

**REVIEW – Alexis Austin’s *Welcome to the Traffic Jam*
at Oklahoma City Community College’s Inasmuch Foundation Gallery
August 7 through October 31, 2018**

Does an exhibition need to be consistent in order to be successful? I hope not, because the 31 paintings of Alexis Austin’s *Welcome to the Traffic Jam* stage an elegant riot against aesthetic unity, presenting a daring cacophony of styles and materials. The incisiveness of each individual work is sharpened by resisting assimilation to any kind of summative statement.

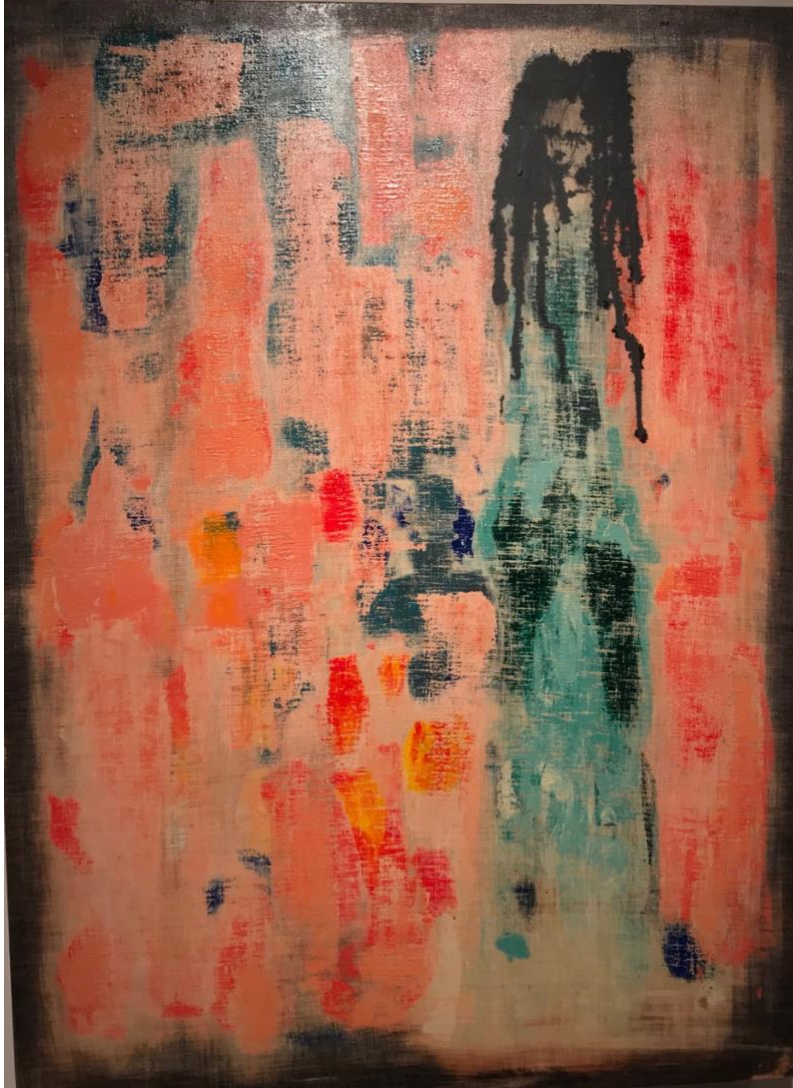
Austin has written: “I feel uncomfortable calling myself an artist. So I don’t. I paint and I make.” Her anti-institutional conviction finds traction here by excluding oil and canvas entirely in favor of a dynamic mix of acrylics, dyes, gold leaf, pools of resin, and an occasional corrosive wash of bleach applied to surfaces of linen, muslin, silk, and evanescent tulle.

Despite her iconoclasm, however, Austin remains a painter’s painter. Celebrating a vibrant color spectrum, her work often recalls Matisse or Miro in its figural precision, but just as often her figures bleed off and simmer with the cheery violence of Bourgeois, de Kooning, even Art Brut. Also jockeying for position in the *Traffic Jam* are confidently realized abstract works reminiscent of Helen Frankenthaler or Gerhard Richter.

Each painting is succinct unto itself, and so this show’s unabashed heteroglossia emerges as a strength, testifying honestly to contemporary experience as multiple, fractal, occasional, and always mediated. To consider just one painting, Austin’s deft layering and effacement in “Possible Self” achieves a simultaneous coming-into-being and erasure of its female figure that stands powerfully as an analogue for this artist at work.



1 Alexis Austin's *Welcome to the Traffic Jam*, corner view of the Inasmuch Gallery at Oklahoma City Community College



2 Alexis Austin, "Possible Self", 2016. Bleach and acrylic on linen, 24 X 22.5 inches



3 Alexis Austin's Welcome to the Traffic Jam in the Inasmuch Gallery at Oklahoma City Community College