

Gorchov

Channelizing

Cowan

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Rachael Gorchov and Jonathan Cowan

November 10 - December 8, 2016

Essay by Matthew Neil Gehring

Flecker Gallery  
Suffolk County Community College  
Ammerman Campus, Selden, NY

## Seeing Beyond the Limits of Sight

Matthew Neil Gehring

Channel is both a noun and a verb with several usages, all of which describe pathways or the action along them: a narrow nautical pass, a means or path of communication, a band of frequencies sufficient to carry radio, to express, to funnel, or direct movement. The title of this exhibition, Channelizing, sets an appropriate point of departure for entering a dialogue with the works of Rachael Gorchov and Jonathan Cowan. Both artists speak of their works as a means of departing from the familiar path of thought, experience, and knowledge. Both channel the subsequent de-stabilization into artworks that re-frame perceptual reality. About her work, Gorchov states "The various elements of the artworks frame and obscure one another, de-familiarizing omnipresent, ordinary environments." About his work, Cowan expresses the idea that the work is a "re-staging of tradition that seeks to de-familiarize what we think we know."

Gorchov's work from a few years prior seems much more closely tied to an interest in the architecture of suburban spaces, with forms that are often geometric and painted surfaces inflecting those references with simultaneously overlaid pastiches of both art history and the environments themselves; palm trees, for example, or a riff on mid-century painterly abstraction. In her most recent work she has shifted from these more concrete sources towards the abstract. These new works are foregrounded by a series of sculptures that involve singular, painted, rock-like forms also familiar to suburban landscape. The forms seem to cast

elongated shadows that are not really shadows, but extensions of the corporeal, painted surfaces of the rock-form. Shadows, are immaterial – perhaps the closest things in our physical experience to a pure abstraction – but Gorchov apprehends them and imbues them with substance. They extend the painterly surface, but they are not painted. They are slick digital prints on vinyl sheets of paintings originally made on paper, which extend from the base of their "source" objects and move across the floor and often creep up the walls. Gorchov is synthesizing real and imagined, material and immaterial, past and present. These works, such as "Five or Six" and "Concrete Garden," are particularly enigmatic. Because primary elements of these works are the apprehended cast shadows, they contain both the potential for expansion, contraction, or directional changes. Scale becomes fluid and the work takes on the characteristic that it presents us with one fleeting moment of an infinite set of possibilities. The pieces aforementioned are included in this catalog, but the scale has been expanded for this exhibition.

Gorchov's wall sculptures jettison the apprehended shadow and break open the three-dimensional form to expose the interior as the primary, but not the only focus of the work. These works, such as "Three O'Clock," flirt with genre painting – landscape and still-life painting in particular, as the largely abstract painting on



Rachael Gorchov, "Concrete Garden", 2016, acrylic paint, handmade archival paper mache clay, burlap, pigment-based inkjet print on Enhanced Adhesive Synthetic Paper, 18 x 37 x 36 inches

the concave interior surfaces seem to evoke or suggest flora within the confines of the spaces, which are also vessels. The space is unlike pictorial space, however, in that it is concave with an interior, and as such provides distinctly different possible viewing experiences. From a distance, we see and interact with a three dimensional object at a distance, from it's exterior. Up close, standing in "the sweet spot" you can immerse yourself in the panoramic inner life of the same form.

Jonathan Cowan makes paintings that look nothing like a traditional painting. Beginning with watercolor studies on paper, Cowan paints grand open landscapes on raw canvas with acrylic stains, creating cottony-soft, vibrant yet dark, ghost-like scenes. These sweeping vistas are the archetype of the sublime; the same type of spaces that found Turner feverishly sketching in them and that Caspar David Friedrich made his mainstay. But they are facsimiles, the implicit sincerity, romance, and richness of their art historical precedents in oil are replaced by a thin translucent copy, an appropriation of a vision whose sincerity is perhaps less resonant now than it was when it was new. They are also infused with an apparent pixelation, a result of the transfer and staining processes themselves combined with the choice of a canvas substrate that has a pronounced grid in its weave.

