

SOPHIA AINSLIE

Drawing Breath
10 years



Published on the occasion
of the exhibition:

Spill without Splatter

October 8 – November 6, 2021

Gallery NAGA

SOPHIA AINSLIE

Drawing Breath
10 years

Gallery NAGA
67 Newbury Street
Boston MA 02116
gallerynaga.com

COVER

Apple Not Included 3, 2021
Flashe, acrylic on polypropylene
52 x 52 inches
Photo: Julia Featheringill

INSIDE FRONT COVER

Apple Not Included 2, 2021
Flashe, acrylic on polypropylene
52 x 52 inches
Photo: Julia Featheringill

PHOTOGRAPHY

All uncredited images
courtesy of Sophia Ainslie

DESIGN

John Colan

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“Sophia Ainslie’s abstract paintings on paper have the whizzbang crispness, tangy hues, and brio of comic book graphics, although they’re made with tiny, almost imperceptible brushstrokes.”

Boston Globe
September 2015
By Cate McQuaid
Pata Pata
Gallery NAGA
Boston, MA

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Ainslie in her studio 2018
Photo: Lin Wang

Spill without Splatter

Sophia Ainslie

After the death of my mother, I began using a single X-ray of her abdomen combined with my surrounding landscape as source material. It proved to be a way to hold onto her memory and absorb the meaning of her passing; the resulting shapes and marks led to the development of a visual language.

The process began by projecting the X-ray onto paper and tracing specific shapes of organs or spaces between organs. These were then painted with acrylic and Flashe without leaving any evidence of the hand, leading to flat, opaque shapes of color and commemorating the body. Reacting to these shapes with black India ink mark-making added an element of chance, spontaneity and a celebration of the hand. As the work evolved, I began utilizing the computer as a cutting tool to 'collage' carefully selected shapes and marks, dissecting and editing previous work. Almost as if performing surgery, areas were fragmented, reconstituted and ultimately mapped through light projection.

In the last two years my content has shifted. Although my intention of making a painting still investigates the same questions of previous work, involving a visual vocabulary that relates to abstraction and collage, my attention has shifted away from the content of my mother's body to looking deeply at structure and relationships – of scale, color, application, the manner in which shapes meet and the specificity of the edge they create in their meeting. I'm acutely engaged in building a painting that will have weight and presence. Often beginning with observation as a starting point, my paintings end with the look of abstraction. They are a translation of what I see and experience.

Ultimately my painting is a celebration and orchestration of the visual elements and their relationship to each other. My intention is to create a visual sense of democracy between these



LEFT TO RIGHT

In Person Hubweek, 2018
acrylic on shipping container
City Hall Plaza, Boston, MA

Ainslie with her work prior to
her exhibition *Pata Pata*, 2018
Gallery NAGA
Boston, MA

elements – a harmonious coexistence and sense of equality. My process is a conversation of trial and error, which when successful, opens my eyes to new and surprising outcomes.

Biography

Sophia Ainslie is a South African American abstract painter represented by Gallery NAGA in Boston, Massachusetts. Born in Johannesburg, Ainslie grew up in an atmosphere that celebrated creativity and out-of-the-box thinking. Her father, Bill Ainslie, an artist, together with her mother, Fieke, founded the Johannesburg Art Foundation (one of the first multiracial art schools in South Africa).

Ainslie committed to her artistic career while growing up in Johannesburg. She won the prestigious New Visions award at the early age of 22. Two years later she won the Staffrider award in Drawing. She held her first solo exhibition at the noted Goodman Gallery three years later. The African Arts Trust and the Hamlyn Foundation sponsored Ainslie's 3-month residency at Gasworks in London, culminating in a solo show. This led to an invitation to paint for a

year in San Francisco at Yosemite Studios. Having time to focus, and being in a new landscape, opened up new opportunities in her work. Under the sponsorship of her patron Henny Kirshon, and the Art History Department at Tufts University, Medford MA, she pursued her MFA through the combined program at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts/Tufts. After graduating in 2001 she received the Ann and Graham Gund award to attend the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine.

Ainslie has exhibited extensively in museums and galleries nationally and internationally including *Call and Response*, Newport Art Museum, RI (2021); *Last Touch* and *Pata-Pata* (both solo), Gallery NAGA, Boston (2018 and 2015); *Groundswell*, Museum of Art, University of New Hampshire (2016); *In Person* (solo), Kingston Gallery, Boston (2013); *Interstitial* (solo), curated by Leonie Bradbury, Carol Schlosberg Gallery, Montserrat College, Beverly, MA (2013); *Pigment: Color and Metaphor*, curated by Stephanie Cardon, Brant Gallery, MassArt (2012); *Skowhegan Alum*, juried by Carrie Springer, Senior Curatorial Assistant, Whitney Museum of American Art,

92Y Tribeca, New York, NY (2012); *Inside Out-2* (solo), Grillo Gallery, Endicott College, Beverly, MA, (2012); *Projected Image*, ArtSTRAND, Provincetown, MA (2011); *Crawlers and Oxipurex-Xtra-Clorox* (solo) HallSpace, Boston (2006 and 2004); *Reaching for the Unreachable* (solo), Gasworks Gallery, London, United Kingdom; *Transfiguration*, Association for the Visual Arts, Cape Town, South Africa, (1997); *We Are One*, Zakithi Gallery, Pretoria, South Africa (1997); *Future Prospects*, Newtown Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa, (1996); *Volkshkas Atelier*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Johannesburg, South Africa (1994); *Thapong*, Gaborone National Museum, Botswana, Southern Africa, (1994); *Thupelo International*, Federated Union for Black Artists Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa, (1994); and many others.

Her commissioned site-specific work can be seen in numerous public spaces including Hoem Residence in Toronto, ON; Harvard University, Cambridge; Mayors Office in Boston; Northeastern University in Boston; Tufts University's Collaborative Learning and Innovation Center in Medford, MA; Studio Allston Hotel in Boston; Enso Flats in Brockton, MA; Meditech in Foxborough, MA and the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital in London, UK. Her work is part of many international and national private collections.

Ainslie was the recipient of the inaugural Hendricks Art Fund for Tufts Graduates, which led to the creation of a 6000 square foot mural at Tufts University; the Massachusetts Cultural Council Fellowship for Painting; the Drawing Center's Registry Program, NY, and was nominated as a Finalist in *Drawing by the New England Journal of Aesthetics*, Massachusetts; and awarded first prize in *Drawing by Stafrider and New Visions* in South Africa. She has received multiple grants to pursue her work from the Artist's Resource Trust; Gund and Sugarman Foundations in the US, African Art Trust and Paul Hamlyn Foundation in the UK, Oppenheimer Trust, and others.

Other awards include participation in sponsored residencies and workshops such as NIROX Foundation in Gauteng, South Africa, Triangle Arts Association and ART/OMI in New York, Yosemite Studios, San Francisco, Gasworks in London, Thapong International in Botswana, Southern Africa, and



0001 Untitled, 2021
Flashe, acrylic on paper
22 x 22.5 inches
Photo: Julia Featheringill

Thupelo international in Johannesburg and Cape Town, South Africa.

Most recently her work has been reviewed and published by the *Boston Globe*, *Art New England*, *Artsy*, *ArtFetch*, *The Boston Phoenix*, *ArtScope*, *Northeastern News*, *ArtsMedia*, and WCVB TV.

Ainslie began teaching at the Johannesburg Art Foundation in South Africa, ran workshops in Botswana at the Gaborone National Museum and in Cape Town at Iziko South African Museum. She is currently an Associate Teaching Professor in the Department of Art and Design at Northeastern University and maintains a studio in Somerville, MA.



