IN THIS SERIES OF PAINTINGS, Toronto artist Janet Jones probes our fascination with the future. Her process begins with taking black and white photographs of sterile public spaces, such as the lobbies of international corporations and underground passages. Each image is observed, recorded, transmitted, digitised and frozen as if projected onto a screen. The absence of brushstrokes contributes to the apparent flatness of these paintings. As psychological impressions of the urban environment, Jones’s imagery represents places that are everywhere and nowhere: the hybrid spaces of our globalised environment that collapse the experiential and the technological, near and far, real and virtual. Jones is interested in the sublime, but a new sublime, a techno-sublime. Using light and thin layers of fluorescent colour, she infiltrates these dark, cavernous spaces, turning the ominous into the illuminated while underscoring the ecstatic blur of technology, as the Curator describes it.

DaDa Delirium was curated by Stuart Reid and began its national tour at the Tom Thomson Art Gallery in Owen Sound in 2009. Tom Thomson Art Gallery, the MacLaren Art Centre, the Art Gallery of Northumberland and the McIntosh Gallery are proud to co-publish this catalogue. We are grateful to curator Stuart Reid, Nell Tenhaaf and Georgiana Uhlyarik for their eloquent and insightful contributions, to Toni Hafkenscheid for his skilful photography, Adams + Associates Design Consultants for their impeccable design, and the staff members at each of the participating galleries for their professionalism in presenting the exhibition. We are also indebted to the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council, and the cities of Owen Sound, Barrie, Cobourg and London for their sustained support of our exhibition programming and related publications.

Most especially, our appreciation is extended to Janet Jones for the opportunity to share this outstanding body of work with our audiences. Her tremendous generosity and dedication have brought this touring exhibition and publication to fruition.

Carolyn Bell Farrell, Executive Director, MacLaren Art Centre
Virginia Eichhorn, Director + Curator, Tom Thomson Art Gallery
Doreen Carter, Curator/Executive, Art Gallery of Northumberland
James Patten, Director/Chief Curator, McIntosh Gallery
Janet Jones's large paintings that comprise the exhibition DaDa Delirium are like windows that open up onto an abyss. What they depict is a fantastic, dark, mysterious space illuminated with artificial light and colour. These paintings can be read as contemporary urban nocturnes in which we glimpse flickering images of a futuristic metropolis. "The sky above the port was the color of television, tuned to a dead channel," writes William Gibson. Jones's paintings allude to the imposition of technology on the urban sphere and transmit imagery through a techno-haze, the invisible silent network of signals, satellite relays and data exchanges.

Works in both Jones's DaDa Flow and DaDa Delirium series are painted primarily in blacks, grays and silver. The dark and elegant paintings hover between abstraction and representation. There is an ambiguity in the depiction of space and form: what at once seems flat and decorative is also read as vast and monumental. Several of the DaDa Flow paintings are comprised of dark vertical thrusting shapes—a similar pictorial structure to Guido Molinari's Quantificateurs, a series of minimal abstract paintings, begun in the 1970s. Molinari's works juxtapose vertical bands of various shades of deep blue. Roald Nasgaard, in his book Abstract Painting in Canada, describes the effect of the Quantificateurs: "Viewing them is slow, intense and demanding; their chromatic values sometimes so close and subtle as to be on the edge of invisibility, their vertical divisions only marginally deviating from the plumb line."

While Molinari's juxtaposition of vertical colour bands creates a meditative abstract monochrome, Jones illuminates the upright shapes as if they were skyscrapers viewed against the night sky, pushing them towards representation. Light glows around the edges of these shapes as if from a roving searchlight, or another powerful, unseen source. Tiny coloured discs of light float in the space around, pushing each other into three-dimensional space. The canvases have a dazzling quality like a computer screen; their edges are painted with artificial fluorescent colours that cast a faint aura around the entire work. The colours that Jones uses signal a departure from the natural. She writes: "The colour glows, purposefully fake, 'real' green infected with the acidy aura of the electronic, blood red mutated into day-glow pink, the cadmium yellow of nature turned acid."
In the nineteenth century, bourgeois society gendered one of its major social divisions, and represented this as an absolute split between the public and the private, which was figured by rigidly differentiated bodies, Man and Woman. This polarization incited bourgeois women, ideologically and practically confined to the ‘inside’, private, domestic sphere, to campaign to enter the public sphere…

Griselda Pollock

The French poet and essayist Charles Baudelaire said the flâneur was a person who walks in the city in order to experience it. Baudelaire felt that the flâneur was essential to understanding, describing and porpoising the city’s life. ‘For the perfect flâneur, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite.’

In her life that is lived in big cities, Janet Jones embraces the role of flâneur. She is a keen observer and practitioner. She claims the city as her territory but is aware of constantly being observed, often by roving electronic eyes. Janet questions the impact of gender on the gaze leveled by and encountered by the flâneur. She writes: “I must say recently been written concerning the sexual politics of the gaze which privileges the man who objective and masters the woman whom he gazes upon. To escape this power dynamic, the woman, I, had to also possess the phallus or the power and he came across the face of this power I became the visible sign that I too was watching. I too could capture and possess.”

