



This Page:
Ryan Campbell
in his studio.

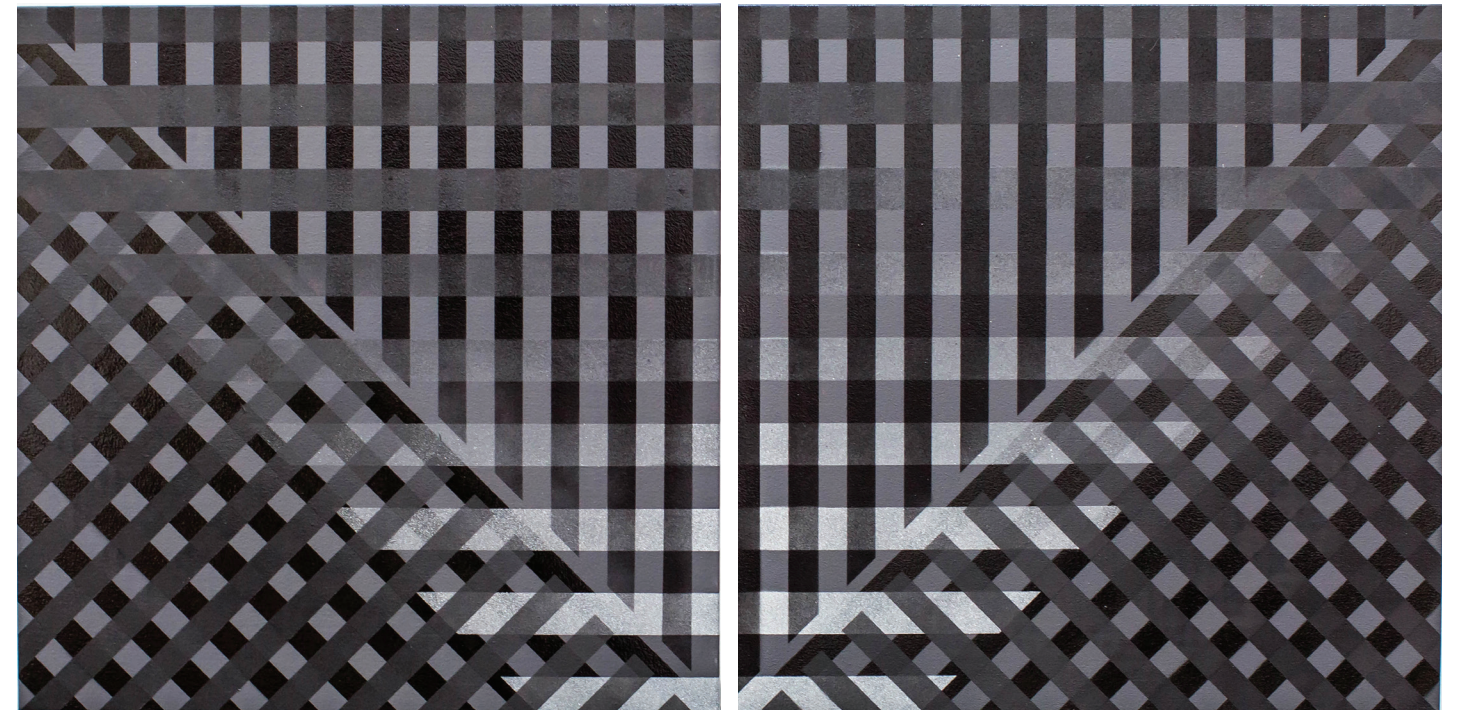
Opposite Page: "Line
Segments number 81"
(diptych)
24"x 24," 24"x 24"
latex and aerosol
on canvas. 2017.

MAKE WORK EVERY SINGLE DAY

Artist Ryan Campbell Says This Credo Shaped the Career He Never Dreamed He Could Have

written by Linda L. McAllister

photos by Terry Hastings and Deja Kreutzberg



As a six-year-old, painter and sculptor Ryan Campbell experienced what he describes as pure joy for the first time. "I was coloring at my table and remember saying, 'I love to scribble scrabble.'"

He never quit loving it.

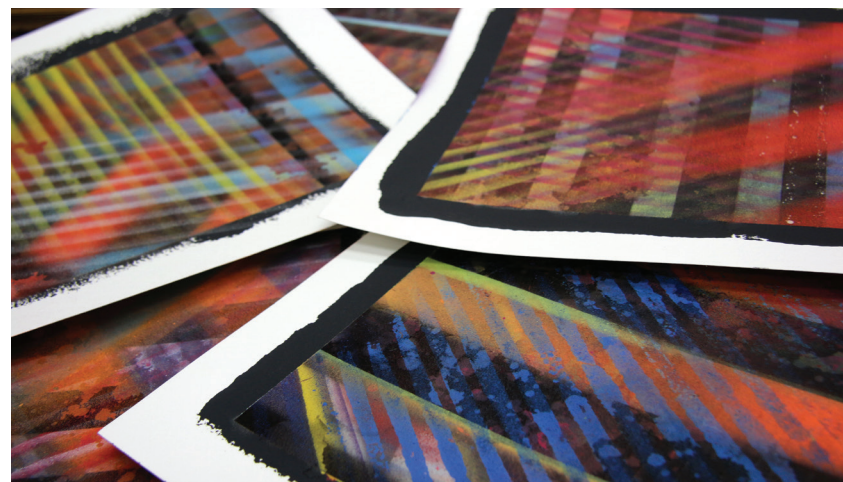
On a family trip to Venice Beach when he was a teen, the Los Angeles native saw boldly tagged graffiti for the first time. "I was enamored with the size, the color of it and that it was done illegally, at night, in the dark," he remembers. "The mystique behind it and the mischievousness of it—that was a real rush for me."