Figure 1
The Artist's Studio
December 2019
Photo: Amy Halliday

Drawing Breath

Amy Halliday

Entering the studio, my breath catches. Rhythmic lines of deep black ink and Flashe paint undulate and demarcate uncertain terrain, mapped alongside pulsing pools of saturated color. Arranged in series of varying size, number, and orientation, at times these pieces seem contained, restrained, by the white space of the picture plane; at others they bleed beyond the edges. Sophia Ainslie's works of the past decade embody an uncannily organic abstraction. Simultaneously familiar and strange, they insist on surface attention, yet gesture towards infinity.

Inhale

We pore over a small x-ray film: imaging from an intestinal stent used to visually assess the status of the artist's late mother, Fieke's, abdominal cancer. Without context it would be easy to mistake this internal topography for a telescopic view of celestial bodies. Micro and macroscales meet and mingle in curious intimacy:

I had never seen the abdomen from the inside and was struck by its seeming vastness. It reflected the universe so completely... It was like her body contained all the stars and planets, black holes and layers of space, reflected in mark making, and subtle tonal shifts.¹

Drawn directly from life, yet abstracted from the lived, the diagnostic film oscillates between fragment and firmament, interior and exterior landscape. Occlusions, voids and shadows reflect varying levels of permeability to the imaging technology; require expert interpretation. The surface reads, too, as a drawing or etching. Bite and burr, line and value; a careful attention to tonal gradation. Indeed, this small relic would become the ground for over a decade (2009-2021) of expansive formal experimentation.

The artist slips the film back into a binder sleeve. We return to the work on the walls.

Exhale

Back in Somerville, Massachusetts, following her mother's death in South Africa in 2009, Ainslie found herself at a loss. Remembering a remark she had made to her mother about wanting to draw her portrait from the inside, she used light projection to enlarge and project the x-ray onto her studio walls. At the time Ainslie had mentioned this, her mother had giggled with the doctor about how typical this was; that it was her lot for a life lived with artists. Ainslie's father, Bill Ainslie (1934-1989), was an abstract painter deeply committed to arts education and access for all. He is perhaps best known for (co-)founding and teaching at several of South Africa's first non-racial art centers and residency programs, many of which emerged from the studio spaces, conversations, and collaborations fostered in the Ainslies' Johannesburg home, in which writers and artists would gather and work from the late 1960s. The young Sophia grew up enveloped in music and mark-making at every turn. Visual artists like David Koloane, Tony Nkosi, Ezrom Legae, Mandla Nkosi, and Dumile Feni shaped her aesthetic sensibilities as well as her political consciousness, not to mention her growing awareness of the potential interplay between the two. The music of Dollar Brand (Abdullah Ibrahim), Miriam Makeba, Bob Dylan, and Allan Kwela wove through it all, constantly on her parents' record player at home, or live and on the turntables of the local clubs Sophia frequented.

Looking at the projection of the x-ray, Ainslie selected and traced shapes of her mother's organs, the spaces around and between them. She then used flat areas of painted color to re-vivify the shapes, allowing them to inhabit sections of stark, white, almost palpable absence. As Karen Kurczynski writes in her catalogue essay for the artist's 2011 Kingston Gallery exhibition, *Sophia Ainslie: Inside Out*:

The abdomen... is the charged site both of gestation and birth and disease and death. The tissues so intimately connected to the artist's own body come to

symbolize an enduring memory of the emotional, physical, psychic, and spiritual bond with her mother over many, many years. The colored forms depict not only fragments of organs and tissues, but also the spaces between them. They materialize loss in the form of both organic parts that are now disappeared, and spaces of absence given a new and profound physicality as vivid colors with their own sensory presence.²

The sheer vitality of these forms draws my attention to my own sensory presence in turn. I'm reminded that the abdomen is also a site of breath, particularly the deep, diaphragmatic breathing associated with mindfulness and the parasympathetic nervous system. Nineteenth-century art critic and philosopher John Ruskin believed breath to be a sort of grand unifying principle, what literary scholar Peter Garratt refers to in *Out of Breath*, an essay on respiratory aesthetics, as a "vision of distributed material vitality." For Ruskin, the work of air traces interrelational desire lines between the oxygen which we breath, that which rusts iron, and the natural iron oxide in a stone – forms of a compound that gives both blood, and earth-toned paint pigments, their vitality.³

As I stand surrounded by the ferrous reds and rich browns and ochres of so many of Ainslie's works (figures 2-4), I feel my body's respiratory agency responding to the perception of form:

Breath becomes a basis for feelings of identification with the contingent life of things... In this sense it exercises an aesthetic potential. Grasping why intricate vermilion streaks of iron oxide running through a stone are somehow distantly connected to our living bodies – to the physiological energy that beats its rhythm in our veins and lungs – is a very particular kind of aesthetic knowing. It entails an apprehension of form as living and relational, grounded on an affective body...⁴

Working out from the originary shapes, Ainslie developed intuitive linework, informed by the dual landscapes of her back-and-forth lived experience: from Johannesburg,



LEFT TO RIGHT
Figure 2
Fragment A, 2010
India ink, Flashe on paper
50 x 38 inches



Figure 3
Fragments 30, 2010
India ink, Flashe on paper
11 x 8 inches
Private Collection

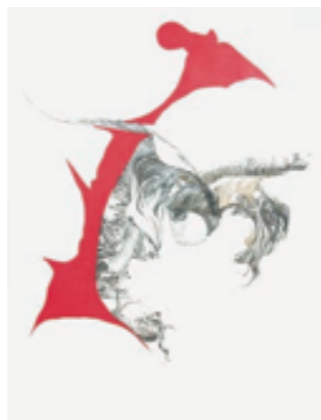
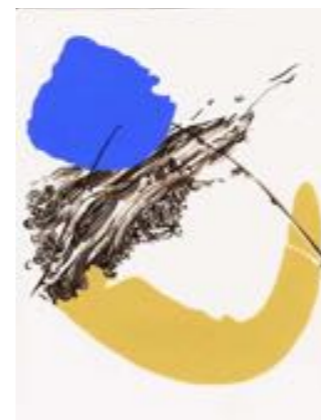


Figure 4
Fragment C, 2010
India ink, acrylic on paper
50 x 38 inches

Figure 5
Fragments 26, 2010
India ink, Flashe on paper
11 x 8 inches
Private Collection



topographical, territorial and meteorological maps; from New England, fragmentary sketches and closely-cropped photographs of logs, mushrooms, undergrowth, and decomposing matter, gathered during hikes. Her works insist on an affective body (her mother's, her own, her viewers,' the landscape's); a body composed of myriad relational vectors.

If the anchoring shapes in what would become the *Fragments* series (2009-2012) represent her mother – and they are, indeed, representational – the lines become an abstract cartography of self-in-relation to: a sequence of increasingly complex prepositional propositions that come to define form. Twisting toward, turning away, spiraling inwards, looping back, running parallel, crossing over. The picture plane operates as a “collage-like space” that:

...reflects the relationship between the body and landscape as interconnected and parallel experiences. Drawing becomes a tool where observation and imagination intersect, resulting in a relationship of connections and disconnections between inside and outside, absence and presence... mark-making and flat color.⁵

Each *Fragment* was a “step away from old territory into something new,” Ainslie recalls, recalling, too, the uncertainty and doubt attendant on this time, the battle to fully “see” when a work was complete or to recognize emergent patterns.⁶ Thus began a process of learning to trust her intuition. At first, the

tone of the shapes is quiet, surrounded by large expanses of white on small sheets of paper. After about a year, Ainslie began painting them in bolder hues that hold personal affinity, take up more space (figure 5) – the cobalt blue of her mother's chunky old glass beads, the ochre of familiar South African scenes. “It took me a while to realize,” says Ainslie, “that this process was a way to hold onto her memory and to absorb the meaning of her passing. It resulted in the development of shapes and marks that are now the grammar of my visual language.”⁷

Inhale

Music plays an important role in Ainslie's deeply embodied studio practice. It feels particularly resonant to learn that Bach's *Well Tempered Clavier* (1722) delineated her acoustic environment during this time. The collection of preludes and fugues spans all major and minor keys, moving through them with deliberation in a rising chromatic pattern until all have been represented, each different in pitch and arrangement, yet carefully calibrated within a unified whole.

