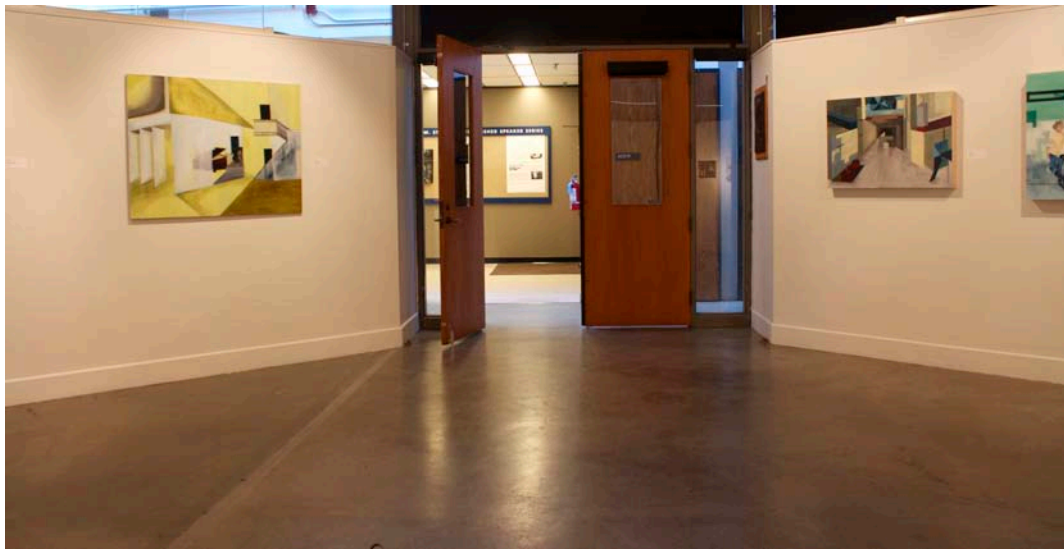


# Integrated Project Thesis

## *A Deconstructed Space* by Jessica Fass



I am struggling to find my place in the adult world and investigating where I stand in a life made up of mostly corporate offices. The struggle has inspired me to paint a series of architectural spaces in oil that reflect my childhood ideas of offices combined with my current insecurities of fitting into a corporate world. The world as I saw it seemed to work nine to five in large offices with white walls, gray floors and cubicles. When I imagine myself in that lifestyle I fear that a life in a corporate office would block my creativity.

My interest in offices began as a child. Both my parents worked full time as lawyers in New York City, leaving me behind to wonder what their daytime world looked like. I imagined that the offices resembled the complex architecture and sleek, delicate furniture I saw in the movies. It was not until I experienced working in an office one summer that I realized that the average office is not as glamorous as I once imagined. The space felt constricting and uptight and not a place where I could be free to let my mind wander and daydream.

*“Isn’t imagination alone able to enlarge indefinitely the images of immensity?”*

*Gaston Bachelord.*

My paintings use planned architecture from references of offices, and also uses abstracted architecture that develops during the painting process. I begin each painting using found images from Architectural Record, Architectural Digest and Architect. I am drawn to these images of modernist architecture because they are places that I do not see everyday. In order to find my place in the office I abstract and reconstruct it.

The Poetics of Space by Gaston Bachelard has emphasized the importance of using my imagination when working, rather than relying on references alone. He speaks about the role of daydreaming and how it references places we've seen in the past, but also how it creates an exaggerated, grander picture. My old and new daydreams of the office force me to recreate the space as I would want it to look in order to feel like I fit in. The reconstruction of these spaces made me see my work as an investigative self-reflection series. I am sensitive to what my choices of planes, color and composition say about my place in an office.

The first half of the series focuses on depicting the office spaces as cold and negative, reflecting on my separation from the space. After my third piece I had a change of heart. I decided that the second half of the series would begin to stretch impossible architecture and become less focused on how I do not fit into these office spaces. Instead my goal became about how I can recreate the space to fit my personality and fit me. The series works with both color and abstraction to express my separation, but also connection to the office spaces I create.



Detachment, Jessica Fass, 2012

Color sets the mood and the scene of this series. In *Behind Closed Doors*, *Risky Business* and *Detachment*, I wanted to show the cold, lonely feelings I develop when I step into a corporate office. I use a more muted palette to emphasize my feelings and to

create a dull atmosphere. These three paintings consistently use different shades of gray, purples and cool colors, only using a limited number of bright hues.

