



MATTHEW KOŁODZIEJ

Necessary Parts

I trace over the drawings with gel medium and pour paint between the lines. The effect is a solid cast, or enduring fossil of the original structures, defined paradoxically with artificial color and materials . . . There is a constant dialogue between the fixed structure and the editing and decomposing of that structure in the medium of paint.¹

In many ways, Matthew Kolodziej's layered and agitated paintings encapsulate his varied interests and experiences through a uniquely disorienting, almost stop-motion painting style seemingly set on fast-forward. Kolodziej began his undergraduate career in anthropology and graduated with a major in economics from the University of Chicago, where he also spent considerable time working on archaeology digs. Subsequently, Kolodziej built stage sets at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago before doing his graduate work at the Rhode Island School of Design in painting.

With suggestive titles such as *Rumpus*, *Revel*, and *Torsion*, Kolodziej's canvases are

simultaneously juicy, joyous, synthetic, clumsy, and awkward. The work in this exhibition represents a shift begun a few years ago when the artist switched from oil to acrylic paint, primarily for the latter's synthetic color palette and capacity for sculptural relief. This body of work takes its bearings from both destabilized source imagery and non-traditional imaging and painting techniques in order to impart a sense of impermanence that transcends specificity of time and place.

When discussing his work, Kolodziej moves easily from topic-to-topic and reference-to-reference, weaving between ideas of how theatre creates a veneer of artifice that leads to a suspension of belief to how archaeologists consider object, context, and false context in order to ascertain meaning. Acting almost like an archaeologist himself, Kolodziej's paintings compile, according to the artist, "associations that build logic out of something that seems improbable."²

Similar to artist Robert Smithson's use of displaced locations to infer the concept of entropy and composer John Cage's often disconcerting use of found sound, Kolodziej uses photographs of construction and

Right:
Computer
generated
collage for
Rumpus, 2009

Cover:
Rumpus,
2009 (detail)
Acrylic and ink
on canvas
84 x 66 inches





Revel, 2009
Acrylic and ink
on canvas
84 x 66 inches

demolition sites as a starting point for his paintings. According to the artist, such “found” imagery offers a:

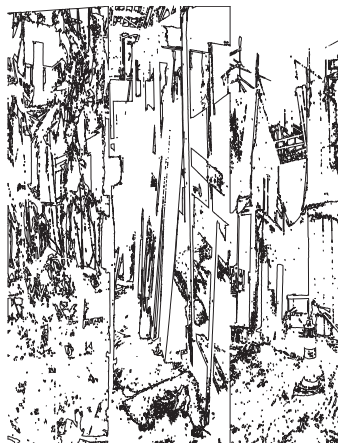
... complexity of information that sets up an elaborate array of intersections and relationships. Collaging multiple conflicting points of view accentuates the disorientation of the viewer, and multiple levels of definition further complicate the viewer’s ability to find a foothold in the image.³

Pasted together, and distorted on a computer (far left), these images are the foundation for the extensive drawings—or mapping (right)—that underlie the extruded and poured linear elements bound together by liquid pigment stains and paint accretions.

More visible in earlier paintings, this initial mapping is less easily discerned in the current work, which is far more dense, anxious, and

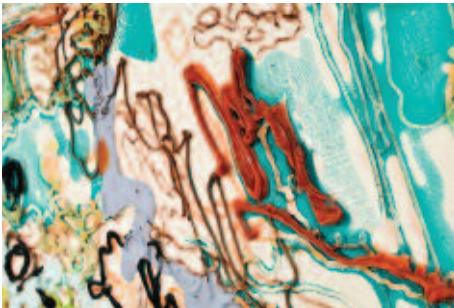
intensely compressed. Although the wall drawing *Necessary Parts* created specifically for this exhibition shows the artist’s process as well as his interest in the tenuous nature of structures, his newer paintings have evolved into more of an explosive, all encompassing sensory experience, albeit with limited information. Like kinesthesia, which is the sense of being in motion but does not describe the specifics of the motion itself, Kolodziej has pushed his boundaries, and perhaps ours, in his effort to move the viewer away from specifics and toward the bigger picture (no pun intended).

Comprised of many different views and perspectives of demolition sites puzzled together, *Revel* (left) and the other works share a color scheme derived from advertising’s attention-getting, “look at me” aesthetic. Numerous disruptions are sprinkled throughout its fictive spaces, causing slippage between the macro and the micro in this mosh pit of a painting. Hints of underlying structure tantalize and then disappear; and spatial recessions are thwarted by the vague sense of collisions, keeping the reality of the planar surface in



Necessary Parts, 2009
Preparatory
computer
mapping for
wall drawing

Torsion, 2009
(detail)
Acrylic and ink
on canvas
84 x 66 inches



play at all times. The cacophony of baroque textures and exuberant over-painting create a profound sense of disorientation and instability.

