

An abstract geometric pattern on a teal background. It features a grid of thin blue lines. Overlaid on this are various shapes: small squares and rectangles in a light orange or tan color, some of which are partially filled with a darker teal. There are also larger, irregular shapes in a vibrant orange and a deep blue. Thin, curved lines in a dark red or maroon color sweep across the composition, intersecting the grid and other shapes. The overall effect is a complex, layered geometric design.

**Nothing,
Then Everything**

Introduction

Power Boothe takes an improvisational approach to painting. Using a grid structure as a starting point, he engages line, color, shape, texture, and rhythm in the moment to produce a lyrical and contemplative work of art.

Nothing, Then Everything showcases Boothe's large-scale abstract paintings in dialogue with his smaller canvases and works on paper, exploring his work and process. The exhibition's title derives from one of the exhibition's most evocative paintings, opening up a range of ideas and associations. What does it mean? Indeed, much is open-ended, inviting viewers to consider the visual elements at hand.

This exhibition traces the threads and shifts in Power Boothe's explorations over five decades of painting, with energetic, colorful, and bold canvases, as well as more quietly compelling ones. Boothe's drawings are a focus of the Hazlewood gallery, which contains framed works on paper as well as sketchbooks full of vivid compositions.

In his art and his teaching—Boothe is a Professor of Painting at the Hartford Art School, having served as Dean there for a decade—the artist draws on a wide range of ideas and experiences. He remains deeply grounded in material and technique, while his work soars with abstract and poetic connections.

We are grateful to Power Boothe and the Fred Giampietro Gallery for sharing this artwork with us.

