

Jenkins Johnson Gallery

*FOG Design+Art
2022*

Lisa Corinne Davis

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LISA CORINNE DAVIS

Lisa Corinne Davis (b. 1958, Baltimore, MD) explores the complex relationship of race, culture, and history, where form and content merge. She uses abstraction to explore how society compresses identity into singular terms. Davis believes that identity is much more convoluted and complex to be narrowed down to race and gender. She weaves together ruled lines and primary colors with gestural work and organic forms. Davis uses the map as a metaphor for the viewer to try to locate themselves within the composition. Her “inventive geography” prompts a wide range of interpretations, its open-endedness a stance she actively cultivates. The resultant mix of eclectic form and content is surprising as well as stimulating. Davis, says her practice explores the complex relationship between “race, culture and history” and, with it, ideas about classification and contingency, the rational and irrational, chaos and order.

Davis' paintings have been exhibited across the United States and Europe. She has been received positively by the press including The Telegraph, Art News, Art in America, The Philadelphia Inquirer, and The New York Times. She is the recipient of numerous awards, including The Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant, The Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Grant, a National Endowment for the Arts Visual Artist Fellowship, and three Artist Fellowships from The New York Foundation for the Arts. In 2017, she was inducted as a National Academician at the National Academy Museum & School. Davis' work is included in many prestigious private and public collections including The Museum of Modern Art, the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum, and The Philadelphia Museum of Art, which is documented in the book, *Represent: 200 Years of African American Art* in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, by Gwendolyn DuBois, Yale University Press, 2014. Davis received her BFA from Pratt Institute, and her MFA from Hunter College. She is currently a Professor of Art, and Head of Painting, at Hunter College.



Lisa Corinne Davis, *Credible Tale*, 2021, signed verso, oil on canvas, 50 x 40 inches



Lisa Corinne Davis, *Factual Feint*, 2021, signed verso, oil on canvas, 60 x 45 inches

LISA CORINNE DAVIS

BORN:

1958 Baltimore, MD. Lives and works in New York, NY

EDUCATION:

1983 Master of Fine Arts in Painting, Hunter College, New York, NY
1980 Bachelor of Fine Arts in Painting, Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY
1978 Cornell University, Ithaca, NY

SELECT SOLO EXHIBITIONS:

2023 Miles McEnery Gallery, New York, NY (forthcoming)
2022 Pamela Salisbury Gallery, Hudson, NY (forthcoming)
2020 *All Shook Up*, Pamela Salisbury Gallery, Hudson, NY
2018 *Turbulent Terrain*, Esther Massry Gallery, College of Saint Rose, Albany, NY
2017 *Lisa Corinne Davis*, Galerie Gris, Hudson, NY
No THERE there..., Zolla/Lieberman Gallery, Chicago, IL
Location...location..., Farmer Family Gallery, Ohio State University, Lima, OH
2015 *Lisa Corinne Davis*, Gerald Peters Gallery, New York, NY
New Paintings, Gerald Peters Gallery, New York, NY
2014 *Lisa Corinne Davis*, Galerie Gris, Hudson, NY
2012 *Lisa Corinne Davis*, Peter Marcelle Gallery, Bridgehampton, NY
2011 *Abstract Infidelities*, Gabin Spanierman, Ltd, New York, NY
2010 *Bona Fide Disorder*, Lesley Heller Workspace, New York, NY
2007 *Facts & Fiction*, June Kelly Gallery, New York, NY.
person, place or thing?, June Kelly Gallery, New York, NY.
2002 *New Work*, June Kelly Gallery, New York, NY.
2001 *Index*, Lehman College Art Gallery, Bronx, NY. (catalogue with essay by Franklin Sirmans)
2000 *Ontologies*, June Kelly Gallery, New York, NY.
1998 *Chartings*, June Kelly Gallery, New York, NY
1998 *Indirection*, ALJIRA, A Center for Contemporary Art, Newark, NJ.
1997 *Essential Traits*, Project Room, Bronx Council on the Arts, Longwood Gallery, Bronx, NY
1994 Dell Pryor Galleries, Detroit, Michigan.
Transparent Brown, Halsey Gallery, School of the Arts, College of Charleston, Charleston, S.C.
Layered, Municipal Gallery, Atlanta, GA
1993 Second Street Gallery, Charlottesville, VA
Mixed Media, Print Club, Philadelphia, PA

SELECT GROUP EXHIBITIONS:

2022 FOG Design+Art, Jenkins Johnson Gallery, San Francisco, CA
2021 Art Basel Miami Beach, Jenkins Johnson Gallery, Miami, FL
Point of Departure: Abstractions 1958-Present, Sheldon Museum of Art, Lincoln, NE
Un-Representation, The Tang Teaching Museum, Saratoga Springs, NY
Frieze New York, Jenkins Johnson Gallery, New York, NY
Art Basel OVR: Portals, Jenkins Johnson Gallery, Online Viewing Room
2020 Art Basel, Miami Beach: OVR, Jenkins Johnson Gallery, Online Viewing Room
Art for Your Collection, The Catherine Fosnot Art Gallery and Center, New London, CT



