

5 mai 2023

Alison Shields

A Journey into Canadian Artists' Studios: Dwell in Yellowness



“When you find yourself in an empty studio, nothing makes it feel like yours than painting it a different colour every day.” Leah Rosenberg, Photograph ©Alison Shields

**Propositions: Rather than defining what art-making *is*, it opens up to what it *could be*.**



Ian August's Studio, Winnipeg, 2014, Photograph ©Alison Shields

## Chapter 1: Remain curious (Studio as mystery)



Ashleigh Bartlett's Studio, Toronto Island, 2015  
Photograph ©Alison Shields



Robert Tait's Studio, Winnipeg, 2015  
Photograph ©Alison Shields

**Monica Tap**



Toronto, 2014, Photograph ©Alison Shields

Painting was the one thing I didn't know if I could do. I keep doing it because it's hard. It still seems interesting. It hasn't revealed itself yet...So, why do I continue? Because I remain curious.



Sean Weisgerber's Studio, Saskatoon, 2014  
Photograph ©Alison Shields



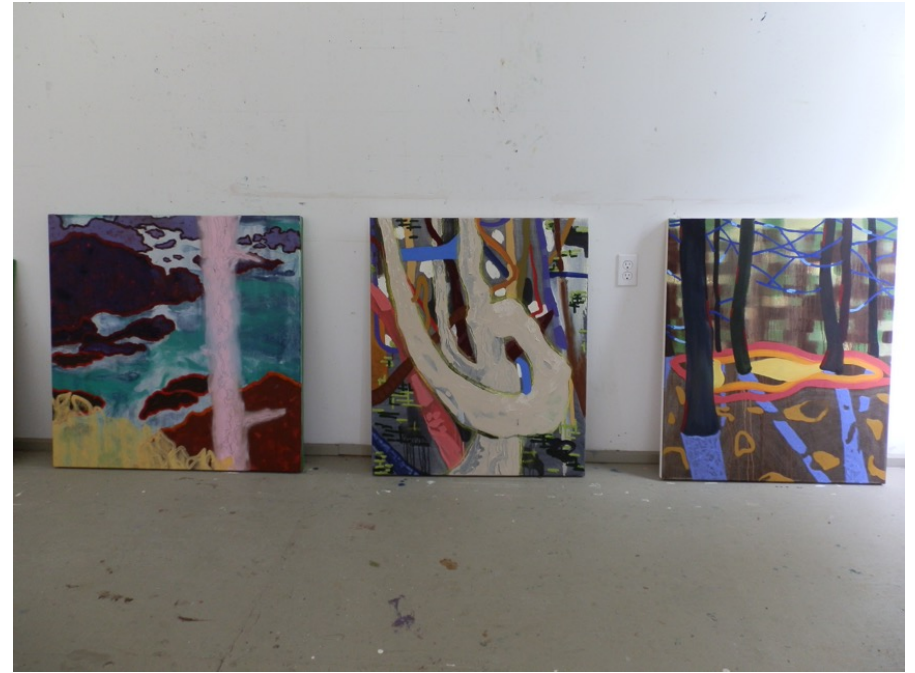
Sandra Meigs' Studio, Victoria, 2015  
Photograph ©Alison Shields

I think it's a huge ideal, but I think that art is a transportative place. And if you were to go into the world's best ever art show you would be transported to an actual different world and I think that's what the artist strives to do, to take the imagination there. I think there are those moments where your whole self is transported to someplace else. It's a pursuit of knowledge, a different kind of knowledge. What kind of knowledge? I think it's knowledge outside of daily everyday life. It's for discovery. People go to the Gobi Desert to discover what that landscape is like, so I could go to the land of Pink to discover what pink is like. Or if I do a huge yellow painting that is 47 ft. wide, I discover what it's like to dwell in yellowness. (Sandra Meigs)

## Chapter 2: Grab that moment when you're aesthetically shocked (Studio as place)



Colin Dorward's Studio, Halifax (NSCAD), 2014  
Photograph ©Alison Shields



David Blatherwick's studio, Elora, ON, 2014, 2015, Photograph ©Alison Shields

What happened in Dominican Republic was an aesthetic shock. You arrive there and you had no idea that things looked like this or acted like this. And then going to the West Coast of Canada, to the rainforest, I had never seen that before either. So, you have to grab that moment where you're aesthetically shocked. I don't know if I want to get addicted to needing it, but the aesthetic shock is extremely important to me. These images and impressions will stay with me when I return home. So, they're stored in my head and regurgitated later in the studio. (David Blatherwick, Elora, 2015)





