

A novelist sits in his industrial studio
Rob Goyanes

The paintings by Alexander Kroll are sort of like abstract novels. There's a patient yet mountainous layering to them. There is a litany of moods. Probably the most novelish thing about them is that they feel self-deterministic—one stroke determines the next, yet you don't know where it's headed. However, these are novels where no words can be made out. Kroll's particular dimension of abstraction is acutely notional; it is percussive and radiant, effacing of real world subjects and signals, and embracing instead the rigorous study of colors and forms.

But allow the eyes the time to walk, to wander in, and one might detect meanings deeply embedded. Eyes, though lacking in reach considering reality's vastness, remain inverted pools, where the world splashes about. And paintings, particularly for the painter, are a series of sensual grazes; when one color or more stretch out on a bed together. With Kroll, they streak, puddle together, and get shoved around—motion and color take primacy.

Painting is space made from nothing, space to step into. Not only something to enter, but a way to reach out into the world, and in the case of Kroll, it is his primary vehicle for engaging in life. But to define painting, ultimately, one can only point to its underlying sense of painterliness, and this is what Kroll's paintings do. They are great clusters of sentences, swirling with indiscernible phrases, dialects belonging only to the region of the self. The works are referential, yes, to the history of abstraction, to the history of painting, but as Kroll and the paintings suggest, these are about process, one thing leading to another—influenced by the world, but radically defiant in defining what that means. So, precarious are the granite and lavender skins atop a green pour, as are the lagoons, and the dunes, and the glass.

Rob Goyanes is writer from Miami, Florida currently living in New York City. His work has appeared in the Miami Herald, Jai Alai magazine, the Miami Rail, and elsewhere.