RUTH PASTINE
THE INEVITABILITY OF TRUTH
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In her latest show at Los Angeles gallery Edward Cella Art and Architecture, the Ojai, California–based artist continues to mesmerize viewers with color-saturated canvases that seem to emit light. There are no high-tech tricks here, though — these are pure paintings.

Ruth Pastine doesn’t finish paintings. Rather, as the California-based artist says of her seamless Color Field–esque abstractions, they “resolve.” Her paintings’ completion is as self-reflexive an act as if they were collections of pixels coalescing on a screen, but it would be a mistake to think of her works as somehow futuristically inspired or in pursuit of effects done better by digital technology. Her process is as analog as it comes, and squarely aimed at fixing you, the viewer, in the here and now.

To gaze at one of Pastine’s works is to enter a force field created on the surface of the canvas. If the colors are hot, the space between your eye and the painting might seem to shimmer, as if in the desert. If the colors are cool, you might find yourself leaning forward slightly, a subconscious attempt to peer into their fathoms.

In her most developed series, two hues from opposing sides of the color wheel join uneasy forces, one either cranking up or dialing down the other’s power, setting up a perceptual volley between eye and mind that doesn’t quit until you blink. An amused Pastine reports: “I’m often asked, ‘Are they lit from behind with a light source?’ They’re not, but they do have perceptual presence, and it’s not an illusion. When you experience [the paintings] in person, there’s this movement, this activity. They happen.”

When preparing for shows like her current outing at Edward Cella in Los Angeles, Pastine lines up her gessoed canvases on the walls of her skylit Ojai studio at about the height they will be hung in the gallery. She works on several pieces simultaneously, building up painstaking layers of color by hand until she has covered each canvas from edge to edge.

“Viewers imagine they’re painted with a delicate process, but they’re actually very physical and gestural, because I’m working the entirety of the surface,” Pastine explains. “The luminosity comes from being an arm’s distance from the canvas and seeing the opportunity to have it resonate.” That effect is also helped by her scrupulously smooth surfaces, which lend the works a sensuous quality that can be read as a silent riposte to the machismo of the abstract canon.
The experiential quality of the work aligns Pastine with minimalists like Dan Flavin or the California Light and Space artists. But unlike, say, James Turrell, whose practice might be described as materializing light, Pastine, an oil painter in a direct lineage from Claude Monet and Kazimir Malevich, seeks to capture light’s ultimate ineffability by dissolving it. “I think that’s my enduring awe and inquiry into the painting process,” she says. “When you paint a mark on the canvas, it’s a physical thing. And then to have it disperse into a gaseous aura... I’m just enthralled with the process and the transformation. It only happens by working months and months on these pieces, dissipating the material into the ethereal.”

Color theory has been a primary interest of Pastine’s since her days reading Michel-Eugène Chevreul and Josef Albers as an art student in her native New York. She obtained her BFA from Manhattan’s Cooper Union before shipping off to Amsterdam on an independent study grant at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie (named, of course, for the De Stijl designer who gave the world the Red Blue Chair in 1923). Upon returning she attended Hunter College for her MFA.

Practically without exception, Pastine has trod this path of inquiry for more than two decades, showing widely in Japan, New York and on the West Coast, where her incandescent abstractions find a natural home. Recently, her oeuvre has been reaching a wider audience. She had a career survey, titled “Attraction 1993 – 2013,” last year at the Lancaster Museum of Art and History, in California, and a show called “Present Tense: Paintings and Pastel Works on Paper” was mounted by the Carnegie Art Museum, in Oxnard, California, earlier this year. Those who have passed through Ernst & Young Plaza in downtown Los Angeles may recognize her monumental 2009 installation “Limitless,” which features two pairs of paintings in both of the main entrance lobbies from her “Blue Orange” and “Red Green” series.

