

Adrift
by Erin Manning



Reunification 48"x72" – Margarita Lypiridou 2012

Years ago, I saw a print very much like this painting. It was in the context of an MFA critique in Print Media. This earlier work, from the 2007 *In Transit* series (see image below), is called back every time I look at Margarita Lypiridou's recent series of paintings. A copy of the print now hangs above my staircase and every day as I walk down the stairs, I look at its stillness-in-movement and I wonder at the medium's capacity to make felt the fullness of movement's potentiality through the stark black lines of ink. Now, invited to write on the paintings these prints have in some sense become, I find myself returning to the prints and wondering about medium-specificity, wondering about what paint can do that print but gestures toward, and what print can do that painting misses. For there is no question that Lypiridou is both a print-maker and a painter, and that the between of these mediums plays in her technique, in the activation of how movement figures both in the 2007 digital prints from the *In Transit* series, and in the 2012 series *Drift II Dérive*.

Technique, as I understand it, is what incites the medium's potential to come to the fore. Yet technique, the how of working with the singularity of a given platform, is also that,



In Transit # 2, Margarita Lypiridou 2007

which both makes and unmakes the medium. It brings out its specificity, and at its best, finds ways to go beyond what the medium can do. This second aspect of technique, where the work outdoes itself, I call technicity. Technicity is the event of the work's emergence beyond what the medium proposes, beyond the way the medium generally expresses itself.

The question of technicity is, it seems to me, the question of art. For art can never find its expression solely in technique. Technique is its support, its backbone, the field of play from which it generates. But technicity is its power of invention, its movement.

In Margarita Lypiridou's work, the expressivity is always allied to the potential of the medium: the medium's materiality is foregrounded. And yet what always strikes me in her work is its capacity to defy the medium, or to find ways

for mediums to begin to share resources, to co-compose with the very technicity of their outdoing. This, I want to emphasize, is not a superficial gesture. It is not about making print "look" less like print, or to make painting "seem" like print. It is to take the force of form one medium activates and compose with this force in another medium. It is to work with the tendential acrossness, which is at the heart of all mediums, and of all techniques.

The *In Transit* series is composed of several large-scale black ink prints on white paper, digital prints almost human size. In the *In Transit* series, the medium of the digital print foregrounds the starkness of the intensive passage between a body and its movement, emphasizing the drift between here and there, the body's transitory quality. The prints "body" in a way that induces a sense of vertigo - we look for but cannot locate the stark contour the ink seems to promise. Instead of seeing "body" we see movement, and it destabilizes us, the paradox of believing we "should" be able to see is undoing us of the certainty of looking, the certainty the medium seems to promise. And there's something about the flatness, about the paper and ink, linked to a constitutive blurriness of the sharp image, that seems counterintuitive. We look again, we can't help but look for the contour, for the body, for the representation, yet, again and again what we see instead is the vertigo induced by our incapacity to see the demarcation between the line and its drift.

In transit: a body across, a body multiple, bodying here and there at once.

Drift II Dérive at first glance seems to do the opposite, turning to the body-solitary, giving it back to us fully-formed, on its own, still. But when we look more closely, we see that in fact this series is an accentuation of *In Transit*, returning to the body in movement (despite the apparent stillness) to see how the medium of paint can activate the transit, how paint can foreground the acrossness of a bodying in movement. It does so not by making the body move, but by making the landscape move, bodies in its midst.



In Time, Margarita Lypiridou 2012

Drift II Dérive takes us back to the instance of the uncanniness of line from the digital print series and seeks to create an affective continuity across mediums with not the body as the subject, but movement itself. But where it was the body itself that could be undone (or outdone) by the limits of digital print-making, this time it's less the body as such that is undone than its apparent foregrounding. For the body oscillates more than it stands out, accentuating a movement of foreground-background that was unavailable in the print medium. And so we find ourselves in the technicity where mediums meet less at the level of representation than of affect.

The *Drift II Dérive* series seems gentler at first glance. It softens the perceptual quandary, for it allows us to see, to look, more calmly, into a merging of movement with

stillness. That it can do this is partly due to the medium: paint can accentuate more than one quality of movement at once, giving us a layering effect that invites the merging of a horizontal and a vertical looking where landscape and figure can coexist. Lypiridou speaks of this in relation to the contrapuntal movement of the brush stroke. In an email correspondence she writes of "feeling opposite forces" when she is working, of moving "with a beat," in tandem "with the rhythm of the brushstroke," "feeling opposing forces."

