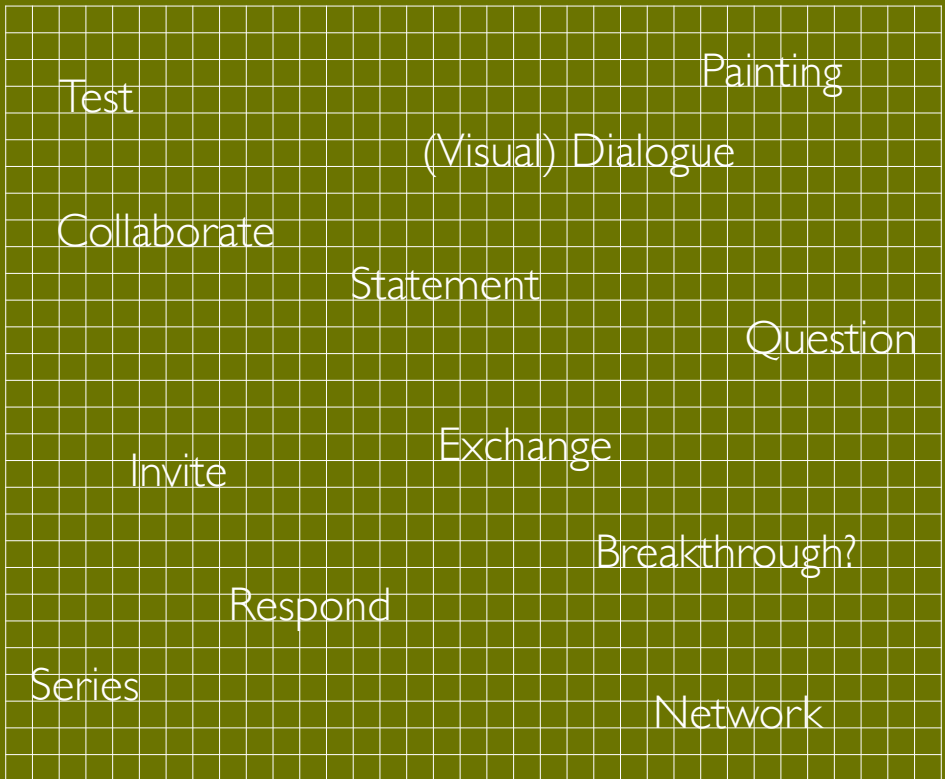


PAINTED CONVERSATIONS

Exhibition Two: 01/10/22 - 06/10/22

Sarah Longworth-West + Marcus Murison



Painted Conversations est. 2021 is organised and facilitated by Lyndsey Gilmour + Peter Chalmers

Conversation between Sarah Longworth-West and Marcus Murison on 14 June 2022 half-way / 3 months into their 'Painted Conversation'- after exchanging their 2nd painting and before starting their 3rd and final painting.

Note name abbreviations: Sarah Longworth-West (SLW) and Marcus Murison (MM)

SLW: So shall we start chronologically with why we chose the first painting that we exchanged..?

MM: I guess I chose this first painting *Relative Progression* because it was one of the best paintings I've made so far this year, and I wanted to give you a painting that I've been enjoying myself. So, it's quite simple really. It was because I was enjoying what that painting was doing, at that time. It was quite different from what I'd made in the past; it was more intuitive. Which again is quite different from my previous works because in the past, paintings have been quite planned, whereas this one was just a bit more open to explore through the painting process.

SLW: Did *Relative Progression* respond to anything in particular; how did this one come about? And does it belong to a series or body of work?

MM: It doesn't belong to a series of work. It came about, in a way, from a

metal stencil (shows SLW the stencil). I'd used it on previous smaller pieces and then I just decided to basically use it at and on a larger scale because it felt like something that was just the next step as I wanted to continue to use this material. I was also interested to see how it would respond and interact on a larger surface.

SLW: What in particular attracted you to that gridded stencil?

MM: I bought it during the summer prior; it was in my old studio and I hadn't used it yet and I guess I liked it visually as an object. Or I could see it as a sculptural element in itself, and what I was looking at and what I'm still looking at are building sites and it reminded me of the fencing; fencing these sorts of spaces off. I guess I enjoy the repetition but also using the certain material in a playful way because it is literally a barbecue grid - a throw-away object which is being immortalised in paint.

SLW: So you said you previously used that grid as a layer on smaller works and now you've essentially scaled up the surface but the grid has remained the same. How do you think this alters now on a larger work; because it presumably has a different intensity or does something quite different?

MM: It does something different., I guess it activates the surface differently. The way I was using it in the smaller pieces was as an initial mark, so it was kind of sitting behind whereas here in *Relative Progression* it's actually sitting on top and was the last layer to be painted.

SLW: So is the grid layer the top layer to the painting?

MM: Yes, it's the final layer. So it is a piece that has been built up maybe over 2 years, but with quite large gaps of time in between.

SLW: So did you have an old painting on that canvas and then whited it out or are there remaining layers that you kept as a base?

MM: Yes, it was a painting before, which I then acrylic gessoed out and then I did this smaller painting which contained the sprayed enamel dots. I wanted to continue that and it felt natural to apply it to this larger piece.

Then I took the decision to use the stencil to create the last layer on top.

SLW: Yes, got you.

And you mentioned building sites and I'm really intrigued; I wonder, whether that is another link between our source material or stimulus: or street detritus. So tell me a little bit about why you're interested or what attracts you to those 'things'?

