

Art News
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ARTNEWS

HABITAT: BARNABY FURNAS

BY Katherine McMahon POSTED 09/03/15 1:48 PM



Barnaby Furnas photographed in his Chelsea studio on July 22.

KATHERINE MCMAHON

Habitat is a weekly series that visits with artists in their workspaces.

This week's studio: Barnaby Furnas, Chelsea, New York. "Technically my paintings are made more like watercolors than anything else," Barnaby Furnas said about his process during a recent visit to his studio, as New Order played in the background. The Philadelphia-born artist has been working in his well-lit Chelsea studio space for four years. He discussed drawing landscapes with his young son, which oftentimes inspires the artist to think about his own work in new ways. "Everything is in conflict in his drawings," Furnas said. "I'll draw the sun, and he'll draw the sky trying to attack the sun. I'll draw a tree and he'll draw the wind going after the tree. It's a good way to approach landscapes. He's at that age where his cognitive level is so pure, it's just a great time to steal his ideas."

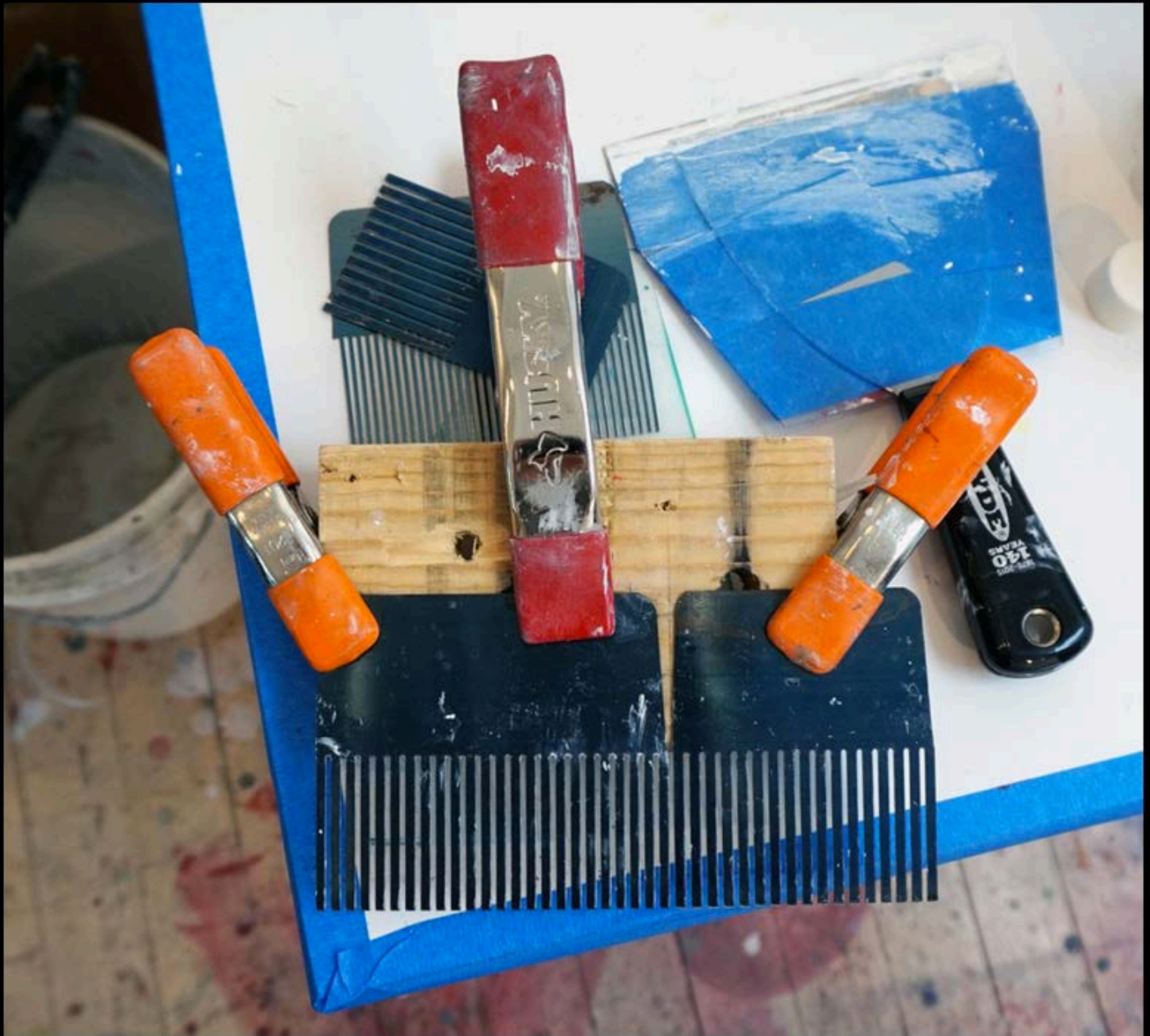
On September 10, Furnas's sixth solo show at Marianne Boesky, First Morning, will open. It is on view until the beginning of October. The show will feature nine landscape paintings, and examines the artist's interpretation of what the first morning on earth or what the first American landscape might have looked like. Below, Barnaby discusses Gesso groovers, unwholesome lozenges, and Ben Franklin in his Chelsea studio while preparing work for his upcoming show.



