

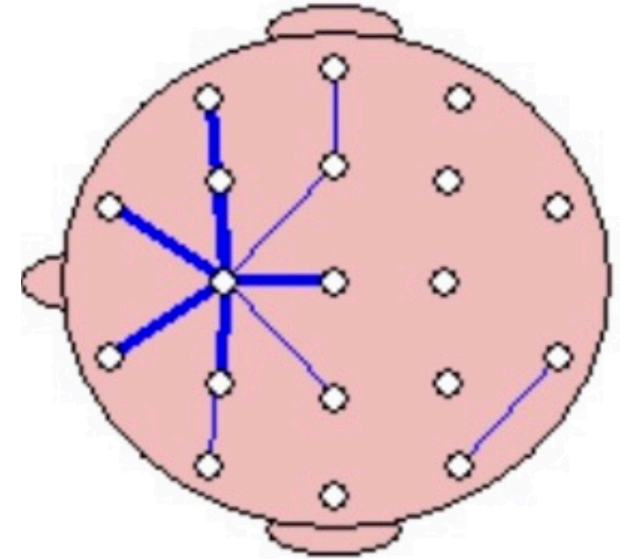
CALL
IT

July 31, 2026 at

Show title ideas

The freedom tour (riley likes) (j likes)
It's telling time (caro)
How to tell what other people think
Stack
Cooked! (Riley likes) (caro)
Trading catherine deneuve for vin diesel
The better end in time (janine likes)
My love is as free as a dove
Predictable enough
Depends who you ask (caro) (dana)
Vol engine
WHO OHW
Our values (Janine likes) (caro like) (Riley likes)
End Quote (dana like)
Founder
Truth detector (dana like)
Trendsetters
Bad century (janine likes) (caro)
The Alarmists
X Call it (Riley likes) (caro) (dana)
GGG
Until now (janine likes) (dana likes)
Threes a charm
Deluxe charm
Art and its limits (J likes)
Infinity (dana)
Eternity
Almost perfect
Justice
Circle of Willis
Custom prints (J likes)
The world is as you are
Odds are (dana)
No mistakes
Stating the obvious (dana likes) (caro)
One of Seven
Seven of Nine (J likes)
Part 1 (J likes)
No other way
Inevitable
Chess vs checkers
Moon Landing (J likes)
Endgame

Good appetite
Oil painters
Multiplication bootcar
Love of the game (dar
From the future
Come live inside of me
Is it a good feeling to l
Full? Full!
Past, present, future (j
The higher worlds
Cruise (caro)
A works life
It's a blip!
Kleptocracy (caro)
Stripped for parts (j li
Seventh place
A special day (j likes)
Non-contact
Buybacks (riley likes)
Supply and demand
1999
Asset-light
Soft tissue (ilikes)
Leaving money on the
In the balance (caro)
Surprise surprise (car
Has left the building
Doctored
United (j likes)
Blip! (Riley likes) (carc
Ambiance (caro)
Insider trading (dana l
Hand in hand in eye
War of choice
Hitch
Knots and Hitches
Too Much Information
All Over Painting
Ticker (Riley
Ticker Tape
Nexus
Clear winner (carro) (l



