



ALI SMITH

MARK MOORE GALLERY | STATEMENTS

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Mark Moore Gallery: *Statements* introduces a featured gallery artist through images and candid interview. From noteworthy early examples to present bodies, the works featured in *Statements* act as an overview of the varying practices and movements implemented by a given artist in tandem with their thoughts and interpretations.

Ali Smith (born 1976, Newport Beach, CA) uses the canvas as an open space of exploration; an empty landscape that serves as the starting point for investigation into abstract terrains. Her work illustrates the existential plight the artist has in finding new, personal meaning and direction within the field of abstract painting. The recurring visual trope of Rococo-like excess and abundance performs a celebratory re-assertion of the endless possibilities available to the painter. Smith weaves together fleeting thoughts, moments of time, the fine lines between fact and fiction and subjective desires within her canvases, which in turn present the hopeful attitude of the artist, in the face of the realities of life and experience.

Smith received her MFA from California State University, Long Beach (CA), and has since had solo exhibitions in New York, Houston and Los Angeles. She has been included in numerous group shows, including those at the Laguna Art Museum (CA), Irvine Fine Arts Center (CA) in addition to shows in Boston, Tokyo and Basel. Her work is included in the collections of the Laguna Art Museum (CA), Frederick R. Weisman Foundation (CA), Progressive (OH) and the Chaney Family Collection (TX). The artist lives and works in Long Beach, CA.



Special Effects Armored Love, 2006. Acrylic and oil on canvas, 80 x 70 inches
Chaney Family Permanent Collection, TX

ALI SMITH

Interviewed by: Lauren Licata, Mark Moore Gallery

In your work, the canvas becomes a space for exploration, abstraction, and mark-making. Can you speak to how your methodology straddles dichotomies of chance/intention and fantasy/reality? Is there an overarching discourse in this tension?

To me, chance and intention are really essential to the tension or even vivacity that exists in the work. I often paint in the moment, but it's only through years of painting that I am able to perhaps project what a certain mark might look like; it's always a focused formal decision. In that sense, the work comes from both analytical and emotional decisions. It's never about a "random" way of working, each mark always has a purpose in the overall composition.

My work is fairly multi-layered, and really about activating the surface of the canvas. I rarely have one specific message that I'm trying to portray to my audience. I approach my paintings in various ways – Sometimes, I work from a study or collage, with a specific idea of what



the finished work will look like, while other paintings are made from simply starting to paint. When I work, I attempt to create a balance between working analytically and intuitively. I never know for certain what a mark might look like, so there is a certain risk or chance to the way I work. I'm interested in that contrast between focused painting and serendipitous moments that I feel lends a certain energy to the work. It's a bit risky and it helps me to live in the moment when I'm painting.

While some of your pieces incorporate a variety of grey tones, most works are extremely vibrant. What significance does your color palette have in your practice?

Color is quite key in my work, it can take on certain emotional qualities that are potent to me. Color functions similarly to music: it can move us, and it can bring very specific sensorial associations, memories, or corporeal reactions. It lends itself to the plasticity of the medium, and it really is the flesh of the work. I don't think the work could exist without it.

Parallels have been drawn between your work and Surrealism, Gaudi architecture, Baroque ornamentation, and Art Nouveau – What historical movements or external sources do you personally cite as the most influential to your practice?

I'm always looking at contemporary art, but I also love to look back in art history. I find my own work connected to a lot of early to mid-century artists: Max Ernst, Matta, Gorky, Joan Mitchell, Cy Twombly, Philip Guston, Lee Bontecou. I'm not concerned with whether their own visual language is abstract or figurative; some of these artists are more about a surrealist, inventive language, and with others, it's their raw, very emotional sensibility that I respond to. Often it's just a certain spirit about how to approach painting that interests me, like the fierceness of Joan Mitchell. I love the idea that her paintings were like Cathedrals and can relate to that a lot. I am also really inspired by looking at sculpture, sometimes more so than painting—I often imagine what my work would look like in 3-D form.

In terms of historical movements, I am particularly interested in Surrealism, Early Abstraction, Victorian Painting, Rococo, and Outsider Art. I'm also quite often inspired by looking outside of painting: literature, film,

even landscapes feed my work. Music is really important to me because I want my work to have that same sense of immediacy and emotional potency. I often title my paintings in relation to certain songs or sounds that might parallel a feeling in the work.

Finally, I always have a lot of images in my studio, from vintage children's encyclopedias and books on textiles to newspaper photos, though I'm never painting directly from them. There are definitely certain visual themes that creep into my work, various structures and patterns like crumbling buildings and ornate Indian temples that are then broken down and manipulated.

