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- All Cities
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- Dallas
- Houston
- Hove
- Liège
- London
- Los Angeles
- Miami
- Milan
- Mönchengladbach
- Nashville
- New York
- Poitiers
- Prague
- Riga
- São Paulo
- Seoul
- Toronto
- Venice





Elizabeth McIntosh, *Colours From A Story (detail)*, 2010, photo backdrop paper, vellum, construction paper, gouache, acrylic paint, aluminum push pins, 18 x 18 x 20'.

VANCOUVER

## Elizabeth McIntosh

CONTEMPORARY ART GALLERY, VANCOUVER

555 Nelson Street

November 19, 2010–January 9, 2011

Elizabeth McIntosh's paintings share an unexpected affinity with poetry. In poetics, a text is referred to as "open" when it is composed in such a way that one authoritative reading cannot hermeneutically "close" it. McIntosh's latest exhibition, which consists of five canvases and two pieces that she refers to as collages, achieves this openness through a tension between apparently contradictory approaches. Whether by combining disparate painting techniques or by using installation-size collages to comment on compositional process, McIntosh's work resists easy summary.

On first glance the oil paintings appear to be hard-edge abstractions, but on closer inspection, the way in which McIntosh applies paint over parts of the canvas creates layers that form shadowlike shapes beneath the surface. *Untitled (Black Dots on Swatches)* (all works 2010) is, as the title suggests, a composition of black dots on swatches of a light yellow, where previous dots, still barely discernible, have been painted over. *Differences of Lines and Rectangles*, on the other hand, is composed of two basic colors: blue and white. A series of (white) lines outlining (blue) rectangles are placed in relation to one another; the combination creates frames within frames, so that an asymmetry of lines allows endless ways for the eye to form rectangles.

The collages act as a gloss further opening McIntosh's paintings to a network of painterly relations. *Colours from a Story* comprises three ersatz walls that have been installed so the viewer can walk around them in the space between the gallery wall and the back of the wall on which the collage hangs. Construction paper, vellum, and photo backdrop paper have been applied with a mixture of gouache and acrylic paint. Neither painting, installation, nor collage exactly, these pieces explore the affinities between all three. In this way, her work underscores not only the tensions within a single autonomous painting but also the networked relations that makes these compositions readable as a whole.

— Aaron Peck

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