The works on view at Edward Cella, part of a series titled “Inevitability of Truth,” embrace a strong internal architecture by introducing a new element: Superimposed shapes create frames within the six-foot-square picture plane. Now, not only do the colors vibrate, so do the spatial relationships. Pastine hit on the idea while taking a breather from painting with a series of pastels on paper, where “the limitation of this powder chalk medium, not being as fluid, was actually an opportunity to heighten these edges.” In the new works, she says, “This more charged surface has... brought this urgency into the experience for the viewer. It’s no longer a slow burn — we’re having some combustion here.”

“The way she’s projected the pictorial plane into the wall, portions of the image seem to recede, while other portions advance. The luminosity is much more present,” says Cella.

The tension of opposites, now made explicit, extends beyond her process into the philosophical content of the works. (As her abstractionist fellow-traveler Mark Rothko famously proclaimed, “There is no such thing as good painting about nothing.”) Although Pastine has abandoned referential titles and embraces a conceptual label for the paintings, she acknowledges that her method functions as a kind of metaphor for the unresolvable dialogue between presence and absence, chance and intent, and beauty and terror that fuels not only painting but also the human experience. Pastine transcends such paradoxes by embracing them, pushing her paintings ever farther into the realm of the sublime.

A version of this essay ran on September 21, 2015 in Introspective, 1stdibs.com’s weekly online magazine.
Inevitability of Truth 1: S7272 Square Diamond (Red Green/Phthalo Green), Inevitability of Truth Series, 2015
Oil on canvas on beveled stretcher, 72 × 72 in. (182.9 × 182.9 cm)
Inevitability of Truth 2-S6060 Square (Red Green/Phthalo Green), Inevitability of Truth Series, 2015
Oil on canvas on beveled stretcher, 60 × 60 in. (152.4 × 152.4 cm.)
Blue Orange 4-S7272 Square Diamond (Blue Orange/Prussian) for Malevich, Present Tense Series, 2015
Oil on canvas on beveled stretcher, 72 × 72 in. (182.9 × 182.9 cm)

Inevitability of Truth 3-S7272 Square (Blue Orange/Blue Light), Inevitability of Truth Series, 2015
Oil on canvas on beveled stretcher, 72 × 72 in. (182.9 × 182.9 cm)
Inevitability of Truth 4-S7272 Square Diamond (Blue Orange/Blue Violet), Inevitability of Truth Series, 2015
Oil on canvas on beveled stretcher, 72 × 72 in. (182.9 × 182.9 cm.)

Inevitability of Truth 5-S6060 Square (Blue Orange/Blue Violet), Inevitability of Truth Series, 2015
Oil on canvas on beveled stretcher, 60 × 60 in. (152.4 × 152.4 cm.)
Inevitability of Truth 6-S6060 Square (Blue Orange/Blue Deep), Inevitability of Truth Series, 2015
Oil on canvas on beveled stretcher, 60 x 60 in. (152.4 x 152.4 cm)
Inevitability of Truth 8-S4848 Square (Red Green/Olive Ocre), Inevitability of Truth Series, 2015
Oil on canvas on beveled stretcher, 48 × 48 in. (121.9 × 121.9 cm)

Inevitability of Truth 9-S6060 Square (Red Green/Red Light), Inevitability of Truth Series, 2015
Oil on canvas on beveled stretcher, 60 × 60 in. (152.4 × 152.4 cm)
Inevitability of Truth 7-S4848 Square (Blue Orange/Orange Deep), Inevitability of Truth Series, 2015
Oil on canvas on beveled stretcher, 48 × 48 in. (121.9 × 121.9 cm)

Inevitability of Truth 10-D6868 Diamond Square (Blue Orange/Blue Violet), Inevitability of Truth Series, 2015
Oil on canvas on beveled stretcher, 68 × 68 in. (172.7 × 172.7 cm)
RUTH PASTINE

Born in New York, NY. Lives and works in Ojai, CA

EDUCATION

1993  MFA, Hunter College of the City University of New York, NY; 1990–1993
1984  State University of New York College at Purchase, Purchase, NY; 1982–1984

