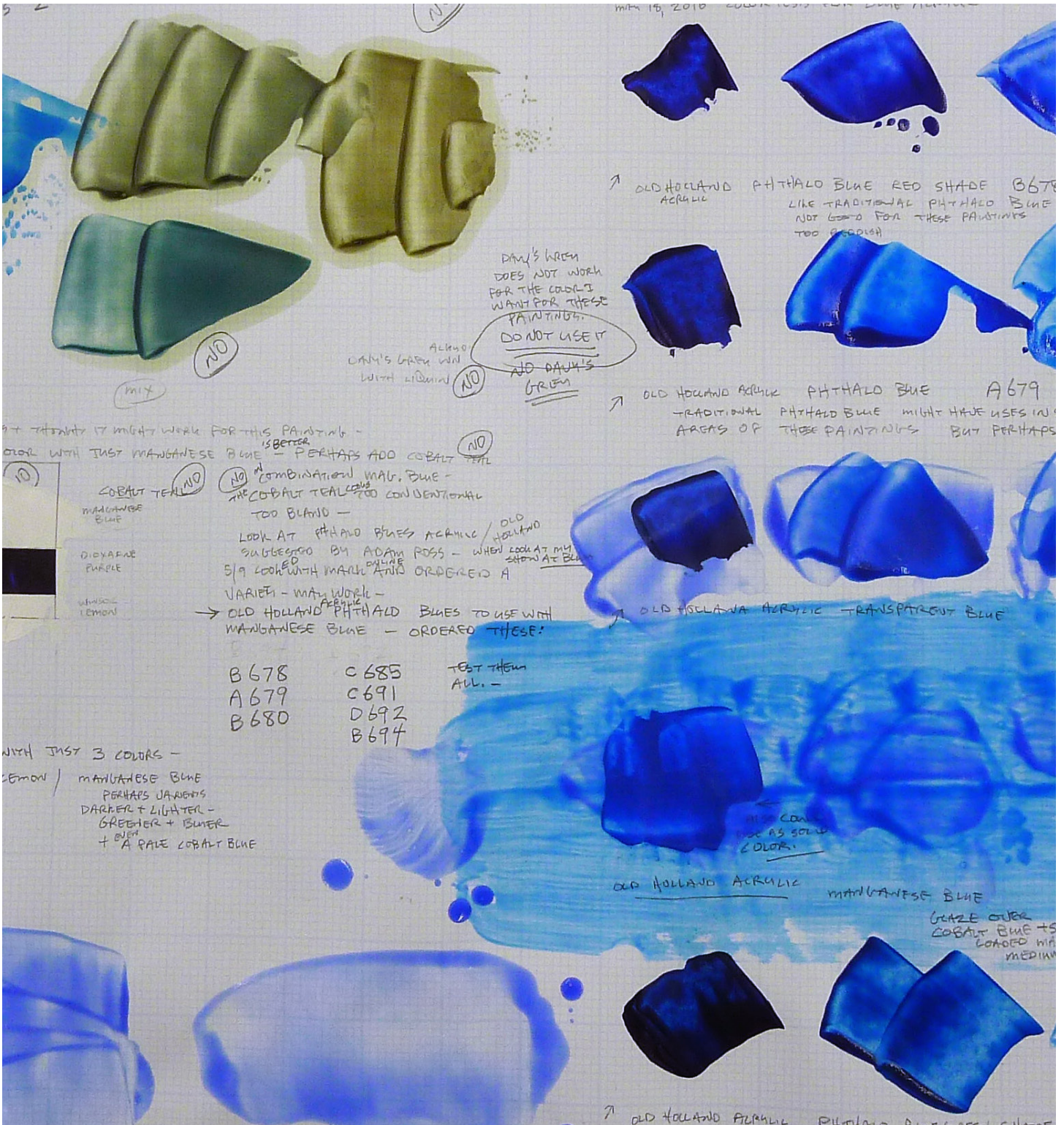


David Reed

English



Vice and Reflection—An Old Painting, New Paintings and Animations

David Reed's paintings feature large brushstrokes and diverse paint placements in vibrant color configurations. His gestural marks are often shown partially fragmented, as if the brushstrokes are elements of collage that have been cut and placed in disjunctive ways. The artist has experimented with methods of painterly abstraction for more than five decades, pushing and expanding material limits, forms, and references. Since the 1970s, his works have drawn upon and critiqued the legacies of Abstract Expressionism, Minimalism, and Conceptual art, while continually responding to new forms of image making taken from cinema, television, and digital media.

