



**DAVID KLAMEN**

**MARK MOORE GALLERY** | *STATEMENTS*

**"Getting visitors to look and look again (and again) is the Chicago-based painter's speciality, and it marks the moment when his abstract images begin to do their most compelling work: setting us to thinking not just about the pictures before our eyes, but pondering our own abilities to know what we're seeing, and what that means for us as social beings especially when we stop taking such activities for granted."**

—David Pagel,

"The Solo Show as Group Portrait: David Klamen's Multifarious Paintings"

# DAVID KLAMEN STATEMENTS

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**Mark Moore Gallery: *Statements* introduces a featured gallery artist through images and candid interview. From noteworthy early examples to present bodies, the works featured in *Statements* act as an overview of the varying practices and movements implemented by a given artist in tandem with their thoughts and interpretations.**

David Klamen (American, b.1961) is a contemporary painter whose work grows in conjunction with his interest in philosophy and scholarship, centralized around the questions, "How do I know what I know?" and "How do I know myself?" Klamen paints figuratively and abstractly, sometimes combining the two by incorporating geometric lines or patterns atop his high finished landscapes. Says Richard Gray Gallery, "His current paintings test epistemological strategies as diverse as OP Art (and its implication that knowledge may be a purely retinal experience), empiricism (the idea that the sole source of knowledge is direct quantifiable experience), introspection, and others. In this investigation, Klamen plays with the history of art, utilizing modern and pre-modern conventions as metaphors for our communal search for meaning."

Klamen earned his BFA at the University of Illinois, Champaign/Urbana and his MFA in Painting at the School of the Art Institute. Klamen is represented in the following public collections: the Metropolitan Museum of Art (NY), Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art (CA), the Museum of Contemporary Art (IL), the Whitney Museum of American Art (NY), the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (CA), the Chazen Museum of Art (WI), and National Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul, Korea.

# DAVID KLAMEN

Interview by: Marielos Kluck, Mark Moore Gallery



**Firstly, you are a very skilled painter, have you always been drawn to the medium?**

In an obvious way, oil paint is attractive in its capacity to create the illusion of space and form, transforming itself into a malleable and sensuous world. But I have a stronger interest in the diverse ways that paint can simultaneously reference a subject, the artist, and the history of painting. When working, I am aware that the painted imagery mimics the appearance of a subject that can resonate symbolically or metaphorically with extended ideas. But perhaps most directly, it creates a physical record of my touch; it is existentially connected to me. The history of painting is a massive catalog of artifacts that carry the physical record of their creators' touch. Like footprints in the snow, each painting offers a record of the artist and a very real link to how they worked and who they were. This presents particularly interesting opportunities when creating paintings of other paintings – a kind of indexical ricochet – a type of content that lives in the dialogue of the painted surface.

**Your work, which adheres to no particular subject matter or style, primarily concerns itself with questioning epistemological strategies. How did this interest first begin?**

I've been a student of philosophy for as long as I've been an artist. The question of how we know what we know is so fundamental,

yet is answered with so little consensus in the wider community. Exploring various visual answers to this question gives me a chance to consider the veracity and/or usefulness of ways of knowing that seem foreign to me. In the end, I like to think that it expands my understanding of how we arrive at such divergent conceptions of our world.

**Upon first glance your work exposes the viewer to a something familiar, usually grounded in the heritage of knowledge that we often take for granted as authority, from natural history displays, to antiquities, to architectural interiors of institutions. How do you select your subject matter?**

In contrast to tradition, my work is not bound by visual consistency or a specific "aesthetic" investigation. From the entryways to universities and museums to landscapes and other artworks themselves, I look for subjects that support my interest in visually exploring (and overlapping) answers to the question "how do we know what we know?" Past paintings have focused on epistemological strategies as diverse as OP Art (and its implication that knowledge may be a purely retinal experience), empiricism (the idea that the sole source of knowledge is direct quantifiable experience), introspection, and others. In each of these, I consciously addressed the history of art, using modern and pre-modern conventions as metaphors for our communal search for meaning.

