Daily record

Jacques Pierre Gasquet

Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, jgasquet@lsu.edu

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DAILY RECORD

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Louisiana State University and
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in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts

In

The School of Art

by
Jacques Pierre Gasquet
B.S., Louisiana State University, 1999
May, 2008
Acknowledgements

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# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Record</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal of Records</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vita</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abstract

The paintings in this master’s thesis exhibition represent my daily encounters over the past three years. The hurricanes of 2005 made me realize how nature can be ugly and destructive one day and peaceful and beautiful the next. My paintings are abstractions of imagery representing the disrupted landscapes and personal obstacles left behind by the storms, along with my optimistic vision of a harmonious world. I describe my experiences through the search for a delicate sense of balance that excites and then quiets the mind. The painting is created through an intense interaction between me, the materials and the surface, creating something new and unique. My abstractions are full of energy, color and texture that represent days of turmoil to days of complete relaxation.
Daily Record

Painting is a personal interaction between me and the picture plane to create a surface of visual energy. Each painting develops as a unique experience. It is important to show the physicality of the materials and the connection between paint and surface. I start with a canvas, paper, or wood panel and then begin applying many different mediums such as acrylics, oils, encaustics, graphite, charcoal, pastels, paper and any other material that I feel will enhance my painting process. In my process I try to balance reaction painting with conscious objective decisions. The painting is guided into a particular direction while still allowing the paint to have an energy of its own. I create events depicting energy, action, and movement, balanced with calm, tranquil passages; areas of illusionistic space against a two-dimensional flat space. My search is for a delicate sense of balance that excites and then quiets the mind.

My work is produced in many phases and with multiple mediums. Inside my studio I have at least twelve paintings hanging up so that I can work on them all at once or individually as needed. During the time on the wall the paintings will often evolve into two or three sets. I welcome these changes of direction, which allow me to investigate the same initial thought in multiple areas of advancement. This paper will discuss two of the directions that I have been working on for the past three years. The first direction is about how I have seen the landscape of southern Louisiana drastically change since August 2005. My second direction concerns my investigation of the female form as a point of departure for a more concentrated abstract experience. Both of these series are fueled by naturally contrasting elements. I will combine ideas of the blue tarp paintings along with more intense color relationships, big bold brush strokes, and my personal intense painting approach in both series.
I have lived and worked in the New Orleans area my entire life. I grew up in Buras, Louisiana, fishing, hunting, playing football and working in my family’s grocery store. It is here that I developed my aesthetics and the desire to become an artist. The way I see the world changed one day when I realized that all material objects can be taken from you without notice. The first set of paintings deals with images that represent the disrupted landscapes and personal obstacles left behind by the two devastating hurricanes of 2005. Visions of buildings violently torn apart, floods of black water, and towns that vanished over night throughout the Gulf Coast and lower Plaquemines Parish haunt me everyday. I now have a new world view which is a home town that no longer exists, a devastated family home and business. Living in a region where the grass rarely turns brown and the trees are green most of the year, the hurricanes gave me the opportunity to live on what seemed to be a different planet. After the storms, most of the landscape was filled with muted tones of umbers, siennas, and ochres with only sporadic bits of vibrant color speckled throughout. For months, as I would drive around, I would see bright blue tarps on almost everyone’s roof where normally there was a dark-colored roof. These environmental and manmade changes prompted me to investigate the relationship between toned-down hues and hues of higher intensity. The new landscape also drove me to investigate patterns in my new world. Some areas had a lot of debris, which created a chaotic scene covering large areas of the normal grids. After the hurricanes removed many of the trees, vehicles, houses, businesses, billboards and people from normal life a grid pattern began to emerge. Some of these patterns were interrupted by huge piles of rubble or displaced houses that were scattered throughout the region. These patterns will continue to evolve until the cities and towns are either rebuilt or completely removed from the landscape. As an artist my job is to
break down and harmonize and record all of these images that surround our lives everyday. After cataloging and editing my ideas I can start my painting process.

The second series deals with the combination of an abstract field with the female figure. The reason for using the figure is to have a point of departure that is immediate. I break the figure down to a couple of simple lines or shapes that may be considered suggestive imagery. In some paintings I choose to represent the entire figure, but in others I zoom in and describe a specific area or body line which may feel familiar yet mysterious. In building the surface I combine simple geometric and organic shapes to either represent or contrast the figures. These paintings are all developed using mixed mediums.

I want viewers to be presented with a purely visual field, bringing into play their own experiences, synthesizing their interpretations for visual fulfillment. The viewer should first look passively at the painting and observe the color, texture, form and energy; then go in for a closer investigation. My paintings are a record of the performance between me and the surface creating something new and unique.
Journal of Records

June 10, 2006
Today I decided to think more about what has happened over the past couple of years, where I’ve been, what I’ve done, and where I want to be.

June 18, 2006
Energy is a big part of my paintings. Movements in nature are created by energy, so all movements represent some type of natural energy. I want my natural energy to be transferred to the surfaces that I work on.

June 30, 2006
Late in the evening when I go hunting, all the colors of nature go from a vibrant palette to a more muted palette until most light is gone and everything takes on a hue of black. All colors are in nature somewhere, you just need to see them.

July 6, 2006
In an abstract painting I must rely on color, texture, and form to convince the eye that it sees something that is not there. I recreate my world on canvas abstractly so that you can experience something that you may not otherwise have noticed.