Linda Martinello: Fear of forgetting, Toronto, 2014  
Photograph ©Alison Shields

### Chapter 3: Move the conversation even in a tiny way (Studio as ecosystem)



DaveandJenn's Studio, Calgary, 2014  
Photograph ©Alison Shields

## Monica Tap: Painting talks back to its own history



Toronto, 2014, Photograph ©Alison Shields

These paintings are phrases that are uttered. They are parts of a conversation that extends beyond you. It's not just the conversation you have with the canvas but it's the conversation that came before this that allows this painting to exist. This painting may help to move the conversation a bit even in a tiny way but it doesn't exist on its own and it's that kind of generosity that I think is a necessity at the heart of art making.

































































































































































































































































































































































































































## Ehryn Torrell: Paralleling two different lives



My core subject was memory and longing and real attempts to articulate experience in space and experience in place and understand what that means... There is an associative power, ascribing meaning to something that isn't yours.



Doris McCarthy Artist Residency, Scarborough, 2016  
Photograph ©Alison Shields

**Landon Mackenzie** The main signal I was picking up was that artists are important and they do important things and they think in an important way.



Vancouver, 2022, Photograph ©Alison Shields

## Chapter 4: Let a thing be itself and the opposite at the same time (Studio as elsewhere)



Laura Millard's Studio, Toronto, 2015  
Photograph ©Alison Shields



Kym Greeley's Studio, St. Johns, 2015  
Photograph ©Alison Shields

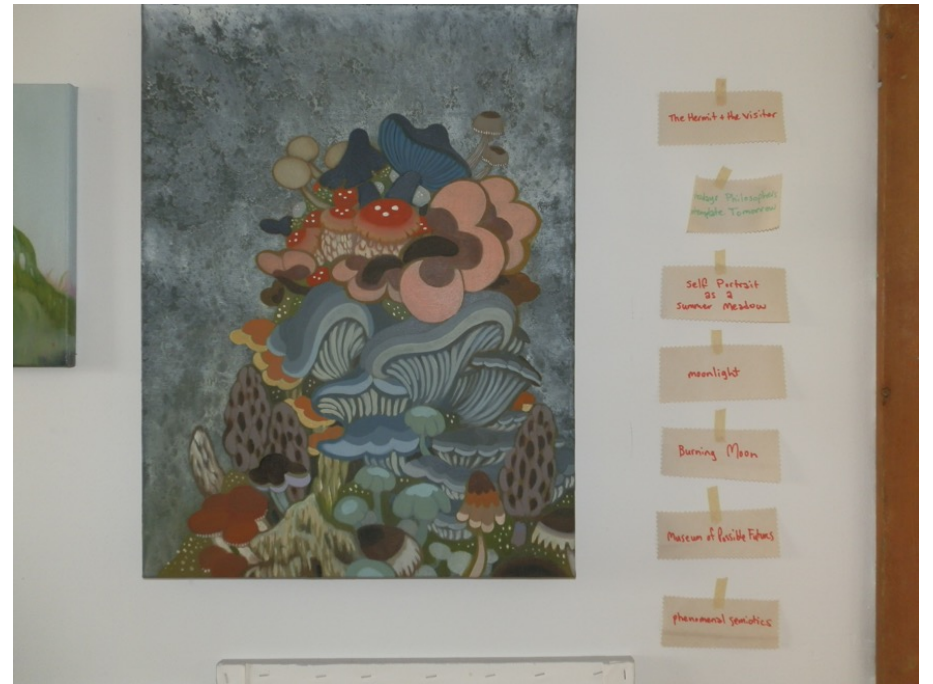
## David Elliott



David Elliott's studio, Montreal, 2015, Photograph ©Alison Shields



## Rick Leong



Rick leong's studio, 2014, Photograph ©Alison Shields

**Sandra Meigs:** Projecting your mind onto the surroundings at the same time as the surroundings are influencing you.



Victoria, 2014, Photograph ©Alison Shields



Hamilton, 2021, Photograph ©Alison Shields

**Fiona Ackerman: Studio as Heterotopia, a work and anti-work place, the real and the imaginary.**



Vancouver, 2015, Photograph ©Alison Shields

“The world of the studio began to reveal itself onto the canvas.”