The choice of “subject” in these paintings was selected as a poetic way to address this questioning.

**The “meta-paintings” and “remixes” pose many ontological questions concerning painting, in particular the historical authority of the medium. How did you relate this work to your earlier work that examined the tableaux in natural history museums?**

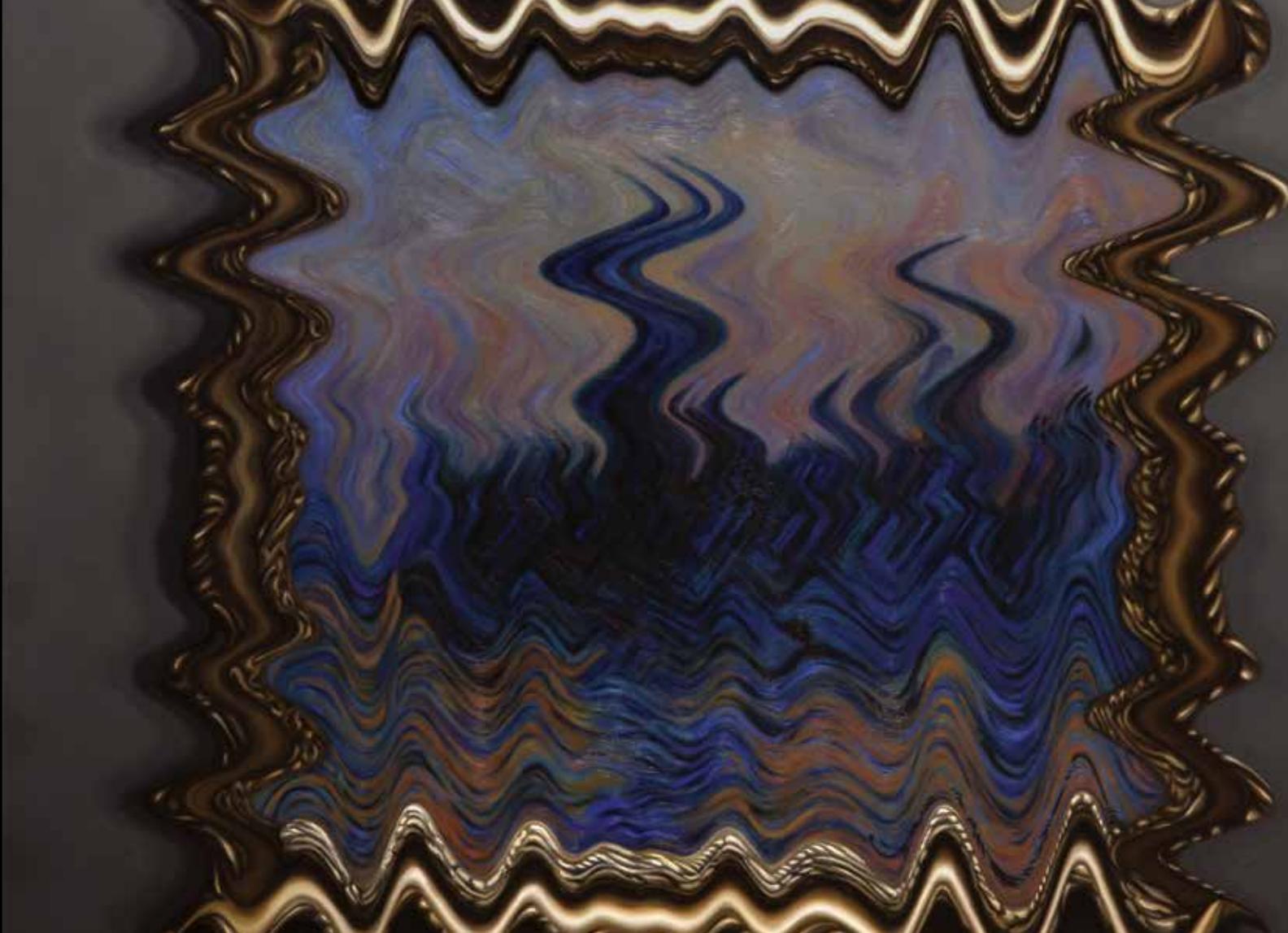
Both my earlier work and my current work revolve around institutions that present artifacts for our contemplation and visual appreciation. However, the new meta-paintings and remixes have a significant difference in that the brushstrokes and the painted surface both represent the subject, and physically mimic the paint of another artist’s paintings. These works engage the surface of the painting as part of the dialogue in a way that can be at times reverent and occasionally humorous. For example, the spontaneous flutter of an impressionistic brushstroke that captures the painterly openness of the source painting, but does so slightly foreshortened by linear perspective.