Sam Quigley, Director
Lyman Allyn Art Museum

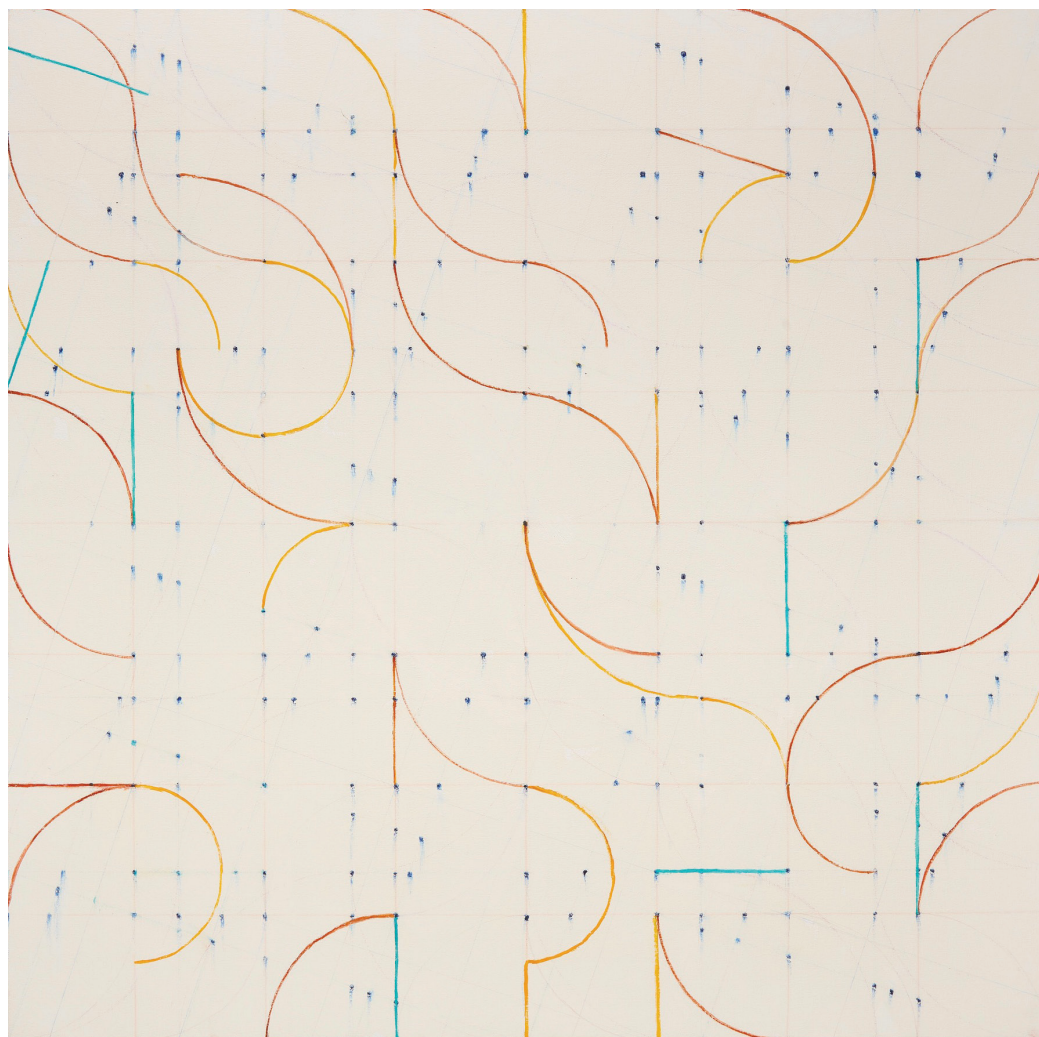
On the cover

Nothing then Everything, 2019
Oil on canvas
72 x 72 inches

On view
May 11 - August 4, 2024



Gate, 2023
Oil on canvas
72 x 72 inches



Free Fall, 2022
Oil on canvas
48 x 48 inches

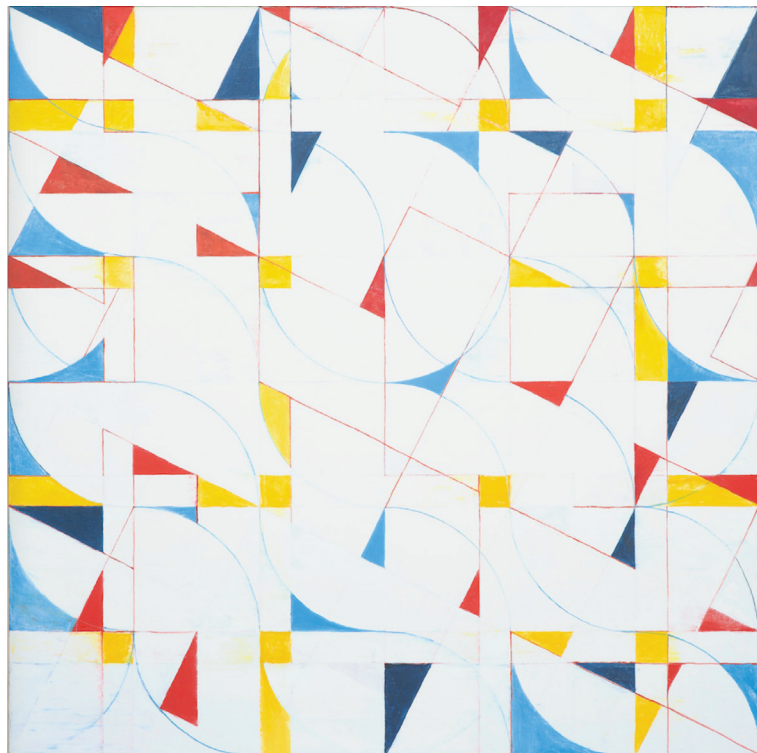
Power Boothe, Poet of Being

by George Smith

Founder and President / Edgar E. Coons, Jr., Professor of New Philosophy
Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts

In one way or another, all poetry, all art, not least but perhaps especially as regards the art of healing, speaks about wonderment, about the primordial essence of being as a sacred grace, as a gift. Only rarely, though, does art or poetry, or philosophy or science, whatever its form or medium or style, speak *through* and *with* and *in* the poetic word as it took root in primeval consciousness. Whenever this unlikely event occurs, the human spirit plucks at the unfathomable string that vibrates the length of history and pre-history. Here and there, in other words, the artist-philosopher comes along whose voice, whose poetic attunement, resonates the string which connects poetic thinking to the originary site of wonderment.

