

# **Making Things That Look Like Other Things**

A research paper written in support of my thesis exhibition

By David Kaarsemaker

Department of Visual Arts, University of Ottawa,  
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**Abstract (Artist Statement for Exhibition): David Kaarsemaker. Pictures.**

My work explores and questions the relationship between the practice of painting, the physical world, and memory. My paintings are made through a layered process that constructs and mediates my approach to a subject. I think through and about the levels and methods of mediation between the world of experience and the act of painting, examining the complex and interconnected realities of things and making images of things.

I begin with the rooms or houses that I remember most vividly from my life. I build maquettes of these spaces, combining them with photographs, projected images, maps, grids, shadows, reflections, and views of my studio space and exterior landscapes. In my paintings, walls unfold or merge into other spaces, doors and windows open into other realities, rooms are half buried, light and images are projected onto walls, and objects appear or disappear with varying degrees of resolution.

I foreground the tape, gaps, and crookedness of the maquettes in my paintings as a means of reflecting on the ways that memories are inherently malleable and always incomplete. Memories are warped by the stories we construct to fit our evolving identities. These stories, in the telling, are like architecture. We move through them, they fall apart and are repaired, and they give shape to our experience. Memories, like the mind and like time, are unimaginable without their physical manifestations. The foundation of my practice is the concept of “pictures residing in pictures,” which sets individual levels of visual experience at a remove. Each painting presents a record of my effort to make these variously represented realities cohere into a convincing and engaging entity. In my paintings, the image and the materiality of paint dovetail and mutually transform each other: raw canvas gradually becomes recognizable image, paint thins into atmosphere, becomes more suggestive of things, builds up, and congeals into a tangible mass before gradually “dissolving” back into the canvas surface. The act of painting itself possesses narrative possibilities that give physical form to memory and perception.

In *Transparent Things*, Vladimir Nabokov describes the past as *pictured* and the present as *perceived*.<sup>1</sup> This distinction resonates with my painting practice. I examine “pictures” and “perception” by filtering them both through modes of representation in painting. In my paintings, I question and respond to the various, overlapping ways in which my experiences are pictured and perceived by creating illusionistic spaces with moments of collapse. Resisting an “all-over” treatment of a painting, I deliberately allow areas of openness to sit within a finished work, juxtaposing various degrees of completeness and resolution. I celebrate painting’s limitations<sup>2</sup> at the same time that I struggle with them, exploring a painterly spectrum from areas of detailed rendering through areas in which the support is laid bare. Throughout my MFA, I have been exploring and questioning the loose equivalences and contradictions between paint, charcoal and raw canvas on the one hand and the world of objects and space on the other.

As I entered the MFA, my painting practice was engaged with an examination of the ways in which landscapes in the forestry industry are demarcated and ascribed meaning through systems of signs and markings.<sup>3</sup> This interest in systems of ordering was carried forward to work in which I began isolating specific modes of painterly application as a way of describing aspects of objects, spaces and vision. In the second year of my MFA, I combined this interest in the way physical space is framed with a more focused spectrum of painterly applications to describe fragmented, multiple-perspective views of structures and rooms (for example, *Space Moves With Us*, Fig. 1). The multiplication of viewpoints, seen in the paintings themselves, have now migrated and influenced my compositional process itself. My most recent and ongoing body of work increases the levels and methods of mediation between the primary world of experience and the painted image. My primary interest however, is not in the specific relationships between the levels of

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<sup>1</sup> “But the future has no such reality (as the pictured past and the perceived present possess” Vladimir Nabokov, *Transparent Things* (McGraw-Hill Int., Inc., 1972), 1

<sup>2</sup> I am adopting an admittedly modernist definition of painting as a primarily planar and static surface upon which painting and drawing materials are applied.

<sup>3</sup> I maintained a painting practice between receiving my BFA in 2004 (Concordia University) and entering the MFA program in 2012

mediation and the image (which elude direct correspondence), but in what new painterly entity can emerge through processes of translation.



