

States of Formation and Change: Elizabeth Winton's Prints and Paintings
—Greg Lindquist

Elizabeth Winton's latest works employ a hybrid of techniques, combining printmaking, collage and painting. Composed from splinters of paper and paint, her most recent "paintings" have roots in the collagraphic prints she made from 2008 to 2010. Prior to this development, Winton's paintings were characterized by dense accumulations of wobbly hatchings and swaths of paint, and a naturalistic landscape palette, recalling the spirit of Abstract Expressionism on an intimate scale.

Winton, who has lived in New York since completing her B. A. at Connecticut College in 1991, rediscovered monotyping at the Lower East Side Printshop in 2007. She had experimented with it on occasion for fifteen years. "I intuitively felt it would help focus my ideas quicker," she recalled. A year later, she learned the collagraphic process, a related technique in which she began to incorporate shards of rice paper as a masking element.

The collagraph's defining characteristic is its use of texture to print. Using a collaged surface as the image plate, or "matrix," a collagraph can be inked for both intaglio and relief printing. Unlike monotypes, collagraphs are made with a fixed matrix, so the same image can be printed many times in different ways. Winton works with book-binding board and uses a range of glossy and matte acrylic mediums to mask parts of the plate; she also uses rice paper for that purpose. Because the rice paper is thin, ink often bleeds through. She then collages passages of dried acrylic paint scraped from her palette into the prints. A collagraph such as *Untitled 1* (2010) achieves an openness of form and mark making by loose layering and the exposure of raw paper.

She has translated this airiness to her recent paintings by masking acrylic paint with rice paper or mylar. Often, Winton removes this paper mask. When she does not, as in *Untitled 2* (2010), the partially adhered paper becomes an evocative residue of her technique, and a pictorial element in its own right. Having recently acquired a printing press, Winton now maintains both her printmaking and painting practices in her Bushwick studio, a former warehouse.

Winton grew up in Atlanta, Georgia, experiencing the crafts and outsider art of the South. She says that she has always felt surrounded by people making things, but didn't learn any art history until college, when she was first exposed to Abstract Expressionism.

The newest paintings that Winton showed me in her studio have loosely collaged elements, which, as in her collagraphs, often extend beyond the picture plane. In these works, the mottled rice paper swells outward from the canvas's surface or extends over its edges, recalling the eccentric shaped canvases of Elizabeth Murray, in whose studio Winton interned as an undergraduate from 1989 - 1990.

These flowing forms may bring to mind as well the work of Mimi Gross, for whom Winton also interned while she was in college. Winton recalls, "She had all this intensely colored, dyed silk hanging on clothes lines throughout the studio. These were either to be used for dance costumes, sets or sculpture. But it was this airy floating color in space. I loved it." By bringing collage into a sculptural space around the canvas, Winton's current paintings also suggest a three-dimensional theatricality.

Winton's distinctive image-making method also includes the traditional collage process of papier collé (French for "pasted paper"), in which an artist pastes pieces of flat material into a painting much the same way as in a collage. But Winton's pasted pieces do not take the shape of objects, as did the pasted-on elements in the work of Cubist painter Georges Braque. Inspired by Pablo Picasso's collages, Braque first used the papier collé technique in his painting, *Fruit Dish and Glass* (1912). Winton's removal of elements from her paintings can be considered a form of décollage (which translates roughly as "to take off" or "to become unstuck," and involves cutting and scraping away parts of images), a technique that is, in a sense, the opposite of collage. The French affichistes ("poster designers") of the 1950s are another close link to Winton's process. Raymond Hains' collages, made from torn subway posters, utilize a similar method of removal, rearrangement and re-adhering of various papers.

In a work such as *Pitch 3* (2010), Winton's bold, playful use of jagged form and primary color evokes a rough take on Murray's Surrealist-influenced Pop vocabulary of cartoonish shapes. The tearing in Winton's collage-paintings is implicitly violent, yet executed in a delicate manner much like her choice of colors, including a range of grays and neutrals.

Unlike her contemporaries working in mixed media-painting hybrids such as Mark Bradford and Wangechi Mutu, Winton brings no apparent narrative content—political, social, economic, or cultural—to her work, impelled only by an intuitive approach to formal concerns and process-driven inquiry. Creating her own vocabulary and pictorial world, Winton is reluctant to title her work, restricting names to those things close to her: "Morgan" refers to the street on which her studio is located, "ANKA" is simply a made-up sound. Other titles are made by actions associated with the paintings, such as "stir" or "pitch".

At the age of 17, Winton lived with artist friends of her grandparents in Zapopan, Mexico. These friends ran a cultural center graced by José Clemente Orozco's social realist murals, which became the subject of a high school independent study project. Winton's interest in Orozco, who was known for championing political causes such as the rights of peasants and workers, is interesting because she has removed narrative (or overt political content, for that matter) in her work.

In Winton's statement, she discusses a focus on the "individual states of formation and continued mutation" in her paintings. This description calls to mind a molecular, cellular or otherwise organism-like painting process, one that requires intuitive, empirical decision-making, rather than *a priori* thought. Chameleon-like in their changeable formation, her abstractions offer the pleasures of visual richness and technical complexity.

The writer, **Greg Lindquist**, is a Brooklyn-based writer and artist. He contributes regularly to *ARTnews*, *The Brooklyn Rail* and *Beautiful/Decay* and is a Contributing Editor at *artcritical.com*. He also contributed an essay to the monograph *Ryan McGinness Works*, published by Rizzoli International. As an artist, Lindquist has been written about in *ARTnews*, *Art in America*, *Sculpture*, *Frieze*, *NY Press*, *The New York Sun* and *The New York Observer*. He attended the ArtOMI international residency and received the

Pollock-Krasner Grant in 2009. In 2010, Lindquist participated in the exhibition *Frozen Moments: Architecture Speaks Back*, organized by the Laura Palmer Foundation in the Ministry of Transportation building in Tbilisi, Georgia.

The mentor, **Nancy Princenthal**, is a New York-based critic and former Senior Editor of *Art in America*, for which she continues to write regularly; she has contributed to many other publications as well, including *Art News*, *Artforum*, *Parkett*, the *Village Voice*, and *The New York Times*. Princenthal has recently published a monograph on Hannah Wilke (Prestel, 2010), and her essays appear in books and exhibition catalogues on the work of Doris Salcedo, Robert Mangold, Alfredo Jaar, Rona Pondick, and Petah Coyne, among others. She has taught at the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College; Princeton University; Yale University; and RISD, and is currently on the faculties of New York University and the School of Visual Arts.