MM: It's been something that's run through my practice since I was in my third year of undergrad so, I think for me, I do a lot of walking and, I actually ended up receiving the Carnegie Vocational Scholarship where I went to Oslo and Copenhagen. I was walking around these cities a lot and I was collecting visual research. I guess for me it's this idea of the overlooked, it is detritus, it is sometimes rubbish on the street. But, you know, within that there are these pockets of colour or shapes created, which was this immediate visual impact. It's just something that I've always gravitated towards. And in Aberdeen I guess I would always be walking the same routes to work or to the studio, so I am very aware of my surroundings and notice when something's changed or moved or a new element has been added and then I'm just documenting that. I guess it's

being open to ephemerality and being very observant of your immediate environment.

SLW: Completely. For my practice I always refer to that as 'the incidental'. I love coming across source material.

Mine used to be from magazines, and it is still to some extent, but through the incidental, and I always think about that word incidental as an action which is so key. It is incidental, however, you've got to arrive at it with prior visual knowledge and a keen sense of a search; because someone else could walk past and just be like, oh, you know, a skip, scaffolding, tarpaulin, steel rods or whatever, it doesn't even draw others' attention. And I'm not saying it is all of these all the time; it has to be arranged in a certain way or a patchwork of forms or something particular that makes that specifically the one that becomes a source. But I agree and I too think about those formal elements; shape, colour, form and coming across these in your environment is just quite refreshing when that encounter does occur.

I'm always curious as to what is that object doing in that space and then how could that potentially be translated or used as pure source material.

So do you take photographs - is that your main source material or stimulus?

MM: It is source material but it's also maybe either used directly as source material or as shape, or colour...

SLW: like a prompt?

MM: Yes, or like an idea of a material which sometimes comes across in the space of the paintings. Recently I have been using physical objects as a material to create these marks which I probably wouldn't have been able to do with a paintbrush.

So I've ended up becoming more process-based more recently, I also use these objects as source material to then paint on top of. Which is more of a recent thing for me actually.

SLW: It could be either a 'straight' source, or I really like thinking about it often as a 'prompt' and not being too literal with it; so it is a source / prompt.

I always tread this thin line; I'm not fussed if viewers 'get' any source directly and actually sometime or often I don't want them to get that because it then becomes too literal and too easy.

And once you can name it, I think it's just too satisfying in a dull way

(for me) whereas I would prefer it to be more engaged in a discussion of what the paint can do and what is the state of all these visual elements coming together; and what is happening there?

But I suppose I'm interested to find out how you think about that in your practice...?

MM: I don't think my source is actually that obvious for people and that's fine.

SLW: Yes, I agree.

MM: ...they can take from it what they want. I had a show the other week (Emergent at Look Again, Aberdeen) and I had a comment that the painting felt as though one were looking out of a window, so bringing their own interpretation of the work is absolutely fine. I've always been like that I don't want to prescribe my view on the work and what the work is about onto other people..

SLW: Yes, but you can steer it can't you..?

MM: ...you can steer it yes, but I like to keep things quite ambiguous, like titles for example. As I'm into music, I like to title paintings from songs that I am listening to at the time or certain lyrics. I tend to make these decisions quickly as I don't like to put too much

emphasis on this as I would take too long to settle on an idea.

SLW: And in terms of the colour palette you used in *Relative Progression* with the sky blue and the pastel pink.

Did that come from anywhere in particular?

MM: It's certain colours which I have as a base, I would say the blue was more correlated to a colour that was from one of my source images of a building site. But actually it's funny you were talking about using magazines as a source. The pink dots came from looking through a fashion magazine - there was this model wearing this amazing pink eyeshadow. And I just so happened to have this pink enamel spray paint so I just went for it. So that was a completely different source for me ...as I hadn't really done that before.

SLW: Yes, but again it's got to be something that you're arriving at and it just fits. It's like that last jigsaw piece.

MM: ..it's allowing yourself to be open to.

SLW: ..to stimulus?

MM: Not to be so strict upon 'this is what I'm making paintings about' or having to take everything from

a source and be quite open to different stimuli.'

SLW: I think I'm similar, in that sense of sort of a structured but also a letting go during the making process(es). So I'd arrive at something say, for instance, when starting a painting I would think 'what kind of base do I want to do?'

There is a thought process based on my previous knowledge and experience (with the pigments), what I have already made, new combinations and visuals I'm excited to text out, and then truly reacting to what results these bases produce.

Then for the next stage of the painting process, I might have an original image I've collated that I want to work with in mind or some other visual element, but then actually, after that first piece possibly goes down, again having a rough idea but then not having to so rigidly stick to it, because quite often the potential of the work or outcome will improve if you keep aware and are constantly reacting to what it is doing now rather than the prior thought of what it was going to be.

Quite often I'll think about, for example, there's five elements going on and usually often it won't get that far, I'll conclude at 2 or 3 to 'finish' the

work...because again, I want to allow the paint to do that job.

And like you said, a moment ago, you are using your stencil to do a layer of work and you want to have it put on in a different way from a brush. I think that is really important and I get most excited when I see paintings which have a combinations of applications. And I'm often talking about (to my students for example), if there is a combination of that, it's going to be so much more of an absorbing journey of looking through the painting rather than a more monosyllabic way of working, which obviously has its place, but it's not the thing that I get probably most excited about. So I think that perhaps comes across when layering up and again that's something else that our work has in common, in terms of the layers.

It's actually interesting because just from seeing the images that we first exchange and prior to this conversation I haven't thought of the source material as a commonality but I now think we've got a similar type of process.

MM: So it's like what you said; it's like an encounter?

SLW: Yes, I would. Originally, so say from my MA (2008), I would

religiously use magazines and I'd be really strict about keeping the purity of the source -this is when magazines were at their height and I would be fanatical about gaining visual information from them - prior to social media etc.-and my process was more about editing in a different way. I was sort of replicating the format; to the extent that the specific dimensions of my panels are a hangover from magazine format, because they're all A sizes - relating directly back to the dimensions of front covers.

