

# Time-Traveling with Line

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*Jessica Baldivieso: "Here, and on my way."*

Pencil on Paper Gallery, Dallas.  
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JESSICA BALDIVIESO'S LINE DRIVEN, GRADIENT PAINTINGS veer from spatially receding grids to distinct staircases. Specific vibrating color palettes hang next to all-white relief constructions. To manifest her bold, implicit line imagery, Baldivieso moves between the use of tape and paint augmented with X-Acto blade cuts (to transfer planned drawings), laser cutter and computer-generated line (for distinct rigidity of line), freehand sketchbook drawings (often of her landscapes), and freehand drawing with tape directly on surfaces.

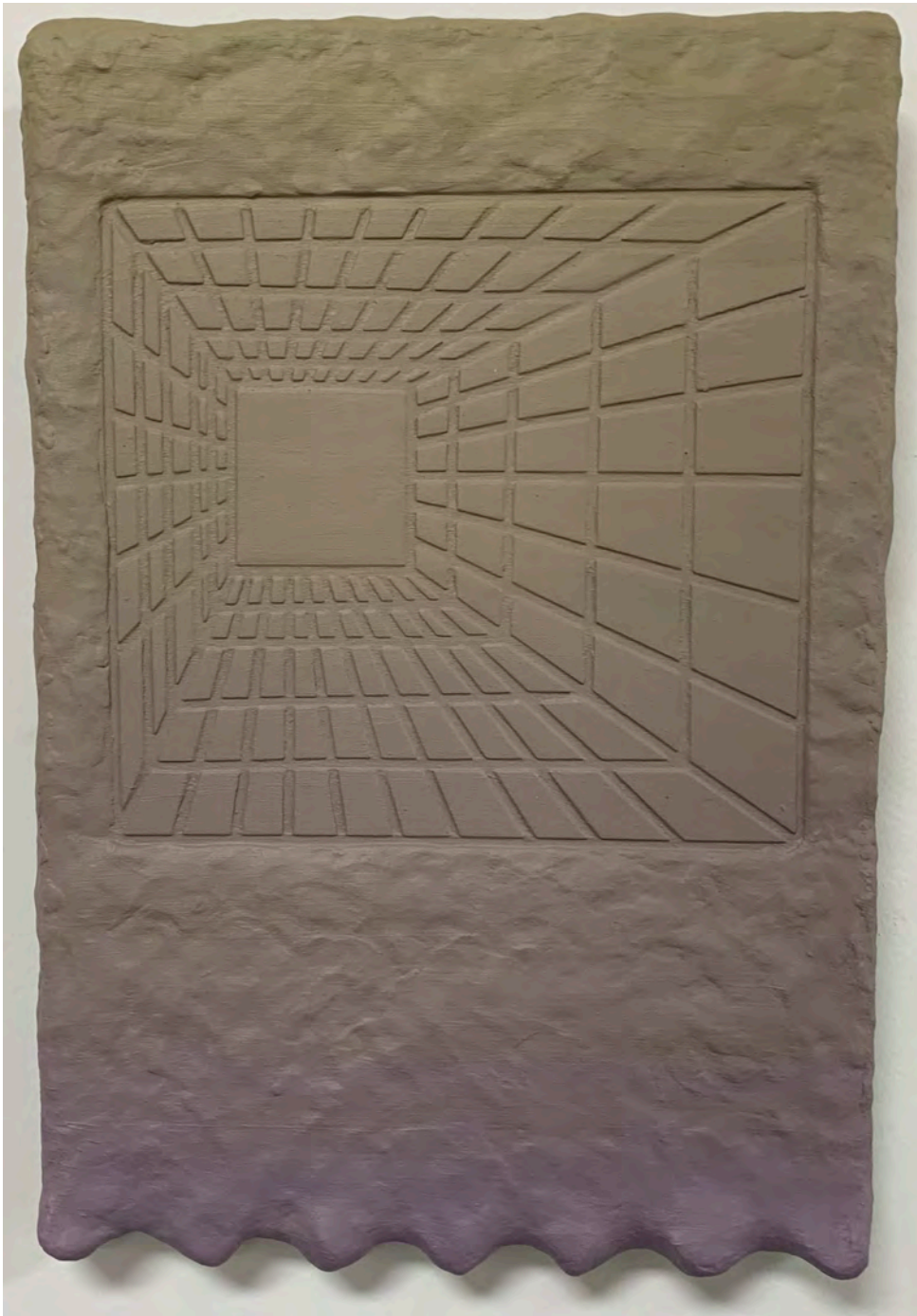
The importance of line drawings for Baldivieso began with those that underlay her early landscape paintings. Her love of line led her to architecture school, while her need for expression led her to an art career. The installation at Pencil on Paper enabled us to study her paintings and seek out questions that drive her decision-making in the studio. Important aspects of work include: activating visual ambiguity within carefully drawn spatial perspectives; repeated symbolic imagery that moves through various materials, and painting as a hybrid object.