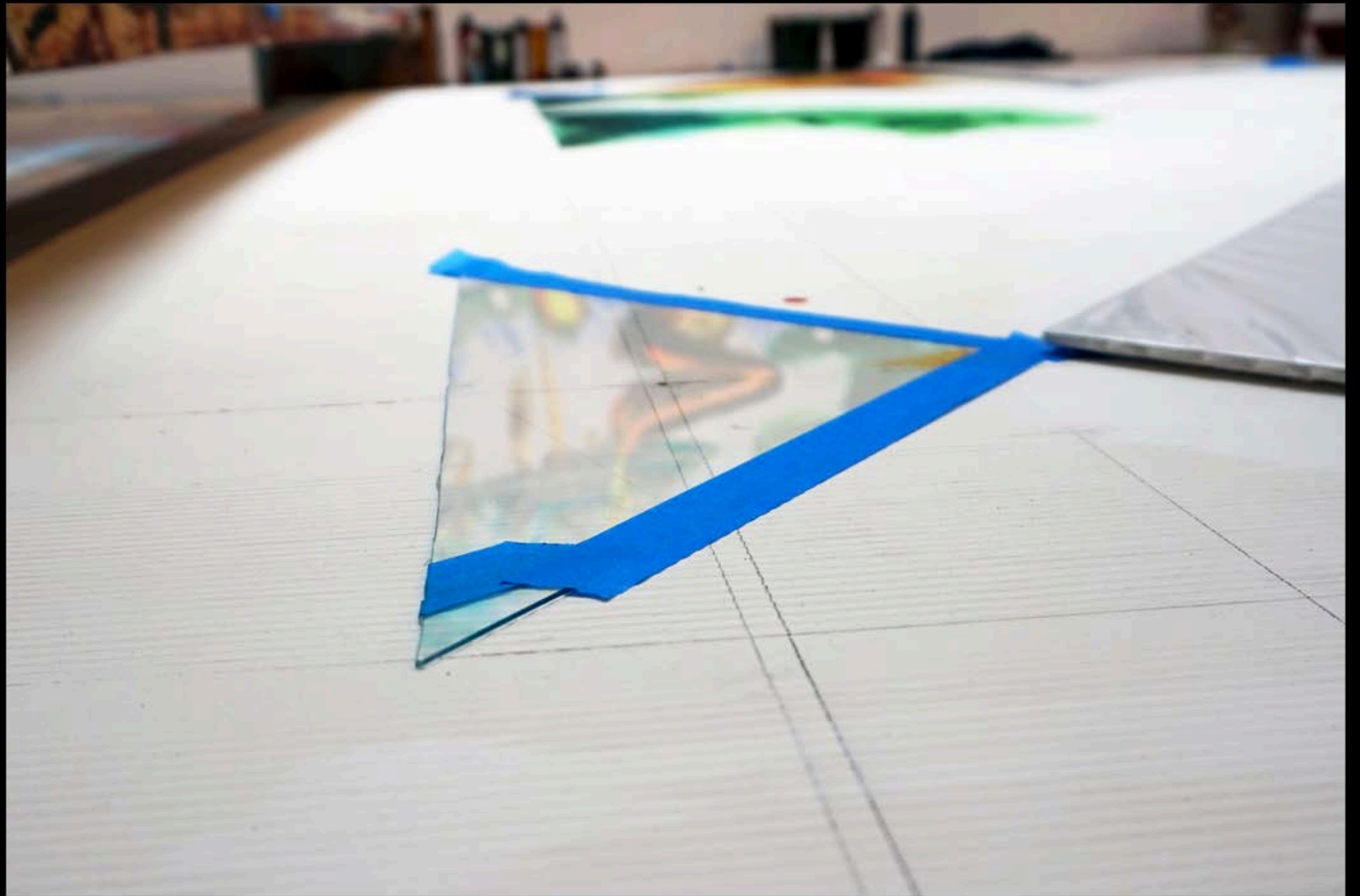
"This close up is of one of the new large landscape paintings I am showing this September in New York...Form is built up by layering transparent layers of colored puddles so they are made flat on, so the puddles won't go spilling onto the floor. Recently I have been adding shapes to the puddles, which causes the paint to conform to the shape. Then I add weight—in this case spare change (I have recently discovered the joy of paying with exact change after many years of putting it in jars), but anything handy and heavy will do. This helps squeeze any excess paint out, which speeds up the drying time. It also gives the dried paint a compressed look which allows more white to show through the color. I am going for a sort of stained glass-lit-from-behind look."



