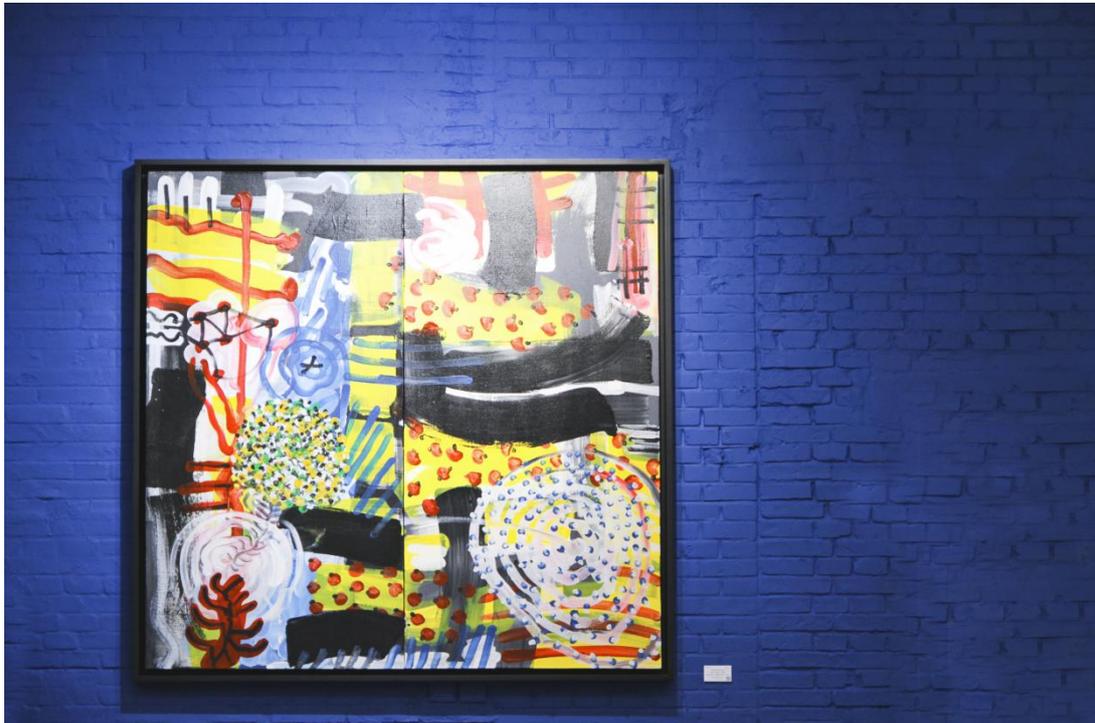


Understanding Peter Wayne Lewis: *The Bending Time Paintings - From Kingston to Beijing*

A first glance at Peter Wayne Lewis' paintings leaves the viewer dazzled by their striking colors and abstract symbols that create a visual symphony of dots, lines, circles, and waves.



Bending Time #4, 2017, Acrylic on linen, 170 x 170 cm
(Image copyright Red Gate Gallery, Beijing and the Artist)