His current project, created for the Mary M. and Sash A. Spencer Gallery of the Pérez Art Museum Miami (PAMM), offers a fresh look at his complex and layered processes, and at how he engages with time, reflection, and repetition in unusual ways. It involves the artist's investigation of his own art history, by presenting an older painting that serves as inspiration for a set of new, large-scale canvases that also respond to Miami and to PAMM's architecture. These large paintings are presented alongside his series and *Working Drawings* and *Color Studies* and two new video animations.

In *#212 (Vice)* (1984–85), blue alkyd paint moves across the canvas in unusual ways. Divided into long, horizontal sections, the work features diverse applications of paint that create visibly different rhythms; in the top section, paint is applied in thick, wavelike lines, in the bottom right, in swirling, textured brushstrokes layered onto a set of repeating arcs. The paint's opacity is constantly shifting as a white ground underneath the blue is revealed in some areas, depending on its density and placement. This vibrant blue is juxtaposed with the bright yellow of several linear elements. These include a squeegee-like set of lines that form a translucent rectangle in the center-left of the composition, and a crisp, geometric band alongside a similar form in black-purple that runs across the entire bottom edge of the work.

This work is particularly significant to Reed's development, as it was here that he first noticed that the color produced glowed outward from within, similar to the way the white light of a television screen projects into space. The white ground on which the blue paint is placed creates an all-over glow that emanates from beneath the surface, behind the

blue paint. Reed also noted that the high saturation of color recalled, for him, the intense colors used in the television show *Miami Vice*, a series he enjoyed watching in the 1980s. He was specifically drawn to it for the unique way in which, for the first time on TV, the story was driven by visual effects. Michael Mann's *Miami Vice* represented one of the first instances in which cinematography or "high art" filming entered popular culture. Mann then updated his tale of undercover Miami cops in his remake of the TV program as a feature film in 2006.

In considering the invitation to produce an exhibition at PAMM, Reed thought of *#212 (Vice)* because of its Miami-inspired palette and pop culture references. He then created a "remake" of his original painting, using it as inspiration for a group of new paintings. *#212 (Vice)* was exhibited at the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, La Jolla, in 1989 and displayed in a gallery with large glass windows that faced the Pacific Ocean. Reed specifically hung his sea-blue painting so that its central horizon line aligned with that of the ocean outside the gallery windows. In positioning the work this way, Reed drew the exterior environment into the painting, tying the work to its exhibition site and "contaminating" its abstraction by referencing the physical landscape surrounding it.

At PAMM, Reed pursued a similar strategy, allowing the museum's architecture to dictate the scale and placement of the new paintings he produced. During a visit to the gallery in which his works would be placed, he was drawn to the size and proportions of its single, vertical window and the tropical view of palm trees, blue sky, and the colors of the bay seen in the distance. He created four paintings of the exact same dimensions as this gigantic window; one to be hung vertically to the left of the window and three to be installed horizontally, perpendicular to it.

The palette and overall structure of these new paintings take inspiration from the 1984–85 painting. They each incorporate its white ground, vibrant blue, yellow, and dark hues. The three horizontal paintings read as a single composition, unified by the bands of yellow and purple that run across the bottom of each canvas, an element that extends to the vertical painting on the other side of the window. A horizontal line cuts through the compositions of each of the four paintings, the height of