Further reinforcing a less-than optimistic point of view, one that suggests that the sublime in art might be a relic of the past that is not wholly possible in our insincere present, is the fact that this is just a backdrop for the main event. Each of Cowan's canvases are also meticulously embroidered, creating overlaid stitched forms, chromatic bands and vortexes that hover above the spaces and seem to suggest inter-dimensional worm-holes, as in "Void in a Form Over a Flood" or prismatic auroras, as in "Ribbon". They have the unmistakable feeling of a mystical, rapturous event. They also carry a kind of analog distortion – the kind kids of the 80's experienced when we tried to watch cable channels our parent's didn't subscribe to. This limited access, provided only slipping glimpses of things that weren't meant for us.

Both Gorchov and Cowan present us with work that evokes a kind of longing, a need to grasp that which is just beyond our reach, to see beyond the limits of sight, and they do so by manifesting a kind of abstract-surrealism; a space where the limits of both our perceptual experience and our consciousness ultimately become the primary emphasis and the subject of the work. Each is creating alchemy of the moment, both internal and external. All of this is an embodiment of process, material, image, and vision working in discordant harmony. This is a channeling; a synthesis that is poignant and filled with vivacity at this moment in history.

Matthew Neil Gehring is a painter and curator who lives and works in Queens, NY. He is an Associate Professor of Art and the Director of the Flecker Gallery at Suffolk County Community College, Ammerman Campus.



Jonathan Cowan, "Ribbon", 2016, acrylic and cotton thread on aida canvas, 26 x 20 inches



"Five or Six", 2016, acrylic paint, handmade archival paper mache clay, burlap, pigment-based inkjet print on Enhanced Adhesive Synthetic Paper, 53 x 48 x 40 inches, two views



"Vignette", 2014, acrylic on handmade paper mache clay, chicken wire, and burlap, 40 x 32 x 17 inches





"Three O'Clock", 2016, acrylic on handmade archival paper mache clay, and burlap,  
22 x 25 x 14 inches, two views





"Martin Towers – Gazing Down, Eyes Out of Focus", 2014, acrylic on handmade paper mache clay, panel, Styrofoam, and burlap, 43 x 26 x 24 inches



