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Every ten years or so, for the past hundred or more years, the death of painting has been proclaimed. Certainly this has been a prevalent notion recently, with the explosion of large format photographic printing, Photoshop, and digital video, each of which has sought to match (or exceed) painting's scale, its ability to

invent, and its narrative capacity. But painting, far more adaptable than its critics give it credit for, has survived, even thrived, in the face of these new developments. At the heart of this resiliency is the tension between image and abstraction, material and illusion, two and three dimensions, and, perhaps most importantly, the undeniable individuality of its makers.

The work in this volume—reflecting the diversity we could expect to see from artists residing in a region that ranges from the hills of Arkansas to the cosmopolitan mélange of Miami, the so-called “capital of Latin America”—is characterized by both a continuation of tradition and an adaptation to the influence of successive technological revolutions.

Who could have guessed when in the nineteenth century photography challenged painting's verisimilitude that painters would someday take photography as their subject in order to question its veracity? Such is the case with artists like Christian Bradley West, who paints engaging imitations of snapshots, faithfully replicating their deformities—creases, scratches, chemical spots, and grainy obscurities—to emphasize their nature as objects rather than images. John Duckworth and Michael Slattery use the pixilation of digital photography to underscore the nature of these images as a series of abstract marks that meld into a convincing image.

Computer technology, particularly Photoshop's capacity to modify, cut, move and layer fragments of images into seamless compositions of extraordinary complexity, has had an enormous influence on our visual perception. Whether used as an actual tool in the development of their compositions or simply as the creator of the multi-layered visual environment in which they work, the impact of the computer can be seen in the paintings of Luis Alonzo-Bakargia, John Bailly, and Felice Grodin, in particular.

The influence of the graphic environment, whether signage, posters or graffiti, can be seen in the work of Carlos de Villasante, William Goodman, and Nolan Haan. The latter ingeniously traces the history of wall painting through trompe-l'oeil cinderblock walls adorned by Paleolithic animals and graffiti tags.

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While these artists reflect an engagement with the role of art—and painting in particular—in the age of digital reproduction, others are involved in more elemental issues of image-making. John Barwick, Lilian Garcia-Roig and Judy Rushin

all use the tactility of the paint medium to create a tension between the materiality of their means and the three-dimensionality of their imagery. Jenny Brillhart, with her flat architectural planes, and Mike Wsol, with his diagrammatic renderings, exploit the tension between abstract surface design and representational illusion.

The interplay between abstraction and representation is exploited differently by a number of artists working in the realm of what has been dubbed “organic abstraction.” Vickie Pierre's delicate, jellyfish-like biological forms turn out to be based on the edge patterns of frilly garments, creating a faintly discomfiting atmosphere of subaqueous femininity. Christian Duran creates masses of interwoven vascular systems

