

BRIDGETTE MAYER GALLERY



TRIPLE BOLT GAZETTE

Be Here Now...with Tim McFarlane

Brian Aufdenberg | September 18, 2023



Hello, and good to type with you again. Since we last spoke, you have moved your studio. How has the new space changed or challenged your creative process? Has it made much of a difference?

Haha, good to type with you, as well! I moved to my current studio at Crane Arts in the lower Kensington area of Philadelphia last June. This is a much larger space than the previous one I had and it has definitely changed my process. I'm now able to work on larger paintings and other projects that I wasn't able to do so comfortably in my last space, which was a two-bedroom apartment in South Philly. The ability to have room to stand back and examine a 60" x 60" painting with no problem is a huge bonus.



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Have you had to change the tone of your work since you moved? Has your vision of the world or your work been changed by it being made in a new place? I remember noting a shift in your style when you moved from the studio on North 3rd, and starting to see another evolution as you have settled into this space. Has this been a concise shift?

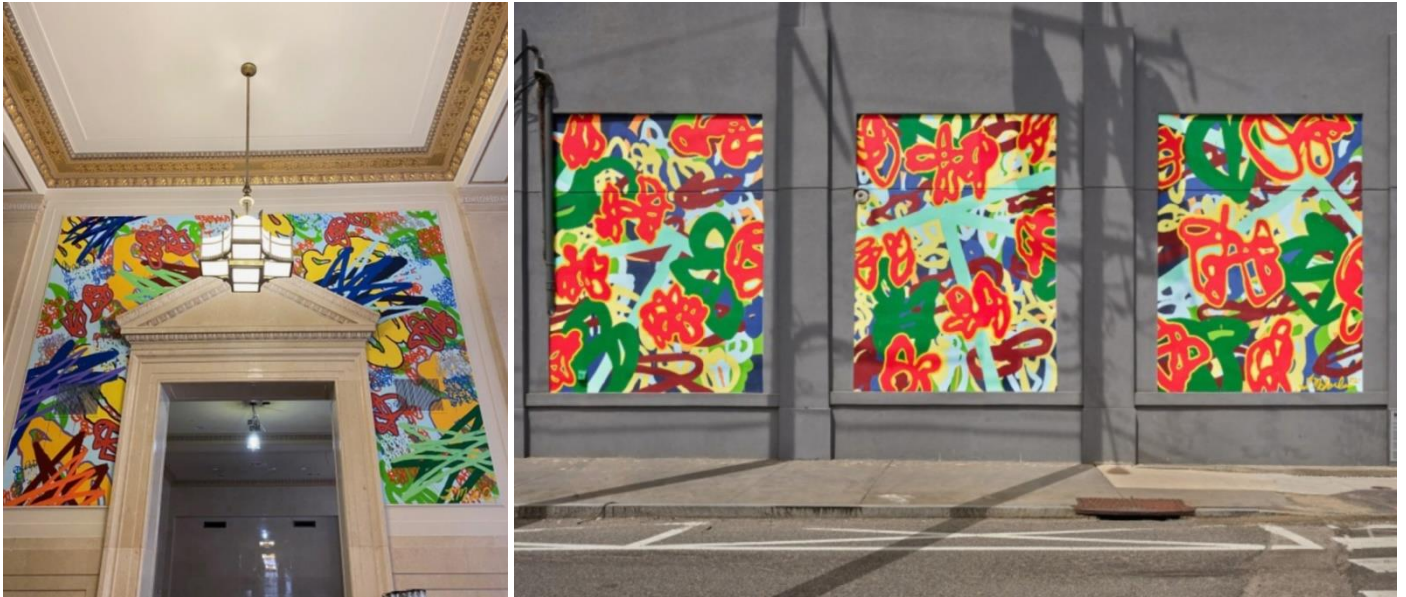
Having more space to make my work again has been a game-changer. I'm now able to conceive of and make larger paintings without the previous spatial restrictions. I can also work on a number of projects at once and be able to leave things out, something that I wasn't able to do in the old space. There, I had to rearrange ten things in order to be able to work on one large painting, sometimes. Being able to have several works-in-progress and finished works out at the same time helps with my painting process. Being able to examine and think about newly made paintings and works on paper is helpful in solving problems and determining ways forward in the work.



