

Louise P. Sloane: A Portrait of the Artist in Her Own Words

When I stay up into the morning hours discussing art, and I mention a new artist's work I've seen, someone usually asks, "How long has he/she been doing this?" We know the desired answer is "always," as indicative of a life long devotion to one's studio practice. I have always been an artist.

The visual language of my paintings embraces the legacies of reductive and minimalist ideologies, while celebrating the beauty of color, and the human connection to mark making. Dyslexia has proven to be the greatest challenge in both my private and professional lives; Mark making has provided me with a tangible force without conceptual limitations. My fascination with the way the brain registers written language, color, movement and spatial relationships is at the heart of my work. In a world where there is little harmony, these concepts give structure to my paintings as well as to my life.

I moved into my first loft in Lower Manhattan in 1974. A disciplined studio practice of painting daily became the essence of my life.

A fascination with materials that could diffuse light and enhance the luminosity of pigments led me into over a decade of painting in beeswax (1975-1989). The excitement of watching my materials evolve, in combination with the satisfying and familiar fragrances of their creation, formed a strong, natural bond with my medium. Scoring a grid pattern into the wax and then fusing each 1" square with a hot palette knife resulted in translucent layers of undulating color reminiscent of writing. This aesthetic conceptualization of language as texture became the hallmark of my paintings.

After giving birth to my two children (1984 and 1988), I began experimenting and developing a new painting style that would enable me to more efficiently utilize my limited studio time. Working at a variety of part time jobs, mothering full time, and painting in all my remaining hours proved to be an exhausting combination. I was struggling to produce a conceptual vision that could combine all aspects of color, light, language and geometry. It would take me nearly nine years to find myself, and to feel that my work was truly adding something unique to the dialog of abstract art.

By 1992, I was using acrylic mediums, paints, and pure pigment powder to create highly textured layered images. The structure loosened. These detail-oriented works, which were typically divided into rectangles or squares, had all-over patterning, scraped and rubbed surfaces, and abstractions of written communications. Abstracted text grew to be a dominating feature of my work; it became a means to conquer my own personal struggle with both written and spoken language.

I was struggling to better express language as texture while using color in a more intense way. During the early part of this century, intense color became prominent in the public psyche, and began to infiltrate public events. I was feeling a primal tug towards bright and vivid colors. The effect of lush color upon mental and spiritual consciousness began to dominate my thoughts.

I also began experimenting with my textures, forming surfaces by directly transcribing personally significant text. My previous explorations with text utilized only key phrases or a jumbling of various texts. Now I was engaged in actually "writing" full, complete passages that moved me spiritually. My "MMS" series, thought to represent *multimedia square*, was in reality the transcription of a journal kept when my now deceased mother had a massive stroke. *My Mother's Stroke (MMS)* represented the

beginning of works with which my emotional connection was overpoweringly moving and meditative. The writing was objectified to pure design. The repetitive, obsessive text reconnected my work to the grid and past positive experiences with extruded forms. After finishing my own text, I started using other written passages that held deep personal significance and emotion. Song lyrics and poetry morphed into the paintings.

Still yearning to move into a zone of optically charged works, I was challenging my own exploration. Changing direction in the studio and leaving a comfort zone can set an artist adrift. While discussing my ideas regarding the use of intense colors in my work, Richard Anuszkiewicz looked at me and said, "...what in the world are you waiting for?" His work had influenced me as a child (1963 MOMA exhibition "*Americans*", 1965 MOMA "*The Responsive Eye*") and as an adult, in 2002, his simple comment provided me with the catalyst needed to move forward. Upon my return to the studio the next morning, I began painting in bold bright colors, a radical change for me as an artist.

The poetry written by Allen Ginsberg has resonated deeply with me since my youth. Many people, including myself, had personal contact with Allen and a connection with his troubled soul. I began writing and conceptualizing to texture "Howl" then "Kadag," and before I knew it, I was transcribing the entire "Allen Ginsberg: Collected Poems 1947-1980." My goal with these works was to bring light and joy to Allen's work through homage to him and his quest for love. Reading the text, laying it down as texture while listening to jazz, made my entire studio experience reach an incredible state of clarity and unity. As much of Ginsberg's work is very dark and emotionally painful, I would take occasional breaks and use the work of other poets. During a visit with my adult daughter, Hannah Dillon, she performed a set of her original rap poetry pieces. I was so moved by her passionate lyrics, that then and there, we decided to collaborate on a project. She provided me with pages and pages of lyrics. I created two paintings that used her lyrics as my texture ("BlueBlueCRL-Bounce", "RedPinkCB-Somebody"). Now my work had transitioned again, conceptually linking three generations of women, and brought me closer to my personal past, present and future.

My late father, Burt Sloane was a marvelous story teller and wrote down his experiences and observations as a private citizen, serviceman and as an intelligence officer for the Army Air Force during WWII. He was a frustrated writer, and wrote a novel, title "Beshert". When he passed away, I found a folder on his desktop that had every story I had heard as a child, and more neatly typed up. These stories, and his unpublished novel, have been the source of my surface texture since his death in 2014. In addition to my father's writing, my late mother Charlotte Balinky Sloane dictated and had my Dad type some of her recollections. These passages formed the texture of "4CBS" which is now in the permanent collection of The Heckscher Museum of Art.

I create my art as a means to interact with and respond to poignant moments in my own life and in history. While everything I create is full of personal meaning, it is my hope that the work produced by my mind, heart, and hands translates into a new, powerful, provocative experience for the viewer.

Lilly Wei beautifully summarized the effect of my work in this last portion of her catalogue essay *For The Love of Pure Color*. "From the beginning, Sloane has depended upon personal narratives and writings to help her get started, provide the pulse of the painting, and to "keep me going," but it is not necessary that the viewer knows the

specifics in order to respond to the work. Sloane treats narrative more as process than content, the narrative ultimately becoming an ambience that pervades the formal, its presence and meaning to be intuited—or not, a situation Sloane prefers. Not quite done, she then goes back in with a zero brush as the last step, and very slowly, very carefully, adjusts the color, adding what will be read as highlights, as more luminosity. “Very obsessive,” she admits, “but as an artist, I’m driven by a vision that I need to realize.”

Louise P. Sloane’s art has appeared in NationalPoetryMonth.ca 2016 and *Experiment-O* Issue 9.