So I've always been interested pictorially in, how things are laid out and displayed, initially it was through these front covers. I've always been wanting to find something, almost on the hunt for visuals but then I could go through a fat magazine for example and there's nothing or it could be like I mentioned the incidental thing like a random 'still life', that's in the background of a photograph that wasn't really meant to be there. Then the progression of my practice led onto a different type of magazine - high-end fashion due to the curiosity about the seduction of luxury. It's now progressed in recent years, taking photographs, becoming a real combination of source inputs but again -no matter where the source is found- that same thing of arriving

and discovering something; 99% of the content not being relevant and having your eye for the gems (to me). Or it could even be from going to like a fabric shop or street market for example, unrelated to a visual hunt, as such, and then there might be some sort of stimulus/source there.

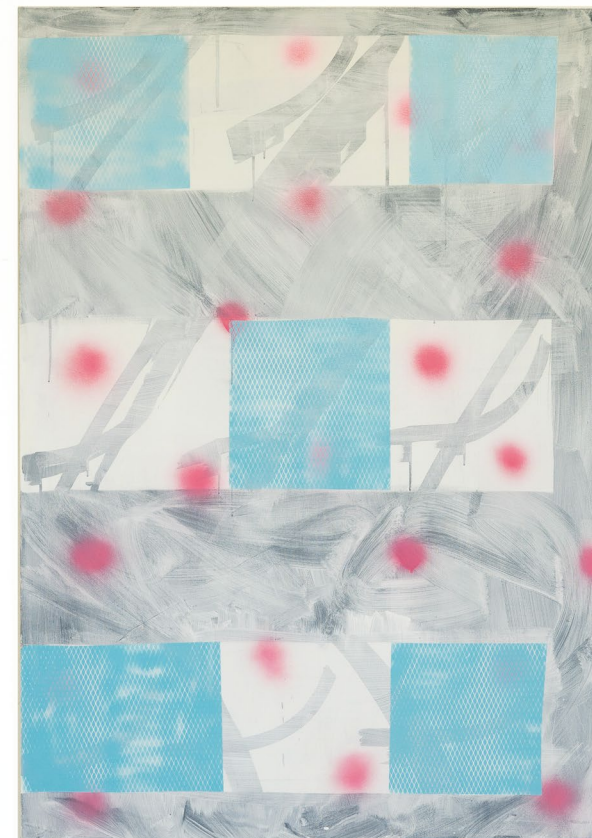
So yes, definitely an encounter - I like that term. My relationship with sources went from being quite strict during my MA to then having a bit more of a rhythm for finding sources. And then obviously times change and your way of finding things inevitably change. And maybe being a bit less strict, but if I take a photograph intended for my work, I would orientate myself -if possible- to a flat-on 2D viewpoint; but equally I would again orientate around to get a different angle of that 'thing' to get the photograph in the off-2D format that I prefer.

MM: So, you prefer flatter images first off?

SLW: I do. And I really gradually started to notice that because I'm always auto-correcting myself to straight-on or flat-on when photographing, especially for my work. And I totally link that to just being a pure 2D visual person.



Endless
Oil paint and oil pastel on pigmented gesso panel
42 x 30 cm
Sarah Longworth-West, 2018



Relative Progression
Acrylic and spray on canvas
153 x 107 cm
Marcus Murison, 2019-2022

MM: I feel the same as well and it was something I didn't really notice until, I think it was Peter Chalmers in my 2nd year at Gray's and we were looking at Morandi for object composition. I realised I really do just like flat images and I guess that's the way it's continued, even to the point of making the work very flat in itself because of how it's painted, so that's a really interesting observation.

SLW: ..but I think because I'm so aware of it now, sometimes I ask myself - when taking, composing photographs - what would happen if it was a little bit skewwhiff..? Would there be a different type of thing or potential for the painting...? So I'm aware of visual habits and also questioning it.. What would be more visually captivating, I suppose.

SLW: And the title of your first painting we exchanged is entitled *Relative Progression*?

MM: ..it's a title track again but the second exchange painting that I've just given to you in response to your first work is untitled.

SLW: Will you title it or not because this is a separate project...?

MM: I don't exactly know yet but I do currently like it being untitled because

I'm unsure of it as it's so new so I'm just leaving it at the moment.

SLW: I think I will most likely title mine but I haven't yet because I don't tend to rush to title paintings but also I thought when we complete our second work, closer to the exhibition, something might click into position. Again, you can't really force those things.

MM: For titling work, is there a process there for you?

SLW: I keep a running list of words or groupings of words that I gather, again similar to collating source material from just seeing and selecting them randomly from text, or occasionally lyrics as they strike a chord with how I'm thinking about a painting. Or sometimes words that link to the feeling that I want to project with the work. They're often singular words that try to conjure something up that I'm wanting to happen possibly; something that sits with the painting seemingly well, to me.

MM: So it could be a word that is responding to how something is happening visually in the painting itself?

SLW: Yes, and I wouldn't say emotionally as well, but then sometimes perhaps a tiny bit

because it is your emotive response to those visuals or your history and links with those visuals and that might then make cognitive links to other ideas or thoughts. So the title is sort of like a simmering pot.

MM: So the first work you gave to me is called *Endless*.

SLW: Yes, so again that's one that is quite open-ended!

MM: I did get this sense of something being wrapped and that there is this combination of unnatural and natural things colliding; that was my initial interpretation and when working from it too.

I think it's because you see the creases and folds in the shape and colour..

SLW: That's right. What I tend to do in terms of process, once I've got my source material and I have got to feel really excited about that. Then I make drawings, but again, leaving out the information that I'm not interested in and only focusing and drawing the information that I am interested in so it is an editing process from the start.

Then I have lots and lots of drawings and I normally work in batches, so I'll have a few months of drawing and then probably a couple of months of

making gessoed surfaces and then I get into the painting.

But actually for this project (with work no 2 and 3) I kind of just leapt in.