“Is this your studio or is this my painting? It’s a Heterotopia. How you see yourself in your studio can be re-invented.”

**Emmanuel Osahor: This was my gardening practice**



Emmanuel Osahor's studio, Toronto, 2022, Photograph ©Alison Shields







































































































































































































































































## Chapter 5: Hold a wine glass as tight as you can without it breaking (studio as performative)



Mitchell Wiebe's Studio, Halifax, 2014  
Photograph ©Alison Shields



Holger Kalberg's Studio, Winnipeg, 2014  
Photograph ©Alison Shields

**Daniel Hutchinson:** My definition for intuition is everything you've ever learned bubbling up in random ways that you can't possibly understand. That's how I imagine it. I imagine this kind of soup of stuff with this unimaginable depth of knowledge that I'm not fully conscious of.



Hamilton, 2015



Hamilton, 2014

## Melanie Authier: Create something that can't be found in the real world



Ottawa, 2015, Photograph ©Alison Shields

I like to set up parameters so there is a certain playful antagonism between myself and the work from the get-go. I think ultimately it traps a certain energy in the work if there is a bit of struggle... struggle can be positive. I like taking risks, I like painting myself into corners, I like setting fires and figuring out how to put them out, or figuring out how to paint myself out of a corner. I like making wrong decisions for compositions, or putting down a colour that in theory shouldn't work with the painting's colour palette. By doing this I challenge myself to discover unexpected colour pairings and hues. I like to set up these games for myself, and then figure out which rules are meant to be broken and why.

## James Gardner



Montreal, 2021, Photograph ©Alison Shields



Toronto, 2014, Photograph ©Alison Shields

Sometimes being in a studio for a while, a painting can lean on another painting and they start to fuse together, and that can be a starting point to move forward. So, the ecology of the studio can be a driving force of the work. I'm not trying to just represent things. I'm not trying to capture ways of perception. Or explain things to the viewer. I'm more interested in how the act of painting in itself is the experience and how I can find new experiences through the act of painting.

## Shoora Majedian



Shoora Majedian's Studio, Vancouver, BC, 2022, Photograph ©Alison Shields

I believe that true and honest art comes from my life experiences. I find that even in simple and ordinary stories, there are valuable insights to be discovered. When I create art in my studio, I feel like I can explore and answer questions about my past. As I reflect on my upbringing and what I've been through, the act of making art helps me to uncover new perspectives and notions. While I am painting, I pay attention to the decisions I make around form and color, because they often hold important meaning. They don't always provide an answer, but they can evoke questions about the society we live in. Overall, I believe that creating art is a way to express myself authentically and connect with others through shared experiences and emotions.