In all, the *Fragments* series accrues to almost eighty works, all, crucially, portrait oriented in both format and subject. Starting at just 8 x 11 inches, they become 50 x 38, then 77 x 53 – larger than life – as Ainslie explores the alternating expansion and contraction of line and shape and affect. Subtle shifts in medium and ground also occur: from tight, controlled drawing towards the fluidity of brushed India ink, and from paper to polypropylene (a kind of recycled plastic), offering a sensuous surface that readily accepts paint and ink. Increasingly complex compositions fill the visual field, gather momentum, breathe deeply.

Exhale

In her 2013 Kingston Gallery exhibition *In Person*, which included many *Fragments* from 2009 through 2012, the artist's dynamic framework tracks from the cartographic to the choreographic. In the large-scale works, *Fragment X* and *Fragment Y* (2012), line, shape, and color weave an exuberant dance, tracing a kinesphere that exceeds the edges of



LEFT TO RIGHT
Figure 6
Installation view
Kingston Gallery
In Person – Kingston, 2013
acrylic paint on wall
(impermanent)
12 x 35 feet
Photo: Stewart Clements

Figure 7
Installation view
In Person, 2013
Kingston Gallery
LEFT
Fragment Y, 2012
Flashe, acrylic, India ink
on polypropylene
79 x 55 inches
Private Collection

RIGHT
Fragment X, 2012
Flashe, acrylic, India ink
on polypropylene
79 x 55 inches
Private Collection
Photo: Stewart Clements

the picture plane (figure 7).⁸ One can almost hear the Marabi music that Ainslie was listening to in the studio during their creation, particularly Miriam Makeba's signature 1967 hit *Pata Pata* (Touch Touch), named after a popular style of dance in Johannesburg. A keyboard style drawing on African traditional music forms, as well as American jazz and blues, Marabi emerged from urban township (informal settlement) settings in the first half of the twentieth century, and continued to have a pervasive influence on the big band and township music forms of the sixties through the eighties. It revolves around simple chords repeated in short phrases and harmonic patterns, making the rhythm easy to pick up and dance to for extended periods.

The liberatory impulse of these works opens out into the immersive, 35-foot-long temporary wall drawing, *Impermanent* (figure 6). Ainslie carefully planned the composition – “it was the first time I’d used so many parts of [my mother’s] body in one piece...” – but trained student assistants to trace outlines and fill painted shapes, to “see how much of the work [she] could give away,” let go.⁹ The shift to landscape orientation was significant, a laying to rest of the body with which Ainslie associates the portrait format:

This particular wall drawing feels like a release... I feel more free in the manner I’m exploring my mother’s body. There is... more exploration of mark making



overlaying color, of movement, and the introduction of more color.¹⁰

Inhale

Over time, Ainslie had noticed that several shapes and marks were reoccurring, articulating a personal archive that she began to document digitally for her own reference. The process of scanning each component opened up a new working methodology, and one that was particularly suited to the compression of studio time she was experiencing while juggling teaching jobs at Tufts, Northeastern, the School of the Museum of Fine Arts (now part of Tufts University), and the New England School of Arts and Design. She could now compose her painted collages digitally (easily selecting, cropping, layering, and experimenting with color relationality) from wherever she found herself working, then project them for tracing later in the studio, allowing for spontaneous reaction during the painting process.

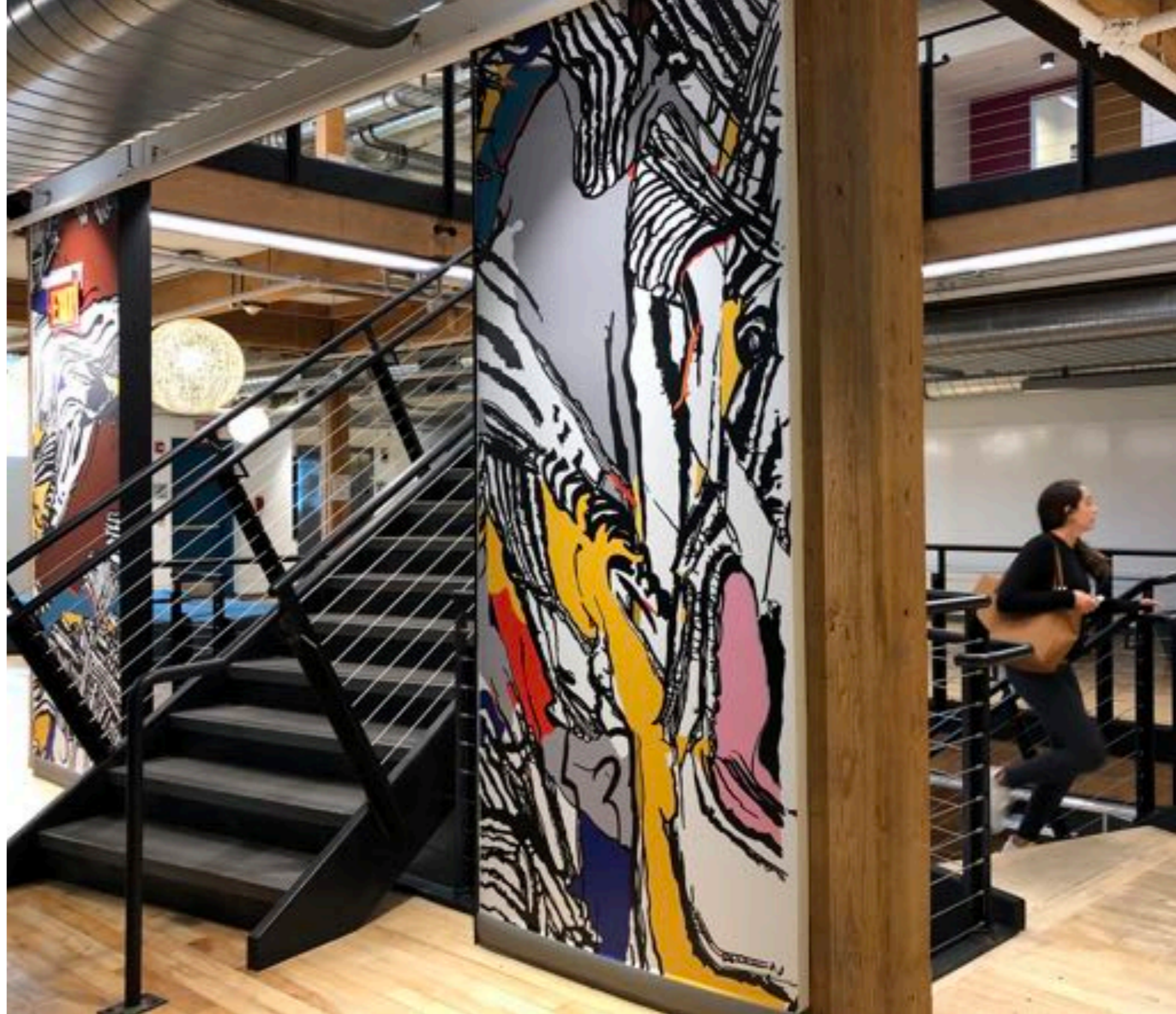
The relationship between the digital and painterly – and their formal interplay in the viewer’s reception and perception of what they are seeing – becomes an important through-line. In 2015, a commissioned wall drawing for Tufts University’s Collaborative Learning and Innovation Complex (CLIC) prompted her to explore the reverse of the digital-collage-to-painting pathway. Ainslie first visited the space with



Figure 8 and 9
In Person - 574, 2015
Collection: Tufts University

A monumental site-specific art commission for the new Collaborative Learning and Innovation Complex at 574 Boston Avenue on Tufts' main Medford campus. The seven-panel mural is the artist's largest work to date; and the first to use digital printing methods; it spans over 6,000 square feet and four stories of the building's central stairwell.

