

Cheyney Thompson:
metric, pedestal, landlord, cabengo, recit

Cheyney Thompson (b. 1975, Baton Rouge, LA) has made the technology, production, and distribution of painting the subject of his work for over a decade. Thompson employs rational structures, technological processes, and generative devices as part of “thinking through problems that organize themselves around the terms of painting.” The artist addresses the contemporary conditions of painting while expanding its potential through visually engaging yet exacting work. With such a rigorous approach to the medium, Thompson produces work that addresses varieties of abstraction, including pictorial, economic, and technological.

The luminous surfaces of the *Chronochromes* (2009–2011) are painstakingly composed using the color system devised by Albert H. Munsell, a Boston-born painter and professor at the Massachusetts Normal Art School (now MassArt), in the early 1900s. Thompson grafts this color system—used to classify everything from archaeological samples to frozen french fries—onto a calendar: each day is assigned a complementary hue pair, with every hour changing the color value, and every month changing the saturation, of each hand-painted and minutely-controlled brushstroke. Noon is absolute white and midnight is absolute black. This system produces paintings of subtle variations “which register fatigue, distraction, and interruptions,” as well as the flow of time itself.

The materiality of painting is the basis for his *Chromachromes* (2009), which depict a motif drawn from an enlarged scan of the underlying canvas. Thompson’s recursive process merges digital reproduction with the literal ground of painting: the scanned linen is divided into values of light and dark, and painted using colors drawn from Munsell’s system. Each painting is given a unique historical format, including the academic portrait painting, the diptych, and the Renaissance tondo (a round painting or relief). The use of this typology continues Thompson’s

engagement with the history of painting, from still life to the chromatic variation on a single motif.

Thompson’s long-standing interest in the circulation of painting, and the artwork as commodity, is evident in eight paintings of his landlords composed using the CMYK four-color process of commercial printing. Through a subtractive process removing degrees of light from the image, the portraits combine deskilled technology with painterly technique. A set of signatures from the rental lease of the artist’s studio are abstracted to form the composition in *Untitled*, 2006. These paintings comment on the historical relations—artist and market, labor and value—of artistic production, as well as the circulation and exchange of commodities and information.

Other works on view reframe or reiterate details and motifs from previous paintings. Reflecting his interest in the practice of painting and the conceptual and material conditions of image production, these paintings combine both senses of the *digital*. Blurred photocopies of garbage are used to produce a digital artifact that serves as the source for Thompson’s series of *Untitled* (2006) paintings. Enlarged sections of these images are meticulously rendered in shades of gray; arranged in a grid, the tonal scheme used to produce the paintings is itself presented in *Is-A* (2008) while a detail is reframed in a blue register in *Untitled* (2008). For his participation in the 2008 Whitney Biennial, Thompson reframed details from the digital images to produce a new series of black paintings. The exhibition also includes a selection of studies on the modernist trope of the grid.

The exhibition also features a series of Thompson’s recent pedestal sculptures, which turn sculptural volumes into surfaces. The formal iteration of each sculpture reflects his interest in varying forms of display and the relation of measurement to the body. Rather than following the convention of presenting artworks, these sculptures self-reflexively address their function by presenting artefacts, data, and supplemental materials related to the exhibition,

the artist’s research process, and the works on view. These materials include: a flute from Papua New Guinea likely used in the ritual of male menstruation; two lamps given to Thompson by his landlords, a kind of exchange exceeding the parameters of the lease; numeric information used to develop five different motifs; a scale model of three sections of the artist’s *Chronochrome* series; a pedestal with a spirit; and a bound book collecting references to all of the materials employed in the exhibition.

About the Artist

Cheyney Thompson was born in 1975 in Baton Rouge, LA, and currently lives and works in New York City. He received his BFA from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, in 1997. He cofounded Oni Gallery, along with Count Zero guitarist Brendon Downey, in an artist-occupied space at 84 Kingston St, Boston, MA, in 1998. Recently, his work has been presented in solo exhibitions at Sutton Lane, Brussels (2010), Overduin and Kite, Los Angeles (2010), Galerie Buchholz, Berlin (2009), and Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York (2009). His work has also been featured in significant exhibitions such as *Slow Painting*, Museum Morsbroich, Leverkusen, Germany (2009); *Collatéral*, Le Confort Moderne, Poitiers, France (2009); *Compass in Hand: Selections from the Judith Rothschild Foundation Contemporary Drawings Collection*, Museum of Modern Art, New York (2009); Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2008); *TBA: Cheyney Thompson and Eileen Quinlan*, Arnolfini, Bristol, England; and *Greater New York*, P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, Long Island City, NY (2005).

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Lunchtime Gallery Talks:

Wednesday, February 29, 12:30PM
Gallery talk with LVAC educator Mark Linga

Wednesday, March 14, 12:30PM
Gallery talk with LVAC curator João Ribas

Wednesday, April 4, 12:30PM
Gallery talk with LVAC educator Mark Linga

Weekend Talks:

Saturday, February 18, 2PM
Gallery talk with LVAC educator Mark Linga

Saturday, March 24, 2PM
Gallery talk with LVAC educator Mark Linga

Saturday, April 7, 2PM
Gallery talk with LVAC educator Mark Linga

Public Art Tour:

Saturday, March 24, 11AM

Tour of MIT's Public Art Collection
with LVAC public art curator Alise Upitis

Please note: Group will meet at the main entrance to MIT.
77 Mass. Ave., Cambridge

Raindate:
Sunday, March 25, 11AM

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