To move with the rhythm of force in the brushstroke is to work with the technique of painting. It is to move with its potential - to feel, as Lypiridou writes, "the wind, ephemerality, change" in the horizontal movement, even while working with what she calls the "vertical dripping," "the continuity of movement" that brings out what she calls the palimpsest, the painting's layering, which is not only the painting's materiality but the force of its moving-with. Mix this with the affect of blur accentuated through the earlier prints and what you have is an emergent technicity that develops itself across mediums and yet honors what the singular medium can do. For what Lypiridou speaks of when she writes of force and rhythm is the painting not of a form but of movement itself. She moves to paint, and paints movement.

To paint movement is to paint across figures without using them as final resting points.



This, it seems to me, is what the earlier print series has allowed Lypiridou to feel: that what is at stake is less the stark line than what the line can do for perception's edging into image. This is what Lypiridou paints in *Drift II Dérive*, this is the contrapuntal rhythm she seeks and finds. And it is this rhythm we see: not bodies, but multiplicities. in movement.

To think of a body as a rhythm rather than as a stable entity may seem counterintuitive, but one need only look at Lypiridou's work to feel what is at stake in this outdoing of form. The bodies here are interchangeable, faceless, turned away, always, from their innate tendency to "represent." They are material not in the sense that they "stand in" for a

human body, but material in the sense that they activate a field of perception. What we see is not a body per se, but the material effects of a process in the bodying.

This was perhaps "easier" to "unsee" in the prints, for there the body was dizzying in its incompleteness. In the paintings, the body stands out in a way that makes it feel more formed. Yet if we look with and across the canvas, perceiving the canvas in its totality, what we find that we see are less bodies than brushstrokes, the materiality of a rhythm

that makes felt the tension between the vertical and the horizontal, between ephemerality and palimpsest, and, if we look closely, again, we find we see not the foregrounded form of the body, but the backgrounded unformings of bodies that are not yet, or always already. In movement.

What we see in Lypiridou's paintings is this movement, the quality of the paint in rhythm with the stroke that never rests, moving incessantly across and down, not so much blurring the form as discovering and occluding it, foregrounding its inability to take final form.

And so whereas in the prints the very medium of the paper/ink forced us toward the disappearance of the body-as-such, into its blurriness, focused as we were always on the blackness of the defeated form, what the paintings can do is to take us not into the body's deformation as such but into its beyond, into the landscape of its undoing. And so we find ourselves looking toward the beyond of form, to the drift where paint and figure no longer coincide, to the very quality of the background, which, if we observe long enough, becomes foreground. And here, in the betweenness of figure and drift, what



we see, again - for this is the refrain - is movement in its infinite instability. And here, with this instability, comes the sense that there are bodyings in the offing, not figures or forms, but movements in the making.

What are these movements? Where are they going? I believe there is always something, in Lypiridou's work, which gestures to this question. For the movement we perceive in her work has an unnerving quality, an uneasiness to it. It gestures not only to the impossibility of standing still, to the insufficiency of medium as such, to the necessity of technicity's outdoing, to the philosophical refrain that what a body does, what it is, is movement, but to something else, something allied

to the quality of lurking I mentioned above. For what is coming forward from the background never feels easy.

This lurking tendency comes out in the paintings in a way that the prints couldn't have easily managed without

falling into representation. For the unease is not something we see. It is something we feel, gesturing as it does to the limit of expression where affect and perception are one. And this is something Lypiridou makes use of: paintings's capacity to create affective resonance through the rhythm of brushstrokes, through the intensity of colour folding through figure.

Take *Le feu rouge* (24x20), with its figures disappearing into the darkness, the red of the foreground in contrapuntal rhythm not only with the quivering of its blackening background but with the figures themselves, tending to red in the distance. Here, with the sense of a liquid gravity, of a landscape tense with foreboding, the feeling is one of deepest sadness, a loss, an endless flow of a certain quality of aloneness. For the bodies, in all their figural unease, are not together. They multiply alone, wandering in a landscape that refutes easy limits. Lost, lurking in the beyond of representation.

The drift, the loss, is felt more than it is seen, felt in the faint blurring of black into red, in the vertical drippings of red into black, in the highlighting of red hands onto disappearing



black bodies, in the blackness of shadows emanating from bodies almost-red. Paint and body are one, red-black, moving in a rhythm where landscape and body are co-constituting, co-composing. This is what painting can do: make felt, with rhythm and brushstroke, the terrible loss of direction that is at the heart of drift.

And then, in *Ça pourrait être moi* (24x24), a touch of whimsy. A sense, perhaps, that was lies (or floats) in the offing can perhaps be less threatening, less all-consuming than the inevitable loss of direction that overshadows the limitlessness of the force of movement.

Here, in this painting where the body perhaps retains more stubbornly its form, the brushstrokes seeming to invite the body into the landscape (or are they covering it up?), layering it with the snow of its surround, the red umbrella feels like an invitation to believe, for an ephemeral moment, as the little prince does, in the force of a flower that grows, all alone, on a planet otherwise uninhabitable.

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