

Maura O'Connor  
Artist Statement

Honing in on the research of Vicki Hearne who stood at the crossroads of dog training and philosophy, I am influenced by her presentation of fetch as a subset of study within communication of which is only gained through the relinquishment of spoken language. While Hearne's work reads well in theory, it plays out exactly as written in practice. I found that with my own silence came an epiphanic level of clarity in my own German shepherd's movement. In Fetch, both the dog and I had to decide that this whole thing wouldn't work if neither of us stepped up to the plate and decided *this isn't about me but I have to take responsibility for my own coherency*. Because fetch is not a sound chamber and rather informs the rest of your shared relationship- there is a new coherence of the dog's loyalty, the coherency of his speed. The fracture of communication has been fully mended and if he meant everything he did, I aimed to match his honesty. Finding a well trained dog underneath a solid sense of intentionality on the part of the handler and the dog's desire to understand.

In painting, the coherent intentionality experienced wholly in fetch is sought through universal visual signs to express touch, movement, directionality- hands, aeriality, arrows and layered brushstrokes. A lexicon of symbols recycled over and over again. Creating both a narrative but also an honest and self referential language to abstract the description of movement. As more work is made and the language is built, the more sincere in its description it becomes. Influenced by Susan Rothenberg's vocabulary but also the longevity of the symbol of the duck in the Lascaux Caves. While the *why* of its form is unknown, the *what* is confidently obvious. Regarding the recent death of the oldest thoroughbred horse in history, the owner, mourning its passing, spoke about his speed; "It really is a special thrill to feel a racing thoroughbred at full speed underneath you." I can only begin to imagine this experience, as the words to describe the horse's speed or even my words to describe the thrill fetch leave a lot of negative space. That indescribable space where language falls short is then created visually. The translation between the reality of the dog and semiotics aims to describe the world outside its own symbology. To live alongside dogs does not also mean you live with a manifestation of wildness. Not what the dog is to you but what is created between you and the dog.