

SCOTT LYALL

Scott Lyall combines drawing, painting, sculpture, and found objects into what he describes as a ‘scenography without actors,’ or ‘plastic supports for an almost clientless sense of design.’ His production revolves around issues related to sculptural display, the relationships between graphic processes, and the design legacies of conceptualism.

While Lyall’s earlier work involved installations created from construction and everyday materials such as particleboard, styrofoam, and other ephemeral fragments, his recent practice is predominantly comprised of graphic assemblages and printouts produced without direct mediation of an image. Referencing Bruno Latour, the artist describes his *Nudes* and *EVEs* series as “design all the way down,” a statement that resonates with Mark Rothko’s use of pigmented gessos to achieve what he called “color all the way down.”

Originating from the basic and most abstract unit of the digital realm—the single color pixel—the pale hues of Lyall’s color wave paintings and stickers are formed through a method of mathematical interpolation that generates a unique and potentially infinite bitstream. The resulting information is sent directly to the print heads, which apply sheer layers of ink such that the gradient color-deposits are mixed directly on the substrate. The immediate relationship between the numerical formula and the printer is akin to a “fauve” effect of releasing color from the received image. Embodying a movement from pure quantity—a digital field of dispersions and exchange—to form, these works are inherently split objects that exist first immaterially, and materially in the last instance. They address the informational fetish of recent art and the dissolution of visible signs.

The *Nudes* stand slightly detached from the wall, affixed to hand-painted monochrome MDF panels of corresponding dimensions, which are in turn attached to the wall directly – digital dust on canvas, one might say, over compressed and solidified wood powder. The pieces combine ink and its erasure in canvases subjected to multiple passes through a UV-based printer. The result is a subtle residual ‘tan’ that suggests an index of rays ‘beyond color’ that affect the tonal assemblage. Lyall describes the *EVE* vinyl adhesive sheets as ‘thin reliefs,’ and relates the printed posters to a generalized artistic space between painted, sculptural, and architectural forms. A glued sticker on one side of the panel and a spray of cartridge inks on the other establish a relationship between plastic and graphic determinations of the print. The interaction of the surfaces of the ultrathin paste-up and the façade of a smooth wall creates an implication of depth. Because of the use of non-archival inks in the instance of the adhesive sheets, each printout will eventually fade to white, thus merging with and disappearing into the wall that houses it. In this sense, these works exist beyond the traditional confines of the wall and architecture more generally. A further constitutive feature of the file is its capacity to circulate electronically freely around the globe and beyond before the moment of incarnation. The owners of unique bitstreams are then entrusted to printout new iterations of the color fields at will. This is painting engaging the digital realm and pushing it to the limit of its material and conceptual possibilities by reducing it to a sequence of three discrete and subjective gestures: 1. The random selection of an entry point among the 284 million color options. 2. The algorithmic unleashing of the infinite expansion of the file. 3. The final decision to cut the color progression in a particular place, that is finding the edges of the gradient before outputting its content onto a chosen substrate. As such, the painting object is suspended until the last impulse of incarnation.

Lyall’s recent *Talents*, which use the same algorithmic formula as his *Nudes*, are made of two compressed sheets of glass. The back sheet is a mirror; the front pane is printed on the inside with a unique field of color. An admixture of gel medium and nanoparticles of gold is applied by the artist’s hand to the outside surface to complete the work – the painter as window cleaner, if you will.

At their core, the *Talents* are identical (same process), yet unique (singular field of color). They both engage and subvert the three ghosts of contemporary art, that is the readymade, the monochrome, and the mirror.

In line with the dehierarchization proposed by monochrome painting in the 1950s, Lyall considers his work to be a function of its interaction with the surrounding space. The environment provides a space of aleatory, open representation, which might be captured by Cage's description of Rauschenberg's White Paintings as "airports for the lights, shadows, and particles." To the most limited form of commercially printed material, Lyall adds the speculative image of mental projection without an end. The works become advertisements for this 'grey matter.' In Lyall's words, "It will be whatever reality does not prevent it from becoming...."

Scott Lyall (b. 1964, Toronto) lives and works in Toronto and New York. He earned an MFA from the California Institute of the Arts (1993). Solo and two-person exhibitions include SculptureCenter, New York (2007); The Power Plant, Toronto (2008); Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York (2023, 2019, 2015, 2013, 2010, 2006); Susan Hobbs Gallery, Toronto (2025, 2022, 2018, 2014, 2010, 2006, 2004, 2001), Greene Naftali, New York (2011, 1997–98, 1996); and Campoli Presti, London and Paris (2017, 2014, 2011, 2008). Notable group exhibitions include A Serene Look upon the World, Mendes Wood DM, Brussels (2026); The Living End: Painting and Other Technologies, MCA Chicago, Illinois (2024); The Painter's New Tools, Nahmad Contemporary, New York (2022); The Poet-Engineers, Miguel Abreu Gallery, (2022); Ballistic Poetry, Hermès Foundation, Brussels (2016); Anti-Establishment, CCS Bard, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY (2012); The Montreal Biennial (2011); Double Yolk (with Rachel Harrison), Galerie Christian Nagel, Antwerp (2011); New York to London and Back: The Medium of Contingency, Thomas Dane Gallery, London (2011); Collatéral, Le Confort Moderne, Poitiers (2009); The Lining of Forgetting, Austin Museum of Art, TX, Weatherspoon Art Museum, Greensboro, NC (2008); and SITE Santa Fe, 7th International Biennial (2008). Lyall's work is held in the collections of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo; Pinault Collection; the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.