The artist/flâneur has infiltrated the male-dominated power centres located in office towers housing corporate head offices and the passageways and underground tunnels that connect these skyscrapers. She has taken photographs of these spaces that are, when open to the public, tightly controlled and monitored. These photographs capture a dystopian environment of lobbies, hallways, corridors, elevators – sterile spaces vacated with the antiseptic vision of corporate decorum. The artist then collages these photographs into new compositions that, in turn, inspire paintings.

Janet Jones first adopted this method of working in 1997 during the Women and Paint residency at the Banff Centre for the Arts. It was in 2003-2006 with the Novascotia, Everyday series that the artist opened up her trajectory on a larger scale, presenting vast panoramas that used a land-scape perspective. In the work Novascotia, Everyday, Jones paints an undulating ambiguous white form that could be a morphed view of corporate space, but could also be read as a landscape reminiscent of one of Lawren Harris’s later mountain abstractions. Intricate glazes layer over the scene like transparent glass panels, reinforcing the hyper-techno surface with varying sheens from glossy and flat to highly reflective. Small blips or marks reference the buzz of information technology, criss-crossing the surfaces like a techno-rain falling on the surreal landscape. The breadth of the work fills the viewer’s peripheral vision and presents like a filmic narrative, unfolding in three frames read from left to right.

With this series, Jones shows that photography enables the filmmaker to comment the gaze to map out a new kind of space—one claimed by the observer. Her explorations in painting infer transparent barriers and reflections into the exchange.
The entrance means under the blue ceiling never connects with outside light or outside space. This disconnects the occupant in space and time. One sees each of where one is and when it is. Time is limitless, because the light of noon and midnight are exactly the same. Space is limitless, because the artificial light obscures rather than defines its boundaries. Light is not used to define space. Walls and ceilings do not serve as reflective surfaces for light but are made absorbent and dark. Space is enveloped but limitless, because its edges are dark.—Robert Venturi in Learning from Las Vegas

On a recent trip to Las Vegas, Jones confronted the dizzying delirium brought on by the hyper-stimulating environment of moving lights and automated visual space. The paintings from the series A Las Vegas of the Mind done in 2009 move away from the vertical acres of lower-like shape seen in the DaDeRio and DaDeDelio series. The works open up a void for the viewer that is situated with artificial light emitting from mammoth disks in A Las Vegas of the Mind #4 and from seeming blank rectangular screens in A Las Vegas of the Mind #2. There is a sense of flight or soaring in both works, as if the shapes are ungrounded, no longer fixed architecture but spatial traffic in a changeable environment. A Las Vegas of the Mind #1 has an overwhelming black shape floating in the lower right of the painting that either ends or, at the least, interacts with four beams of light. This abstract shape seems to be like a legend for the larger map, perhaps a Google street view pop-up, or a secondary way of imagining the scene. In an artist statement, Jones writes: “The abstract shapes which float across the surface [are] another layer, perhaps a distilled mirroring, perhaps an intervention which further disrupts the subject centered, perspectival space that is infused with artificial light emitting from mammoth disks in A Las Vegas of the Mind #4 and from seeming blank rectangular screens in A Las Vegas of the Mind #2. ’

There is also a series of five paintings inspired by Dupont Station, a Toronto subway station on the Yonge-University Spirals line, which wanders from pure abstraction and addresses an actual place and real man-made spaces in a more expressive and painterly way. Opened in 1978, Dupont Station was designed by Burgen-Farrow Architects and features rounded edges covered in small round orange tiles. The organic soft-edged form of the “feminized” architecture intrigued Jones; even the entrances to Dupont Station are through glass “bubbles.” The organic soft-edged form of the “feminized” architecture intrigued Jones; even the entrances to Dupont Station are through glass “bubbles.”

Jones’s Dupont Station paintings are on a smaller scale than the DaDeRio and DaDeDelio series. They are wrapped around deeper interstices reenacting the notion of the painting as an object. The artist has distanced the viewer from the central image by delineating a lone shape on the canvas surface, framing the central image with white. Through the portrait-like window that is formed, one witnesses a kaleidoscopic play of reflections of light in a space that is transparent and reflective. With streams and subtle gradations of grayscales, Jones paints the dizzying panorama of light ricocheting around the dark space of the station. From the viewer’s perspective, equilibrium is lost. Images are glimpsed from above; others are layered and folded into themselves, collapsing into a reflective illusion.

All representations of anxiety or horror in the face of the void… these phantom shapes are, as researcher demands, sometimes named architecture, sometimes urban spaces; and their proliferation and mulitplication has been the object of representation in the art for more than a century. Their recent entry into virtual space has simply multiplied their potential for morphing, and obscured still further their place and role in relation to their subjects, we see from time to time Surrender to their forms—Anthony Vidler in Stuck Pig: Space, Architecture, Anxiety and Modern Culture

Jones creates paintings that address the sublime, confronting the vast expanse of space, scenes of enormous scale and indescribable magnitude. This is not the traditional notion of the sublime found in the representational landscape work of painters such as Friedrich or Turner, but, as Jones terms it, an appreciation for the technologic sublime, or the awe inspired by the destabilizing yet ecstatic blur of technology.

