



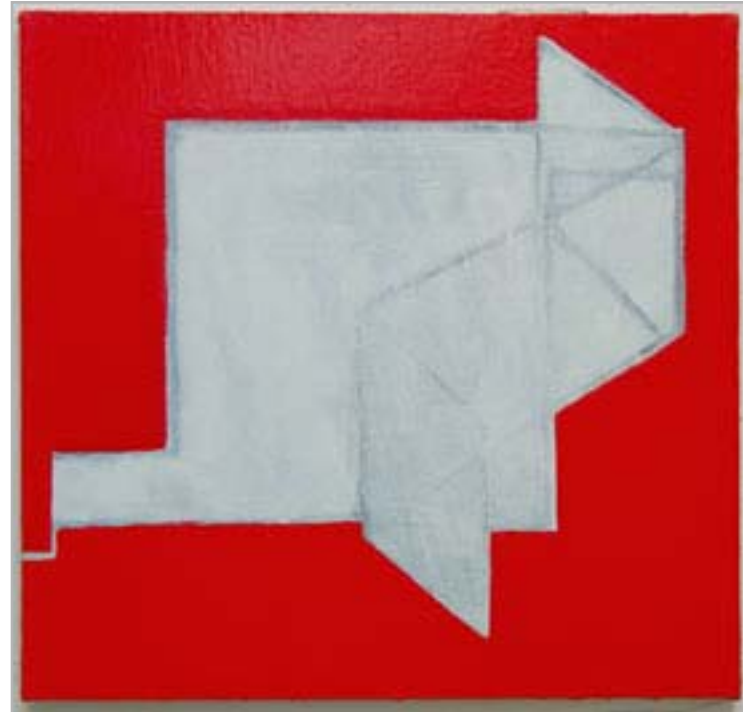
Paul Pagk

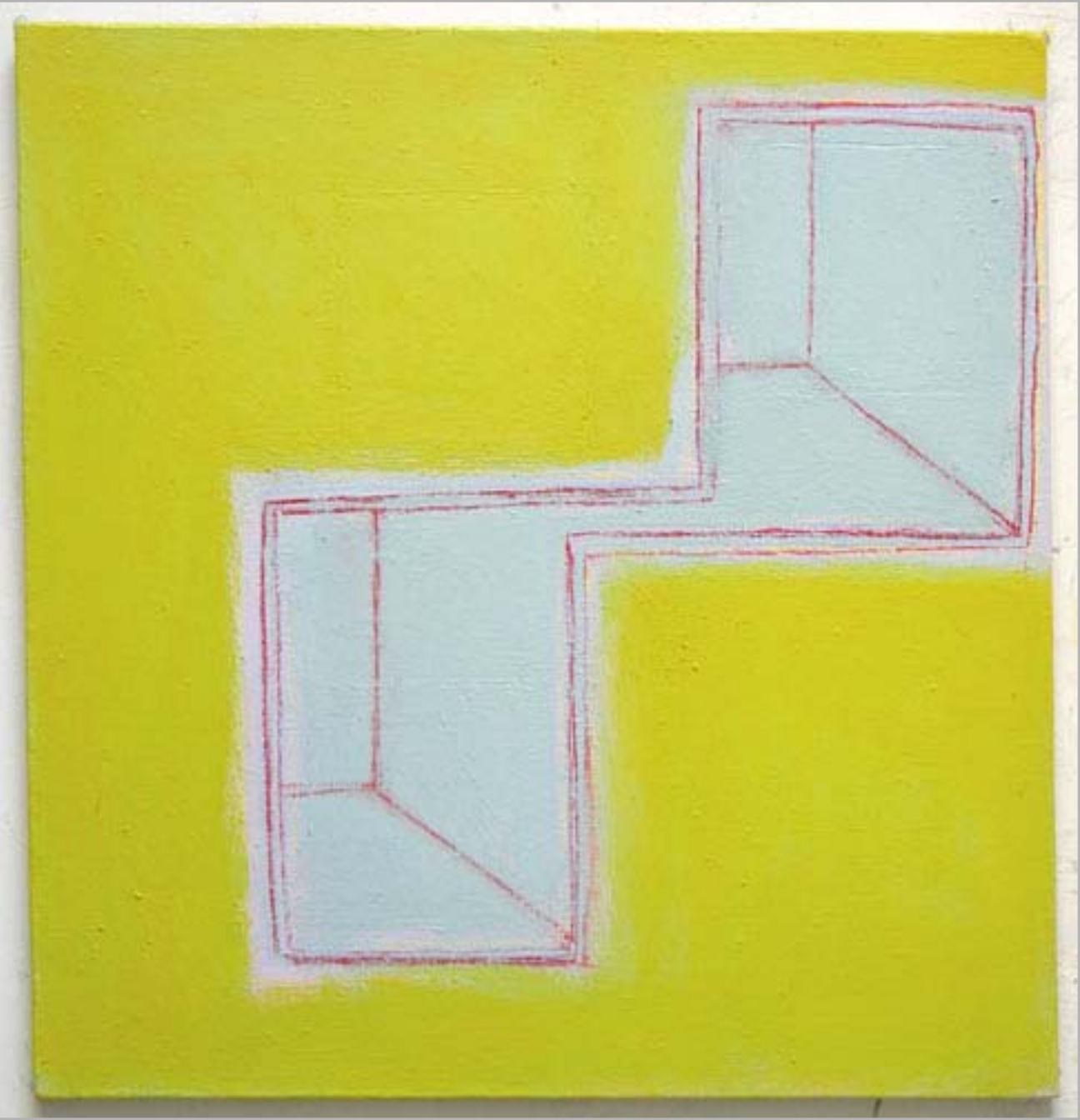
This is not a Pagk

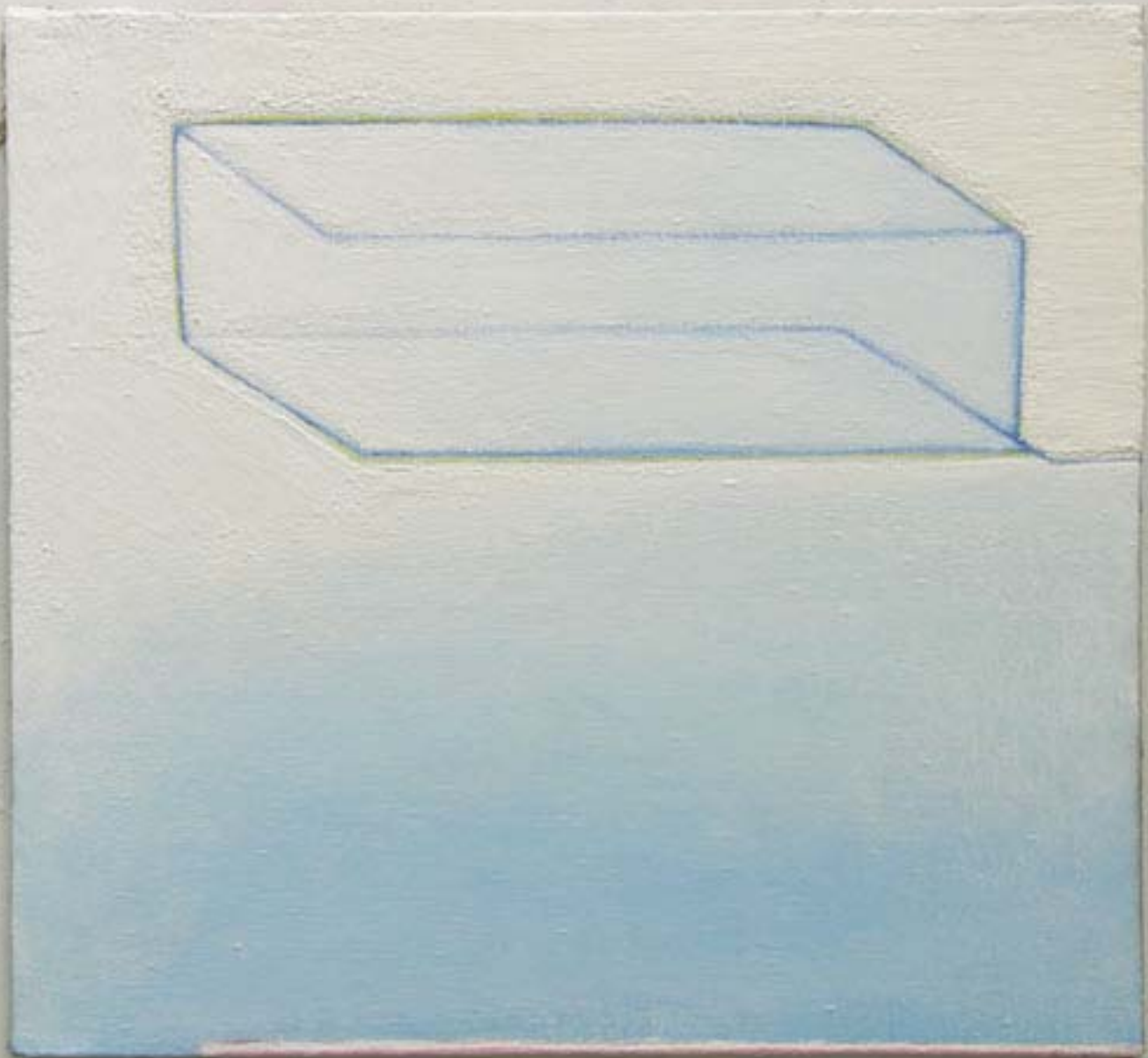
by Adrian Dannatt

No: this image on the right, lit up on a screen in front of you right now, is the absolute opposite of any painting by Paul Pagk. In fact this digital picture is lacking all the essential elements that make up the experience of one of his works. This is not a problem - this is instead a positive advantage, because it means we can try and work out precisely what a Pagk painting contains that a jpeg cannot. We can try to understand the differences between an image on a computer screen and the experience of an actual painting seen by eye, in the flesh, and we can posit painting as an act of resistance to the very image you see here. For here you are looking at a hard, flat, pixilated rendition which attempts to approximate the colors and the forms of such a painting but which by its very nature has no choice but to leave out everything important to enjoying this work.