"This unwholesome lozenge is actually a yoga bolster cushion, which I use to try to make my time lolling about on the studio floor more comfortable. Wish I had ordered it in a solid color, but if wishes were fishes we would all cast nets."



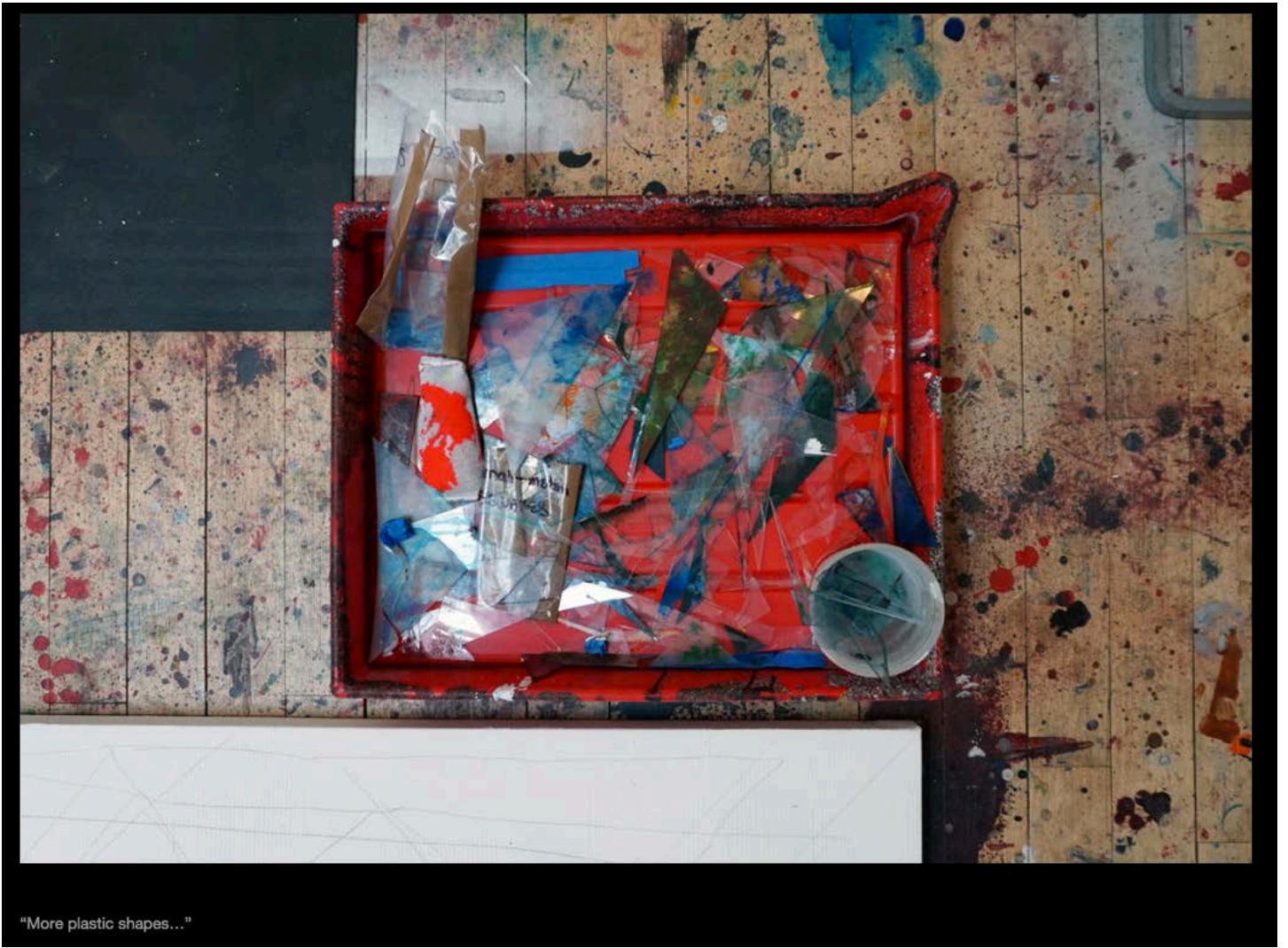
"This elegant device is a Gesso groover. Lately I have been working on grooved grounds of Gesso (think white corduroy—good band name there, you can have it). When the paint puddle is put down it spreads out along the grooves, which gives the paintings a kind of blurry woozy effect."



