



JULIUS CAESAR

3311 WEST CARROLL AVENUE · CHICAGO, IL 60624
312-725-6084 · JULIUS@JULIUSCAESARCHICAGO.COM
WWW.JULIUSCAESARCHICAGO.COM

Scrying Statement

I have begun exploring two tropes that I had previously avoided: repetition, and objective representation.

Doing something again makes me self-critical, repetition frequently causes a perversion of the original gesture or causes an awkwardness or a jokey quality that I dislike, but can't shake; objective representation, because I found it difficult to attain objectivity without mediation, and I could not find a form of mediation adequate to my ideas about painting.

I first saw the work of Moyra Davey in 2007, my last year of graduate school, and have been strongly influenced by her photographs of her bookshelves, desktop, and dust under the bed. She photographs these spaces of accumulation and history in her home/studio with melancholic clarity. The camera does the work of clarifying, and the melancholy is supplied by the disarray, by the sense of neglect, of the past piling up.

Wanting to take photographs, but not knowing what to look at, where to turn my gaze, from what angle, what pictorial conceit? I chose the studio, because it is a space I know well, and I have control over its contents. Yet it is also a space of failure, of abandoned projects, of disuse and indolence. In beginning to photograph the studio, I found myself unable to choose an optimal perspective. David Hockney's cubist photographs were an influence, but I was not interested in planting my feet, standing still and moving only the lens of the camera. There is a roaming, liberated, yet labyrinthine and circulating quality to my gaze in the studio. Scanning, zooming, alighting, moving on, redoubling, returning.

Repetition is implicit in photography, as everything is doubled by the image, so the process of exploring over 500 images in the environment they depicted, is vertiginous. The French phrase *mise en abyme*, which means "put into the abyss" and refers to a self-reflexive embedding of content (as in Andre Gide's novel *The Counterfeiters*, which contains a novelist who is writing a novel called *The Counterfeiters*,) was always on my mind, and I took numerous breaks on the fire escape outside my studio to escape the sometimes overwhelming doubling of the space.

Scrying is a practice of crystal-gazing, or divination. I found *A Short Course on Scrying* on the internet. The three steps, which are described in great detail, are summarized as, 1. Establish the boundaries, 2. Create the landscape, and 3. Establish a body in the magickal space. These steps could be applied to studio practice, and in a different way, to internet usage, and our increasingly virtual lives.

The practice of seeing the future through images or symbols, smoke, water, crystals, clouds, is ancient. If one eliminates the possibility of "magic", and reads the practice at a material level, the relationship between the future and the present is implicit in divination. The seer, or medium, is putting images about possible, projected futures in front of the questioner, who then processes these ambivalent symbols unconsciously as they move into the future. Thematizing the present as the producer of the future is the radical potential of divination. Increasingly, we fear the future and therefore blind ourselves to visions of it, dark or light.

The scribes in the show are lids from jars, paint cans and other containers. Paint is mixed in them, and then sometimes coated with resin or polyurethane, creating a shiny, reflective surface. This surface is similar to the prints of photos on glossy paper, and framed in glass. The angle of viewing renders the surface glaring sometimes, producing an experience of looking *at*, and sometimes allows the gaze to penetrate, and look *in*. In painting, I am struggling with this tension as well: a dialogue between going *into* a space and being held at the surface, with an object in the *here* space.

Mixing color is subjective absorption for me. The problem of composition, and its references, although not left behind, become less important in the circle. "The round cry of round being makes the sky round like a cupola. And in this rounded landscape, everything seems to be in repose. The round being propagates its roundness, together with the calm of all roundness. And for a dreamer of words, what calm there is in the word round. How peacefully it makes one's mouth, lips and the being of breath become round. Because this too should be spoken by a philosopher who believes in the poetic substance of speech... Being is round."

My circles are flat. Not spherical, but flat as the moon appears when looking up at the night sky. We must imagine the round, perfection; the wholeness of being. I am only making pools, like Narcissus or the frog princess, who accidentally tossed her golden ball into the dark waters of a pond.