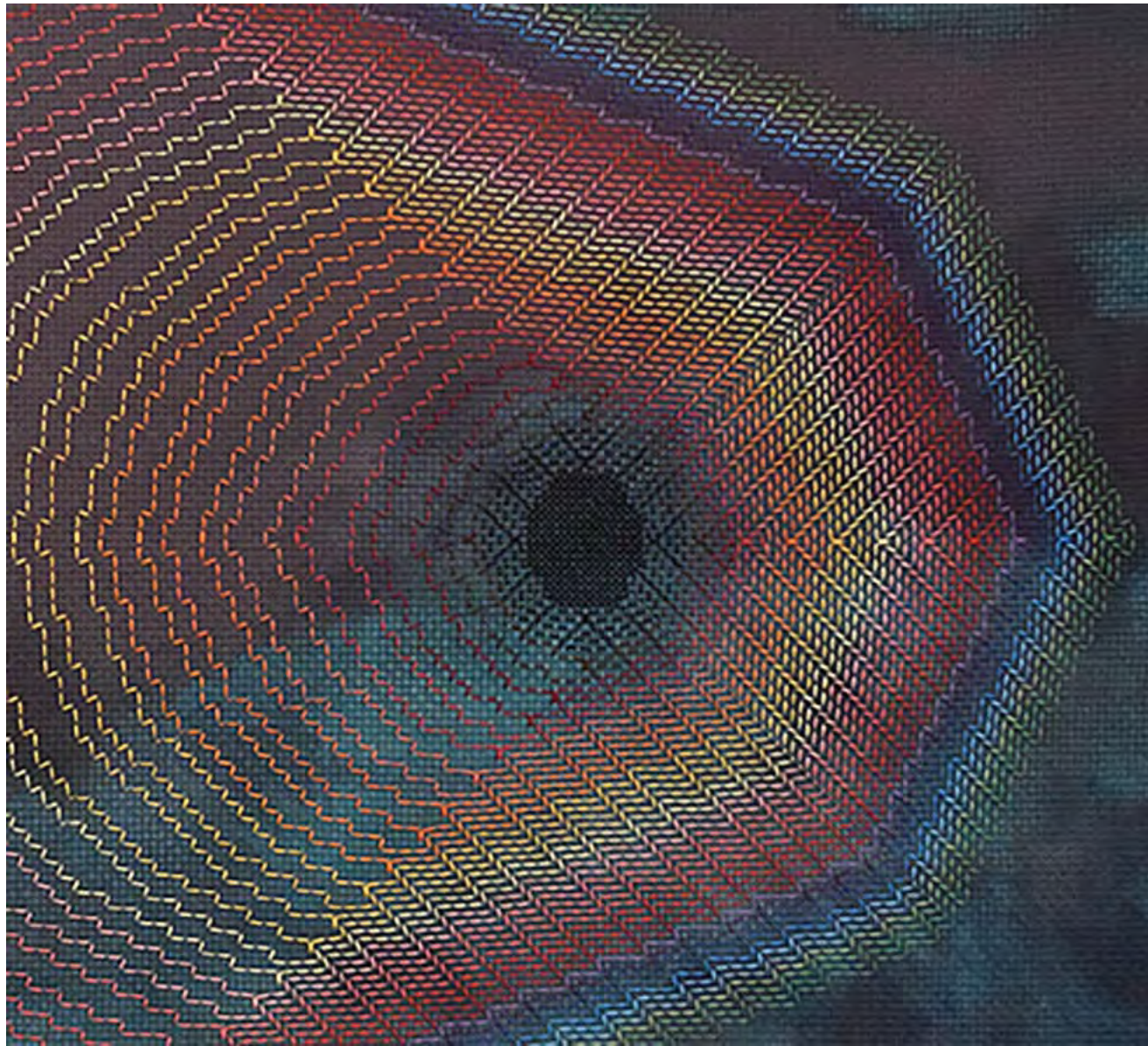
"Toile", 2016, acrylic on handmade paper mache clay, panel, Styrofoam, and burlap,  
17 x 37 x 10 inches, two views