Such as? Such as its physical presence as a three-dimensional object within a specific space, the space of the exhibition, its juxtaposition with everything from daylight to artificial light, to furniture, windows, the walls and indeed people. And from that literal space we are led to construct the larger space, harder space, in which the



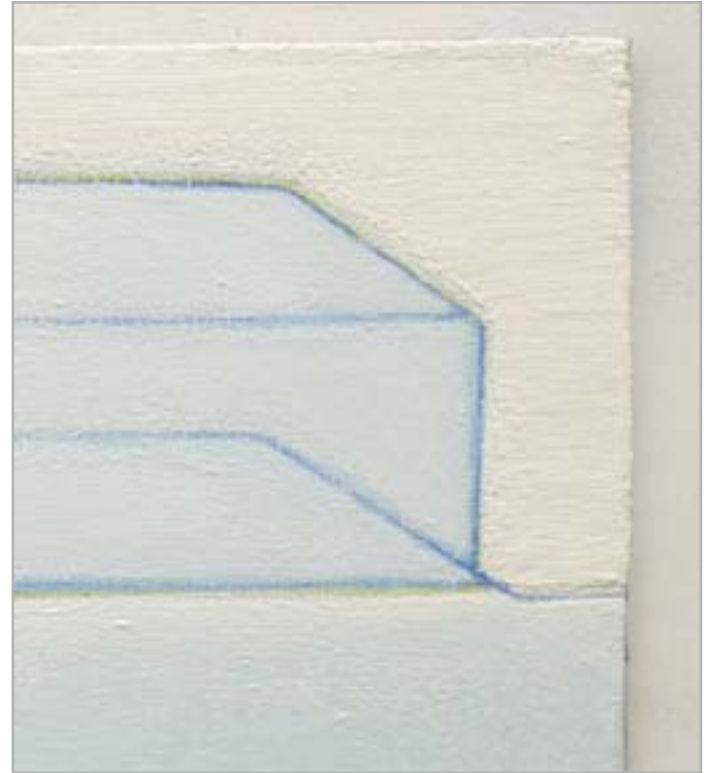


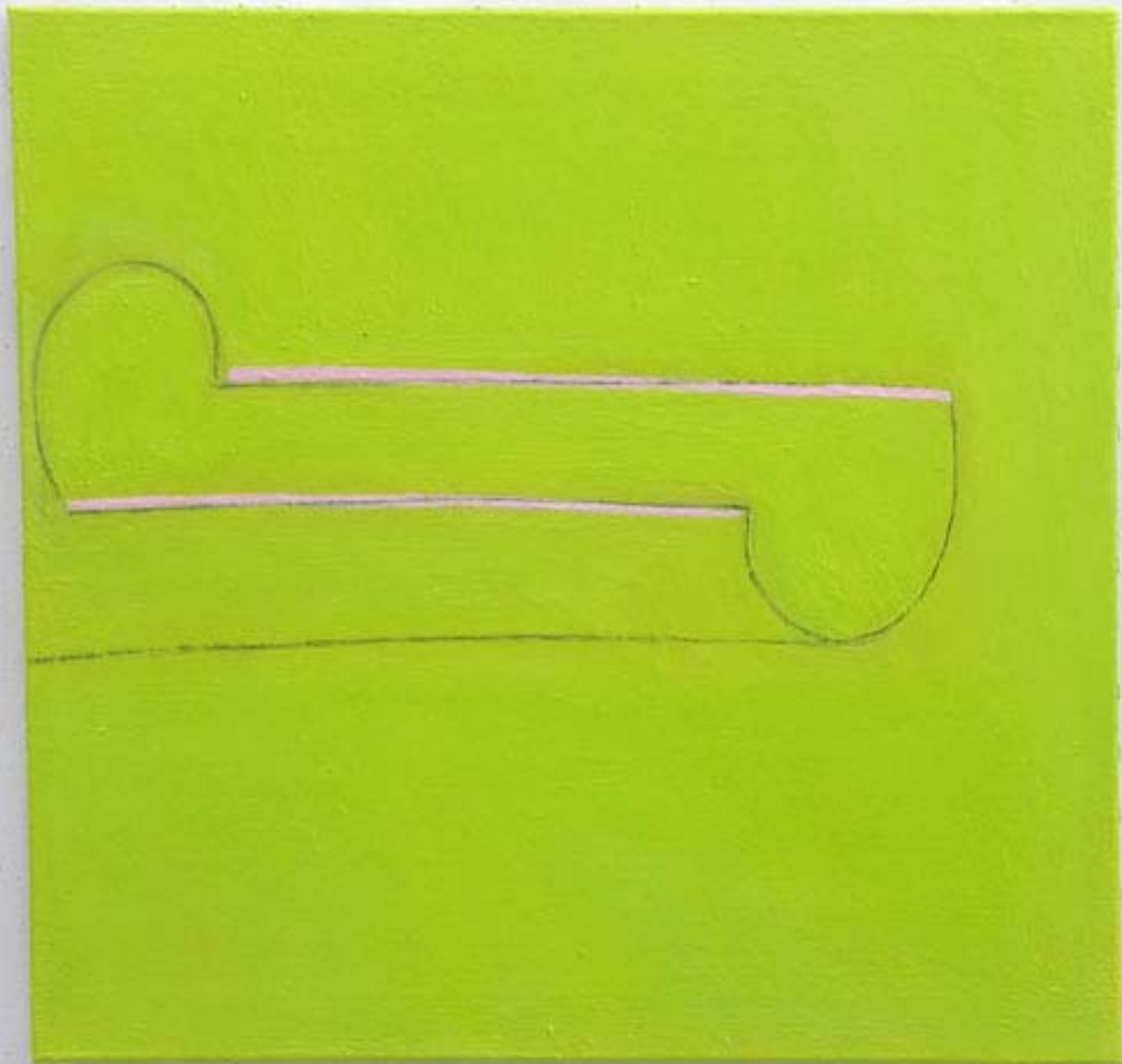


work of art resonates, a place akin to the echo-hall of memory in which our own sensation of the painting lingers, juxtaposed, set against the other works which remain in that mental domain.

Without lapsing into the kitsch of romantic garret mythology one might be allowed to mention the real resonant smell of thick oil paint and linseed, the olfactory engagement of the artists studio, the strong scent of their gathering.

Just as poetry is made up of the irreducible, the un-translatable "extra" or "excess" of language so painting is everything that just cannot be conveyed, cannot be felt through transmitted reproduction, which defies our too easy contemporary image-promiscuity. Reproductions, as here, are anti-paintings. What are the dimensions of the computer screen you are sitting in front of? The dimensions of these paintings by Pagk are mostly 25 x 24 inches; computer monitors cannot mimic the exact scale of this art. Least of all it cannot replicate the chunky inch of depth that the Pagk canvas maintains from the wall it is hung upon, the one inch by which all paintings act out as sculpture, add shadow, edge, and floating depth to the plane of the canvas. It might be interesting to try and build a special computer screen to the precise dimensions of a Pagk painting, including that inch of stretcher, and on this to attempt to perfectly reproduce the colors at identical scale. All just in





order to analyze what is still missing, what is still un-reproducible, extra between the two. Of course this is an issue that has been around at least since Benjamin's essay on the work of art in the age of reproduction and without rehashing that idea of the 'aura' we still have to ask ourselves if, how and why art maintains this "difference"?

Thus Bill Gates has himself attempted to challenge that assumed gap by creating perfect digital copies of some of the world's greatest paintings, buying rights to their reproduction, and installing these simulacrae in his own abode rather than "original" art. This might be analogous to the outrage that greeted Google's recent attempt to buy the rights to many of the most famous books and then turn them into digital downloadable files. The opposition from libraries and booksellers brought to the fore the question of what constitutes a book: is it just the actual text, the ideas contained within or the format, or is it also the object itself? And does the book as an original object, does the unique oil painting, become all the rarer?