In his book Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition: Friedrich to Rothko, art historian Robert Rosenblum addresses the concept of the sublime, as illustrated in the works of Friedrich and he charts a trajectory through the ensuing history of painting from nineteenth century romantic painters to the twentieth century abstract expressionists and Mark Rothko. It is possible to extend Rosenblum’s arc to encompass Jones’s recent body of work. Her paintings, in their contemplation of the infinite, stir reactions in the viewer much like those one would note on a visit to The Rothko Chapel in Houston, in fact, the installation of Jones’s exhibition DaDa Delirium is intended to surround the viewer with painted space in a similar chapel-like setting or viewing chamber. Rosenblum writes: “Rothko’s pursuit of the most irreducible image pertains not only to his rejection of matter in favor of an inhabitable void that vanishes, imaginatively, between the extremes of an awesome, mysterious presence or its complete negation.” Jones sees such a paradox in her paintings—the void: borders between clarity and the infinite, emptiness that causes one to shudder.

There are aspects to the paintings in DaDa Delirium that are alien and mechanical, but they destroy the illusion: they exist. The awful absence of any expected references to humanity, Jones uses signs and symbols that remain intentionally oblivious. There are many framing devices and complex compositions in her works that could be called couturephotographic. The works are aesthetically beautiful, but they do embody anxiety and uncertainty. Jones writes: “Perhaps our anxieties are related to our inability to change our way of thinking. We still want certainty, absolutes, indescribable truths, emotionally (and intellectually) we desire the safety of empirical evidence, the idea of progress, the hope of a utopia, even if we suspected that these were only myths.”

Our collective optimism recently suffered a dramatic blow as the world watched the spectacle of two airliners crashing into the towers of the World Trade Center in 2001. Television screens around the world simultaneously broadcasted images that were stunning and awe-inspiring. After the explo- sions, the fire and the ultimate collapse of the two modernist monoliths, we were left with the void, Ground Zero, and the grief over so many deaths. Technology became a weapon that day and it revealed another aspect of our future: a new relationship with fear. According to the French philosopher
phr Jean-François Lyotard, the sublime points to the core of doubt within human reason, the inadequacy of our imagination and a reckoning with the limits of our conceptual powers. Ultimately, the sublime reveals the multiplicity and instability of the postmodern world.

In their contemplation of the techno-sublime, these paintings in *DaDa Delirium* resonate with questions. What is real? What has become of nature? Can one truly perceive the infinite? The works do not provide any concrete answers, nor do they clarify into a prescriptive vision of our future. They are revealing in their presence as objects created by the human hand, even though they hide that evidence. While comforting us with beauty and illuminating the darkness with light, they do, very eloquently, reflect back our own hopes and fears through the techno-haze of the dead channel.

**NOTES**

7. Ibid.
Janet Jones  DaDa Delirium

DaDa Flow #3, 2006
Georgiana Uhlyarik: Since 2003 you have been working on an evolving series of paintings that investigates the public spaces of the postmodern city. In time, you have come to present these works under the rubric *DaDa Delirium*. You have explored corporate lobbies and corridors in *Nowhere, Everywhere*, Las Vegas interior and exterior landscapes in *A Las Vegas of the Mind*; and the prescribed conduits of subway stations in *Dupont Station*. Can you describe your process in creating these related series of paintings? How has it changed, if at all, over time?

Janet Jones: I have always lived in the core of big cities, Montreal, Toronto and New York, walking the streets at all times of the day and forming my impressions of the world through these experiences. That is where these paintings begin. They are psychological impressions, located everywhere yet nowhere, rather than literal documentations. The Situationistes called their meanderings through Paris “drifts”. If they had a purpose it was in search of “places” that gave them a nebulous feeling of release from the spectacle of modernity. My course through the city is also uncharted but I am particularly drawn to public spaces such as bank towers, headquarters for multi-national corporations, and the subterranean passages that sinuously link the skyscrapers. This is the complex overlapping of territory and habitat, in urban space, to which my work responds. My “drifts” unconsciously lead me to the spaces of spectacle. Early in this drifting I began to photograph. My fascination with an image is primarily ignited by my ability to imagine an impressionistic narrative occurring within the nebulous space that starts/ends control and logic. Of course, this imagined occurrence is open for interpretation, remains ambiguous, happens everywhere and nowhere simultaneously.

The large paintings, *DaDa Flow* (2006) and *DaDa Delirio* (2009), are more abstract, in relation to the earlier *Nowhere Everywhere* group (2003-2004) and to the smaller paintings, both of which recall the photographic imagery more closely. I always think of Jackson Pollock, in this regard, who said that all of his paintings came from the same source but his later ones were simply more “veiled”. I have always been interested in abstract painting. I studied with Yves Gaucher and Guido Molinari at Concordia University, in Montreal during my BFA. Later, for my PhD Dissertation, New York University, which addressed Clement Greenberg and the artist/critic relationship, I interviewed Greenberg, accompanied him on studio visits and studied his art criticism very closely. I am now thankful both for what this experience taught me and for giving me the understanding of how I might reinvent abstraction as an “interested” instead of “disinterested” practice.

Georgiana Uhlyarik: Does colour create space?