- The Pursuit of Aesthetics, Artwork Created During Quarantine*, Morgan Lehman Gallery, New York, NY
Art Basel, OVR:2020, Jenkins Johnson Gallery, Online Viewing Room
African American Abstraction: Frank Bowling, Lisa Corinne Davis, Felrath Hines, and Sam Middleton, Spanierman Modern, Miami, FL
- 2019 *The Metaphysics of Abstraction III*, The University of Hawaii at Hilo, Hilo, HI
At The Core Club: New Members of The National Academy of Design, The Core Club, New York, NY
Dance With Me, Zurcher Gallery, New York, NY
- 2018 *MacDowell Now: Recent Abstract Painting*, Curator Gallery, New York, NY
Mixed Bag, Real Estate Fine Art, Brooklyn, NY
The Nature Lab, LABspace, Hillsdale, NY
- 2017 *Lack of Location is My Location*, Koenig & Clinton, Brooklyn, NY
Solace, New York, NY
Text/lure, The Shirley Fiterman Art Gallery, New York, NY
Holding it Together, 68 Jay Street, Brooklyn, NY
Taconic North, LABspace, Hillsdale, NY
The Bedroom, Joyce Goldstein Gallery, Chatham, NY
NEW NEW YORK: Abstract Painting in the 21st Century, Curator Gallery, New York, NY
- 2016 *Alternative Dimension: Lisa Corinne Davis, Maureen Hoon*, Project Art Space, New York, NY
On The Waterfront, Pop up exhibition, Brooklyn, NY
- 2015 *NEW NEW YORK: Abstract Painting in the 21st Century*, University of Hawaii at Manoa Art Gallery, Honolulu, HI
Beyond Boundaries, Flinn Gallery, Greenwich, CT
Keep Out, Leslie Heller Workspace, New York, NY
- 2014 *Soccer Mom*, Lehman College Art Department, Bronx, NY
Awkward Phase, Pop up exhibition, Brooklyn, NY
Nation II At the Alamo, Sideshow, Brooklyn, NY
- 2013 *Terra Incognita*, Storefront Ten Eyck, Brooklyn, NY
The Nature of Women, The Mayor Gallery, London, England
Decisiveness, RuSalon, Brooklyn, NY
Contemporary Cartographies, Lehman College Art Gallery, Bronx, NY
- 2012 *Anywhere But Here*, Pelham Arts Center, Pelham, NY
Two River, One River Art Center, Englewood, NJ
- 2011 *Driven to Abstraction*, Von Lintel Gallery, New York, NY
Time and Again, McCormick Gallery, Chicago, IL
Paper Jam, Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase, NY
- 2010 *When I Come Around: The Artist Around Me*, Apartment Show, Brooklyn, NY
Group Show, Craven Gallery, West Tisbury, MA
- 2009 *The Black and White Show*, Collective Hardware, NYC. Curated by AMP Tracks , featured artists: Kara Walker, Vic Muniz, Jean-Michel Basquiat and Barbara Kruger, among others.
Gallery Selections, Spanierman Modern, New York, NY
Lisa Corinne Davis, Edward Evans & Pinkney Herbert, Allen Projects, New York, NY
- 2007 *Art of Collecting*, Flint Institute of The Arts, Flint, MI
Invitational Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture, American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York, NY
Five Contemporary Voices, Delta Arts Center, Winston-Salem, NC
Universe of Art, Credit Suisse First Boston, New York, NY
Rhythm of Structure: The Mathematical Aesthetic, Wilbur Jennings Gallery, New York, NY



- Glasgow School of Art/Hunter College Art Department Works on Paper by Painting Faculty*, The Bertha and Karl Leubsdorf Art Gallery, Hunter College, New York, NY
Works on Paper: Variations and Themes, Pace University Gallery, Pleasantville, NY
High and Inside, Marlborough Gallery, New York, NY
On The Record, Skylight Gallery, Brooklyn, NY
- 2002 *Cultural Collaging: Lisa Corinne Davis and Apo Torosyan*, Corridor Gallery, Fine Arts Center Galleries, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI
Paper Remix, Dieu Donne Workspace Program: 1995-2000", curated by Edwin Ramoran, New York, NY
Buying Time, New York Foundation for the Arts, Sotheby's Galleries, New York, NY
- 2000 *Book Art 12: Artist's Books from the Library and Research Center*, National Museum of Women in the Arts, Wash., D.C.
- 1999 *Waxing Poetic: Encaustic Art in America*, The Montclair Art Museum, Montclair, NJ, travelling to the Knoxville Museum of Art, Knoxville, TN
- 1998 *Black New York Artists of the 20th Century: Selections from the Schomburg Center Collection*, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, NY
- 1997 *Generations*, A.I.R. 25th Anniversary, A.I.R. Gallery, New York, NY
- 1996 *Artist in the Marketplace Benefit Exhibition*, Bronx Museum of the Arts, Bronx, NY
Prints, Dell Pryor Galleries, Detroit, MI
- 1996 *Allegory and Identity*, Visceglia Art Center, Caldwell College, Caldwell, NJ
With All Deliberate Speed: Revisiting Race and Education, ALJIRA, A Center for Contemporary Art, Newark, NJ
- 1995 Dieu Donne Papermill, New York, NY
- 1994 *Resisting Categories, Finding Common Ground*, City Without Walls, Newark, NJ
Gallery Annex, New York, NY
Identity and Culture, African-American Heritage Exhibition, Barrett House Galleries, Poughkeepsie, NY.
- 1993 *Artist's Books*, curated by Tom Butter, Butters Gallery, Portland OR
AIM Artists, curated by Lydia Yee and Marisol Nieves, The Bronx Museum of The Arts, Bronx NY.
Child's Play, curated by Holly Block, Art In General, New York, NY.
Nancy Bowen, Rosann Berry, and Lisa Corinne Davis, curated by Rosann Berry, Organization of Independent Artists, New York, NY
Emerging Artists, curated by Corinne Jennings, Kenkeleba Gallery, New York, NY
Granary Books, New York, NY
- 1992 *Utopia/Distopia*, curated by Kathleen Edwards, Print Club, Philadelphia, PA
- 1992 Pyramid Atlantic Workshop, Washington, D.C.
Okeanos Gallery, Berkeley, CA
- 1991 Artist's Space, New York, NY
- 1990 Artist's Space, New York, NY