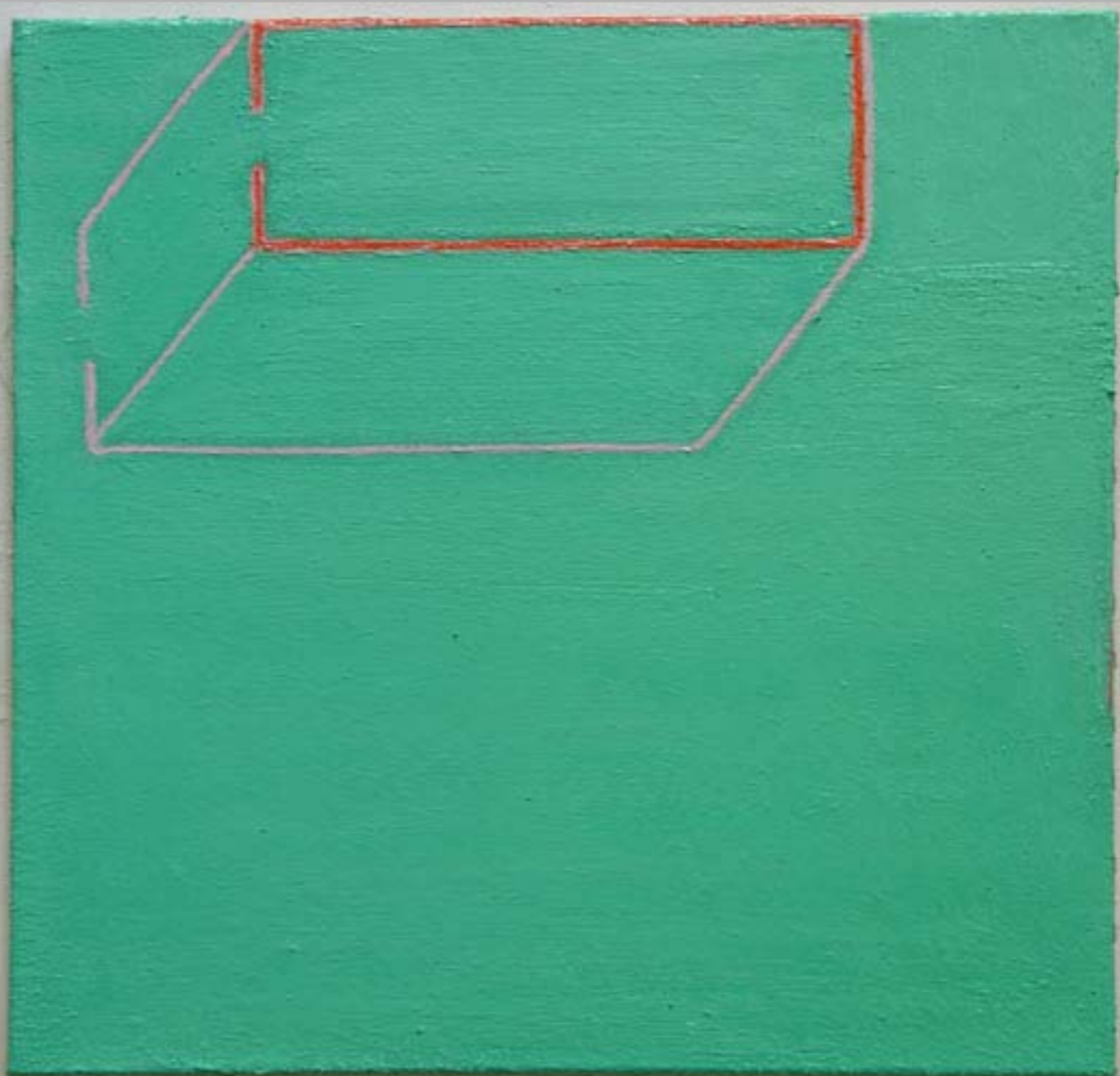
Texture is obviously one of the key elements that the computer, TV screen or printed page can never mimic, the roughness, the smoothness, the pitted and sanded, those worn and polished and faded surfaces of all Pagk paintings. And these very textures are essential to the varied ways in which light



plays off the paintings, absorbing light in place, refracting in others, granting a high-gloss sheen or a deeply resonant absence, a contrast of planes and edge. Without these textures the paintings cannot change, cannot breathe like other organic things and we must never forget that they are built out of living, mutating elements from burnt wood of charcoal to the chemical elixir of the paint itself, the oils and crushed pigments, the hemp of canvas itself. The painting shifts in color and resonance with the movement of the light in the room where it is hung, it expands and contracts, warps and wefts according to the most minute changes in temperature, and it begins to change with age.

The painting as reproduced on screen or page does none of these things, it has lost all "thingness," its frailty, its precious potential for damage, change. And it is by these textures that Pagk builds the effect of his paintings, by the contrast of the hard glossy surface with the so scumbled softness it abuts, or the fat embossed ridge of striated paint set across the lowlands of thinnest stain. Pagk uses different widths and depths of paint, the thin and the thick, the diluted and the densely repeated, to create myriad tensions and resolutions on the canvas, so that a minute x-ray analysis of all these surface differences would reveal a veritable landscape of alternating strata, microscopic high & low.





The strong physicality, the practical everyday dimensions of a work by Pagk are worth emphasizing in the place of poetic waffle about their sensuality. Of course there is a sensual if not erotic tactility to these objects, not least if you own them and can really pick them up, shift them around, place them in different lights, different corners, feel in your hands their weight, lightness. But like one of those impeccable reviews written by Donald Judd it might be better just to list the actual inches and precise weight of each Pagk work, the type of paint used, the sort of stretcher and canvas, every element measured to the millimeter, listed with no adjectives attached.

For there is much of the workaday craftsman, the systematic, pragmatic laborer to Pagk's studio method, whether in building layer upon layer of paint repetitively in order to achieve the appropriate density or deploying optical tricks, solid techniques almost akin to trompe l'oeil. The metaphysical, the philosophic, the meta-textual might be 'read' into the compositions Pagk so carefully elaborates, one can fill them with as much poetry and humanistic



timbre as one wishes. But like early paintings by Robert Irwin or indeed Judd, these are also basic material articles meant to exist in the physical world and to react to that world accordingly; specialist-built objects intended variously to refract and gather light, impose or efface themselves, depending on surrounding circumstance. So surely it is the constant push-pull in Pagk's work between this so-called 'Minimalist' plain physicality and the richer, almost Baroque temptations of surface, of skin and texture and veiled theatrics, which makes them unique? It would be as pointless to try deny the overt pleasure, those deliciously rich and yes decorative dimensions of Pagk's oeuvre as its factual, silent solidity.