To name an artist-philosopher of the present day, or more particularly, a painter of our time, one such name would be Power Boothe, the poet of Being. For the past half-century and more, Power Boothe has been a poetic thinker and maker of authentic art. When he first started out, the understated style and Velazquez-like workmanship—especially in the brushwork and its multi-tonal play with light—showed through plain and simple, even in the frenzied commotion of the New York scene, where every other week, a new star was born.



Recapitulation, 2019
Oil on canvas
72 x 72 inches

Following those heady days—from the mid 'sixties up through the 'nineties, let's say—not a few if not most of those stars faded or burned out. Often as not, they were simulations of brilliance. Quick to fame, the money cooled, and the collectors moved on. I remark these days not to cop a superior look back, but only to suggest that conversely, very quietly, working at his own pace, seeking a way into the nature of things from the vantage point of poetic thinking, Power Boothe read books, shop-talked with fellow artists, mentored aspirants, created set designs, led institutions, and made paintings and drawings.

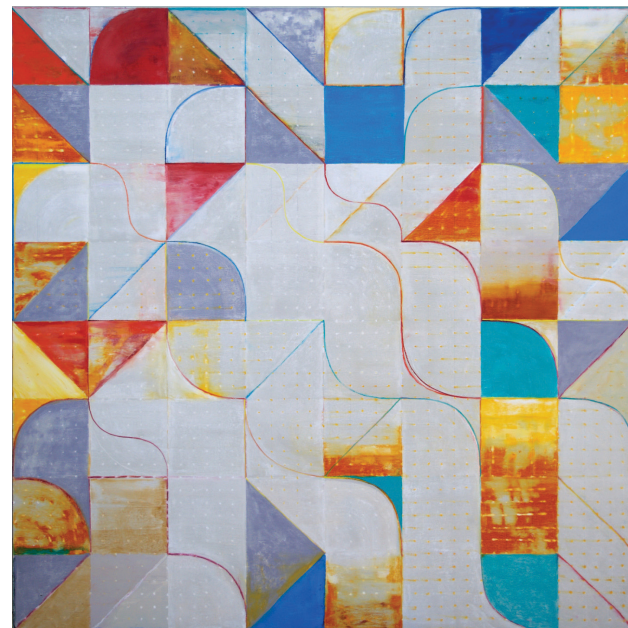


Right

Long Tail, 2016
Oil on canvas
72 x 72 inches



Transient, 2016
Oil on canvas
72 x 72 inches



Interlude, 2016
Oil on canvas
72 x 72 inches

Yes, the galleries called, *Artforum* wrote, the Guggenheim exhibited. But self-promotion was not Power Boothe's thing. Nor was spectacle or loud banging. Quietude, meditative thinking, inward joy, friendliness, endless wonder and gratitude—these were and remain the tools of his lifework, the ingredients of his style. We might say this style never asserts its own worth. Rather, it awaits blossoming and fruition.

Awaiting and blossoming and fruition occur in time, as *time*. Just as Maori time traverse the mythopoetic past, present, and future, each temporality contained within the timeless span of time and simultaneously in the now of an instant—and just as the same can be said for all cultures that originate and exist outside of Western scientific-temporal consciousness—so the artist-philosopher thinks and works in ancestral time. Though his/her begotten and begets descend and ascend from and to poetic thinkers of an un-blooded line, still, his/her temporal existence is that of ancestral time. Which is to say that Power Boothe's style represents time, ancestral time, time that ranges all the way back to Laozi and before him to the archaic shamans, and all the way forward to Sherrie Levine and Wim Wenders.