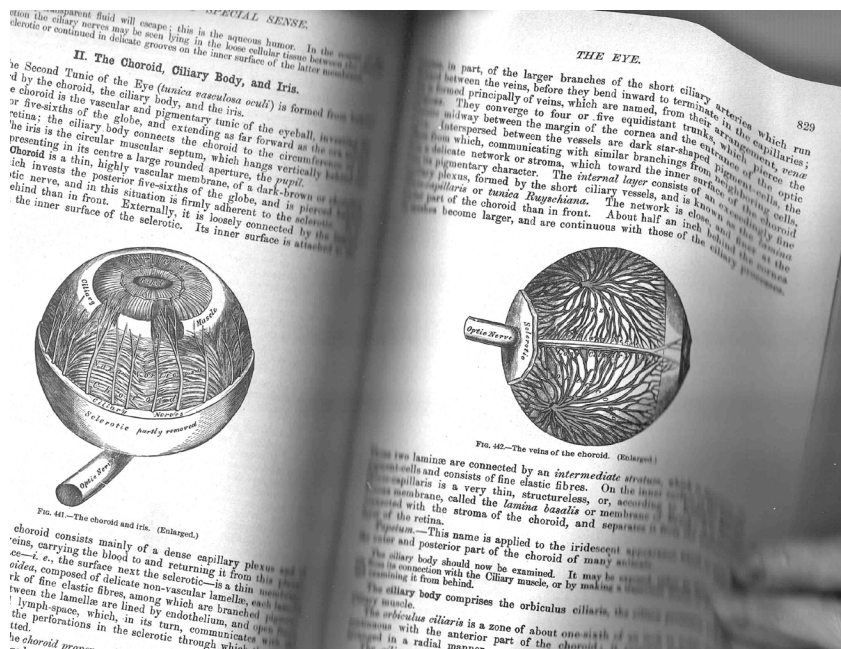
Mira Dayal



Varieties of Disturbance

I wanted to catalogue the varieties of disturbance I see in this group of paintings hung in someone else's home. This title is often in my head; it comes from a collection of short stories by Lydia Davis. The collection is part of a much larger collection that I have here in my hand. One of the stories within the sub-collection is called "Hand." It goes: "Beyond the hand holding this book that I'm reading, I see another hand lying idle and slightly out of focus—my extra hand."

Between my laptop and book is the bookmark I'd last used: a postcard my friend sent me eight years ago that features, on one side, a painting by Anni Albers with blue, periwinkle, and yellow stripes across a pencil-gridded background. Though this postcard is small, I can see that sometimes the periwinkle blocks out the pencil, whereas the pencil sometimes overrides the yellow. The stripes sometimes stick to each other, forming L-shaped sections that wrap around other sections. On the back side of this postcard, a sheet of adhesive paper on which the message is written partly obscures the caption, but through it, part



of the title is still legible: *Design for a tapestry*. The stripes designate patterns for weaving.

Blocking, overriding, sticking, wrapping, adhering, obscuring—these are some of the varieties of disturbance I see in these paintings. Disturbance as in, though they begin with different objects of study—playing cards, plums, financial markets, cigarettes, logos, cities, letters—Dana Lok, Janine Iversen, and Carolyn Forrester each end up with pictures whose planes fragment and dissolve, ripple and rise, break up and get put back together again. The show is in a space called AILSA. The name feels like an anagram but may not be; I slide the letters around in my head when I say the name: A SAIL, A AILS, ISLAA, A IS AL, AI AS L, AS I LA...

I keep going back to my images of Lok's *Practice Plum*, hung above the white couch. The composition is hard to remember. I know that there are some knots with slippery streaks, and pairs of plump fruit. I remember that the fruit helps keep the planes from flipping upward. Sylvia Plimack Mangold once said of her own paintings, "If I included a ruler, it was because the ruler was a visual tool that could lie on a flat plane and keep that plane from sliding downward." Lok and Mangold have something in common: Their work is meticulous but remains strange. Both take study seriously. A ruler is a weight. Practice makes plums.

A disturbance can take the form of an interruption, or eruption, or subtle bump, or slight corner where it shouldn't be. The ground breaks up in Lok's *Sunset* in the hallway, revealing red lava beneath two peaks—two mountains, two volcanoes, two icebergs, two breasts, with two Sim cities nestled into their valleys. A landscape from on high; see Yvonne Jacquette, see Jacqueline Gourevitch. And then there's Iversen's cut-ups, cut-outs, film cuts—or so I see them. She crops the Universal logo to the letters in the middle that begin her surname (*The Future*). She builds a ladder of gradients and drops a slinky of rings in

the background (*The Time*). She sets two aces into a cross and gives us not their decorated suits but their rounded edges (*The Space*). Then up close she casually shows her hand.

And then there's the scatter: the sponged texture of Iversen's ovals and the splay of her playing cards in the living room piece, *The Space*; the splatter at the edge of her painting in the kitchen, *The Future*; but also the confetti of colorful marks populating Forrester's canvas by the fireplace: it could be a crowd scene from above, or a map of distributed data, or a carnival up close, with letters strewn about like broken signs (*End Quote*). Shapes become characters, as in the work of Patricia Treib, but then there's the atmosphere to account for—festive here, but gray there in Forrester's print *Shill*. A shill being someone paid to promote something. Someone shifty, a con artist. Deceit as disturbance—of morality, order, good form.

The weave stitches all of this together: the long blue loops beneath pale pink planes in Lok's *Practice Plum*, the sinewy rope underneath all that piled earth in Lok's *Sunset*, the interrupted chain behind orange bars in Iversen's *The Time*, the ribbon glyphs nested across Forrester's *End Quote*, and even the helix of watery forms in Forrester's *Any Integrity* are the threads through these varieties of disturbance.

