

SLOW WAVE (BREATHING & WONDERING)

Each of Ian Harvey's pieces is a reoccurring dream. In his earlier work, dating back to the year 2000, there is a mixture of images, some of which can be identified as common objects that exist in our daily lives (the table). The table is a functional, everyday object that is universally encountered. It becomes a launching pad into Harvey's world as it serves as a recognizable stabilization point in concert with abstract forms and structures that belong to Harvey's visual language. The image of a table is a reoccurring object that is introduced early on in the work that carves its own trajectories into many pieces throughout the years. The table is a shapeshifter of sorts. It often maintains a recognizable identity, however, Harvey opens the conversation into what is seen as an everyday inanimate object and reveals its many personalities. As we move through the work, the table's identity becomes less important. The constructs that make up the table emerge as objects of significance. Much attention is given to how the pieces of the table are joined together, as it is taken apart and then re built into something unrecognizable from its original form. The parts still preserve their familiarity and seem magnetic in the way that the reconstructions stick themselves back together—without consideration for functional logic.

Harvey's internal dialog begins to develop into the formation of surreal dream rooms. They read as a combination of the reality that Harvey encountered when he entered his studio, and his cerebral and internal life. Much like passing through a vivid hallucination, the viewer attempts to gain their footing by recognizing what is known and familiar. This is a false sense of security as what is considered elements of real life are in actuality

transitional passage ways into the unknown. From 1999 to present day, elements that are considered “known” begin to deconstruct themselves while remaining providers of structure and order. As we progress chronologically through the work, the viewer becomes an active participant in Harvey’s worlds of reoccurring signs and symbols. By engaging ourselves, we acknowledge and acquire a relationship with the work in such a way that we find ourselves in these particular places and situations that the work is made of. Affected by these reoccurring forms, the viewer becomes more comfortable with experiencing unknown circumstances. Whether or not what the viewer is seeing is identifiable, the life span of the work is proof that through Harvey’s transformation, his world is able to assume new identities, new meanings and new lives. The works take on many trajectories, all of which become interwoven paths. The central theme is that the life of the work is a constant evolution. Through documentation, we are able to trace back to the origins of specific forms and signs, all of which will prove to continue giving for a lifetime; a never ending commitment to progression.

Upon extended viewing of all of Harvey’s work we are able to identify all of the specific reoccurring images. Never once repeated the same, each reoccurring dream becomes a new incantation. Through repetition, the viewer is able to locate and remember the parts of Harvey that he just cannot get away from. The world is a repeated vision that seeks to colonize and overtake the work, yet also has a life span similar to spool of yarn. Unraveling into a pile, it builds and gathers strength. It is an energy that is heightened by fragility and vulnerability. This is the lifespan of the abstract; visual cues that delve deep into the human subconscious, to acquire a relationship with an image, and to feel something from an image that is beyond immediate comprehension.



No. 108.36, 2001, mixed media on paper 20 x 19 inches

(*No. 108.36*) Primordial forms emerge from a liquid ground. As they pass through the surface, a ripple pattern moves out from the base of what can be seen as a stalactite. In later works the ripple will become a form that is independent from outside influences. At times it will appear as atmosphere, in other works it arrives patterned and dense, almost like a mound of material, in others it takes the form of a galactic portal.

Subtle hallucinations are experienced in the bending and warping of objects and forms (*No. 120*). These forms melt away, overlapping into perceptual shifts of textural contrasts. The work is confounding in the sense that we find ourselves realizing that

grasping for reality can actually be a pleasant experience. The presence of familiar things and the way they may actually exist is felt, but that feeling is an illusion. These images are not rational arguments, they are beautiful delusions.



No. 120, 2003, mixed media on panel, 96 x 144 inches

The accordion book as a surface introduces a set of unique constraints. Made up of a series of peaks and valleys, Harvey is left to strategize with the fabrication of the book as the multiple bindings place him on an incline. This is a limitation, however, it is in moments like these when confronted by limitations that Harvey becomes more inventive. (*No. 134*) In the crease of each fold of the accordion, a pooling of the different liquid mediums compile.

Wide drips of orange and red flood in the lower grounds, to rise and crawl over the spines of the book. Murky collections of black absorb into the paper and carve their own paths, eating into parts of the colored forms, the black creates boundless voids.



No. 134, 2005, mixed media on paper (accordion book), 7 x 89 inches.