Fig. 1. David Kaarsemaker. *Space Moves With Us*. Oil, wax, and charcoal on canvas. 48" x 60". 2013

*Space Moves With Us* (Fig. 1) was the final multiple-perspective piece that I made and exemplifies many of my evolving concerns leading up to my current body of work. In this painting, I have opened up the transitional spaces between views, allowing the image to appear to fold out of an indeterminate middle space.<sup>4</sup> *Space Moves With Us* questions paradoxes of perception through a picture that both separates and confuses the boundaries between inside and outside by appearing to open and stretch according to the movement of the eye. This fragmented representation of space recreates a fractured experience of perception in the viewer by mimicking the act of moving between areas of focus, filtering out that which concerns us out of a profusion of sensory information. Paint is applied through various touches in relation to the surface, building up convincing passages while

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<sup>4</sup> I have been influenced in this regard by Russian filmmaker Andrei Tarkovsky's use of long takes in order to stretch time, lingering in the spaces between scenes.

allowing forms to disintegrate into dissolved transparencies and roughly scumbled<sup>5</sup> dry brush traces. The flattened greenhouse structure in the middle ground is positioned between deep space and tactile proximity, while distinctions between figure and ground become confused as the gaze shifts up towards the sky, which is fused with parts of the greenhouse walls. The spaces of raw canvas prevent the composition from coalescing into a definite shape and force the eye to circulate around the periphery. My retention of areas of bare canvas is one way in which I emphasize the painting as object and challenge the efficacy of painting's capacity for illusion, while still allowing this area to serve as a space of possibility, of something yet to come.

### **The demarcation of physical and painterly space**

Deleuze describes the task of the artist as being one of placing a frame over experience.<sup>6</sup> The frame entraps shards of sensation that are then returned to the viewer, filtered through the painter's thought processes. This process mirrors French philosopher Henri Maldiney's description of the three stages of the manifestation of form, in which the chaotic world of sensation condenses into demarcated entities with definite shapes before crumbling back into an enveloping unity of sensation.<sup>7</sup> Throughout my painting practice, I have looked at ways of creating a loose equivalence between the systole and diastole of perception and a way of painting that allows the viewer to reconstruct the process of raw surface becoming recognizable image.

Just before entering the MFA program, I painted a series of trees that acted as "hubs" to delineate the boundaries of cut blocks in the forestry industry (Fig. 2.). I

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<sup>5</sup> Scumbling is the use of opaque paint to partially hide the under layer so that patches of the colour beneath show through.

<sup>6</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (U of Minnesota Press, 2003), 32

<sup>7</sup> Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze on Music, Painting, and the Arts* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 120

used a dremel to carve into the wooden surface, rubbed charcoal and faintly pigmented medium over this gouged surface before applying thick paint. I then sanded down areas of the composition. Sections of this process are preserved in the final piece. I was using paint geologically, building up and wearing away the surface of my image, turning the panel into both a representation of a forest and a record of the painting's making as a way of talking about cycles of decay and renewal in nature. "CMT" (Culturally Modified Tree) refers to the designation given by surveyors in the forestry industry to trees in which bark has been stripped by aboriginal peoples (for clothing and building). CMTs are marked with flagging tape so as not to be cut down. The isolated use of different painterly applications and the geometric emphasis on colour-coded markings make reference to the delineation of portions of a landscape according an imposed cultural order.

