

Fabian Marcaccio talks about Confine Paintant, 2003

ArtForum, Nov, 2003 by Katy Siegel

Born in Argentina, Fabian Marcaccio has lived and worked in New York City since the late 1980s, although many of his larger exhibitions have been in Europe, including "Multi-Site Paintant" at last year's Documenta 11 and "Paintant Stories," which appeared at museums in Cologne and Stuttgart in 2000. His life and career take him all over the world, and he works on a scale to match: "Dais past spring he created a huge outdoor project on a beach in Belgium that addresses everything from abstract painting to politics.

Some painters continue to think intently about the history and meaning of painting within its traditional limits. Others leave painting to work in other media. Marcaccio does both. While his fans include many devotees of painting proper-to whom the artist represents its future and continued health--Marcaccio fully incorporates digital techniques into a painterly practice. His content is decidedly "impure" as well, including, as it does, subjects such as protesting crowds, environmental disasters, and pornographic pinups amid the paint puddles.

His paintings (or as he calls them, "paintants," which he says implies "action" as well as a kind of "hybridity") are rarely flat, discrete easel pictures. Sometime they are large enough to be environmental, as in the Belgian project; other times they are composed of wild, curving structures that hang from a ceiling or stretch from indoors to outside; and occasionally they even move, as in the digital animations at his last New York show (at Gorney Bravin Lee in 20002). As an artist, Marcaccio is ambitious, both materially and politically, in a way that reminds me of Sigmar Polke--an attitude of scale and reach that few artists in their thirties seem able to manage right now.

"Right now," for Marcaccio, means big, messy art that never says no to a subject matter or a material and then complicates things further by adding the element of time, giving unique form to the all-too-common assertion that the world is changing so fast we have to analyze it as we go.

Invited to create a work in Ostend, Belgium, that would bridge the urban setting of the city and the vast openness of the ocean, I made a 334-meter-long piece called Confine Paintant, which I painted digitally, printing on vinyl, then finished with materials like oils, silicones, and polymers. I worked on-site with the wind and the sand--there's so much sand in the painting that it looks like a Tapies! It's painted on both sides and divided into eight one-meter-high sections, all raised on stanchions to meet the viewer at eye level. There are spaces between these "chapters," allowing you to weave in and out of the whole painting, seeing it against the sea or against the city. My idea was to create a pictorial reality that parallels your experience of walking and seeing.

I had been thinking about how to tell a story through abstract and semiabstract means, a story with episodes and evolutions instead of the synchronic totality of allover painting, while keeping in mind the tradition of religious painting or of cartoons, and especially film, where you have durational viewing. But instead of watching indoors with a projector, the viewer here is in the middle of the beach, walking and thinking, in plain air, like the Impressionists, except he or she is also living with culture. Other artists go from the white cube to the dark cube, but I wanted to go outside.

There are long areas of the work that depict the beauty of water and waves. But even in the most natural passages, there is social meaning: A stroke creates the image of the sea, then the sea comes to bring the tide up to and even under the painting and creates another mark on the sand, and then people come and leave their footprints another kind of mark. A combination of nature and culture. I also wanted to evoke vulnerability--his beach is only twenty miles or so from Dunkirk--the idea that in war, the coastline is the area most open to attack. Confine Paintant alludes as well to the fragility of the ecosystem. You can see the garbage you would find on the beach, dead fish, or the oil from some industrial disaster (it's actually soy sauce) alongside abstract brushstrokes (which are actually made with ketchup). Is this abstract or organic material? All these objects are

trash and are transformed and in transition. I like to think about painting as the most open thing in the world. Even pigment has its own reality--in a Ryman, at the same time that it's sand or it's titanium, it's something that's in the world. It is a cultural material as well as a natural material.

I call this kind of painting "complex" or "network" composition: It interweaves abstraction and representation, the digital and the analog. I knit my work like a sweater. You have wool, and then you also have a sweater--the sweater that leaves the threads open, slightly unraveled. All my paintings work against the unitary, using multiple parts or details that never create a strong whole. I want to ask, How can we bring complexity to a painting? How can we compose a painting of hybrid materials in time and space, as opposed to reducing it to "pure" painting or history painting?