Made possible by
Dr. Joan M. Henricks and Alan Henricks
Photos: Lin Wang





LEFT TO RIGHT
 Figure 10
Untitled (Spear), 2019
 Flashe, acrylic on
 polypropylene
 52 x 52 inches
 Photo: Stewart Clements

Figure 11
Last Touch - J3, 2016
 Flashe, acrylic, India ink
 on paper
 38 x 50 inches
 Photo: Stewart Clements

Amy Schlegel (previous director of the Tufts Aidekman Gallery) when it was under construction, and recalls confronting the void that would soon contain a four story central stairwell, “being shown this hole in the floor and [asked] if I could imagine something going into it...”¹¹ Over the next year,



working alongside fabrication and installation professionals, she would develop *In Person - 574*, her largest work to date: 6000 square feet, composed of seven distinct wall areas girding the stairwell (figures 8 and 9).

Due to the nature of the space, she was unable to project digitally-composed collages onto the wall for painting by hand. Instead, she created seven original paintings, from which she then made scans. Working into the scans to smooth lines, and flatten blacks and textures towards a more graphic effect, she probed how pixels change the shape of a line and transpose the fluid and organic into the square and angular. The scans were, in turn, enlarged as vector files for vinyl printing and installation, completing the transmutation from the hand-made to the machine-made, with Ainslie’s own hand having pushed the visual effects from one to the other in the process.

Ainslie’s blurring of the boundaries between paint and print, brush and pixel, animate works such as *Last Touch-J3* (figure 11). Swathes and streaks of white transgress the composition as if in sweeping acts of cursor-led digital erasure. In other works, clear evidence of the artist’s hand surfaces through

incomplete erasure in the white spaces. The white that had once been a space of absence or containment increasingly takes on its own character: fullness, force, agency. Indeed, by her 2018 Gallery NAGA exhibition *Last Touch* (2018), the once-dominant shapes traced from her mother's x-ray no longer anchor or dominate the composition, but exist in equanimity with line and negative space. In works such as *Untitled (Spear)* (figure 10), lush lines are thickened by repeated brushwork, becoming shapes in their own right (at what point does a line become a shape, after all?), while pools of seemingly flat, opaque color "fill" reveal areas where the acrylic is slightly translucent, or its edges bleed and rise beneath a line.

Exhale

Since 2019, Ainslie has been working mostly in bold, square formats. The surface of her paintings read as cropped and magnified, abstracted, again, through imaging technologies – the camera lens and the computer screen, the microscope and telescope. *Untitled*, they nonetheless hold the artist's parenthetical projections, and quickly accrue the viewer's in turn: Could our eyes be tracing the textures of a New England wetland, crunching underfoot, observing cellular activity across a permeable membrane *Untitled (Peekaboo)* (figure 12), or reflecting the radiant energy of a supernova *Untitled (Bite)?* (figure 13) After all, on an atomic level, we agree, we're all "made of star-stuff:" the carbon, nitrogen, and oxygen in our bodies created in previous generations of stars connect us, physically and phenomenologically – through breath – to all other matter.¹²

Most recently, in Ainslie's 2020 works, the black mark has gathered momentum as the artist continues to probe the threshold at which line becomes shape. Pulsing with possibility, lines appear arterial, like rivers poised to overflow their banks as she "allows process and chance to lead [her] through the work." Charting a new course, the colorful shapes no longer index their ordinary x-ray source, but coalesce from impression, sensation, anticipation. A new attention to texture emerges, too: in *Untitled (Pink)* (2021), the pressure and patternation of the brush-in-hand rises clearly



Figure 12
Untitled (Peekaboo), 2019
Flashe, acrylic on
polypropylene
52 x 52 inches
Photo: Stewart Clements

to the surface (figure 14). "I'm in a dialogue with process and play," says Ainslie, "...the shapes of color don't come from the x-ray, they come from inside me... They feel lighter, playful... moving forward." As we discuss a decade of work drawing to a close, and, perhaps, to closure, Ainslie catches her breath and reflects:

"I'm exhaling."¹³



Figure 13
Untitled (Bite), 2019
 Flashe, acrylic
 on polypropylene
 52 x 52 inches
 Photo: Stewart Clements

Notes

1. Ainslie, Sophia, cited in "In Person - 574." Tufts University, Museum without Walls app, 2015. Script provided by the artist. An abridged version of the text and video excerpts of the artist are now available via the Museum's new Cuseum app, available at: <https://web-app.cuseum.com/?204#!/art-object/8765>.
2. Kurczynski, Karen. "Sophia Ainslie: Inside Out." *Sophia Ainslie: InsideOut*, Blurb, 2011, pp. 4-21. p. 5-6.
3. Garratt, Peter. "Out of breath : respiratory aesthetics from Ruskin to Vernon Lee." in *Reading Breath in Literature*. 2018. pp. 65-90. Palgrave studies in literature, science and medicine. p. 75.
4. *Ibid.* p. 75.
5. Ainslie, Sophia, "Artist's Statement," 2015. Unpublished manuscript provided by the artist.
6. Personal email correspondence, September 15, 2020.
7. Ainslie, Sophia, cited in "In Person - 574." Tufts University, Museum without Walls app, 2015. Script provided by the artist. An abridged version of the text and video excerpts of the artist are now available via the Museum's new Cuseum app, available at: <https://web-app.cuseum.com/?204#!/art-object/8765>.
8. "Kinesphere" is a term originated by choreographer and dance theoretician Rudolf Laban to define the "sphere around the body whose periphery can be reached by easily extended limbs from that place which is our point of support or stance." See this definition, and more on the kinesphere, in Nicolas Salazar Sutil's "Rudolf Laban and Topological Movement: A Videographic Analysis", 2013, *Space and Culture*, 16(2). pp. 173-193. p. 176. The notion of the kinesphere has been expanded by artist-choreographers such as William Forsythe, whose work explores multiple (bodily or virtual) centers, as well as decentralised kinespheres in his notation of bodies in space.
9. Personal email correspondence, September 15, 2020.
10. Ainslie, Sophia, as quoted in Davis, Lindsey, 2013, "Sophia Ainslie: 'In Person' at Kingston Gallery," *Artscope Magazine*, [online]. Available at: <https://artscopemagazine.com/2013/02/sophia-ainslie-in-person-at-kingston-gallery/> [Accessed September 12, 2020]
11. Personal email correspondence, September 15, 2020.
12. Sagan, Carl. *The Cosmic Connection: An Extraterrestrial Perspective*, Anchor Press/Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1973. The full quotation, the "star-stuff" phrase later rendered iconic in the 1980 PBS series *Cosmos: A Personal Journey*, is: "Our Sun is a second- or third-generation star. All of the rocky and metallic material we stand on, the iron in our blood, the calcium in our teeth, the carbon in our genes were produced billions of years ago in the interior of a red giant star. We are made of star-stuff." p. 189-190.
13. Personal email correspondence, January 21, 2021.



