



Michelle Eskola | Räjätää

# Michelle Eskola

## *Räjätää*

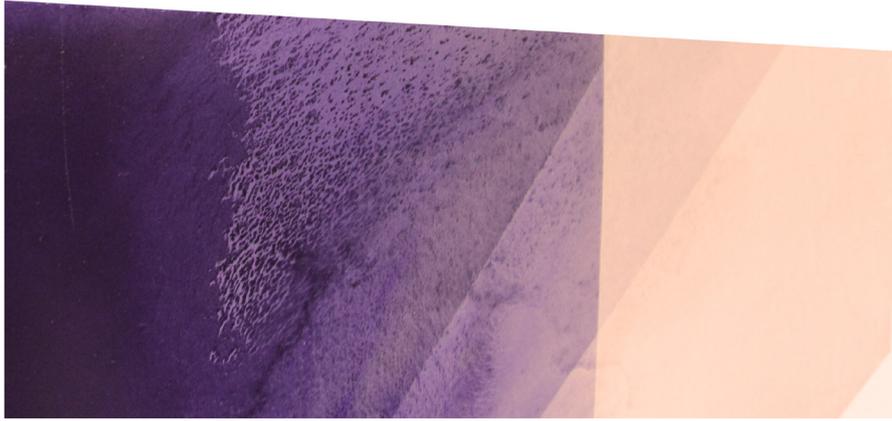
By Danielle Clej

*If one task of representation is to show us how the world looks, abstraction is free to do something else, and reflecting our sense of the world, rather than what's otherwise visible to the naked eye - whether on the part of the painter or the viewer - is key to its perpetual attraction - Bob Nickas*

Michelle Eskola creates images that explore abstraction, the formation and disintegration of form within contemporary digital culture. These images are created as series of artworks that include drawings, paintings and digital prints. They are moments captured as part of a larger, continual processes of making, of layering, editing, printing, cropping and rearranging forms in paint, photoshop and prints. The artworks seep through this process to develop complex, intense visual fields. Yet this making process is not immediately noticeable to us as viewers, it reveals itself slowly on closer inspection across series of works that rhythmically repeat particular textures, colors and shapes. These fields of indefinite, shifting spaces are difficult to describe yet so pleasurable to view, they float as spatial diffusions of mood.

Pigment as pigment, paper as paper, there is no illusion here, the works are anchored in their materials, and yet they establish a presence larger than their material form. In the images flatness and dimension often co-exist, exerting a playful push and pull. They present us with voids, a presence in absence of an image, subject or object. Here presence is not used in a spiritual, divine sense but in metaphysical terms, in the sense of examining the properties and possibilities of the material.