In *Rumpus* (cover and overleaf), the original collaged photographs are less compressed and areas of raw canvas are visible. The artist equates such elisions or “gaps in information” with “how the perception of space constantly redefines our experience of it.” Put another way, there are always going to be omissions in our knowledge base; yet, in general, the western world has shown itself to be remarkably uncomfortable with ambiguity. We want to **know** and know **now** instead of being willing to consider that perhaps there is no correct or single answer, any answer at all, or perhaps there are multiple realities that are all viable.

If one considers Matthew Kolodziej’s paintings to be an extended exegesis on the premise of calling attention to the possibility of truly knowing by not always seeking fact and certitude, his paintings begin to make a kind of sense. It takes a fairly resolute sense

of self for an artist to put the “necessary parts”⁴ out into the world that essentially ask us to step back, breathe, come to grips with the very human trait of seeking order in chaos, and suggest that disorder may well be our unintentional yet underlying norm.

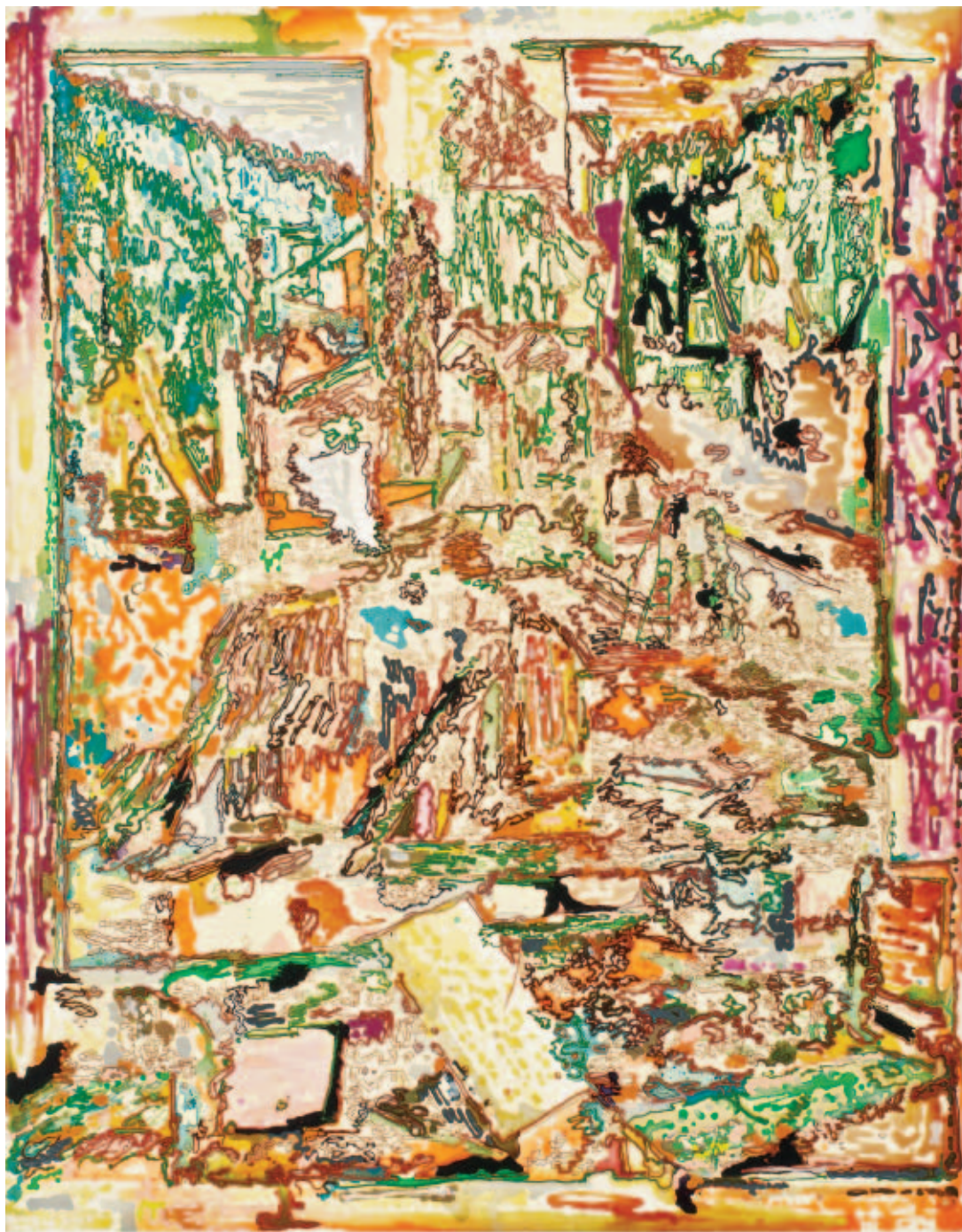
Kitty McManus Zurko
Director and Curator
The College of Wooster
Art Museum