You have done some very exciting murals over the last few years. While we are talking about locations, how much does the location of your murals dictate the work itself? Do you like creating site specific or do you have a theme in mind beforehand that you make fit into the location?

Thanks, yes, the expansion of my studio work into public and semi-public mural making has been exciting. I've only made two murals, so far: one in collaboration with Mural Arts Philadelphia and the other was a private commission for an indoor mural at a local architectural firm. All murals are site-specific and all have their own particular quirks. The public mural, *Bound Together*, located at 10th and Callowhill Streets in Philadelphia, has a specific architectural feature in that the wall is made up of these huge "insets" that are separated, so the mural is in three parts across the wall. My design had to take that into consideration after I had the go-ahead from the Chinatown community. The second mural had its own quirks being that the painted area was bounded by arched, marbled, neoclassical architecture. I had to make a design that fit into a space that's a rectangle with an arrow cut into it from the bottom edge. That was an interesting challenge, but it turned out wonderfully. Also, I was able to go ahead with the mural after showing the client a couple of four-inch sketch colored pencil sketches. I'm grateful for their trusting me with that project and not demanding a full rendering in software that I have limited ability with, haha!

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I have always found your work musical & lyrical for a while now. How much of an impact does music come into play with your art or process?

Music is always on in my studio and definitely impacts the work that I make, sometimes directly in the type of energy that I channel from what I'm listening to and sometimes much more subtly. As you know, I'm a big drum 'n bass fan, but I listen to a fairly wide range of music, although a large portion of it is electronic: dnb, deep house, dub techno, Detroit techno, industrial, minimal techno/ambient some hip hop and so on. I also have "quiet days" in the studio where I'll come in and forget to even turn on anything. I'll work for a couple of hours that way or go the whole day without listening to anything. Full quiet days are rare, though. I also listen to podcasts a lot; about art, movies, social topics, whatever interests me at the moment. Podcasts can take up a lot of mental energy, so I only listen to them when I'm doing some studio task that doesn't demand a lot of attention, like stretching canvas, filling in color in places on paintings, cleaning, etc...



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Do you approach your work from more of a series viewpoint, or individual works with a similar style or message?

Generally, it's the latter for me. Sometimes a standalone series will come out of just working and playing with ideas, but I'm mostly interested in playing with materials and ideas seeing what happens. Interestingly, I'm currently working on a series of small paintings on panels (9" x 12") with stripped down ideas that have emerged from the past few years of painting. I'm up to eight in that series, so far, but I'm hoping to get to 20 pieces and maybe more, if I don't get tired of it.



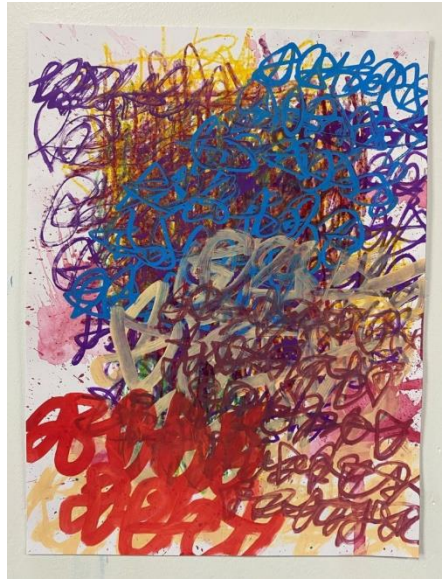
Since it has been a little while, can I ask how your creativity was affected by the pandemic? Have you changed much about your process or output? Did it challenge you to rethink your craft or how you approach it?