By the time he was 16, Campbell was part of a graffiti crew that scrawled and sprayed its creations

on the sides of boxcars and along freeways in the San Fernando Valley and beyond for nearly a decade. "Graffiti art was my second job."

Although he worked in retail and restaurants growing up, the art was what got him through the day. "I always had three things with me, and it was never my homework," Campbell recalls, laughing. "I had a sketchbook, one or two graffiti magazines and a pack of markers. I drifted away into this world that felt so right."

Campbell is lucky to even be in this world. Born with serious deformities in his heart and bowels, he spent much of his youth in and out of hospitals. "I had 15 surgeries by the time I was 13, so I watched movies and colored a lot." It was



Opposite Page Top:
 "Line Segments," Steel
 Sculpture, work in
 progress; Bottom Left:
 Paint cans detail; Bottom
 Right: New works on
 paper detail.

This Page: White on
 white painting detail.

during that time, given art supplies by his parents to keep him busy while in bed, that art became part of his recovery.

By 2001, Campbell was living full-time in the Coachella Valley and had enrolled in art classes at the College of the Desert, where he says he learned important lessons. The late Bill Kohl told him his sketchbook showed real promise and then taught him how to create handmade paper, while Professor David Einstein gave him the artist's credo that Campbell still lives by today: "Make work every single day."

The next ten years were transformative. "I was at a point that graffiti had run its course; it was no longer the thrill it once was," explains Campbell. The restaurant where he worked closed, so he got a job painting a sign, earning enough to pay a month's rent. He began working with galleries on art installation and restoration. "At these homes where I was doing installations, I'd see beautiful gazebos, lined patterns and shadow patterns extending across the ground and on the walls, and I wanted to emulate that. I started to paint lines in my backgrounds, and at some point, those backgrounds overtook the foreground." The intrigue and excitement of his craft returned.

Campbell was mentored by the likes of Russell Jacques, Gesso Cocteau and Phillip K. Smith. "I've worked in each of their studios and I learned what you can't learn in school." Their guidance and Campbell's aim to "make work every single day" helped him land his first significant sale: concert promoter Goldenvoice commissioned 13 of his paintings for installation in its private homes and offices.

CHIHULY

AT THE
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Dale Chihuly, *Mille Fiori* (detail), 2014
 Clinton Presidential Library and Museum
 Little Rock, Arkansas

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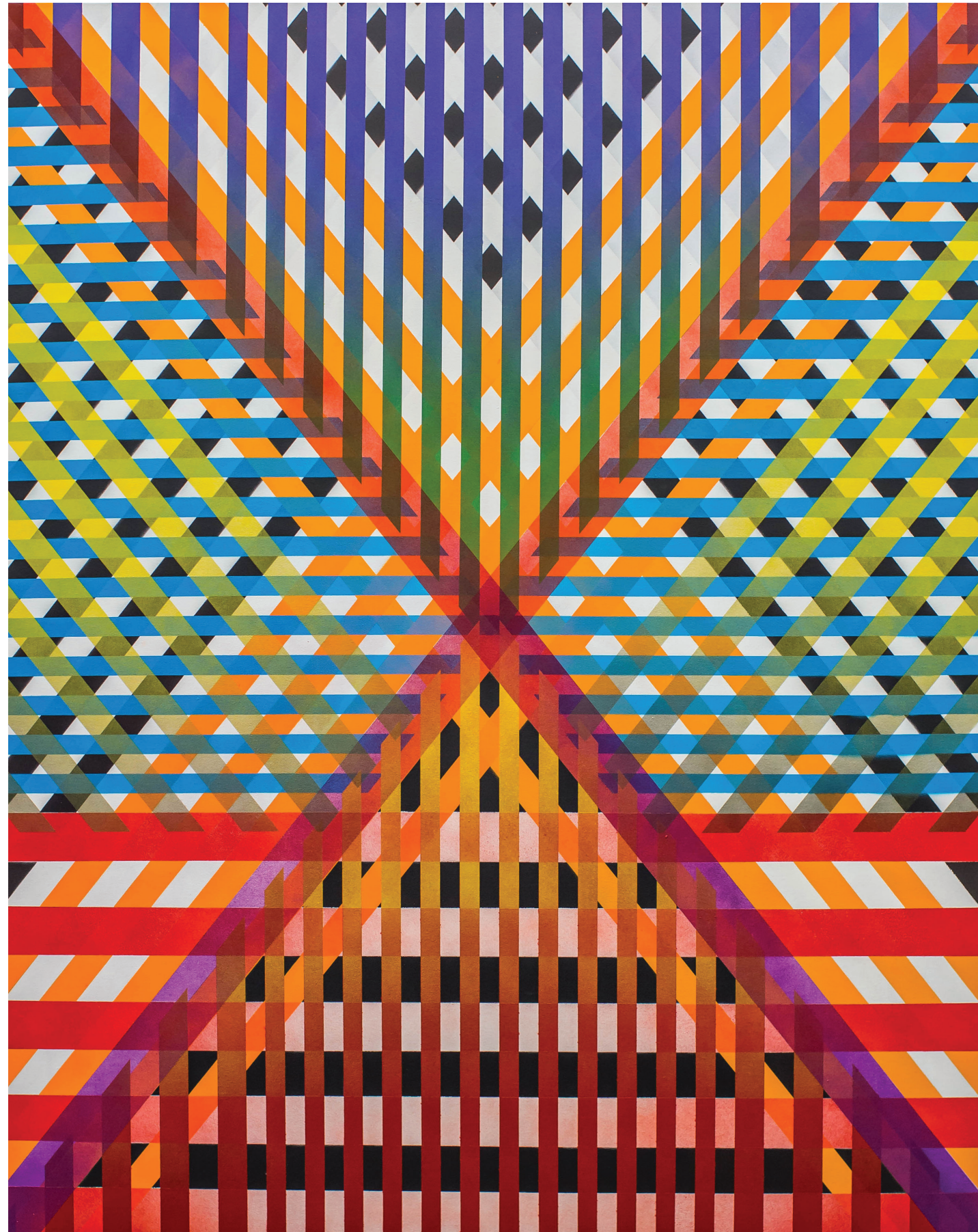


