

“Creatives at Home: Louise Blyton in Her Art Studio”

By Louise Lakier / May 25, 2016



Creative Space at a Glance:

Name: Louise Blyton

Occupation: Artist

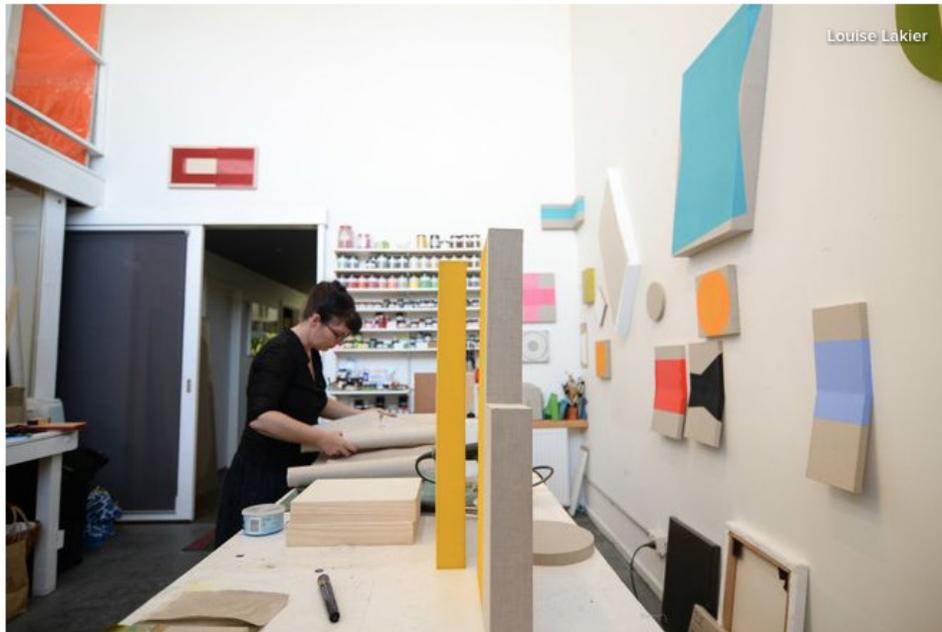
Location: Alphington, Victoria

What's made here: Reductive paintings and three-dimensional installations

Welcome to the home studio of artist Louise Blyton, where she shares her process and her passion for creating paintings and sculptures that experiment with colour, light, and form. Time spent in her warehouse-style studio – which is attached to her house – is methodical and purposeful, providing Blyton with a retreat and a respite from the chaos of everyday life. Here she builds her two and three-dimensional canvases from balsa wood, then covers them with linen, wrapping them to have as few cuts as possible.

Each piece offers new challenges and opportunities for problem-solving. The pigments she uses for her artworks are chosen based on Blyton's knowledge of how each one works; the way it takes to the linen, how many coats it requires, and how quickly it reaches the level of saturation she requires. Blyton has been working with pigment for 15 years now, and knows how each colour behaves from this experience. “It took a lot of work and a lot of experimenting,” she says. But now she feels like she's got a good handle on it.

Joshua Liner Gallery



Blyton runs an artist's supply store called St Luke Artist Colourman, with her husband David Cole. The duo supply artists with Cole's handmade paints, and offer support and advice on blending and application techniques. They love sharing their knowledge and helping creatives from across Australia problem-solve to achieve their desired results. Blyton has had 11 solo exhibitions, she exhibits widely in group shows, and sometimes curates as well. She is currently part of a group exhibit at Langford 120 and is preparing for another exhibition in June.