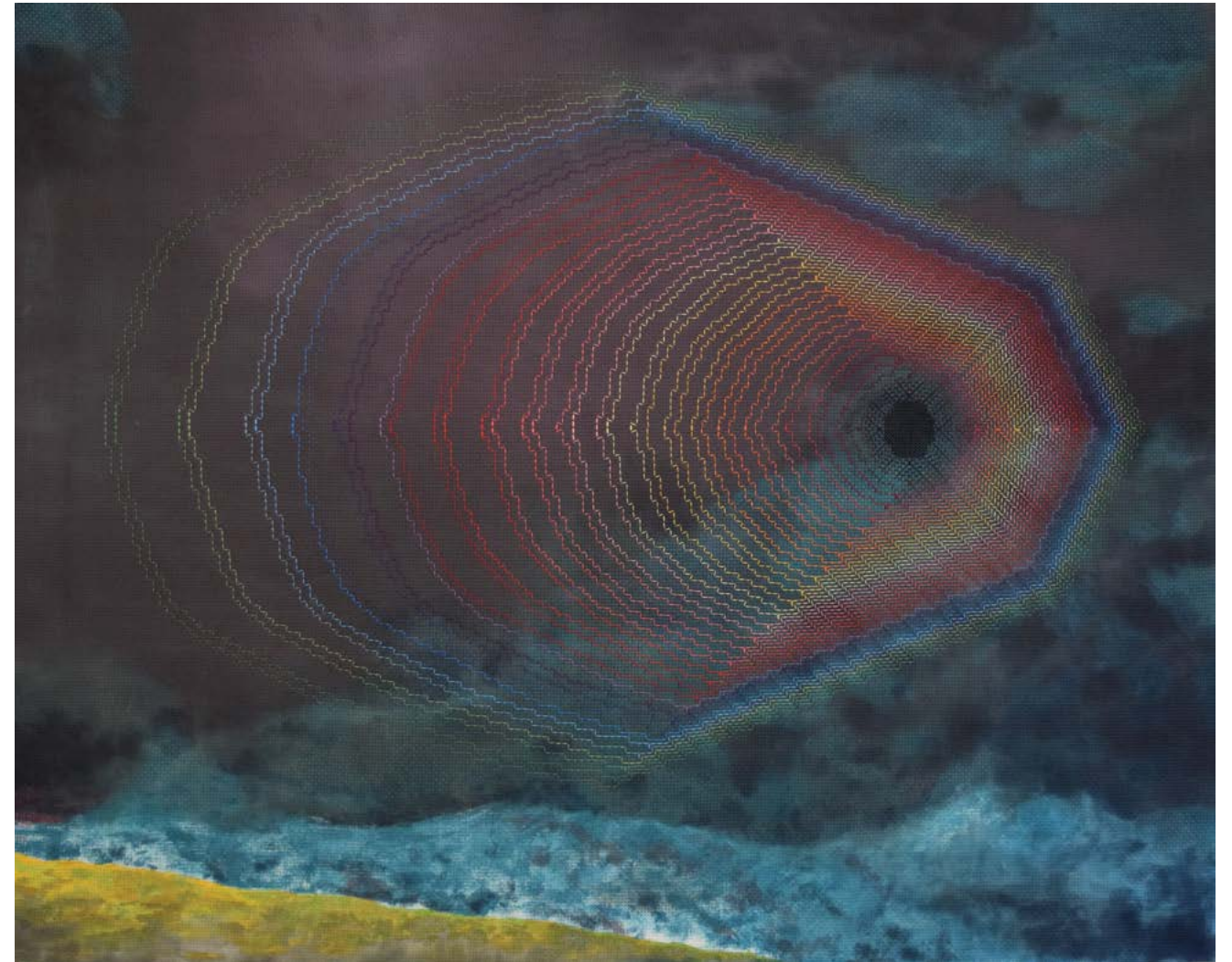


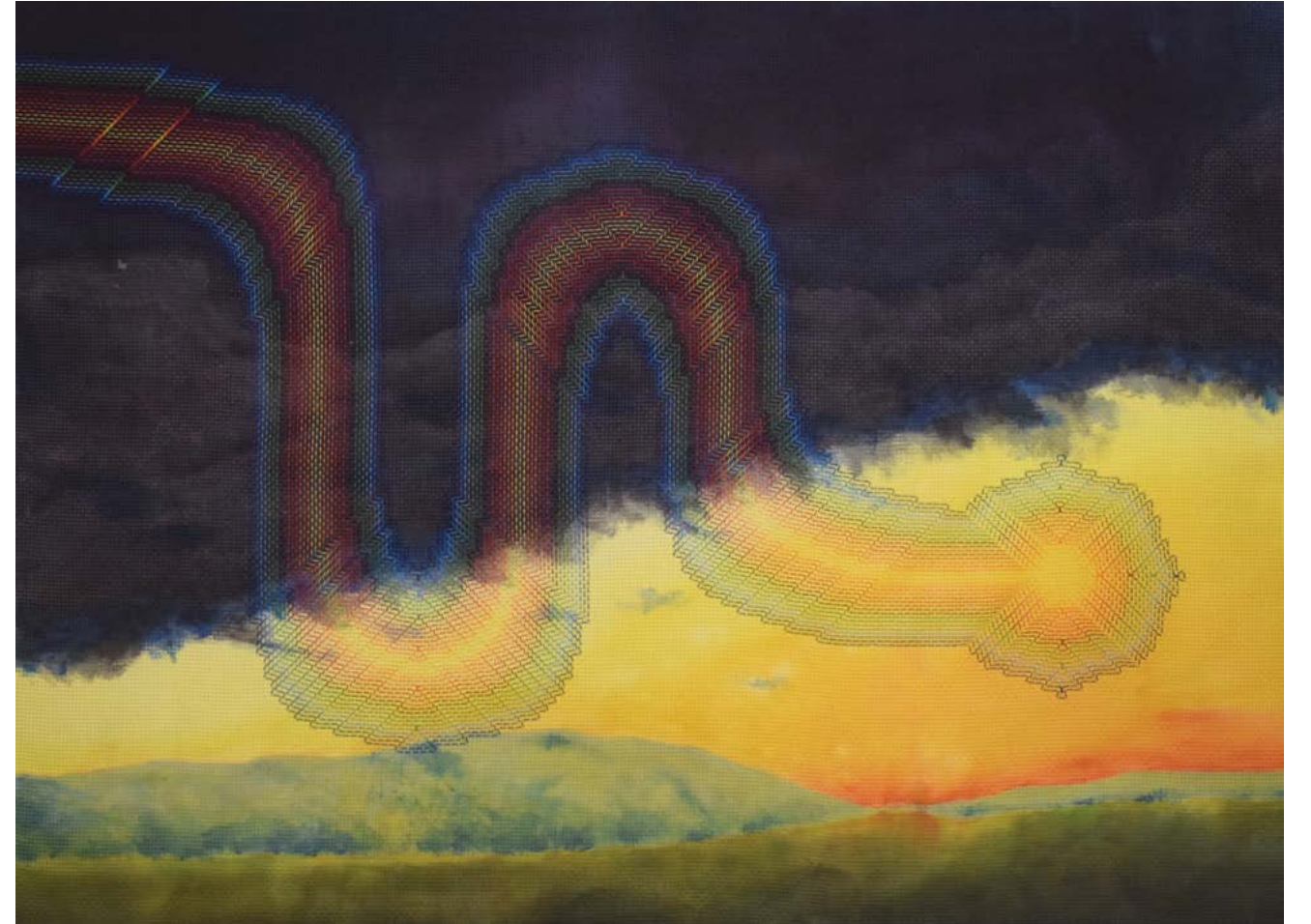
"Triangle and a Storm", 2016, acrylic and cotton thread on aida canvas, 28 x 36 inches