Galerías de Barcelona Inauguraciones recientes

Fabian Marcaccio presenta sus nuevas pinturas en tres dimensiones

JUAN BUFILL
Barcelona

La galería Joan Prats expone la obra reciente de Fabian Marcaccio, un artista nacido en Rosario (Argentina) en 1963 y afincado en Nueva York desde 1986, que ha realizado algunos pasos notables en el incierto camino de la pintura de vanguardia del siglo XXI. El pintor propone un neologismo para definir su extraña obra híbrida: lo que él llama en inglés *paintant* y en castellano *pintante* es una contracción de *pintura* y *mutante*. Marcaccio no sólo se propone transformar la noción de pintura, sino que sus obras se presentan como una mutación en curso: representan transformaciones monstruosas en una época en que estas, por desgracia, abundan.

Algunas de sus obras recientes son casi como una instantánea pictórica y ya escultórica en vez de fotográfica, capaz de detener la imagen de una realidad dinámica, caracterizada por la producción y acumulación de objetos y de materiales y la sucesión de cambios violentos.

Sus obras recientes son pintu-

ras que se escapan de las dos dimensiones y crecen en la tercera, como esculturas de trazos pictóricos o formas extrañas de vida. La hibridación es una de las características del monstruo, y otra es la desmesura. Y en la obra de Fabian Marcaccio se juntan ambas. Por ello el resultado se parece a una selva antinatural y monstruosa por exceso. Como todo lo que crece sin límites, esa selva representa -con plástico y colores chillones- todo aquello que destruye lo demás y a los demás para seguir su ilimitado desarrollo. Representa algunos de los aspectos más equivocados del mundo actual.

Las pinturas mutantes de Fabian Marcaccio son fascinantes por sus formas y conceptos, pero seguramente una parte del público las va a considerar horribles. A menudo sus colores son ácidos y artificiales y sus texturas pegajosas y viscosas. Su belleza es la del monstruo y este sería el monstruo de la cantidad y de la exuberancia caótica. La proliferación es uno de los modos del arte barroco, y de la personalidad barroca, tan bien representada por la literatura del cubano José Le-



GALERÍA JOAN PRATS

Una de las pinturas tridimensionales de Fabian Marcaccio

zama Lima, por ejemplo. Pero el barroquismo de Marcaccio tiene un sentido ideológico y social, muy crítico con respecto a lo que está sucediendo en estos últimos años.

La instalación llamada *3DEP2* atraviesa una sala, sostenida por cables, y es una combinación de plástico impreso en 3 D, pintura, silicona, metales y cuerdas. En esta pintura tridimensional o es-

cultura pictórica las formas orgánicas no identificadas han proliferado e incluyen caóticamente algunos elementos reconocibles, a menudo agresivos: dentaduras voraces, armas de guerra, una jeringuilla alada, un corazón arrancado o circuitos electrónicos, integrados en esa maleza mutante.

En otras obras, cuando una figura humana aparece en medio

de masas informes de pintura o de plástico, su aspecto es siempre inquietante: la cabeza que nos mira desde la trama manchada y desgarrada del cuadro *Islamic-Catholic* es espantosa. Las obras más figurativas son como esculturas de pintura. El rostro de *Child Soldier* es una carne sin rasgos, deshecha y viscosa. Y su posible pareja *Daughter* tiene la cabeza, el pecho y una mano manchadas, cubiertas por una especie de marea negra. Galería Joan Prats. Balmes, 54. Hasta el 21 de mayo.

Artnexus, 2011

Fabian Marcaccio

Premio de escultura

Bernhard Heiliger 2011

Berlín, Alemania

El premio de escultura Bernhard Heiliger, creado en 1999, fue otorgado en 2011 a Fabian Marcaccio. El galardón consistente en 15,000 euros fue entregado por un jurado compuesto por Udo Kittelmann, director de la Galería Nacional de Berlín; el Profesor Dr. Raimund Stecker, director del Museo Wilhem Lehmbruck en Duisburg y el Dr. Anda Rottemberg, curador independiente y ex director de la Galería Nacional Zacheta, en Varsovia. El voto unánime a favor de la obra del argentino Marcaccio fue otorgado a su obra escultórica de amplia significación, y teniendo en cuenta la contribución de la misma a la percepción de la escultura como una forma de hacer arte, independientemente de las tendencias del mercado del arte y aunque su obra no estuviera adecuadamente representada en Alemania.