## Chapter 6: Dig a hole and find your way out of it (Studio as unlearning)



Andrea Kastner's Studio, Hamilton, 2016  
Photograph ©Alison Shields



Robert Taite's Studio, Winnipeg, 2015  
Photograph ©Alison Shields

### **Elizabeth McIntosh: Improvising with artists from the past**

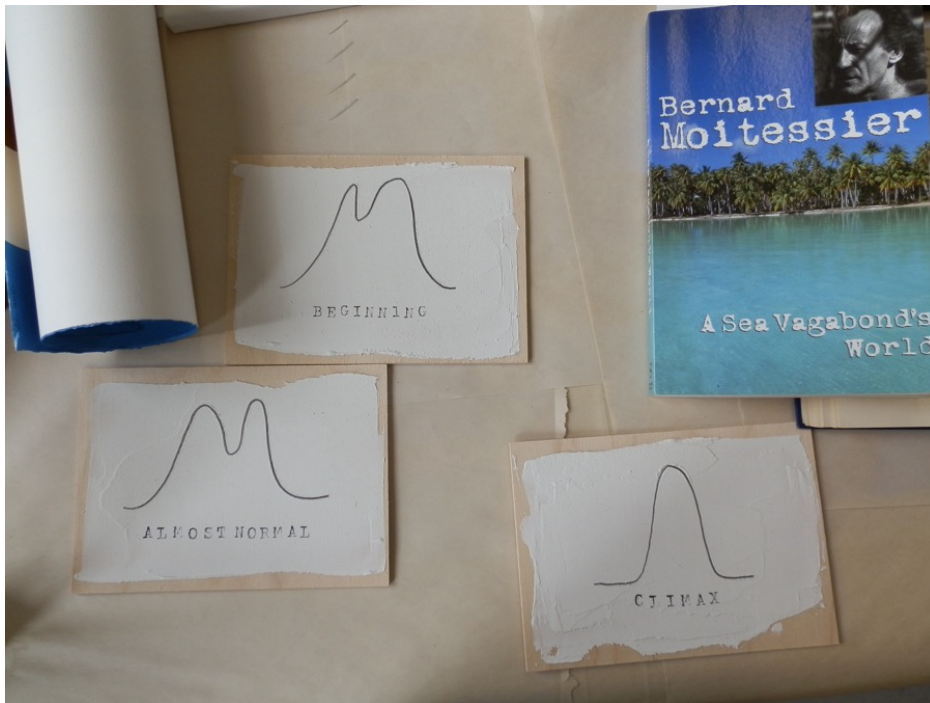
That way of thinking, that is a way of making. In the case when it's not planned, it's a kind of record, there is physical evidence because you can't actually get rid of it when you make a painting like that. It's all there in all the layers. It's not like when you're editing an essay. All the decisions are embedded in the paint.



Vancouver, 2015, Photograph ©Alison Shields

**Carly Butler**

Part of my practice is that I'm not an expert and it's about what I don't know and it's all about the failures.



Halifax, 2015, Photograph ©Alison Shields



**Art Green: Create a problem that can't be solved**

'Art is not about solving problems, art is about finding problems that you can't solve.' In other words, artists keep working because they have found something they want to resolve. Maybe it's something in their life they want to resolve. They've been carrying around an incredible guilt and want to paint it out. Or it's the relationships on a flat plane or its colour relationships. The most important thing you can find as an artist is a problem.



Stratford, 2015, Photograph ©Alison Shields

## Dil Hildebrand: Walk in the wilderness without knowing where you are going



Dil Hildebrand's studio, Montreal, 2014, 2015, Photograph ©Alison Shields

It's really just a walk in the woods. I sort of think of in this way, like a walk in the wilderness where you don't know where you're going and every decision is based on what's there right now. It's not based on the map that you might have in your hand that gets you where you are you going. I don't have a map. I'm just walking through the woods and making decisions. There are problems with that because sometimes you do get lost; I get lost each and every time. (left, 2015, right, 2015, Montreal)

## Julie Trudel

In the day-to-day practice of being an artist, coming to the studio and seeing art, there is a great deal of doubt. Over the course of a painting project, you're trying to understand what other people are doing, trying to understand what you are doing, trying to find your own way into the whole baggage of art history. You start with an idea, you try this, you try this and you walk through this whole process. And in the end, I've tried every possibility, and when I choose one, it's like, 'ok it couldn't be any other way for this project.' Then I feel confident enough to show it in the world.



Halifax (NSCAD), 2015, Photograph ©Alison Shields

**Chapter 7: Take one small idea and see how fertile it can be: (Studio as messy)**



Adam Gunn's Studio, Halifax, 2014, Photograph ©Alison Shields

## Ufuk Gueray



Ufuk Gueray, Winnipeg, 2014, 2015, Photograph ©Alison Shields

In creating these images, I was consciously working with a narrow, repetitive inventory of motifs. I did so in an effort to use self-imposed limits as a way to generate stylistic freedom; in the studio, painting often happens in a responsive way, through improvising, going along with textures, forms and shapes, and responding to ideas that get carried over from one piece to the next and morph into different things.

## Mathew Reichertz



Halifax, 2015, Photograph ©Alison Shields

The whole thing revolves around dealing with a new material in relation to an idea that already came to me. The undiscovered possibilities in the material allow me to approach whatever I'm trying to do, where something is coming in from outside myself that I can't control but that I have to engage. I haven't painted on canvas in a long time because of how I work in the studio. I need to invite something into the process that disrupts what I'm used to doing, so I can think about it in a new way.