In this light we can look briefly at one of Power Boothe's more recent paintings, *Time Being #2*. I say briefly only because everything we've said so far has to do with this painting. More directly, we can say right off that *Time Being #2* stands in ancestral relation to *Being and Time*, Heidegger's monumental attempt at understanding time as existing outside of Western scientific-synthetic time. *Being and Time* ranks among the most famous of all philosophical works across the ages. And yet Heidegger would say that *Being and Time* failed. Whether as failure or merely incomplete, *Being and Time* could not carry through to its end. It lacked poetic thinking, lacked the thinking and practice of the artist-philosopher. Not until Heidegger devoted his thinking to the attentive study of poets and artists did he find the wherewithal to write about time from within poetic time, from inside the consciousness of ancestral time, time as it is poetically represented in *Time Being #2*.

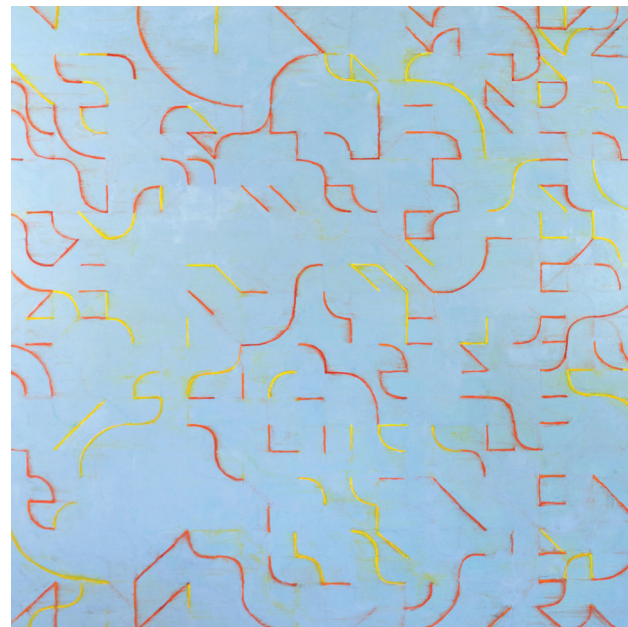
And just as *Time Being #2* puts the original *Time Being* behind it and therefore reverses it, so Heidegger's "Time and Being" puts *Being and Time* behind it and therefore reverses it. The notorious reversal of Being and Time to "Time and Being" marks Heidegger's stepping back from Western scientific-temporality, into poetic-ancestral time, in which is blended poetic thinking and philosophy. Similarly, when *Time Being #2* reverses *Time Being*, it goes back to the place where *Time Being* loses its way and starts forward again from there, toward poetic time.



Time Being #2, 2022
Oil on canvas
72 x 72 inches



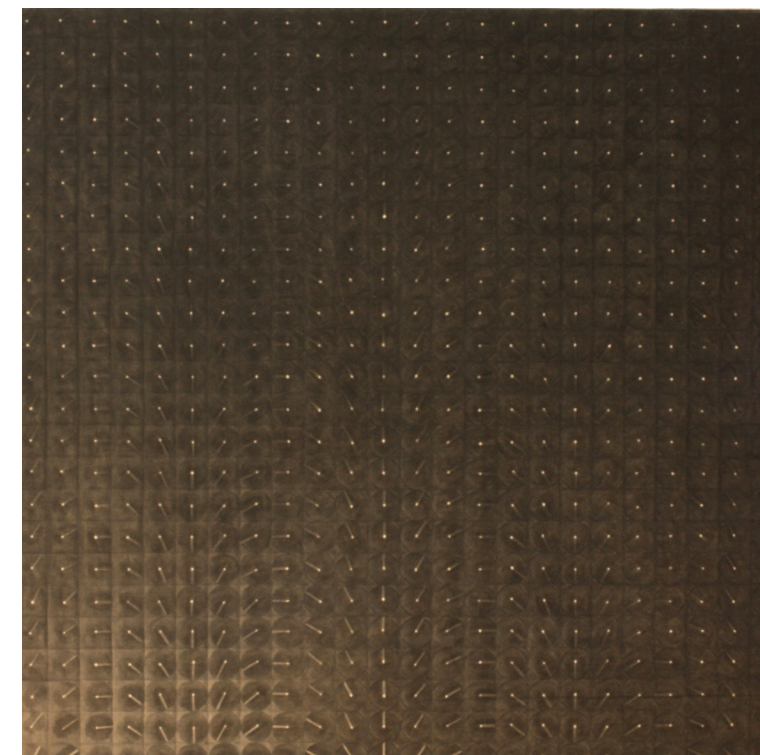
Heracleitean Fire, 2013
Oil on canvas
72 x 72 inches