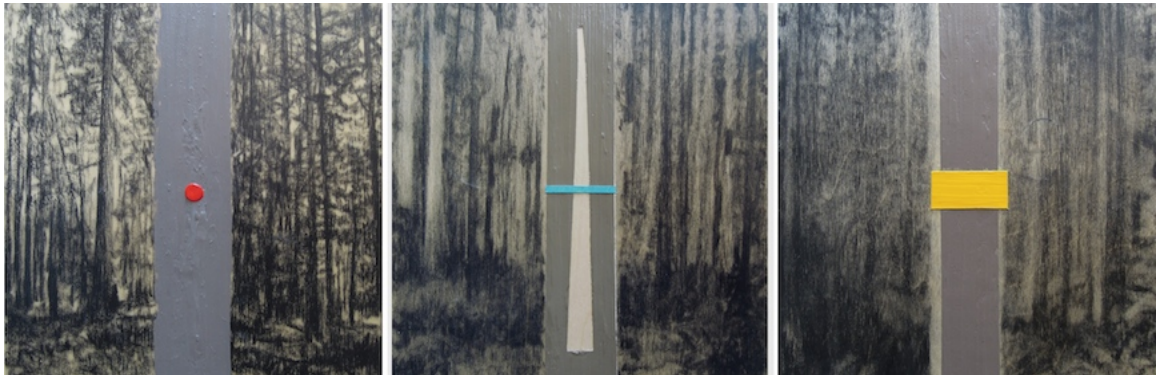


Fig. 2. David Kaarsemaker. *CMTs*. Oil and charcoal on gouged plywood. 10" x 30" 2012

Deleuze's notion of the frame in the painted space can also be interpreted as the way that space is partitioned and assigned meaning in the physical world. When I entered the MFA program, I extended my examination of the relationship between a process of painting in which marks act like physical boundaries to the subject of the telephone and utility poles of the urban landscape. In *Poster Pole* (Fig. 3), I attempted to fold space along a central axis, exaggerating perspectival space while masking the vanishing point with a line of blank canvas, marked by gooey layers of thick paint. Although the stark juxtaposition of geometric forms onto the variously faded backgrounds of the landscape was part of the point of these pieces, I began to

see that this juxtaposition sets up a simplistic binary between nature and culture and I wanted to find more interesting ways of conveying the complexity of this relationship, showing that we are not separate from the natural world.



Fig. 3. David Kaarsemaker. *Poster Pole*. Oil and charcoal on canvas. 48" x 72". 2012

I found Merleau-Ponty's concept of "flesh" to be a useful complication of binary thinking. In *Eye and Mind*, he illustrates his notion of "flesh" with the example of water in a swimming pool, by explaining that the water is not merely *in* the pool, but also *in* the reflections on trees around the pool, to the extent that "in" can also mean "a part of" or "in relation to". The gaze is not exclusively divided between an interior from which one looks out, and an exterior, towards which the gaze is directed. Instead, the painter's "fleshy" vision "participates" in a relationship between the various elements of a scene.<sup>8</sup> One of the strategies that I found to visually complicate the boundaries between inside and outside in urban spaces was through the layering and blending of opposing viewpoints.

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<sup>8</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind" in *The Merleau-Ponty Reader*, eds. Ted Toadvine and Leonard Lawlor (Northwestern University Press, 2007), 48-49.

## Superimposed views

Much of my adult life has been divided between bush work in northern B.C. and various urban environments. My interest in painting spaces is my attempt to reconcile the different sense of space that I experience in cities and wilderness. In the latter, I am aware of enveloping space and of a periphery of vision unobscured by the grids of roads and the interlocking frames of architecture. When I return to the city, I become increasingly aware of the interpenetration of inside and outside, of nature and the built environment, and the ways that the structuring of urban space affects my vision.



Fig. 4. David Kaarsemaker. *Through 3*. Oil and charcoal on canvas. 16" x 26". 2013

In my second semester of the MFA, I began exploring superimposed perspectives in a series that included the painting *Through 3* (Fig. 4). In this piece, I have overlapped opposing views of a bike tunnel. This superimposition allows for a layering and confusion between sequential rectangular “windows” within the frame. With the discovery of perspective in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, we increasingly learn to see from behind a gridded window on the world, causing “the body, now divorced from this self, [to] becomes a specimen ... and the world, as a matter for this detached and

observing eye, becomes a spectacle”.<sup>9</sup> The bare canvas and charcoal marks around the periphery of the “window” of the frame serve as a flattening contrast to the use of perspective and illusionism in the two central windows.



