

# FLOCK HOUSE

Mary Mattingly



## Extending Painting Outwards and Inward By Greg Lindquist

Painting is about the slowness of seeing and the difficulties of recognition. It is difficult to locate painting's imagery with how it is painted, as simultaneously it exists as both perceptual experience and physical depiction. Painting is about the transformation of sensation, memory and observation into a self-contained, portable frame. It is a world of its own. But, to look into it with eyes, one must look around it with eyes and body and into the context in which it is displayed. The walls on which a painting hangs, although often blank and disregarded, must be accounted for.

The gallery as a particular, whole space and time for contemplating the landscape interests me. Whereas the Land artists of the 1970's sought to take art into the landscape and thus forego the gallery experience, I am interested in bringing the perceived constructs of nature and culture into the real, architectural space of the gallery with painting. To a certain extent, this seems like nothing new if you think of from this perspective Piero's enclosing frescos, Monet's peripherally immersive l'Orangerie, or Frederic Church's theaters of vistas. Yet these artists remained less concerned with and conscious of the character and particulars of their paintings in the context of one place/space at one time; they are all as pictures interested more in the frame within which time is both captured through an instance and suspended in an infinite moment.

In painting that is site-specific and extended into the realm of installation, the timelessness (or, eternalness as Daniel Buren has likewise written) of the illusionistic image melds with the immediacy of the architectural real space, experience in real time by an embodied viewer. The tense of the architectural space flickers with the illusionistic imagery painted directly on the wall, the tenses of present and past swirl with phenomenological confusion. The viewer encounters at once the exteriority of the gallery space and the interiority of its painted image, as well as the interiority of the gallery and the exteriority of the painted image. Ultimately, the melding of image and real space is not experienced seamlessly, or without complication. Corners of architecture intersect and negotiate layers of painted imagery. The light of the gallery irradiates its painted walls, fused in a perceptual mirage and locked in an endless feedback loop of the movement between eyes and body.



Top to Bottom:

Flock House painting by Greg Lindquist in Flock House Prototype at 125 Maiden Lane in Lower Manhattan, 2012;

Setting up the Flock House Prototype at 125 Maiden Lane, 2012.

What happens though, when the geometry and sterility of gallery-like architecture is altered or removed? Can painting thrive or even exist? These questions intrigued and attracted me to Mary Mattingly's Flock House project,

**Locations and Inhabitants:**

125 Maiden Lane, Lower Manhattan: Greg Lindquist

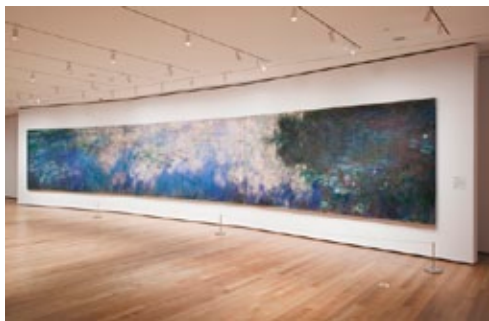




Detail, Greg Lindquist's Flock House painting, 2012;

Greg Lindquist's Flock House paintings installed at the University of Arizona Museum of Art, 2012.





which enlisted artists to take residency in her spherical living systems that imagine an alternative model of urban architecture. With a network of conduit and laminated plywood as frame and spandex fabric as a permeable/membranous shell, there is little distinction between interior and exterior, or the geometric determinations of wall and ceiling. Based on a hexagonal floor plan, I proposed to follow one half of the shape with a painting triptych. One central canvas would remain flush with the floor and be flanked by a canvas on each side turned inside, in a way similar to a previous display of Monet's *Water Lilies* at MoMA that suggests the elliptical hangings at L'Orangerie. I was also inspired by James Rosenquist's F-111 installation, which was recreated in its original floor plan at the MoMA in summer of 2012 and inspired also by Monet's extremely retinal *Water Lilies* installation at L'Orangerie. Unlike either, though, the canvases in the Flock House were both painting and architectural substrate, becoming the walls themselves.

I wasn't certain how the image would function in its environment. Would be it abstract or descriptive imagery? Would it be derived from the garden in its site, painted from life or photographed and painted from projection? To this end, I wrote two a priori statements arguing for each extreme, but in the end my approach was a fusing of these two false dialectics. An argument for representational imagery also required addressing a problem of how abstraction is arrived at and what is purely representational or abstract. I started with one silhouetted image of a plant and obscured it by the repetition of brushstrokes that recorded my motions, movements and actions inside of and around the Flock House.

With the evolving, freely growing aesthetics of the Flock House, I envisioned the paintings as developing in the same ecological process-based system. Each time the Flock House is installed it is subject to adapt to the resources and limitations of its surroundings. What I might have seen in the Flock House as a lack of aesthetic choices (eg craft) is rather simply a different set of choices to a more or less flexible set of outcomes (eg hypothetical, propositions, imaginings). Painting, on the other hand, might require a more crafted environment in which to function yet itself may operate in terms of process in a similar series of flexible, organic adaptations to its space in order to thrive.

The Flock House paintings began with translations of imagery or imagistic transcriptions of nature. With the imagery of one plant, I brought what was outside the Flock House inside. Each painting session or encounter also addressed something specific to that particular visit, whether it was a detail of light, color, atmosphere, feeling or impression. It was not necessarily abstract by form or inspiration but rather a distillation of something perceived or observed.

This exercise was also about subverting expectation, breaking down the contradictions inherent in language that classifies, such as abstract and representational. It was also about being outside of the interiority in a more traditional studio, and painting in the atrium of an office building in Lower Manhattan without a door to close, or privacy. A constant stream of people entered and exited this space, freely offering their responses of confusion, admiration or entertainment. This forced me to be more deliberate and decisive when I visited the Flock House, or I was forever uncomfortably distracted.

Ultimately, I never quite understood how the painting was experienced until it was removed and placed in a museum setting, where it was supplied emptied (yet altered) space around it. Rather than hang the painting as a continuous edge-to-edge triptych I raised the central panel slightly by twelve inches or so to suggest the environment of its origin.

Opposite Page:

The atrium at 125 Maiden Lane lit up at night, 2012.

Installation view of Monet's *Water Lilies* (1914-26) at MoMA. Photo by Thomas Griesel;

Flock House prototype as a painting studio at 125 Maiden Lane in Lower Manhattan, 2012.