Janet Jones: Colour does, of course, function as a formal element and creates varying amounts of space but I see colour as more than a “design” element. It functions on the level I see it as superficial, merely there for decoration, like a brightly coloured pillow on a couch. All colours have meaning, as does black, white, grey and the use of extreme or minimal contrast. Colours act like subtle codes and may suggest nature, culture, the body, or even a specific time period or style of art. I try to use colour in this way. In my paintings, the colour is purposely artificial: ultramarine blue, bubble gum pink, chrome yellow, or lime green.
I am interested in coloured light, the aura of neon in city streets or encircling storefront winds at night. Echoing these phenomena in the urban environment, I paint the canvas on the end surfaces of the paintings (i.e. top, bottom, left and right edges) with high key or fluorescent colours so as that the effect of the paintings extend beyond their edges, reflecting colours onto the white walls of the gallery as a solid chromatic glow. When installed in an exhibition, the paintings are hung high enough so that the viewer sees only the glimmer of colour reflected on the white walls but not the bands of colour themselves. This is particularly noticeable in the smaller paintings, such as the Support series, in which the stretcher bars are very thick causing the paintings to have an object-like presence. I work in layers. The final translucent glazes, effecting a glistening chromatic taping of spatial dimensions in the work, act as both barriers and filters, inviting the viewer to fall through the gaps or “windowed” in the imagined viewing chambers to the seemingly infinite space beyond.

Georgiana Uhlyarik: Considering your very strong interest in the digital and photography, why do you paint? Can you elaborate on the process of translation in painting, from one visual vocabulary to another?

Janet Jones: In painting I’m interested in “impurity” or what Donna Haraway calls “promiscuous intermingling,” a kind of hybridity in painting that references photography, film, real and virtual space. I’m not interested in the weariness “perfection” of the digital image that tends to reproduce spectacle or the expressionistic impastoed surfaces of the humanistic gesture but in the tension between the hand made technology and my inability to resolve these tensions from the point of view of the mimetic body of coordination in analogue experience that enables the facture or making of my work. I see painting as an ideal medium in which to comment on this tension. In my paintings, the surfaces hover somewhere between skin and screen, caressed by my touch but with no tracking of the hand/brush visible. This enables the facture or making of my work. I see painting as an ideal medium in which to comment on this tension. In my paintings, the surfaces hover somewhere between skin and screen, caressed by my touch but with no tracking of the hand/brush visible.

Georgiana Uhlyarik: Would you situate your work in the landscape tradition? Are these (imagined) landscapes? UBubercape?

Janet Jones: Yes, they are. The curator of this exhibition, Stuart Reid, thinks of them as contemporary nocturnes. In retrospect, I see them as part of what Robert Rosenblum has termed the “Northern romantic tradition” that he sees beginning with painters such as Friedrich and moving to Robinson and Newman. Rosenblum includes a fascination with the sublime and spirituality as a salient characteristic of this tradition. In my paintings, the extreme contrasts of light and dark evoke the sublime, but not simply the sublime in nature that was so interesting to Friedrich. Now, the technocublums, evidenced in marks technological achievement, are fore-grounded against the deep stellar tones of the paintings that is an ecstatic flow and speed about it that was best described by Virilio and Baudrillard and visualized in Wong Kar Wai’s film

Georgiana Uhlyarik: Your paintings are at once luscious and artificial, inviting and ominous. They oscillate between abstraction and representation. You said you are attracted to “creating a crisis” in your painting process. Can you talk about how you create and resolve, cause and maintain a built-in tension or interruption?

Janet Jones: Your first statement, that these paintings are at once luscious and artificial, inviting and ominous and their straddling of abstraction and representation, is how I would like viewers to react to these paintings as I’m very pleased that this is what they are communicating to you.

In terms of creating a crisis, as a group of work proceeds in order to cause a change I take risks, instead of repeating what I know will work. These risks inevitably result in crisis. In a sense we are self-imposed, self-created. If the risk is too great the painting usually falls too small and the work becomes boring. A painting can be too quick. By that I mean, as Philip Guston said, that one has to have a certain amount of experience in a painting. If a painting gets resolved too quickly it seems too easy and without experience, perhaps too pat or superficial. This is when a crisis is necessary to somehow create experience.

Georgiana Uhlyarik: The central notions in your work is that of the virtual or the hyper-real. Does the artificial simulacrum of virtual space, digital environments, and Las Vegas as the matrix of mediated really evoke a state of nonsensical delirium?

Janet Jones: I see the present world as delusional with Las Vegas as an extreme example of this. There is an ecstatic flow and speed about it that is best described by Virilio and Baudrillard and visualized in Wong Kar Wai’s film

Janet Jones: There are signals in the work that direct not only the gaze but the viewer’s body. How important a role does the viewer’s physicality play in your conception of the work?