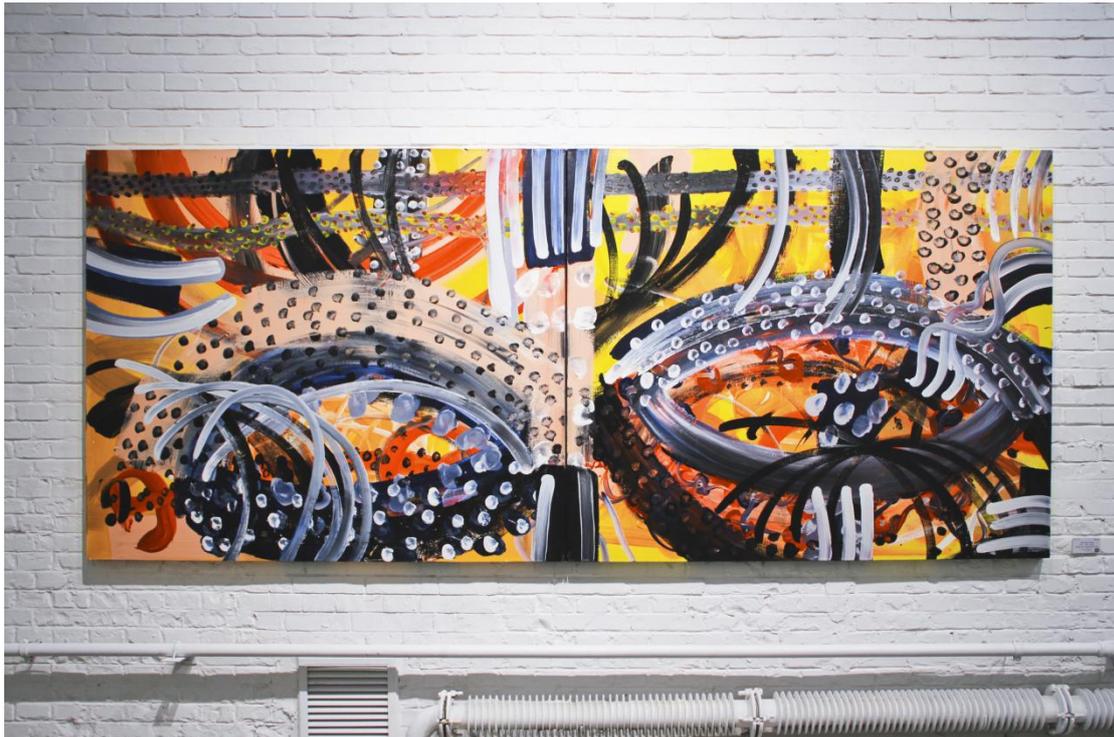
There are great similarities between Lewis' paintings and works of *The Blue Rider*, a German Expressionist group, especially those by Vassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc, who founded the group in 1911 in Munich, Germany. Kandinsky and Marc were influenced by the quantum physics developed by Max Planck, Einstein's Theory of Relativity, and Bohr's explanation of atomic structure. As Kandinsky and Marc's art was founded from science, Lewis' abstract expressionism also manifests itself from metaphysical exploration to become pictorial creation. Lewis is also influenced by physicist Alan Guth, a professor at MIT, right across the Charles River from MASSART. One quote of Guth's in particular has made Lewis think more about people, science, and the universe, "the false vacuum — The decay of the false vacuum, which according to the inflation theory, created the matter of the universe." Lewis ponders the question of nothingness-vacuums- through his paintings by incorporating circles and holes, both in black and in color. He prompts his viewers to ask with him, 'can there be a *something* in a *nothing*? What is *nothing* made of?' Although they teach within such close proximity, there is not much overlap between Guth and Lewis. Still,

Lewis teaches his students that artists must be engaged with all aspects of life, including science, philosophy, and technology.



Everything That Glitters #2, 2019, Acrylic on linen, 60 x 50 cm
Everything That Glitters #3, 2019, Acrylic on linen, 60 x 50 cm
(Image copyright Red Gate Gallery, Beijing and the Artist)

Lewis is not only fascinated by physical and visual manifestations of physics, but also by the double stranded molecules of DNA and RNA. Lewis strives to learn more about human nature through new possibilities that science offers, “where such modes of thought end, or at least where they fail to address questions that require for their answers, more than enumeration, cataloging, impressionistic summaries, selected lists, or noncritical formulations.” By trying to understand the evolution of human consciousness, Lewis examines his own internal life: physical representations symbolically represent the interior life such that secured knowledge should be shared with a community. In *Peter Wayne Lewis: Multilogues for the Human* by Babacar M’Bow, M’Bow writes on the transformation of Lewis’ abstraction, how an image may progress from opaqueness to openness, “These secret spaces, although escaping the visible, would be sites for transcendence susceptible to opening the field of art.” These intensely complicated, emotional, physical, and intertwining aspects of life and death come to fruition in Lewis’ paintings.



Bending Time #10, 2018, Acrylic on linen, 140 x 320 cm
(Image copyright Red Gate Gallery, Beijing and the Artist)

In addition to the influence of *The Blue Rider* and the physical sciences, African art also influenced Lewis' creations, especially its usage of dots, lines and holes. Carvings from the African Stone Age, around 400,000 years ago, show that the uses of dense dots, serried lines, and circles, have been used in African art and stone carvings for many years. Lewis is also interested in the "dissonance of musical structures, as well as pictorial arts with the concept of space and what is contained in it," as explained above. He relates this question of *something in nothing* also to music. He references the great jazz pianist Thelonious Monk who reimagined the world by inventing different structures of time. Lewis' paintings show a rhythm that comes from his passion for music. This passion was passed to him by his father, Herman B. Lewis, a jazz musician himself. Growing up, Lewis listened to European classical, African, Caribbean, Japanese, Chinese music, and more. These different rhythms and music styles influence his art today. All the different musical rhythms that Lewis listens to culminate on the canvas as curves, angles, dots, and colors.



