions for one reason or another. I, maybe it's one of the things that drew me to this invitation to, to this, this conversation was that I knew that there was going to be thoughtful, acutely thoughtful restraint. Um, and maybe I tried to qualify that at a certain point, but then I also kind of realized that, no, that's not going to lend itself to something generative for me. Um, so that's, uh. That's how I respond. Totally present, but I don't know anything beyond that.

DD: That's, I just, I'm really like, kind of stunned and psyched about the question still, because I'm thinking about, you know, personhood and method and whether or not there's a difference between privacy and secrecy and like, what I expect to meet of the exposed subject on the surface of their object, you know, and I feel like as a teacher, part of my job is to get in there, get into the gesture and materiality and find them, you know, and be like, are you anxious? You've got a relationship to edges that makes you want to keep negotiating, for instance. And I don't think that it's pop psychologizing, I think it's care when you're trying to talk to a twenty-year old about like what to, to effloresce themselves. I think with other like artists who I, who I anticipate are doing everything on purpose all the time, I think withholding is actually a good word. I think privacy maybe is more comfortable than secrecy for me in relation to Matthew's work. You know, it's like I'm turning around and running out the door because I need to, uh, I need to preserve the deposit of attention. I think about zero a lot, and like what it takes to get to zero. And like, sometimes you have to add to get to zero. I know that I look like I'm like holding back or something, but some days I have to amp myself up to hit zero, you know, sometimes it's like taking it down a notch. And I feel like if there's a, a comfort in the relation of these objects is, I think that, like Matthew's paintings almost always hit zero. I think that's a really good. It's not empty. It's between positive and negative, right. Once they start to inflect it's like, don't tell me what to do. Like, I'll do it, you know, or something. Um, so I think that that's, I think a lot about, because I think I'm not going to art for an encounter with another person. I'm coming for the trace of subjectivity, but not for like, who is Matthew Girson? I'm like, I'm like, I, I've forgotten you. I'm like, what is cup, or something? You know, like they're like, what is illusion of cup? Is that a little bit set back? What to do with this gulf? Um, that they are like so full, I think is a move towards generosity, is a move towards like a table is prepared for you, is prepared, so prepared, thinking about what to do in the gulf, what to make of the gulf in relation to a painting that wants to like step forward into the gulf and like, give me something, and like, my own physical response is to recoil slightly, but I moved by generosity nonetheless. You know what I mean?

RL: I think it's a paradox.

DD: Yes yes yes yes, and I think it's really interesting. Yeah yeah yeah, yeah. And I think that the negative space that I need the viewer to occupy in my absence is not, those aren't the terms that everybody wants like, people who are like No, stay! And I'm like, no. I have nothing to say to you about that or me. I'm not interested, you know, and I'm not interested in you either, except for on the surface of this object. Here I am, there I'm not, you know, and I think there's… I think there's, you know, I feel like that opens up to lots of other questions about conduct in the world and who's who, and who's who why, and what, what we expect from that, if we expect to encounter a mirror.

JAF: One final question, yeah.

Audience question 4 (from Delia Pelli-Walbert, DPW): You're both so articulate and also have some professional role as educators in which your job is to be articulate to some degree.

MG: We're not, but go ahead., uh, not, but go ahead.

DPW: How do you get the words out of the way or get the words out of the way of the presence?

MG: Are you asking that, if I may, are you asking that to us as painters or as educators? Because there are big important distinctions to make.

DPW: Originally, yeah, I was, I was thinking about in the space of the act of making, the act of material relationship, but if it feels more interesting to answer as a teacher go ahead.

MG: All right. So just for my students over here, but there's a few here in Zoomland, and, um, my students will often ask me a question to which I will respond "I have heard your question and I understand it." Um, they hate that, but it opens up a space where we can then talk about what are they really after here? Okay, so that's that side of it. I think the one of the real hard parts of for me being, making paintings that I'm satisfied with. I'll use that word, yet. Um, is evacuating language as much as I can, which is a completely impossible. But again, then it comes down to touch. And a choice that I make is with these brushes that you can push that thing in, and, you know, if you, if you take an egbert brush and you drag it on the surface, you get a thin line. If you hold it perpendicular to the surface, um, it can give you a thin line. Or if you hold it up, it'll fan out. Um, if you, it can hold a lot of paint and give you a razor's edge, or you can twist it in different ways. And so it's simply being attentive and attuned to the touch and the materiality and yeah, words are happening in my head, but I think that when I'm on my game, they're secondary or I'm at least allowed, at least I find a way to hold them separate for at least a little while.

DD: Yeah. I mean, I want to start this off, I'm going to touch Riva's question for one more second, which is, like, I've been trying to stay on the surface a little bit longer. But, I've been trying to stay, it's like in my life, it's like a life thing. you know, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, for sure. And… and…part of the reason for, like, deposit / exit is, like, because language starts. And I start thinking about, like, oh, what's this? Like, I can't anticipate the intelligence of an eventual interlocutor. Like, what do they want? What can I give them? What do I have? What about this? Is this like, is there, I mean, I've made, you've probably seen them, just like more than one gesture key of like how we're able to read marks of agitation, of attention, what care looks like, there's lots of like annotated history of all of our gestural vocabularies through which people read, through which we're able to find one another. And I think that, talking to my friends yesterday, just like it takes, I was like, so nervous for this talk because, liked, teacher voice can't have anything to do with this. You've heard teacher voice, and teacher voice is like Are we here? There's lots of, like, lots of this [*spreads arms and pushes palms down*], you know, and it's like I can't, I can't. There was so much time when I tried to get those together, and I think that, like, as I get older and my students remain college students, it's like, wanting, wanting them to know that, like, the path is prepared. The table is set. It is okay. It isn't volatile or precarious. You don't know, you do know what's going to happen

today. And I feel like my responsibility within the boundness of painting is to like, kind of not know as much as I can, kind of keep language out. Um, one of my, someone I know said to me once that, like, I paint to keep from talking, and that might be a little bit true, and I, like, don't like it, but I think that the legislative power of language is dangerous for me, and I don't want to be part of it, I don't want to use it, like, I don't want to wield it, and I feel like trying to stay in the like 8 inches of water that painting can feel like for me, and, like, get used to the discomfort and not have to describe the task. I don't know, I was talking with my friends too, and I've like started listening to sports radio while painting pretty loud 'cause I'm not listening and can just kind of be underneath it. Like, and that's probably the most honest answer to the process question, too. It's like, I don't care about football at all, but, like, they hit a certain, like, kind of metronomic bleat, you know, and I can just, like, be kind of free underneath it, and I think that that's a question, too. I can't listen to… I can't listen to listening. I don't know. It's really ,it's a great question, and I feel like, because you want to be responsible, and you want to be conscious, and you want to be clear about what you're putting in the world. And I think that if I didn't trust both, like, the formal education I received, and the, like, my experience with painting, then I would't trust myself enough to try and turn the language off. I can be careful there, am I being careful here without it. Does that make sense? Is there too much begging? You know, it's like, don't beg, eat a snack, and then keep painting. Don't tell them you're begging. Don't tell them you're not begging. Just, like, don't tell them anything. Just do your thing. Get out. Let them be. Let it be. This. I think it's a great question, it's really hard.

JAF: Okay. I think that's great, thank you very much, thanks.

DD: Peace, bee!

MG: Thanks. We're going to shut this off. It will be eventually up on the website at, um, Material. Bye bye, Zoomland.