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2015  The Inevitability of Truth, Edward Cella Art & Architecture, Los Angeles, CA
      Present Tense, Paintings and Pastel Works on Paper, Carnegie Art Museum, Oxnard, CA
2014  Mind’s Eye / Sense Certainty Series, Paintings and Pastel Works on Paper, Brian Gross Fine Art, San Francisco, CA
      Ruth Pastine Attraction 1993–2013, Paintings and Pastel Works on Paper, Lancaster Museum of Art & History (MOAH), Lancaster, CA
2013  Interplay, Paintings and Pastel Works on Paper, Scott White Contemporary Art, La Jolla, CA
2012  Counterpoint, Pastel Works on Paper, Edward Cella Art & Architecture, Los Angeles, CA
1998  Ray Paintings: Blue-Orange-Violet Series, Brian Gross Fine Art, San Francisco, CA
       Ray Paintings: Blue-Yellow-Violet Series, Deven Golden Fine Art, New York, NY
1996  Mergings, Brian Gross Fine Art, San Francisco, CA
       East Meets West, Peggy Phelps Gallery, Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, CA
1993  Diffusion Paintings, Times Square Gallery, Hunter College, New York, NY
1987  Arc Paintings, Haughton Gallery, Cooper Union, New York, NY

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2015  Made in California: Selections from the Frederick R. Weisman Art Foundation, Mana Wynwood, Miami, FL
       RE-OP: ‘The Responsive Eye’ Fifty Years After, David Richard Gallery, Santa Fe, NM
       San Diego Collects, Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego (MCASD), La Jolla, CA
       Minimalist Abstraction, Scott White Contemporary Art, San Diego, CA
       Is it... Monochrome? Colorfield? Or an Object?, Gallery Sonja Roesch, Houston, TX
       Unbound, Edward Cella Art & Architecture, Los Angeles, CA
       BLACK + BLUE, KM Fine Arts, Chicago, IL
       Surface to Edge, Curated by Carl F. Berg, Cypress College Art Gallery, Cypress, CA
2014  A Rotating Exhibition of Selected Artworks, Ace Gallery, Beverly Hills & Los Angeles, CA
       6018 Wilshire, Edward Cella Art & Architecture, Los Angeles, CA

