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*Born to Love*  
Lowell Ryan Projects  
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## by Jody Zellen

*Born to Love* is an exhibition of eight large-scale mixed media works by Alexandra Grant that take their point of departure from Sophocles' play *Antigone*. Most likely, Grant's careful reading of the play informs the works, but ultimately it is the phrase, "I was born to love not to hate," that finds its way into Grant's artworks. While the works are infused with content — the relationship between love and hate and how that extends throughout history — they display Grant's formal sensibilities and her acute skill in combining shapes and colors.

The works are large and breathtaking. Each has its own color palette and compositional specificities, yet they are all created from the same elements. The understructure of each work includes a textual graphic in the form of a back to front and front to back rubbing that is repeated throughout. Sometimes readable, other times obscured by layers of paint or collage, the thematic schema of the privileging of love over hate is meant to resonate and direct the reading of the works, however it is muted by the aggressive workings of the surrounding patterns and abstract elements.

Each work is titled *She said to Creon*, (all 2018) and is a combination of collage, wax rubbing, acrylic paint, ink and colored pencil on paper mounted to fabric. These densely layered works juxtapose painted stripes in myriad colors that have been cut and reassembled in multiple directions, sometimes forming herringbone patterns. These are overlaid with what appears to be ink splatters that undulate above and below the other textures. The works simulate spontaneity, yet are too well assembled for that to be a *modus operandi*: the compositions feel extremely organized despite the allusion to chaos.

It is easy to get lost in the works. *She said to Creon (5)* is dominated by purple and gray hues intersected by bursts of yellow and red. The yellow even spills over into the text-rubbing, giving this particular instance of the phrase a colored background which pops within the composition. The eye wanders from cut out triangles to blue and purple stripes collaged onto the paintings top layer. A tension rises between the geometric and the organic shapes as they compete for dominance within the space. This perhaps is a metaphor for the relationship between love and hate and the ongoing conflicts and struggles world wide.

Grant's thesis speaks beyond the formal nature of her works and while she infuses the pieces with historical content that resonates to this day, the works are first and foremost studies in abstraction.