## Will Gill

The whole thing revolves around dealing with a new material in relation to an idea that already came to me. The undiscovered possibilities in the material allow me to approach whatever I'm trying to do, where something is coming in from outside myself that I can't control but that I have to engage. I haven't painted on canvas in a long time because of how I work in the studio. I need to invite something into the process that disrupts what I'm used to doing, so I can think about it in a new way.



St. John's, 2014, Photograph ©Alison Shields

## Jeremy Hof

It goes back to a 'maker' need that it satisfies. I'm my happiest and healthiest when I'm working in my studio. It gives me great pleasure.



Vancouver, 2015, Photograph ©Alison Shields



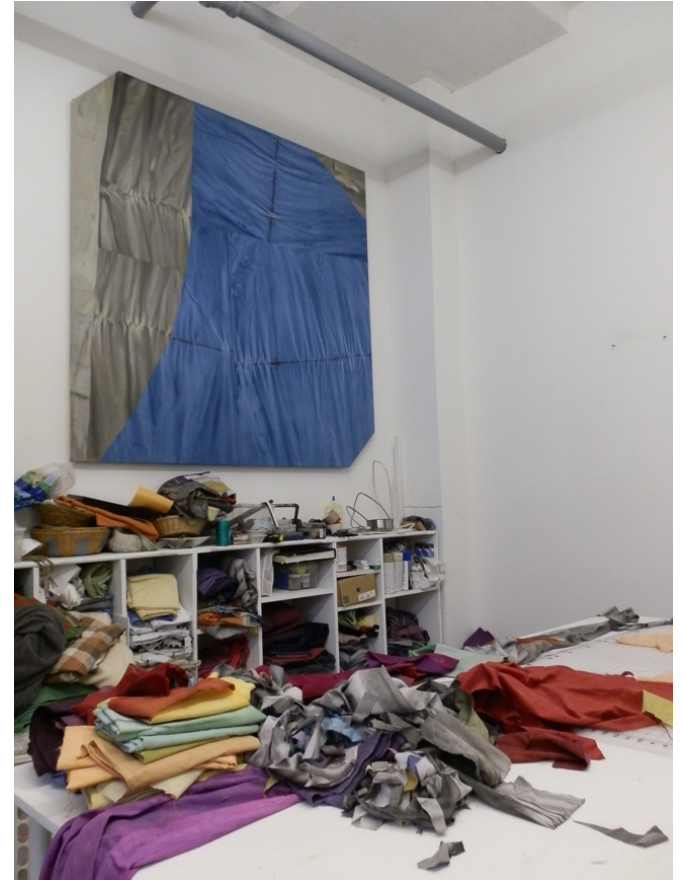
## Sean Weisgerber

I was at the grocery store one day and I was looking at apples and was thinking about wax coating that protects it and makes it last, giving it a shimmer. I went to the studio and I just decided on impulse to dip an apple.



Saskatoon, 2014, Photograph ©Alison Shields

**Colleen Heslin:** Any work that is interesting, is informed by the material that it's made from in some way.



Montreal, 2014, Photograph ©Alison Shields



Toronto, 2015, Photograph ©Alison Shields

## Jennifer Carvahlo

Someone once said to me in a studio visit that the etymology of the word methodology is to make a path. So, if you think of yourself as making a path through a wild forest, you have nothing ahead of you but wild brush and you're cutting into it as you go, and you can't see the path until you look back. In front of you, you're making some sort of intuitive decision but it's not until you look back that it makes sense, and there is a path. I'm ok with things being a bit messy and having unanswered questions. Over time things will make sense.

## Chapter 8: To bridge the gap between what I'm seeing and feeling (Studio as body)



Allyson Clay's Studio, Vancouver, 2015  
Photograph ©Alison Shields



Jordy Hamilton's Studio, Vancouver, 2014  
Photograph ©Alison Shields



Barrie, 2015, Photograph ©Alison Shields

**Gary Evans: fight, flight, movement,  
happiness, comfort, discomfort**

And that's something I've always been compelled to do, to bridge that gap between what I'm seeing and feeling. And I don't really think it's a logical thing. I think it's a way to dialogue with reality in some way and I think that's by and large what I do. It's that feeling of a space. And the feeling of being in the space and aware of that feeling.

