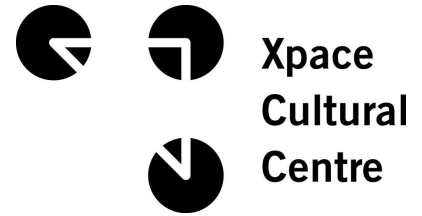


MAIN SPACE



Connective Tissue

Curated by Reiley Whelen

Ben Cromien, Jake Santos, Ciara Premi,
Laaya Tabei, and Danielle Vincent

September 13 – October 25, 2025

This exhibition, Connective Tissue, locates our current moment in contemporary painting, informed by my thesis project, Affairs. Affairs researched what precisely constitutes new wave contemporary painting, expressed through the work of emerging artists, clarified through interviews and criticism. Five painters featured in Affairs exhibit in this show. Benjamin Cromien, Jake Santos, Ciara Premi, Laaya Tabei, and Danielle Vincent uniquely position themselves in the painting world, demonstrating an approach to engaging in the new wave of contemporary art. Their works, distinctive in terms of practice, process, and visual appearance, represent courageous experimentation and aesthetic assertion. And yet, even in this diversity in content and form survives a notion of something to achieve; dynamic and attractive, unserious yet critical for our moment. They set a standard as a reference to budding aesthetics and to what has come before.

References seen in the fabrics of content, medium and scale collectively remain aesthetic choices that support a reflection of our contemporary world.

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Functioning akin to connective tissues in our bodies.

Connective tissue supports and binds other tissues, protecting existing frameworks in the body. It exists in constant reference and interaction with other systems and their processes. *Connective Tissue* addresses new visual language through shifting aesthetics and experimentation. Works become reference points to the current culture, in dialogue with one another, the medium, the subject, and the viewer. They are in constant connection and regeneration through metaphorical connective tissues. Think Venn diagrams and hyperlinks, in reference to something larger, something said before, thought up tomorrow.

Among these connective tissues, themes of irony, kitsch, mundanity, and memory surface, depicted in a representational nature.

To address the shaping of beauty and aesthetics, it is necessary to note what we are looking at. Themes are not solely depicted in their representational or abstract façade but are located within the medium and scale. A range of mediations [of medium] is exhibited, from traditional acrylic to its thinner counterpart, suitable for airbrushing, to oil and charcoal. They are painted upon micro, medium and massive canvases, those of cradled wood and stretched cotton. Medium implies themes and associations in these works; to read and feel a painting is to understand its deliberate choice in

material. There are made-up boundaries and allowances of medium, where acrylic is subservient to oil for its juvenile associations and relative ease of application, whereas oil is a bodily act and serious channel. The sizing of canvas, too, where a large canvas conveys grandeur one could dive and be lost in, to a micro piece that can be regarded as votive and intimate. *Connective Tissue* displays work that embrace contradictory materials, framed feet and flat abstracts, reinforcing the shifting plates in contemporary aesthetics and artistic choice. What remains is the feeling of some transcendence, a positioned importance upon a sliver of a moment. Washed in the paint, there is this awareness of greater sensations, how to arouse the feeling of being deeply human, seeing and feeling deeply human. Unique in content but familiar in substance, one can locate themselves in a piece and find a connection in the content, material, and artist. Visually, the work is refreshing and punching; you can feel it, you have seen it referenced on a crack in the ground or in the face of the stranger, or never seen it before ever. It is confronting and allusive, a quiet proof of exploration, not pushing the boundary but bending it conceptually.

Arranged in a flow of tight and distanced spacing, clashing with large and small canvases, *Connective Tissue* finds balance in the variation through these major contrasts. Cohesion and reference remain a curatorial focal point to create an atmosphere that not only questions what is contemporary, but to witness shifting aesthetics; the exhibition is the documentation of such. Walls become bearers for work, and arrangement pulls together contexts and connections. For Ciara Premi's large pieces, space and lighting were a focus. Her work, *Untitled Bedroom*, required the privacy of its own wall. The dark red, in contrast to the white bedspread, held a Rothko-like vision in my mind; it required the space to live alone for pondering. Conversely, Jake Santos' portraits are covert; there is a particular closeness you can feel, but a mesh lies between the subject and viewer, perhaps shielded by the artist or a figment of our imagination. Such mystique often travels in twos throughout the show,