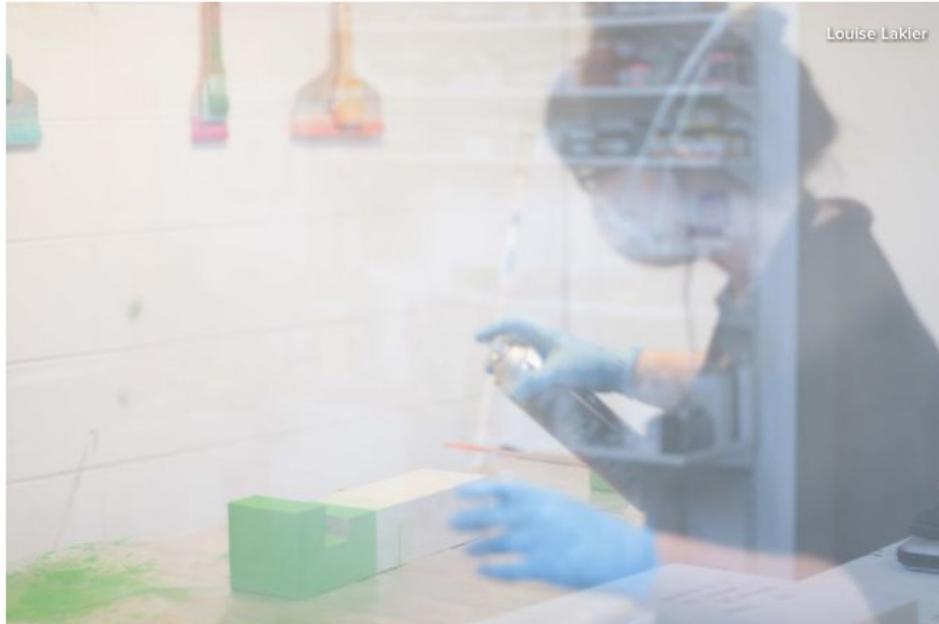
Blyton and Cole renovated and reconfigured the warehouse to provide ample space for life, work and play. Her favourite feature of the studio is the even southern light; "It rarely changes, so my disruptions are less," Blyton says. "If I had sunbeams streaming in, I'd never get anything done as I would spend the whole time daydreaming."

The frames for Blyton's paintings are made from lightweight balsa wood, filed and sanded, covered with linen glue, and then wrapped with linen. Finding the right linen to serve as a canvas for her paintings took a long time, then two-and-a-half years ago the linen was discontinued. Blyton is still heartbroken. She is now using a variety of different linens.

Blyton finds it frustrating to work with wet paint because she has to wait for it to dry. Each piece takes two to fifteen coats of pigment, depending on the desired level of saturation and the colour. With the new linen, she sometimes has to use wet paint to achieve the same level of saturation and colour the original material provided.

Blyton takes colour into consideration when preparing for an exhibition. If it's a group show, she looks at the colours of the other artists' pieces and selects accordingly. "I want bright candy colours, but I think about the other artists' work and how it will work without distracting from their artworks," she says. Her upcoming pieces are subdued earthy tones for a group show, "which a lot of people won't be expecting," she says.

Joshua Liner Gallery



Once Blyton determines the layout for pigmented shapes, the linen-wrapped form is masked with packaging tape. She problem-solves as she works to reduce seams while wrapping, and forms to positive and negatives.

Tools are laid out purposefully and organised for easy accessibility. This prepped piece in the extraction room is ready to be coated with pigment.

Blyton couldn't live without her extraction room; "When I've had to rent studios over the years, it's always the one thing that became problematic," she says. "In the past, I've had to build rooms out of builder's plastic, that's not fun."

Application of the pigment is physical work as the colour is pressed and embedded into the canvas. Blyton wants the purity of the pigment against the purity of the linen. Coming from a background in printmaking, she loves this meditative, process-driven practice.

The extraction room is where the artist applies the pigment because it is messy and dusty, and the fixer she sprays on to seal the colour is toxic. The extraction room (with exhaust vent fan) also prevents dust from seeping into the living spaces.

Mistakes happen that evolve the pieces. For example, with this piece, a bit of cadmium green coated a sliver of linen that was not covered by the tape, the green piece evolved into a piece with varying stripes of saturation.

The tape is peeled away to reveal precise applications and delineations of pigment.

Once the piece is completed, Blyton hangs it and studies the work, trimming off rough edges, and checking for tight transitions.

Joshua Liner Gallery



Blyton says she likes to keep her space quite minimalist, but does decorate with the really special pieces. “I try not to have too many personal things in the studio, but one I do have is a plastic red very worn kangaroo,” she says. “It was found on a beach in New York City by a friend, who gave it to myself and another Australian artist when we were there on a residency a few years ago. I was feeling pretty homesick that day, so we took it as a ‘hello!’ from far-off Oz.”

The rulers on the wall tell the story of Blyton’s life, as she has collected them from various chapters and cities she has lived in. She points to a ruler that belonged to her mother, a nurse who also loved to sew, as one of her favourites.

Louise describes her space as a world in itself. “Studios are really special places for artists. Some for the solitude, others for the mess they can make,” she says. “I think most artists love their studios because it’s your own place. You can have all your special things around you – books, postcards, memories, etcetera. For me, it’s really about work and focus. It’s just like having a shed – that’s what I love about it.”

February 20, 2018. Web. May 25, 2016. <https://www.houzz.com.au/ideabooks/66592262/list/creatives-at-home-louise-blyton-in-her-art-studio>