



2-303 Lansdowne Ave
Toronto ON M6K 2W5
416 849 2864
Tuesday-Saturday 12-6
www.xpace.info

Where my ass has been
Dylin North

January 30th – February 21st

Where my ass has been is a series of small paintings by Toronto-based artist Dylin North. The series playfully catalogues the artist's movements from place to place and serves as an archive of his time spent on buses and trains. Based on cell-phone photographs taken by North between 2010 and 2015, the paintings depict his interpretations of the abstract, geometric and often brightly coloured patterns that adorn the seats aboard these vehicles. The paintings are small, measuring approximately eight by ten inches.

North uses various paint applications that provide an effective translation and simulation of the industrial-strength velvet that covers the seats of most public transport vehicles of a certain era. The familiarity of these patterns is oddly comforting, perhaps that is because the painted image, removed from its original context aboard some form of public transit, becomes a reminder of the security of the everyday. These patterns could be from any bus anywhere, they are something you have seen before and they are something you will see again, a signal of stability in the banal.

The paintings are about the space between departure and arrival, where being in transit is about residing in an in-between non-space. This non-space has characteristics that enforce a way of being, and this can be limiting or freeing, depending on one's view of the experience. While aboard a bus or a train, a passenger has limited options, restricted mobility, and a reasonable expectation of quiet stillness. Each of the paintings is titled with its origin and destination points and is chronologically numbered in order of when the journey was taken, such as *Seat #16 Toronto to Niagara*. If the title of a work can lend information regarding what the work is about, North's paintings are about the "to" in the journey evoked in the title.

I sat down with North to discuss this series of work. He described for me how the paintings were prompted by a ride on the bus, probably on one of his monthly commutes from Toronto to Niagara. Acknowledging the design of his seat to be eccentric, North took a photo and

texted it to a friend. After this, he started noticing that the various seat designs ranged from interesting to ridiculous, and he started collecting the photographs.

North says the paintings started out as a sort of joke, as he saw the patterned bus seats and thought that they looked like Abstraction. I am interested in how much of a direct effect Abstraction has had on this type of patterning and imagery, and thereby how Abstraction has made its way into mass-consumed consciousness in the form of the Ikea-type giclée print, the bus seat, the hotel hallway artwork. North is pulling something that has been filtered through the lens of mass culture back into the realm of fine art by re-interpreting, through painting, the degenerate geometric designs that decorate public transit seats. A layering and looping occurs in this process that serves to level the function and value of both formal Abstraction and its “less authentic” reproductions.

The bus ride to Niagara, which takes about 90 minutes, has always been, for North, a sort of break. It is the time between spaces and places and doing things. During his travels throughout North America and Europe, his time on buses and trains was his only time to think about what he was doing and what he was seeing. When he was wandering around a city he felt distracted - prompted, even obligated, to be out and doing and seeing more. He didn't feel like he should sit down and read a book, because why would he read a book while he is in London? He would read and write and think and pause while in transit between places. Being stuck in the container freed him from thinking about other uses of his time, it allowed him to “recover from having too many options in a space where [he had] none.”

Where my ass has been at first struck me as sort of just whimsically geometric abstract images, and it was not until I pulled back my gaze and the individual dots and strokes blurred that I saw the recognizable fabric. I laughed out loud at this interaction going on between my eyes and my brain and my heart. I liked the painting when I did not know what it depicted, because it felt calm and it felt easy, like a friend that I haven't seen in years. Someone who knows me so well that our re-connections are effortless. There is an ease that comes from the familiarity with these abstract patterns and what they represent - the in-between space of a forced slowness that offers both relief from and comfort in the everyday.

-Rachel Ludlow

List of Works

Clockwise from door:

Seat #16 (Toronto to Niagara), 9" x 12", acrylic on panel with artist frame, 2014

Seat #14 (Boston to Buffalo), 9" x 12", acrylic on panel with artist frame, 2013

Seat #23 (Toronto to Niagara), 9" x 12", acrylic on panel with artist frame, 2014

Seat #17 (Toronto to Niagara), 8" x 10", acrylic on panel with artist frame, 2014

Seat #2 (Niagara to Toronto), 8" x 10", acrylic on panel with artist frame, 2013

Seat #12 (Dublin to Cork), 8" x 10", acrylic on panel with artist frame, 2013

Seat #19 (Toronto to Niagara), 8" x 10", acrylic on panel with artist frame, 2014

Seat #10 (Amsterdam to Paris), 8" x 10", acrylic on panel with artist frame, 2014

Seat #6 (Prague to Berlin), 8.5" x 9", acrylic on panel with artist frame, 2013

Seat #3 (London to Reading), 8" x 10", acrylic on panel with artist frame, 2013

Seat #8 (Berlin to Oranienburg), 8" x 10", acrylic on panel with artist frame, 2014

Seat #5 (Florence to La Spezia), 9" x 12", acrylic on panel with artist frame, 2014

Seat #11 (Paris to London), 8" x 10", acrylic on panel with artist frame, 2014

Seat #9 (Berlin to Amsterdam), 8" x 10", acrylic on panel with artist frame, 2013

Seat #15 (Toronto to Niagara), 8" x 10", acrylic on panel with artist frame, 2014

Seat #18 (Toronto to Niagara), 9" x 12", acrylic on panel with artist frame, 2014

Seat #13 (Dublin to Howth), 9" x 12", acrylic on panel with artist frame, 2014