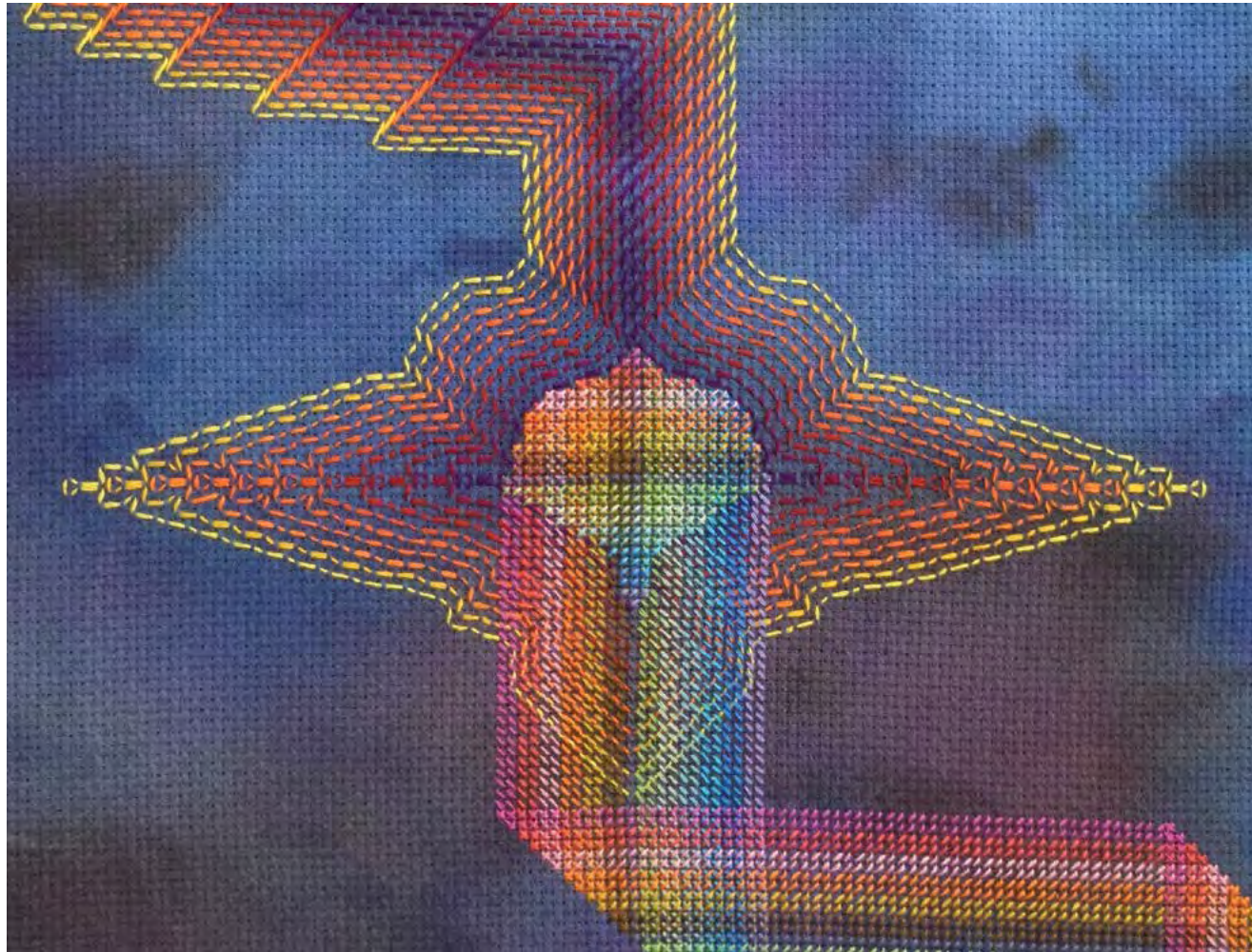


"Void In a Form Over a Flood", 2016, acrylic and cotton thread on aida canvas, 46 x 58 inches, detail above