Fabian Marcaccio nació en 1963, en la ciudad de Rosario, en Santa Fe, Argentina, vive y trabaja en Nueva York desde hace más de 20 años. En sus trabajos examina, continuamente, los conceptos clásicos de la creación pictórica creando sus "Paintants" en las que combina conceptos de la pintura, la escultura y el arte objetual. El premio del jurado hizo énfasis en las escultóricas *Paintants* y en su nueva serie, dirigida a temas críticos como la globalización, la crisis financie-

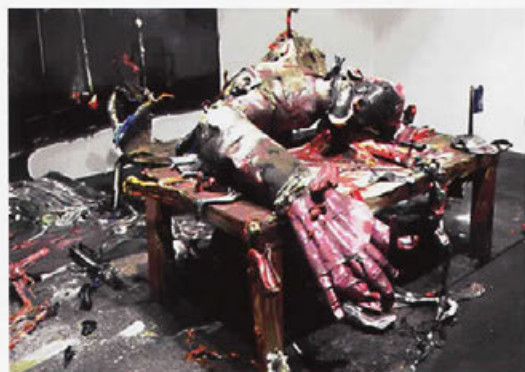
ra, la trans-sexualidad, la ingeniería del género, el terrorismo y el papel de los medios de comunicación.

En esta ocasión se presentará una muestra de las obras de Marcaccio en el Georg-Kolbe-Museum (11 de septiembre al 29 de noviembre, 2011). La ceremonia de entrega de premios tendrá lugar el 10 de septiembre de 2011 en la Academia de las artes de Berlín, en ParisierPlatz.

Más información:

[cwww.bernhard-Heiliger-preis.de](http://www.bernhard-Heiliger-preis.de)

Fabian Marcaccio. *U.N. Paintant* Basel Art Fair 2006, Art Unlimited Bravin Lee Programs, NY (en colaboración con Galerie Thomas Schulte, Berlín).





Fabian Marcaccio, *Paintant Stories*, 2000, installed at Casa Daros, Rio de Janeiro, 2014. Pigmented ink on canvas, silicone, poly-optic resins, oil, wood and metal. 13 x 328 feet. Collection of Daros Latin-America, Zurich, Switzerland

Talking Painting With Fabian Marcaccio

By PAUL LASTER, SEPT. 2014

Few painters push the boundaries of their medium like Fabian Marcaccio, an Argentinian artist that has lived and worked in New York since 1986. Taking painting beyond the stretcher, off the wall, and into digital realms, Marcaccio creates hybrid works that continually delight and astonish viewers. Whitehot contributor editor Paul Laster talks with the artist about his radical concepts on painting, while also discussing Marcaccio's seminal, 13-by-328-foot [Paintant Stories](#), which was shown this past summer at Rio de Janeiro's Casa Daros, its fourth international venue since 2000.

Paul Laster: Where were you born and educated?

Fabian Marcaccio: I was born in Rosario, Argentina, in 1963. It's an industrial city with a huge river, like the Mississippi River, running crazily by it. I studied art there and then in Buenos Aires. I studied printmaking and painting in different workshops as an apprentice. Later on, I studied philosophy at the university in Rosario. I started showing my work in galleries and got a scholarship to travel to Europe or America. I chose New York and came here in 1986.

PL: What was your first big break in New York?

FM: I was in a group show at Althea Viafora Gallery, which was one of the first galleries to show Matthew Barney. I made a painting that articulated a corner with unpredictable pictorial activity going up and down. Afterwards, I worked with the independent curators Collins & Milazzo, who were organizing high-profile exhibitions in New York and Europe.

PL: Was that when you started showing canvases that had manipulated stretcher bars?

FM: That was my first recognizable body of work in America. I called it *The Altered Genetics of Painting*. I was trying to create a new situation where painting would forget the reductivist period of the '70s and the pastiche and simulacra periods of the '80s. I was proposing an animated or complex or macromalist period for painting. Painting would have to deal with all of its levels of complexity from context to size to materiality and still be painting. Not just technically painting, it could involve photography, printmaking, and sculpture to become an amalgam. At that time, I used the titles *Altered Genetics of Painting* and *Mutual Betrayal Paintings*, which implied elements fighting with each other. Then I went into *Paint Zones*, *Time-Paintants*, and *Paintants*.

