

Tomislav Nikolic - *Vestiges of Now*

Tomislav's intentions align closely with Camille Pissarro's when Pissarro stated that he wished to "paint the essential character of things." This kind of essentialism often gets tangled up with notions of reductionism or worse still - fundamentalism, but Nikolic's approach to painting is considerably more maximalist than minimalist, more desiring of abundance than stringency. So, when I suggest that he too is seeking to bring forth the essential character of colour and its atmosphere, he like the impressionists, wants that his paintings don't so much distil a sense of place or a moment in time, but that they offer up a new convergence of experience and sensation, one that is highly specific to painting.

One might assume that when Pissarro painted the same vista time and again in Paris that he was somehow invested in those sites. Though he was clearly drawn to them, the appeal may well have been as much about pictorial structure than climate. By returning to this location he established a pictorial constant, a certain visual scaffold around which everything else was invited to be in flux – the seasons, the light and perhaps of equal importance, his own vision and temperament.

Nikolic's commitment to the esoteric colour theories expressed in the *Seven Rays* is perhaps loosely equivalent to Pissarro's repeated locations - in that it provides a theoretical architecture for him to initiate working. In a way these ecumenical positions function as settings from which point we are invited to customize our experience, and that is what Nikolic specialises in.

He takes the cartography of a painting, most often one that has affected him emotionally and philosophically and then, instead of retracing the directions that got the artist there, Nikolic sets off on a chromatic, orienteering adventure that is shaped much less by doctrine and more by intuition. The resulting painting is less than a homage to the original, than it is an expression of allegiance.

$(1 \times 7) + (7 \times 1) = 14$. Simple math for sure but that is where the simplicity ends, for these two suites of paintings are filled with endless equations, all essentially immeasurable. In the wake of Formalism, abstract painting in particular, finds itself, not so much in uncharted waters but subject to multiple crosscurrents and uncertain tides. Despite these conditions there is a new latitude that allows a painter like Nikolic to initiate conversations with Pissarro, Bacon, even Manet, for example without resorting to the unventilated irony and satire of post-modernism.

The paintings that comprise *vestiges of now* contain much of the seasonal and capricious flux that Pissarro looked out upon and sought to absorb. Every co-ordinate of each painting, whether they be the 1 x 7 (*vestige of now: 1 - 7, 2019 - 2022*) or the 7 x 1 (*vestiges of now, 2017 - 2019*) is utterly idiosyncratic, granted a completely individuated character, so much so that one could be forgiven for thinking that Nikolic's paintings have more in common with the obligations of portraiture than the relative ubiquity of landscape.