**Your larger installations incorporate many disparate periods from the art canon. Keeping this in mind, as well as, the oblique angles of each work, it is as if the viewer were standing in all places at once in an encyclopedic museum. Some writers have written that you utilize a cubist approach to space. How do you compile these larger salon-style installations?**

I only work on one canvas at a time, with each of the paintings in the multi-canvas installations created with the general idea

Page 2:  
*Untitled (Monet 3), 2014*  
Oil on canvas  
28 x 42 inches

Opposite Page:  
*Monet Remix, 2014*  
Oil on canvas  
34 x 38 inches



that they would end up as part of a larger multi-canvas piece.

The individual images for each painting are chosen for a variety of visual and conceptual characteristics, which can range from my interest in the way the light reflects off a gold frame, to the way the rectangles in a Mondrian echo the nametag on the wall.

Once I have a large enough collection of these smaller works, I orchestrate them together into a unified ensemble. I am conscious of activating the space in a way that is somewhat cubistic - where the resonating colors, skewed angles and picture planes coalesce together into a larger geometric abstraction. From a distance, the gestalt of these works presents a unified visual library... partially resulting from the rather compressed scale of each of the individual works. I see these multi-canvas pieces as drawing attention to a kind of aesthetic intertextuality produced within the internal conversation of the paintings and outwards into a larger artworld context.

**How do they function separately from the individual works?**

The larger individual paintings create a more dramatically deceptive picture plane where the physical painted surface records both my touch and hovers back into the illusion of the receding wall. These works are given a more nuanced consideration of the source painting's content and surface, and its relationship to my painted illusory picture plane. The heightened focus on a historical masterpiece gives these paintings a kind of absurd tongue-in-cheek humor, like saying I can paint a Monet... and at an angle! That is of course meant playfully and ironically. After so much careful

scrutinizing of the works of modern masters, I am increasingly humbled by their intelligence and vision.