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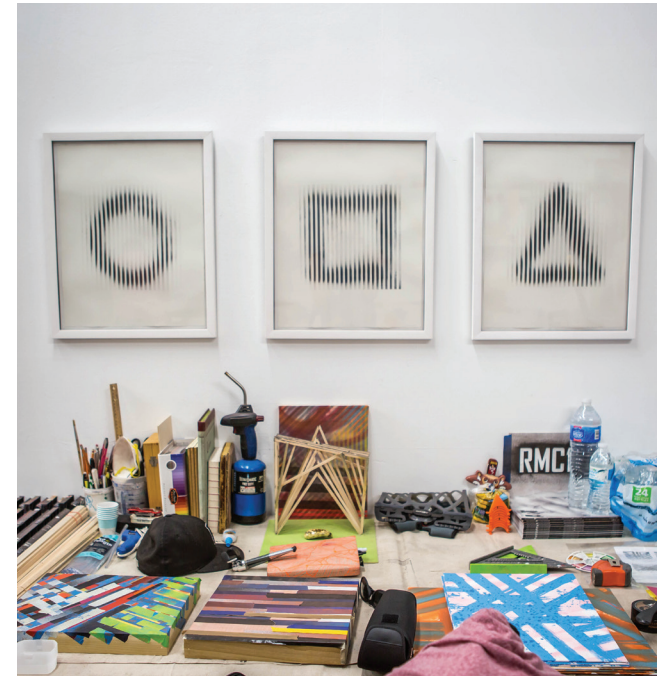
[f](#) [i](#) [t](#) #CatalinaMuseum
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Line Segments number 82 48"x 60" Latex and aerosol on canvas 2017.




Desk detail with Circle, square, triangle framed aerosol works on paper 2015.



Other minimalist artists who inspire Campbell include Ed Moses, Frank Stella, Sol LeWitt and controversial L.A. graffiti writer Jason REVOK. "I'm an experimental painter with wonderful mediums and surfaces," he explains. "From time to time, I find myself in great situations, and the excitement and magic come out." When pressed to describe his own style, the artist says he paints geometric abstraction, creating contrasts between elements, layers and colors, but adds, "I don't like to limit myself with a label in one distinctive category." Most recently his body of work includes larger-than-life angular sculptures in a variety of metal finishes.

When he was younger, Campbell thought he'd follow his father into the restaurant business. Turns out, he did in a sense—his Cathedral City art studio is located behind an Italian bakery where fresh-from-the-oven cookies give his space the heady aroma of butter mixed with warm sugar. A place of orderly chaos, the studio is scattered with the tools of his trade: cans of aerosol, latex paint in every color, wood spacers, thin sheets of metal leaves, paper, plaster, steel, wooden slats ... and "boatloads of masking tape," Campbell adds with a laugh.

Campbell sees his paintings as a study in contrasts, as he is himself: a rebel kid who reformed. An unfocused student, now laser-focused and devoted to his art. Married two years ago, the 36-year-old Palm Desert resident and wild-child graffiti artist turned hard-edge painter has a self-described soft spot for his wife, Waleska. "She took a leap of faith to marry me," he remarks, grinning. And with Campbell's ever-growing body of work and leap of faith in himself, it's all paying off. 

Follow Campbell's work on instagram @RMC1 or for more information visit his website at RMC1studio.com

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