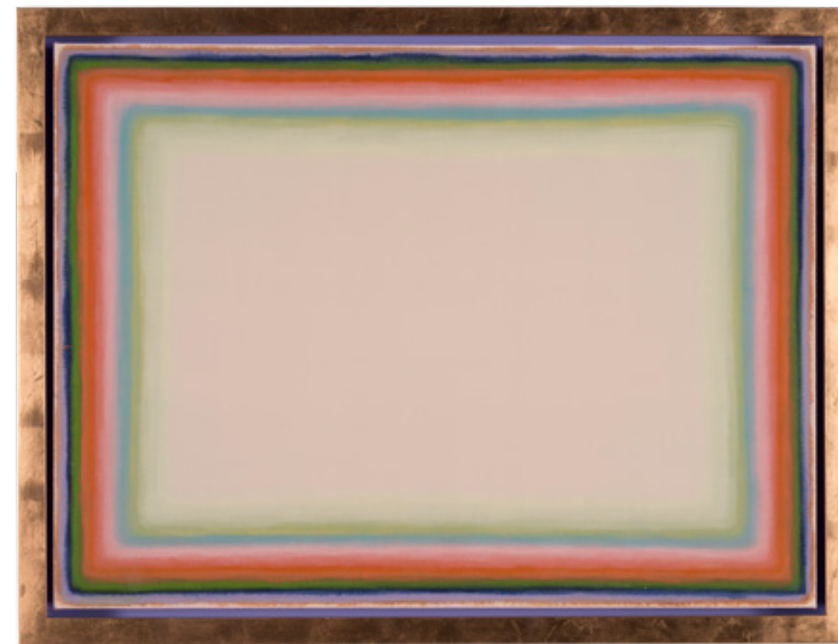


Paint the essential character of things.
Camille Pissarro

If there is a deeper narrative substrate to these exquisite paintings it is Nikolic's ambition to express a quality of self. He would seem to manoeuvre around the rowdy autobiographical overtures of expressionism, but it is worth remembering that Francis Bacon is also amongst his favorite painters. Perhaps not surprising given their irreverent, even flagrant character and most certainly his embrace of assertive colour.

Presumptuously, I can imagine Bacon supplementing Pissarro's statement that "blessed are they who see beautiful things in humble places where other people see nothing." By suggesting that beautiful things might also be found in the ugly, even in the brutal... and that if we are blessed enough to find that, then hallelujah.

- Andrew Jensen

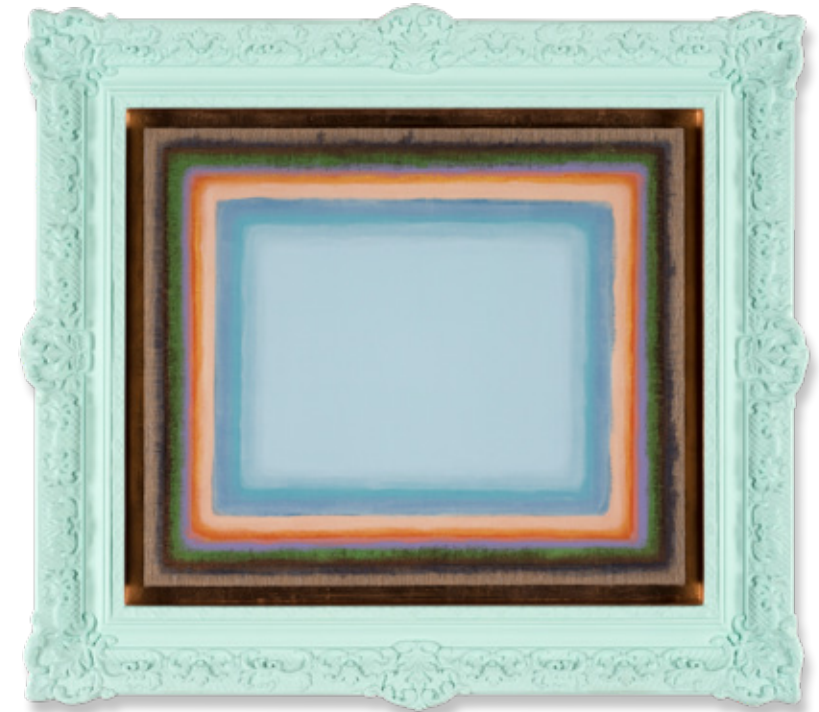


vestige of now: 1, 2019 - 2022
synthetic polymer, marble dust, 22ct rose
gold leaf on canvas and wood
68 x 88.6 x 8 cm

left. Tomislav Nikolic & Emma Fox
Fondation Beyeler, Riehen, Switzerland. 2018

*All that you touch
All that you see
All that you taste
All you feel.
All that you love
All that you hate
All you distrust
All you save.
All that you give
All that you deal
All that you buy,
beg, borrow or steal.
All you create
All you destroy
All that you do
All that you say.
All that you eat
And everyone you meet
All that you slight
And everyone you fight.
All that is now
All that is gone
All that's to come
and everything under the sun is in tune
but the sun is eclipsed by the moon.*