July 22, 2006
One way to suggest movement in a painting is to use strong, aggressive, deliberate strokes of paint. For any stroke to be successful you need a variety of mark making to play against the main characters in a work.

August 1, 2006
I feel like I’m in a slump. I need something to change.
August 5, 2006

I’m leaving for Florida today in the hopes of relaxing my mind and rejuvenating my creative energies. Two weeks of travel should clear my mind and allow me to approach my thoughts from a different direction.

August 20, 2006

You should try to appreciate a line, a shape, a texture, and a color for what they are, paint.

August 29, 2006

The Mississippi River is in my back yard and I always thought of it as beautiful and tranquil, but nasty and dangerous at the same time. I wanted to put a bit of all those feelings into the work. As every ripple in a body of water has an explanation, so should every mark in a painting.

September 15, 2006

I’ve started a series of paintings that represent how I see the altered landscape of my home town. I’m not sure where the paintings are going, but I am thinking about the damaged landscapes every day, so instead of fighting to keep them out of my mind I decided to embrace them and really investigate what I see when I drive home.

September 28, 2006

One of the main things that I see when driving down the street are the blue tarps on almost every rooftop. This blue color is very different from the color of a normal shingled roof. The color stands out, calling for attention.

October 20, 2006

The first couple of blue tarp paintings are working fairly well. I will keep working through the idea of the muted colors and the more intense colors.
November 15, 2006
I’ve noted some thoughts on how to live. Celebrate your mistakes. Use what you have learned to grow in a new direction. Travel in multiple directions at the same time, and you may reach a higher level of success this way. Live life, don’t let life live you. Do what you want, not what is expected; this is how you can grow into something new and great. Have fun and relax. Growth does not come if you are uptight or restrained. Enjoy what you do or don’t do it. Consolidate many ideas, and mix these ideas together until they have grown into something new and valuable.

January 2, 2007
I enjoy watching and shooting fireworks. The wonderful colors and patterns against the black sky, combined with the dangerous aspect of lighting the explosive devices, produce an exhilarating experience that I look forward to every year. I want to work a bit of that feeling into my paint.

February 10, 2007
I want to investigate further how I can interpret the female figure. I want to just allude to the form - maybe just one line or shape, maybe a color that feels fleshlike. With these paintings I want to experiment with mixing different mediums together or in layers.

March 8, 2007
Transparent paint layers are an element that I will begin using to develop another way of overlapping lines, shapes and colors. This technique gives me the same feeling that a good fireworks show does with multiple explosions one after the other.
April 2, 2007

I am creating mixed media works on paper. I feel freer to experiment with layering techniques and mediums. These works are produced with many short but fast-paced painting sessions, over and over, creating many layers, experiences and emotions.

April 20, 2007

In creating something new an artist must be true to his own thoughts and preferences; he should not do something simply because it was successful in the past. One cannot create a new image while copying the past without some innovative idea or process. Don’t deny yourself the enjoyment of self-satisfaction, whatever form it may take. Just don’t break the law to much.

May 5, 2007

I believe the painting should be structurally sound. The stretchers and panels must be built with the highest of quality.

July 18, 2007

The combination of strongly contrasting elements can bring an area of the painting alive and give direction for the viewer.

August, 28, 2007

Art is an evolutionary entity dependent on its environment. This is why I want people to use their imagination to figure out what they believe my paintings mean to them.

September 3, 2007

Today I began adding in big and small areas of solid flat color to contrast with the aggressive mark making. Besides contrasting the activity in the paintings, the solid masses give a sense of push and pull to the positive and negative space.
**September 19, 2007**

Today I started looking at some of my older unfinished works and thinking about how I can make them more visually exciting, by adding more intense color, texture, line or transparent layers. I brought some of the old paintings together to see if a combination of works would spark a new idea of composition. These thoughts led me to decide that I would combine ideas behind many of the paintings I created in the past couple of years to form a dynamic series of paintings. I will combine ideas of the blue tarp paintings along with more intense color relationships, big bold brush strokes and my personal intense painting approach.

**October 3, 2007**

The female figure can be a very exciting point of departure for a smaller series of paintings. I will use circles and other geometric shapes to play off the lines of the female forms. The contour of the female form may be described as a single brush stroke. These smaller surfaces are also great for combining many mediums and materials for added textures and shapes.

**January 30, 2008**

After a couple months of working in the two directions, I wasn’t sure if the paintings related enough to be considered for the same exhibition. However, today I realized that the two series relate because they show the contrasting way that my mind works. Sometimes I need to be completely spontaneous, while at other times I need to sit down relax and concentrate more on the decisions made to compose a painting.
Vita

Born in New Orleans, Louisiana, in August 1976, Jacques Pierre Gasquet grew up in lower Plaquemines Parish. His mother and father owned a grocery store where he spent many hours surrounded by shelves with labels of all shapes and by a cast of versatile people. Growing up in a grocery store, Jacques developed an aesthetic for strong contrasts and the desire to become a craftsman with his art. When not working or playing in the store he spent his time hunting, fishing, and playing sports.

After graduating from Buras High School, Jacques attended Louisiana State University and received a Bachelor of Science degree in psychology. Upon graduation he began working as manager of a truck stop, but soon figured out that he wanted to study painting. He began his studies of fine arts at the University of New Orleans in 2002. In 2005 Jacques began working towards his Master of Fine Arts degree at Louisiana State University.