The straight ordinariness, the pragmatic practicality of the thing-that-is-what-it-is, the construction of wood, canvas and paint that is just plain so. We do not require any explanation or elucidation, we judge it as it exists. That is one part of our experience in looking at, sitting amongst, passing through a set of paintings by Pagk. But there is also the corruptive and slow delight of their layered depths, their expert optical conjunctions, the green within the cream, the sub-arctic blue shadow almost worthy of, dare one say it, Wayne Thiebaud at his most richly edible. One could compare the skillful smudge of titanium white, the smear of sheer pigment with those dazzling, bravura passages by John Singer Sargent where he creates a reflective gleam with a single

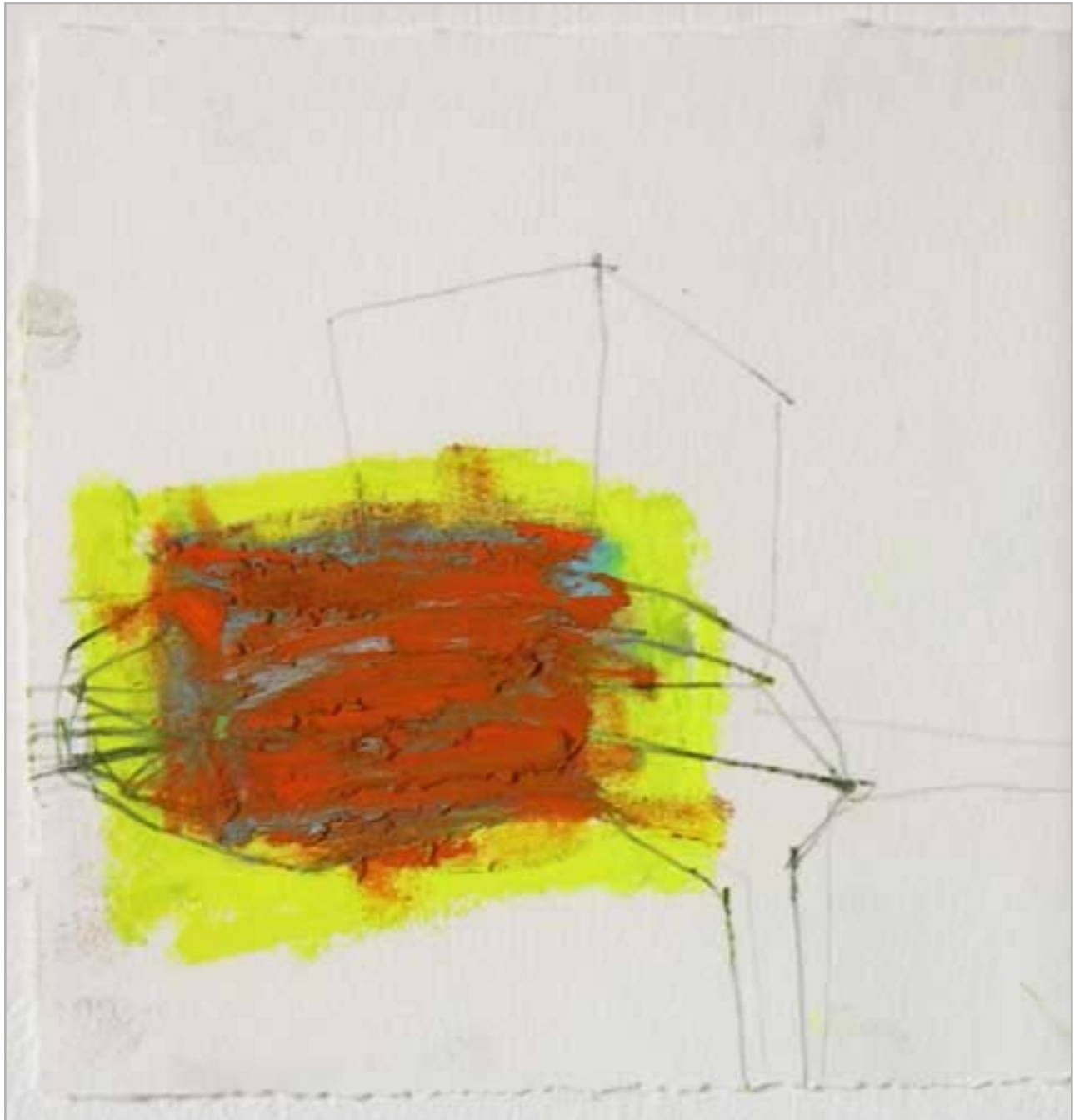


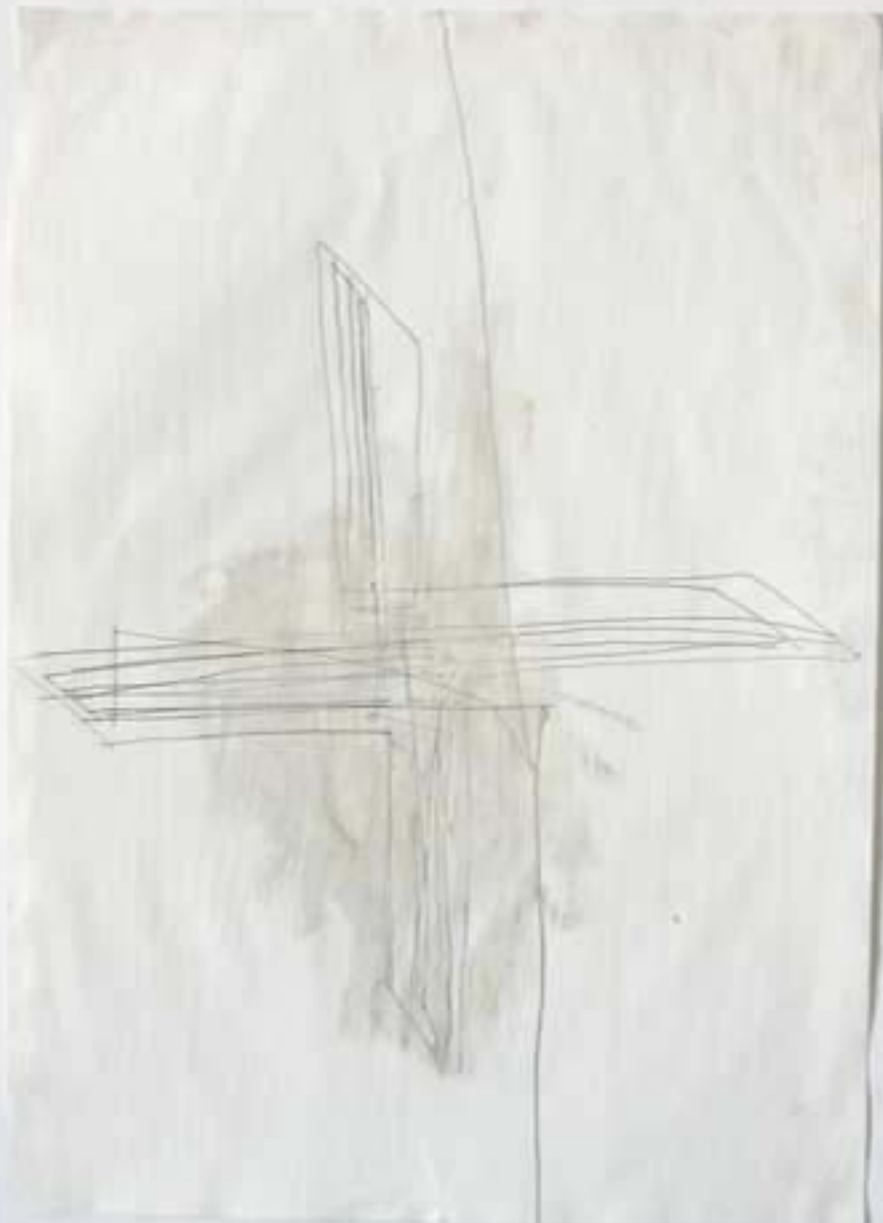
dab of paint. We do not need to know that Pagk is a methodical reader and student of Merleau-Ponty, Bachelard or Spinoza, nor do we need to know that for 25 years, Pagk has been making these paintings and learning their secrets slowly, from within.

Instead we can spend five seconds glancing at one of these paintings, and move on, or we can let them seep into us over the days, years even, by which we may come to know or feel what the artist knew or felt, wittingly and not. We can interpret them as diagrams, charted intellectual-constructs, ideas plotted out as lines and shapes, as fragments of impossible architecture, or we can feel them as containers and generators of an emotional sensibility. Every reaction to these paintings is equally valid and none of them correct, for their purpose is precisely to deny any fixed or permanent interpretation, continually opening the world up to 'both/and' rather than close it down to 'either/or'. And so the painting dies & survives, expands and subsists, just exists, but always on the other side of this screen.

Paintings and works on paper by Paul Pagk are on view at Open Project Space from October 5 to November 12, 2005. Open is located at 62 Leroy Street, NYC. Hours are Saturday 12-6 and by appointment. For more information please call 917.340.3760 or email og@studiovisit.net.







- 1962 Born in England
- 1969 Moved to Vienna, Austria
- 1973 Moved to France
- 1988 Moved to New York City, USA
- 1997 US permanent resident

Education

Art Education at Ecole Nationale Superieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris (France), 1978 to 1982.