Your pieces incorporate a multitude of brush strokes, varying from soft curving lines to celebratory gestures, jarring angles, and intricate nooks – Is there an underlying tone or dialogue at work? What purpose does this juxtaposition of sentiments serve?

It's hard for me to single out one underlying tone or dialogue, often I am inspired by certain formal ideas that then translate themselves conceptually and emotionally into a work.

Thematically, I am often thinking about the idea of beauty

versus awkwardness, as well as the tiny, detailed moments versus the overall, gestalt of the painting, and the issue of abstraction vs. representation is always present. I think of my paintings as being fairly abstract, though I truly feel that in contemporary painting, there is often little difference in a figurative painter's approach compared to my own.

With such a heavily gestural style, your work brings awareness to painting as a material process, and to the role of the artist as well. How does movement and medium factor into your work? Do you see your paintings as an inscription of time or painting itself?

Yes, I think that's an interesting point. We live in a so-called "digital age" where we can constantly manipulate what we're seeing or experiencing, and often that can feel quite hollow. With my own work, I'm interested in creating something that is tangible, visceral, and honest, where there is a sense of the artist's touch, complete with imperfections and successes alike. Ideally, my work forces the viewer to slow down and experience the specific sense of time and movement I've created.

Finally, can you describe any changes in your most recent body of work, or any evolutions

since the beginning of your practice? How might your trajectory evolve from this point forward?

My recent work has become more about playing, quite loosely, with patterns and dimensionality. There is still a sense of dualities co-existing in the same space, but I feel the work is perhaps clearer; less about excessive, heavy paint dominating the canvas and more about a certain clarity and balance.

My work has gradually shifted from being highly figurative in nature to more abstract. In grad school, I started out working with a vocabulary of cartoony, rather Rococo characters, and that evolved into multi-layered landscapes. Embellished with glitter and puffy paint, the surface would become like frosting, echoing decadence and repulsion. The work has shifted a great deal since then, but I think the overlapping forms and embellishments are still present.

I hope to continue in a similar vein, but it's hard to predict how the work might shift in the future—I like the idea that each canvas is its own unique experience, and I want my work to be constantly in flux and evolving.



Territory, 2010. Oil on canvas, 70 x 90 inches

"Smith is an adept colorist, manipulating seductive combinations in the tradition of Matisse. Her expressive compositions include swaths of pure, beautifully mixed vibrant colors conversing with linear detail and architectural yet organic structures, that are at once playful yet precarious. Referencing the formalist ploys of abstract expressionism, her works attempt to give the historical trope new relevancy."

– Sasha Lee,
Beautiful/Decay, 2008



Longscape, 2009. Watercolor and gouache on paper, 6 x 17.5 inches
Permanent collection of the Frederick R. Weisman Foundation, Los Angeles, CA

Orbital, 2012. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 72 x 60 inches



"The exuberant *Geek Love* pulsates off the wall. A chaotic mix of fuchsia, red, black, light pink and bright blue, it depicts a closely jumbled collection of shapes and objects that seem to grow out of a red table-like surface. Thick pink, flower-shaped blobs of paint dominate the lower part of the painting. It's like a psychedelic dream featuring neon toys, the detritus of a long-ago childhood."

– Elizabeth Anderson-Kempe,
Artillery Magazine, 2008



Geek Love, 2008. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 92 x 84 inches



Left: *Recto Verso*, 2012. Oil on canvas, 68 x 64 inches
Right: *Yellow Mount*, 2012. Oil on canvas, 36 x 32 inches

Opposite Page: *Banquet*, 2011. Oil on canvas, 54 x 50 inches



Gold Bulge, 2011. Oil on canvas, 50 x 54 inches





*Shadow Weaver, 2010. Oil
on canvas, 48 x 60 inches*



"In *Terrains Vagues*, the colors are subdued, the paint is less dense, and the brushstrokes are flatter and more refined. Against a grey-washed background, a fairly detailed set of objects and shapes is arranged in a precarious stack that references Duchamp's famous staircase. In this painting, Smith exhibits the most control over her brushwork and a stronger formalism in her composition to great effect..."

