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BY ANDY CAMPBELL, MAY 4, 2012, ARTS

How and why does one become an abstract painter? Although an entrenched Austinite by now, artist Court Lurie began her career in education, activism, and administration with arts nonprofits in Albuquerque, N.M. Ten years ago, after "talking about artwork, but never making it," Lurie quit her day job and dedicated a breakthrough year to producing paintings more abstract than any she had made before. She has since spent a decade developing her distinct style. These are canvases with often dense layers of building, scraping, and manipulating paint – Lurie's hallmark style. But her most recent series of paintings, named after an inner alter ego full of strength and vigor, are lighter and sparser.

Austin Chronicle: *There's a trend in your new work toward a scrawling kind of mark-making; can you talk about where that comes from?*

Court Lurie: My two favorite artists are Gerhard Richter and Cy Twombly at the moment. The experience I had seeing the Western Wall in Jerusalem is similar to the experience I have every time when I visit the Cy Twombly Gallery [in Houston]. To get to this point, I had to work against what I was taught in art school, which was a more rigid aesthetic environment, and being the daughter of an interior designer. These paintings are process-oriented for me, and I never have an idea of what it's going to be.

AC: *I bet that's scary.*

CL: It's totally scary – fucking terrifying!

AC: *It seems you have a grammar of marks that you use consistently. Do you name these elements?*

CL: I don't, but I did start a notebook of some of the elements I create, like a glossary, so I can remember these 46 elements I've created. It's a working document, not just archival; it's active. It's like teaching abstract painting. I don't think you can teach abstract painting, but you can show people how to use materials and push them. The experience I have in my studio is about me and the materials.

AC: *So your exhibition is a part of the West Austin Studio Tour, a new event that seems to have cropped up in response to the East Austin Studio Tour. Do you think there's a false dichotomy at play here?*

CL: Well, I'm excited to be a part of it. Any opportunity for the public to see and experience art in a creative way, especially in artists' studios, is beneficial for everybody. It creates and fosters relationships between the artists and a public, just people. Forget about selling, art community, academics – I think we've lost so much connection to human creativity. Connecting to any piece of the human experience, for example, vulnerability, which is really what my work is about, is connecting to something bigger.

AC: *So why do you think designers are so keen to work your paintings into their aesthetics?*

CL: You mean besides that the paintings will be worth \$50,000 in a year? [laughs] Working with designers is nice, because I self-represent in Austin, and it's great to have creative conversations with designers. There's a breathing room – ah, you have a wall that needs art!