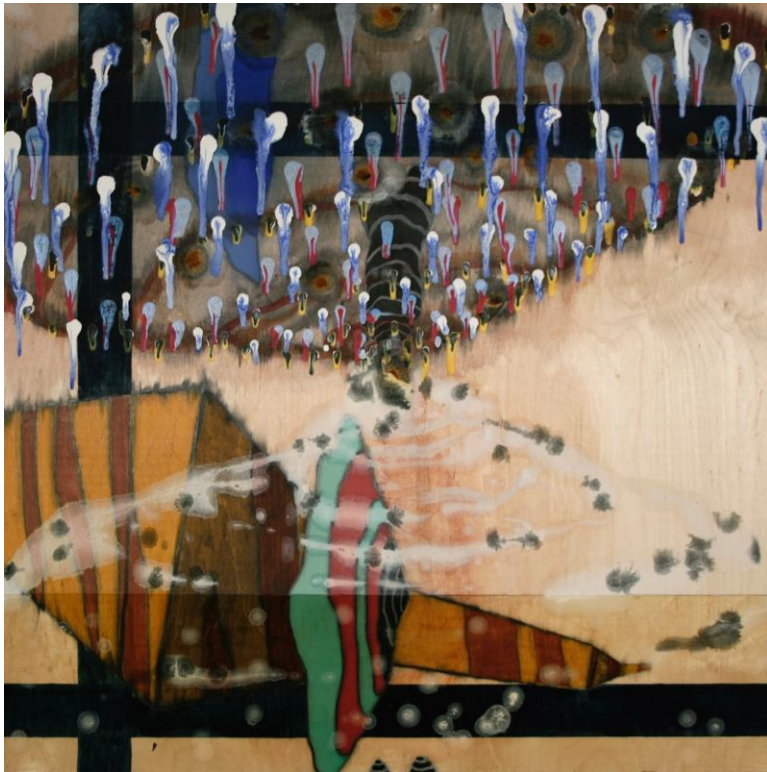
Many of the forms are contained by an outlined perimeter. (*No. 134.2*) The barrier that the outlines provide for several of the forms are filled with different colored dots. These tiny markings that march in forward unison create a continued noise that reverberates around the box like shapes. The composition is split into two parts that are stacked one on top of the other. Each is a different perspective of the same event that is frozen in place as it is materializing. The spatial realities, which are described in transition, derive their order from a variety of different resting places. Puddles of uninterrupted hues allow the eye to pause and ingest.



No. 134.2, 2006, mixed media on paper, 52 x 40 inches.

Placed behind a raining vortex, a blue gradient in the form of a claw sits amid the swirling swarm of rotating drips (*No. 139*). Underneath, like a re-interpreted mirror image, the vortex is now a smokey vapor. Similar to the function of an axel a black and white striped form enters and connects both of the vortexes. Blurred and distorted lines coat the perimeter of the blocks that take advantage of a receding perspective. They come forward,

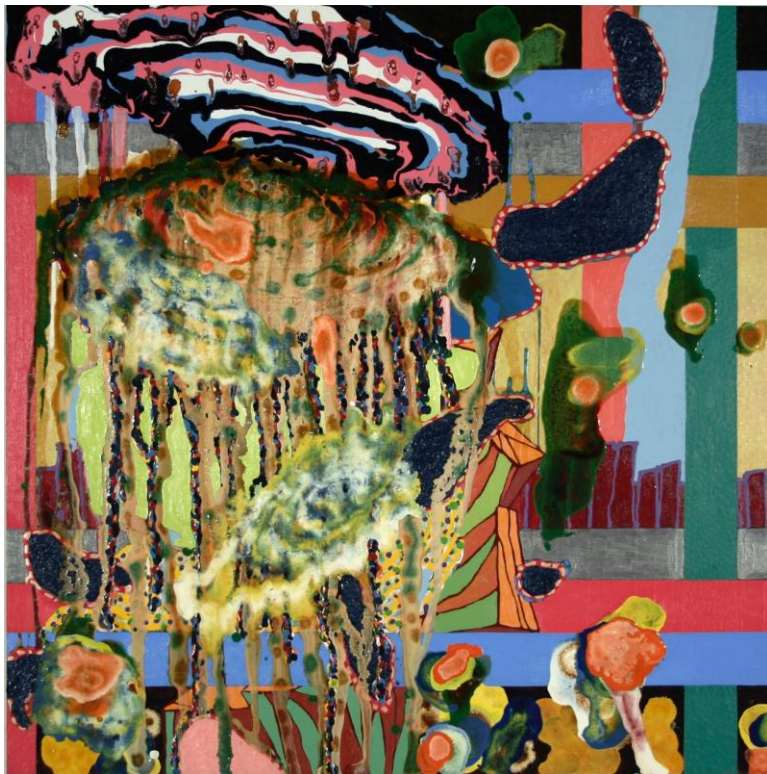
then double back, zig zagging backwards to an abrupt end. A current of air captures several gray speckles that swirl around weightlessly. Underneath it all, black lines pass along three sides, intersecting at the top and bottom left corners.



