



## **Exceptional Faculty Series**

**Conversations with some of our very best professors**

**Professor Paul Fabozzi**

PROFESSOR [PAUL FABOZZI](#)

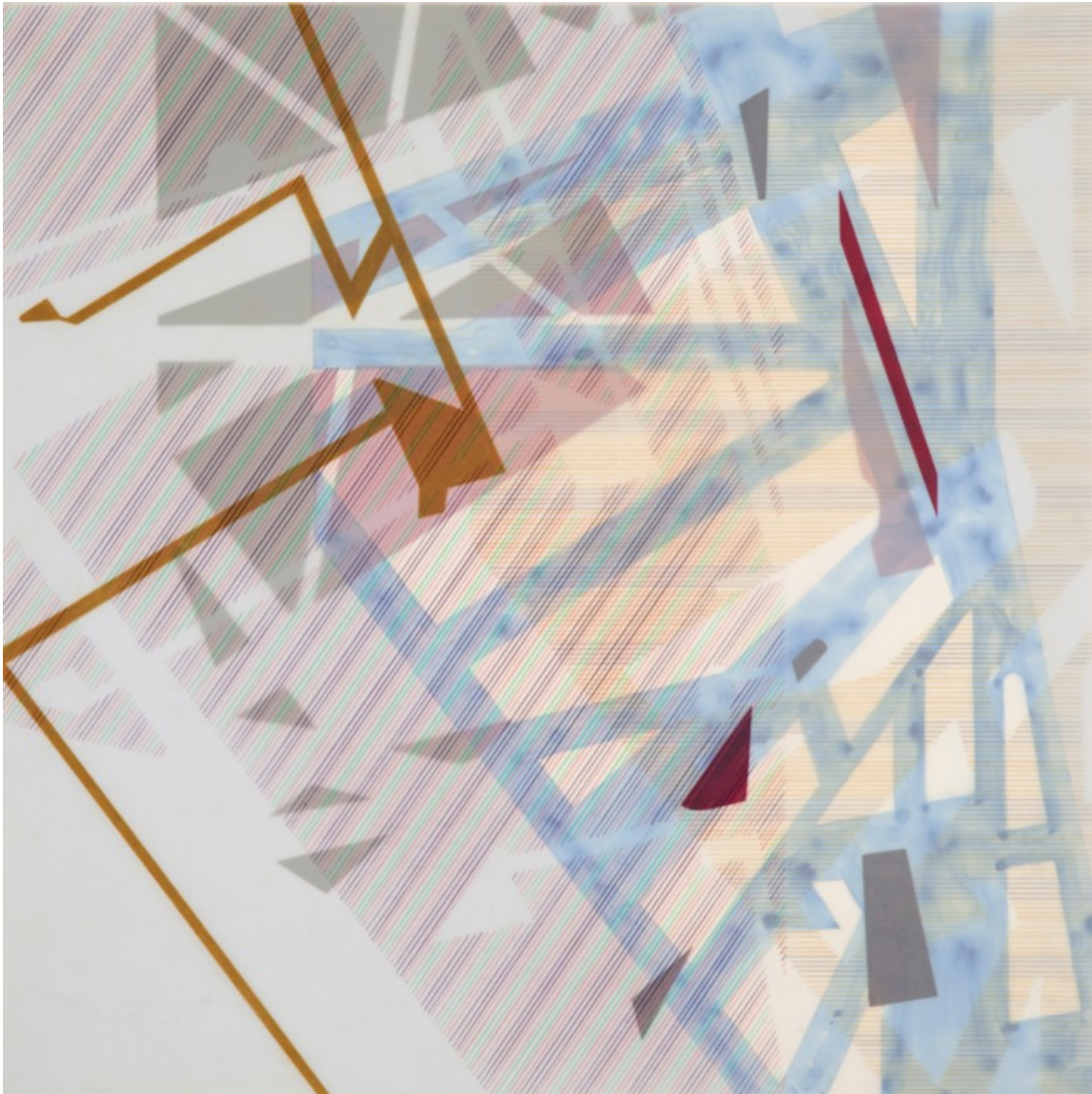
Image provided by Victor Jolley

“Paul Fabozzi received his BFA from Alfred University in 1989 and his MFA from the University of Pennsylvania in 1993. Additional studies include SUNY Buffalo in Siena, Italy and The University of Georgia at Athens in Cortona, Italy. His paintings and works on paper have been included in numerous solo

and group shows throughout the United States and Europe, including exhibitions in New York, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Rome, London, and Vienna.”

***What artwork are you most proud of?***

That is a complicated question to answer because I feel like what I’m usually most interested in is what I’m currently working on. But, if I had to answer the question I would say that there is a little painting in my parents’ house. It’s about 12x12 inches and I did it after I spent some time in Berlin in 1989. I was there during the period that the Berlin Wall first opened. I happened to be lucky enough to be a witness to that momentous time in recent European History. When I got back to the US I made a small painting about my experience of the wall. I have a real fondness for that painting. Something about the way a physical structure — a line, could define an ideological edge was fascinating to me. I like to look at it every time I visit my folks.