So, for (work no 1) *Endless* during the making process I would of had lots of drawings to choose from as well and a variety of pigmented panel surfaces, and I was particularly excited about this pure vermilion one.

I make the bases from traditional handmade gesso; a combination of glue and champagne chalk, and I add pure pigments. I then paint 12 layers (choosing which colours to lie on top and/or to do a plain-multilayered or something like a gingham layer); I then let it dry and then wet and dry sand it to be super smooth but I try to keep the jaggedy edges.

MM: I noticed the edges on the image

SLW: It feels/looks very chalky in real life and then with oil paint sitting on top of that there's a

difference again, with the surfaces, so then, you've got the pure paint and then the oil paint and therefore all the paint is operating together, just marginally differently from each other.

Basically, I was most excited about the combination of that cyan/pale blue

pictorial source with the vermilion base and then seeing where that went.

So even though -the blue 'image'- was a stimulus from a magazine all the rest of the image was irrelevant.

And I think a little bit like how you work too; edges are very important; how the edges are meeting; what goes off; what stays on; and on the right hand side-in *Endless*- , there's a straight line, which was the edge of the lifted image -from the magazine page- that I've chosen to highlight it with a negative space.

So it's all about how things are laid out or contained and I think that makes these placement decisions so crucial to the success of a painting; because if it was cropped differently, it just would be floating there; you're trying to anchor it to something.

...it is a combination of let's say man-made and natural because you've obviously got the foliage - for want of a word to name it - in the painting..

MM: Yes that's what I thought seeing the image, analysing and making initial notes about it when I first received it - I noted 'foliage' for that part.

SLW: ...actually, more accurately it's a combination of things.

So the blue section was the first pre-planned element that was the key to this work (*Endless*) and then it was a process of reacting to that. There are at the bottom centre directional lines embedded, which was part of the green and white organic shapes or motifs which I used as an activator or highlight for the composition. Then I needed to unify the 2 sections as at that point they were sitting onto too much -almost like stickers. I had a drawing of a variety of circles and again it is about how much of the circle is on the surface and where it's placed and how it falls off the side. I used the form of a spray- painted almost 3/4 circle to unify and deepen the composition whilst it was also making conceptual sense to me.

MM: Ah, so that's actually spray paint then? I had thought it was a different type of oil paint application or something. That's interesting as that's something we both use too.

SLW: Yes, then even after that it was almost too organised. So I added a warm grey toned pastel based on a collated pattern from a jacket for its looseness to help unify the composition. I often think when a work isn't necessary at the place where I want to be, I actually must do something else to it, even if it runs the risk of ruining it...

MM: Yeah of course.

SLW: ...often it's a semi-violent mark, gesture or action to the work. Thinking very much about different types of applications; in *Endless* I loaded a brush very full and wet with the same tone as the spraypaint section and then the composition clicked and merged together much better.

So like you said, this mixture is organic and perhaps the viewer also knows there's something man-made about it as well; which just reflects the world around us. However it's not saying anything literal, I'm not being pushy, like you mentioned you avoided too,

I made *Endless* in 2018 and I chose it because I was excited about getting a visual response because even though it's 2018 (I had a second son so I had maternity leave) I had approximately two years out of my studio work, so it still feels very relevant to my visual repertoire.

MM: Yes, still within your visual vocabulary, exactly.

SLW: Yes, it's still part of the collection of works that represent my ideas and practice now. And I feel that it's representative of my work in general.

And what I was trying to do in *Endless* was to be playful with the visual elements because I see them as shapes, forms, colour and I want them to relate to one another; it is Abstraction but with a bit more supplementary information or visual cues.

MM: Yes, in my process of making my second painting/and my first response painting; *Surface tension* from your painting; *Endless* I am reacting to colour and the idea of a form being wrapped and to some extent the shape as well, like the curves. And the difference you described in application and a different type of paint. In *Surface tension* I use an airbrush for the orange kind mark with a mesh material to create the grid. Then using acrylic to get that flatness for the straight edge mark and then I used oil paint on top and I hadn't used oil in a while, which was good to introduce again, it felt quite tricky but it was made in one go. And then I just had to let it sit for a bit to see what I thought and if it was doing what I wanted it to do. And I hadn't used a landscape format in a while, so that was different for me.

SLW: Was the landscape format you worked in a response to *Endless*?

MM: More to the process of making *Surface tension*. It's not a response to 'natural' as we were talking about

earlier. Actually I initially painted it in a portrait format, but then when working on it I was turning it and visually I was enjoying it in the landscape orientation and preferring the weight at the bottom of the painting. I think you can get this sense of this object or motion -in blue- that's coming around better; so more of a formal aspect.

SLW: And the green 3 sided rectangle in *Surface tension* where the 4th side has fallen -as I see it- off from the bottom of the painting...?

MM: Yes it's a shape which I found then made a digital drawing of so the overall process was that it is a combination of different images which were used together. The green was from focusing in upon *Endless* as the least prominent colour. It's actually a few different greens which I was enjoying merging, which you can see in real life.

SLW: From the rectangular format and the partial rectangle in green; I was again getting the idea of the screen or more accurately multiple screens and stacking and layering of open tabs/pages etc. But I mainly enjoyed that it's loose within its boundaries.

MM: Yes, the looseness is what I

was enjoying playing with; the marks between being straight edged and controlled against looser, more gestural mark-making which I don't really allow myself to do enough, so this was an opportunity to pursue that.

SLW: I think that leads me to say how I received *Relative Progression* and what I was thinking of doing, in response to yours. What I did first, when I got your digital image through, I actually marked up the dimensions physically on my wall to envisage its physicality.

MM: Oh really..?

SLW: Yes, as you work a lot larger than I do, in general. Actually, another reason I gave you *Endless* was it is A3 sized that is the scale I'm most confident with to date; I like the 1:1 relationship and playing with scale on a relatively small board.