Janet Jones: Given the ultimate exhibition circumstance, I would like to see these paintings enacting a space, all hung at the same height which the installation creates an urban, technocublum “viewing chamber” for the audience. The shine of the coloured transparencies, the gaps in the paintings imply barriers for the viewer, while the gaps in these layers imply viewing passageways to other and more distant spaces. I see the audience as physically positioned within this panopticonic space looking out. But, I think these paintings because of their filmed qualities also create a type of projected viewing experience, a questioning of the viewer’s position, a confrontation of the viewer’s awareness in that space, an immersion in the painting “screen.” This is a constant challenge to the apparent static physicality of the painting as object.
Particularly in the series DaDa Delirio, but in a less extreme way, In the group of paintings DaDa Flow, I am trying to create a sense of delirium, of vertigo, a sense of instability in the viewer. The small chevrons or horizontal bands of solid bright colours at the bottoms of these paintings are meant to provide a very precarious observation platform for the viewer, to position the viewer on the edge of a precipice, like the monk in Friedrich’s painting The Monk by the Sea or the spectre of Eadweard Muybridge perched on a pinnacle of rock overhanging the Grand Canyon.

I think this question about physicality is interesting because on the one hand the surfaces of my paintings are very smooth, not built-up, a denial of the heroic physicality of the gesture. However, they begin in a far more expressionistic way and then the brush strokes are “tamed”. I guess one could view this process as a concealment of my identity. However, I see the surfaces as very sensual, very much like skin. Taking this idea further, perhaps I am more interested in the viewer’s body than declaring my own through revealing my mark. However, as I paint I also evolve into a viewer.

August 2010
DaDa Delirium installation view, MacLaren Art Centre, 2010
Janet Jones  DaDa Delirium

Dupont Station #5, 2006

Nowhere, Everywhere #4, 2003-2004
OUTSIDE THE COMFORT ZONE
by Nell Tenhaaf

THE STARKLY ABSTRACT HORIZONTAL PAINTINGS that compose Janet Jones’s *Nowhere*/ *Everywhere* series of 2003-04 present themselves to me as reservoirs of sheer potential. When I first saw just a pair of these paintings in an exhibition several years ago, their glossy, artificial surfaces were the feature that most struck me. Here, in the full series of six that are shown in DaDa Delirium, their primary impact is a sense of limitless and unformed space, as if I am on an observation deck, scanning a vast emptiness that is delineated just enough to invite me in toward incipient order. The space that I occupy while observing this emptiness feels secure enough, if basically unanchored, while the atmosphere is unsettling on the other side of the shadowy thresholds between me and the outside (or inside somewhere else, if you prefer). The way into and through the paintings’ atmosphere is very subtly signposted by means of lines and fields of colored dots. For example, in *Nowhere*/ *Everywhere* #5, there are three small green circles with black eyes in the center; one such circle clips together two colored panels, one crosses the edge between a window-like shape and its background, and the third leaves the edge of the painting to link it to the wall behind. The function of this signposting is to subtly cohere elements in the works, and assign to them a place in a whole that is always in a process of reweaving itself.

Two parallel procedures coalesce in these paintings, and in all of the works in the exhibition. One is focused on destabilizing the viewer’s subjectivity—and subjectivity itself—through sense impressions of vibration, slippage, falling, even disintegration. The other makes use of layers of abstraction to generate a materialization of a world, or a space, with its own internal shape, logic and potential that are far removed from any real world source. The two procedures in tandem give access not to source signifiers, which will always be elusive in these paintings, but to a process of folding a viewer into the paintings’ reservoirs of potential, and vice versa. Clearly this process is intended by Jones, because barriers that might prevent such movement are minimized: edges carry bright colors that change them into thresholds one easily slips over; shadowy shapes like sills or valances have softened edges that one handily slides across. In the recent *DaDa Delirio* series of 2008-09 vertigo is very strong, and although the movement it instigates tends to be a side to side one, falling forward into the paintings’ spaces is not a great leap. Tellingly, Jones recounts how she was influenced by a 1978 show at the Art Gallery of Ontario, *Structures for Behaviour* (George Trakas, Robert Morris, Richard Serra), an exhibition of installations that tempted and controlled—that created behavior in the viewer.

As Jones’s exhibition title tells us, delirium is the key perceptual strategy that induces destabilization of point of view and invites new possibilities. On a 2008 trip to Las Vegas to compile source material for the *DaDa Delirio* series, Jones sought observable equivalence for her intuitions about the information-overloaded cybercity, and confirmation that those intuitions are not inventions. Among those intuitions is the sense that, no matter how informationally sophisticated it is, our out-of-control urban development is teetering on the brink. Even the remaining natural forces that touch it are a threat—forest fire, earthquake, flood, etc. Jones deliriously responds in Las Vegas to an optically driven mode of destabilization, and from that arises the delirium that suffuses the exhibition. There is irony in her translation process from source to effect, which proposes that our entire twenty-
first century surround has only a semblance of solidarity when, in reality, we have to stoick on solid ground to make such an observation. But it is irony of the most incisive and also playful kind, not only any tongue-in-cheek observation that speaks only to those in the know or the expatriate of others. These four DaDa Delirio paintings reveal in destabilizing forces, which take over the viewer’s rational or even vacuous affective thought of the paintings: the canvases of #1 and #2 both appear as consumed and transitory evanescent entities due to stark colour patches at their edges, also some dominated by light swathes that work vertically in a pulsed #2 and #4 that multicoloured at the edge, especially #3 in which the painting space is accentuated perhaps at the expense of an intensification. #4 seems to weaken out its left side through a brilliant iridescence of the leftmost space that blends with the green reflection of the painting’s edge onto the wall.