AWARDS AND HONORS:

- 2020 Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant
- 2018 NYSCA/NYFA Artist Fellow In Painting
- 2006 American Academy of Arts and Letters Invitational Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture Yaddo residency
- 2001 The Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation, 2001 Biennial Artists Awards
- 2000 New York Foundation For The Arts, Artists' Fellowship
Printmaking Council of New Jersey, Master Printer Residency

- 1997 New York Foundation For The Arts, Artists' Fellowship
Dieu Donne Papermill, Workspace Program
- 1996 Bronx Council on the Arts, Project Room
- 1995-6 National Endowment for the Arts, Visual Artist Fellowship
- 1994-9 Art In General, Board Member
- 1994-6 The College Council, Parsons School of Design
Artist in the Marketplace, Bronx Museum of the Arts
- 1993-4 Art in General, Advisory Committee for Exhibitions
- 1993 Faculty Development Grant, Parsons School of Design
- 1992 Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation, Regional Fellowship

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- 2020 Samet, Jennifer. "Beer With a Painter: Lisa Corinne Davis." *Hyperallergic*, 26 December 2020. Online.
- Smith, Melissa. "5 Things to Do This Weekend." *The New York Times*, 3 December 2020. Online
- Yau, John. "Lisa Corinna Davis Critiques Corporate America Through Abstract Art." *Hyperallergic*, 24 October 2020. Online.
- Editor, "Notice and Being Noticed: An Interview With Lisa Corinne Davis." *Two Coats of Paint*, 23 October 2020.
- Editor. "Lisa Corinne Davis, Jim Denney, and Seth Becker open October 9 at Pamela Salisbury Gallery, *Hudson Valley 360*, 1 October 2020. Online.
- Waddoups, Ryan. "At Art Basel's Latest Virtual Edition, Timely Works Abound." *Surface Magazine*, 25 September 2020. Online.
- Scott, Chadd. "Art Basel Introduces 'OVR:2020,' Online Viewing Rooms Dedicated To Artwork Made in 2020." *Forbes*, 17 September 2020. Online.
- Artspace Editors. "Rhinestones, Sequins, Paint, Photography and Linocuts – 5 Great Pieces on Women's Equality Day." *Artspace*, 26 August 2020. Online.
- Corwin, Williams. "The Pursuit of Aesthetics: Artwork Created During Quarantine." *The Brooklyn Rail*, 9 July 2020. Online.
- 2018 Carey, Brainard. "Lisa Corinne Davis." *WYBCX*, 15 March 2018. Online.
- 2017 Princenthal, Nancy. "Contemporary Art Steams Up The Hudson." *The New York Times*, 24 August 2017
- 2015 Lawrence, Alexa. "Lisa Corinne Davis." *Artnews*, May 2015.
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- 2014 Diamond-Hammer, Katy. "26 Female Artists on Lynda Benglis and the Art World's Gender Problems." *Artnews*, November 2014.
- Wei, Lilly. "Lisa Corinne Davis: Interview." *Studio International*, 16 August 2014. Online.
- Moynihan, Colin. "Eviction Battles Imperal a Queens Art Haven." *The New York Times*, 6 June 2014. Online.
- 2010 "Railing Opinion: Batman, Bernini and the Young Romantics", *The Brooklyn Rail*
- 2008 *Who Am I? What Am I? Where Am I?* by Aura Rosenberg, Erschienen, Ostfildern, Germany
365 Days of Black History, in Praise of Women, 2009 Engagement Calendar, Pomegranate Communications, Inc., 2008
- 2007 Epstein, Johanna Ruth. "Lisa Corinne Davis at June Kelly" *Artnews*, September 2007.
- 2006 *100 New York Painters*, by Cynthia Maris Dantzic, Schiffer Books, 2006
- 2005 Young, Wesley. "Light Fantasti", *Winston-Salem Journal*, 2005
- Patterson, Tom. "Fine Art in a New Home", *Winston-Salem Journal*, 2005
- Farmer, Layla. "At Last! The New Delta Fine Arts Center Opens its Doors", *W-Times*, 2005



- Caesar, Dianne. "Five Contemporary Voices in a New Space", *Delta Arts Center*, January 2005
- 2004 *100 Creative Drawing Ideas*, edited by Anna Audette, *Shambala Publications, Inc.*, 2004
- 2003 Goodman, Jonathan. *Art In America*, June 2003
- Cohen, David. "High and Inside", *The New York Sun*, June 2003
- Ashford, Doug. "Off the Record", *Time Out New York*, May 2003
- Cotter, Holland. "Off the Record", *The New York Times*, May 2003
- 2001 Cotter, Holland. *The New York Times*, May 2001
- Franklin Sirmans and Susan Hoestzel, "Index", exhibition catalogue, Lehman College, Lehman College Art Gallery, February 2001
- 1999 Stavitsky, Gail. "Waxing Poetic, Encaustic in America", The Montclair Art Museum, Montclair, NJ, 1999
- 1998 Bischoff, Dan. *Star Ledger*, September 1998
- Johnson, Ken. *The New York Times*; May 1998
- Riccard, Frances. Cover, Vol. 12, #3, May 1998
- Miller, Stuart. "Soho Style, Show and Tell", *The New York Observer*; May 1998
- 1996 "Artists' Pages", *Art Papers*, March/April 1997*Abby Goodnough, "Personal Responses to A Page of History", *The New York Times*; June 1996
- 1994 Drake, Nicholas. "'Transparent Brown' requires some thought", *The Post and Courier*; November 1994
- Hakanson Colby, Joy. "Quiet 'Brown' asserts itself in rich shadings of culture", *The Detroit News*, October 1994
- Cullum, Jerry. "'Layered' shows complex quest for identity, individuality", *The Atlanta Journal/The Atlanta Constitution*, August 1994.
- Shine, James G. "Art Beat", *Daily Freeman*, January 1994
- Stack, Sarah. "review/art"; *taconic newspapers*, January 1994
- Schetzel, Florence. "Enjoy!" *Poughkeepsie Journal*, January 1994
- 1993 Sozanski, Edward J. "Galleries", *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 1993
- Rice, Robin "Foggy Bottoms", *Philadelphia City Paper*, November 1993
- Berry, Rosann. "Selections From The Slide File", *Organization for Independent Artists Newsletter*, Spring/Summer 1993
- Marysol Nieves and Lydia Yee, "Artist In The Marketplace", Thirteenth Annual Exhibition Catalog, The Bronx Museum of the Arts, Bronx, NY, 1993
- 1992 Tallman, Susan. "Utopia/Dystopia", The 67th Annual Competition: Prints Catalog, *The Print Club*, Philadelphia, PA., 1992