And now: Fade out, draw the blinds, shut all those windows, shuffle the cards... Recede, reposition, deal. Sweep aside. Intersect. Differentiate. Disperse.

Joseph Montgomery

Pearl

I exit Ailsa chewing on the painter's idea of enoughness. You could call it a sense of fullness. Until I was six or seven, my vocabulary for being sated was telling the adult how many of my garages were full and how many were empty. Starved, I wanted food driven into my stomach; still hungry, I had only stuffed two or three. My father was a hoarder, and the garage was a catchall for my mother's tidying. I remember no vehicles, only the mesmerizing swing of a tennis ball on a string, meant to touch the windshield before the bumper crushed cardboard.

Poor painters, just filters these days, thick with images learned actively, passively, performatively. It's part of the job description to know and see, to massage the accretion like a steward nursing a theater of constant reproduction. So many babies, so little consummation. Where do we put them all? The drive wasn't even hard, and still they print backwards into a flaccid, supersaturated organ.

Speaking of which: what age is right to feed a boy raw seafood? He was a useful eater, tasked with being lucky, slurping for a valor he would never read as a lottery, one of dim, dim proportions that only a laissez-faire NOLA

JOSEPH MONTGOMERY

ambition could achieve. His parents wanted a pearl; they got an abstraction. So much swallowing, the occasional regurgitation, a disgusting yet possibly fun meal pregnant with prizes that never materialized. Lazy oysters, layabouts. All that sucking in, all that exhalation, and never a jewel for the boy to choke on, tear up over, make his parents proud of. His better odds came in the shape of plastic babies in a King Cake, with Heimlich potential but sweetened in crushed rainbow dust. Jars of babies accumulated on the cupboard shelf (all mouthed bibelots). Useful eater, he was distracted by the gargled promise of glory, immediate salvation: just eat this body over and over. Forgiveness before he knew there was sin to be possessed. What kind of timeline puts salve on before the injury, predestining a lifetime of pleasure in being saved too early?

But how the painter likes to swim in this junk. Baby Jesus might be in there too. I don't know how thick your shell is, or how long you've been sucking these juices through your mandible, but it's a no from me. I want to see what's outside Sodom at this point, and also look back, become a person-sized pillar of salt but be sand instead and get lapped back up by the soup, and maybe someone will suck me up, get me stuck in their maw, and polish me until I am a pearl. Or I could just stay and slowly make my own pearl. What would that take, more eating or more luck?

Here is where I remember looking outward again, seeking pleasure. I rant at others' filtration, rend feeds with sharp thumbs. Let's compare and contrast fitness levels, beauty, coolness. You cover my mouth when you chew. (Impressive.) Enjoy the crumb I show you. (Should I taste it?) Allow me to withhold from you. (I am starving.) The mark you make on this surface is enough. But it doesn't taste good.

Did you digest your synthetic cubism lesson? Plasticity, literally. Now we can put sand into our paint and truly say goodbye to illusion. Let's labor like set designers,

JOSEPH MONTGOMERY

let tactility grind the gears of originality to a halt,
make a dam at the end of our intestinal processors, and
sculpt and polish the information that sticks around for
entertainment. What gullet sucked this? What pelican
carried these nutritions? No stork birthed me. You
painters conceived viewership, then confused the sex,
so I don't know what goes in and what goes out. I am
stuck under one of those edible fountains mouthing for
purchase.

Let's not drown; I have a strategy. I'll consume starting
at the crust, the edge of the support, nibbling around
the edges of the puzzled pile. That's where I find
optimism - these objects on the wall don't center data,
they scrape but they also filter, permeable engenderers:
eating, shitting, fertilizing seedy exposed decisions. The
pleasure in tasting is shared. Our belly flexes with the
dimensionality of aggregate, one grain at a time, until
something hardens, slowly, patiently, into the shape
of satisfaction. The hard part is holding on to that,
sustaining it like something precious. We are in luck. The
paintings are real and don't fit between the fangs.