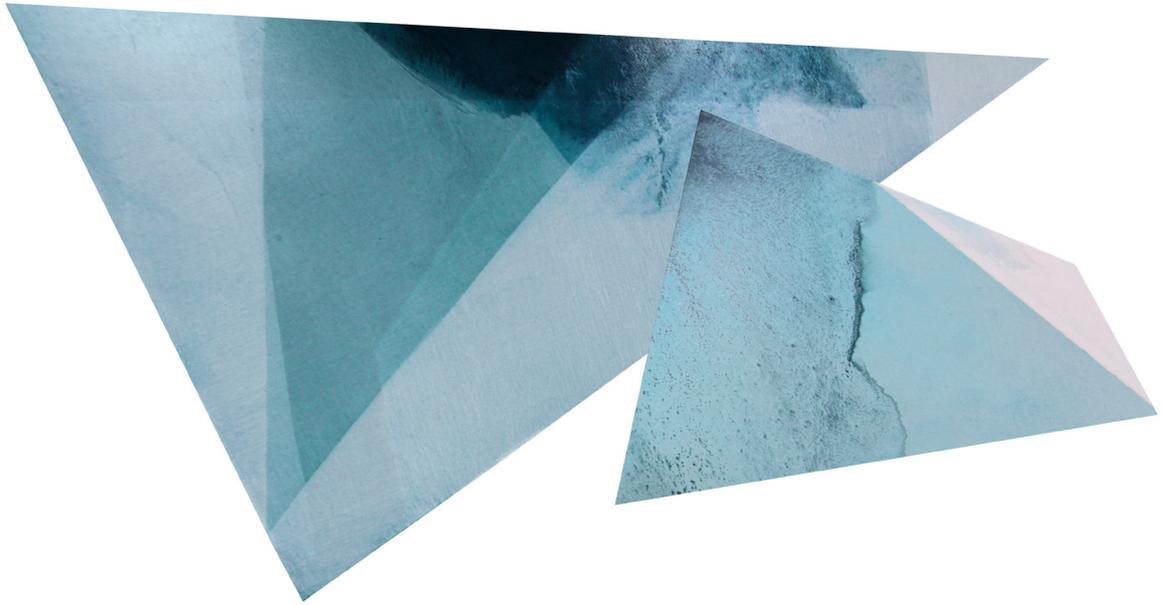
These works resist a conscious attempt at projective adaption, so we move into realm not accessible to a representative, distal mode of perception, but to an ambulatory and synesthetic one. Towards the non-spaces of airplane windows, desktop screen savers, smoke, horizons and the sun setting, and yet these examples are too grounded in objects and spaces to be useful. Beyond these non-spaces is the realm of quasi-things. Quasi-things precede a subject/object distinction in that their authority hangs in the air to resonate in the islands not the organs of the body.



An atmosphere is primarily understood in a meteorological context as the mist surrounding our planet. It is the focus of scientists who study weather phenomena and the climate. In aesthetics it is used to describe feelings and moods. Recently in design and architecture, atmosphere has developed as a tool to describe the spatial diffusion of specific moods. This discourse around atmosphere is both easy and difficult to understand, easy as it is a known phenomena, but difficult as it requires a distinctively poetic approach to perception. As architect Mark Wigley states: “atmosphere escapes the discourse about it. By definition, it lacks definition. It is precisely that which escapes analysis” (Wigley, 1998:27).

In his writings on an aesthetic atmosphere, Tonino Griffero describes an atmosphere as a space beyond measure. He asserts it cannot be rendered using traditional representation that contrasts physical and lived space, it is an obscure event, but is not unknowable. It engages feelings with physical consequences and is contagious, like stored up energy. He believes atmosphere is more a spatial state of the world than a very private psychic state. Griffero states an atmosphere is generable, but not rationally communicable; the more deeply an atmosphere is felt the less it is linguistically circumscribable (Griffero, 2014: 197). As the epiphany of impersonal external force, it pervades lived and pre-dimensional space so intensely that it is resistant to critical interpretation. It is attractive, not in spite of the fact that it renders one speechless, but because of it.

In the past few years there has been a resurgence of interest in contemporary abstract painting. Some exhibitions have suggested this interest is a reaction against technology, that it reflects a longing for objects in a digital world. In light of this idea, Eskola’s artworks are interesting for their cross-media experimentation of abstract forms. They explore image manipulation in the present era, a time in which the viral circulation of screen-based images and free filter applications have shifted the idea of the image and processes of making images. This exploration is driven by a dialogue with pigment and error and chance on real surfaces and objects, a dialogue at the heart of abstraction.



Cover | *S78d 2*, synthetic polymer on board (detail) digital composition, 55 x 55 cm

Inside Left | *S78d 1*, synthetic polymer on board (detail) digital composition, 55 x 55 cm

Back Cover | *S78d 3*, synthetic polymer on board (detail) digital composition, 55 x 55 cm

*Griffero, Tonino (2014) Atmospheres: Aesthetics of Emotional Spaces. Farnham: Ashgate.*

*Nikas, Bob (2009) Painting Abstraction: New Elements in Abstract Painting. Phaidon: London.*

*Wigley, Mark (1998) "The Architecture of Atmosphere." Daidalos 68: 18-27.*

Exhibition dates | October 14 - October 24 2014

Woolloongabba Art Gallery (Upstairs)

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