So immediately when seeing *Relative Progression* I thought how coincidental that the core colours are so similar in these particular two. I was already aware of some general visual similarities but we didn't know what we were giving one another, as it was a blind exchange.

And the second main point of parallel is the importance of a misalignment or placement that we choose. For

example, at the top of *Relative Progression* there's a negative slice of space or weight, it's almost shifted down. Like with my practice, these decisions about the edge and how we deal with an element being just a fraction 'off' that, not a mis-register but a purposeful shift. I feel like that's really important with this piece as well as my practice in general.

MM: Yes. With *Relative Progression* there's a conscious line that runs down the right hand side, which is also happening with *Endless* actually. And when I was making mine it was quite an intuitive thing, but I had taped those edges to match those white square inserts as I didn't want the colour to go beyond that line, I was conscious for the blue to register against the white edge.

SLW: So that's again control, organisation but also reaction; organised-reaction. But not even that exactly. It's those two properties being parallel. A 'Balancing Act', isn't it? Because you want it to be a certain way but then you're also wanting the paint to do a certain thing; you're giving and taking away at the same time.

I tend to think about these often as visual weights.

And with that space on the right hand side -of *Relative Progression*- and because Western languages are read left to right, I almost think of that negative line as the breath off..

For example, someone could have done a painting using squares and wanted it to be very confined and I feel *Relative Progression* is doing so much more because you've got the top gestural surface as well as the misaligned or placement element to it.

Could you explain a little bit about the gestural loop shape or mark..?

MM: These swooping shapes are sitting on top and they were one of the last parts before the pink spray dots. I remember using a tool to pull the paint into this rhythmic shape.

SLW: So the third main feature, after the colour, mis-registration on the pictorial surface - which we have as common ground - is our layering processes which I was intrigued about.

And then something additional I saw in your work which I recognised is the movement of the gestures that I saw as relating to the use of modern technologies and the finger movements creating marks on the digital interactive screen. But I wasn't sure if I was adding that...



Swell
Oil paint and oil pastel on pigmented gesso panel with remnant
118 x 84 cm
Sarah Longworth-West, 2022



Surface tension
Oil and acrylic on canvas
30 x 40 cm
Marcus Murison, 2022

MM: That's an interesting observation, it wasn't specifically, no; for me it was a shape that I wanted to make recurring over the surface.

SLW: Yes, not that we make that exact marked-shape but there was something about swiping open or moving differently over a surface that was interesting. Something you don't necessarily see when looking at work from, for example, 15 years ago. So it made me interested in the link of mark-making to culture in general. And perhaps because we are so intertwined with using screens, their functions are becoming part of our visual vocabulary, for example.

I really enjoyed the fluidity of the gesture mark as it's combined with the structure underneath or should I say flattened as one plane.

MM: Yes, the shapes were all built up. On another painting I was doing at a similar time, I had made these black swoops all over in rows. They were then sitting behind these larger flatter shapes which were taking up most of the painting and you were just seeing a few of these shapes peeking through. On reflection, I was reacting to those marks that I made, but in a different way.

SLW: And I see the more gestural mark making you made in *Surface tension* in response to *Endless*, is possibly a direct link using that language of looser marks, for example, the rough S-type shape; so you got this fluidity with the structure.

MM: For me, yes, it is purely visual and I hadn't necessarily picked that link up yet as a response. And it's now so interesting that through this verbal conversation there's actually these commonalities which I hadn't realised myself.

Surface tension was responding to yours - *Endless* - directly through the use of a collaging process of a few different images. These were quickly sketched out, making fast decisions and combining a few different ideas. Then it was a matter of starting to make painted marks in response to the collage studies. *Surface tension* is still very fresh for me to review just now...and it's a little bit different from what I've been doing in the studio with my other works, for example, with my last finished work - everything was painted in the same way.

SLW: ..in a way that's part of the project's process, so we have been open and engaged to make something that we wouldn't just make in isolation.

When I had your painting *Relative Progression* to react to, I was pleased to see your approach to pattern and non-conformity.

I'm really interested in pattern, but not from a straightforward approach, more from a sense of being slightly mismatched, for instance, my striped t-shirt - it could be straight lines laid flat or you could actually acknowledge the fabric and drapery where it's bunched up which is where pattern becomes more interesting, unpredictable, rhythmic, chaotic and life-like; and then that is the photo that I may take....the incidental.

In *Relative Progression* I read the blue and white boxes, almost as gingham, which I was drawn to; and because of that it immediately made me think of a source material image I'd taken and stored to use. I've wanted to do something with that for a while, so it's just been sitting there, and as soon as I saw *Relative Progression* and had some thinking time; it became clear there was a relationship, to me in any case, between the boxes of colour or gingham and what I wanted to achieve with this patchwork of blues, and that's how I wanted to react to your painting.

Then straight away for my second painting (first painting 'reacting'

to yours entitled *Swell*) I was also thinking about the gesso bases and the colours that I could use to best work with the patchwork of blues.

I wanted to key into the tones you had as dominant colours, but instead of making each of them obvious, I layered them up in a 4 way colour gesso - colour on colour - so when wet and dry sanded a fuse of them would make the surface and some of the more vibrant colour would be subdued not to take away from the main patchwork of blue which is the top layer. So the base creates more of a subtle link back to *Relative Progression*.

And lastly, for *Swell* then I wanted to gather all your dispersed pink circles in *Relative Progression* together, cluster them almost. Initially, I had a drawing but it didn't work out; a pink netted bag full of oranges but having that on the surface became too pictorial and literal. So I played around with casting some pigmented pure gesso and I saw that as pulling all your pink circles into a cluster of one.

The green gingham shape in *Swell* that's oscillating at the base is to set the tone for the rhythm that I felt you were creating with the swoops we spoke about in *Relative Progression*. The negative shape within the gingham shape echoes the mark-making which

is mainly seen on the white squares you painted.

