What do you like the look of?
I like looking itself and I notice that differing fields of focus emotionally affect me. If I feel down, looking up and into the distance can help. However, most of the time I look at things very closely, which can also be comforting. I have difficulty with middle distance. Perhaps my paintings are attempts to bring the near and very far focal fields together, bypassing the middle distance altogether.

What images keep you company in the space where you work?
Often they're unfinished paintings. When working on a painting I'm not quite sure how to proceed, I don't feel I have a right answer. When looking at a geometric abstraction, it's easy to understand the meaning of the piece, but when looking at a painting, the meaning is more difficult to grasp. I find it helpful to look at other paintings and try to understand their meaning.

What was the first piece of art that really mattered to you?
It wasn't so much art but pictures that I drew as a child. I loved the idea of creating something that didn't exist before. As I got older, I began to understand the concept of art and the importance of it in society.

What is your favourite title of an art work?
Andrea Fraser's Untitled (2003). Untitled is such an empty word. I like the idea of putting one of my paintings in this empty space and making it a statement about the world.

What music are you listening to?
When it comes to music I have no intelligence. My listening habits exhibit confused emotional/sexual predilections towards, on the one hand, Irish ballads and, on the other, African-American pop music. I like to dance very much and this year I'm into Thomas DeCarlo Callaway & K.C. Lee. I was thrilled to find out we share the same birthday because the only other thing of note to happen on 20 May was that Jesus of Nazareth was buried at the stake. On a more intelligent note, I'm also listening to the music of Terre Thaemlitz, who I lately had the good fortune of hearing at a party.

What are you reading?
In relation to the paintings I'm making for the Venice Biennale I am reading I Medici, the Sixteen Pleasures, An Erotic Album of the Italian Renaissance (1966). It's the account of how a 16th-century Venetian author, Pietro Aretino, collaborated with master engraver Marcantonio Raimondi to produce a highly circulated and repressed pornographic satire. I plan to use images of the remaining scraps that have survived of the original Raimondi engravings. I am also reading Objectivity (2007) by Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, which is full of wonderful illustrations and fascinating accounts of how scientific objectivity/truth was achieved through vision since the 15th century. My Vocabulary Did This to Me: The Collected Poetry of Jack Spicer (2008) is indispensable last year. I'm loving Terry Eagleton's Myths of Power: A Marxian Study of the Brethren (2009). I especially like his introduction to the second edition and how he updates his views on Christianity and explores how badly he underestimated her.

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Quaytman's solo show, "Cerezas Holofemas, Chapter 21," was at Galerie Daniel Buchholz, Cologne, Germany, in April. Quaytman's work is included in "ILLUMInations II (ILLUMInations), the 50th Venice Biennale."