Fig. 6. Dil Hildebrand. *Studio D*. Oil on canvas. 84" x 72". 2010

Dil Hildebrand's *Studio D* (Fig. 6) offers a photographic take on the “window on the world”. The blurry studio space recedes into the background while curtains of stain and thick florid paint pull the gaze back to the foreground as a reminder that we are looking at paint through paint. What I find significant about the way imagery is handled in this work is that although important differences between photography and painterly materiality are highlighted, they are free to coexist side by side. It functions as a “multi-mediating picture” in which “the use of characteristics of the other medium ‘layers’ and ‘delays’ the (viewer’s) perception”<sup>10</sup>. This approach resonates with my experience of mediating my past through photographs. When I

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<sup>9</sup> Robert Romanyshyn, quoted in David Howes. *The Varieties of Sensory Experience, A Sourcebook in the Anthropology of the Senses*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 5.

<sup>10</sup> Van Gelder, Hilde and Helen Westgeest, “Photography and painting in multi-mediating pictures” in *Visual Studies*, Vol. 24. No. 2 (September, 2009), 129

remember, I do not so much remember my first sensation as its image as an image. My paintings are distanced from their origin in nature through many layers of pictures and photoshopped manipulation. Critic Peter Weibel describes one of the breaks in the illusions of modern painting as being the “cruel discovery (that) the ground of the picture is another picture”.<sup>11</sup>

My work is a reaction to and rethinking of the theory of representation as outlined by Kant that continues to be influential, namely that our representations of things, as they are given to us, do not conform to these things as they are in themselves. In this view, there is distance between the “real world” subject and the *representation* of a set of appearances that somehow correspond to the represented object.<sup>12</sup> My way of working with photographic sources is more closely aligned to the thinking of the French philosopher Henri Bergson. Art critic Barry Schwabsky summarizes Bergson’s view that “we are acquainted with the world not through mere appearances that are somehow different in kind from the things in themselves ... but through ‘images’, which are part and parcel of the real.”<sup>13</sup>

### **Paint and its complicated relationship to signification**

During the second semester of the MFA I also made three pieces that attempted to formulate different ways of thinking about representation’s ties to explainable meaning. *Draped 5* (Fig. 7), *Gear* (Fig. 8) and *Periphery 1* (Fig. 9) ask whether painting can support the breadth of the contradictions inherent in relating mark-making to things in the physical world. They led me to conclude that a painting eludes the confines of the categories that I set up and that marks cannot be reduced to an assemblage of coded meanings. However, I have carried a taxonomical

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<sup>11</sup> Peter Weibel, “Pittura/Immedia”, in *Contemporary Painting in Context*, eds. A.R. Petersen et al. (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2010), 51

<sup>12</sup> Barry Schwabsky, “An Art That Eats Its Own Head: Painting in the Age of the Image”, in *The Triumph of Painting* (Saatchi Gallery, 2005), 8

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

approach forward in my work, because it is only by working through a process of ordering that paradoxes and slips between categories can occur.

In the *Draped* series (Fig. 7), I focused on three distinct but overlapping ways of using paint between the opaque gesso of the sky and the raw surface of the land, suggesting a form in flux between these two spaces. I used the image of a blowing tarp covering a hill of road salt because the landscape was conveniently ambiguous and the moving shape of the tarp suited my exploration of modes of painting in terms of their connection to semiotics through the orders of index, icon and symbol. I have found American philosopher C.S. Pierce's definition of these categories of sign to be helpful:

“Likenesses, or, as I prefer to say *Icons*, which serve to represent their objects only in so far as they resemble them in themselves, *Indices*, which represent their objects independently of any resemblance to them, only by virtue of real connections with them, and thirdly *Symbols*, which represent their objects, independently alike of any resemblance or real connection, because dispositions or factitious habits of their interpreters insure their being so understood.”<sup>14</sup>

A tarp pulled taut feels like a thick gestural brush stroke. I interpreted this material connection as alluding to a factual or indexical link between tarp and brush stroke. I used a different position of the tarp to render it with light and shadow, shifting to a primarily iconic mode of signification through optical resemblances. I overlap these two signs with a transparency, alluding to a symbolic dimension in which the use of glazed transparency can symbolize ephemerality and transience.