Broken Arc, 2016
Oil on canvas
72 x 72 inches

Perhaps, then, it was no accident that Power Boothe suggested I read a recent book by Carlo Rovelli, the historian of science and theorist of quantum mechanics. Rovelli's *Helgoland* tells the story of how a scientific revolution came about, not by invention of pure scientific genius, but as an emergent moment in the poetic thinking of an artist-philosopher, Werner Heisenberg.

The young physicist had always been drawn to Helgoland due in part to its mythopoetic origins. Now he went to the windswept and treeless island in the North Sea in search of healing and solitude. With him, he brought Goethe's translation of the great Persian poet, Hafez. Reading the great German poet's translation of the great Persian poet late into the night, Heisenberg awoke the next morning vaguely aware of something strange. He walked outside to clear his head in the morning light. Coming to the sea-bluffs, he braced against a fresh wind. As the night's reading returned to his clearing thoughts, out of the blue, quantum theory came to him. The wonderment of the Persian poet in German translation, East to West, West to East, had opened Heisenberg's thinking to a realm of scientific thought that existed far, far beyond the borders of Western logic. In the poetic space between East and West, between art and science, the uncertainty principle was born.



Hours, 1973
Acrylic on canvas
72 x 72 inches

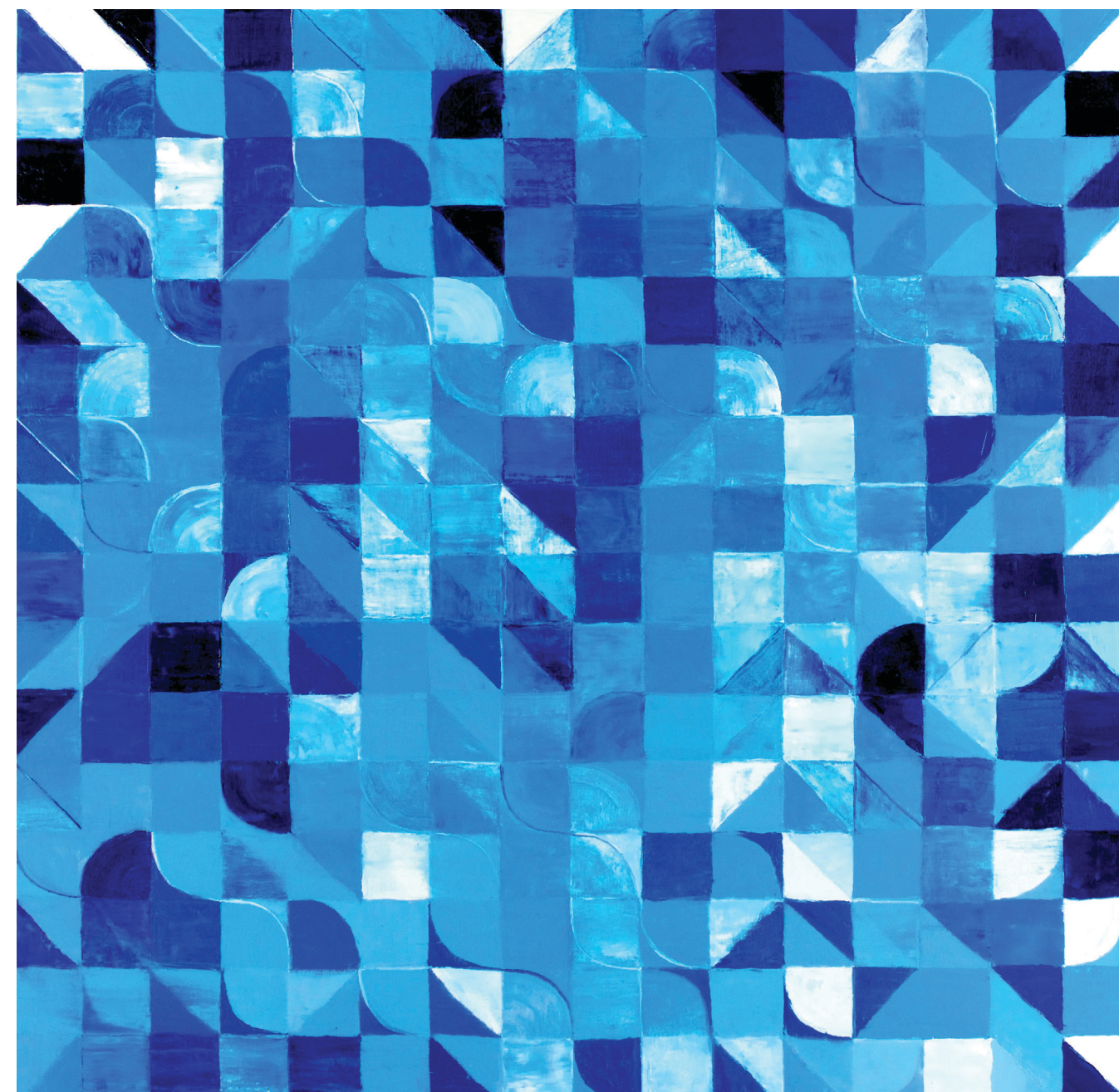
As a matter of poetic thinking, Power Boothe's *Time Being #2* has everything to do with Heisenberg's quantum theory. There are many possible explanations for this. But the one I want to touch on is the one we're already talking about, the difference between Western scientific temporality and ancestral time.

Scientific time, Western temporality, breaks time down into measurable and quantifiable segments. Aristotle designates in each instantaneous moment a distinct now, a now that is stopped, as it were, separate from the now that came before it and the one that comes after. Every being that science defines is separated from all other beings and measured in the instant of a frozen now. Ancestral time, on the other hand, makes for an endlessly elastic now, a now that holds the past, the present, and the future within its ever expanding and contracting horizons. An ancestor or ancestors from the primeval past, for example, can speak in the present and in fact be present in the now of ancestral time. Put simply, ancestral time brings together and Aristotle's time takes apart.

As with Aristotle's time, so with the abstract expressionism. Greenberg's abstract expressionist, at least as he typified his/her romantic image, was a lonely-hearted tragic hero, painting in the solitude of his/her cold-water loft, isolated from the world below, high above its paltry life. The abstractions he/she painted, beautiful as they often were, represented the instantaneous now of what Greenberg describes as a singular optical event. Yes, of course, there was the Cedar Tavern, there were love affairs and break-ups, there were friendships—connections and relations, in other words. Nevertheless, the unique, separate, and original identity the abstract expressionists created in their paintings, or that Greenberg created for them in his reviews, gave rise to an era of separateness and alienation.