FILM:

- 2003 *From the Ashes – Epilogue*, --premiers in The Tribeca Film Festival (3/03). Directed by Deborah Shaffer and Michael Berz. Included interviews with artists Shazia Sikander, Jane Hammond and Laurie Anderson
- 2002 *From the Ashes – 10 Artists*, premiered Sept. 11th on cinemax reel life. Directed by Deborah Shaffer and Michael Berz. Included interviews with artists Shazia Sikander, Jane Hammond and Laurie Anderson

TEACHING EXPERIENCE:

2007-

Present HUNTER COLLEGE, THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK, NY, Graduate Studies Coordinator, Associate Professor

2005-6 THE MARYLAND INSTITUTE COLLEGE OF ART, Baltimore, MD, Visiting Critic

2002-4 HUNTER COLLEGE, THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK, New York, NY, Assistant Professor

YALE UNIVERSITY, New Haven, CT, Critic

1997-

2002 YALE UNIVERSITY, New Haven, CT, Assistant Professor of Painting/Printmaking

1997 CENTER FOR ADVANCED DESIGN in affiliation with Parsons School of Design, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Visiting Professor

1996 YALE UNIVERSITY, Norfolk, CT, Norfolk Summer Program, Visiting Artist

1995-8 PARSONS SCHOOL OF DESIGN, NY, NY, Foundation Department, Drawing, Special Part-time Faculty

1995 YALE UNIVERSITY, New Haven, CT, Drawing Instructor

1993-4 COOPER UNION SCHOOL OF ART and ARCHITECTURE, NY, NY, Drawing Instructor, Outreach Program

1993-7 PARSONS SCHOOL OF DESIGN, NY, NY, Coordinator, Design Studio

1992-5 PARSONS SCHOOL OF DESIGN, NY, NY, Academic Advisor, Foundation Department, Drawing and 3-D Design, Part-time Faculty

LECTURES AND ARTIST TALKS:

2008 Maryland Institute College of Art, 2008

2006 Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH. 2006

Complex Collisions, with John Bowman, artist, Phoebe Hoban, journalist and art writer, Carter Ratcliffe, art critic and poet, and Katherine Chapin, private art dealer, Locus Media Gallery, New York, NY.

2000 Abstraction as Description, Transcribing not Transmitting, College Art Association, New York, NY., 2000

1999 Yale University, School of Art, New Haven, CT. 1999

Carnegie Mellon, School of Art, Pittsburgh, PA. 1999

1997 Center for Advanced Design, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 1997

1996 Yale University, Norfolk Summer Program, Norfolk, CT., 1996

Allegorical Painting and Identity Politics, College Art Association, Boston, MA., 1996

1995 Art in General, (with Al Loving), New York, NY, 1995

1994 College of the Arts, College of Charleston, Charleston, S.C., 1994

Moore College of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1994

HYPERALLERGIC

Beer With a Painter: Lisa Corinne Davis

“Artists are cultural critics – but painting is a language.”

Jennifer Samet
December 26, 2020



Lisa Corinne Davis, "Cerebral Calibration" (2017), oil on canvas, 60 x 45 inches

Just over four years ago, Lisa Corinne Davis curated an exhibition called Representing Rainbows at GP Presents/Gerald Peters Gallery, New York. It was one of the shows that marked the beginning of the Fall 2016 art season in New York, but its open and generous tone presented a welcome break from the clubbish and exclusionary feeling that can pervade that week of openings. The show's concept was inspired by an article Davis had written for the Brooklyn Rail in 2014 as a way of grappling with a phenomenon she had observed in the work of her Hunter College MFA students: increasingly, representations of rainbows were cropping up. She wondered how to make sense of these images; on the one hand, the rainbow is a cliché symbol, and on the other, it is a sublime phenomenon. She ultimately noticed that in a world where everything is shared, the rainbow can't be: it exists experientially, it is unfixed, and it is perceived distinctly, depending on one's location — even two people standing next to one another might see it differently.

I have gotten to know Davis over the past several years through a group of her women artist friends, and I've been a guest at the wonderfully noisy, crowded holiday parties she has hosted. Davis has a generous, full-hearted laugh that makes one feel at ease, but she doesn't pull any punches in her observations and opinions. It seems clear that her life as an artist is not compartmentalized. Her engaged social life, her adult children, her devoted attention to her students, and her dedication to running are all absorbed into her abstract painting. This noise, the liveliness, a polyglot social experience — this “rainbow” — is the web and pulse of the shifting grids in her paintings.