*There is no dark side of the moon really.
Matter of fact it's all dark.
Roger Waters, Pink Floyd*



vestige of now: 2, 2019 - 2022
synthetic polymer, marble dust, 22ct rose
gold leaf, glass, on linen, composition and wood
70.5 x 78.5 x 10.5 cm

following page. *vestige of now: 2*, (detail) 2019 - 2022



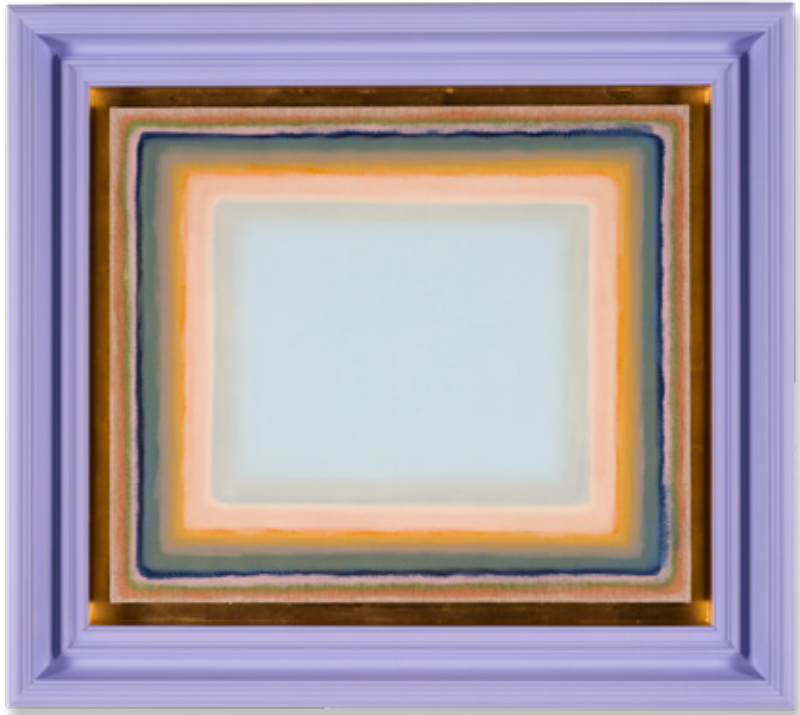


*If you let your demons go
Let them walk right out of mind
It will purify your soul
And out of the flames you will rise
Paradise (The Violet Flame Song), Erasure*



vestige of now: 3, 2019 - 2022
synthetic polymer, marble dust, on canvas and wood
73 x 92 x 4.2 cm

left. Francis Bacon
Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion
(detail, right panel) c.1944
oil on board
94 x 73.7 cm (each panel)



vestige of now: 4, 2019 - 2022
synthetic polymer, marble dust, 24ct gold
leaf, museum glass on linen and wood
66 x 73.7 x 11 cm



vestige of now: 5, 2019 - 2022
synthetic polymer, marble dust, on canvas
and wood
73 x 92 x 4.5 cm



vestige of now: 6, 2019 - 2022
synthetic polymer, marble dust, 24ct gold
leaf on linen, composition and wood
66 x 74.7 x 10.5 cm

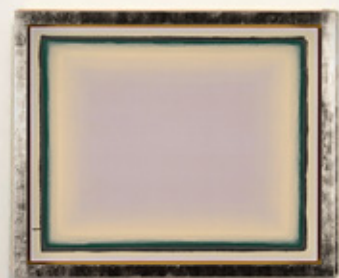


vestige of now: 7, 2019 - 2022
synthetic polymer, marble dust, 24ct gold
leaf, 22ct rose gold leaf on linen and wood
82.4 x 101.2 x 4.5 cm

following page. *vestige of now: 7*, (detail) 2019 - 2022







vestiges of now, 2017 - 2019
synthetic polymer, marble dust,
13.25ct white gold leaf, 22ct gold leaf,
conservation glass, museum glass,
on linen, canvas and wood
approximate overall dimension: 75 x 811 x 11 cm



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