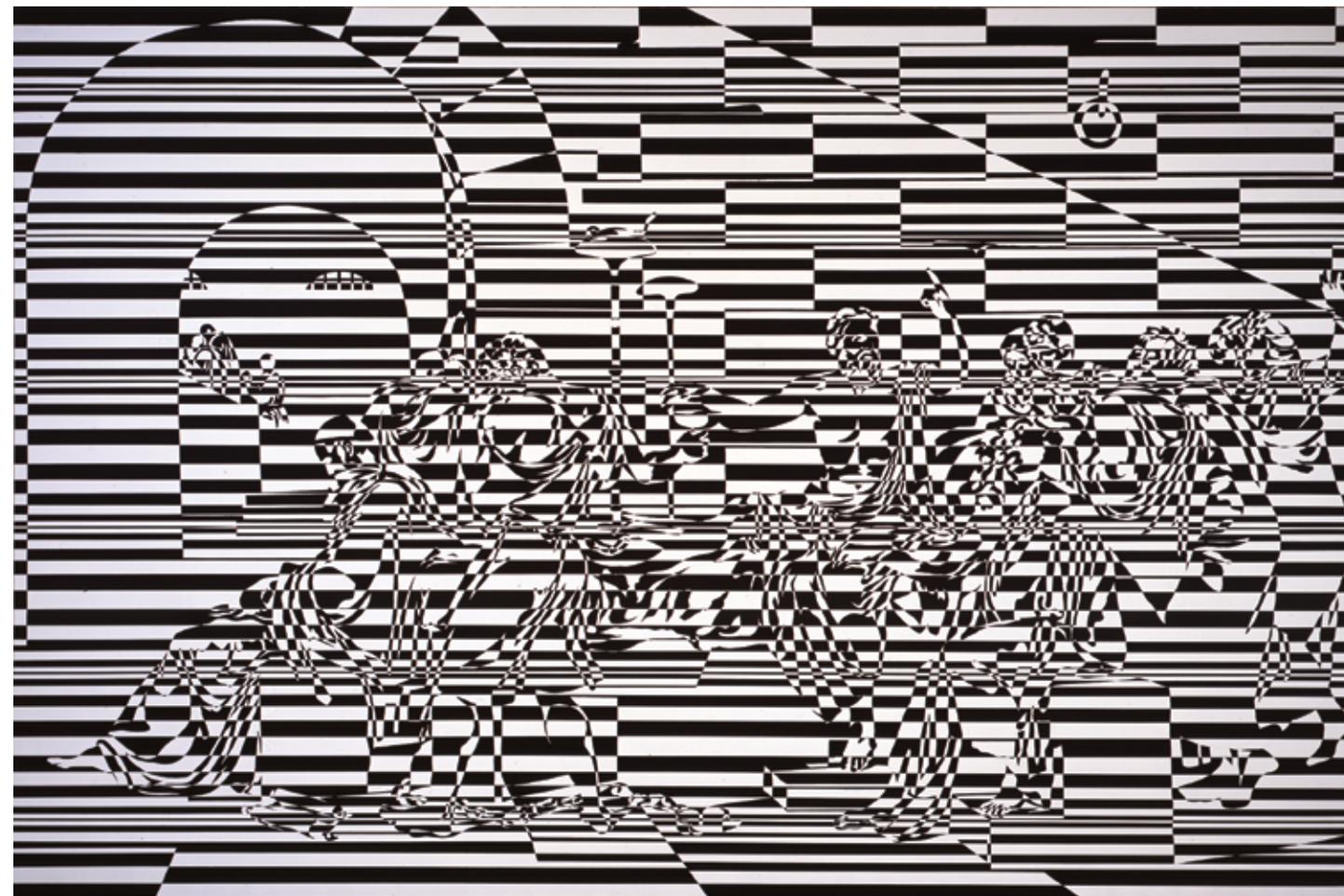
**You clearly have an interest in museum methodologies and strategies. Do you consider yourself in dialogue with the artists associated with Institutional Critique?**

I am aware that my meta-paintings and remixes can be read as part of that conversation. These works do ask questions about the relationship of exhibition strategies with the visual autonomy of artworks; and anytime one makes a painting of an extremely valuable painting it raises questions of authenticity and the construction of value. But this is not a central motivation in making these pieces.

**What is next for you within your art practice? Are there new subjects that you wish to explore?**

It's hard for me to see past my next painting; it currently has my full attention. I'm certain there are more meta-paintings, remixes and multi-canvas installations on the way, but it's difficult to responsibly say much more.