Of course, when we met in late fall for this conversation, at her upstate New York home and studio, the social experience was toned down and cautious. But she had set up an outdoor “living room” for small get togethers in her backyard, and her front lawn (a week before Election Day) was a cacophony of political and activist signs. Her studio and home are meticulously ordered.

Order and disorder play against each other in her paintings, in which grids don't behave as we might expect. We look through and into them. They are disrupted by the edges and corners of her paintings, which throw off any rigidly frontal perspective, and suggest shifting, irregular angles. They are interrupted by fleeting passages of disharmonious color. These are paintings that challenge any kind of essentialist interpretation and which, like the rainbow, invite subjective points of view.

Born in Baltimore, Maryland, Davis received her BFA from Pratt Institute in 1980 and her MFA from Hunter College in 1983. Her paintings have been exhibited at the June Kelly Gallery and Gerald Peters Gallery, both in New York; and the Mayor Gallery in London. Davis was recently the subject of a solo exhibition at Pamela Salisbury Gallery, Hudson, New York. Her work is included in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and the Victoria and Albert Museum. Davis is the Head of Painting at Hunter College in New York. She was recently the recipient of a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant. Davis is represented by Jenkins Johnson Gallery, San Francisco.

Jennifer Samet: You grew up in Baltimore, Maryland. Do you recall specific formative experiences with art or art-making? How would you describe your path to art school?

Lisa Corinne Davis: My father died when I was young. I grew up with my mother, who worked two jobs to send me and my brother to private school. She believed that if you're going to be a successful person in the world there are things you have to know: classical music, art, dance, and theater. She really had no education in the arts whatsoever — so she made sure we did.

We would go to the Baltimore Museum of Art. I spent a lot of time with the Cone Collection of modern art. I was fascinated by the idea of it. I thought about who would collect all of that work. I liked the space itself — the quiet of it. It gave me the chance to act differently than I did in other spaces in my life. I loved the idea of looking for that long, and making sense of the work. That experience was more important to me than individual works or specific artists.

My mother's dream was for her children to go to an Ivy League school. But I

arrived at Cornell and thought it was just like my high school. It was very elite. At Cornell there was a choice: You could be part of the Ujamaa House and live in a house with the Black people or you could live in a dorm like everyone else. I lived in a dorm. I was approached by the Black students at the end of my freshman year who said, "You should come live with us next year." I said, "I would like to do that, but you guys are at the far stretches of campus and winters are horrible here." I thought it was not cool that I had to make a choice like that.

I went to New York the summer after my freshman year at Cornell and I was in heaven — the diversity, and the feeling I could reinvent who I was. At the time, the art program at Cornell was falling apart, and they were firing the most interesting teachers. After two years at Cornell, I transferred to Pratt as a painting major.

I went to my mother with this information and, to her credit, she said, "I just want you to do what you want to do." She said, "I didn't get to do what I wanted to do because I couldn't afford it. You have the privilege to choose, and if that's what you're choosing, I'm behind it." My mother, who is 97 now, was one of the first African American women in Maryland to get a law degree. However, what she really wanted was to be a brain surgeon.

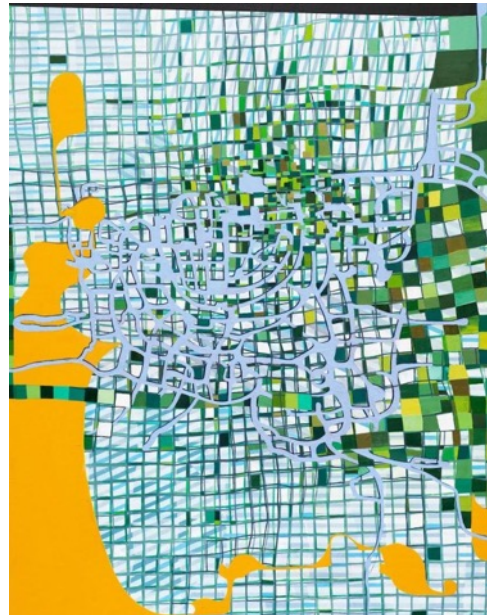


Lisa Corinne Davis, "Deliberate Disinformation" (2020), oil on canvas, 48 x 36 inches

JS: Can you tell me about your experience at Pratt, and then at Hunter College for your Masters degree?

LCD: As an undergraduate, even though I was a painting major, I never learned how to paint. I didn't learn to mix color, the differences between brushes, or how to use linseed oil. We learned none of that.

By graduate school at Hunter, we were already too involved in our own work to learn the basics. Still, I had some great teachers, like Ron Gorchov. He was probably the most well-read person I had come across. At some point I asked him, "How have you read everything?" And he said, "It's because I didn't get a graduate degree." Rosalind Krauss was also my teacher. She was fierce, smart, beautiful. I was shaking in her classroom all the time from fear, but I loved being around her. It was still such a male world in the early 1980s, and I was looking for a female role model for validation that this was all possible. And Lynda Benglis was my teacher as well. She was a character, warm and lovely, and she obviously had guts.



Lisa Corinne Davis, "Deliberate Deceit" (2020), oil on canvas, 50 x 40 inches



JS: What was your early work like?