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<sup>14</sup> C.S. Pierce, “A Sketch of Logical Critics (1911)”, *The Essential Pierce, Volume 2 (1893-1913)*, ed. The Pierce Edition Project (Indiana University Press, 1988), 460-461



Fig. 7. David Kaarsemaker. *Draped 5*. Oil and charcoal on linen. 48" x 72". 2013



Fig. 8. David Kaarsemaker. *Gear*. Oil and charcoal on canvas. 48" x 54". 2013

*Gear* (Fig. 8) farther isolated distinct painterly applications within a perspectival space simulated with charcoal on raw canvas. The relationship between the depicted objects, illusory space, and the surface of the picture plane is subtly ambiguous. Hanging hockey equipment is painted sculpturally, activating a viewer's sense of touch. I used shadows on a wall of bare canvas to give them the illusion of solidity and then removed these shadows on the lower portion, turning them into flat shapes. Lush, loose brushwork describes the material qualities of the curtain and the potted plant. Two forms of representation, a forestry map and painting of a dead pine tree (on the far right and left of the image respectively) are painted in detailed *trompe l'oeil*. The transparently painted distance through the window is applied on a built up surface on top of the bare canvas.



Fig. 9. David Kaarsemaker. *Periphery 1*. Oil and charcoal on linen. 20" x 20". 2013

*Periphery 1* (Fig. 9) used distinct painterly applications as a means to describe distance and periphery according to the way space is experienced by the eye versus the way it is filtered through the photographic lens. This piece reverses the traditional rendering of distance and proximity by giving the most distant forms the most material emphasis, while attempting to describe the way sight operates

through different degrees of focus. I combine a geometric sense of space (distorting the space into a cube) with the ocular relationship between peripheral vision and central focus. The central area (also the section at the farthest perceptual distance from the viewer) is rendered in thick paint, giving this area substance while also allowing the forms to linger in an unsettled transitional space in which the marks can either be read as abstract or as image-bearing. The forms in the periphery space beyond the round ocular shape are nearly entirely subsumed into the surface.

### **Multiple Perspectives**

I turned to a multi-perspective approach for depicting space in the second year of my MFA. I carried forward an emphasis on isolating distinct painterly applications and a questioning of the ways these painterly qualities can relate to the representation of things in the world. I extended this investigation into the fragmentary nature of the perception of space. An example of this new approach can be seen in *Katrine's Hexagon* (Fig. 10), My sister Katrine built the hexagonal house and many of the furnishings represented in my painting. In this painting I combine multiple viewpoints and degrees of attention rendered with varying intensities, thicknesses and opacities of paint. The changing focus in terms of views and the different way objects are rendered in *Katrine's Hexagon* are there to provide structure as much as they are there to destabilize the image. By keeping the colour pallet relatively monochrome (the colour of bare canvas) and leaving bare and dissolved spaces, the areas of focus become concentrated in only certain places. This serves to hold the painting together while the fractured and interrupted views allow the image to resist crystallization into a single perceived unity, balancing a crowding of details with blank spaces that allow the gaze to move in a flexuous fashion.