Figure 14
Untitled (Pink), 2020
Flashe, acrylic
on polypropylene
52 x 52 inches
Photo: Julia Featheringill

In the studio 2014
Collection: Meditech,
Foxborough, MA



Fragments 2009-2010



LEFT
Fragments 8, 2009
India ink, acrylic on paper
11 x 8 inches
Private Collection

RIGHT CLOCKWISE
Fragments 29, 2009
India ink, acrylic on paper
11 x 8 inches
Private Collection

Fragments 37, 2010
India ink, acrylic on paper
11 x 8 inches
Private Collection

Fragments 42, 2010
India ink, Flashe
on polypropylene
12 x 9 inches
Private Collection



Sanku Anand '09



LEFT CLOCKWISE
Fragments 28, 2010
India ink, acrylic on paper
11 x 8 inches
Private Collection

Fragments 46, 2010
Micron pen, India ink, acrylic,
Flashe on polypropylene
12 x 9 inches
Private Collection

Fragments 47, 2010
India ink, Flashe on paper
11 x 8 inches
Private Collection

RIGHT
Fragments 4, 2010
India ink, Flashe on paper
11 x 8 inches
Private Collection



Sophia Anelis '09

Spotlight on Sophia Ainslie

ArtFetch

Céline Browning

Interstitial on view at the Carol Schlosberg Alumni Gallery at the Montserrat College of Art from March 13th through April 6th, 2013.

At first glance, the work of Sophia Ainslie can seem like a force of nature: a freeze frame of a hurricane where gales of form and color swirl and twist against a blank, static background. Her work is full of motion: dripping, jabbing, and swirling lines are surrounded by islands of color. Her palette is a box of brightly colored crayons, blood red suns, all-encompassing blues and rich egg-yolk yellows standing in stark contrast to one another, separated by crisp edges.

...Her current body of work uses X-rays of her deceased mother's body and maps of Johannesburg as the starting point for a series of drawings and paintings that range in size from 8 x 9 inches to 25 feet long. While the emotional core of her research drives her visual imagery, the motion and delicacy of her work also calls to mind calligraphy and Chinese landscape painting. Ainslie's formally sophisticated visual vocabulary successfully engages in critical conversations happening in painting today, conversations foregrounded by artists such as Mark Bradford and Julie Mehretu.

...Ainslie handles these size restrictions with the spatial sensitivity of a sculptor. Smaller works on paper adorn one wall, while the other is devoted to a large wall painting. This painting represents a change in the relationship between positive and negative space established in Ainslie's earlier drawings. In previous wall paintings and smaller works, the brushstrokes seem pinned like an exotic butterfly to a vast neutrality. Sometimes, the jagged edges of her colorful shapes form ruined cityscapes that clutch the negative space as two puzzle pieces locked together. But in the Montserrat wall painting,

there is a firm sense of grounding as the shapes and lines seem caught by a gravitational pull. Ainslie's characteristic black arabesques and flat shapes of color orbit a white expanse of space, a portal out of the work pulling us towards the unrequited possibilities of the void.

The smallest works in this show are a pair of drawings, each



In Person - Montserrat, 2013
acrylic paint on wall
(impermanent)
10 x 30 feet
Beverly, MA
Photo: John Chernis

about 8 x 10 inches. The presence of the hand is evidenced by the calligraphic filigree of her inked lines. When shown in close proximity, there is a clear dialog that takes place between these small works and the larger wall piece. In the translation from small to large, Ainslie finds the difference between the beautiful and the sublime. Areas filled with delicate penmanship become broad, confident brushstrokes, while confetti-like scraps expand to Rorschach puddles of color. What is precious and jewel-like becomes explosive and forceful.

Ainslie is a prolific artist, producing significant amounts of work and showing regularly. Her work is fresh and ever evolving – definitely an artist to watch. *Interstitial* will be on view at the Carol Schlosberg Alumni Gallery at the Montserrat College of Art from March 13th through April 6th. The closing reception will be held on April 4th from 5-8pm. Ainslie's work is also on view at Northeastern University's Gallery 360. This three-person show will be on view from March 9 - April 18, 2013.

Céline Browning is an artist and writer working in Boston.



Fragment 2010-2013



LEFT TO RIGHT
Fragment J, 2010
India ink, acrylic
on polypropylene
72 x 60 inches

Fragment Ireland C, 2010
India ink, Flashe, acrylic
on polypropylene
60 x 69 inches



Fragment D, 2010
India ink,
Flashe on paper
50 x 38 inches



Fragment E, 2010
India ink, Flashe,
acrylic on paper
50 x 38 inches



In Person 5.21, 2016
India ink, Flashe, acrylic
on polypropylene
74 x 51 inches
Photo: Stewart Clements

In Person 2014-2016

“The content of her art, even as she tackles salient social issues to increase public awareness, deals in a Zen-like fashion with abstract, as well as disparate, concepts of positive vs. negative, of presence vs. absence, of movement vs. stillness, and of interchangeability and balance. This is a tireless, ongoing, private conversation she conducts with herself, absorbed, spending hours alone in her studio delineating art.”

ArtScope Magazine
March/April 2011
by Franklin Liu
In Person
Kingston Gallery
Boston, MA

Installation view
In Person, 2013
Kingston Gallery
Boston, MA
LEFT
Fragment Z, 2013
India ink, Flashe, acrylic
on polypropylene
79 x 55 inches
Private Collection
Photo: Stewart Clements





In Person 3.24, 2015
India ink, Flashe, acrylic on paper
50 x 38 inches
Collection: Fidelity Investments
Photo: Stewart Clements



In Person 3.3.6, 2016
India ink, Flashe, acrylic on paper
50 x 38 inches
Collection: Fidelity Investments
Photo: Stewart Clements



In Person B2.6, 2016
India ink, Flashe,
acrylic on paper
50 x 38 inches
Photo: Stewart Clements