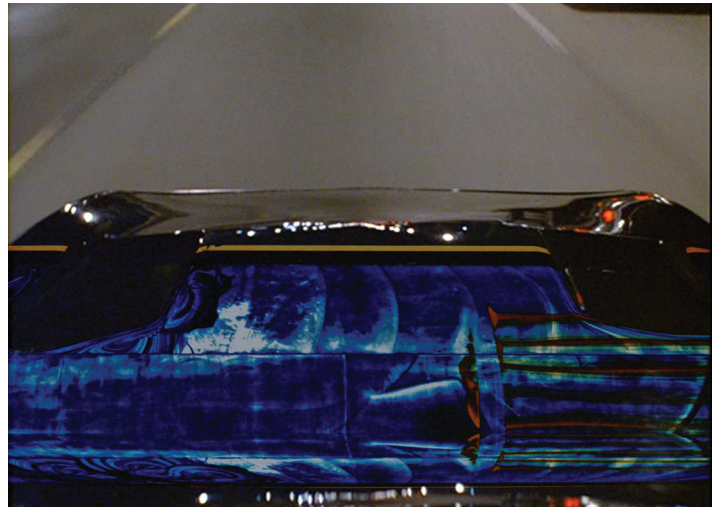
which has been carefully calculated to match the height of the horizon line seen outside the window. All the paintings are hung very low, so that the lower edge of each aligns with the bottom of the window frame. These canvases, their placement, and both the linear and curvilinear elements depicted in them, play off the architecture of the room, the window, and its view. These elements help draw the outside landscape into the room and into the paintings themselves. In their direct engagement with the architecture of the gallery, the paintings distinctly reflect the space in which they are placed, but also aim to dominate it, by not fitting elegantly or seamlessly within it.

Reed also presents two video works in the exhibition. The first plays on a TV that the artist has had in his studio since the 1980s, the specific television on which he once watched *Miami Vice*. On this monitor is a clip from the original 1984 pilot for the program, which shows the hood of a black sports car as it passes beneath streetlights, which are seen in its reflection. Reed has digitally inserted #212 (*Vice*) into this segment, so that it also appears reflected on the hood of the car, its image distorted as it moves quickly over the shiny surface. The second monitor is a newer flat screen TV that displays a sequence from the *Miami Vice* film. Gestural elements of Reed's new paintings are digitally inserted here as well, also as reflections, across the windshield of the protagonist's car.

Mirroring, reflections on, reflecting in are gestures made literal through Reed's digital insertions, but also point back to his thought processes and the formal influences that these filmic narratives have had on his abstractions. This is a strategy Reed has used before, having previously inserted his paintings into the Alfred Hitchcock film *Vertigo* (1958) in *Two Bedrooms in San Francisco*, *Judy's Bedroom* (1992) and *Scottie's Bedroom* (1994). These insertions represent another move by the artist to emphasize how the world outside painting—architecture, film, popular culture—influences his abstractions. The idea that paintings can absorb or be influenced by the environment around them is one that is in direct contrast to the notions of formal purity espoused by the influential postwar critic Clement Greenberg, who championed Abstract Expressionist artists such as Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning. Greenberg demanded that abstract painting seek to solely reference its own formal qualities, rather than respond to the characteristics of the space and world around it. Reed began working in a period in New York when Greenberg's ideas were still highly influential, and to this day his theories and writings serve as reference points for Reed to work against. In the context of Greenberg's orthodox ideas, the fact that Reed's paintings absorb a television program's color palette or lighting effects represents another form of vice, or aesthetic sin.

The remaining gallery space is devoted to the series *Working Drawings* and *Color Studies*. Both series directly relate to the larger paintings on view and give insight into Reed's complex and detailed working processes. His *Working Drawings* are sheets of graph paper onto which the artist has carefully recorded notes on the production of each of the four large paintings. These include swatches of paint as records of proposed color choices or color tests that the artist conducted. The written notes include tangential ideas, concerns, dreams, and other influences that arose as he worked on the paintings. Meticulously organized, these diary-like entries document his deep engagement with each painting, recording each decision or change in creative direction. Reed's *Color Studies* are 1/5-scale models or various "stagings" of the four paintings. Complete with tiny gestural brushstrokes in real paint, as well as collaged elements and stencils, they offer intriguing examples of alternate versions of the final large-scale paintings on view nearby. Their existence places the stability of the final works in question, as if they are but one version or physical manifestation of a larger flow of experimentation around this particular vocabulary of color and form.