“Like a gourmet who picks the raisins out of a cake”,<sup>15</sup> I notice things to the degree that they are useful to me as material for painting. In 1934, biologist Jacob

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<sup>15</sup> Jacob Von Uexkull, “A Stroll Through the Worlds of Animals and Men: A Picture Book of Invisible Worlds”, in *Instinctive Behavior: The Development of a Modern*

Van Uexkull demonstrated the ways in which the subject and the object are dovetailed into one another in the natural world, to constitute a systemic whole, or *Umwelt*.<sup>16</sup> Each organism responds to the world according to the information that its senses are able to perceive and that are relevant to it. Presence implies that which is not simply before us but that which “stands out” and concerns us. In *Katrine’s Hexagon*, I paint the various objects in the painting in a different way based on my perception of them as primarily sculptural, transparent, textured or rendered. The use of perspective is not unified in relation to the subject as in traditional linear perspective, but is broken up to simulate the many views of space afforded by a moving eye.



Fig. 10. David Kaarsemaker. *Katrine’s Hexagon*. Oil and charcoal on canvas. 84” x 84”. 2013

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*Concept*, trans. and ed. by Claire H. Schiller (New York: International Universities Press Inc, 1934), 13.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 10

## Pictured Pasts

My most recent paintings begin with a complex compositional process that precedes the act of painting. This process creates an image that refers to places in which I once lived, and various mediated ways of accessing that memory. Thus an important part of my artistic process occurs before I begin to paint. These steps include multiplying levels of mediation and construction that move between the remembered space of experience, photographs (both as memory aids and objects), and a constructed maquette within my studio. The first level of mediation occurs in the mental space of my “pictured past” in which I bring together in my mind a fragmentary assemblage of images and sensations that are tied to a remembered location. Photographs I took of this specific space act as both memory aids and memory erasers, shaping the content of my mental pictures. Next I construct a maquette out of foam core and tape based on the photographs and mental images of this specific room from my past. I also add objects both from the remembered space and from my studio.

After I have this physical three-dimensional materialization of my memories and of space, I take photographs of the maquette from various perspectives, taking care to include the surroundings of the maquette, for example the floor of my studio. I then add another layer of mediation by constructing a photographic model of the maquette in Photoshop. Here I combine the photos just described, of perspectival views of the studio and maquette, with the first photographs of the original space that I was using as a memory aid at the beginning of this compositional process. To complicate matters even more, physical objects from the remembered room (a book, a map, a batik) and physical objects from my studio are added to the image. The resulting constructed image serves as the initial reference for my painting. I then begin the process of responding to and changing the painting based on the way paint, mediums and applications function in the painting as a whole.

The construction of these various pictures and models increases the distance between the *perceived* moment of experience and the new *perceived* moment of the painting. The ground of the picture is another picture, grounded in yet another

picture, multiplying the steps back to the primacy of experience. The painting is not related to reality in any direct way, but is mediated through different forms of media as a way of problematizing the notion of origin in painting. “Today, we no longer confront the visual innocently, spontaneously, but recognize that it is invariably mediated; indeed, the visual is not only continually being mediated due to mass media (...), but also as cultural codes, thanks to the reproduction of art history in books and magazines. We live in a sea of mediated visibility.”<sup>17</sup> I have actively constructed the painting from out of this sea, painting the layers through which memory is accessed and blurring the borderlines between these different levels.



Fig. 11. David Kaarsemaker. *Burkina Bedroom/ Studio Floor*. Oil and charcoal on canvas. 64" x 48".  
2014

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<sup>17</sup> Peter Weibel, "Pittura/Immedia", 46

*Burkina Bedroom/ Studio Floor* (Fig. 11) is a recent piece in which I explicitly combine a fractured, hazily *pictured* past space (working from a maquette that is based on photographs of my childhood bedroom in Burkina Faso, West Africa) with the space of the *perceived* present (my studio floor, scattered tools, photographs, a batik). A range of material intensities of worked surface are used to represent my studio floor that surrounds the faint charcoal shapes in the maquette. The peripheral floor space of my present reality has been painted using charcoal, loose washes, the stamp of a paint-encrusted paint lid and illusionistically rendered studio objects (a paint can, brush, rags and sandpaper). Objects from the depicted photographs on the floor are identifiable in changed positions, within the space of the maquette and in the surrounding space of the studio. In this painting, I have added yet another level of mediation. About midway through making the painting, I photographed the painting on my studio floor with studio objects placed on top of the lower section of the painting. I then worked from this image in order to paint the studio objects and the area where the bottom edge of the painting meets the floor from an overhead perspective. This perspective on the lower section of the painting provides a contrast to the depiction of some of the same objects from a lateral perspective in the upper portion of the painting. This extra level of mediation allows the imagined space represented by the maquette to appear to hover in an indeterminate zone between spatial and perspectival levels of physical reality.