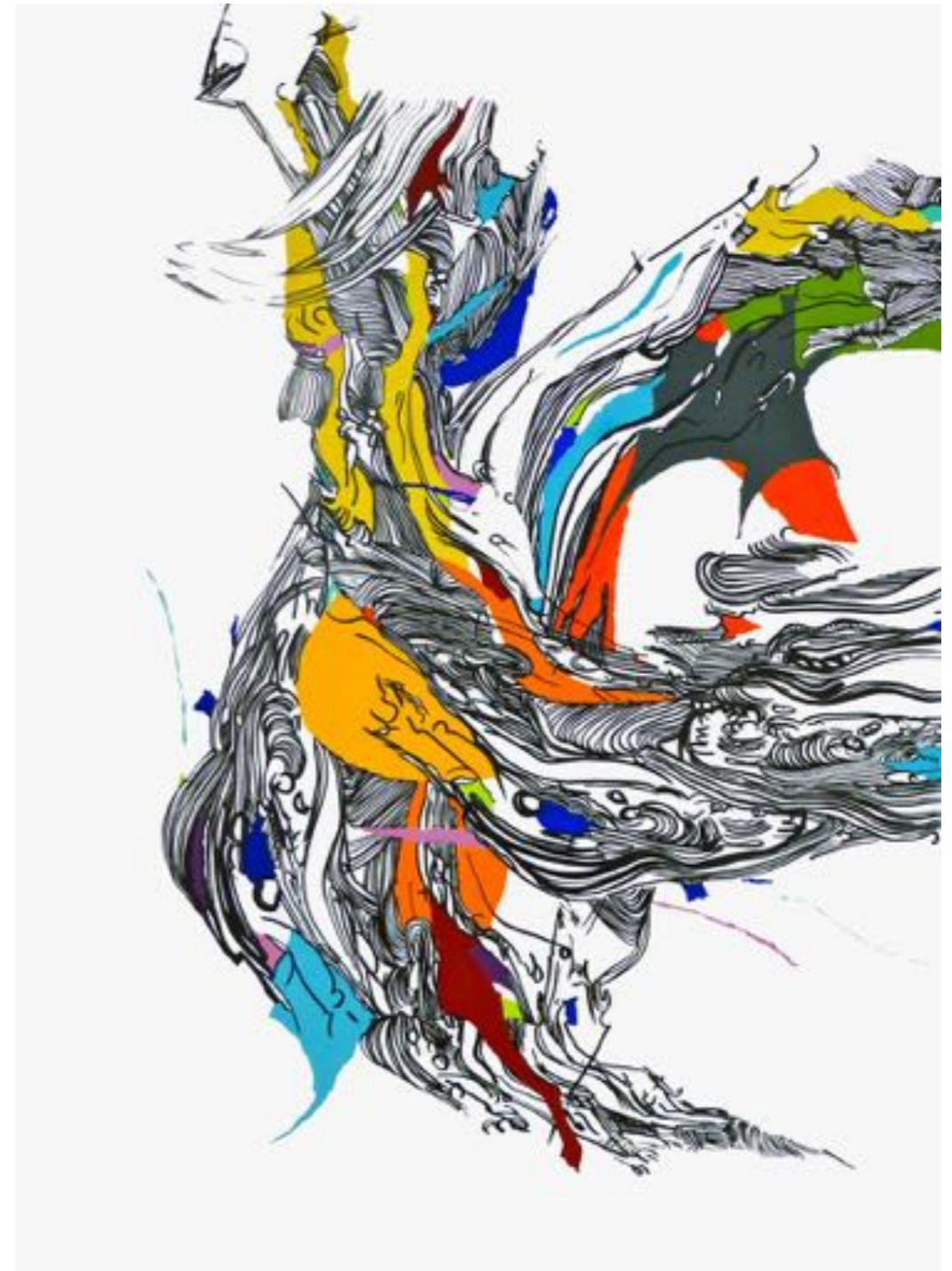


In Person C2.5, 2016
India ink, Flashe,
acrylic on paper
50 x 38 inches
Private Collection
Photo: Stewart Clements



In Person F, 2014
India ink, Flashe, acrylic
on polypropylene
76 x 53 inches
Photo: Stewart Clements

In Person High Rise, 2014
India ink, Flashe, acrylic
on polypropylene
74 x 52 inches
Private Collection
Photo: Stewart Clements





In Person Et.4, 2016
India ink, Flashe,
acrylic on paper
50 x 38 inches
Private Collection
Photo: Stewart Clements



In Person 3.3.2, 2015
India ink, Flashe,
acrylic on paper
50 x 38 inches
Collection: Fidelity Investments
Photo: Stewart Clements



In Person M, 2014
India ink, Flashe, acrylic
on polypropylene
76 x 53 inches
Private Collection
Photo: Stewart Clements

In Person Montserrat, 2014
India ink, Flashe, acrylic
on polypropylene
76 x 53 inches
Private Collection
Photo: Stewart Clements





Installation view
Last Touch, 2018
Gallery NAGA
Boston, MA





Last Touch 1.2, 2016
India ink, Flashe,
acrylic on paper
50 x 38 inches
Photo: Stewart Clements

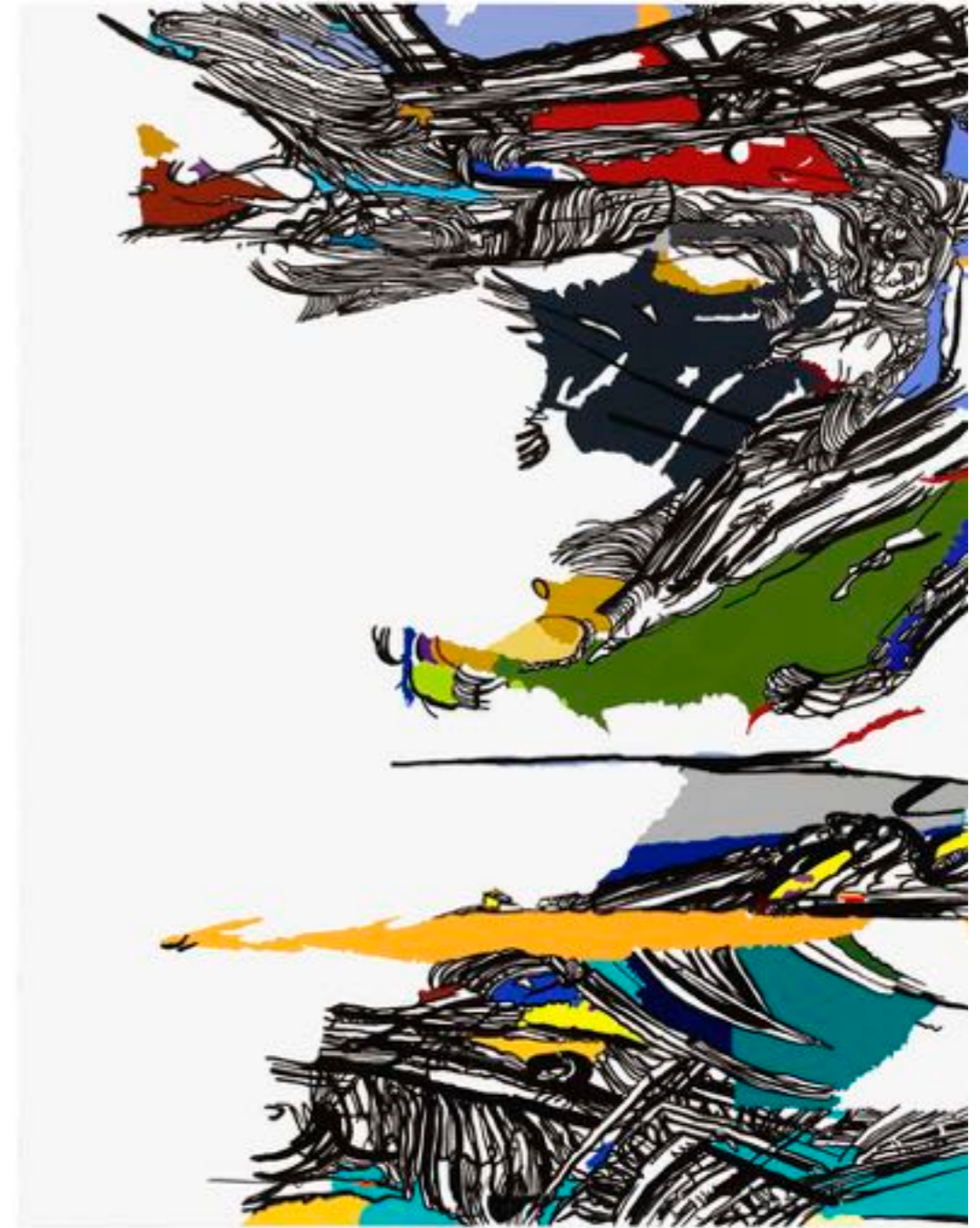
Last Touch 2016-2019

“The three paintings by Sophia Ainslie have the spill and sling of expressionist painting without the actual splatter...the over-all effect is one of spontaneity and unified action. Essentially figurative (as in figure-ground rather than human figure), these forms drape and spin into their brilliant white arenas in twists of sinew, muscle and inky braids. Color slips in and out of their black and white biology of the paintings and forms float like released ideas.”

