

The background is a complex quilt pattern. It features a large white hexagon in the upper left corner. The rest of the quilt is composed of various colored triangles and curved shapes in shades of blue, orange, yellow, green, and purple, arranged in a symmetrical, repeating pattern. The text "Matt Phillips" is overlaid in the center in a white, sans-serif font.

Matt Phillips

*comfort  
inn*





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Matt Phillips  
*Comfort Inn*

JANUARY 6–FEBRUARY 6, 2016

208 forsyth street & 237 eldridge street





**FRONTISPIECE:**

*Starling*

2015 silica and pigment on linen 24 x 20 in.

**LEFT:**

*Mountain Mind*

2015 silica and pigment on linen 58 ½ x 48 in.

Paul Klee was the only twentieth-century painter that Martin Heidegger held in any kind of esteem. “In Klee something has happened that none of us yet grasps,” he remarked to a student sometime in the 1950s, and later told a Japanese interlocutor that he valued the work of the Swiss-German painter over Picasso.<sup>1</sup> This is a dubious distinction, to be sure, given the philosopher’s low opinion of Picasso, and of modern art in general: who wants to be the least objectionable representative of an otherwise deplorable artistic epoch?

Actually, though, everybody liked Paul Klee—except perhaps the Nazis, minus the aforementioned Heidegger. The high quality of his work was a rare point of agreement between otherwise opposing figures: not just Heidegger and Adorno, but the Dadaists and the Expressionists, Duchamp and Picasso. His amiable art, neither wholly abstract nor representational, playful but not childish, managed to process most of the relevant







Studio view with *Slow Dance* and *Bungalow (Spring)*  
Both canvases: 2015 silica and pigment on linen 58 ½ x 48 in.

**LEFT:**

*Arboretum*

2015 silica and pigment on linen 58 ½ x 48 in.

avant-garde tendencies of its day, but couldn't be wholly identified with any of them. Instead it hovered above the aesthetic battlefields of the early twentieth century like a very smart bird.

This lightness is a desirable trait for abstract painting today, and is particularly present in the paintings of Matt Phillips. Working serenely in an idiom historically plagued by philosophical bombast, inflated political stakes, and a nearly paralyzing level of self-analysis, Phillips imbues his paintings with a sense of calm openness. They seem to regard while being regarded, surveying not just the great repository of forms generated by



Studio installation, 2015







*If the Falling Tide Can Turn*

2015 silica and pigment on linen 58 ½ x 48 in.



the short history of modern abstract art, but longer decorative or craft traditions (quilting, in particular, plays a big role in these paintings). Their wonky, Kleeian geometry celebrates abstract form as a common language, bounced around among paintings, rugs, sweaters, airport carpets, skateboard graphics, religious tile-work, and chewing-gum packaging.

Phillips' canvases are neither tiny nor excessively large; he works in the two- to five-foot range, more or less. This middle zone, neither intimate nor heroic, presents a challenge for painters to overcome—it's easy to get locked in, visually, to the actual size of the painting support. Phillips solves this problem through a peculiar paint application: he suspends his pigments in silica, making it intentionally impossible for him to create an uninflected area of flat color. The granularity of the silica (reminiscent of Georges Braque's sandy experiments), and the irregular dispersion of pigment on the surface of the canvas (you can see where individual brushstrokes overlap) create, in effect, a second composition in the painting. The interplay between this, the visible history of Phillips' painting process, and the larger division of the canvas into interlocking, geometric color-areas, produces a sense of shifting scale. The paintings begin to feel much bigger than they are; you can project yourself into them, and float for a while over their remarkable landscape.

—Roger White

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1 Quoted from Heinrich Weigand Petzet, *Encounters and Dialogues with Martin Heidegger, 1929-1976*, trans. Parvis Emad, Kenneth Maly (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993) in Stephen H. Watson, *Crescent Moon Over the Rational: Philosophical Interpretations of Paul Klee* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).



*Sweep Out the Ashes*  
2015 silica and pigment on linen 58 ½ x 48 in.





*The Kingston Line*

2015 silica and pigment on linen 58 ½ x 48 in.



*Santa Monica*  
2015 silica and pigment on linen 24 x 20 in.





*Untitled*

2015 silica and pigment on linen 24 x 20 in.



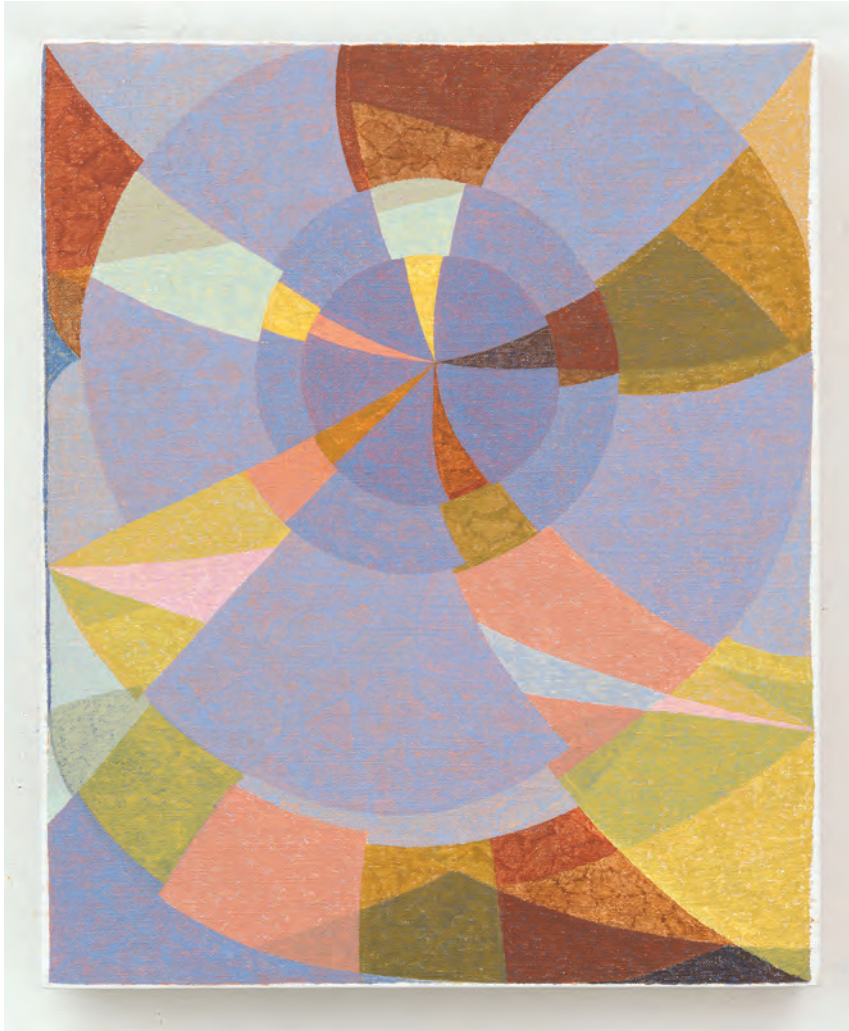
*Spierdalaj*  
2015 silica and pigment on linen 24 x 20 in.





*San Marco*

2015 silica and pigment on linen 24 x 20 in.



*Inner Ear Visions*

2015 silica and pigment on linen 24 x 20 in.

**RIGHT:**

*First Dance*

2015 silica and pigment on linen 58 ½ x 48 in.

**FRONT COVER:**

*Linen Service*

2015 silica and pigment on linen 24 x 20 in.

**BACK COVER:**

*Helsinki Swim Club*

2015 silica and pigment on linen 24 x 20 in.