Part of the reason that I started painting rooms and making maquettes was because they enabled me to make paintings within paintings by filling them with objects that had personal meaning. *Basement Playhouse* (Fig. 12) is a house within a box, within a frame. The walls are both defined and porous, allowing outside elements to permeate its borders. It is my interpretation of Deleuze's concept of the "baroque house", in which the upstairs world of the soul or unconscious is connected to the ground floor of the senses and the "pleats of matter"<sup>18</sup> by a series of stairs. The maquette that is featured in this painting was based on the playhouse

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<sup>18</sup> Branka Arsic. "Thinking Leaving" in *Deleuze and Space*, ed. Ian Buchanan and Gregg Lambert (University of Toronto Press, 2005), 134

in the basement of one of my childhood homes and combines various references to this home.



Fig. 12. David Kaarsemaker. *Basement Playhouse*. Oil and charcoal on canvas. 48" x 60". 2014

I will discuss *Basement Playhouse* in relation to two works by Matthias Weischer and Peter Doig. Both artists describe physical spaces as a means of exploring the way memory shapes experience in ways that have influenced my work recently. Matthias Weischer is interesting to me in terms of the many ways that he renders the objects in his rooms, treating them as both flat and rendered forms. In *Tuch (Cloth)* (Fig. 13) Weischer moves objects in and out of the gridded surface of the painting. In different areas within *Basement Playhouse*, I emphasize the flat surface of the raw canvas, apply impasto paint (by painting through burlap) and dissolve the paint with solvent. This emphasis on materiality reveals my strategies of representation and of the artifice of painting while allowing for narrative possibilities within the emergent and dissolving processes of memory and perception.



Fig. 13. Matthias Weischer. *Tuch (Cloth)*. Oil and tempera on canvas. 59" x 78". 2006



Fig. 14. Peter Doig. *Figures in Red Boat*. Oil on linen. 98" x 79". 2005-07

The material handling of surface and paint in my work has recently been influenced by the ways that Peter Doig uses hazy, dissolving surface effects and half rendered forms as a way of representing the indeterminate zone situated between “the actuality of a scene and something that is in your head”.<sup>19</sup> The maquette and the taped-together objects in *Basement Playhouse* represent the “actuality of the scene”, whereas the “something that is in your head” is suggested through the various ways they are painted and the warped and porous nature of the composition. I want to combine details that emerge out of a sense of sensory overload, allowing portions of them to take shape and dissolve others back into sensory confusion. Works such as *Figures in Red Boat* (Fig. 14) have reminded me of the importance of sometimes allowing paint to be paint, relishing its thick and runny qualities. However, I do not want the dematerialized haze of painterly effects to eat away at the entire surface of the painting. Instead, in paintings such as *Basement Playhouse*, I allow objects to separate themselves from the empty space of the canvas while emerging through various degrees of apparent solidity.