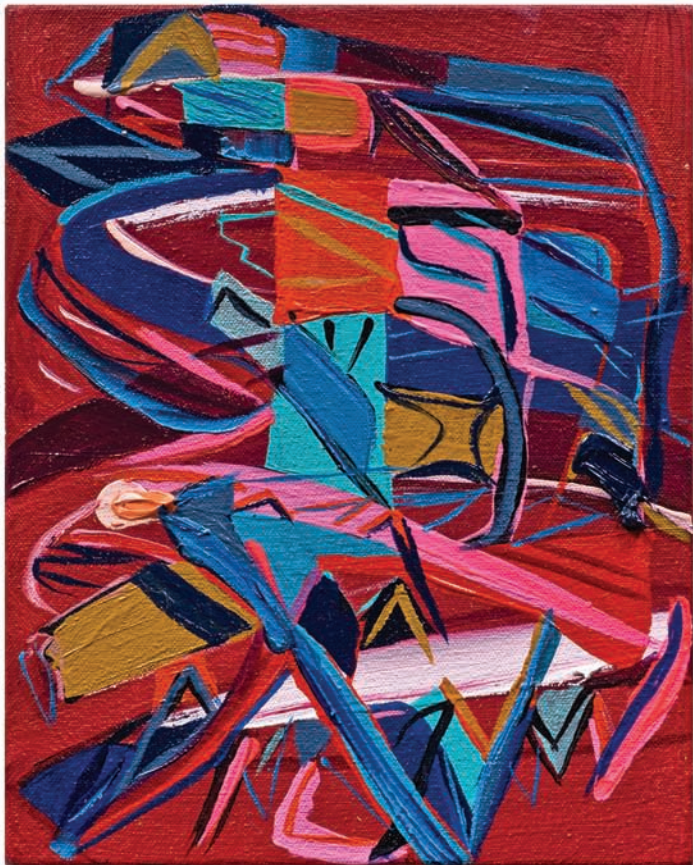
– Elizabeth Anderson-Kempe,
Artillery Magazine, 2008



ALI SMITH



Left: *Heavy Metal*, 2008. Watercolor, gouache and pencil on paper, 15 x 10 inches
Right: *Siren Crown*, 2007. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 64 x 68 inches



Left: *Crimson*, 2011. Oil on canvas, 10 x 8 inches
Right: *Civil War*, 2011. Oil on canvas, 10 x 8 inches

Opposite Page: *Arena Eruption*, 2010. Oil on canvas, 70 x 90 inches



"The improvisational character of these compositions is like improv jazz or stream-of-consciousness writing: what at first appear to be haphazard combinations slowly reveal an underlying structure that comes alive through reception."

"Each painting is a universe unto itself."

– Elizabeth
Anderson-Kempe,
Artillery Magazine, 2008



Green Spleen, 2007. Oil on canvas, 50 x 70 inches



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Right: *Never Enough*, 2008. Oil on canvas, 68 x 64 inches

Left: *Goldspurt*, 2007. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 60 x 55 inches
Permanent Collection of the Frederick R. Weisman Art Foundation



Left: *Everything I Don't Understand #2 (Maidenhead Ancestry)*, 2006. Oil on canvas, 70 x 50 inches
Above: *Everything I Don't Understand #3 (Masthead Ancestry)*, 2006. Oil on canvas, 90 x 70 inches
Progressive Insurance Permanent Collection, OH

Cornucopic, 2009. Oil on canvas, 55 x 60 inches





Geometry, 2011. Oil on canvas, 90 x 70 inches



Half-Life, 2007. Oil on canvas, 84 x 130 inches
Permanent Collection of the Frederick R. Weisman Foundation

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Above: *Chart and Chain*, 2012. Oil on canvas, 50 x 54 inches
Opposite Page: *Anemone #2*, 2006. Oil on canvas, 60 x 70 inches



ALI SMITH

BIO

Ali Smith

Born 1976, Newport Beach, CA
Lives and works in Long Beach, CA

Education

2003 MFA California State University, Long Beach, CA
1998 BS Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY
1997 Skidmore Program, Paris, France

Solo Exhibitions

2012 *Flip Side*, Mark Moore Gallery, Culver City, CA
2011 *Merge*, Freight + Volume, New York, NY
2009 *The Rubble Luxe*, Freight+Volume, New York, NY
Recent Paintings, McClain Gallery, Houston, TX
2008 *We Find Ways*, Mark Moore Gallery, Santa Monica, CA
2007 *Project Room*, Mark Moore Gallery, Santa Monica, CA
Finesilver Gallery, Houston, TX
2005 *She Fell and Missed the Ground*, painting installation, Greenleaf Gallery, Whittier College, Whittier, CA
2004 *Jump, said the Hole*, University of Montana, Missoula, MT

