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Guggenheim Fellowship Application 2023

Martin Marvin Pacific

A census-designated place (CDP) is a concentration of population defined by the United States Census Bureau for statistical purposes only.

Tanglewilde is a CDP in Thurston County, Washington. It is included in the “Urban Growth Area” of Lacey, a post-war suburb of Olympia, the state capitol. Top employers for residents include the combined Fort Lewis Army and McChord Airforce military bases, Providence Health & Services, and the State of Washington. According to the 2020 census, it has a population of 6,265. The median income is \$45,000 per household and \$21,154 per capita. Aerially, Tanglewilde is a loose polygon framed by the following arterials:

Carpenter Road
Interstate 5
Martin Way
Marvin Road
Pacific Avenue
Steilacoom Road

Nonarterial street names within the CDP may refer to flowers, glaciers, mountains, clouds, trees, animals, seasons, landmarks, the sea, pilgrim ships, forts, weapons, aircraft, the military, classic cars, faith, feelings, sensations, wellness, religion, deities, holidays, traditions, television and cinema, colleges, sports, athletes, cowboys, lumberjacks, Shakespeare characters, Britain, France, Native Nisqually individuals and terms, local officials, white settlers, American patriotism, Lewis and Clark, wives and mistresses, sons and daughters, business partners, and allusions to affluence.

This is a flattening effect. A spiky riot of suggestive toponyms recedes toothlessly under the workaday din of Panda Express, long commutes, vinyl windows, bikini baristas and Amazon deliveries. Tanglewilde is hardly unique; after all, haphazard suburban sprawl masking a history of genocide and dispossession is an American standard.

While I grew up in Tanglewilde, I’m not interested in forwarding the place as a personal identity or formalizing the CDP as a subject in my paintings: my interest as an artist generally lies in the flattened scramble of distorted clues and references all around us, be they material or emotional. This is mirrored in the kaleidoscopic placenames of Tanglewilde, where ornamental nomenclature points at dizzying (and disturbing) West Coast histories, serving to usher motorists from Forbidden Cannabis Dispensary to Interstate 5. Conversely, the area’s dour designation as a “census designated place” suggests a “concentration of population” shrugging at its own flat reflection. But if you eschew nostalgia, what emerges is a palpable tension between flat affectation, affable presentation and simmering hostility, compressed within a single place. This aligns with my paintings, where similar attributes muscle against material limits.

The work samples included in this application are small paintings on paper, collectively titled “Martin Marvin Pacific.” Individually, the paintings are titled with similar composites of Tanglewilde street names, resulting in unlikely referential combinations. A result of process-heavy painting methods, they are as heavily layered and marked as they are redacted and scraped. I plan to follow this fledgling body of work to a logical conclusion with the support of a Guggenheim Fellowship, including a series of larger-scale paintings based on the quotidian quicksand of American *community*. I will also continue the smaller paintings, which serve as burnt offerings from the distortions of *home*.