2012  Imminence, Primary and Secondary Color Series, Quintenz Gallery, Aspen, CO
2011  Immaterial Matters, Primary Red Blue Series, Paintings and Pastel Works on Paper, Brian Gross Fine Art, San Francisco, CA
       Conquer Surrender: Green Orange Violet, Secondary Color Series, Peter Blake Gallery, Laguna Beach, CA
       Transcendent Boundaries, Edward Cella Art & Architecture, Santa Barbara, CA
2010  Present Fugitive, Red Green and Blue Orange Series, Gallery Sonja Roesch, Houston, TX
2009  Limitless, Red Green Series, Edward Cella Art & Architecture, Los Angeles, CA
       Phase and Shifting, Gray Series, Peter Blake Gallery, Laguna Beach, CA
2008  Convergence, Red Blue Series, Brian Gross Fine Art, San Francisco, CA
       Ever Present, Red Blue Series, Gallery Sonja Roesch, Houston, TX
2007  Black Light Paintings, Nathan Larramendy Gallery, Ojai, CA
       Ruth Pastine: Focus on the Masters (FOTM), Interview Series and Exhibition, Brooks Institute, Ventura, CA
2004  Luminesce – Red Green, Equivalence Red Green Series and Sameness and Difference Series Paintings, Nathan Larramendy Gallery, Ojai, CA
2003  Expedition: Yellow Violet Series Paintings, Double Squares, Bentley Gallery, Scottsdale, AZ
2000  Yellow Magenta Violet Paintings, Bentley Gallery, Scottsdale, AZ
       Red Green & Yellow Magenta Paintings, Haines Gallery, San Francisco, CA
       Yellow Magenta Paintings, Margaret Thatcher Projects, New York, NY
1999  New Paintings, Quint Contemporary Art, La Jolla, CA
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Black and White: Reductive and Conceptual Art, Gallery Sonja Roesch, Houston, TX</td>
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<td>Colorimetry, Lancaster Museum of Art and History (MOAH), Lancaster, CA</td>
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<td>Convergence, Marietta Patricia Leis and Ruth Pastine, Gallery Sonja Roesch, Houston, TX</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>Summer Group Exhibition, Scott White Contemporary Art, La Jolla, CA</td>
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<td>20th Anniversary Exhibition, Peter Blake Gallery, Laguna Beach, CA</td>
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<td>Spring Group Exhibition, Peter Blake Gallery, Laguna Beach, CA</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>Collectors Show, Arkansas Art Center, Little Rock, AR</td>
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<td>Selections, Edward Cella Art &amp; Architecture, Santa Barbara, CA</td>
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<td>Transcending Abstractions III: Contemporary Perspectives in Reductive Art, Peter Blake Gallery, Laguna Beach, CA</td>
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<td>Cool Calm Collected, Danese, New York, NY</td>
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<td>Summer Group Exhibition, Brian Gross Fine Art, San Francisco, CA</td>
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<td>Summer Pop, Edward Cella Art &amp; Architecture @ Ilan Dei Studio, Venice, CA</td>
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<td>Next Generation, Lancaster Museum of Art and History (MOAH), Lancaster, CA</td>
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<td>Transcending Abstraction II: Contemporary Perspectives in Reductive Art, Peter Blake Gallery, Laguna Beach, CA</td>
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<td>Accrochage 2012: Celebrating 21 years, Gallery Sonja Roesch, Houston, TX</td>
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<td>Transcending Abstraction: Contemporary Perspectives in Reductive Art, Peter Blake Gallery, Laguna Beach, CA</td>
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<td>2011</td>
<td>The Gleam in the Young Bastard’s Eye, William Turner Gallery, Santa Monica, CA</td>
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<td>California Contemporary, Scott White Contemporary Art, San Diego, CA</td>
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<td>Summer Group Show, Peter Blake Gallery, Laguna Beach, CA</td>
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<td>Art in Public Places, Peter Blake Gallery, Riviera Art Space, Newport Beach, CA</td>
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<td>Winter Group Show, Peter Blake Gallery, Laguna Beach, CA</td>
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<td>Latitude 34–40, Los Angeles incontra Napoli, Art 1307, Villa di Donato, Naples, Italy</td>
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<td>2010</td>
<td>Fresh Figures &amp; Abstraction, Scott White Contemporary Art, San Diego, CA</td>
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<td>In House, Peter Blake Gallery, Laguna Beach, CA</td>
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<td>Sulle Tracce di Luca Giordano, Mostra Internazionale d’Arte Contemporanea, Naples, Italy</td>
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<td>2009</td>
<td>Quint: Three Decades, California Center for the Arts, Escondido Museum, Escondido, CA</td>
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<td>Accrochage 2009: Gallery Sonja Roesch, Houston, TX</td>
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<td>White, Ruth Bachofner Gallery, Santa Monica, CA</td>
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<td>The Non-Objective Object, Four Abstract Painters, CSUCI Gallery, Camarillo, CA</td>
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<td>2008</td>
<td>Supermarket, Peter Blake Gallery, Laguna Beach, CA</td>
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<td>15 Years 15 Artists, Peter Blake Gallery, Laguna Beach, CA</td>
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<td>History is Now, Photographic Portraits by Donna Granata, Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Plaza, CA</td>
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<td>X Invitational, California State University Channel Islands, SCIART, Camarillo, CA</td>
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<td>Transformative, Nathan Larramendy Gallery, Ojai, CA</td>
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<td>Good Clean Fun, The Brewery Project, Los Angeles, CA</td>
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<td>Installations: Yellow Violet Paintings, Bentley Projects, Phoenix, AZ</td>
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<td>Pool Party, Nathan Larramendy Gallery, Ojai, CA</td>
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<td>1998</td>
<td>Self-Portrait, Gallery at Dieu Donne Papermill, New York, NY</td>
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<td>1998</td>
<td>10 Year Anniversary Group Show, Charlotte Jackson Fine Art, Santa Fe, New Mexico</td>
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<td>What’s On The Wall, Margaret Thatcher Projects, New York, NY</td>
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<td>Abstraction Index, Condese/Lawler Gallery, New York, NY</td>
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<td>Art Without Curves, Invitational, Phoenix, AZ</td>
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<td>Benefit Exhibition, Pat Hearn Gallery, New York, NY</td>
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<td>Drawing from Life, Stark Gallery, New York, NY</td>
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<td>On the Wall – Current Expressions in Contemporary Art, TIAA/CREF, New York, NY</td>
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<td>Presentational Painting II, Bertha &amp; Karl Leubsdorf Art Gallery, Hunter College, NY</td>
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<td>Pools of Light, Donahue/Sosinski Art, New York, NY</td>
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<td>A Large Show of Small Works, Houghton Gallery, The Cooper Union, NY, NY</td>
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<td>Formal Abstraction / New York, Ruth Bachofner Gallery, Santa Monica, CA</td>
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<td>Group Show, Ruth Bachofner Gallery, Santa Monica, CA</td>
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<td>Outreach Alumni 2, The Cooper Union, New York, NY</td>
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<td>MFA Selection, Wexler Library, Hunter College, New York, NY</td>
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## 1998-1997