And lastly, again thinking about the edges, the lines and the boundaries; because *Relative Progression* had the breath on the right hand side; I really thought there too was an affinity with how we deal with the whole image.

I definitely want to incorporate and visually acknowledge placement and proximity to 'edge'.

When I added the line on the left the image as a whole became grounded rather than all the elements floating there, and colourwise keys into and gives a bit more weight to the gingham green shape at the base as well.

MM: What about the scale for *Swell*?

SLW: I went up in size to A0 which is usually my largest size and that was to give the blue shape enough space to breathe because I knew that I wanted to have quite loose fluid marks with the blue. I didn't want this one to be small and risk being neat; I wanted it to expand.

MM: We've done the opposite with sizes of stretchers/panels.

For me, as I normally paint on a larger scale, it was somewhat of a challenge to scale down. However,

it was something that I wanted to get back into making, I suppose more domesticated size paintings.

With your circular shape addition in *Swell* there's now a physical 3D aspect to the show as a whole and it's making me think about possibly playing with 3 dimensions as I it's always something I've wanted to perhaps test out. When I've had all my stencil tools stacked up, almost like big screens in the studio sitting there, they are a part of my tools but they could also become the object themselves.

SLW: The paint objects - which I have named 'Remnants' are essentially pure paint, which dry and crack into smaller irregular forms whilst drying; they are the same mix of champagne chalk, pure pigments and glue base purposely made as a paint for the bases of the panels, which I spoke about earlier. They are formed from the excess leftover mix after a session of gessoing; as initially I had to find a responsible way to dispose of the liquid. I let the small amount of excess dry out in plastic bowls but later started to recognise these as naturally finished and formed paintings or elements of paintings in themselves. I had a lack of control over them which I enjoy with in the process.

I started to choose and use individual remnants atop of a painting on occasion when it sat well with the whole and made sense. For example, 'Hold' 2016 and 'Withdraw' 2018 and now *Swell* so far to date. And I also made a work called 'Remnants of Them' in 2014 which was a physical 'painting table' of 4 heights or layers which was constructed from exactly the same raw material as my 2D painting practice; pigmented gesso and plywood – however, in these instances the pigmented gesso was in block form/shape rather than used as a paint surface. This was to bring up and start discussing painting within the expanded field for example.

Because of this research strand in my work when making *Swell* it was natural and entirely apt to add the circular peachy green toned remnant atop of the panel as it is now strange when I have to take it off, for example.

So yes, it is a 3D element but I simply see it as a natural part of the whole painting in itself.

MM: So we are now going to work on our 3rd work - we have some time, of what to do next.

SLW: Yes and the painted conversation is so layered it could go in any direction really and

it's intriguing where it might go unexpectedly with each other's work as the source.

Let's speak again when we've finished our 3rd painting in response to my (Sarah's) second painting entitled *Swell* and Marcus' second painting *Surface tension...*

Conversation between Sarah Longworth-West and Marcus Murison (at the end of their 6 month 'Painted Conversation' on 2 Sept 22 - after exchanging their 3rd painting.

SLW: Hello again, just to update the readers, we haven't spoken about the work since our last recorded conversation and we have been getting on in our studios with this 3rd and final work for the exhibition. I have been responding to your second painting; *Surface tension* and Marcus, you have been responding to my painting second painting *Swell*.

So, would you like to start with how you began to think about what to do, and why, after receiving my second painting *Swell*?

MM: Hello Sarah, yes initially I made a few digital drawings of differing compositions from different sources. I then pursued and started painting one of my options, but then later I became unconvinced by its design and felt that there was not much of a visual dialogue between the two pieces.

The first word that came into my head when I saw *Swell* was *Surface*. I really got a sense of the background being pushed back with effort, revealing a similar blue found in *Relative*

Progression. This is then juxtaposed by the fresh marks found to describe the tarpaulin-like material; the thickly applied 'gingham pattern' and lastly contrasted by the swirling marbled smoothness of your *Remnant*'.

I went back and started to think about what I really wanted to do with this last response, and realised that this last piece had to be some sort of a series, as there were certain elements within your painting that I felt had to be emphasized. I believe in the last conversation we had, I had mentioned that I was interested in the idea of bringing in one of the stencils I use in the studio, but showing it as its own object/ artefact as that is something new for me. And in a way I wanted to make a direct response to your 'Remnant.'

When I created the composition of the bigger piece in the series I wanted to highlight the linear poles within your painting, by bringing them forward, intensification by multiplication and countering the breathing space established in *Swell*. I also wanted to create more layers

in the work so that I could work back into it, so I became much more conscious about how I could approach the surface and how I would apply the paint and /or the stencils.

The 'Green Gingham Swirl' as I like to call it, in my mind, was a section of the painting I felt needed its own space if I was to react to it as it's such an intense cluster of information. Throughout *Swell*, there is luscious thick paint application, that was also something I wanted to incorporate with my last response as generally my paint application is normally very flat or lean.

SLW: Yes, that's all very succinct and all ties in with our discussion points previously, both visual and verbal. I really enjoy that these 3 pieces co-exist and are a unit; you've definitely pushed the boundaries of all your investigations so far. It was really interesting to see what aspects that you'd taken time and focused in on this time; as an open conclusion, especially when you just explained the opportunities that arose for you through such an open approach, for example, using an unusual to you - thicker paint application.

I'm interested to know about the peach-tone linear mark - if you could explain a little?

How do you work to translate a collage into painting?

And lastly, the tonal shift of green in the larger piece - was there a stimulus that prompted this, for example?

