

Melissa Kretschmer

*1962 Santa Monica, California, USA

Plane Series – Water Bodies

May 22nd to July 1st 2014



Rio, 2014



Source, 2014

The beauty of Melissa Kretschmer's work lies in the deft placement of geometric planes and the subtle interplay of varying hues of her materials: natural wood, vellum, gesso, gouache and beeswax. The process of building up opaque and translucent layers gives them both depth and a subtle luminosity, while the sculptural relief adds a physical presence and alternate focal point. This interaction between light, luminosity, opacity and physical structure stimulates the imagination and gives each piece a life of its own.

Plane Series – Water Bodies

In 1988 Melissa completed her degree at the Art Center College of Design, in Pasadena, and she started to focus her attention on the materials, their underlying structures and subtle changes when combined with each other.

This places Melissa Kretschmer's work between painting and sculpting. Although color is given a subtle role in her work, it is always deeply connected with the material that carries it. She does not consider herself as a colorist in any traditional way, but rather she makes an interplay of the colors that are inherent to the materials. *'I think of myself as a lazy colorist... I rather rely on my materials to do the work for me.'*

Instead, she brings textures and layers together while making use of their translucence, matteness and fluidity... thus involving what ultimately proves to be central to her work...*how matter reveals as much about light as light reveals about matter... how the two reveal each other's continual states of change.*

In the newest works within the series, called *Water Bodies*, the artist has pared her materials down by omitting previously used black graphite with the intention of drawing more complexity out of fewer elements. Vellum, favored now over opaque paper, takes a greater role and large sheets are pre-painted with loose brush strokes on one or both sides and then torn into smaller sheets and glued down to the wood surface in a collage-like manner. This allows the color of the wood to still remain visible to some degree and imparts a more open and airy quality. In works like *Source* and *Rio* edges are brought to the center of the work and cuts are made all the way through the surface of the work, both exposing the wall behind and the center of the work itself, as well as affording the possibility to apply paint the very inside of the work.

When talking about her work, Melissa Kretschmer prefers to use the term 'accuracy': *'Accuracy is about the rightness of the whole entity rather than the fit of its individual parts. While accuracy does not preclude imperfection, precision does and often at the loss of a sense of the whole.'* And furthermore: *'I feel myself moving more and more towards the actual interior of the work, towards the idea of penetrating the surface to show that painting is not just about surface and support. There is color and texture to be drawn out of the center of the material.'*