Dexter Dalwood and Edward Hopper have both been inspirational to my work. However, Dexter Dalwood's paintings have been an effective example of how color can set the tone of a piece. "Room 100, Chelsea Hotel," is one example of how he creates an intense mood. This piece stood out to me because of his muted and dark palette. I think his colors are effective in adding drama and a narrative to this room. He suggests there is a story happening beyond what we see. Edward Hopper's work also suggests a narrative beyond what we can see and now my work is exploring the same task through color.



Room 100, Chelsea Hotel, Dexter Dalwood, 1999

I use color to create space beyond what we initially first see. In one of my later pieces, *The Other Side*, I am using different temperatures within the same hues in order to create new planes and new directions in perspective. This technique opens up the possibilities in the space and makes the viewer want to see beyond what is given. If the viewer cannot see past what I show them, it leaves room for an imaginative daydream, and also forces the viewer to look at the piece longer. The same technique is applied to *A Transparent Space*. I consistently use



The Other Side, Jessica Fass, 2013

temperature shifts in order to turn walls and planes, distorting the perspective and creating a new unseen space. Staying within the same hues has also helped to connect all aspects of the piece, instead of isolating sections.

All five of my paintings have been held together by one common color element. In each painting there is at least one drastically bright or bold hue. I believe that I needed to add this into my work because it was a representation of me. Even if there was not a figure present I felt myself in each piece because of the bright color choice. As the series evolved I found it more difficult to stay away from the bright and vibrant colors I am so drawn to. In the last painting, *A Transparent Space*, I decided to work only with brighter and bolder hues. I made the potential boring office space more exciting so that it fits me.

*"When the image is new, the world is new," Gaston Bachelard*

Abstraction is used in many ways throughout the series to also show my separation or connection to the office. *Behind Closed Doors*, *Risky Business*, and *Detachment* each work with abstraction of the figure and abstraction of the space. I break the figure into geometric forms of color while retaining the pose. My intention is to keep the figure looking removable from the space. The body language of the figures shows either ambivalence or hesitation towards the office space. *Detachment* shows the woman looking in one direction while walking in the other. She seems to be torn between either walking towards the office or walking towards the more abstracted area. She is ambiguous to the viewer because it is not clear which direction she will choose.

Her indecisiveness represents the pull toward a more creative job, but also the pressure I feel to conform to the normalcy of working in a regular office.

In an attempt to abstract offices to cater to my views, I have been looking at



Pormetxeta Square, Kounosuke Kawakami, 2012

Kounosuke Kawakami's and AI Held's work. While AI Held creates three-dimensional, non-existent spaces through color and form, I have found Kawakami's work to be more inspiring. Although his work is imaginative, each piece makes us believe that the space could exist. I am especially attracted to his work because of his use of architecture and perspective changes. It seems that he combines more than one place in his paintings and uses deconstructed geometry in order to steer away from a known place. Trying to abstract the spaces I create has been a challenge, but I have found using

deconstructed geometric shapes to be a helpful solution.

*Risky Business*, uses geometric shapes to add abstraction to the known office space. Deconstructed shapes or puzzle pieces hold the disassembled figure as a separate element from the office. Not only do the shapes begin to abstract the space, but they seem to guide the woman in and out of the room. It appears she might jump off the ledge she is sitting on, but is hesitant. The



A Transparent Space, Jessica Fass, 2013

possible action is a metaphor to show my struggle between entering the creative world or a more corporate atmosphere. The shapes bring an abstract element to the space, however still feel separate from the rest of the piece.

In an effort to completely abstract and reconstruct office spaces, I felt that I needed to consider abstracting the entire painting instead of certain sections of the piece. *The Other Side* and *A Transparent Space* begin as one architectural disruption. Lines meet each other at unrealistic angles, planes are flat and three dimensional, and surrealist objects are added. I use transparency as another element of abstraction in order to create an office space that fits my personality. In *The Other Side* I use transparencies on the walls to achieve a layering effect. The viewer can see faded black lines suggesting that there is something happening behind the wall. In *A Transparent Space* transparency is also used to show the stairs and objects that lay behind the walls. This effect forces the viewer to think about what happens behind walls and opens an opportunity to imagine or daydream.

Although I only plan to show five pieces, I believe I have just started to make a breakthrough in my investigation of the office space. I stopped trying to fit into a place that is not made for me and instead created a place that fits into me. I plan to continue to work with color, abstraction and transparencies in order to create my own office spaces. As I move on in my life I will be moving back to New York, which I believe will inspire me and supply me with the information I need to further continue my investigation.

## Resources

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