

Lisa Denyer

Interviews Terry Greene

LD: Hello Terry, thanks so much for agreeing to do this interview with me. Your work has been an inspiration to me for a long time so it's wonderful to be able to check in and find out how your practice has been going lately.

I first became aware of your paintings around 2012, and in the following years you kindly allowed me to include your work in some exhibitions I curated. I was really drawn to the paintings because of their energy and playful, experimental nature. In what ways do you think your work has changed since then?

TG: Thank you for your kind words and for your ongoing support of my work over the years. Since 2012, my artistic journey has seen an evolution in several respects. While the energy and playfulness that you've admired in my earlier works continue to be foundational, I've delved deeper into the exploration of geometric forms and abstract concepts. This has brought a more refined and nuanced dimension to my paintings. Moreover, my experimentation has become even more deliberate, allowing me to push boundaries and discover new possibilities within my artistic practice. So, while the essence of my work remains consistent, it has evolved to encompass a richer and more layered expression.



LD: I noticed that collage and paper cut outs play a big part in your recent work. Could you say a little bit about the process you go through to create a painting, your preferred materials and what draws you to them?

TG: Reflecting on my upbringing, where I was captivated by my mother's craftsmanship as a seamstress working from home, I find it intriguing how life's experiences shape us. Drawing from those early memories, I have begun to realise that the incorporation of collage and paper cutouts into my practice, draws on parallels to the transformative process I witnessed of my mother cutting and joining fabric and making clothes.

The appeal of collage lies in its inherent flexibility, enabling me to engage in the creative process anytime, anywhere. This convenience aligns with my preference for spontaneity and adaptability in my practice. Typically, creative sessions commence after a morning walk, allowing for a period of reflection. I maintain an inventory of canvas boards and sheets of canvas, each housing works at varying stages of completion. This structured approach ensures a continuous and evolving dialogue between myself and the unfolding artwork.

The genesis of a new work often involves selecting a small thumbnail study as a starting point. Once drawn out on the canvas or paper, the material is systematically cut into individual sections where colour is applied — often to both sides. The reconstructed pieces, while not always conforming to the initial arrangement, undergo a final step of being pasted down upon a canvas board.

In terms of the creative process, I am committed to the act of drawing and allowing the paint to organically interact with the support. The initial stages involve creating a space for dialogue, and I deliberately maintain a measured distance during the application, removal, and adjustment of liquid colour. This deliberate detachment facilitates a moment-by-moment presence, fostering a dynamic interplay with the evolving artwork.

Regarding materials, I work with both canvas boards, canvas and paper. These materials serve as conduits for the unfolding dialogue within each piece. The journey of discovery within each painting, marked by nuanced decision-making and personal exploration, is what renders this artistic process deeply rewarding. In essence, my endeavours are centred around the pursuit of dialogue and discovery, where each stroke of paint opens up new possibilities and narratives.

LD: It's fascinating to hear about how your childhood has shaped you as an artist. Now that you've mentioned your mother's work as a seamstress, the visual associations are obvious. How do you make sure the work is moving forward; are you actively experimental in your daily routine in the studio?