LCD: I worked on paper for a long time because I felt like I didn't know how to paint. I was making work about gridding and cultural analysis. They were paper installation pieces. When I was pregnant with my first child, I started thinking more specifically about the importance of race and race labels, and how appearances affect the trajectory of one's life. I began making simple self-portraits in ink on paper. I would cover them with a layer of graphite, so they became reflective and hard to read. To this I would add a clear cultural sign in white colored pencil, like a Greek vase. That's what you would see. Gradually, you would see a person lurking behind. I was asking the question: "Can you or should you make a connection between who you think that person is and the Greek object?"

I would look at American history books in terms of codes of illustration. If you were a white man, you were represented as a bust. If you were a woman, you were a figure, and if you were "other," you were in the landscape. I would take the pages apart, reassess, and draw over them. I would rewrite histories in between the lines.

That is where the grid entered the work, because I was lining things up for analysis. However, it was more about a personal quest as opposed to establishing myself as a political artist. By the mid-1990s, abstraction became my language.

When I was hired by Yale to teach in the Painting department, and I first went into the graduate studios, I thought, "Wow. You can really paint. You really know this stuff." I envied the deep dive the students were making into the medium. I realized how far painting could go, in an expressive way. It made me stop making the works on paper and start to paint.

However, I think of identity in painting, too. When I am painting and making different moves, I think, "Now I am a grid painter, or a spiller, or an Expressionist." I try to embody these personas, because none of them quite feels like home. Therefore, I try it on and see what it feels like. It never feels quite right, so I don't fully act it out.

JS: Yes — I wondered if you identify with other grid painters, or see your work as responding to them?

LCD: I don't identify with grid painters. The grid is the linchpin because it is the most fascist, unbending, unyielding painting move you can make. It defines the surface and it puts it into measurable equal, timed zones. It is the most organized system in a painting that's reliable. You can compare it to systems in the world. What would feel as secure in the world as a grid does in painting? Nothing.

By nature, people want other people to be clear: you're female; you're male; you're from the East Coast; you're from the West Coast. The grid is the metaphor for that kind of stable, unquestioning zone. But I don't relate to that at all. I was a light-skinned Black woman, whose mother moved us to an Orthodox Jewish neighborhood when I was 12, and I went to a Quaker school for my entire childhood.

I am trying to breathe humanity into this system — to breathe life into the grid. I think I have two vocabularies. There is a set of things that are objective, and there is the subjective vocabulary — the weird things, elements that are about feeling. I keep interweaving them and making them come close to each other. I want the work to feel like someone is trying to knit things together which, perhaps, should not live together. That process keeps me engaged in the studio. It is happening in real time in the studio.



Lisa Corinne Davis, "Calculated Computation" (2020) 42 x 34 inches, oil on canvas

JS: I know maps are an important starting point for the work. Do they also relate to real spaces which you are moving through?

LCD: They are about mapped spaces, and about how we understand space: mental space, physical space, painting space. I think about all those things and how we navigate them. They are also about growing up with an indeterminate history. Many African American histories are lost, so you have bits and pieces.

I also had a mother whose attitude was, "I'm going to push you further." So I was always landing in spaces that I was trying to understand and thinking, "How do I want to navigate the space? What do I want to take away from it? Am I comfortable here?" There is never a lack of consciousness around the space being inhabited. It is always an active expression of memory and wanting to connect.

Even though many maps are lies, a map is made with geometric shapes and primary colors and black and white. We just assume that it is delivering facts to us. I am constantly playing with whether you can trust what you are seeing in the work.

I also move from color that is more trustworthy to color that's more expressive or less trustworthy. In the book *Chromophobia*, David Batchelor discusses how when the New York Times moved to color photography, people were up in arms. Black and white photography symbolized truth, whereas color photography felt like a lie. In literature, like *Moby Dick* or *Heart of Darkness*, elements are described as black and white until the story becomes crazy, and then it is in color. When elements move from primary color to more toxic and invented color, it suggests a move from actual, territorial spaces to psychological spaces. I play with that in the work.

JS: In many of your recent paintings, you notice a ghost image of painting marks that came earlier. Do you leave and use this to help generate what comes later?

LCD: I never give up on a painting. The process of painting is a conversation. I have sanded paintings and let that residue become part of the conversation again. This was initially out of convenience. However, I later realized that it created a situation where the back plane of the canvas became less determined. I like that ability to absorb into the space, and to not know where it ends.

Also, I always want to communicate the sense that someone is building this world. They are not graphic. I don't build them on the computer or draw them first. I do something, the painting does something, and then I try to counter it with the next move. That is the conversation.



Lisa Corinne Davis, "Captious Computation" (2019), oil on canvas, 40 x 30 inches

JS: You published an article, "Towards a More Fluid Definition of Blackness," in 2016. It seems like your work is trying to communicate a more nuanced expression of Black experience, and of shifting or unstable identity markers. Why do you think we haven't moved toward a conversation about racial fluidity as it relates to painting content?

LCD: Some Black painting has communicated, "Here is history, but I'm going to retell it in a different way, or make you look at this through a different lens." This is completely valid, but there are also other ways to think about it. Sometimes, the content of painting is not so easy to understand. It can be difficult to understand. But that fluidity needs to happen so people can understand the different nuances of Black experience. For instance, when I was teaching at Parsons, there might be a request like, "We've got this kid who grew up in the inner city. Lisa, can you talk to him?" I would say, "No. We don't share an experience just because we are Black."

I certainly have had dealers come into my studio and say, "You should make your work more Black." I am like, "What does that mean?!" It is as Black as I want to talk about. I'm an abstract painter. Just accept me on those terms. It navigates through the thread of my experience, which is one type of Black experience. I can't take up the banner for everybody.