One-Person Exhibitions

- 2005 Scope Art Fair, New York, USA
Galerie Eric Dupont, Paris, France
- 2003 Battle Pagk, curated by Adrian Dannatt, Thomas Erben gallery, NY, USA
- 2002 Galerie Eric Dupont, Paris, France
- 2000 Galerie Eric Dupont, Paris, France
"Galeries des etudes", ENAD Limoges-Aubusson, France
- 1999 "MACC", Fresnes, France
"Le 19" C.R.A.C. Montbeliard, France
- 1998 Galerie Eric Dupont, Paris, France
CRG Gallery, New York, USA
- 1995 CRG Gallery, New York, USA
- 1994 Galerie Eric Dupont, Toulouse, France
- 1993 Thread Waxing Space, New York, USA
- 1992 Galerie Eric Dupont, Toulouse, France
- 1991 Thread Waxing Space, New York, USA
- 1987 Galerie Jean Fournier, Paris, France
- 1986 Simone L'Hermitte, Rouen, France
- 1984 Jean-Marie Monthiers, Paris, France
A.P.A.C. Montpellier, France

Group Exhibitions

- 2005 "Exces de traits" Frac Picardie , Amiens, France
- 2003 "Le Cabinet" curated by Ann Philbin" FRAC, Picardie, Amiens, France
"Le Cabinet" curated by Gabriel Orozco FRAC, Picardie, Amiens, France
- 2002 Zenroxy, Curated by Ivan Vera, Von Lintel Gallery, NY, USA
- 2001 Galerie Martagon, Malacene, France
Recent acquisitions FRAC, Picardie, Amiens, France

- 2000 Geoffrey Young Gallery, Great Barrington MA, USA
 1998 C.R.A.C., Montbeliard, France
 1997 "New York Draws", Corner House, Manchester, UK
 "New York Draws", Gas-Works, London, UK
 "Current under current", Brooklyn Musuem, Brooklyn, USA
 1996 "Drawings", AC Project Room, New York, USA
 "Works on Paper", Alona Kagan & Jose Martos, New York, USA
 "Other Rooms", Ronald Feldman Gallery, New York, USA
 1995 "Metamorphose, Part II", Guillaume Gallozzi, New York, USA
 CRG Gallery, "Summer Exhibition", New York, USA
 "Logo Non Logo" curated by Robert C. Morgan and Pierre Restany,
 University of South Florida, Florida, USA
 1994 "Logo Non Logo" curated by Robert C. Morgan and Pierre Restany,
 Thread Waxing Space, New York, USA
 Centre Lotois D'Art Contemporain, Figeac, France
 "Written-Spoken-Drawn in Lacanian Ink" curated by Raphael Rubinstein, Thread Waxing Space, New York, USA
 "Drawings", Galerie Regards, Paris, France
 1993 "Interieurs", Musee Goya, Castres, France
 1990 "Abstract Painting" curated by Robert C. Morgan, Nahan Contemporary, New York, USA
 "Three Painters" 470 Broome St (curated by Timothy Nye), New York, USA
 1988 Galerie Jacques Girard, Toulouse, France
 Park Floral de Paris, Paris, France
 1987 CREDAC, Carte Blanche a Yves Michaud, Ivry, France
 Centre Culturel de Bretigny, Bretigny/Orge, France
 1986 "L'Epure" (curated by Yves Michaud), Galerie Beau Lezard, Paris, France
 1984 "Journées Jeunes Createurs", espace Kiron, Paris, France
 "Sur Invitation", Musee des Arts Decoratifs, Paris, France
 Galerie Jean Fournier, Paris, France
 1983 "55 Panoyaux", Paris, France

Awards

- 2000 The Sheldon Bergh Award, USA
 1998 Pollock-Krasner Foundation, New York, USA
 1987 Prix Feneon, Universite de la Sorbonne, Paris, France

Selected Public Collections

- 2004 Springfield Museum of Art, Ohio, USA
 2003 Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, NH USA

- 2001 FRAC Picardie, France
 L'Artotec Limoges, France
- 1999 FRAC Picardie, France
- 1993 FNAC, France
- 1993 "Les abattoires", Musee de Toulouse, France
- 1987 Collections de la Ville de Bretigny sur Orge, France

Selected Private Collections

- Mr. and Mrs. Joel Mallin,
- Mr. Ken Fried,
- Dr. and Mrs Marc Strauss,
- Mr. Tim Nye,
- Dr. and Mrs Berlingieri,
- Mr Herve Halgand
- Mr. Wynn Kramarsky

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- Morgan Robert C, Tema Celeste "The Endgame", January-March 1992
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Satch Hoyt

at

Open Project Space

Nov 16 - December 17, 2005.

Open Project Space is located at 62 Leroy Street, Ste 2E, NYC.

Open is open Saturday 12-6 and by appointment. For more information please call 917.340.3760.

SV.Pagk was published in October 2005.

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This publication is produced in New York, NY, USA.

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