MM: Ah yes, the linear peach tone is actually an outline of a shape which was in my source image. The colour was taken directly from the source using the eyedropper tool on PhotoShop but then altered to bring out the colour more as I felt there needed to be a point of difference within the painting. It was only after I painted it, I realised that one of the ends was pointed directly below where your 'Remnant' is sitting on top of your painting. A bit of painted serendipity.

I guess initially I'll work from one source then turn that into a digital drawing but I will create a few versions to give myself options. This helps me isolate the parts of the source I want to bring out into the painting. It is then through painting, if I feel that there is something unresolved, I will go back and reference the other drawings and combine elements.

I first painted the smaller gradient piece so it was present in my studio for a while.



VDU
Oil paint, oil pastel, silver leaf & pigmented gesso on panel
84 x 118 cm
Sarah Longworth-West, 2022



Response 3
Oil, acrylic, spraypaint on canvas and mesh
Various (30 x 40 cm) and (111.7 x 86.3 cm)
Marcus Murison, 2022

The tonal shift came about as I was working on a few pieces at the same time. The sources I was working from had these tones of green within them, so I had some of these colours made up. I just tested on PhotoShop how it would sit along the smaller painting and I thought there was a nice dialogue there.

So Sarah now I pose the question to you, what were you initially thinking on how you would respond to my second work - *Surface tension*?

SLW: That's really insightful in terms of your practice; to get these specific examples of the routes and processes through the making of this, working into how you made decisions overall when in preparation and in the studio.

I was going to ask, as it occurred to me after our last conversation, if you know of the short book 'Flatland' by Edwin A. Abbott 1884...?

The author creates a fictional land while at the same time satirising contemporary/Victorian culture - a lot that still holds true now- and introducing theories of space's multi-dimensional nature. In summary, Flatland is a two-dimensional world chronicling the adventures of Square - a mathematician who lives there. There are hierarchies of shapes; from

lines to polygons. The protagonist, by mistake, ventures into Spaceland, which has three dimensions, Lineland, which is one-dimensional, and Pointland, which does not have any dimensions. Square also imagines a land with four dimensions.

I read it a number of years ago and it was an interesting concept whilst making my paintings.

I'm bringing this up now, as a key factor to working from your painting was for me to embrace the flatness and not to reintroduce any forms -3-D – Spaceland. This was quite hard to put into practice and to restrain myself. So it did challenge and push me into new territory.

So to go back to when I received your second work *Surface tension* in June, I was struck by the landscape format -that you explained arose from working on it and responding to it naturally in the studio. This had a 'Georg Baselitz' -turned painting- effect on me - as the thing I was almost least expecting was a landscape format; due to my rigidity to 'portrait format' for such a long time - it was almost an unquestioned or over-questioned given. And the second or simultaneous element that was dominant to me was the echo of this with the 3 sided -as the 4th

side was absent- rectangle which further exaggerated the landscape format to me. So that was where I started to reflect upon the work itself and started to question myself about what it was that I wanted to focus on in response. I also enjoyed in *Surface tension* the focus you had on an overlooked tone - of the light green in *Endless* which is tiny compared to the dominant vermilion. And you also inverted that by using the white ground of the primed canvas as a base.

As you know, I have mentioned how I find elements of the screen and screen usage present through some of the marks of your works; so I was also interested to see how this could work in the painting that I was planning on making.

My third painting entitled *VDU* has the same gesso base tones as the remnant in *Swell* which goes back to echo your first painting *Relative Progression*; and also ties in with your base in the 2nd work *Surface tension*. I thought this worked well in terms of how a conversation is multi-layered and harks backwards, forwards and builds. There's also a shifting surface tremor to the base layer.

Within the 2 most dominant rectangular-ish paintings within paintings, the palette is punchy and

picks up on what has happened thus far. I was also drawn to the blue 'S' and 'C' like shapes in *Surface tension* and wanted to have a tremor- like pattern again within these saturated oil painted blocks in *VDU*.

As we had recently –above- had a discussion about edges, when making *VDU* it only seems right that I make sure that an edge was acknowledged but also in a new way - on the left hand-side. Halfway down this curling line breaks down and looks to disintegrate only to then subtly reform. Again, this tone of green was a shift – firstly, I used a cream colour but it wasn't legible so I kept building the tone up - which is again a coincidence as it is a very similar tone to the one that you also shifted to simultaneously in your third painting *Response 3*.

MM: Thanks for talking about how you found it responding to my second painting, *Surface tension*, I'm glad it challenged you and got you thinking, especially in terms of how you felt on combating the flatness in *Surface tension* and the landscape format. The landscape format is also a format which I have hardly used myself so it was nice to try it out for a change. This begs the question of why the portrait format? I have thought about this and wondered if it

is how we interact with photography today, it is, the majority of the time through our phones. So is technology subconsciously affecting how we compose an image which then affects the painting?

No I Haven't come across this book before, it sounds very interesting and I feel like it is something I would enjoy. It's very poetic in terms of the considerations you take when breaking down elements, or space, for a painting.

In *VDU* it is really interesting how there are some commonalities with *Response 3* I'm not sure if you noticed, but there is the use of metallic spray paint which was the first layer, of the larger piece which I worked back into to reveal it. In *VDU* you have a rectangular metallic shape, can you expand on this?

I'm also intrigued by these collages of colour- they remind me of sections of a quilt. Have you heard of the Japanese technique Boro patchwork? It's used to further extend the life of different fabrics and combines them to create a patch-worked material, which was out of necessity not an aesthetic choice. How was this element sourced?

SLW: Yes - I'd say working with the flatness is a main element now in *VDU*; and I'm pleased to have had that focus.

The portrait format -in these ratios-, for me, is a definite link back to the magazine covers and the exact formatting that I was attracted to and worked from during my formative MA period. And I have decided to keep it as a constant as it's a format that stands to challenge and still excites me to work with; it's a given regular now and holds the work together collectively. But yes, I agree, this magazine format has shifted with technology yet is still the regular format for digital image consumption. If it is such a regular - then in many ways it's a challenge to do something interesting with it.