In a further manifestation of thoughtful irony, the outcome of using geometrical abstraction (including the signifying marks that float over its surface as a scaffolding within Jones’s paintings) is the opposite of functionality or control: the agency behind constructing these elements is masked, it has been submerged within an autonomous world that has its own rules and paths, as if disparate elements will find their place in it even if not necessarily so designed. Within these works then, who or what is the force that seems to work on the paintings’ spaces as one looks at them, and is asignifying presence for the parts within vibrating and shape-shifting wholes? This question permeates the viewer out. Let’s take Jones’s own description of what she puts onto the surface of these paintings: “Life has turned into ‘still life’ frozen on the screen, reflected in the glass, observed, taken us, and in the process find “possible lines of flight.”

For several decades, simulation has operated as a key trope for describing how human constructs a mirror world of empty signifiers through rampant development of media and replication of surfaces. The trope is potent in its descriptiveness, but also in its tenacity as a force of disempowerment. But Jones’s sense of abstract form saves the day in her paintings: the images don’t ever mirror the source that they are distilled from, rather they invite a kind of empty screen of pure abstraction that then allows something to emerge from it. In Jones’s paintings there is fusion of the destabilization of subjectivities on the one hand (delirium), and the distillation of impersonal networks of forces and relations in cities (determination) on the other. In a sense we are empowered through this dual process to start fresh, and by engaging in an act of creative experimentation, to take a stand against runaway signifiers. Jones calls for a destabilization of subjectivity so as to break out of the abstractions that we have locked ourselves into, fixed structures, routines, hierarchies. As nonorganic life with its potential for emergent materializations is in tension with already fixed materializations, so the potential for new subjectivities is in tension with already fixed perceptions, associations and expectations that the viewer brings in with himself.

Opening up, exposing and finding potential in a negative, hierarchical stratification that we are all familiar with. As backdrop for the turn-of-the-century world, she recreates how she distills elements from the cityscapes as she experienced them: lights, haze, conceits, and significantly, a point of view. She describes how she is turned into a particular kind of subject when moving about in the public spaces of cities, under the eye of surveillance cameras and at the corner of her gender with which she watched, as well as controlled by how the spaces are constructed. In Nowhere/Everywhere, the broad horizontal dimension puts the viewer inside the parapet effect that is akin to the disorientation experienced within elevated urban streets and bridges, while in the DaDaDelirio series, tall vertical shapes close in on themselves and lock the viewer out. Let’s take Jones’s own description of what she puts onto the surface of these canvases: “Life has turned into ‘still life’ frozen on the screen, reflected in the glass, observed, recorded, transmitted, digested.” I see in the negative face of the flux of potentials in Daukaus’s oeuvre, life is the ground that says to the potential for intense matter-energy states, knots that are turned to work zero in the global state of other potential (“the absolute minimum value of intensity, bringing any production of structured form to a halt”), higher for emerging materializations and way up for highly stratified abstractions. Jones’s paintings don’t picture what a state of high intensity matter-energy might be. Not only are they abstractions, and so they don’t come to landscape at all, but they are dominated by the viewer’s perception into a state that parallels the effect of particular matter-energy information. The urban worlds that are distilled into the paintings are accentuated perhaps at the expense of an intensification. #4 seems to weaken out its left side through a brilliant iridescence of the leftmost space that blends with the green reflection of the painting’s edge onto the wall.

Marcia DaLanda derives the metaphor of knots for controlling the intensity of various matter-energy states, knots that are turned to zero in the global state of other potential (“the absolute minimum value of intensity, bringing any production of structured form to a halt”), higher for emerging materializations and way up for highly stratified abstractions. Jones’s paintings don’t picture what a state of high intensity matter-energy might be. Not only are they abstractions, and so they don’t come to landscape at all, but they are dominated by the viewer’s perception into a state that parallels the effect of particular matter-energy information. The urban worlds that are distilled into the paintings are accentuated perhaps at the expense of an intensification. #4 seems to weaken out its left side through a brilliant iridescence of the leftmost space that blends with the green reflection of the painting’s edge onto the wall.

Janet Jones  DaDa Delirium
as one and multiple, the subject and the world, interior and exterior, etc. I too seek systems, not necessarily mathematical ones, but systems nonetheless that add to my understanding of the world and my place in it. Is the abstracted emptiness of one of Jones’s images like the empty set that Badiou invokes, which then could be understood not just as pure potential, but also as a “motionless intricacy” that is separated off from the continuous flow of life—an action of truth? Metaphorically, perhaps. I bring this up with consideration for voice, empowerment, action. Badiou wants to separate, or oppose, “the operations of life and the actions of truth.” He finds Deleuze and the philosophical tradition he aligns himself with to be as very interested in the immanence of the events of life and the world that there is no place for either voice or action.