QBB #1, colored pencil on Mylar, mounted on gouache on paper, 30 x 30 inches, 2012

***How/why did you start making art?***

Good question! How do we know why we do what we do? Maybe part of it is that I come from a big family. I have three brothers and a sister so lots of people and energy in the house. Art was one of those things I could use to get away; art was kind of an escape. I also think my mom had something to do with it. She was the one in my family that really encouraged me. As well, I had a hard time in school. I had trouble connecting with my classes. But art was a whole other story. Early on I know it would be part of my life.

***What inspires you?***

The thing that I draw most from in the making of my work is the feelings I get from being in certain spaces, cities, and environments. I've been very fortunate to have traveled a lot. I've made travel a key part of my practice as an artist. Over the past few years, I have not made any image without first having an experience of a real place. So the kind of dialectic between the studio practice of making an image and the real events of being in a lived environment are essential. This dialectic also informs my approach to teaching.

***What is your creative process?***

I think to a degree I already covered that. On the one hand it all starts with a specific experience, most recently of urban spaces. Over the past hand full of years I have taken work trips to Berlin, Rio de Janeiro, Istanbul, Rome, London and of course New York is always in my mind. I have experienced a real range of city environments to engage with. I see my studio practice as a consistent thing that I do every day. It's not about waiting for inspiration and then going there and trying to put stuff together. It's like going to work. It's a day in and day out process, a real routine. I don't depend on my mood to decide if I am going to work, I just do it. What I like most about making paintings and drawings is watching an image unfold slowly, layer upon layer, that's a really exciting thing for me.



Ivo #1, colored pencil and ink on Mylar, mounted on gouache on paper, 18x12 inches, 2014

***What's the best advice you've ever been given?***

I had the great benefit of working a little bit with the well-known painter Neil Welliver. He had just retired from teaching at the University of Pennsylvania when I started the MFA program there, but he came back for a few critiques. He said something once that I remembered; it was pretty simple. He said, "It doesn't happen until your forty." At first I had no idea what he meant by that. What doesn't happen until your forty? The more I pondered it, I thought, what he was really talking about was putting in the required hours to fully own your process. I like it because what it made me think of is to just keep going. That if I stick with this until forty it's going to become so much more a part of me that I'm never going to give it up. So it was more of this idea of making painting a choice about life, not so much an idea of a career. The idea that art is something you might try for a while and then move on to something more practical if it doesn't work out would not have made any sense to Welliver and I connect to that idea.

***Do you have any advice for those pursuing a career in art?***



That's a tough one, things change all the time. I think in this day and age, you, not only need to have a command of craft and technique and ways of making, you also need to be able to understand what context your work is best suited to be in. The cultural, political, social, and economic context. Our cultures relationship with art and art making has expanded exponentially and I think young artists need to be more conscious of what milieu they want to inhabit and how their work intersects with the world.



Corivale #2, oil on canvas, 48x36 inches, 2013

***How do you define good teaching?***

I think what I try to do is instill in my students that it is always important to make things well. But at the same time, I think that you have to have a larger intellectual context for what you're doing. You have to understand the theories and ideas that drive the history and culture of making. Working with your hands on the one level but also working with your brain. Also, I do not view the language of art as a thing separate from our engagement with the world around us. I like to prod my students to consider the connections between the dynamics of the picture plan — space, form, rhythm, balance, and movement and how those things connect to our fundamental perceptual faculties.

***What is the role of the artist in society, in your opinion?***

I guess I could make some kind of claim as to the larger societal reasons for art making. There are a lot of people that have done that and done it very well. I think maybe I'll approach this question in a different way and say, 'what would my life be like if I stopped making art?' For me, if I stopped making art the thing that would be the most lacking is that I would no longer be at all in control of how I represent the world in images. I would only be subjected to other people's representations. I think that what art making does is it allows the artist to self-represent in this world. And I think that what we as artists translate potentially to the viewer is inspiration to also want to self-represent. To me, that is the core of why art is necessary. I don't want to be subjected to the powers that be and the representations that society wants to impose on me, I want to make my own.

***What projects are you currently working on?***

I'm currently working on a number of different things simultaneously. The main project is a group of twenty large-scale drawings based on specific locations in some of the cities I mentioned earlier. The thing that ties them together is that the designs of these spaces are not predicted on rectilinear structure. They are all in one way or another curvilinear and they are all public and or cultural spaces; train stations, churches, government buildings, stadiums, museums and shopping centers. I'm sort of visually and materially breaking down the photographs I took while I experienced these spaces and then rebuilding them through drawing.



QBB #3, oil on canvas 48 x 36 inches, 2014

***Would you like to share some information about your upcoming trip to Brazil?***

Sure! I will be in Rio, Brazil in November to give a presentation at a conference on the topic of innovation in tourism strategies. The Olympics will be in Rio in 2016 and so this event is designed as a forum for developing innovative ways for people to engage with the city. It's a wonderful opportunity because I will be there with Parvez Mohsin, the University Gallery Director, and Alex Morel, one of our photography professors. Our presentation will be one of the only ones considering the role of arts and culture in this conversation. It will be nice to be engage with policy makers, economists and other academics. Our goal it to prod the audience to think more broadly about the concept of tourism. It should be fun!

Cover Image: Corviale #1x3, Oil on canvas, 48x72 inches, 2014