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Artist Audrey Barcio Brings Show to Tube Factory



Somewhere between the intersections of line, light and the existential, is where Audrey Barcio's work lies in flux. Her upcoming works that will be revealed at the Tube Factory(<http://www.bigcar.org/project/tubefactory/>), are no exception.

The show entitled Under Influence(<https://www.facebook.com/events/2009613615976193/>), is a mixture of acrylic paintings and three dimensional forms. If it's anything like her other installations, it will be a totem to artists past. Which is fitting because Barcio considers herself part art historian and part artist. We spoke with her about how this show ties

back to her roots as an artist and how she wrestles with creating something new and sustaining.



Emily Taylor: You mentioned that *Under Influence* is ancestral, universal, infinite and essential. What draws you to those words in correlation with your work?

Audrey Barcio: These words come from the art historical ideas of Suprematism—conveying geometric shapes, lines and colors to depict the universal around us. Humanity is in such a hurry to modify itself, to transcend its apparent limitations, but we do not even know what we are. All we know is that we want to be something else. I am looking back to our ancestry, because there are good questions there—questions covered up by the garbage heap of progress. I am looking toward what is universal because I am made of the same stuff as you, and as these paintings, and as everything in the universe. I am looking toward what is infinite because that concept is inherent to time and space. I am looking for what is essential because our essence is the rawest measure of what we are.

ET: How do you wrestle through those existential questions as an artist? How do you work through those moments?

AB: If art could do one thing... I think that it can give you that universal conversation or moment or feeling, where you can look at something or read into multiple meanings. I highly encourage that... I have this really strong academic background, where I have half art historian half artist, but I also want the work to be completely approachable to a child or to family members who might say I have no idea what this is.



ET: There is beauty in that, to target any audience.

AB: Yeah, it's universal.

ET: Was that intentional?

AB: It's something I have always strived for because sometimes artists make work just for other artists or for other historians. Then you have the general public who will take a look at art and totally dismiss it because they don't understand it. I always want to have that openness, where if I am talking with a historian I can talk about work in one way or if I am talking with someone who has never encountered a painting we can talk

about it in another way. We are still talking about the concepts but you can choose how deep down the rabbit hole you decide to go.

ET: How did you settle on the name *Under Influence* for this body of work?

AB: Titles for an exhibition take a long time for me. I meditate, read, and do a lot of writing leading up to an exhibition. I'm always looking for titles to have multiple meanings and remain open for interpretation. *Under Influence*, to me, came partly from being under the influence of Kazimir Malevich(<http://www.theartstory.org/artist-malevich-kasimir.htm>), the key Russian artist for the Suprematism movement, more than a hundred years ago. Malevich spoke to the pure, universal, abstract and connective nature of art. He was also conveying ideas about the mystical and spiritual in his forms. The influence of what is under also speaks to my research into the earliest mark makers (a.k.a. artists), which showed me that the first art was made in caves by shamans dealing with the same questions Malevich was asking. Why are we here? What does it mean to be human? What is our relationship to nature? Is there a bigger meaning to our existence? And there are other meanings to this title as well. I am reflecting on the ideas of heritage and legacy... It's always that thing that you feel thinking everything has been done, what original gesture or conversations can you add to the long legacy of art history. It's always this question that contemporary artist think about... And in a physical sense, the under part of these paintings, the surface, is symbolic of the influence of technology. But mostly at this point I am interested in learning what the words *Under Influence* evoke in other people.

ET: What was your beginning as an artist? How has your interaction with design grown over time?

AB: I began painting at a very young age, assisting my grandmother, who was a fantastic painter. She eventually went blind and relied on me to mix her paint and lay down many of the first layers of her paintings. I have fond memories of her explaining to me the difference between alizarin and cadmium reds. I learned all this before I could read or count. (*Audrey's first encounter with Malevich's work was in the art history books in her grandmother's library.*) Growing up I saw everything through an artist's eyes. Everything was magical and I wanted to paint it all. I look back at some of my paintings from when I was young and wish that I could paint like that again.

As for my relationship with design, I believe art and design are intricately linked. And both have become drastically altered by technology. Everyone today thinks they are capable of being a typesetter, a graphic designer, an artist. That is largely because

technology has given us tools that do the grunt work for us. So we can do things fast, but what is the point of that? Why are we doing these things to begin with? Just to get them done? Is that the point, to set as much type and design as many graphics and manufacture as many objects as possible? Before what? Before time runs out? There has to be some value in learning human skills, and delving deeply into ancestral crafts. Surely anyone can be an artist, but I am interested in people who give themselves completely to the examination of what it means to use their imagination, to be creative, and to discover what it means to make art...



ET: How is this series of paintings different from your past work? What led you to examine the crossroads of Modernism with the Industrial?

AB: This series of paintings made for Tube Factory Artspace is new, and at the same time, conceptually, it marks a return to an inquiry I started making nearly a decade ago during my time at Herron School of Art and Design(<https://herron.iupui.edu/>). That inquiry relates to action, and the importance of making things. Work is integral to the human condition. It may not be important what we do, but it is important that we continue to do things for ourselves. So I am examining where the heritage of Modernism intersects with the tools of the Virtual Industrial Age. In other words, I am extending a Modernist visual language related to Suprematism, Geometric Abstraction, Futurism, Post-Painterly Abstraction and Minimalism—abstract aesthetic positions with specific formal concerns. And I am doing it by transforming the iconic digital checkerboard pattern that implies a void in digital design programs into a concrete surface. I see the culture of

contemporary technology as displacing the value of physical human effort. I am reclaiming the importance of work.

ET: What's your next big dream? I feel like many artists have a hidden passion project in their back pocket. What's yours?

AB: I have recently been wondering about public works, imagining how the ideas I am working with might translate in that way. I would love to do a large-scale mural in the future.