PL: It seems like you were conceptually dealing with the nature of a painting. Like Frank Stella, or Robert Ryman in a less brutal way, you seemed to be taking the painting off the wall by focusing on its physical structure or armature and bringing its physical nature into the architectural space surrounding it.

FM: There are all of these generic ways of saying that you're going from canvas to shaped canvas or from two dimensions to three dimensions, but for me it was never about the radicality of doing those things. It was more about the paradox. Wherever you apply a limit, you have to cross that limit. Many of those paintings with the three-dimensional stretching of the canvas or running around of the stretcher bars were manipulating the surface. It was not a big formalist break like Frank Stella, it was a more handicapped thing, where the wall becomes an umbilical cord that touches dripping. It was more related to working the paradox that if there is a superstructure in painting, one of the most superstructural things is a drip, something that just happens by chance. You have the wall that holds the whole thing. But what happens if they can relate to one another? How is it possible that a drip can understand a wall? It's a total paradox, playing with the impossible or unpaintable side of painting. In relation to genetics, I could deal with organic matter in a totally different way, as a constructivist activity. That idea of an animated, organic constructivism is very important to me — all of my work is highly organic, but it's also highly preconceived. How can the viewer see an abstraction or abstract-looking painting as a platform to think about mental or physical activities?



Fabian Marcaccio, *Paintant Stories*, 2000, installed at Casa Daros, Rio de Janeiro, 2014. Pigmented ink on canvas, silicone, poly-optic resins, oil, wood and metal. 13 x 328 feet. Collection of Daros Latin-America, Zurich, Switzerland

PL: And the paradox is that it exceeds what we already know it to be. Was this a reaction to what you were seeing in the galleries?

FM: Painting in the late '80s still had the problems of painting in the late '70s. There were the bad color-field painters, people who said repeat and repeat and repeat, other people who were saying copy and copy and copy — all kinds of dead ends. Appropriation, Neo-Geo, and Simulation were the default. At the same time, it was the beginning of multiculturalism, but I never got interested in its platform. I got more involved with the science of complexity, chaos theory, and a relationship to theoretical architecture. Theory is not a situation of art illustrating a theory in a painting. Instead, I believe that you can have theory and have the most stupid painting in the world — they can co-exist. You could have an irrational painting, which at the same time is highly complex and rational. That's what I call complex painting; it's always suspended in a paradox.

PL: Was it at this time, when you were developing *The Altered Genetics of Painting*, that you began making vocabulary drawings of brushstrokes?

FM: The brushstroke is one element that is important to all painters. I created case studies of paint alteration — how to alter the painting map and how to manage painting in a different way. I started naming these studies with names such as brushstroke and its partial disappearance or brushstroke and interfering foreign particles. Collins & Milazzo published a brochure, *100 Cases of Double and Multiple Captures for Painting in Spite of Itself*, for a show in New York in 1991, and since then other studies have been published. In general, brushstrokes in paintings are like divas. If you see all the

drawings in the case studies, you discover relationships between brushstrokes and ground, ground and material, material and line, and all kinds of paradoxical, ghostly lives for painting. How can painting grow in the complexity of its dubious existence? I don't want to go back to the restoration of realism or the restoration of abstraction for the illustration of politics or gossip. I still believe in a platform of art that can be universal with particularities. I'm really Borgesian in that way. I still think that art is a problem.

PL: After you established the vocabulary of brushstrokes, did you start to apply them in your work? Did you recreate them physically with gel medium or did you begin to cast them then, as you do now?

FM: From the beginning, it was a hybrid thing, for example, brush mark, ground, all those kinds of paradoxes. In order to keep those kinds of paradoxes, I needed to use a paradoxical way of rendering it. Rendering is a good word because it's not like painting a painting; it's more like rendering the space of painting. For instance, if I needed a canvas or a ghost of a ground, I would use printmaking. I would then work in miniscule to create some drawing activity inside the whole situation. Next I would go in a totally different mode and add a lot of silicon material that your eye could actually pass through, so I would add material but not actually hide the background. Each moment of how to get into the painting or how to fabricate a painting will be paradoxical so that you will not make a painting in a generic way.