Opposite Page: *Learning Form*, 1998  
Acrylic on canvas  
96 x 144 inches  
Private collection





**“In Klamen’s work there is  
always an oscillating  
relationship between the  
romantic and the logical.”**

–Kathryn Hixson,  
"The Work of David Klamen"

Left: *Parenthesis #7*, 2007  
Oil on canvas  
52 x 42 inches  
AbbVie Collection

Opposite Page: *Untitled*, 2008  
Oil on canvas, 44 x 64 inches  
Langham Hotel





Right: *Untitled (Van Gogh)*, 2014  
Oil on canvas, 32 x 38 inches

Opposite Page: *Untitled*, 2010  
Oil on canvas, 48 x 64 inches  
Private collection





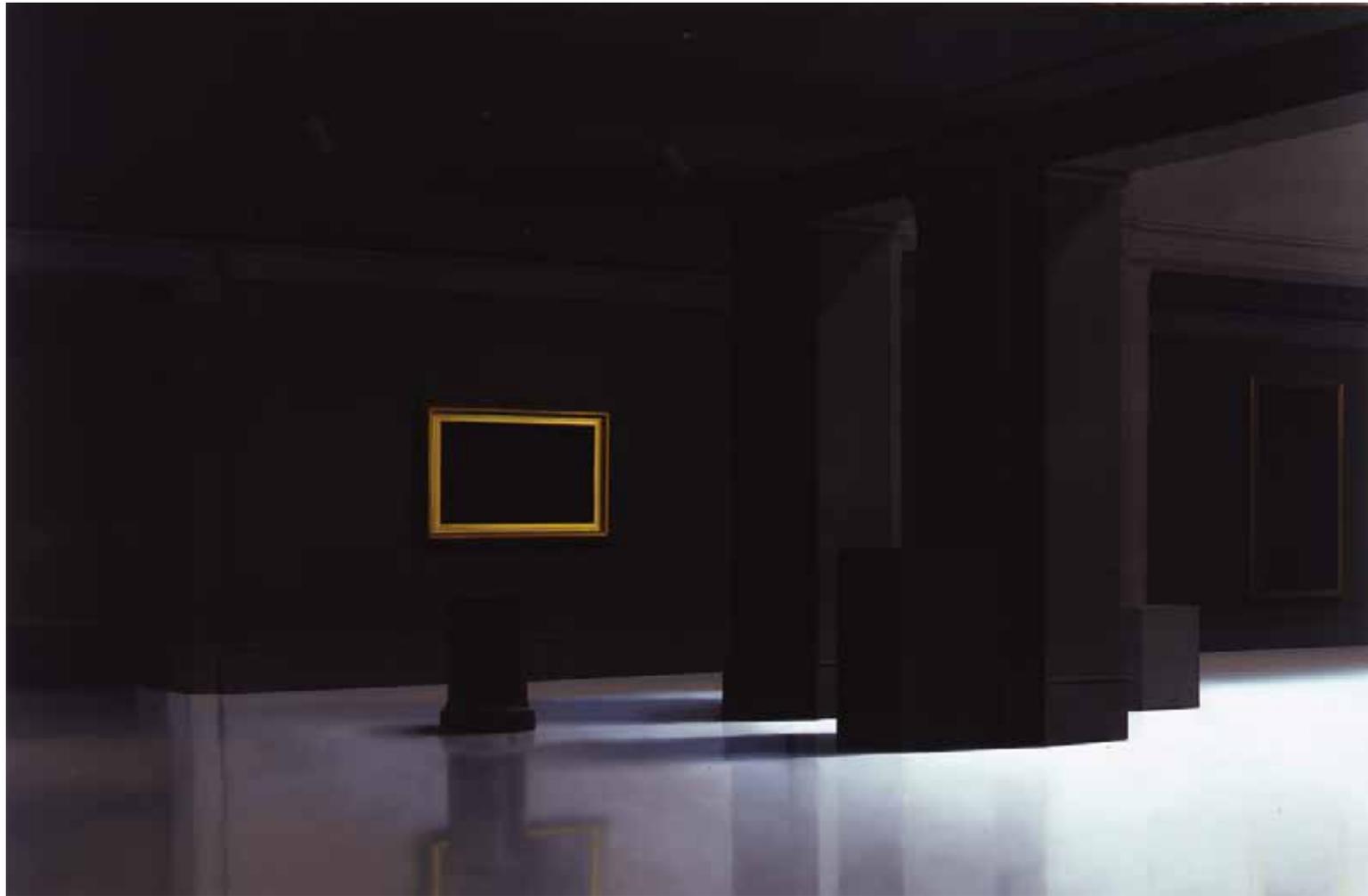
**“These are paintings subject to another vision, a new vantage point, allowing viewers to see differently what they thought they knew so well. In the process, Klamen engages the aesthetic wonderment that great painting affords.”**