No. 139, 2009, mixed media on panel, 30 x 30 inches.

(*No. 143*) The immediate foreground is separated into three biomorphic forms. Having synthetic attributes, the top form is opaque and takes on a plastic quality. The outer three rings begin to drip. Due to this plastic quality, it is implied that the form is melting away into a system of illusional transformation. The following two shapes underneath take on galactic traits. They have textural characteristics nearly opposite to the above top form as they eat into the layers of the support uncovering two entrances into an unknown. Blotted

pink and green forms waft upward. They are reminiscent of the galactic portals at the beginning stages of their evolution. This piece is a world where galaxies have the potential to bloom like flowers. Fragments of the the table are represented as softened forms, almost like a caricature of itself. Hiding towards the bottom of the composition two boards peer out and point to the right. From their highest point the lines reach out, sloping downward they show concerns that are overt examples of perspective. The secondary piece of wood rests above and arches itself upward. It assumes a bending movement. Similar to the gesture of a house plant that sits next to a window; when the moment is right, it reaches for the sunlight.



No. 143, 2009, mixed media on panel, 30 x 30 inches.

Through the vein of gridded perspective, we are introduced to Harvey's most soothing avenue by which he provides order. (*No. 145*) From the left, the grid moves into the background, its clarity diminishes as it travels through the heavy green border that sits as a secondary frame behind the immediate foreground. The work tip toes along a fine line between what is perceived as wholly intentional and instances where the mediums produce moments on their own that can never be repeated. *No. 145* grows into a weather system that completes itself after it metamorphoses into a delicate balance where Harvey's distinctive logic and cognition allows a connective state of disorder to boil over into meaning and understanding. This is where the work becomes a moment in time that is paused, then re-articulated. We are able to identify multiple eyes that belong to multiple storms, compressed into a vital force that is all at once a substance, an entity, and a psyche.



No. 145, 2012, mixed media on panel, 30 x 30 inches.

At the center of *No. 150*, there is a pathway that leads the viewer into the background. It is evocative of parts of the table; taken apart and then reassembled. Like a great wall it extends backwards. Jutting up and down its movements are dictated without a ground to sit upon. This further solidifies its place as a gesture that makes choices without a secondary consultation. Unabashed and unmoved it operates void of any influence as it sits upon the slightly angled pink striped background; a calming and easily reached layer. Appendages reach out from the pathway. They are smeared movements of black and white. Reminiscent of the table's wood grain; new ways of gratification to satisfy a never-ending desire. To the left the audience is offered a view from above where the circular perimeter of a portal is observed, it is a blurred circumference of red, blue and gray. A white outlined pool of black floats above the portal, a thought bubble that contains the flashback of a blueprint or structural drawing that is enclosed inside of it. To the right, a mound shape is re-interpreted as pieces that are linked together forming a chain. It winds downward, then ends at a soft point where it connects to a mounded form of black that is outlined by yellow and white. This is a tender moment where the noses of each form come together and touch.



No. 150, 2014, mixed media on panel, 30 x 120 inches.

In the works, *No. 152* through *No. 165*, the viewer becomes acquainted with a form that will make appearances in all of these pieces. Each rendering will take on many identities, for now, it is best described as the "awkward structure". Totemic by nature, the construction of the "structure" is conceived by a stacking of lines to form a semi-cubic pattern. In the "structures" earliest renditions, it is reconciling what it means to be growing while still in a state of decline. It is in the way that it is drawn differently in each piece that lets the "structure" thrive in its simplicity. From each piece to the next it feels as though Harvey has distilled different parts of himself in each individual "structure".



No. 155, 2016, mixed media on mulberry paper, 74 x 112 inches.

(*No. 155*) A simmering egg shell colored mound of material floats in the upper middle left of the drawing. An exciting condensation of steamy liquid passion drips downward upon a melancholy background. Drips are a very curious action in the way that they are a natural imprint created by the material. However, the context of drips will always change depending on the impression that the surrounding images place upon it. Slithering translucent blue forms are outlined with red that glide and rub up against each other. Lumbering on away from the viewer, the black "Structure" passes us by. There is a powerful and intoxicating substance that is interlocked into the background. It reads like a photo negative of a mutated and elusive version of the "structure". Similar to looking into an x-ray

that is checkered with a series of yellow tinted windows, dark green marks cradle in these bits that resemble over exposures.



No. 161, 2016, mixed media on mulberry paper, 57 x 67 inches.

The "structure" is made visible toward the bottom of the composition (*No. 161*). This time it is uprooted and does not exist as a vertical entity. No longer a faulty tower, the once tall structure is visually reincarnated into a form that squirms through the bottom of the work. From the same starting point a black iteration of the "structure" emerges and moves diagonally. Continuing inward, it pierces into the background until it burns and bleeds out.