Lisa Corinne Davis, "Miraculous Measure" (2020), oil on panel, 40 x 35 inches

I'm really happy about the success — although it came very late — of Jack Whitten or Alma Thomas. But these are artists who worked their whole lives with no one paying attention to the work. I'm happy there is one collector — Pamela Joyner — who has been putting together a significant collection of African American abstraction. But she is still pretty much alone in her mission.

JS: When you talk about the different sets of vocabularies becoming interwoven in your painting, it also makes me think about how you have described the art world as particularly non-inclusive — that there is a Black art world and white art world. Are the multiple grids and dichotomies in your work an expression of this? Also, I wonder if there are historic artists in whom you recognize the kind of destabilization or lack of terra firma that you describe as a goal in your own work?

LCD: Yes, definitely. I don't think it has helped me to always have these things bouncing off each other. If I was firmly rooted in the Black art world, I think my career or experience would be very different. But I don't understand the need to isolate in that way. I feel the art world is decades behind other parts of society, in terms of inclusion. It certainly looks more inclusive now. There are more African American

artists being shown. However, the cliques and clubs among collectors and curators are not very fluid and this situation forces artists to pick a club. I don't want to do that. I've never wanted to do it. But I don't think it has helped me.

I never play by the rules. The grid is never really a grid. It is never measured right, or it might become web-like. I have never been able to fully understand the societal rules I'm supposed to be playing by. So all of the formal elements in the paintings are always a little bit off. There is something you expect about how they will behave, but then they start to do something that lets you off the hook.

Rebellion in art has always come with a subtle rejection of the rules of the game. Poussin did this in "The Sacrament of Marriage" (1647-48), Veronese's "Allegory of Love" (1570) did this, and so did Brueghel's "The Land of Cockaigne" (1567). Perspective was supposed to lay everything out clearly: Here is the vanishing point; here is the horizon. Each one of those painters subtly tipped it.

Brueghel changed how the surfaces of the landscape were expected to look. He wanted the figures glued to the ground for their gluttony. He wanted the ground to feel almost like it was swallowing up the figures. He was making a political statement about a tale. He was saying that if the world was full and you could have all the food you want, that might not be a good thing. Brueghel's rebellion happened in not playing strictly by the rules of perspective.

The same was true of Veronese and Poussin. They all created a kind of destabilized perspectival house for the narrative to live in. In Veronese's case, it was for the purpose of questioning love or marriage or the relationship between men and women. I look at how, with every step of art history, there was an accepted way of constructing the painting to communicate the story. But certain artists placed questions within these constructions. They did it without throwing the game entirely out of the window.

Artists are cultural critics — but painting is a language. There is an accepted language with every given moment in time. If you are just trying to communicate the questions about the narrative within the accepted painting system, it feels like you're not really trying to do anything. I am interested in how to think about things, like your cultural moment, in ways that don't play by the rules.



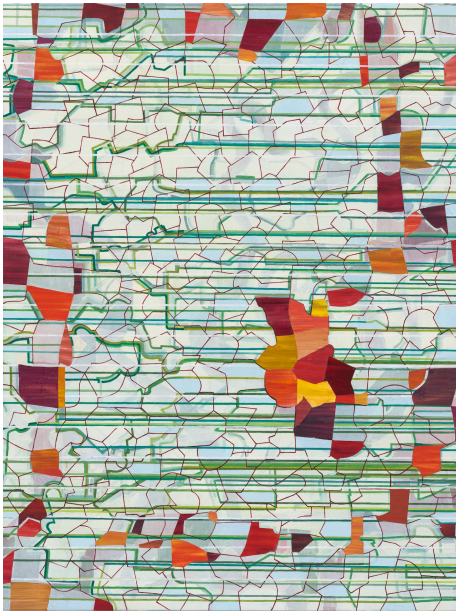
Lisa Corinne Davis, "Analytical Anarchism" (2017), oil on canvas, 72 x 54 inches

HYPERALLERGIC

Lisa Corinne Davis Critiques Corporate America Through Abstract Art

Davis recognizes that grids, networks, and circuits are not purely a product of the art world, and there are myriad contexts in which the government and corporate America deploy them

John Yau
October 24, 2020



Lisa Corinne Davis, "Flitting Foundation"
(2019), oil on canvas, 40 x 30 inches

HUDSON, New York — In 2016, Lisa Corinne Davis published an important essay in [artcritical](#), "Towards a more fluid definition of Blackness." In it, she writes:

Many African-American artists feel the obligation to represent Blackness. My position as an abstract painter allows me to manifest my own sense of self — my black self — as an expression of self-determination and freedom, while avoiding an oppositional stance. I do not believe this position is "post-racial" since I am not sure that that is possible. Yet the current system of how to include black artists in the mainstream seems to be stuck in tropes from the past. I do not want to negate discussions of race and racism in art, but I do want to open the conversation by detaching Blackness from a narrow racial term, allowing it to be more pliable. This will not cause current and historical racial differences to cease to exist, but it will enable artists who are not foregrounding Blackness in their work to become equally important members of the conversation. By rupturing accepted racial boundaries, subtlety and aesthetics will play a social role in the expansion of that conversation.

Davis's comments reminded me of something that Stanley Whitney said to me in an interview nearly a decade earlier ([The Brooklyn Rail](#), October 2008):

With African-Americans, race is always a big issue, and how the art answers the call to race. Everyone understands how to be a doctor or a lawyer — a social activist — to answer the call to race, but what does painting have to do with it? [...] Being an abstract painter, what does that do? Where does that fit in? People have a hard time with that.

As Black artists of different generations, who moved to New York to pursue painting and elected to become abstract artists, Davis and Whitney have had to find ways to respond to, negotiate with, and push back against the expectation that their work should embody an overtly political component.