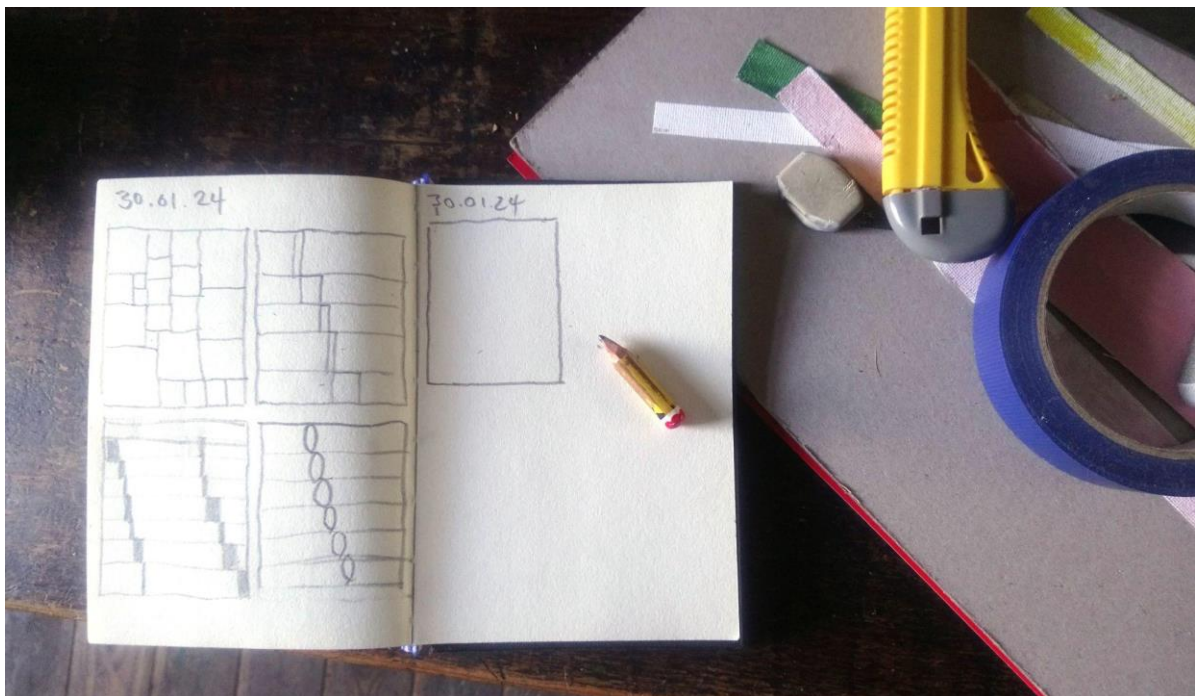
TG: Moving my work forward is a constant pursuit. In my daily routine within the studio, experimentation plays a central role. I actively seek out opportunities to challenge conventional boundaries, whether through novel techniques, unexplored colour palettes, or innovative approaches to form. This daily commitment to experimentation is essential in pushing the boundaries of my artistic language and ensuring that my work continues to evolve. It's through these experiments that I discover new facets of my creative process and maintain a sense of freshness and vitality in my art.

LD: I recently set up a little corner in my flat to be able to paint at home and it's had a really positive impact on my overall practice. I know that you have a wonderful home studio setup, and I was just wondering how important you feel it is to be able to paint every day?

TG: These days, more often than not, you'll find me working at our kitchen table. It's a shift that happened organically, and it's become a central part of my routine.

Interestingly, this change was prompted by my dog, who unfortunately could no longer climb the stairs to my studio. I couldn't leave her alone downstairs, so I adapted by setting up a more intimate and flexible workspace up at the kitchen table. This meant working exclusively on a smaller scale, no larger than 10 x 12 inches. This adjustment has had a surprisingly positive impact on my overall practice. It brought about a level of closeness and immediacy to my work that I hadn't anticipated. Working in a home environment has its own rhythm, and I find it allows for a different kind of creative flow.

While I appreciate the benefits of having a dedicated studio space, there's something special about being able to paint every day in the comfort of home. It has become an integral part of my routine, providing a consistent and accessible outlet for my explorations. So, to answer your question, I do find it important to paint regularly. The key, for me, is maintaining that consistent engagement with the creative process.



LD: It's really interesting to hear about how your practice is changing and evolving, and how where you're making the work has affected the scale in such a positive way. There's something very intimate about smaller scale work I think, and how it invites closer inspection.

I can see how your workspace at the kitchen table lends itself to collage. Having recently gone back to using paper cut outs myself to map out compositional elements, I wholeheartedly agree with what you say about it allowing for spontaneity in the process. It's very exciting when a shape moved around the surface provides an answer to a question I often didn't know I was asking.

I was wondering, how do you know when a painting is finished?

TG: The question of when a painting is finished is a deeply intuitive one for me. It's about recognizing that elusive moment when the painting achieves a sense of harmony and completeness, where every element, be it the lines, colours, or forms, contributes to the overall narrative. It's akin to a dialogue within the piece itself, where each element has found its place and purpose. I often find myself stepping back and revisiting the work, allowing it to breathe, and ensuring that it resonates with the intention I set out with. This dialogue continues until I reach that point of visual tension and autonomy and at that juncture, I consider the painting finished.

LD: You've previously mentioned your appreciation of the work of Braque, Guston, and Morandi. Have your influences changed much in recent years? Is there a particular painting you always find inspiring?