Notes

1. *Caught in Flux*, excerpt from artist statement in exhibition brochure published by William Busta Gallery, Cleveland, OH, for Kolodziej’s one-person exhibition held October 26–November 24, 2007.
2. Matthew Kolodziej. Interview with the author, Fairlawn, Ohio, August 20, 2009.
3. *Caught in Flux*.
4. The artist provided the title for this essay when he paraphrased the following quote from Henri Matisse, “In a picture every part will be visible and will play its appointed role, whether it be principal or secondary. Everything that is not useful in the picture is, it follows, harmful.”

Torsion, 2009
Acrylic and ink
on canvas
84 x 66 inches





Rumpus, 2009
Acrylic and ink
on canvas
84 x 66 inches

About the Artist

Matthew Kolodziej lives and works in Akron, OH.

Artist's Website: www.mattpaint.com

Matthew Kolodziej received a BA in economics from the University of Chicago in 1988 and an MFA in painting, with honors, from the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI, in 1993. He is an associate professor of art at the Myers School of Art, The University of Akron.

Kolodziej was awarded a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant in 2009 and was nominated for both a Tiffany Foundation Grant and Cleveland Arts Prize in the same year. He received an Ohio Arts Council Fellowship at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, MA, in 2008, and an Ohio Arts Council Individual Excellence Award in 2007. Kolodziej was a Fulbright Scholar in England in 1995.

In addition to his one-person exhibition at The College of Wooster Art Museum in 2009, Kolodziej's other selected solo exhibitions include: the William Busta Gallery, Cleveland, OH, 2007 and 2010; the Fine Arts Works Center, 2008; St. Michael's College, Colchester, VT, 2006; and Doll-Anstadt Gallery, Burlington, VT, in 1998 and 1999 respectively; and the University of Leeds, West Yorkshire, England, in 1996.

Selected group exhibitions include: the Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland, 2009; Advisory Boston, Boston, MA, and the Rockford Art Museum, Rockford, IL, both in 2006; the Cleveland Museum of Art and the Akron Art Museum, Akron, OH, both in 2005; and the Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA, in 1999.

Kolodziej's work is represented in the following selected collections: the Akron Art Museum; Nokia Corporation, Boston, MA; the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA; the University of Leeds, Leeds, England; and American Greetings, Cleveland.

The artist is represented by the William Busta Gallery, Cleveland; Pierogi 2000, New York, NY; Art Advisory, Boston; and Art Exchange, Columbus, OH.

Acknowledgments

One of the many pleasant surprises in curating this exhibition of Matthew Kolodziej's work was the artist's willingness to develop a wall painting for the Sussel Gallery in addition to producing all new work. I thank Matt for both his vision and boldness as an artist and for a work ethic that is simply not satisfied with just enough.

Additionally, I'd like to congratulate the artist for being a 2009 recipient of a prestigious Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant—an honor by any measure.

Kitty McManus Zurko
Director and Curator
The College of Wooster
Art Museum

Works in Exhibition

All dimensions are h x w inches

1. **Rumpus**, 2009
Acrylic and ink on canvas
84 x 66
2. **Revel**, 2009
Acrylic and ink on canvas
84 x 66
3. **Torsion**, 2009
Acrylic and ink on canvas
84 x 66
4. **Kirkos**, 2009
Acrylic and ink on canvas
84 x 66
5. **Attractor**, 2009
Acrylic and ink on canvas
84 x 66
6. **Sieve**, 2009
Acrylic and ink on canvas
66 x 84
7. **Partition**, 2009
Acrylic and ink on canvas
66 x 84
8. **Necessary Parts** (wall drawing), 2009
Latex on wall
192 x 156

MATTHEW KOLODZIEJ

October 27–December 6, 2009

The College of Wooster Art Museum

Sussel Gallery

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