

## Senses and Thoughts

Entering Jennifer Goodman's studio is like slipping into another world. House and garden give way to an immaculate white space. Everything is exquisitely thought out. Paint tubes are lined up in a logic of colour placement that fits the artist's working procedure. Set out nearby are dozens of white bowls filled with mixed colour that not only provide the paint but also serve as guides for remixing chosen tones. A long plank shelf, movable on pegs, serves as an easel and a small group of recent works populate the room. It is the perfect setup for Goodman to work in -- an atmosphere that allows her to focus on the meticulous construction of colour and form. The only intrusion on this almost spiritual setting is the sound system, sending out strains of Classic FM, Radio National or chosen music and audio books. There is also a dog!

The studio is as considered as the works themselves. And the paintings in this exhibition are a milestone in what has been a purposeful evolution that has allowed the artist to explore the many possibilities of working within fairly limited compositional parameters. In successive exhibitions Goodman has followed her quest to pursue a set of limits while exploiting a wide range of colour possibilities. Works from previous exhibitions, *The Balance of Asymmetry* (2006), *The Edge of Time* (2008) and *Ocular Spectra* (2010) have presented complex fields of colour, which seem to overlap in veils of tone. In fact, each element of the composition is not a veil, but a totally separate colour. This has meant that Goodman has employed vast numbers of tones to create each painting. For example, a set of small square paintings produced in 2007 each employed forty-nine colours to achieve what seems at first glance a deceptively simple arrangement. In larger scale works from 2008, although sticking to the regimental quality of the grid, her paintings are loaded with compositional surprises. They sneak up on the viewer with strong 'L' forms and subtle intrusions that ensure a dynamic tension across the surface. Such works culminated in with powerful paintings like *Gamboge*, 2009, and *Dusk*, 2010.

Also in 2010, straight grids gave way to off-kilter forms. Trapezoids cut by wedges of colour and the use of white have become dramatic elements in a number of the works. Forms allude to architectural spaces and the viewer is invited to see the suggestion of perspective elements that flatten back on to the surface of the painting in short order. By degrees, these paintings served to shock those accustomed to the subdued grids in Goodman's previous work. However, although works like *Virginia* and *Tarkine* bring a flush of excitement as a result of the jagged rhythm of their forms, the same thoughtfulness and control is there that ordered the rectangular grids.

At this time, Goodman also decided to produce a series of archival pigment prints based on drawings she had made. With the assistance of Chris Pennings, she would sit by the computer using Pennings as the 'technical paintbrush person', as Goodman called him, working out each section of colour until it fit exactly to her needs. So, in a way, she was treating the computer exactly the way she approached her paintings. Elements in the paper works, like Spectra #6 and Spectra #4 read like subtle screens of colour superimposed on each other, where in fact, again, each facet is a separate colour.

After the delightful surprise of the 2010 works, I wondered what could come next. The answer came in a studio visit in mid 2012. The ordered grids of works from The Edge of Time exhibition and the wonky geometric forms of the paintings seen in late 2010 in Goodman's Ocular Spectra exhibition at John Buckley Gallery, had given way to eccentric organic shapes. Although approached with the same meticulousness that is the hallmark of all her work, Goodman has launched herself into a riot of bold forms, interacting in a way to suggest landscape and even creatures. In the paintings Bloom, Transition and Felt, for example, oblongs, blobs and shapes that evoke leaves and birds play across a field of interlocking and overlapping forms. The colour is dazzling and the forms almost dance across the canvases.

Increasingly dense, dark hues are appearing in the works along with a dynamic role for white. For instance in the work, Repose, white plays a starring role. One can almost read this painting as a figurative composition, which comes itchy close to narrative, but what seduces the viewer is merely the interaction of forms capped by the breathtaking dynamic of the central white element.

The paintings of Senses and Thoughts enter new territory. They are carefully controlled, at times sombre, yet they revel in the play of colour and form. At the same time they invite the viewer to enter an arena of spatial invention that sings with Matisse-like joy.

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