Group Exhibitions

2012 *Chasm of the Supernova*, Center for the Arts Eagle Rock, Los Angeles, CA
2011 *Open*, Mark Moore Gallery, Culver City, CA
About Paint, Carl Berg Projects, Los Angeles, CA
2010 *The OScene*, Laguna Art Museum, Laguna Beach, CA
Elements of Nature: Selections from the R. Weisman Foundation, Contemporary Art Center, New Orleans, LA

PULSE Contemporary Art Fair, Freight + Volume booth, New York, NY
2009 *Zoom*, Torrance Art Museum, Torrance, CA
Elements of Nature: Selections from the R. Weisman Foundation, Carnegie Art Museum, Oxnard, CA
Volta Basel Art Fair, Freight + Volume booth, Basel, Switzerland
PULSE Contemporary Art Fair, Freight + Volume booth, New York, NY
2008 *Luscious Abstractions*, Frank M. Doyle Arts Pavilion, Orange Coast College, Costa Mesa, CA
PULSE Contemporary Art Fair, Mark Moore Gallery booth, New York, NY
Darren Foote and Ali Smith, RHYS Gallery, Boston, MA
Accident Blackspot 2, Freight + Volume, New York, NY
Scope New York, RHYS Gallery booth, New York, NY
icandy: Current Abstraction in Southern California, Cypress College Art Gallery, Cypress, CA
Accident Blackspot, Markus Winter Gallery, Berlin, Germany, Curated by Rob Nadeau and Jim Lee
Petri Dishes, White Box Gallery, New York, NY
2007 *Mark Moore Gallery Presents*, Galerie Brunnhofer, Linz, Austria
PULSE Contemporary Art Fair, Mark Moore Gallery Booth, New York, NY
Art Chicago Art Fair, Mark Moore Gallery Booth, Chicago, IL
Aqua Miami Art Fair, RHYS Gallery Booth, Miami, FL
Berliner Liste Art Fair, RHYS Gallery booth
Orange County Museum of Art Auction 2007, Newport Beach, CA
PULSE Contemporary Art Fair, Mark Moore Gallery Booth,

- Miami, FL
- 2006 *Scapes*, Irvine Fine Art Center, Irvine, CA
Ultrasonic International, Mark Moore Gallery, Santa Monica, CA
 PULSE Contemporary Art Fair, Mark Moore Gallery booth, Miami, FL
Urban Impression/ism, City of Brea Gallery, Brea, CA
- 2005 *Painting's Edge*, Riverside Museum, Riverside, CA
Drawing Conclusions, Concrete Walls, Los Angeles, CA
CAGED, collaborative sculpture installation with Noah Thomas, The Armory Northwest, Pasadena, CA
Saratoga Semblance, collaborative drawing project with Megan Bogonovich, The Office, Huntington Beach, CA
- 2004 *Inverse*, SCA Gallery, Pomona, CA
LA Driveby #1, Ginza Kyubidou Gallery, Tokyo, Japan
Unscenery, Raid Projects Gallery, collaborative installation with Noah Thomas, Los Angeles, CA
Network, Gallery De Parel, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- 2003 *Vanitas*, Raid Projects Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
Imaginary Spaces, Real Places, collaborative installation with Noah Thomas, Gatov Galleries, California State University, Long Beach, CA
The Pond and 1/2 Quarter, Raid Projects at Standard Gallery, Standard Gallery, Chicago, IL
Brush, The Office, Huntington Beach, CA
Dog Days, curated by Christopher Miles, Acuna-Hansen Gallery, Chinatown, Los Angeles, CA
Insights, California State University, Long Beach Art Museum, Long Beach, CA
Unnatural, Raid Projects Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 2002 The GAS Station, Gatov Galleries, California State University, Long Beach, CA

Public Collections

Laguna Art Museum, Laguna Beach, CA
 Chaney Permanent Collection, TX
 Frederick R. Weisman Foundation, Los Angeles, CA
 Progressive Insurance Collection, OH
 Nina Jun, Los Angeles, CA
 Chris and Caron Miles, Los Angeles, CA

Honors and Awards

Professional Artist Fellowship, City of Long Beach, 2008
 Artist's Residency at Stichting Kaus Australis, Rotterdam, The Netherlands, June 2006
 Painting's Edge Workshop, Idyllwild Arts, Idyllwild, CA, 2005
 Marilyn Werby Memorial Fine Arts Scholarship recipient, California State University, Long Beach, Spring 2003



Little Folly, 2009. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 15 x 20 inches

Front Cover: *Flip Side*, 2012. Oil on canvas, 76 x 120 inches

Back Cover: *We Find Ways*, 2007-2008. Oil on canvas, 78 x 70 inches (Detail Image)

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