

Galerie Louis Gendre

FROM FREEFORM TO CONTROLLED AND BACK  
Paintings by Susan Shup



SWEET EMOTION, 2012, huile sur toile, 60x73 cm

Susan Shup is an American artist who has lived and worked in Paris since the 1980's. She mixes personal historical elements with those of art and pop culture, like rock music and fashion, to create her witty and vibrant paintings. Often begun with landscape in mind, the large color fields that she creates are influenced by American abstract expressionism, American Indian art, especially Navaho, and French graphic art from the beginning of the last century. In her *language paintings*, she transcribes words and texts directly from the oil paint tube onto canvas, often covering the entire surface, like in Asian calligraphic painting. Her work is a clever mix and she alternates with complete freedom between figuration, abstraction, and language painting. Susan Shup uses language in a dada-like "out of context" way, where the words are treated abstractly, but she also likes telling stories in her paintings and they are usually stories about artists, or words referencing particular events. The pop content renders user-friendly what is essentially a serious act, that of painting.

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During an interview at her studio, Susan Shup talks to us about her work:

I organize my work in series, and over the years these series have regularly morphed into one another. I like painting in different ways, but usually not simultaneously – I concentrate on one group until I'm done. Often it's a conscious choice to change direction, but not always – things just happen. Transitions occur. It's a luxury that I allow myself. I don't have to get stuck. Though everything is related, anything is possible. It keeps me interested, inspired and in the studio.



FELIX, 2013, oil on canvas, 120x120 cm

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About a year and a half ago the words in the text-driven oil paintings that I had been making started becoming more sparse. Eventually they disappeared, giving way to gestures and marks, to a painterly abstraction, involving a more physical painting process.



GOOGLE ME, 2014, oil and graphite on paper, 76x56 cm

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AU REVOIR À BIENTÔT, 2014, huile sur papier arches, 56x76 cm

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PUNKY, 2014, huile sur papier arches, 76x56 cm

I was painting quickly, mostly with water-based paint, india ink and big brushes I had bought in China. I'd pin the large paper paintings on the wall and scatter them on the floor to dry until there'd be no more room in the studio. Every morning I'd review them, select some finished works, and add layers to rework others. I spent about six months doing this. It was very liberating; my arm, my eyes and my mind's eye got good exercise.

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One day In 2014, I sat down at my drawing table and made the first of what turned out to be a series of fifteen simple, geometric paintings on the biggest sheets of paper I could find, and on canvases. They were very cool to make; I would leave them overnight and seeing them the next day was always intense.



SERIES B8, 2014, mixed media on paper, 110x75 cm

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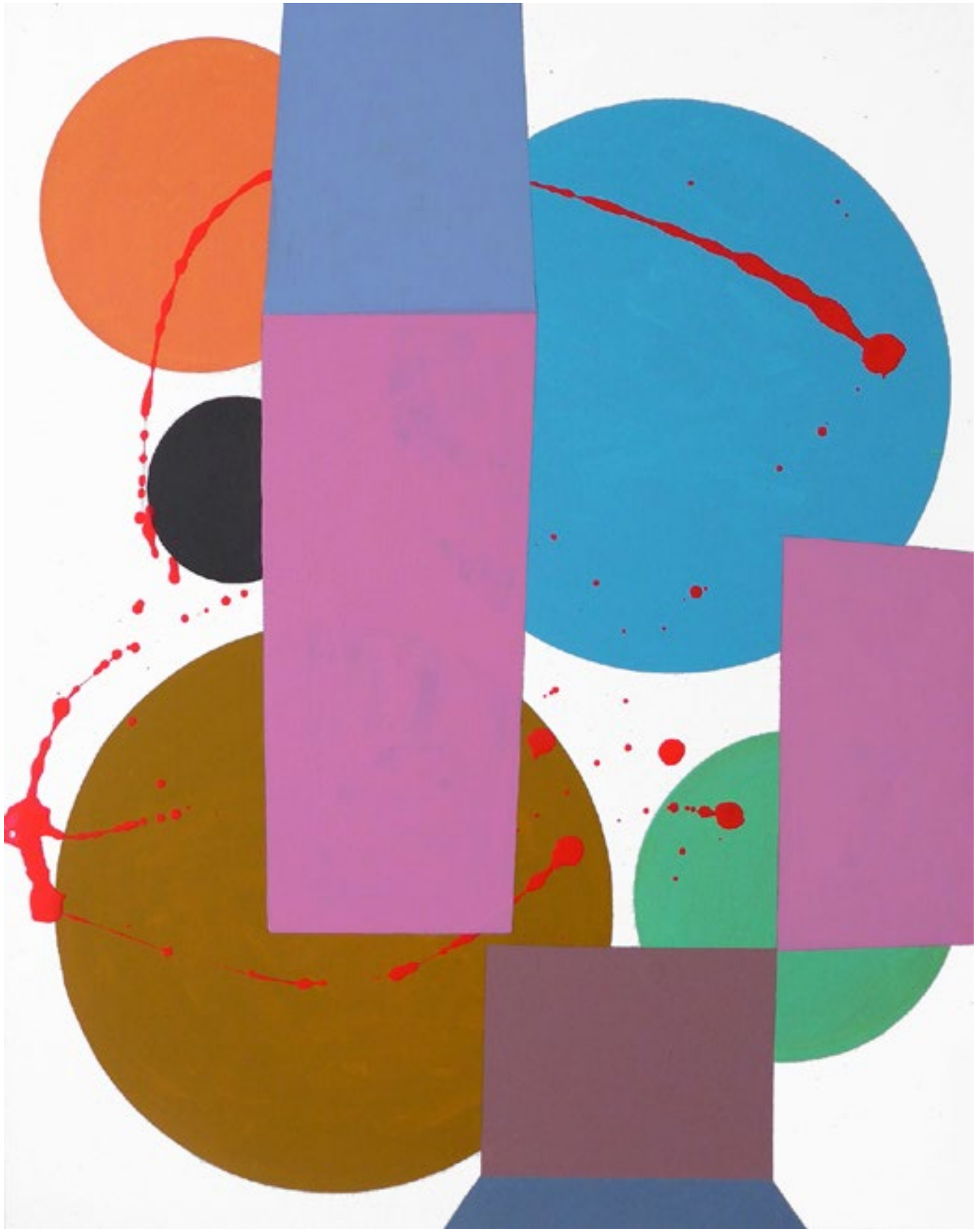
I spent a lot of time everyday just looking at the paintings in relation to each other. The studio was jazzy, jumpin', charged. The composition of the many colored forms on the paintings reverberated a lot like the multi-colored letters of the words on my language paintings. In both cases the paintings were like performances «of sound and vision» to quote David Bowie.



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At one point, I squirted a bottle of orange day-glo paint all over one neat painting. Voilà. It was now infused with the expressionist work of the previous series. New possibilities were presenting themselves.



CORVETTE, 2015, mixed media sur toile, 100x80 cm

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RETURNING, 2015, mixed media on paper, 100x80 cm

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Now, new language paintings are emerging. I'm curious to see how they may be informed by the last works. I've come from freeform to controlled and back.

The title of the exhibition explains these different transitions. From freeform with spontaneous, automatic paintings to total control and back again in a state of perpetual motion.

This interview with Susan Shup was made in October, 2015



ALOHA, 2015, huile sur toile, 100x81 cm

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# Galerie Louis Gendre

**OPENING NOVEMBER 26 AT 6:00 P.M.**

**Exhibition from November 27 to January 16, 2016**

**GALERIE LOUIS GENDRE**

**7, rue Charles Fournier**

**63400 Chamalières**

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