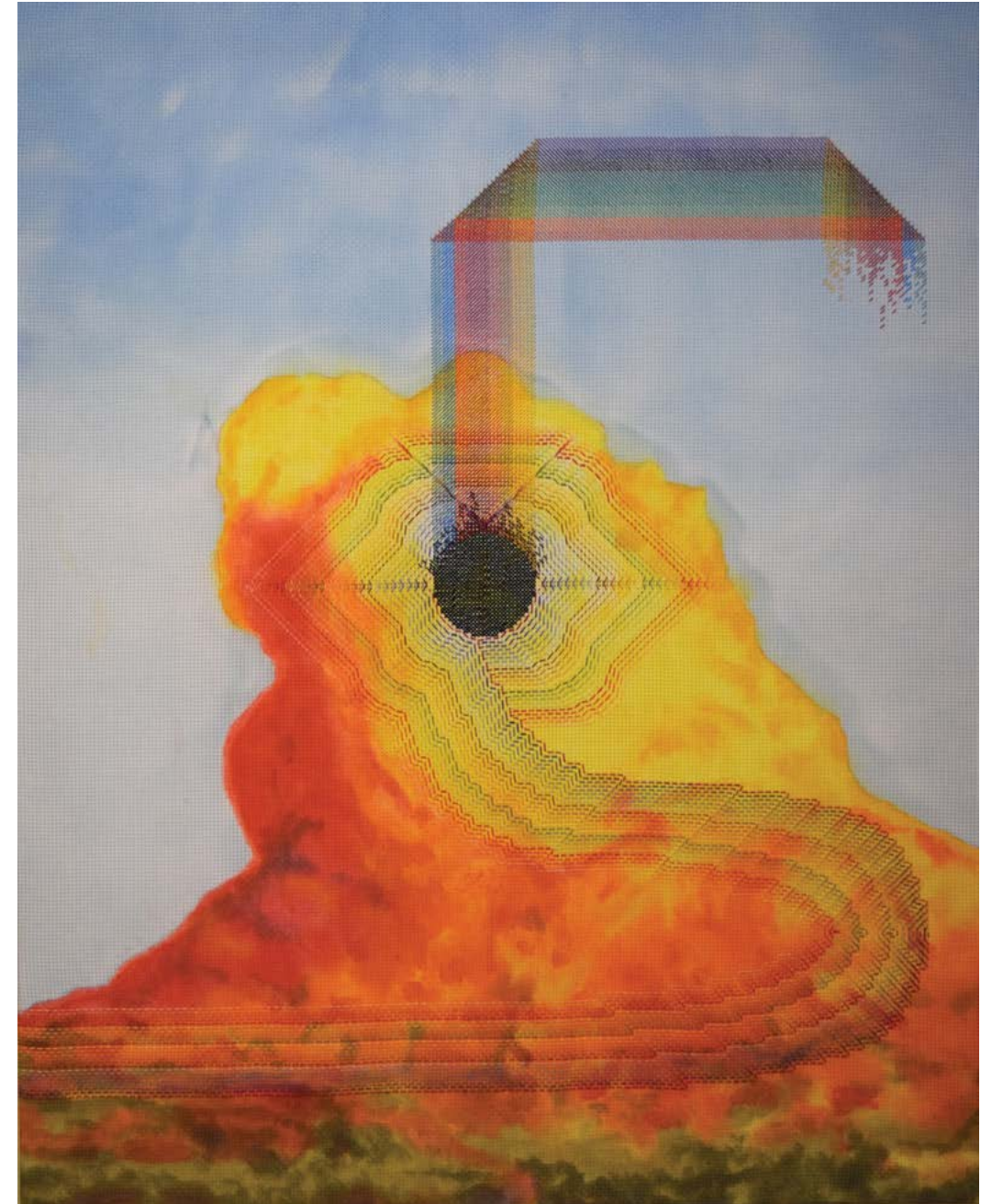
"Form in the Sky", 2016, acrylic and cotton thread on aida canvas, 38 x 52 inches



"Color From a Form," 2016, acrylic and cotton thread on aida canvas, 22 x 16 inches, detail above



"Color From a Void In a Cloud", 2016, acrylic and cotton thread on aida canvas, 50 x 40 inches





Rachael Gorchov was born in Philadelphia, PA in 1979. She attended Tyler School of Art, Temple University and earned a BFA in 2001. Subsequently, she attended Hunter College, City University of New York earning an MFA in 2006. She has participated in numerous exhibitions including shows at The English Folk Dance and Song Society, London, UK; Galeria Arsena in Bialystok, Poland and in New York City; the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM); Owen James Gallery, and Simuvac Projects both in Brooklyn, NY. She is a member of Tiger Strikes Asteroid (TSA), an artist-run gallery in Brooklyn and is an Assistant Professor at the Art Institute of Pittsburgh. She lives and works in New York City.



Jonathan Cowan was born in 1982 in Temple, Texas. He attended The University of Texas at San Antonio where he earned a BFA in 2006. Upon graduation, he moved to New York City. He has participated in numerous exhibitions including shows at Simuvac Projects, Brooklyn, NY; Gray Contemporary, Houston, TX; Ortega y Gasset Projects, Brooklyn, NY; the Parlour Bushwick, Brooklyn NY; c2c projects, San Francisco, CA; Ventana 244, Brooklyn, NY; and TSA New York, Brooklyn NY. He lives and works in New York City.

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Gallery Director and Curator: Matthew Neil Gehring

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