

Leeza Doreian

Pattern is integral to my work, both in form and content. From my earliest creative endeavors, pattern acts as both structure and metaphor to create a place where sensuality and order meet.

My current work is grounded on the Northern Californian coast. Used women's clothing and shipping packaging inspire work which alludes to patterns in nature, and the fragile place where land meets sea. By transforming post-consumer waste into poetic representations of the natural world, I hope to inhabit the space between human separation from nature and a yearning for connection. My process begins with collecting used, mass-produced fabric items, which inspire carefully considered paintings, countering the ever-increasing pace in which these items are produced and consumed.

There is an inherent slowness to my work, which requires in-person viewing. My investment in materiality, subtlety, pattern, and repetition are influenced by my experience as a person with pronounced learning differences, which affect my relationship to symbolic language, especially words. Something I value most about visual art is the potential for communication on multiple levels simultaneously, without being bound by the way meaning functions in word-based form.

In-person viewing of art is one of the primary ways I connect, understand and mediate the world. Shelter in place drastically affected this connection -- as well as my relationship to public transit, libraries, and so many ways which I interact with humans. At the same time, my job — working with artists with developmental disabilities at Creativity Explored — moved almost entirely online. While my neurodiversity makes many forms of online communication incredibly challenging and disconnective, it became clear that the computer is a viable (even preferable) way to connect for some, while extraordinarily marginalizing for others.

Because I can't view art in person, and miss all that does not translate online (regardless of medium), I've found myself leaning into the visual and material subtleties of my own practice. My process has long been laborious, but it has slowed down further in the last year, as I sand and repaint, searching for each painting. My work may employ a realistic technique, but the optical qualities and material presence subvert literal readings, sitting in the ineffable space between binaries such as representation and abstraction.

At the same time, I have begun to create more fully abstract paintings, partly as a reaction to the laboriousness of my other work, but also as another form of respite from my lifelong struggle with words and symbols. I have been falling in love with abstraction for about 15 years, but have never felt such a deep need to work this way myself until the many shifts and challenges of this past year. My representational and abstract paintings belong together, and I include examples of both in my slides.