–Lisa Wainwright,  
"David Klamen 'Painting Paintings'"

Left: *Meta-Paintings 2*, 2013  
Oil on multiple canvases  
90 x 135 inches

Page 14: *Untitled*, 2007  
Oil on canvas, 36 x 56 inches  
Private collection

Page 15: *Untitled (Van Gogh)*, 2014  
Oil on canvas, 32 x 38 inches



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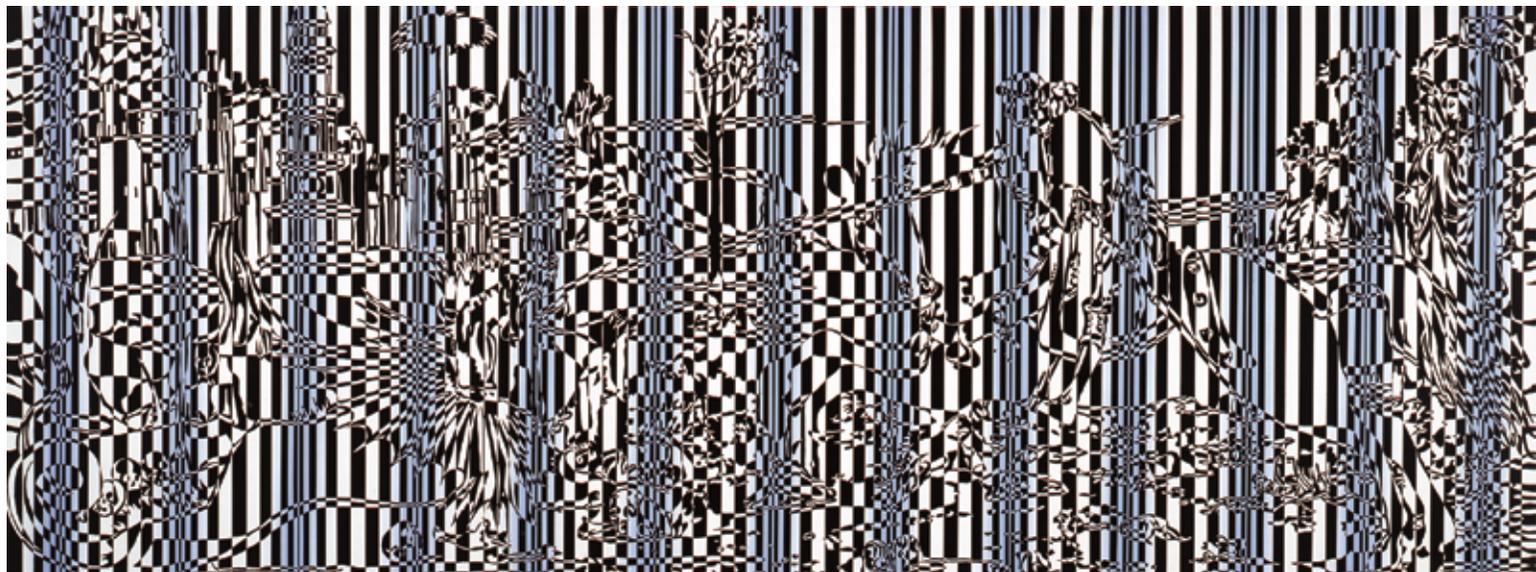
**“Although these works offer a challenge to their being 'read,' their various tactile pleasures suggest a world worth experiencing that celebrates the perplexities of knowing our culture and selves.”**