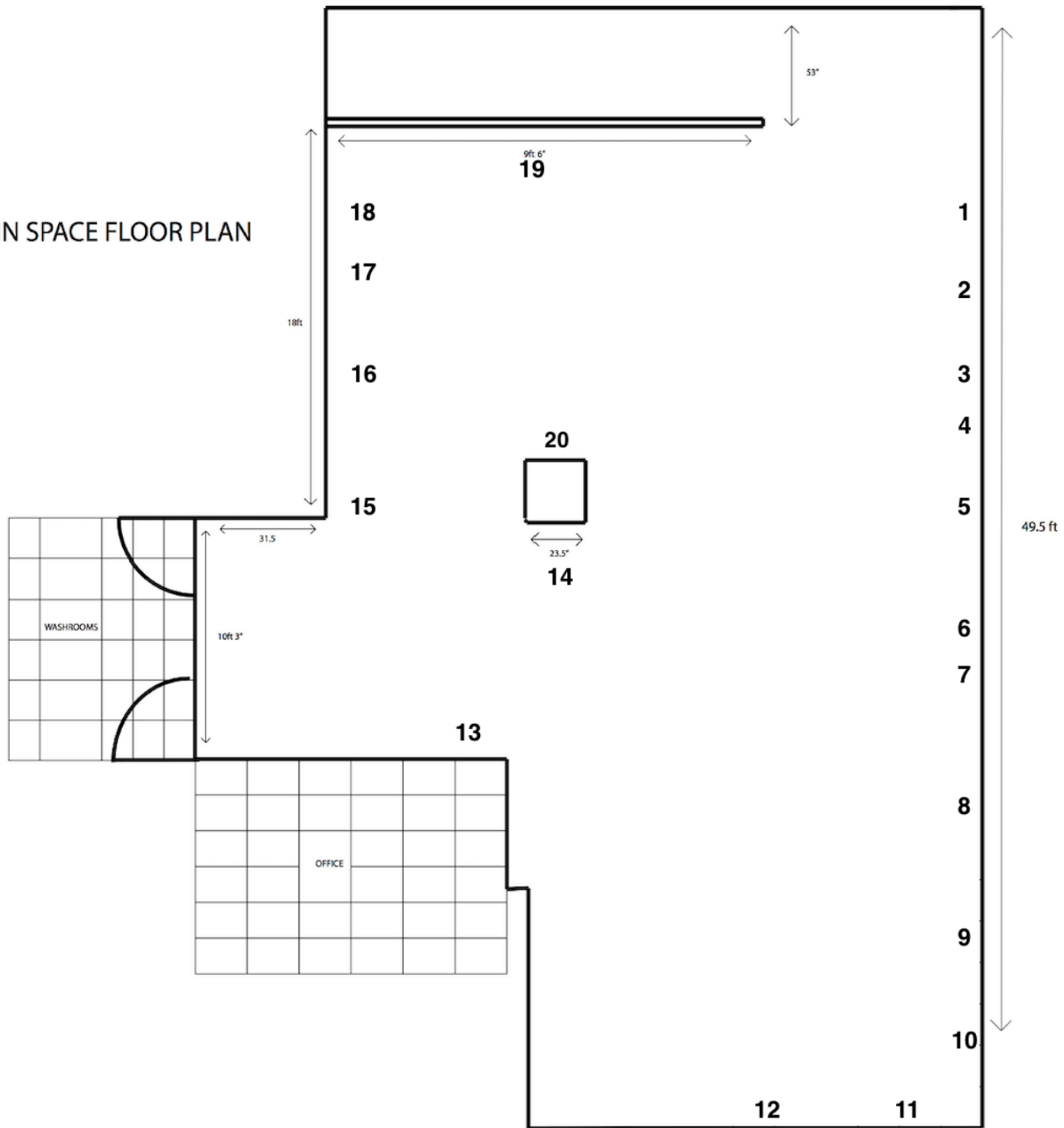
exhibiting a duality to mystery; what is seen and what is known. Laaya Tabei held a similar duality when contrasting medium to scale, painting delicately rendered oil onto micro canvases that can fit in the palm of your hand. The subjects are uncanny but lively; you will find her work close together and diffused throughout the exhibition, punctuating the space. Benjamin Cromien paints in colour-scapes; these tones comprise abstract washes and form portraits in total aesthetic expression. It is a return to abstract, contemplative pieces. His pieces, intentionally hung across each other, embody connection. Lastly, Danielle Vincent's paintings are symbols that evoke memory. Like looking back on a sliver of a moment, looking with ache, intensity or curiosity, they feel called upon, vivid and magical in detail, one could replay the very moment rendered.

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Connective Tissue is to be referential and defining. Connective tissue like relationships, material interaction, being inspired by your world; your roommate, your coworker, a found object, the letter you could never toss, a sentence half forgotten, a rancid experience, connective tissue like process and practice, systems and existing frameworks, connective tissue like beauty and aesthetics, or starving and desire.

– Reiley Whelen

MAIN SPACE FLOOR PLAN



1. *For now, but not for long*, Danielle Vincent, oil on canvas, 9" x 9", 2025
2. *By Two*, Ben Cromien, oil on canvas, 36" x 24", 2025
3. *Entwined*, Laaya Tabei, oil on wood canvas, 3" x 4", 2025
4. *Take Care*, Jake Santos, acrylic ink on wood panel, 18" x 24", 2024
5. *Forfeit*, Danielle Vincent, oil on canvas paper, 8.5" x 12.5", 2025
6. *Wishful Thinking*, Jake Santos, acrylic ink on wood panel, 2025
7. *Wanted*, Jake Santos, acrylic ink on wood panel, 2025
8. *Subside*, Danielle Vincent, oil on canvas, 16" x 24", 2025
9. *Tabletop 1*, Ciara Premi, acrylic and graphite on wood, 24" x 18", 2025
10. *Jake*, Laaya Tabei, oil on wood canvas, 3" x 4", 2024
11. *I still have hope*, Laaya Tabei, charcoal on wood panel, 4" x 6", 2025
12. *Hold on tight*, Danielle Vincent, oil on canvas 9" x 9", 2025
13. *Tabletop 2 (Inferno)*, Ciara Premi, acrylic and graphite on wood, 24" x 18", 2025
14. *Mask*, Ben Cromien, oil on wood canvas, 6" x 8", 2025
15. *How could you*, Jake Santos, acrylic on wood panel, 6" x 8", 2025
16. *Untitled*, Ben Cromien, oil on canvas, 24" x 30", 2025
17. *Partial Truths*, Laaya Tabei, oil on wood canvas, 3" x 4", 2025
18. *Charm Me Once*, Laaya Tabei, oil on wood canvas, 3" x 4", 2024
19. *Untitled Bedroom*, Ciara Premi, acrylic and graphite on canvas, 4ft x 4 ft, 2025
20. *Make it Last*, Jake Santos, acrylic on wood panel, 6" x 8", 2025