TG: My admiration for the works of Braque, Guston, and Morandi remains steadfast, as their contributions to the world of art have left an indelible mark on my creative journey. In recent years, while these influences continue to inform my artistic practice, I've also been drawn to the works of contemporary artists who explore the intersection of abstraction and geometric forms.

Their innovative approaches and reinterpretations of the genre have provided fresh perspectives that resonate with my evolving practice. As for a particular painting that always inspires me, it's challenging to pinpoint one. Instead, I find inspiration in the collective energy of the artistic community and the diverse array of expressions it offers, constantly renewing my creative spirit.

LD: Is there anything outside of painting that feeds into your practice?

TG: Absolutely, there are numerous sources outside of painting that nourish my artistic practice. Nature, for instance, with its intricate patterns and harmonious forms, often finds its way into my work. Literature and poetry, particularly those exploring abstract themes, provide intellectual stimulation and a rich source of ideas. Moreover, engaging with various forms of visual and performing arts, such as music, invigorates my creative spirit and informs

my approach to colour, rhythm, and composition. All of these external influences converge to enrich my artistic vocabulary and contribute to the multidimensional nature of my practice.



LD: I love how your recent pieces combine an ordered, geometric aesthetic but still retain a certain looseness and feeling of spontaneity. To me, there also seems to be more emphasis on repeating patterns than in previous paintings, and a minimal approach to colour. How would you describe the direction your work is going in?

TG: Thank you for your observation, which encapsulates the essence of my recent artistic explorations. In recent works, there is indeed a conscious adjoining of an ordered, geometric aesthetic with an underlying spontaneity. The emphasis on repeating patterns reflects my ongoing fascination with the hidden qualities of geometric forms.

Moreover, the minimal approach to colour serves as a deliberate choice to allow the inherent visual tension and autonomy of each piece to shine through. The direction of my work is one that seeks to strike a harmonious balance between structure and spontaneity, inviting viewers to engage with the interplay of form and freedom within the realm of abstraction. It's a journey of continued evolution and discovery within the context of geometric abstraction.

LD: Do you feel that being a painter has changed much in recent years?

TG: Over recent years, the landscape of being a painter has undergone subtle yet significant transformations. The digital age has opened up new avenues for artistic expression and

connection with a global audience. Online platforms have become invaluable tools for sharing and promoting artwork, offering artists the opportunity to engage with diverse communities. Simultaneously, the core essence of being a painter remains unaltered; the commitment to the canvas, the exploration of form and colour, and the pursuit of artistic dialogue. So, while the means of visibility and interaction may have evolved, the fundamental essence of being a painter, driven and a dedication to craft, remains steadfast.

LD: If you had to pick one, which of your own paintings would you choose as your favourite/most successful?

TG: Selecting a single favourite or most successful painting from my body of work is a challenging endeavour. Each piece embodies a unique moment of creative exploration and dialogue. What makes a painting special often varies from one viewer to another, and it can change with time and perspective. I believe that the true value of art lies in the diverse interpretations and connections it forges with those who encounter it.

LD: What keeps you coming back to painting?

TG: Painting is an enduring passion that continually beckons me. What keeps me returning to the canvas is the thrill of discovering new facets of form, colour, and expression in every move made. It's the inherent dialogue that unfolds within each piece, a conversation that is ever-evolving. It's the boundless scope for experimentation and the pursuit of visual tension and autonomy. Most importantly, it's the profound connection that art forms with viewers, sparking emotions, thoughts, and discussions. This reciprocity between the canvas and the world fuels my unwavering commitment to painting.



LD: Do you have any exhibitions/projects coming up that you're particularly excited about?

TG: I'm currently collaborating with another artist on an exciting project that has me buzzing with anticipation. We're working on a site-specific installation for an art space's 30th-anniversary exhibition. This project is a commissioned wall piece, and I'm fortunate to be partnering with the talented artist, Jean McEwan. Our creation is a unique blend of installation, collage, and infographic, designed to fill an entire wall. It's been a captivating journey, and we're actually set to install it this week. I can't wait to see how it transforms the space and engages with the audience. Working with Jean at Kala Sangam in Bradford has been a fantastic experience, and I'm truly excited about the impact our collaborative piece will have on this special exhibition.

LD: Thanks so much Terry, it's been great chatting with you. Your project with Jean McEwan sounds very exciting, I can't wait to see how it turns out!

Interview completed 29 March 2024