## John Brown: Painting's Leakage

It's because it's one of the ways of making art that can be very improvisational. There are all these things coming in from the side all the time. Sometimes you'll do something and realize later why you did it. And not even what you were thinking about, but something you had seen kind of leaks into it. Paintings have a lot of leakage in and out of them.



Toronto, 2014, Photograph ©Alison Shields

## Erica Mendritzki

Finding the sweet spot of doubt is a really crucial thing in art practice. For me that's really central to my art practice. I'm a very self-doubting artist. So, something I've had to work into my practice is to make that productive, to make that something that generates work rather than stops it.



Winnipeg, 2015, Photograph ©Alison Shields



## Charlene Vickers

If I were to say that my work had any bearing in the world or if it could to have any sort of effect in the world, it would be about healing. That it could change the way someone thought about something or how they felt in that moment. That's the importance of art, if you're able to do something to somebody's thinking or the way they feel or have some sort of effect on someone's body.



Vancouver, 2022, Photograph ©Alison Shields



**Chapter 9: Set the stage for encounters (Studio as encounter)**



Alexis Lavoie's Studio, Montreal, 2015, Photograph ©Alison Shields

## Carol Wainio

Why make art? I want to know what happens when I make it material. I find images interesting, even the most banal. I'm fascinated by choices when there are a million choices. It's like the multiple universe theory in physics. Every step of the way you could go in so many different directions. That's more pronounced in paint. There's something about the accidents that happen that might take you somewhere else.



Ottawa, 2014, Photograph ©Alison Shields

## Janet Werner

I think that is the power of painting. If it has any power and if it has any meaning that isn't in words, it would be that you can feel it. Maybe that's true of any art but I think it's especially true with painting, and maybe poetry. It is that you feel it.



Montreal, 2015, Photograph ©Alison Shields



Montreal, 2021, Photograph ©Alison Shields

## Michelle Peraza



I feel like as an artist you're a cultural commentator. All I had access to when I was little were Renaissance books from Costco. And I was looking at them and just thinking, I want to see some brown people in this size, this level of realism. So, I thought, this is what I can do to work through this mess of a world.

Toronto, 2022, Photograph ©Alison Shields

**Chapter 10: Set up two situations so your mind has to travel between them (Studio as collage)**



Chris Cran's Studio, Calgary, 2014, Photograph ©Alison Shields

## Alex Livingston

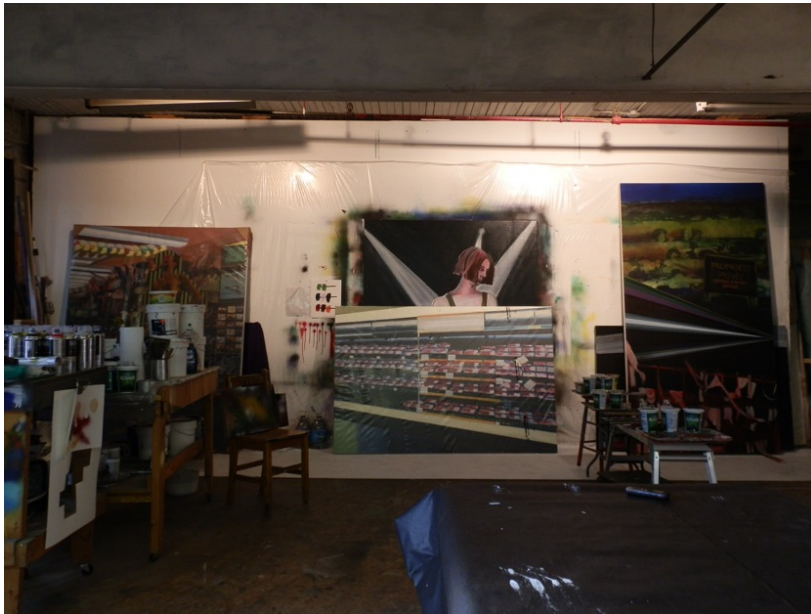
I suppose if there is a base note to all the work it's that there is a deep belief that there is a strong and undefinable interconnectedness between all things. We all find different ways of speaking about our relationship to the external world and the internal perceptions in our world, our internal minds and how we fit into the bigger picture. And that is a prime impetus of mine, a way of coming to understand both myself and how I perceive the world.