Honestly, when the lockdowns happened, my creativity increased, even though I was still in my smaller studio space. I had a day job at the time that had to shut down, so I went to my home/studio and just worked. Amid all of the tragedy, social upheaval and political shenanigans going on with the former administration, I found that the best thing that I could do as an artist was to keep going and making the work. What else was I going to do? We had to spend most of our days indoors and only outside with spatial restrictions, etc... and I couldn't just sit there and do nothing. I made a lot of small works on paper that I donated to a few causes to help raise money for a few organizations and other artists affected by the loss of income. That gave me a sense of purpose beyond just making more art.

I haven't had to rethink how I approach my art making. I guess, if anything, it strengthened my resolve to continue making the work that matters most to me and not change anything because of what I "think" I should be making at the time. I'm referring to the rise of interest in Black figurative art that started prior to 2020, but went into high gear once the pandemic set in. I'm happy to see more Black artists getting represented in the mainstream art world (more museum collections and more exposure at art fairs), but that's not the type of work that feeds my painting. My work, being non-representational, takes as its basis an interest in the residue of human memory and existence-the effects that we have on our surroundings and each other. I'm interested in the questions that come up around what happens to a space that we have impacted through our presence? For instance, what are the hidden histories on a wall that has had many people interact with it via graffiti, street art, postering, buffing/cleaning, etc...? What happens when a city goes through rapid changes due to gentrification and our collective memories shift as the new overtakes the older places? How much do we remember about what was once there and was it there in the first place, are we just forever moving through echoes of the past as the present morphs into the future?

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Any chance we will see some more wood block print work from you?

That's a great question and I'll just say that I do want to make more woodblock prints. Just need to figure out some funding. I had a great time making the edition, *Tomorrow's Conversations*, through the Brandywine Workshop and with master printer, Alexis Nutini, based here in Philly. That was one of my "pandemic projects" that started in 2019 and continued into 2020, along with a group exhibition at Towson University and the beginnings of the Callowhill Street mural project.

What medium out there is one you have not yet tried or explored but are still really excited to try? What is holding you back from trying it out?

I think it would be interesting to animate some aspects of my work, especially the glyphs. I've never felt like I had the time to learn animation. I'd like to learn more about screen printing and use it in my work, but at a large scale, like what Christopher Wool does in his work. I took an intro to screen printing class earlier this year, but have yet to return for other classes. Just have to fit it into my schedule this winter.



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Who are a few artists more people need to be aware of and supporting?

Oh wow, too many to mention them all here, but here are some IG handles in no particular order nor importance over those I've not included here:

@xoaubriecostello, @dos_tres_press, @traem3, @tajposce, @mikelartist, @erik.spehn, @mrodriguez_studio, @luciagarzon, @chloepinero, @culturesclothing, @mjasonweston, @matthewsepiellipainter, @benjaminfweaver, @artqueendee, @arden2bees, @rebecca.rutstein, @athena_astraea

and even more...if you look through my "following" feed on my IG profile, there's a ton of great artists that I follow.

What is up next for the mighty Tim McFarlane?

October 2023: I have prints on view in a new show at the Brandywine Workshop called *Flowing Abstraction: Contemporary African Diaspora Printmaking*

November-December 2023: Group show at the Bridgette Mayer Gallery called, *Something Big, Something Small*

Spring 2024: Solo exhibition at the Bridgette Mayer Gallery

What are your socials?

Web: timmcfarlane.com

IG: @timmcfarlane_studio (painting, etc...) and @timmcfarlanephoto

TikTok: @timmcfarlanestudio

Newsletter: https://open.substack.com/pub/tmstudio?r=2onhk8&utm_medium=ios

Studio blog: https://open.substack.com/pub/timmcfarlanestudio?r=2onhk8&utm_medium=ios

Full article: <https://tripleboltgazette.com/2023/09/18/be-here-now-with-tim-mcfarlane/>