

Larry Bob Phillips

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Artist Statement

The goal in my recent body of work has been to create a form that has plasticity and transformation as its explicit focus, allowing the viewer to experience the paranoid formalism of the image where nothing is anything, but everything is something. Working on a wall sized scale and using a cartoon language that responds to psychedelic impulses, I can work a color field in ways akin to drip painters, describe characters in real space, or let the cartoons just haze out in impressionistic fog. The more recognizable architectural and landscapes structures allow this loose web to hang and grab at something shared in our remembered visual experience. The result is a complex trip that keeps the viewer in a suspicious state of investigation while providing just enough facts to keep them searching. What surfaces from the psychedelic sludge must not only be poignant and surprising, but have the force of the real, and happen at the right intervals.

The work in my studio right now is a little different, an attempt to create this slow-read, soft-yet-hard dissolving picture space with a high contrast, black ink calligraphic mark system. Both bodies of work, the colored pencil and ink, could be described as an attempt to revisit some of the themes of French painting at the turn of the last century. Painters like Bonard, Braque and Van Gogh were aware of a violent pregnancy within modern painting. They understood that the mark or brushstroke had a destructive agency that had to be grappled with, and that the resolution or justification of painting problems lay in a very complex and fine balance.

My work also owes much of it's grounding to much more recent shifts in thinking and looking, like the coy cartooning of every kind of hopeful modern abstraction in the 1990s. The mind numbing sensory overload that has been the hallmark of the new psychedelia in the 2000s and the pervasiveness of the graphic novel in recent years, all of these developments constitute in my mind an exciting break with the past.

I am inspired by these developments, and I feel it is my task to create a space that can accept and integrate my fascination with painting history and art's current state. Landscape traditions, calligraphy, graffiti, abstract expressionism, cubism, impressionism, I want these to all remain recognizable while they crowd the same space and still feel something like the one we live in.