Baldivieso limits her work's architectural line to a certain width. Yet, taped lines and up to forty gradient layers of acrylic paint in each painting (and clay mixed with gesso in her relief objects) allow for a considerable topographical depth to be seen across the surface of her artworks. The lines in her painting *Eternal Organized Chaos* reveal a brilliant yellow-orange ground against a thicker gradient of blue—Baldivieso's self-described "Texas sky blue". Her intense color pairings and color choices often reflect personal stories.

The question of line depth and how it changes the viewer's perception play out especially in the exhibition's white gesso and clay reliefs. Her found frames have proportional shifts between their decorative edges, and include various line weights and depth as they add repeating rectangles to her own taped ones, creating window-like views.



Jessica Baldivieso, *Eternal organized chaos*, 2023. Acrylic mixed with gesso on stretched canvas, 76 x 54 in. Courtesy of Shauna Benoit and Pencil on Paper Gallery.



Jessica Baldivieso, *Por ahora (for now)*, 2022. Acrylic, self-drying clay on laser-cut wood panel, 16 x 8 in.  
Courtesy of Shauna Benoit and Pencil on Paper Gallery.



Jessica Baldivieso, *Intension vs Impulse*, 2022. Gesso and acrylic on framed wood panel, 28 x 24 in.  
Courtesy of Shauna Benoit and Pencil on Paper Gallery.

In *Intention vs. impulse*, line depth variation softens the drawing in the upper right-hand portion of the image. As with atmospheric perspective, her decision to sand the surface shifts the space and adds light to the cathedral-like arches. In the absence of a frame, spatial ambiguity is magnified in *Katy Trail*. Diagonal forces push against one another, and the viewer may have trouble reckoning the perspective needed to enter the path suggested in the title.

All-white surfaces work well for the light and shadow play inherent in Baldivieso's relief lines, yet white is also an architecture school reference (Baldivieso has a degree from the prestigious Fay Jones School of Architecture at the University of Arkansas). School assignments there limited the use of color, allowing only black and white drawings (and self-drying clay for projects). Economy of line is important in architecture, especially for those following the Bauhaus "less is more" manifesto.

Not all the painted relief objects are white. *Por ahora* (For now) is a delightful and mysterious rounded rectangle covered in a finger-smoothed clay. Its rich and complex greenish-yellowish-grayish color gradually moves to a full lavender towards the object's fourth edge, a surprising undulating sculptural line. Baldivieso's often-used image of a hard-edged grid tunnel (that moves equivocally both outward and inward) appears in the upper half of the work. Its rigid glyph-like stamp provides a strong contrast to the hand-petted surface elsewhere. Of note, the painting *Not there yet* repeats this tunnel motif, but now illuminated, greenish lines float in a stellar specter against a background of yellow and purple hues. The motif has changed from noun to verb—from a logo-like symbol to an activated and radiant portal.

The staircase (as well as the passageways illustrated in other works) resonates as a signifier for Baldivieso's constant moves back and

forth, from one space to the next. She describes these transitional boomerangs as traveling between her home country, Bolivia, and the U.S.; switching from her native Spanish tongue to English; existing between her day job and working in the studio; and coinciding past experiences with new realities. Her color gradient backgrounds suggest changing light or time passing.

Two staircases in the exhibit show Baldivieso's drawing skills at play with abstraction, ambiguity, and perceptual observation. The staircase in *Eternal Organized Chaos* is located at the artist's Shamrock Studio in Dallas and has been drawn plein air, pencil to sketchbook, multiple times, then distilled to a strong, architectural graphic using the computer. The accuracy in the point of view is dynamic. In contrast, *Liminal Gate* is a computer-manipulated drawing intentionally re-adjusted to veer towards abstraction. While the source of *Liminal Gate* is the interior staircase in Shamrock Studios, Baldivieso's agile drawing abilities purposefully hinder accurate perspective. Steps appear to move forward or backward and, at the same time, upwards or downwards. There are subtle and refreshing disconnections in the taped and painted line to allow viewers to question the arc between a familiar and unfamiliar interior.

Baldivieso has a continued interest in paintings (or drawings) as objects. These objects create sensations that echo her interest in liminal spaces that mix past and present (or, more specifically, hint to her powerful encounters with Gothic, Brutalist and Contemporary architecture.) The white objects and color tablets allude to relics of archaeology, yet some of the line drawings on them echo present-day computer graphics. Her paintings portray usable staircases as well as vibrating sci-fi portals. I look forward to what Baldivieso makes in her studio as she continues to time-travel with line. ㄿ