

Theme: The idea of painting
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Send your text (750-2,000 words, footnotes included) to s.babin@esse.ca before April 1, 2012. Please include a short biography (50-80 words), an abstract of the text (100 words), as well as postal and e-mail addresses. We also welcome submissions (reviews, essays, analyses of contemporary art issues) not related to a particular theme (deadlines: September 1, January 10 and April 1).

The idea of painting

Painting has more often than once been declared dead, yet it has nevertheless remained at the heart of artistic practices. The revival of interest that painting seems to be enjoying today has thus inspired the magazine *esse, arts + opinions* to further explore this phenomenon.

Of course, following the modernist period that saw abstract painting reach its apogee, it is clearly no longer possible to approach the subject of painting exclusively in terms of medium specificity. For this reason, the forthcoming issue wishes to examine artistic practices that question painting as a visual device and make its history and conventions their subject. In short, it is not painting as such but the more general *idea of painting* that is of interest to us.

The mere mention of painting conjures up numerous questions. What to think of the dramatic “reappearance” of gestuality and technical virtuosity in the practice of the medium? Is it, in response to the dematerialization of art and the abandonment of the studio, a matter of reaffirming the art object in its materiality, a certain fetishism for the touch and expressiveness of the artist, or a question of rediscovered savoir-faire? And what effect does this have on the artist’s modes of assertion, on our belief in his authenticity, or, quite the reverse, in his artificiality through the pastiche of styles and hybridity? Also, what can be said of the general scepticism directed towards painting for its supposed “natural” complicity with the art market? In other respects, where do we stand on the postmodernist analyses of the 1980s, such as those published in the American journal *October*, which demonized painting, qualifying it as bourgeois and regressive? And does the gulf that prevailed between upholders of a critical art, non-pictorial by definition, on the one hand, and defenders of painting highly esteemed on the art market and at auctions, on the other, still exist? If not, how have such perspectives evolved?

Another rapidly emerging facet of pictorial practices is the thematization of the history and historicity of painting and its conventions, notably through recourse to other media (photo, video, performance, sculpture, and installation) and to discourse on the subject. In what forms and through which strategies does this perspective of the historical import of painting manifest itself? How, for example, are artists calling into question painting's heritage and the hierarchical relationships and categorizations on which its value was based?

Essentially, painting and its history, which long dictated art history in general, rested on the exclusions now being fundamentally re-examined from feminist and postcolonial perspectives by numerous artists, while others are revisiting the medium by challenging the conventions of the painted subject, questioning its originality and uniqueness in contrast with technically reproducible media. Among the current reconsiderations, several focus on modernism, with the monochrome offering artists seemingly endless scope for exploration. Through its contact with various modes of visualisation and representation, painting can no longer simply be categorized in terms of figurativism or abstraction: what about the notions of the window, the screen, and tableau, which have provided painting with its various theoretical models throughout history?

These are the ideas, among others, which this issue would like to explore by inviting writers to submit their proposals and texts.