Fabian Marcaccio, *Paintant Stories*, 2000, installed at Casa Daros, Rio de Janeiro, 2014. Pigmented ink on canvas, silicone, poly-optic resins, oil, wood and metal. 13 x 328 feet. Collection of Daros Latin-America, Zurich, Switzerland

PL: It's not like Abstract Expressionism, where the buildup of physical paint hides the action below it.

FM: Exactly. My work is not really abstract, but it's rooted in abstraction. I was always interested in notions of say, action painting. Is the action in painting the subject or is it the time in painting? The time in painting is the subject. The time in painting, for me, is the big subject of the 21st century. We

are in a much more cinematic, computing moment. Life itself, biological alterations of matter, the aging sciences, it's all about time. That is the whole subject for me, from the beginning of those paintings: how you recirculate the desire in a painting; how you see a drip going back into a flux.

PL: What motivated you to take the physical structure of the canvas further into the third dimension, where you create a funky armature with plumbing pipe, as you did with the tent paintings?

FM: The stretcher-bar paintings were actually giving me some interesting products but canceling others. They were creating relations to the wall of the gallery that started looking like shaped canvases, and I never wanted to make shaped paintings. I wanted to see them more as broken paintings or mutation paintings. I want them to mutate in a coherent way like they will almost absorb the structure. The tent was an interesting thing to me. You have this really simple structure on the back of a tent painting: two poles or a couple of pipes, and you can create a whole cartographical landscape of hills and valleys, suspending canvas on top. It's almost like reducing the structure to the minimum and creating a neutralization of the tension of the surface. Sometimes it looks like ski slopes. I wanted the canvas to become an object. I wanted the painting to become a skin. All of the things that I do today relate to things that I did when I was a child: the practice of painting, the practice of taxidermy, and the practice of comics. When you create a stuffed animal, you mummify it. When you create a painting, you try to create something that will be there forever. When you create a comic strip, you try to overcome the impossibility of creating motion. If you analyze my paintings, you will see all three elements.

PL: After you had made a number of the tent paintings you started to bring in elements of body parts.

FM: In the beginning, I used collography in relation to painting. At the moment of the tent paintings I switched to silkscreen. I silkscreened all kinds of complex patches that were abstract yet looked figurative or that were figurative but looked abstract. I would add a crowd of people that looked like sand from a distance. I wanted to create a semiotics, I wanted to go from the material, the paradoxical part of the work, and make the semiotic part of the work paradoxical. Further than that, I started putting all kinds of figurative imagery in combination with abstract imagery. Not only that, I turned the tent pieces into time-oriented areas, meaning they were much more determined by architectural or site-specific spaces. The biggest one that I did was 300 meters long on a beach in Belgium. Instead of making a painting of the sea like Turner, I created a passage of painting through the whole beach. What happens when a painting that relates to the sea is in the sea? I went from collography and painting to silkscreen and painting to digital printing and painting. Everything that I do now involves digital art and painting. I say that there is the pigment, the emulsion, and the pixel. In a certain time in history, you could only think about the pigment. When the emulsion came, you couldn't help but deal with it. When the pixel came, even if you wanted to be the purest artist in the world, you had to pay attention to the pixel, as well as all kinds of digital culture.



Fabian Marcaccio, *Paintant Stories*, 2000, installed at Casa Daros, Rio de Janeiro, 2014. Pigmented ink on canvas, silicone, poly-optic resins, oil, wood and metal. 13 x 328 feet. Collection of Daros Latin-America, Zurich, Switzerland

PL: Was the painting that you made for the opening of Gorney Bravin + Lee in Chelsea in 1999, a painting that wrapped around the whole space and came out onto the street, the first painting of this sort?

FM: That was the second one. The first one was a collaboration with my friend, the architect Greg Lynn. We reorganized the exhibition space of the Secession building in Vienna for a pictorial architectonic flow. That led in to the one in New York, which was really exciting for me, because I like the paradox that it was the first show of the gallery, and I could actually unfold the exterior and interior of the gallery. You could be in a taxi and see the painting, and then when entering the gallery the scale would change. You could never see it as an object. That for me was the beginning of *Time-Paintant* or *Paintant*, as I use it right now. Because what is *Paintant*? It's *Mutational Paintant*. It's *Action-Paintant*. It's painting instead of an objective, a description; it's an action. It's action painting for a beholder of action painting as action, more than performative painting or action painting as Abstract Expressionism.