- **1998**
  - **4th Annual Group Show, Ruth Bachofner Gallery, Santa Monica, CA**
  - **Gallery Artists, Deven Golden Fine Art, New York, NY**
  - **Jewel Box Project, GAGA Gallery, New York, NY**

- **1997**
  - **Inaugural Exhibition: Celebrating 23 Years, Elizabeth Leach Gallery, Portland, OR**
  - **Grand Opening Exhibition, Scott White Contemporary Art, Telluride, CO**
  - **Breathing Room, Fifth Anniversary Exhibition, Margaret Thatcher Projects, New York, NY**
  - **Signals, Bentley Gallery, Scottsdale, AZ**
  - **Terrain: Literal to Metaphysical, Scott White Contemporary Art, Telluride, CO**
  - **Crossover, Kurashiki City Art Museum, Kurashiki, Japan**
  - **Continuous Senses, Gallery Jurou, Kurashiki, Japan**

- **1996**
  - **Abstraction Index, Condese/Lawler Gallery, New York, NY**
  - **Art Without Curves, Invitational, Phoenix, AZ**
  - **Benefit Exhibition, Pat Hearn Gallery, New York, NY**
  - **Drawing from Life, Stark Gallery, New York, NY**
  - **On the Wall – Current Expressions in Contemporary Art, TIAA/CREF, New York, NY**
  - **Presentational Painting II, Bertha & Karl Leubsdorf Art Gallery, Hunter College, NY**
  - **Pools of Light, Donahue/Sosinski Art, New York, NY**

- **1995**
  - **Vulnerability, The Dahn Gallery, New York, NY**

- **1994**
  - **Outreach Alumni 2, The Cooper Union, New York, NY**

- **1993**
  - **MFA Selection, Wexler Library, Hunter College, New York, NY**

## 1998-1995

- **1998**
  - **Self-Portrait, Gallery at Dieu Donne Papermill, New York, NY**

- **1997**
  - **Abstraction Index, Condese/Lawler Gallery, New York, NY**

- **1996**
  - **Abstraction and Immanence, Hunter College, Times Square Gallery, New York, NY**

- **1995**
  - **Abstraction and Immanence, Hunter College, Times Square Gallery, New York, NY**

- **1994**
  - **Outreach Alumni 2, The Cooper Union, New York, NY**

- **1993**
  - **MFA Selection, Wexler Library, Hunter College, New York, NY**

## 1998-1993

- **1998**
  - **4th Annual Group Show, Ruth Bachofner Gallery, Santa Monica, CA**