By way of disintegration it simultaneously enters and becomes part of the works atmosphere. A weightlessness is sensed, but the viewer is reminded of gravity as black drips work their way down the paper. Seven individual floating forms are distributed across the work. They are built by a series of connecting points that join squares, triangles, and trapezoids together. Each shape is filled in with a specific color, others are hatched in with hues that assign a planar quality to these hovering technicolor crystals. The work is completed by dark green lines that define the contour of a form that clenches and interlaces itself through the bars of weathered colors that define the middle ground. A simple yet emboldened moment, the green lines bind the work together. While thin and airy, it still leaves a great impression. Behaving similarly to a set of lungs, it gives *No. 161* the air it needs to breathe.

Exposure to Harvey's entire body of work provides the viewer an intimate familiarity with his landmark forms. We feel the harmony that is integral to the work, yet with this understanding, a glowing dissonance radiates from beneath the surface. Harvey's floating, single celled forms morph into a new existence; drifting from right to left they coagulate into a semi figurative state and bear the essence of an eyeball (*No. 163*). This is a symbolic element that represents intuition that lives all over the body. As an emblematic and narrative based form, the eyes in *No. 163* are apparitions that are pulled through the space. Behind them the "structure" makes an appearance in the middle ground and the background. Specific zones of the "structure" are colored in with pink, red, yellow, and green. "The Structure" is reborn, in this moment it carries familial traits that stem from the technicolor crystals that are observed in *No. 161*.



No. 163, 2017, mixed media on mulberry paper, 112 x 74 x inches.

The large-scale drawings are all composed of three to four sheets of mulberry paper. He takes advantage of this arrangement in that on each sheet there is a slight disconnect in the way that each panel offers a jilting new perspective into a world that is otherwise a constant barrage of activity. It must be acknowledged that Harvey has found innumerable ways to reconcile his longing to bathe in swaths of chaos, with the need to lasso in the frenzies that he creates (*No. 164*). Harvey hones in on these moments and constantly develops new ways

to command an intentionally transitory arrangement of events. His wisdom for articulating these off-kilter and teetering balancing acts cannot be ignored.

(*No. 165*) Towards the bottom of the composition, a large cream-colored stripe runs horizontally. Unlike its solid blue and black equalizing counter points, it functions as a veil. The lucid and foggy transparency offers the viewer trace moments of the pulsating material that lies underneath. The "structure" reemerges in the upper left corner. It levitates in the foreground. Covered in a shade of neutral grey it rests pointing downward with confidence and strength, a contradictory position to its former specifications of awkward fragility. Cube forms are scattered around the composition, while still identifiable they take on new specifications. The cubes are unrolled into a flattened strip that is stretched across the entire width of the piece. This form grows out of its traditional norm to become a joining of lines similar to former pieces in terms of growing into crystalline moments. They are new entryways into the piece that offer fresh disruptions of space and perspectival passage ways.



No. 165, 2017, mixed media on mulberry paper, 150 x 74 x inches.

From the right a great spiral is propelled through the composition (*No. 166*). Working in reverse it begins in an unraveled state and tightens as it pushes itself forward. As the work moves to the left it locks into a closely knit "V" formation that is enforced by black, white, and grey lines. The lines get caught up in the tumult that is gathered by the spiral and bits and pieces fracture away and splinter off into the works atmosphere. There is a sense of focused speed that begins on the left where the spiral feels like it is burrowing into the patchwork of imagery. Solid and controlled from the left, the event that is taking

place loses its control as the world becomes open air where particles of remaining material float by and are pushed around by a fleeting wake that the spiral leaves behind.



No. 166, 2016, mixed media on mulberry paper, 112 x 74 x inches.

Harvey's work is a testament to the ways in which our surrounding environment is a precursor to discovering dream worlds that were formerly unexplored. There is an existential undertone to all of the actions, forms, and most certainly the development of the work.

Discovering the Apollonian side of things amidst confusion, is a crisis that Harvey has harmonized into an all-encompassing sensory experience. His work is a mind-expanding documentation of existence where hallucinations are like asking important questions and there is no line that distinguishes between reality and the unknown. The work is serious, yet there is a humorous nature that is reminiscent of the way that in times of hopelessness and confusion we find ourselves laughing. These are the emotional mechanisms that encourage the viewer to become lost. In these moments of feeling adrift, the viewer can take comfort in the concept of not knowing, as it is the notion of possibility that keeps us moving forward. Harvey's work is a shot of adrenaline that stimulates the eyes, mind, and body as he takes us into worlds where there is no room for hopeless emptiness to exist.

Jeffrey Mayry

Sacramento, 2019.