Right

Nocturne, 2015
Oil on canvas
48 x 48 inches



Power Boothe's abstractions set to work on a different path, toward the poetic thinking of ancestral time. In *Time Being #2*, four curved lines, all of them red and each stemming from a different corner of the picture square, appear far distant in time and space. And yet they come together as intimately interconnected and intertwined in a nowness that spans past, present and future in space. To take a word from quantum mechanics, they are entangled. The same can be said of all the lines, straight and curved, red and blue and yellow, comprising the painting as whole.

We can readily demonstrate what we've just said. But first another word from Carlo Rovelli. From quantum mechanics, he says, we learn that "the properties of an object become manifest when this object interacts with others." Moreover, "we cannot separate the properties from the other objects." And further, "all of the (variable) properties of an object, in the final analysis, are such that exist only with respect to other objects." These things exist in relation to each other in time that is not sequential time, and in space that does not admit of serial cause and effect relations. Relativity becomes a-causal and the certainty resulting from Aristotle's world of cause and effect does not obtain. For Rovelli, "The conclusion is revolutionary." Why? Because, as he says, it "forces us to think about everything in terms of relations" (*Helgoland* 141-2).

Power Boothe doesn't force us to do anything. But his *Time Being #2* does invite us "to think about everything in terms of relations," and to see our world not as comprising separate and unique beings and things that serially exist in cause & effect sequential temporality, but as a matter of simultaneous relations wherein time is ancestral, as it is for those who live or lived long ago outside the jurisdiction of Western logic.

Picking up on Heisenberg's notion that everything interacts outside of cause and effect, Heidegger writes, "It is a matter here of understanding that the deepest meaning of Being is letting. Letting beings be, this is the non-causal meaning of 'letting' in 'Time and Being'." In this way, Heidegger adds, "'Time and Being' "attempted to think this 'letting' still more fundamentally in the expression 'giving'" (*Four Seminars* 59).

One look at *Time Being #2* and we can see what Heidegger's getting at. Indeed, *Time Being #2* invents a world that mirrors and inverts the sub-atomic one Heisenberg discovered. And precisely insofar as the lines in *Time Being #2* interact a-causally, the painting as a whole relates to the world as a being that lets-be, as a gift given in poetic time.

Student Response

by Kyle Mieczkowski

Out of all art pieces on show, the oil paint line and dot work *Bang* spoke to me the most. This greatly took me by surprise, as it is very much unlike the usual artwork which draws my attention.