- **1997**
  - **Inaugural Exhibition: Celebrating 23 Years, Elizabeth Leach Gallery, Portland, OR**
  - **Grand Opening Exhibition, Scott White Contemporary Art, Telluride, CO**

- **1996**
  - **Abstraction and Immanence, Hunter College, Times Square Gallery, New York, NY**

- **1995**
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- **1994**
  - **Outreach Alumni 2, The Cooper Union, New York, NY**

- **1993**
  - **MFA Selection, Wexler Library, Hunter College, New York, NY**

## 1998-1993

- **1998**
  - **Self-Portrait, Gallery at Dieu Donne Papermill, New York, NY**

- **1997**
  - **Abstraction Index, Condese/Lawler Gallery, New York, NY**

- **1996**
  - **A Large Show of Small Works, Houghton Gallery, The Cooper Union, NY, NY**

- **1995**

- **1994**
  - **Outreach Alumni 2, The Cooper Union, New York, NY**

- **1993**
  - **MFA Selection, Wexler Library, Hunter College, New York, NY**
1991  Voorhees Painting Exhibition, Times Square Gallery, Hunter College, New York, NY

1987  Annual Exhibition, Haughton Gallery, The Cooper Union, New York, NY

     Grumbacher Emerging Artists Exhibition, New York, NY

     and National Traveling Exhibition

National Arts Club Annual Art Exhibition, National Arts Club, New York, NY

1986  Annual Exhibition, Haughton Gallery, The Cooper Union, New York, NY

     Group Show, Haughton Gallery, The Cooper Union, New York, NY

1985  Annual Exhibition, Haughton Gallery, The Cooper Union, New York, NY

1984  Annual Exhibition, S.U.N.Y. Purchase, Purchase, NY

     Small Works Exhibition, S.U.N.Y. Purchase, Purchase, NY

1983  Annual Exhibition, S.U.N.Y. Purchase, Purchase, NY

1982  Honorary Group Exhibition, School Art League of New York City, NY

     Honorary Award Exhibition, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY

PUBLIC WORKS AND CORPORATE COMMISSIONS

2015  Inevitability of Truth Series, Square Diamond Painting Triptych, Installation, CIM Group Headquarters, Los Angeles, CA

2009  Limitless, Red Green and Blue Orange Series, North and South Lobby Painting Installation, Ernst & Young Plaza, Los Angeles, CA

AWARDS

2012  Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, CA

2009  Limitless, North and South Lobby Painting Installation, Ernst & Young Plaza, Los Angeles, CA

2000  Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts Grant

     The Shifting Foundation Matching Grant

1999  Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts Grant

1993  Hunter College Graduate Study Award

1992  Hunter College Graduate Study Award

     Esther Fish Perry Scholarship Award, Hunter College

1990  Harriet Rutter Eagleson Scholarship Award, Hunter College

1987  Cooper Union Independent Study Grant

     The Rietveld Akademie, Independent Study Grant, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

     Grumbacher Artist Award & National Traveling Exhibition

1984  Four Year Scholarship, The Cooper Union

1982  Alexander Medal, Merit in Art, School Art League of New York City

     Metropolitan Museum of Art Honorary Award and Exhibition
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


Hanson, Sarah P. Ruth Pastine Paints To Tease The Eye, Editor’s Pick, 1stdibs, Introspective Magazine, September 21, 2015.


Roth, David M. Ruth Pastine: Mind’s Eye / Sense Certainty Series @ Brian Gross, SquareCylinder.com, September 10, 2014.


Published on occasion of the exhibition Ruth Pastine The Inevitability of Truth
September 12 – October 17, 2015

ISBN#978-0-9800962-6-2

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Essay: Sarah P. Hanson
Edition of 100
Design: still room / Jessica Fleischmann with Dorothy Lin
Photography: Gene Ogami
Printed in the United States by Chromatic Inc., Glendale, CA.