Jones shares these concerns, in her insistence on both optimism and a mutuality of treating people as the recipients of questions posed to them, for their contemplation. She situates viewers without picturing for them, which would just lead to a narrowly symbolic or associative reading of her work, and also to the subject-addresses as the same as any other person, rather than individuated. These paintings call forth one’s own interior/exterior transfer process through the intensity of Jones’s. Put otherwise, if we can’t sort through the limitless regression of simulacra in today’s world, the simulations of simulations of simulations, because we can’t restore any kind of authentic source, then we can only take the simulacrum into ourselves and put ourselves into it so as to move toward a less dehumanizing territory. Jones’s paintings enable us to experience that folding/unfolding process.

NOTES

3 Ibid., p. 275. “Judge yourself on a stratum; experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous center or a first potential movement of deterritorialization, possible lines of flight…”
5 Ibid., p. 63.
WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

A Las Vegas of the Mind #1, 2009
oil and acrylic on canvas, 239 cm x 137 cm
Collection of the MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina, Saskatchewan

A Las Vegas of the Mind #2, 2009
oil and acrylic on canvas, 239 cm x 137 cm
Collection of the MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina, Saskatchewan

Dupont Station #1, 2009
oil on canvas, 46 cm x 46 cm
Collection Art Gallery of Northumberland, Cobourg, Ontario

Dupont Station #2, 2009
oil on canvas, 46 cm x 46 cm
Collection Art Gallery of Northumberland, Cobourg, Ontario

Dupont Station #3, 2009
oil on canvas, 46 cm x 46 cm
Collection Art Gallery of Northumberland, Cobourg, Ontario

Dupont Station #4, 2009
oil on canvas, 46 cm x 46 cm
Collection Art Gallery of Northumberland, Cobourg, Ontario

Dupont Station #5, 2009
oil on canvas, 46 cm x 46 cm
Collection Art Gallery of Northumberland, Cobourg, Ontario

Solo #1, 2006
oil on canvas, 38 cm x 38 cm

Solo #2, 2006
oil on canvas, 38 cm x 38 cm

Solo #3, 2006
oil on canvas, 38 cm x 38 cm

Solo #4, 2006
oil on canvas, 38 cm x 38 cm

Solo #5, 2007
oil on canvas, 28 cm x 28 cm

Solo #6, 2007
oil on canvas, 28 cm x 28 cm

Solo #7, 2007
oil on canvas, 28 cm x 28 cm

Projections #1, 2010
oil on canvas, 46 cm x 46 cm
Collection Art Gallery of Northumberland, Cobourg, Ontario

Projections #2, 2010
oil on canvas, 46 cm x 46 cm
Collection Art Gallery of Northumberland, Cobourg, Ontario

Projections #3, 2010
oil on canvas, 46 cm x 46 cm
Collection Art Gallery of Northumberland, Cobourg, Ontario

Projections #4, 2010
oil on canvas, 46 cm x 46 cm
Collection Art Gallery of Northumberland, Cobourg, Ontario
Janet Jones

Janet Jones is a Toronto-based painter whose work investigates the spaces of cyber-cities in relation to women in the urban environment and the techno-sublime. Jones’s paintings have been exhibited across Canada, in New York, Los Angeles, England, Germany and France. She received her MFA from York University, Toronto, and her PhD from New York University in the area of art theory and criticism. Her dissertation focused on the art critic Dieter Greenberg and his relationship with artists. She has been a visiting artist and given papers in painting internationally, in France, England, Russia, China, Cuba, the Netherlands and Germany. Janet Jones is an Associate Professor in the Department of Visual Arts, York University, Toronto, where she has been Director of the Graduate Program and Chair of the Department of Visual Arts.

Stuart Reid

Born in Dundee, Scotland, Stuart Reid immigrated to Canada in 1967. He studied art and art history at York University in Toronto, Ontario. Reid has held curatorial positions at The Craft Gallery of the Ontario Crafts Council, Toronto and the Art Gallery in Mississauga, both in Ontario. He was Curator and Curatorial Director of the Tom Thomson Art Gallery in Owen Sound, Ontario from 2001 to 2009. Reid is an alumnus of the J. Paul Getty Trust Museum Leadership Institute (2000-2002) at the University of California, Los Angeles. Reid is the author of over fifty exhibition catalogues and several books including The Art of Tim Jocelyn, Cities: John Hartman and Celebrating Life: The Art of Doris McCarthy. While Director/Curator at the Tom Thomson Art Gallery he oversaw the Gallery’s award-winning rebranding project and website launch (tomthomson.org). He is an elected member of ART International Curators of Contemporary Art Network, Luxembourg. He is a former President of the Ontario Association of Art Galleries. Reid is currently the Executive Director of the MacKenzie Art Gallery in Regina, Saskatchewan.

Nell Tenhaaf

Nell Tenhaaf is an electronic media artist and writer. She has exhibited across Canada, in the U.S. and in Europe. A survey exhibition of fifteen years of her work entitled Fit/Unfit opened in April 2003 at the Robert McLaughlin Gallery in Oshawa, and traveled to several Canadian venues including the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, Ottawa and the Art Gallery of Hamilton. Tenhaaf’s works created between 1989 and the mid-1990s were aimed at deconstructing the dominance in mainstream biological and biotechnology discourse of DNA as the “master molecule.” Later works attempt to represent some of the complex dynamics of life and invites the viewer as one element in a continuous flux, especially through interactivity. Tenhaaf has published numerous reviews and articles that address the cultural implications of biotechnologies and of Artificial Life. She is an Associate Professor in the Department of Visual Arts of York University and is represented in Toronto by Paul Petro Contemporary Art.

