

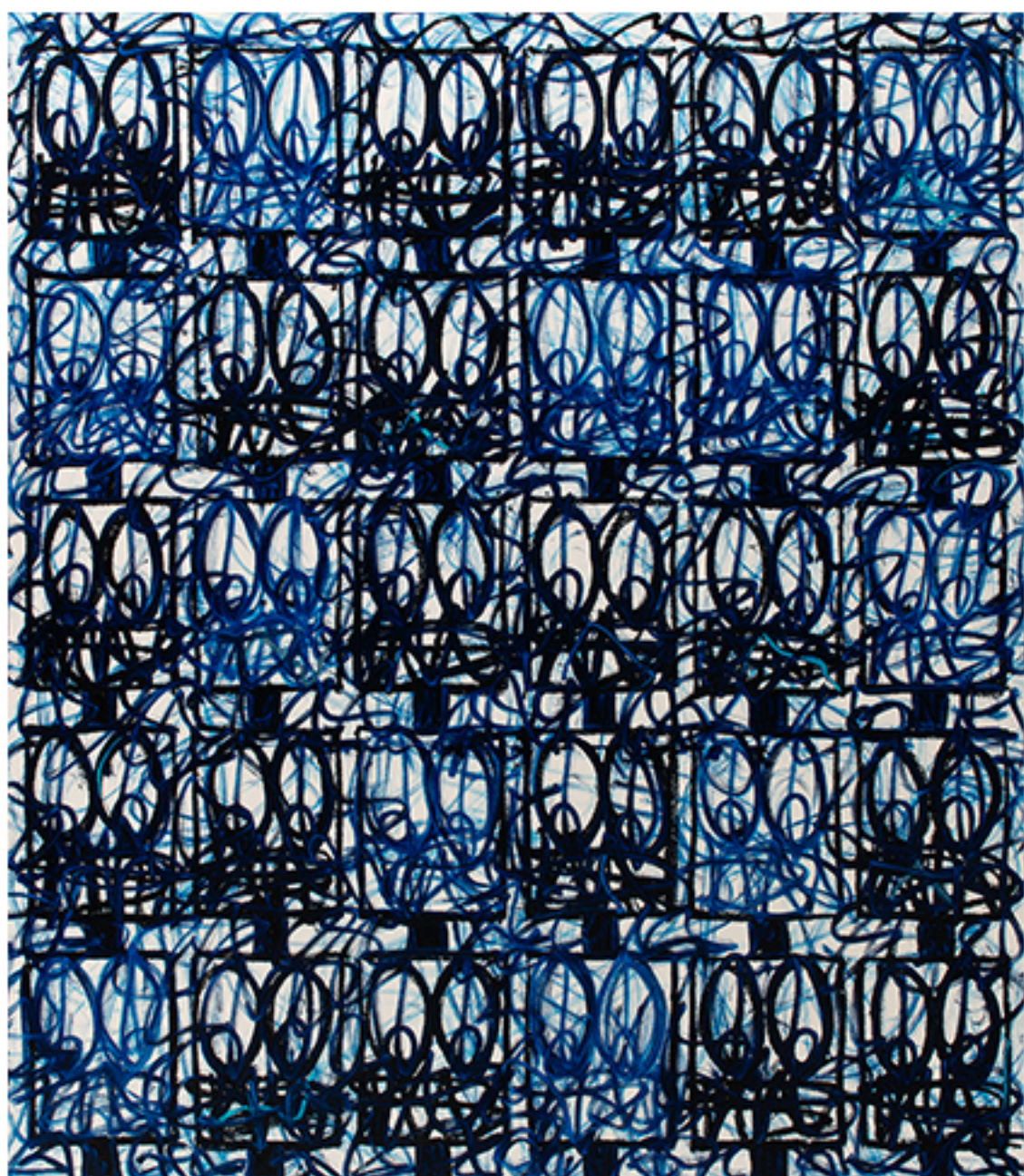
Rashid Johnson, *Bruise Painting "Half God,"* 2021. Photo: Craig Smith

*Repeat That*  
A poem by Artist Kellie Romany

I met Rashid Johnson in 2011, during my final year of graduate school. At that time, he purchased one of my paintings, *Pass the Folds*. Having an artist like Rashid take the time to get to know me and my work was incredibly meaningful. At a time when I had no idea how I was going to maintain my studio practice, I was given guidance on how to prioritize my practice. Over the years, we have maintained a dialogue on painting. Recently, we discussed his new *Bruise* paintings,

We began with three words  
Support/Connection/Mentorship  
Materiality, spills, paint leaking on the surface,  
wrinkling like skin  
Organizing a language around abstraction  
There was the connection  
I was living in that liminal space  
between blunt force trauma  
and opportunity or potential  
A bruise  
Color leaking just beneath the surface  
The need for support and mentorship  
Repeat that  
The repetition is important

Support  
Mentorship  
Guiding this young blood  
to blue  
to black  
to yellow and red again  
to heal and thrive in a tenuous  
and beautiful environment  
Bruise Paintings  
I entered the work through this definition  
"A bruise occurs when small blood vessels break and  
leak their contents into the soft tissue beneath the skin."  
Repeat that  
The repetition is important



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Leak their contents  
Soft tissue  
Beneath the skin  
It's about self-healing  
It's an after  
action  
moment  
There is the impact of a discourse  
Narrative embedded  
That too is the bruise beneath the skin  
the structure, the deconstruction  
The space for improvisation and abstraction  
Allowing space and hinting at freedom  
It's cathartic, the mark-making  
The space between the marks  
There is the melody  
The space in which objects speak of figures  
Signifiers speak of beginnings and ends  
Repeat that  
The repetition is important

Beginnings and ends  
The start and stop  
And scratch  
Into the surface  
The back and forth  
Trying to find the way  
A way  
a range of blues  
The color helps us navigate  
From figuration to abstraction  
And back to where we began, again  
Repeat that  
The repetition is important  
  
We began with three words  
We end with three words  
Narrative/Abstraction/Figuration  
How do the materials function in the collective?  
With this work we collect an understanding  
Repeat that  
The repetition is important