To further expand how I work through the painting part of my process I will discuss my painting *Esplanade* (Fig. 15). The process through which forms are linked to things through many layers of mediation manifests itself through paint in terms of my isolation of different areas that are worked in different ways. The idea that the past becomes warped by the histories that we construct is alluded to by the *trompe l'oeile* tape keeping the raw canvas maquette together. The diverse range of painterly applications refers both to the objects in my models as well as to representational strategies from the history of painting. The photograph that I used to construct the maquette is reproduced in the lower right corner of the painting. The details of this picture are faintly discernable beneath sfumato layering.<sup>20</sup> I have made some subtle overlaps and confusions between the various painterly zones: sections of the photographic images on the floor become detached from their

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<sup>19</sup> Stephane Aquin, “No Land Foreign to Painting”, in *No Foreign Lands* (Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, 2014), 13

<sup>20</sup> Sfumato, from the Italian word for “smoke” refers to thin glazes to achieve a hazy, cloudy atmosphere.

supports and merge into the maquette space and light is rendered in different areas as either a reflection on a surface or as a material substance. Whereas *Burkina Bedroom/Studio Floor* addresses the question of the constructed nature of memory through layering and the illusion of depth, *Esplanade* responds by unfolding and itself spreading out.



Fig. 15. David Kaarsemaker. *Esplanade*. Oil and charcoal on canvas. 72" x 72". 2014

The maquette paintings are my current way of thinking through the interlaced reality of things and their images. According to art historian David Summers, in the long Western discussion of artistic representation there are typically three factors: "A thing, its actual image, and a mental image".<sup>21</sup> In both *Burkina Bedroom/Studio Floor* and *Esplanade*, within the *perceived* present of the studio, and amidst the different representations scattered around the materialized

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<sup>21</sup> David Summers, "Representation", in *Critical Terms for Art History*, eds. R.S. Nelson, R. Shiff (University of Chicago Press, 2010), 3

mental image of the maquette, are images that reappears in three levels of representation. A batik of a warthog (in *Burkina Bedroom/Studio Floor*) and a map of Haida Gwaii (in *Esplanade*) reappear as physical things (grounded in the actual space of the studio), in photographs within the studio space, and as remembered images within the maquette. Both of these objects hold personal significance for me and are tied to my memories of their respective spaces.

## **Conclusion**

The shift in my practice towards a more personal and imagined experience of space allows me to individualize the psychic spaces that my formal explorations into the connections between the materiality of paint and the qualities of objects in physical space had previously failed to develop. I intend to continue to combine my interests in constructing windows within frames, multiple-perspective views of space and a wide range of painterly applications, while folding together a multiplicity of individual objects and surfaces into a new painterly unity. I want to continue to find ways of making the construction and demarcation of painterly boundaries evident in my paintings while increasing the subtle confusions and overlapping contours between these boundaries. I consider my personal recollection (and degrees of forgetting) of past experiences to be a way of talking about the elements through which a culture collectively retains and stores experiences. My process begins with a memory that is turned into models which is then turned into a painting. I consider the tangible yet transparent things; the pictures, objects and spaces that I can make to visualize the past.

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David Kaarsemaker. Pictures. CUAG. August 18-September 14, 2014



Ave. de l'Esplanade 1. Oil and charcoal on canvas. 72" x 72". 2014



Ave. de l'Esplanade 2. Oil and charcoal on canvas. 20" x 24". 2014



Ave. de l'Esplanade 3. Oil and charcoal on canvas. 20" x 24". 2014



Ave. Champagneur. Oil and charcoal on canvas. 72" x 72". 2014



Rue 29:46. Oil and charcoal on canvas. 60" x 48". 2014



Union St. 1. Oil and charcoal on canvas. 60" x 48". 2014



Grant St. Basement Playhouse 1. Oil and charcoal on canvas. 48" x 64". 2014



Grant St. Basement Playhouse 2. Oil and charcoal on canvas. 48" x 36". 2014



Grant St. Backyard Fort. Oil and charcoal on canvas. 20" x 24". 2014



Union St. 2. Oil and charcoal on canvas. 20" x 20". 2014



Windgap Rd. Oil and charcoal on canvas. 48" x 72". 2014



Union St. 3. Oil and charcoal on canvas. 64" x 48". 2014

Exhibition Views: David Kaarsemaker. Pictures. CUAG. August 18 – September 14, 2014





