

Chris Watts is an abstract painter and mixed-media artist whose work interrogates social and personal narratives around embodiment, and understandings of the visible. Within his work, the artist seeks to analyze, re-examine and revise existing conventions by means of their abstract representation, and re-evaluation.

At the center of this artistic approach lies the creation of momentum; of disruption. These moments might be generated by absence, as well as through the representation of windows, into a layered assemblage of space where the distinction between reality and representation is thoroughly confused. Painted on soft and sheer textiles like poly-chiffon, silk, or poly blend wraps, the disruption functions on a visual as well as tactile level, through the haptic qualities of the surface. Thereby, the works foster an encompassing perceptual reception and a reconsideration of the terms of the visible.

In a recent body of work, the artist addresses the figurative and abstract role of the black body. Sourced from video footage depicting police violence towards black bodies, the abstract paintings overturn prescribed modes of figurative representation, placing a sense of absence instead. By totally erasing the figure, the paintings of Chris Watts emphasize the act of disappearance, a non-locatable subject, emancipating notions of blackness from the Western imagination and presenting possible ways in which history could be embodied.

Chris Watts was born in 1984 in High Point, North Carolina. He graduated in Fine Arts from Yale School of Art, New Haven, CT, after attending the College of Arts and Architecture, University of North Carolina, Charlotte, NC, and the Academy of Fine Arts and Design, Wroclaw, PL. The artist has held various artist residencies, among them the Marek Maria Pienkowski Foundation, Chelm, PL; McColl Center for Art + Innovation, Charlotte, NC; the Art & Law Fellowship Program, at Cornell University Art Architecture Planning, New York, NY; and the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council Workspace Program, New York, NY. His work has been exhibited in national and international institutional and exhibitions. Chris Watts lives and works in New York, NY, and North Carolina, NC, US.