Yes, I saw the silver tone peeking through top left -I think- in *Response 3*. And I did see that additional coincidence too in our 3rd works. It's interesting that you say it was your first layer. I've used silver leaf on *VDU*. It's a material I use on occasion in the painting practice when visually appropriate. This particular silver leaf is sold in squares and when thinking about the rectangles and multiple ones I wanted to present, it came as a natural link to use two overlapping silver squares to form a rectangle of solid silver. I was tuned into the

subtleties of the gesso colours and how slithers of cream were pulled through the peach tone. To highlight this, I wanted to echo the visual content that I had plastered over with silver; I took a photo of that area, prior to covering it, and mimicked the lines and blobs that lived underneath by painting them on top. This was to highlight the surface pattern and intricacies.

I am drawn to patchwork and the social concept behind it. In a similar way it has parallels to my interest in marble surfaces - it's the ready-made, the unpredictable and a pure one off.

These sections -of colour rectangles- on *VDU* are from a source I found, drew and collaged, playing with the sections and colours. I was especially interested in the textured rhythm in some of the pieces as I found it related to some of the painted lines in *Surface tension*.

MM: It's really interesting that we simultaneously used metallic materials on our last responses. This was something I hadn't planned. I was using the metallic spray paint on multiple surfaces in the studio and this surface just so happened to be one of them. The silver leaf is very effective. I do like how it's not a completely solid rectangle and allows the colour from underneath to flow on top of it.

You could say that this process has been a quilting together of our ideas and solutions as well as the patch-working of our different networks and us coming together forming this metaphorical quilt.

Thank you, Sarah, for the lovely insight into your responses. It has been an absolute pleasure doing this project with you, and I hope you enjoyed the process as much as I have. Also really looking forward to seeing all the works together, in person, at the show.

SLW: It's going to be so good to see all the works together and the parallels, reactions and coincidences they all hold. I think they'll look really cohesive. And I'll also be intrigued to hear any visitors' feedback and what they might pick up on about the 'conversation' that has visually happened.

Afterwards too it'll be intriguing to see - and slowly understand- the impact of having done this project together; both visually but mainly on our studio-thinking and thinking through the making of the paintings.

The project as a whole, especially since our first longer conversation - in the first part of this text - has opened up our ideas and we've been

reflective and questioning about our practices. This has highlighted the importance of certain aspects which will inevitably allow us to further our ideas more thoroughly, I think.

Thank you too! It's been a great experience. And I can't wait until the 'Painted Conversations' exhibition in Edinburgh.

Also a huge thank you to Lyndsey Gilmour and Peter Chalmers for inviting us to do the 'Painted Conversations' project; and for their foresight that our work would sit so well together; probably in more ways than they could have anticipated, possibly.

**Thank you for reading,
Sarah + Marcus**



Sarah Longworth-West graduated with an MFA Painting from The Slade School of Fine Art, UCL, London in 2008.

Longworth-West has exhibited in: *Jackson's International Painting Prize 2022 Shortlist Exhibition*; *Fully Awake 3:6*, Dyson Gallery, London; *Merge Visible* curated by Charley Peters, Contemporary British Painting; *The Trouble with Painting Today*, curated by Hannah Conroy, Pump House Gallery, London.

Since 2013 Longworth-West has held the post of Lecturer Fine Art: Painting at Norwich University of the Arts.

Longworth-West's painting practice is focused upon creating subtle dystopian non-spaces that are hard to locate but overall give the atmosphere of a place in which people or remnants of them occasionally inhabit.

www.sarahlongworth-west.com
sarahlongworthwest@gmail.com
Instagram: @painting_longworth.west



Marcus Murison graduated with a BA HONS Painting from Gray's School of Art, Aberdeen in 2018.

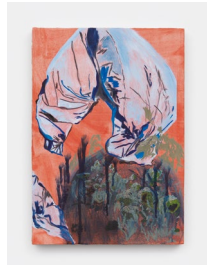
Murison has exhibited in: *EMERGENT 2022*, The LOOKAGAIN Project Space, Aberdeen; *'Alter' Solo Show*, The Briggait, Glasgow; *Reduct: Abstraction and Geometry in Scottish Art*, The Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh; *RSA New Contemporaries '19*, Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh.

Murison's practice is concerned with overlooked objects and situations found in our everyday urban environments. As of late, he has focused his research towards the activity and spaces of building sites. He is interested in how these liminal spaces develop over time and seeing the unseen for a very brief moment in time.

www.marcusmurison.co.uk
marcus.murison@gmail.com
Instagram: @marcus_murison

Endless

Oil paint and oil pastel on pigmented gesso panel
42 x 30 cm
Sarah Longworth-West, 2018



Swell

Oil paint and oil pastel on pigmented gesso panel with remnant
118 x 84 cm
Sarah Longworth-West, 2022



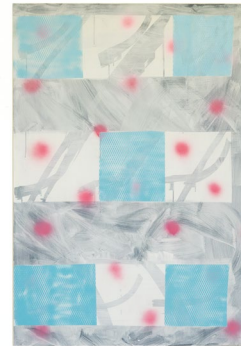
VDU

Oil paint, oil pastel, silver leaf & pigmented gesso on panel
84 x 118 cm
Sarah Longworth-West, 2022



Relative Progression

Acrylic and spray on canvas
153 x 107 cm
Marcus Murison, 2019-2022



Surface tension

Oil and acrylic on canvas
30 x 40 cm
Marcus Murison, 2022



Response 3

Oil, acrylic, spraypaint on canvas and mesh
Various (30 x 40 cm) and (111.7 x 86.3 cm)
Marcus Murison, 2022



PAINTED CONVERSATIONS

Sarah Longworth-West + Marcus Murison