PL: Was *Paintant Stories*—the 100-foot painting that you first showed at Stuttgart's Württembergischer Kunstverein in 2000 and recently exhibited for a fourth time, with a different configuration, at Casa Daros in Rio de Janeiro—a culmination of that form of experimentation or a point of departure for exploring other hybrid forms in painting and sculpture?

FM: After the immense, expanded space of the *Environmental Paintants* I started the *Structural Canvas* tridimensional paintings. This works try to achieve a more sophisticated use of photo and

paint in the configuration or form of a sculpture. They are more intimate and smaller in scale but as complex as the Environmental paintants. Now, I am working on a series that I call "Rope Paintings." These are paintings that look more conventional in principle but they are a total reconsideration of how to make a panel painting; from the specially made support structure, to the weaving of each rope canvas, to the multiple ways they are painted. Silicone casts, 3D printing and many other techniques are use to make this new kind of history or "investigative report" paintings.

PL: How has Paintant Stories changed shape and meaning in its four different exhibition venues over the past 15 years?

FM: The Environmental Paintants are not site-specific but site-related. They are really a hybrid between a frozen film, architecture and painting so they change radically in different spaces. For instance, in the Daros Installation, I want the piece to flow from the inside to the outside of the building, jumping literally out of the window through a kind of pictorial bridge. This creates for the viewer a constant change of the space as they walk the piece. The piece physically has changed, too. It is re-edited in this case in a large way. One scene was taken out and a large element was added. It is like re-cutting a movie.

PL: How has that impacted the way you see your monumental piece?

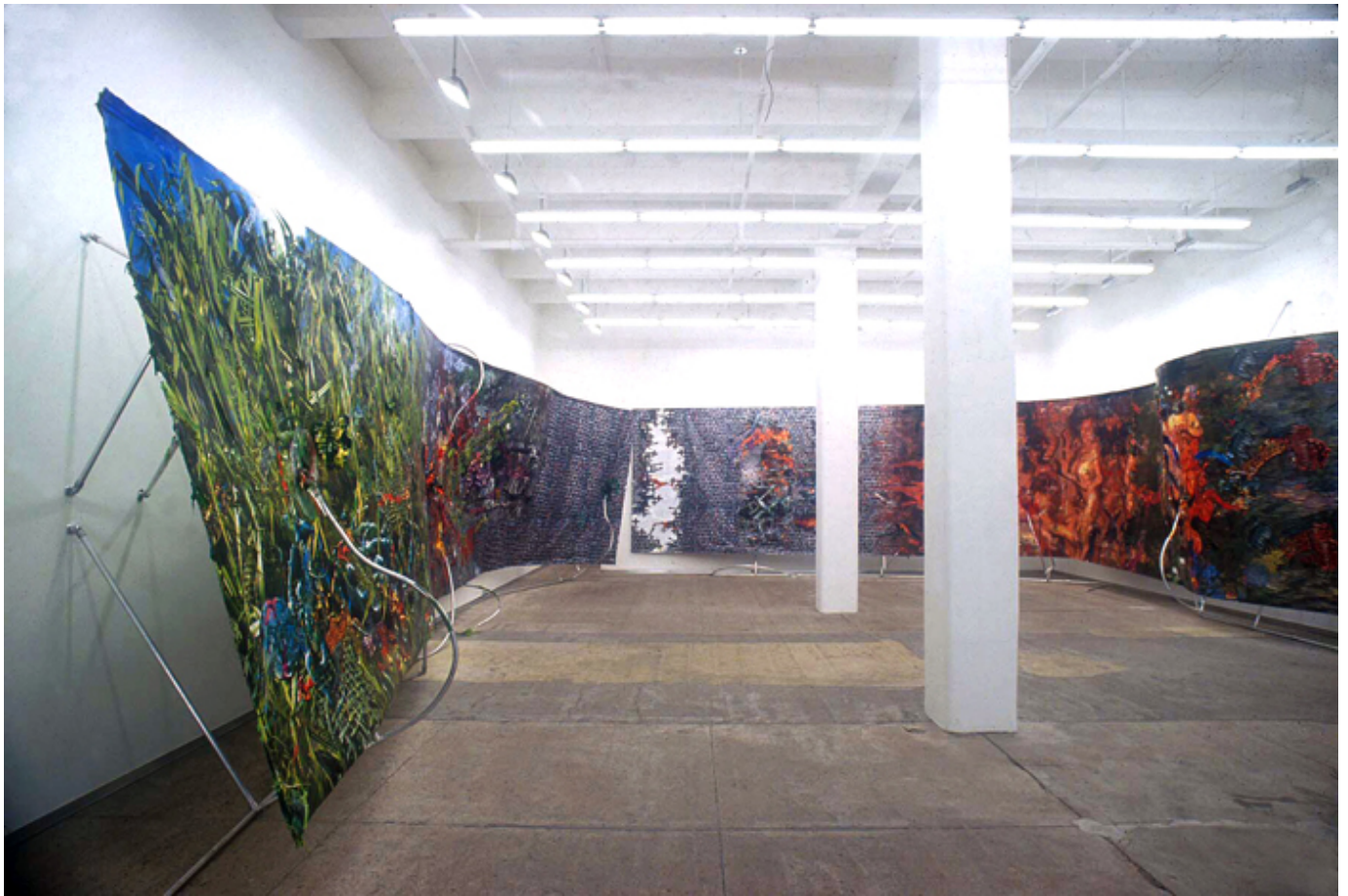
FM: I always emphasize that my intention is not about pictorial monumentality, it is more about having a scale that really permits you to walk and observe. So, it is really more about time, space, and materials in a given architectonic site and how the piece carries you through in multiple ways.