Cameron Martin

Thoughts on *Call It*

In the “Given and the Chosen”, poet Ann Lauterbach addresses art that engages a process of refiguring what she calls “inheritance”. She writes, “This reconfiguration does not abandon the initial, individualized reality, but alters its syntax if you will, to allow new possibilities. The fact of the reconfiguration provides an opening through which what already exists finds itself in that which does not exist”. The works in *Call It*, conspicuously titled with a nod to asserting a point of terminus, as well as utterance and direct address, engage a series inheritances—the modern canon, contemporary data distribution, the impulse to name, to cite a few—which the work then seeks to recast. Part of what puts the artists in a compelling dialogue is that through distinct means each works to suspend what Jacques Lacan called the *point du capiton*, the moment when a signifying chain attaches a signifier to a signified, in order to at least temporarily land on a stable meaning. This arrest is at the core of their refigurations.

Carolyn Forrester’s *End Quote* presents a group of unmoored graphic signs floating in a diffuse divisionist field, leaving us with a decided inability to situate

ourselves precisely in the space the painting conjures. Writing is evoked through the boldest sign-shapes, which are derived, as is typical of her recent work, from a mid-century artist's output, in this case a Bridget Riley print. They don't cohere into discernable language, and the painting's identifiable written words, extracted from the scrolling marquee that wraps the Morgan Stanley building in Midtown, are flipped and embedded within the expanse of the painting's groundlessness, to the degree that they are stripped of context and legible significance. The painting points to the phantasms inherent to our current state of abstracted information delivery, which can promote a form of collective psychosis.

Janine Iversen's *The Space* employs a different but related strategy. In this painting, a series of graphic forms are presented on a white ground, in an arrangement that elicits something architectonic, unclearly interior or exterior. There is the possibility of reading some of these marks as being akin to logos, possible stand-ins for capital, in this case reduced and neutered. Where Forrester obfuscates text, here there is the sense that it has been erased, leaving residual marks that hint at a previous moment of imagined clarity. This contortion of the representational paradigm engages a parallel destabilization to Forrester's, highlighted by the hanging of these two works across from one another in the show. In each case, our capacity to firmly attach language to the work beyond description is thwarted, allowing for an experience of productively frustrated pleasure.

Something of an anomaly in her practice, Dana Lok has called *Practice Plum* an "accidental non-painting", born out of "a different way of thinking" than her more typically worked and exacting build-up of an image. Where Lok often rigorously explores relationships between mind and language (speech more specifically), in this painting there is a loosening of not only paint application but also the superegoic strictures that often guide her work. The painting is at once a form of still-life, with her renderings

of plums and their shadows done from life, but it also shifts into the domain of intellection, in this case allowing diffuse color and mark making to untether representation from a concrete ground. Depictions of knots throughout painting perform an operation of both "tying things together" and highlighting the fundamentally knotted aspect of communication and understanding, in both psychoanalytic terms and as it relates to the act of making a painting. Like Forrester and Iversen, Lok articulates the ways in which comprehension typically involves an embrace of discrepancy and contradiction.



Riley Strom

Presenting

AILSA is in my apartment. I see the show early in the morning before I drink coffee, when I'm on the phone, when I forget something and have to run back to get it- in all moods. Mostly the work feels ignorant of me / ambivalent to me. But during appointments the show turns open to present itself. I think of the double-slit experiment: how particles rearrange themselves if they are being perceived. People keep their shoes on.

When Helen came to see *CALL IT* she said (I'm paraphrasing) it looks like being inside of a space ship. Everything moving at high velocity.

If we can agree that language is not static in nature and changes based on context- then we can know an image has equal potential for movement. I want to talk about the pace/direction/cadence of this movement throughout the show.

*

Janine's palette is made up of flat, industrial colors of a 70's kitchenette. The paint is applied either without

RILEY STROM

brushstrokes or with the exaggerated texture of a foam roller. The images are decisive, severe. She uses super-charged icons and symbols to establish a connection between herself and everything else: the Olympic rings, the Universal Pictures brand logo, her own name or images of previous work. But although she uses herself as a central reference in the paintings there is no phenomena of her being- no sensation of the body, or pull of memory, 0 romance.

In *The Future* a series of kelly green horizontal planes hovers over text "IVERS"- punctuated with a cut out circle, a cigarette, and a horizontal display of 6 blank playing cards. She embeds herself in third person *IVERS*(en) into the cut-off text of the Universal Pictures Logo. She is simultaneously the central figure of and completely absent from the painting. She exists only as a name- the artist as a personal brand, self-commodification. At the same time Universal doubles to signify the macro (!) the universe (!) as well as media, entertainment, and performance. She is adjusting the aperture- zooming in and out, pinching into the personal/the singular and widening into the global/ the universal. The painting expands and contracts - shifting between the self and the Other.

