

# ART PAPERS

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## INGRID CALAME INDIANAPOLIS

Nearly one hundred years ago, Marinetti's automobile evoked a vision so radically new that it shaped the course of an aesthetic future; recently, an automobile race led to a significant reconfiguration of the future of abstract painting. For the past eight years or so, Ingrid Calame has consistently produced some of the most pertinent abstract painting being done at present. Although her recent works might seem like hybridized simulations of Abstract Expressionist gestures, they are unabashedly indexical representations of the remnants of contemporary urban life. Curated by Lisa Freiman, *Traces of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway* [Indianapolis Museum of Art (IMA); November 2, 2007—March 16, 2008] features a significant extension of Calame's technique—the tracing of seemingly random stains on Mylar. Here, the arbitrary stain has given way to the traces of highly refined machines and their competitive arena of operation—that is, pit skid marks at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

Launched in 1911, the Indianapolis 500 is one of the most important annual automobile races in the world. As the self-proclaimed "greatest spectacle in racing," it is the virtual definition of spectacle, which may have less to do with Debord's mediation than with the awe-inspiring technology of the IRL cars: accelerating from 0 to 100 miles per hour in less than three seconds, they reach speeds of around 220 mph, with a driver sitting about two inches above the ground. The sheer scale of every facet of the race is a nearly totemic testament to automotive technologies. The Indy 500 takes place on an enormous two-and-a-half-mile oval track, it awards the highest cash prize in American auto racing, it's a media magnet, and it boasts the largest single-day attendance of any sporting event in the world.

In 2005, the winner Dan Wheldon became the first driver in the history of the race to celebrate by doing a

victory doughnut. The skid marks from that "thrill of victory" loop remain. Calame and her team of assistants traced them onsite, and then painstakingly reproduced them full-scale on three IMA gallery walls. At some 76 x 20 feet, the resultant enamel and latex drawing is still only about a third of the original. This is the most specific of the works on view.

Other painted compositions are more oblique pastiches of Mylar tracings, which Calame refers to as constellations—an apt choice of term, as it seems related to Benjamin's concept of the cultural form as a constellation that links past and present events. While Calame does record the actions of the past, their attribution remains mostly speculative. As such, her work yields a visual metaphor for the provisional nature of historic record. *From #258 Drawing (Tracings from the Indianapolis Motor Speedway and the L.A. River)*, 2007, exemplifies this volatility: large ovoid marks from the victory maneuver are interspersed with teal markings from the speedway's pits and a dark green series of marks taken from a traffic sign on a street in Seoul. While the initial mark is reproduced full-size, its unexpected contextualization creates something absolutely unique—grounded in the history of its making and simultaneously outside of its narrative.

Calame's color choices indicate a very sophisticated, yet also intuitive and possibly emotive, understanding of harmonies. After all, she opted for the color of her own first cars in certain passages of *From #271 Drawing (Tracings from the Indianapolis Motor Speedway and the L.A. River)*, 2007.

—Jeffrey Hughes