

## Mollie Douthit

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### Statement

My creative process begins with a memory; it could be a drinking glass from childhood or a funny story. Often ideas for paintings arrive in my mind during states of daydreaming — possibly during a walk or after a conversation that elicits memories of the past. My work reexamines all kinds of memories: happy, difficult, bittersweet, nostalgic. It is simply the file cabinet of my mind being slowly pulled out and exposed through the medium of paint.

To begin a painting, I might develop little more than a signifying shape or memorable color; if other details are vague in my mind, I allow them to be vague in the painting. For example, I remember eating a bowl of cheerios at my babysitter's house as a child. The bowl I was eating from was plastic Tupperware — olive green with steep edges. This information led me to paint a simple olive-green isosceles trapezoid, mimicking what I see in my mind's eye — the result is a simple, yet precise image of what I remember. I was four years old, eating this bowl of cereal. I was homesick and frustrated with my lack of autonomy. My stomach ached, knowing it would be hours before I saw my mom or dad again. Over time, though, emotions evolve and now this achy memory also comes with a rush of gratitude because I know now that I was deeply loved and cared for by my parents and babysitter. A painting is, in this way, a space to depict what I felt in the past as well as an opportunity to develop new emotions upon careful reflection.

My process is rarely efficient. For example, I might paint my favorite reading chair from childhood only to remember the color of the wall behind it is different from what I had initially thought and painted. Pleased with one part of the painting, I must carefully navigate my brush around it to correct parts that are not working. I have come to love this aspect of painting, because I am caring for something flawed, working towards improvement and a feeling of contentment.

As I develop the work, I wonder, 'how can I make this object or space just as emotive as it is in my mind?' Often, I consider the divide between the actual event and its existence as memory — one operates in the physical world, the other in the mental plane; I like to think that the act of painting bridges these two. Though these memories are my own, I trust that their vulnerability and honesty will allow a baseline of universal emotion to come through. A painting is complete with a sense of crisp, clicking closure — suddenly the emotions I feel for the subject parallel what I feel when looking at the painting — it is like a door locking shut. This finality to the image is also difficult because it means I more than likely will not return to this particular subject.

I intend the paintings to have an arresting quality, holding the attention of the viewer; I want them to ring with familiarity and mystery simultaneously. The title of each work is like a trail of breadcrumbs for my own mind — it might reference other events related to a particular memory, or moments that are connected to the time when I made the work. It's important to me that the titles are nonlinear and that the viewer is left with more questions than answers. In this way, I bring the viewer into a state of wondering about these spaces and subjects. Because none of what we remember is certain or ever fully known.