Halifax, 2015, Photograph ©Alison Shields

**Christine Major: Transforming all this noise and filtering it through my own experience.**

I like constructing paintings and talking about all sorts of things going on in society. Putting images together is a great space to have conversations about issues or about what's going on, or the presence of technology in our lives or social media. I've been critical of technology and I use paint to feed that criticism. I can't live in the world, I need to be in this parallel world. I can't deal with the reality, so I need to get the energy from this parallel world.



Montreal, 2015, Photograph ©Alison Shields

## Andrea Kastner: Connecting the dots

You know when you see a garbage truck pull up and the men throw the garbage in the back of it and then the truck itself mulches it, the thing comes down and all the bags break apart and all the garbage mixes together and you have the old things and the new things and the important things and the not important things mixing together. That's how I picture my brain working.



Hamilton, 2016, Photograph ©Alison Shields





Guelph, 2015, Photograph ©Alison Shields

**Patrick Cruz: Scavenging, this excess of our culture and putting them together**

I think collage has been probably the most influential medium for me after painting. Because it already speaks to displacement. When we tear something and put it in a different place, it changes the context. Ambiguity also connects to the idea of transnationalism. For me, ambiguity is a strategy in art. It prolongs the seduction.

## Chapter 11: Threaten to fall into a mythological or fictional space (Studio as imaginative)



John Kissick's Studio, Elora, 2015, Photograph ©Alison Shields

**Philippa Jones:** Create spaces in which you allow yourself to imagine



St. John's, 2014



## Mark Neufeld



Winnipeg, 2014, Photograph ©Alison Shields

The work is infused with the fact, factual things, but always threatening to fall into a mythological or fictive space. There is this play with objectivity. (Winnipeg, 2014)

## Kent Monkman: Reversal of the gaze



Toronto, 2014, Photograph ©Alison Shields

European artists were looking at indigenous artists through that period of modernity, and that's what's important in a lot of my recent work, it's how that period of modern art is confused by that outward perspective of Europeans looking at non-Europeans. So, a lot of my work has to do with that reversal of gaze and that reciprocal relationship, that it's never a one-sided thing, of course we're being observed but we were also observing.

## Eleanor Bond



I think it's important that there is art in the world. I think that how we think and learn as a society is from people who take the time to view it in a global and an imaginary way... I think making is thinking. So, it's a way of deepening and enlarging my thoughts about whatever I'm spending time with. There are questions here. I don't have solutions, but I want to visualize those questions or debates about utopia and dystopia.

Winnipeg, 2015, Photograph ©Alison Shields

**Cynthia Girard: A Cachette/ A place where I can hide**

*Why do you make art?* Because I like it. Because I can change the relations to the world. Like I try to create a world where I would want to live. And I can only do it in art. I'm quite limited in the normal world. In the arts I can create another balance of powers and it makes sense to me.



Ryan Peter's Studio, Vancouver, 2015  
Photograph ©Alison Shields



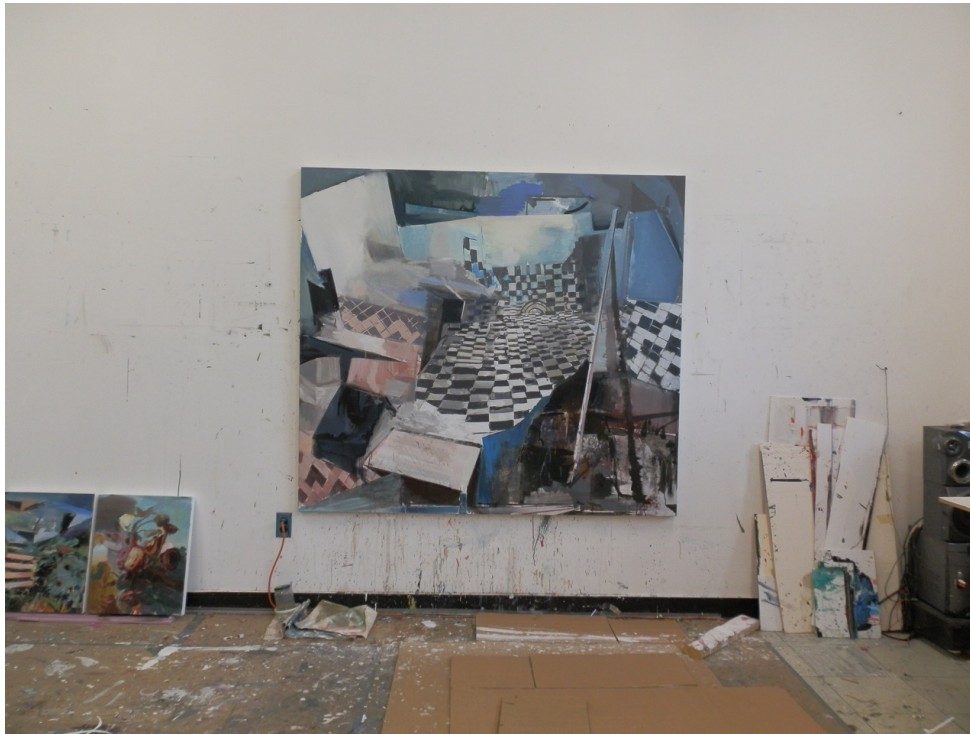
Jared Peters' Studio, London, 2014  
Photograph ©Alison Shields