—Indiana University Northwest,  
Gallery for Contemporary Art,  
"David Klamen: Meta-Paintings"

Right: *Untitled*, 1998  
Ink and watercolor on Paper  
9 x 12 inches  
Whitney Museum of American Art

Opposite Page: *Mother and Child Remix*, 2013  
Oil on canvas, 70.5 x 77.5 inches





Above: *St. George and the Dragon*, 2005  
Acrylic on canvas, 96 x 216 inches  
Collection of the City of Chicago

Opposite Page: *Mother and Child Remix*, 2013  
Oil on canvas, 70.5 x 77.5 inches



# BIO

## DAVID KLAMEN

Born 1961  
Lives and works in Chicago, IL  
Currently serves as Chancellor's Professor at Indiana University Northwest,  
Gary, IN

### Education

1985 M.F.A. School of the Art Institute of Chicago  
1983 B.F.A. University of Illinois, Urbana/Champaign

### Selected Solo Exhibitions

2014 *New Work*, Mark Moore Gallery, Los Angeles, CA  
2012 Gallery for Contemporary Art, Indiana University Northwest,  
Gary, IN  
2010 *Painting Paintings*, Richard Gray Gallery, Chicago, IL  
2009 *Painting Paintings*, Richard Gray Gallery, New York, NY  
2008 *The Art Show*, American Art Dealers Association, New York, NY  
Richard Gray Gallery, New York, NY  
2007 *The Art Show*, American Art Dealers Association, New York, NY  
Richard Gray Gallery, New York, NY  
Richard Gray Gallery, Chicago, IL  
2006 Haines Gallery, San Francisco, CA  
2005 *Compound Visions*, Richard Gray Gallery, New York, NY  
2004-05 Elvehjem Museum of Art, Madison, WI  
2004 Richard Gray Gallery, New York, NY  
2003 Haines Gallery, San Francisco, CA  
Richard Gray Gallery, Chicago, IL  
2002 Richard Gray Gallery, New York, NY  
2001 Richard Gray Gallery, New York, NY  
2000 Haines Gallery, San Francisco, CA  
1999 Museum of Contemporary Art, Wall Project, Chicago, IL

1998 Richard Gray Gallery, New York, NY  
Arte 92, Milan, Italy 1997 Galleria L'Isola, Trento, Italy  
Bologna Art Exposition, Galleria L'Isola  
1996 Richard Gray Gallery, Chicago, IL  
1995 Galleria L'Isola, Rome, Italy  
1994 *New Drawings*, Richard Gray Gallery, Chicago, IL  
1993 Richard Gray Gallery, Chicago, IL  
Chicago International Art Exposition, Richard Gray Gallery,  
Chicago, IL  
1991 Cedar Rapids Art Museum, Cedar Rapids, IA  
Poala Stelzer Gallery, Trento, Italy  
Galleria Trimarchi, Bologna, Italy  
Galleria L'Isola, Rome, Italy  
1990 Chicago International Art Exposition, Deson Saunders Gallery,  
Chicago, IL  
1989 *Studies and Preliminary Images*, Indiana University Northwest,  
Gary, IN  
1987 Galleria L'Isola, Rome, Italy  
1986 Freeport Museum, Freeport, IL  
1985 Marianne Deson Gallery, Chicago, IL

### Collections

Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY  
Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, San Francisco, CA  
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA  
Chazen Museum of Art, Madison, WI  
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY  
Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL  
Krannert Art Museum, Champaign, IL  
Illinois State Museum, Springfield, IL  
National Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul, Korea  
The Searle Collection of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL  
University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, IL  
City of Chicago, Chicago, IL  
University of Chicago, Chicago, IL

### Front cover:

*Monet Remix*, 2014

Oil on canvas, 34 x 38 inches

### Back cover:

*Meta-Paintings 2*, 2013

Oil on multiple canvases

90 x 135 inches (dimensions variable)

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