Georgiana Uhlyarik

Georgiana Uhlyarik is Assistant Curator, Canadian Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario. Recent curated projects include Betty Goodwin: Work Notes, Canadian Art in the 1960s and 1970s through the lens of Coach House Press and the installation of the Canadian historical collection for Transformation AGO. She is developing a large exhibition on Niagara Falls and a retrospective of the work of Suzy Lake. Her most recent publication is on the work of Nathalie Mullen, an early Canadian modernist. Independently, she has curated exhibitions for the Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Galerie Lohmann, and the Art Gallery of Ontario, among others. Originally from Romania, she now lives in Toronto with her twin sons.

ARTIST ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Stuart Reid and Carolyn Bell Farrell for their curatorial vision and generally; Neil Tenhaaf and Georgiana Uhlyarik for their insights here; and, James L. Gillespie for his constant support during the production and exhibition of DaDa Delirium.
TOM THOMSON ART GALLERY
The Tom Thomson Art Gallery is a regional public gallery and national cultural attraction with a top-notch and revolving program of contemporary and historical exhibitions, lectures, films, concerts and workshops. As a dynamic place where artists and audiences can meet and flourish, the Tom Thomson Art Gallery provides enriching experiences through art for a range of visitors, showing the art of today and influencing the art of the future. Exhibitions are accompanied by informative materials and scheduled tours are conducted by trained guides—all designed to bring a new dimension to visitors' enjoyment and appreciation of art and its creation. Established in 1967, the Gallery is named for the iconic Canadian landscape artist Tom Thomson (1877-1917) and houses one of Canada's largest collections of his work. An ambitious program of exhibitions by local and Canadian artists makes the Tom Thomson Art Gallery a focal point for opportunities to experience the ever-changing world of contemporary art.

Tom Thomson Art Gallery
840 First Avenue West
Owen Sound, Ontario
Canada N4K 4K4
519-376-1932
ttag@owensound.ca
www.tomthomson.org

MACLAREN ART CENTRE
Located in downtown Barrie, the MacLaren Art Centre is Simcoe County’s regional public art gallery. The Centre is housed in an award winning 24,000 square-foot complex designed by Siamak Hariri of Hariri Pontarini Architects. Defined by the elegant juxtaposition of a renovated 1877 Carnegie Library and a dynamic contemporary space, the facility includes multiple galleries, an education centre, visible storage of works from the collection, a prints and drawings room, a cafe, outdoor sculpture courtyard, gift shop and a framing department. The MacLaren Art Centre is committed to fostering an understanding and appreciation of the visual arts through providing a year-round program of exhibitions, site-works, events and educational initiatives and a permanent collection of 26,000 works of art.

The MacLaren Art Centre gratefully acknowledges the ongoing support of its members, benefactors, partners, donors and sponsors, the City of Barrie, the Ontario Arts Council and the Canada Council for the Arts, and exhibition sponsor Salter Pilon.

MacLaren Art Centre
37 Mulcaster Street
Barrie, Ontario
Canada L4M 3M2
705-721-9696
maclaren@maclarenart.com
www.maclarenart.com

ART GALLERY OF NORTHUMBERLAND
The Art Gallery of Northumberland is located in Cobourg, Ontario’s historic Victoria Hall, overlooking Lake Ontario. The gallery is housed in an award winning 24,000 square-foot complex designed by Siamak Hariri of Hariri Pontarini Architects. The 50th anniversary in 2010. The gallery is committed to providing access to and education about art for the community. It has three gallery spaces, gift shop, and program space as well as a studio-galler in the town of Port Hope that houses the gallery’s reference library.

The Art Gallery of Northumberland is grateful for the financial support of the Ontario Arts Council, the Arts Council of Northumberland, the Town of Cobourg and the Town of Port Hope.

Art Gallery of Northumberland
55 King Street West
Cobourg, Ontario
Canada K9A 2M2
905-372-0333
agn@eagle.ca
www.artgalleryofnorthumberland.com

MCINTOSH GALLERY, THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
A university-based, public art gallery since 1942, the McIntosh Gallery collaborates with artists, curators and academics to develop innovative strategies to interpret and disseminate visual culture. Exhibitions, educational programs and special events provide a platform for engagement with visual artists and art. The Curatorial Study Centre includes documents, publications and archival materials about museology, gallery practices and the McIntosh Gallery’s collection of over 3,000 works of Canadian and international art.

The McIntosh Gallery acknowledges the support of the Canada Council for the Arts through its Assistance to Art Museums and Public Galleries Program, the Ontario Arts Council, The University of Western Ontario, Foundation Western, and our members and donors.

McIntosh Gallery
The University of Western Ontario
1151 Richmond Street
London, Ontario
Canada N6A 3K7
519-661-3181
mcintoshgallery@uwo.ca
www.mcintoshgallery.ca