Art New England
March/April 2016
by David Raymond
Groundswell
Museum of Art,
University of
New Hampshire,
Durham, NH



Last Touch J3.3, 2016
India ink, Flashe,
acrylic on paper
38 x 50 inches
Photo: Stewart Clements



Last Touch 5.19, 2016
India ink, Flashe,
acrylic on paper
50 x 38 inches
Private Collection
Photo: Stewart Clements



Last Touch J4, 2016
India ink, Flashe,
acrylic on paper
38 x 50 inches
Photo: Stewart Clements



Last Touch J3, 2016
India ink, Flashe,
acrylic on paper
38 x 50 inches
Photo: Stewart Clements

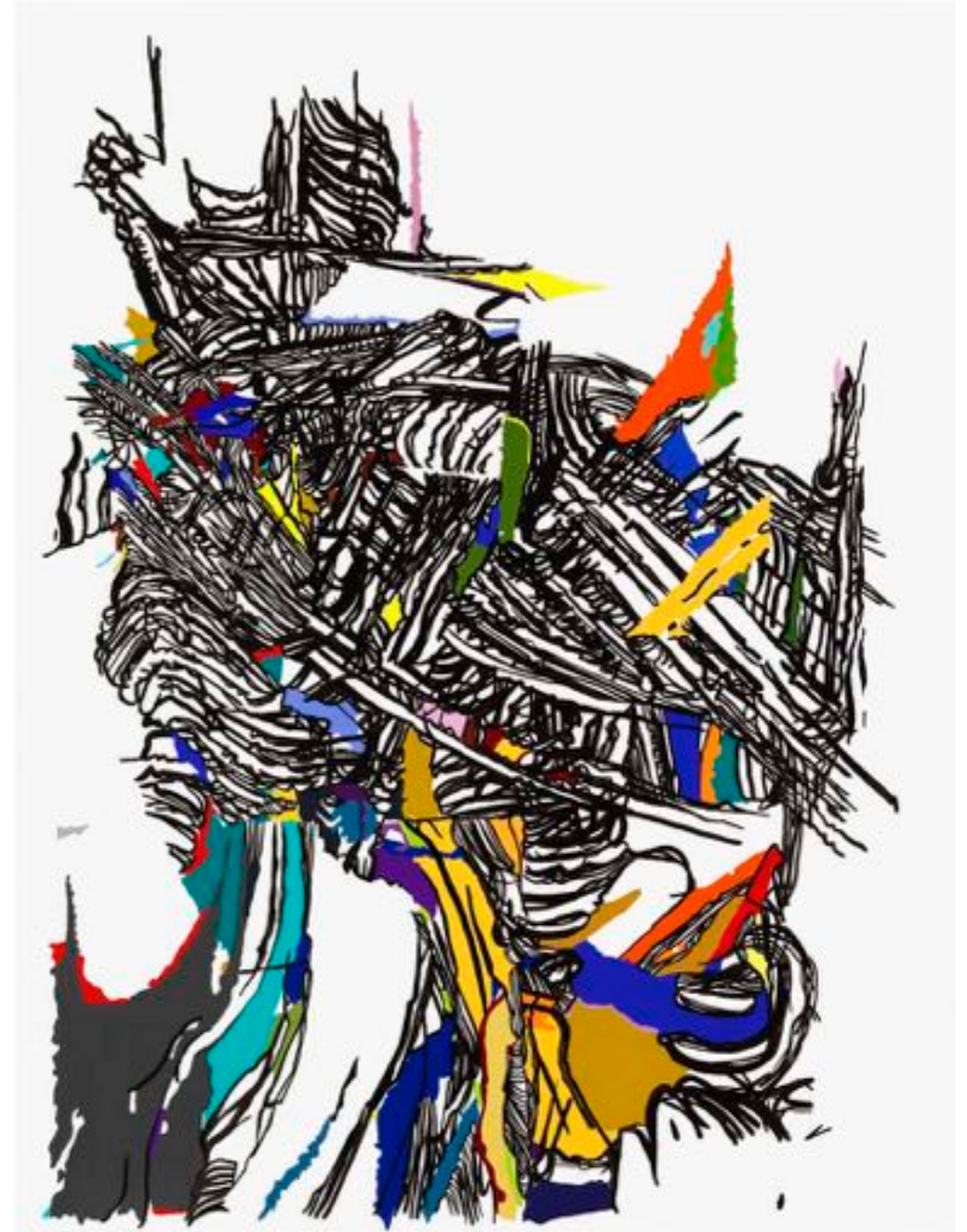


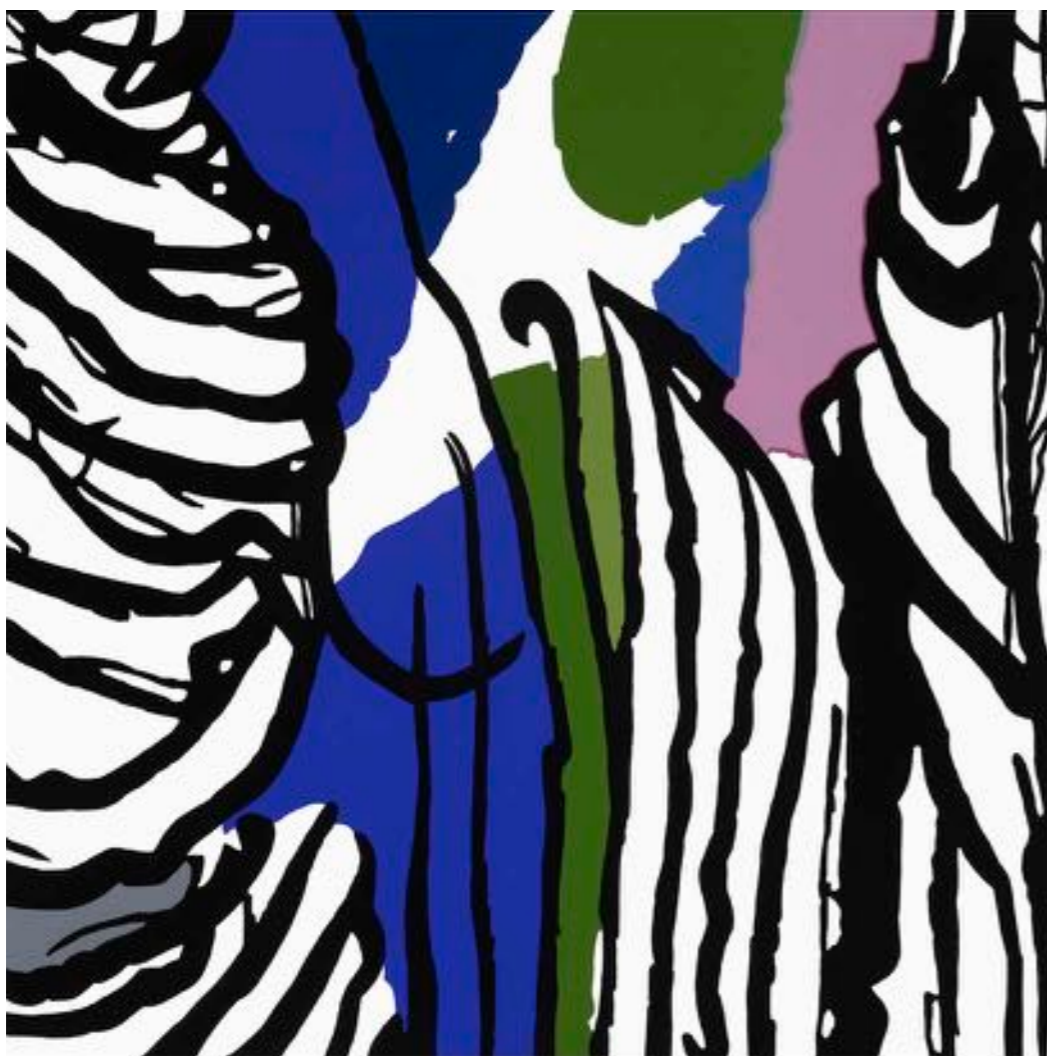
Last Touch 3,3,4, 2016
India ink, Flashe,
acrylic on paper
38 x 50 inches
Photo: Stewart Clements