Copies, displacements, and temporal distortions are not only conceptual or spatial strategies utilized in Reed's paintings, but formal ones as well. Looking closely at the painterly forms and brushwork in the works on view reveals a diverse and complex range of mark making strategies, processes that can also be seen in *Color Studies*. At first glance, the artist's brushwork appears to be direct, immediate—and it often is—but repetitions and serial processes are also revealed



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that seem to contradict the sense of immediacy or emotion that a direct brushstroke has come to signify. Reed often copies or repeats a gestural mark multiple times in the same painting, a strategy that works against notions of originality or subjectivity in this genre. While all his paintings involve directly placing paint by hand on his canvas surfaces, his processes also involve enlarging various marks digitally and trying them out in this reproduced form and scale, before placing the final marks by hand. He has often copied gestures produced in paintings from previous decades and inserted them into new paintings. The four paintings presented here include "brushstrokes" in white and black that have been produced using templates. The particular stenciled form engaged is a mark produced originally in a painting from the early 1990s. These paintings additionally include two long horizontal brushmarks that were first generated in a work from 1975.

Time displacements influence Reed's aesthetics in additional ways as well. Reed has continually described his work as having been perpetually "late." He explains how growing up in Southern California, modernism there always felt slightly behind or seemingly slow to embrace abstraction. He arrived to study in New York in the mid 1960s, a bit too late to fully participate in Abstract Expressionism, which had begun in the 1940s. He then left New York and returned in the early 1970s to find that he was arriving just after the beginnings of Conceptual art practices took hold. Baroque art and Italian Mannerism are strong art historical references for him, both artistic periods that are often regarded as existing in the shadow of the Renaissance, burdened with the challenge of trying to produce just after an influential moment of artistic fervor and innovation had passed.

Reed's own generational position and working methods place him at an interesting crux between Conceptual artists' interest in process, artists like Richard Serra and Barry Le Va whose early works involved preassigned processes engaged to produce the artwork, and members of the Pictures generation, like Sherrie Levine and Cindy Sherman, who questioned notions of originality and were deeply inspired by advertising and television. Reed's methods and interests reflect the tendencies of his generation, while grafting on to them a tradition of painterly abstraction. These references and his specific working processes transforms his gestural marks into images; images that can be endlessly multiplied, manipulated, and reproduced in diverse configurations and sizes within his paintings.

Reed's project at PAMM reveals a practice that pushes a very particular aesthetic vocabulary in surprising and innovative ways. While initially offering viewers a drama of color and an energetic display of paint, further engagement with the works induces thoughtful reflection on what a meaningful dialogue with the history of painterly abstraction can mean in our contemporary context. These paintings are consistently absorptive, influenced by popular culture and high art. Perpetually rigorous, they are earnest, awkward, and strangely enigmatic.

Tobias Ostrander
Chief Curator

David Reed: Vice and Reflection—An Old Painting, New Paintings and Animations
November 29, 2016–May 21, 2017

David Reed
b. 1946, San Diego; lives in New York

David Reed: Vice and Reflection—An Old Painting, New Paintings and Animations is organized by Pérez Art Museum Miami Chief Curator Tobias Ostrander. It is presented by Scotia Wealth Management with additional support from Unscripted Bal Harbour.



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Biography

David Reed is a Californian who lives and works in New York. He studied in Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Maine; Reed College, Portland and New York Studio School, New York. Solo shows of his work have been presented at Rose Art Museum of Brandeis University, Massachusetts; Museum Haus Lange, Kunstmuseum Krefeld, Germany; Peter Blum Gallery, New York; Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, Switzerland;

Wexner Center for the Arts, The Ohio State University; and MoMA PS1, New York. Significant group exhibitions have been presented at Hamburger Bahnhof, Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin; Contemporary Arts Museum Houston; Tate Saint Ives, United Kingdom; Minneapolis Institute of Art; Blanton Museum of Art, Austin; and Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo.

Images

- Cover *Working Drawing for Painting #659 (detail)*, 2016. Mixed Media on graph paper, 17 x 22 inches
- 2 *Color Study #39 (For Painting #659)*, 2016. Acrylic and alkyd on Dibond panel, 25 x 36 1/4 inches
- 3 *Pilot Episode Miami Vice 1984: Reflections*, 2016. Color video, no sound, 59 sec.

All works are courtesy the artist; Peter Blum Gallery, New York; and Häusler Contemporary München | Zürich.



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