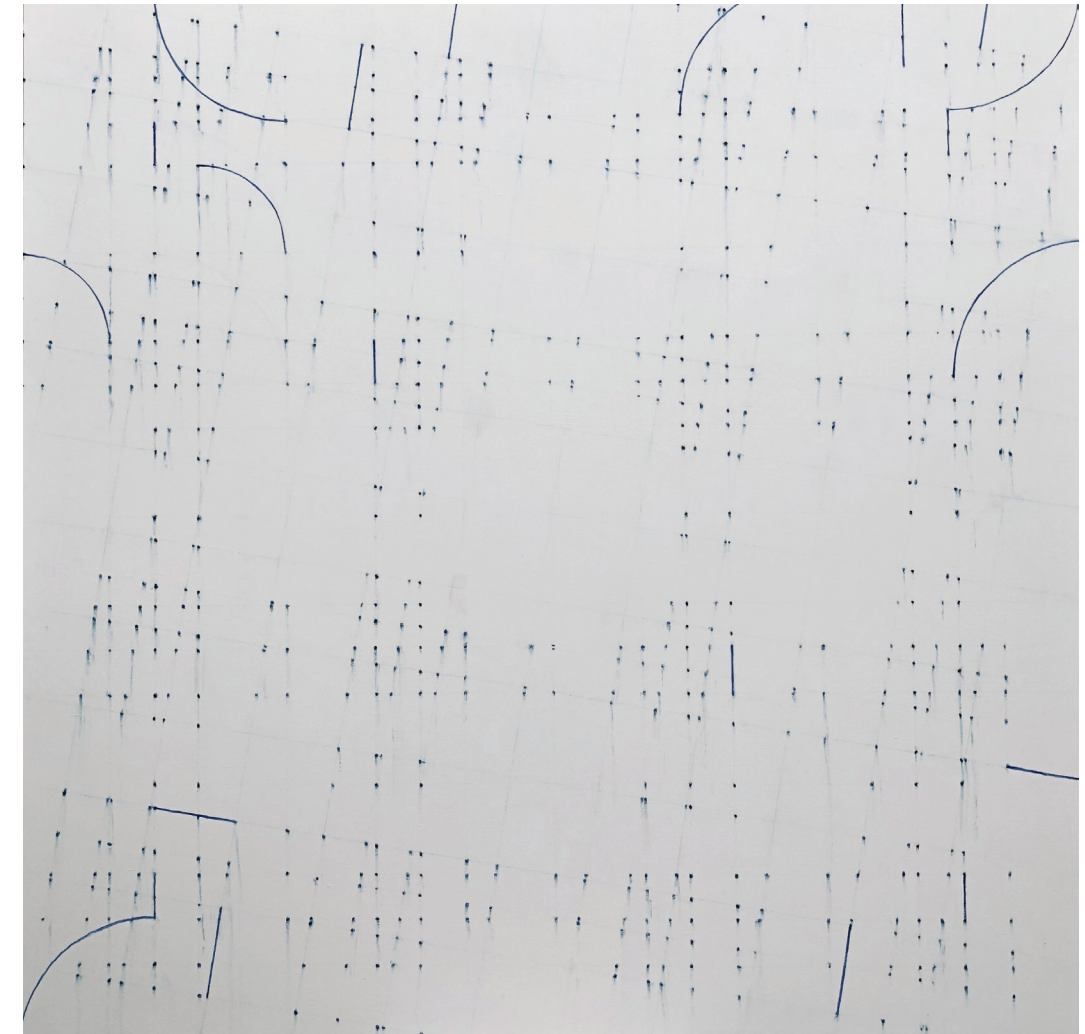
The canvas is riddled with both chaos and order, composed with a forced sense of symmetry, yet breaking its own conventions with stark nuances in each quadrant. The use of both sharp, defined bright blue lines and rough, softer grey marks add both dimensional depth and dynamic personality. The scale allows for both a complex and volatile scene when absorbed as a whole, yet becomes infinitely personal and concentrated as the eye begins to focus on a single collection of marks. The mind becomes so focused on the flow of lines and stagnancy of dots, to the point where all other surroundings and thoughts begin to fade.

About the Artist

Power Boothe's work is represented in public collections including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Guggenheim Museum, the Whitney Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, the Wadsworth Atheneum, the Baltimore Museum of Art, and the British Museum, as well as many private collections nationally and internationally.

Boothe has received numerous grants, including a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship, a Pollock/Krasner Foundation Fellowship, and a Guggenheim Fellowship for painting.

Boothe is a Professor of Painting at the Hartford Art School, University of Hartford, where he served as Dean from 2001 to 2010. He grew up in Lafayette, CA. He studied painting at the California College of the Arts and the San Francisco Art Institute, then after receiving a BA in Painting from Colorado College, Colorado Springs, CO, he came to New York as a student in the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program in 1967. He lived and worked as an artist for three decades in New York City before moving to Connecticut in 2001.



Bang, 2022
Oil on canvas
72 x 72 inches

“Measured, dreamlike, solemn, or quick and animated, there is always something insistently personal in the way Power Boothe treads. He is a painter for whom rhythm is the essential organizing force. Just as the symmetry of the human gait can be altered by countless fortuitous events (the most determined walker is distracted by sounds, movements, encounters), so the basic rhythmic structure of Boothe’s paintings is modified by countless emotional intonations. But, essentially, these paintings are intimations of basic movements in the universe to which the artist is intuitively attuned.”

–Dore Ashton

“Power Boothe’s Gait,” Arts Magazine, 1981



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