Last Touch K3, 2016
India ink, Flashe,
acrylic on paper
38 x 50 inches
Private Collection
Photo: Stewart Clements

Last Touch F3.2 2016
India ink, Flashe,
acrylic on paper
50 x 38 inches
Private Collection
Photo: Stewart Clements





Untitled (Blue), 2019
India ink, Flashe, acrylic
on polypropylene
52 x 52 inches
Photo: Stewart Clements

Untitled 2019-2021

“No body is universal: every body leaves specific traces on the landscape, lives and memories of those around it. Ainslie captures this notion in her translation of singular bodily fragments into unidentifiable shapes that only appear anonymous.

The work questions the basic relationship of the contemporary body to visualizations of nature and technology. It presents the transformation of a body into memory and memory into form.”

Catalog Essay
by Karen Kurczynski
March, 2011
Inside Out
Kingston Gallery
Boston, MA



0003 *Untitled*, 2020
Flashe, acrylic on paper
22.5 x 22.5 inches
Photo: Julia Featheringill



0004 *Untitled*, 2021
Flashe, acrylic on paper
22.5 x 22.5 inches
Photo: Julia Featheringill



0005 *Untitled*, 2021
Flashe, acrylic on paper
21.5 x 22.5 inches
Photo: Julia Featheringill



0006 *Untitled*, 2021
Flashe, acrylic on paper
21.5 x 22.5 inches
Photo: Julia Featheringill



0002 *Untitled*, 2020
Flashe, acrylic on paper
22.5 x 22.5 inches
Photo: Julia Featheringill



Apple Not Included 3, 2021
Flashe, acrylic
on polypropylene
52 x 52 inches
Photo: Julia Featheringill



Apple Not Included 1, 2021
Flashe, acrylic
on polypropylene
52 x 52 inches
Photo: Julia Featheringill



Untitled (Red), 2019
Flashe, acrylic
on polypropylene
52 x 52 inches
Photo: Stewart Clements



Untitled (Shield), 2019
India ink, Flashe, acrylic
on polypropylene
52 x 52 inches
Photo: Stewart Clements

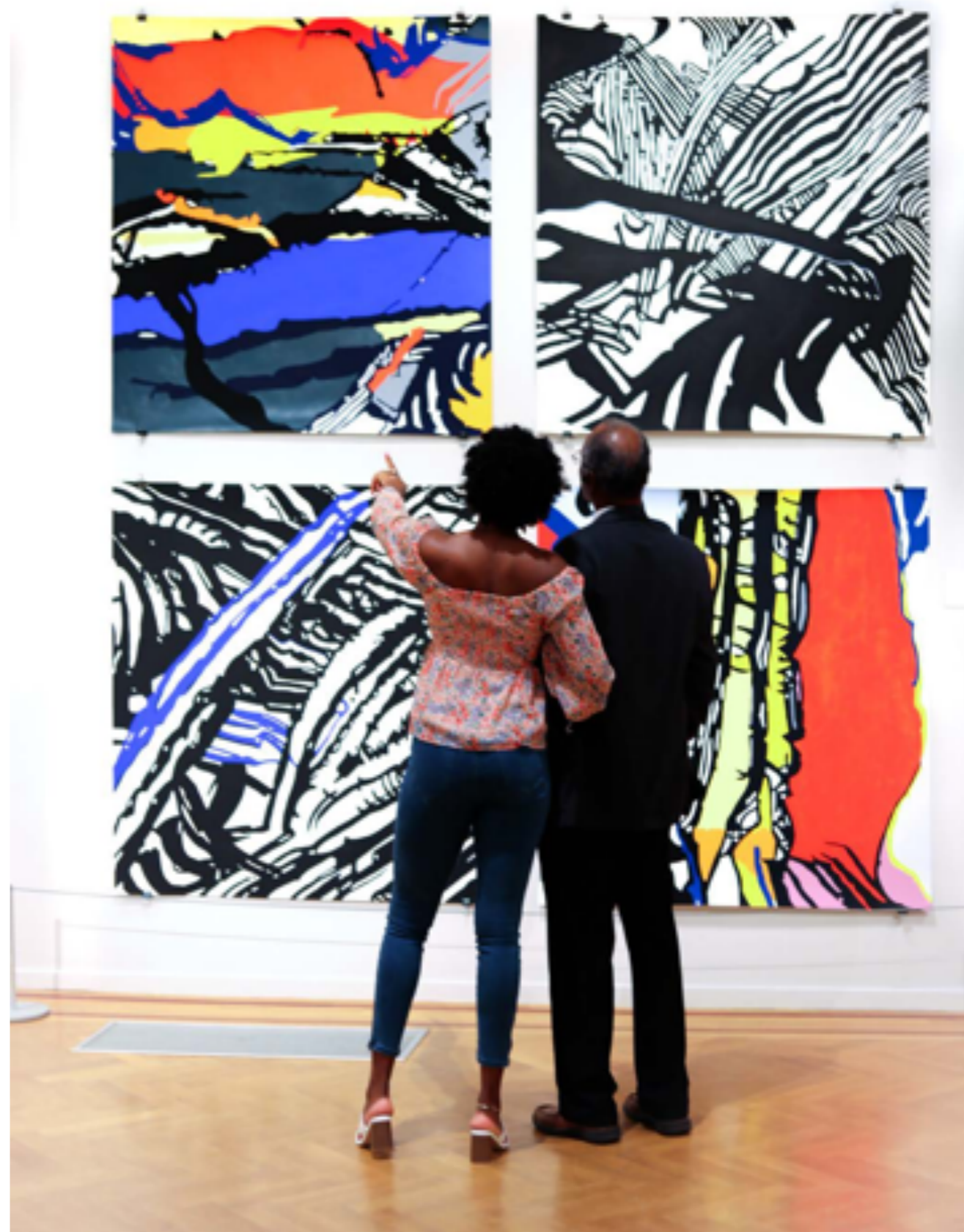


Apple Not Included 2, 2021
Flashe, acrylic
on polypropylene
52 x 52 inches
Photo: Julia Featheringill



Apple Not Included 4, 2021
Flashe, acrylic
on polypropylene
52 x 52 inches
Photo: Julia Featheringill

Vernal and daughter,
Deon Thompson, view
Apple Not Included at the
Newport Art Museum 2021
Newport, RI
Photo: Allison Thompson





0007 *Untitled*, 2020
Flashe, acrylic on paper
22.5 x 22.5 inches
Photo: Julia Featheringill

Acknowledgments

This catalogue is dedicated to the memory of the artist's mother, Fieke Ainslie, and her father, Bill Ainslie, who both continue to guide and impact her work and life in unexpected and remarkable ways.

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Untitled (Swoosh), 2019
India ink, Flashe, acrylic
on polypropylene
52 x 52 inches
Photo: Stewart Clements



Gallery NAGA
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Boston, MA 02116