

Abstraction Revisited

Curated by Elga Wimmer



CHELSEA ART MUSEUM
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Gerard Mosse
Haeri Yoo
Hernán Cedolá
Jean Miotte
Jean Paul Riopelle
Joan Mitchell
Larry Poons
Lee Krasner
Louise Fishman
Lydia Dona
Norbert Prangenberg
Otto Zitko
Robert Motherwell
Sam Francis
Stephen Ellis
Theodoros Stamos
Vicky Uslé
William Baziotis

Abstraction Revisited

This show "Abstraction Revisited" displays the work of contemporary artists engaged in abstraction, alongside examples from some of the earlier Abstract Expressionists. The works were chosen for their visual impact and the strong dialogue they establish between the first generation and today's abstractionists.

This juxtaposition seeks to shed light on the parallels and differences within a practice which shows no sign of fading, indeed which is more vital and innovative than ever, as evidenced by a surge of interest from artists, critics and art lovers alike. While the younger artists acknowledge their illustrious predecessors, they are less doctrinaire, willing to mix genres and media, from painting and sculpture to photography, video and film. They demonstrate their independence and individuality within an idiom which appears as vital today as it was when artists first sought freedom from representation.

Where the early stages of Abstract Expressionism took place mainly in Europe and the US, this exhibition demonstrates that younger international artists from places as diverse as Korea and Argentina, as well as from multiple generational backgrounds, can stand up to being shown 'cheek to jowl' to the Masters of the first generation. This exhibition allows for a new and exciting look at abstract art from the 1950s to today, offering a fresh understanding of its history, while enhancing the importance of the works of younger generations.

Elga Wimmer
Curator

The Persistence of Abstraction

Abstract painting can be its own subject, its own world, one that reveals itself slowly over time and may not look exactly the same to us from one day to the next. Humans change from day to day, whether or not they themselves immediately register those changes. And humans account for those of us who produce as well as receive art; artists are not in any sense "superhuman." In 1968 Douglas Huebler's famous and humbling proclamation stated, in part, "The world is full of objects, more or less interesting; I do not wish to add any more. I prefer, simply, to state the existence of things in terms of time and/or place." Now, when the daily flood of images appears unrelenting, when millions of people across the face of the earth can lift up their cell phones and "make a picture" in an instant, can stop time for one one-hundred-and-twenty-fifth of a second, abstraction – even as it continues to abundantly introduce new images to the world – can be seen as an antidote. And if you subscribe to the notion that what artists make is exactly what they want to see at any given moment (this is called having faith in the artist) then the proliferation of abstract art today may well have something to do with the dispensation of this antidote.

Bob Nickas from "Painting Abstraction: New Elements in Abstract Painting," Phaidon Press 2009

Lydia Dona

From the book: Godfrey, Tony. Painting Today. p 154 Phaidon Press, Ltd. 2009 London.

"In her work of the 1990s Dona accentuates the history of materials, making a car crash of various styles: laying down a ground in acrylic, overlaying it with a grid in pencil, using masking tape to put in some off-balance geometry, then adding images from a car manual in oil paint -- these to her are reminiscent of both Marcel Duchamp's early works and Deleuze's notion of people as 'desiring machines'. Finally she drips on enamel à la Jackson Pollock, but this dripping is scrappy, non-heroic. The colours are unpleasant institutional colours or the over-bright tones of cosmetics. 'Colour codes,' she explains, 'are both cosmetic and cosmic. Cultural codifications of the "cosmetic bodies" of femininity and masculinity are both quoted and displaced to build a systemized degendered "code", a third zone of schisms and multiplicities: the zone of techno-urban bodies. The ghostly paintings of the ghosts of the body."

From the catalogue essay: Rubinstein, Raphael. "Lydia Dona: Zones of Luminous Conflicts" Exhibition catalogue, Galeria Joan Prats, Barcelona, 2007.

"Dona is preoccupied with the urban environment. These are paintings created with a keen sense of the invisible infrastructure that keeps a city running and, even more, of the constant breakdowns of urban systems. In their very diversity of sources, their multiplicity of overlapping languages, their crowded cohabitations, I see Dona's paintings as reflections of the place where they are made: New York City, this dynamic site of "borderline entanglements," to borrow the title of one of her paintings. It's also clear, in looking at the paintings Dona has made since 2001, that her work has been deeply affected by 9/11. Her studio is just a few blocks from Ground Zero and the twisted, smoking, piled-up ruins of the World Trade Center seem to haunt her recent work. We live in the shadow of war and chaos, her recent paintings constantly remind us, yet within this situation the artist has the opportunity to discover what Yeats called a "terrible beauty."





Photo Ghosts And The Labyrinthian
Drip Of The Void 1996
84 x 64 in / 213.4 x 162.6 cm
Oil, acrylic and sign paint on canvas
Private Collection, New York City



Arenas of Smoke, Arenas of Glow 2009
60 x 66 in / 152.4 x 167.6 cm
Oil, acrylic, metallic paint and
sign paint on canvas
Private Collection, Boston