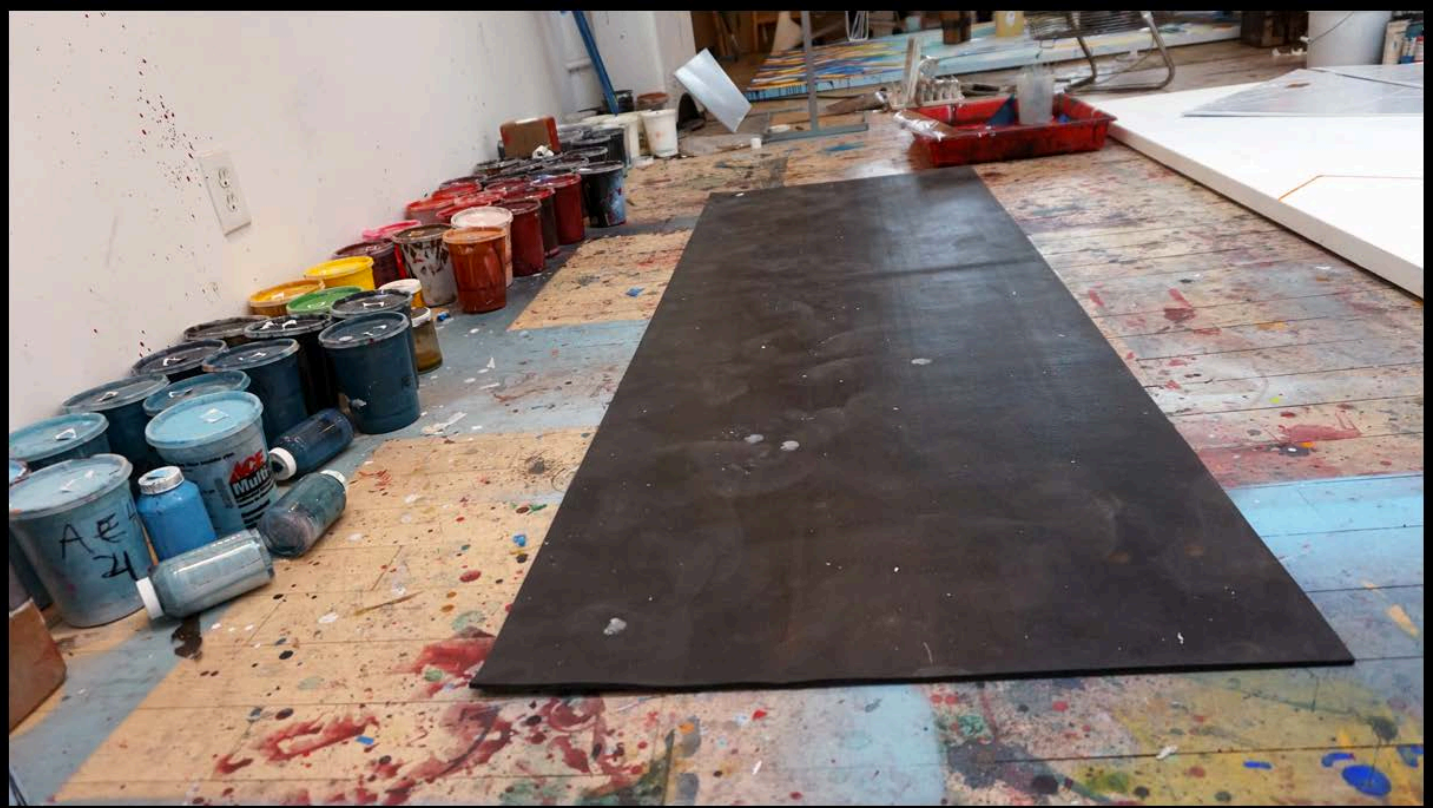
"This is one of the plastic shapes I am using. I got the idea from my 5-year-old, who was given a set of colorforms, which is this old toy from the '50s best described as geometric, multi-colored vinyl shapes that you can peel and stick to any glossy surface. If you want to make a house you take a square and put a triangle on top, a tree could be a green circle with a little brown rectangle on the bottom, a yellow circle the sun, etc. A very zen way to think about representation."