**Chapter 12: Move around so you can see things at a distance (Studio as event)**



Rebecca Brewer's Studio, Vancouver, 2015, Photograph ©Alison Shields





Ottawa, 2015, Photograph ©Alison Shields

## **Martin Golland**

I make art because it is a space that goes beyond certain social orders. It is a free space, a space to do things. If you feel compelled to talk about the world and respond to the world, it is a fantastic space to do it. Very little art comes out of contentment and complacency. But art does come out of a condition of adversity, dissonance, dissatisfaction, ennui and a longing for something other than what is. At the end of the day that is exactly why I make art.



Montreal, 2015, Photograph ©Alison Shields

## Eliza Griffiths

What happens with painting is this embodied knowledge. If you've been painting for a number of years, your body knows what to do. So, your brain is acting, your eyes are acting but it's in concert with each other. You may be meandering everywhere but it becomes this site where you can put a lot of condensed information in that comes out indirectly. So, to support painting you have to believe that it's worthwhile to have indirect information that can impact your senses and imagination.

## Ben Reeves



Vancouver, 2014, Photograph ©Alison Shields

Art is probably one of the most, if not the most useful vehicle for me to think about things, and for me to understand my place in the world. That's essentially what it is. So, it's a way of investigating things. It's a speculative way of thinking, theorizing, philosophizing and exploring things. (Vancouver, 2014)



Ottawa, 2022, Photograph ©Alison Shields

## **Jinny Yu: Move around so you can see things at a distance**

I think art helps me live. To find answers to big questions. Or finding snippets to answers to big questions, it makes living worthwhile somehow. And I think also by doing that, it somehow finds collective individuality. How we all strive to find answers in this world and we find our own answers that are not dictated by whatever events are external to us. But by making art I manage to find my own answers. I think it is a collective thing, not necessarily just an individualistic activity... You get answers, small answers to different facets of the question, and I think that's the driving force behind, people keep asking questions.

## Chapter 13: Being inside a painting (Studio as never-ending)



Renee Van Halm's Studio, Vancouver, 2015  
Photograph ©Alison Shields



Jessica Groome's Studio, Berlin, 2016  
Photograph ©Alison Shields

**Monica Tap: Being inside a painting**



Toronto, 2022, Photograph ©Alison Shields

Mark Igloliorte



Montreal, 2022, Photograph ©Alison Shields

**Ministry of Casual Living Artist-run-centre**



Victoria, BC, 2020, Photograph ©Alison Shields







**Alison Shields: Studio as Portal, McClure Gallery, Montreal, 2020, Photograph ©Alison Shields**





**Alison Shields: Studio as Portal, McClure Gallery, Montreal, 2020, Photograph ©Alison Shields**



**Alison Shields: Studio as Portal, McClure Gallery, Montreal, 2020, Photograph ©Alison Shields**



**Alison Shields: Studio as Portal**, McClure Gallery, Montreal, 2020, Photograph ©Alison Shields



**Alison Shields: Studio as Portal**, McClure Gallery, Montreal, 2020, Photograph ©Alison Shields

What else can artistic practice become when the object is not the goal, but the activator, the conduit toward new modes of existence? (Manning, 2016, p. 46)

Manning, E. (2016). *The Minor Gesture*. Duke University Press.