Fabian Marcaccio, *Altered Genetics of Painting # 4*, 1992/93. Silicone gel, oil on printed fabric and linen, wood, plaster and pigment. 100 x 170 inches (variable). Courtesy Gorney Bravin Lee, New York



Fabian Marcaccio, *Para-Military Fantasy*, 1996. Water and oil based paint on canvas, copper tubing and nylon ropes. 108 x 120 inches. Courtesy Galeria Joan Prats, Barcelona



Fabian Marcaccio, Time Paintant, 1999. Pigmented ink on canvas, silicone, poly-optic resins and oil on metal structure.

17 x 22 feet. Courtesy Gorney Bravin Lee, New York



Fabian Marcaccio, Tingler, 1999. Pigment inks on vinyl, oil, acrylic, silicone and polymer on metal structure. Dimensions variable. Secession Museum, Vienna, Austria. Collaboration with Greg Lynn



Fabian Marcaccio, *Confine Paintant (Destroyed)*, 2003. Pigmented ink on canvas, silicone, poly-optic resins and oil on wood and metal structure.

6 ft. x 6 in. x 295 ft. Triennial for Art by the Sea, Seascape in Confrontation, Beaufort, Belgium



Fabian Marcaccio, UN Paintant, 2005. Pigmented ink on canvas, aluminum, alkyd paint and silicone. 110 x 185 x 216 inches. Courtesy Galerie Thomas Schulte, Berlin



FM

Fabian Marcaccio, *Conjecture*, 2011. Ink on vellum. 12 x 9 inches. Courtesy Galerie Thomas Schulte, Berlin



Fabian Marcaccio, *Transport*, 2013. Hand woven manilla rope, climbing rope, alkyd paint, silicone and wood. 82 x 94 x 5 inches. Courtesy Galerie Thomas Schulte, Berlin



Paul Laster

Paul Laster is a writer, editor, independent curator, artist, and lecturer. He is a New York desk editor at ArtAsiaPacific and a contributing editor at FLATT Magazine and ArtBahrain. He was the founding

editor of Artkrush.com and Artspace.com; started The Daily Beast's art section;and was art editor of Flavorpill.com and Russell Simmons OneWorld magazine. He is a frequent contributor to Time Out New York, Art in America, Modern Painters, ArtPulse, Flash Art, Newsweek, Bomb Magazine, ArtInfo.com, TheDailyBeast.com.