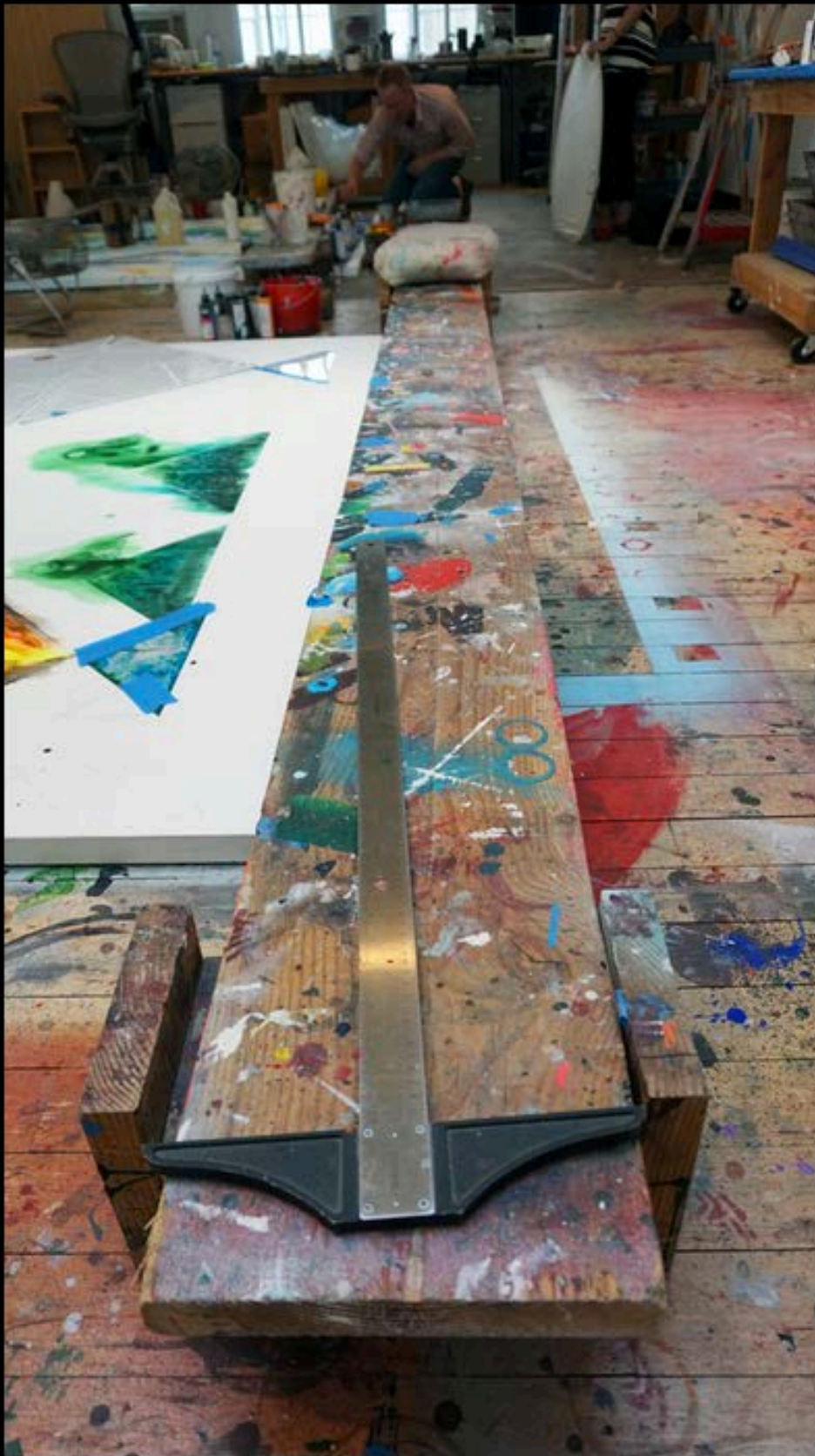
"Because half of the process of making my painting is chance (or guided chance) I often end up finding faces and uninvited creatures once the paint has dried. This green stain has taken the shape of Ben Franklin in profile, right?"



"More plastic shapes..."



"Yoga mat. Working on the floor can be grueling. Most of my time is spent propped up on one shoulder so my chiropractor suggested yoga to try to even my body out. Before entering yoga mode I light some candles, listen to whale song, bust out the pony tail—it's spiritual."



"My canvases can get quite big so I have to place boards over them so I can reach the middle sections."



"This is me in one of my graceful painting poses. (The clogs were another suggestion from my chiropractor (they were!))"