In her current exhibition, *Lisa Corinne Davis: All Shook Up* at Pamela Salisbury Gallery (through November 2), accompanied by an insightful catalogue essay by the noted art historian Nancy Princenthal, Davis's long pursuit of layering multiple visual systems and schemas has — to my eye, at least — reached a new state of visual resolution, one that feels deliberately unstable, approaching collapse or collision. With this breakthrough, multiple ways of reading her work have come into starker focus.



Installation View, *Lisa Corinne Davis: All Shook Up* at Pamela Salisbury Gallery, Hudson, NY

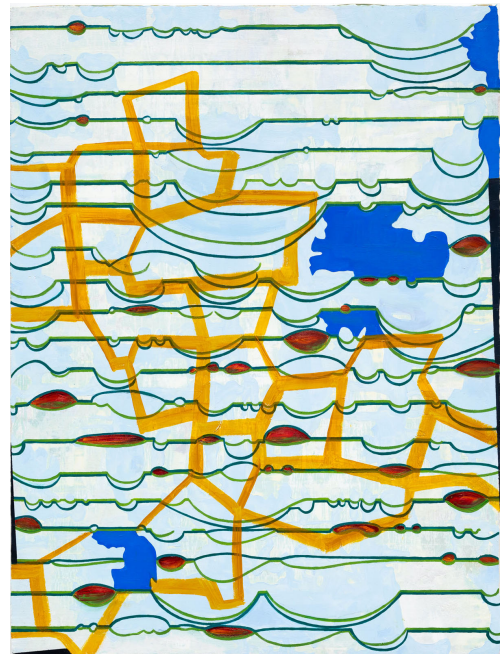
The 15 vertically oriented works are all in either oil or oil and acrylic on canvas, panel, or paper. In scale, they range from 14 by 12 inches to 60 by 45 inches. Compositionally, they share the superimposition of open linear structures over one another. These structures evoke skewed and decomposing grids, disturbed networks, circuitry, collapsing and crashing systems, cells, and even fishnets, pipes, and girders — elements from both the virtual and physical world.

In addition to these features, she includes puzzle-like parts in solid colors and linear bands arranged at various angles, as well as different-colored planes, often abutting each other, spanning part of the canvas, like a path of flat or uneven paving stones.

Looking into Davis's paintings, we cannot tell how far back they go; this suggests a depthless space that shares something of our experience of a digital screen. Although she uses green and/or blue in every work, she does not seem to have a set palette. She often uses punning alliteration in her titles, such as "Flitting Foundation" (2019) and "Miraculous Measure" (2020). They summon a range of associations regarding how the corporate world and government develop ways to identify the individual.

Whereas Whitney composes by laying down rectangles of color, which he goes over or changes, within a non-overall grid, Davis layers together different structures and forms, which she might scrape down, leaving a ghostly echo, before beginning again. As Princenthal points out, citing a statement by Davis, "the paintings begin on canvas, with paint." One could define Davis as an incremental process painter, as the layers of marks don't follow any obvious trajectory.

What differentiates her recent paintings from those I saw a few years ago is that the relationship between the parts and structures seems tighter. By that, I mean that as we shift our focus between the open



Lisa Corinne Davis, "Notional Norm" 2020



Lisa Corinne Davis, "Deceptive Dimension" (2020)

structures and the various forms, we do not get caught up in the eccentricity of a part. Instead, our attention shifts back and forth smoothly.

While these paintings might not initially seem overtly political, I think it would be wrong to reach such a conclusion. We live in a world where everything we do is political, from whether or not we buy a can of Goya pinto beans to whether or not we believe that birth control is a private decision in which the government has no right to interfere. Davis recognizes that grids, networks, and circuits are not purely a product of the art world, and there are myriad contexts in which the government and corporate America deploy them.

Davis's overlaying of structures underscores the fact that numerous organizations have developed innumerable methods to track and identify all of us, in order to discern how and where we fit into a larger pattern. Once we begin to see her painting through this lens, another consideration begins to grab hold. What might a color or a sequence of colors stand for? Color — as we know from experience — is neither neutral nor equal.

At the same time, the twisted and slanted angles at which the linear configurations intersect and overlap, the refusal to settle for the comforts of an overall structure, can be seen as Davis's determination to undo the grid's hold on us. Cognizant that each of us is constantly being tracked, and that our behavior is being registered and fed into a series of overlapping systems designed to decipher what we are up to, Davis's colors also take on a different meaning. What might they be a code for?

This sense of color further distinguishes her work from other abstract painters. My only suggestion is that she bring in more of the highly artificial colors that are available in acrylic, as this would accentuate the singularity that she has already attained.

Davis adds more twists to our experience when she titles a work on paper "Registered Impersonation" (2020) or a painting "Captious Computation" (2019). What does it mean when a computer is programmed to record our trivial faults? Is this the brave new world we are headed toward? The artist's ability to call forth the invisible world, in which we are constantly leaving traces of our presence, injects an unexpected and much-needed jolt into abstraction.

In "Specious Position" (2020), Davis divides the painting horizontally into two unequal areas, with the painting's upper quarter defined by an unloosened grid of white lines on a blue ground. Over this seemingly ruffled surface she has drawn thick brown lines dividing the grid into separate states. Below this grid are two more grids, one composed of blue lines and the other of turquoise on a white ground. Both of the lower grids overlap each other, so that we might read them as a single unit or as two distinct but related schemas.

The tension between the separate states and overlaid grids, and their gesture toward unity and uniformity, is key to the painting. There is constant pressure felt with every overlay, division, element, and intersection. Together, they might lead us to reflect upon what stances we have taken and why.