In *The Space* Janine exists as a rolodex of previous paintings- floating through vacant space, presenting themselves like a conveyor belt of movies on a hotel TV.

Given how controlled these images appear, the surfaces of the paintings are surprising and familiar. You can find quiet scuffs, pencil outlines, and splatter. *Time* is unstretched, hand cut, with grommets placed, unmeasured, in 3 of 4 corners. She arrived for install with *The Future* unwrapped and balancing on the back of her seats in her van like a scale. These blemishes breathe life into the paintings and challenge the impulse to erase the self.

*

Dana's paintings are equally psychedelic and sterile. Her images capture moments along the route that an idea takes from conscious awareness to the physical manifestation of language. Your brain formulates a thought, it travels somehow reaching your mouth, shaping into a sound, your tongue and breath pushing out each letter. The word hangs vibrating, waiting to be heard. Dana is an artist who typically meticulously plans and executes each painting, but her contributions to the show are uncharacteristically improvisational. They map the logic of the hand, wandering around without a worn path. Language with no pre-determined route to travel through-no objective intention for communication. The paintings produce a rhizomatic motion, self generating.

Practice Plum is an outlier in Dana's practice. It began as a tester canvas to rehearse a still-life and marks for other future paintings. Two sets of slightly too small plums sit on top of a ledge that flattens into a fleshy wall. The whole scene is constricted and tied down by an accumulation of (maybe) nautical knots. The painting contains Dana's characteristic repetition and ASMR crispness but also something discordant. The palette is made up of an anemic mauve, deep purples and blues, and a glowy reddish-black like how I imagine pneumonia in the lungs.

Language implicates the body in other ways in *Sunset*. Blood vessels on the inside of your eyes when you look at the sun, breast tissue; there is a topographic mapping of the body in a more literal way. The surface of the painting is slightly raised- a nest of red capillaries spreading from two cadmium red-light postage stamps (pupils? nipples?) that sit on the forced perspective of a city block. The texture gives the sense that positive and negative space are inverted and the palette blushes. Everything is painted expertly with a tiny brush.

*

Carolyn's paintings move like a machine. Each work is constructed with symbols and signs that are insider baseball. Modernism functions as the central metaphor for speed and excitation throughout the works. As a viewer, I can recognize these references are woven in to summon a specific charge, but when I try to read them I find them inverted/stacked/obstructed in some way. A sign that skips over the signifier and lands in the signified. Carolyn paints her images of all but redacted references as a-matter-of-fact; information I should already have, a message I should know how to decipher.

Any Integrity is a nod to Picabia's *The Double World* (1919), which was itself a reference to Duchamp's *LH00Q*- a readymade reproduction of the Mona Lisa. The work functions like an abacus- stacking points on a timeline to record a history of representation, Modernism, Conceptualism. The image is a muted and watery double helix turning calmly in mostly grey, some brown, and a rose colored loop. The work feels elegant but authoritative like a Stile Littorio building. Restraint continues in *Shill*, where Carolyn cites Eli Lissitzky's exclamation point. In Lissitzky's design theory the ! is a visual scream- used to match the amplified and industrial speed of the post-revolutionary soviet era. On pressed, grey/green paper she doubles this motif and rotates it, turning it into some sort of soft scaffolding.

In *End Quote* the viewer is positioned back-side of a looping text pulled from the ticker tape display of the midtown Morgan Stanley building. The message weaves in and out of a scattered field of pointillist marks and fragmented almost letters. The motion in this painting is horizontal, streaming. The image pulverized into its most finite units of color, the text running quickly and illegibly by, acknowledging financial markets as an abstraction that has nothing to do with us.

RILEY STROM

These paintings are serious and you might expect them to feel cold or intimidating. But Carolyn manages to balance the steel of her references with (a gentle, almost tentative paint application and glowing surfaces. In *End Quote* she lowers the key by softening the palette- veiling a pool of cadmium yellow light with a cast of white (dove grey?) scumbling. With this move she muffles the acceleration of the image and gives permission for the paintings to be not only a source of information, a historical record, or a diligent machine- but also a desirous object in its own right.



Published on the occasion of the exhibition

CALL IT

Carolyn Forrester, Janine Iversen, Dana Lok

August 29-October 11, 2026

AILSAs is a curatorial project run by artist Riley Strom from an apartment in Bedstuy, Brooklyn.

ailsa-nyc.com