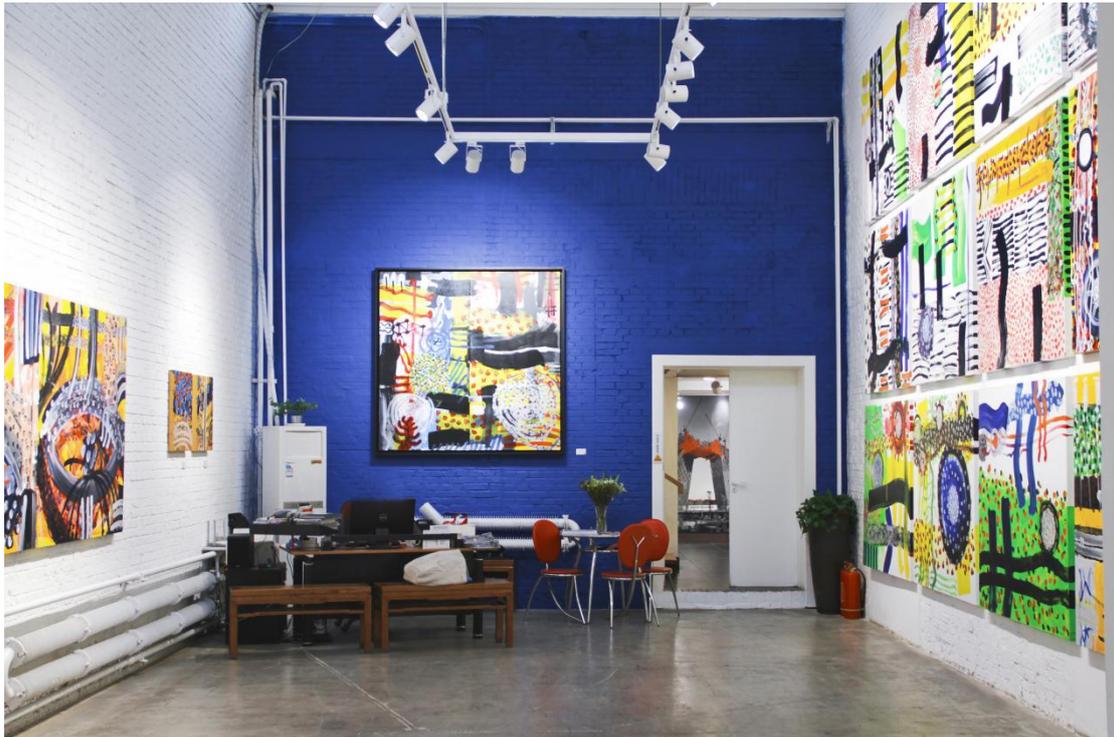
Live Jazz performance at opening
(Image copyright Red Gate Gallery, Beijing and the Artist)



Bending Time #6, 2017, Acrylic on linen, 185 x 400 cm
(Image copyright Red Gate Gallery, Beijing and the Artist)

Lewis' expression also eludes to the influence of Bada Shanren. Peter Lewis has a deep respect for Chinese ink wash and painter Zhu Da, also known as Bada Shanren.

Bada Shanren's work is famous for conciseness and use of a just a simple writing brush to create round, simple, and vivid touching images. In his search for inspiration and resonance, Lewis turns to Bada Shanren's work as one of his dialogic references. In *The Bending Time Paintings*, the dense dots that cling to each other in uniform rows create a striking contrast; the gradient colors of each painting sets the plane lines into tridimensional pillars. As Bada Shanren uses colorful transitions and passionate strokes in his Chinese ink wash paintings, Lewis also utilizes this similar expression in his creations.



Exhibition Setting

(Image copyright Red Gate Gallery, Beijing and the Artist)

'Bending Time' is both a philosophical and aesthetic theme.

"Art is simply fine tuning human expression in its most profound way, it elevates us from the world of the beast and animal while revealing the lyrical play of the world in all of its beauty."

"The activity of painting is a series of problems that one encounters on the way that must be resolved formally aesthetically, philosophically, to arrive at something meaningful that perhaps can affect change in other human beings. My approach to painting is not unlike an emergency that must be addressed in the moment, it is a matter of life and death where everything matters."

These quotations from Lewis himself describe his relationship with art and his studio practice; it is important to understand what his life goals and aspirations are. Peter

Wayne Lewis' thread of time holds his history, past and future. Starting in Jamaica, Lewis' birth place, striking colors, bold brushes, and dense lines tell the stories of culture and people, how Lewis has been shaped by a country he loves and how that has affected his life. *The Bending Time Paintings* show Lewis' transition from Jamaica to California and to China; from childhood to adulthood; the sediments and foundation of Lewis' life have bent in different directions, leading him to the man and artist he has become, and asking who he will be in the future.

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