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Artist Bios - A Planar Garden

Curated by Stephen Westfall

November 21, 2024 – January 11, 2025

Stephen Westfall

Stephen Westfall's (b. 1953) paintings have charted a course between post-minimalist geometries and a Pop inflected awareness of a painting as a thing in the world. The brightly colored diamonds, triangles and trapezoids in his most recent canvases are conjoined into dynamic compositional skeins that seem to lean into space rather than recede. Drawing on Caucasian and Navajo rugs, medieval heraldry, Byzantine floor tile, early twentieth century abstraction, architecture and Pop, Minimalist and post-Minimalist painting, Westfall's abstraction is deeply acculturated while formally honed into an active, perceptual immediacy.

Suzan Frecon

Made over long stretches of time, Suzan Frecon's (American, b. 1941) abstract oil paintings and works on paper invite the viewer's sustained attention. In Frecon's work, composition serves as a foundational structure, holding color, material, and light. Frecon mixes pigments and oils to differing effects, and the visual experience of her work is heightened by her almost tactile use of color and contrasting matte and shiny surfaces.

Arthur Dove

Although Dove (American, 1880-1946) was part of a circle of artists associated with Alfred Stieglitz, including John Marin and Georgia O'Keeffe, his work was uniquely radical and set him apart as a pioneering figure in American art. Dove's legacy is significant for his focus on the formal elements of painting, particularly the use of color and the absence of figuration, in anticipating the rise of Abstract Expressionism in the late 1940s.

Suzanne Caporael

Suzanne Caporael (American, b.1949) is a painter whose elusive imagery - ranging from refined figuration to color-field abstraction - derives from her methodical, persistent observation of the natural world. She is primarily interested in the collection and recollection of individual experience, and the way in which the brain processes visual information. From the chemical make-up of water in estuaries near her studio in upstate New York, to the landscape she encountered in remote stretches of a road trip across the United States, Caporael is continually investigating modes of perception and memory in her work.

Alexander Calder

Through the interactions of shapes, colors, and movement, Alexander Calder (American, 1898-1976) revealed how opposing elements and forces could attain symbiosis in his dynamic and groundbreaking sculptures. His works often appear whimsical, yet they are

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carefully calibrated and composed. Gongs, dings, hums, and silent pauses add humor and sound to enliven Calder's abstractions and bring their contrasting components together as cohesive reflections of the surrounding world.

Polly Apfelbaum

Featuring large-scale installations of textiles, ceramics and drawings, the work of Polly Apfelbaum (American, b.1955) is framed by wider political contexts and the legacy of post-war American art. Apfelbaum combines a variety of media with eye-catching colours and patterns to blur the lines between painting, sculpture and installation, while also exploring the boundaries between art and handicraft. She chooses materials, such as textiles and ceramics, that are usually found in the domestic realm, and emphasises their essential qualities, especially colour and texture. In this way, Apfelbaum assumes a political and feminist position, challenging hierarchies in cultural practice.

Mary Heilmann

Influenced by 1960s counterculture, the free speech movement, and the surf ethos of her native California, Mary Heilmann (American, b. 1940) ranks amongst the most influential abstract painters of her generation. Considered one of the preeminent contemporary Abstract painters, Heilmann's practice overlays the analytical geometries of Minimalism with the spontaneous ethos of the Beat Generation, and are always distinguishable by their often unorthodox—always joyful—approach to color and form.

Joanna Pousette-Dart

Joanna Pousette-Dart (American, b. 1947) has explored the objecthood of the painting, through her unique formal vocabulary, where color, light and form continually bend, grip, and shape one another. After living in the desert of the American Southwest, the enormity of the sky and the curvature of the earth slowly induced a move away from the rigid rectangularity that so much of painting takes for granted. In this way the artist embarked upon a radical re-evaluation of interior form and exterior shape.

Patricia Treib

Patricia Treib's (American, b. 1979) large paintings begin as small oil on paper works that are meditations on a particular visual source—two and three dimensional objects arranged in restrained stilllives in her studio. Selecting one of these smaller works, she produces her larger paintings in a single sitting, a performance guided by the script of the smaller piece. Standing over the canvas, which is laid flat on the ground, the movement of her brushstrokes suggests the choreographic element of her process, which is often attempted several times before arriving at the final work. Contrasting Treib's role as recorder of her original source material to that of the camera, Joanna Fiduccia writes: "Her paintings are deliberate where the snapshot is casual, bodily where it is cyclopic, and temporal where it is instantaneous."

Odili Donald Odita

Odili Donald Odita (b. Engu, Nigeria in 1966; lives and works in Philadelphia, PA) is an

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abstract painter whose work explores color both in the figurative historical context and in the sociopolitical sense. He is best known for his large-scale canvases with kaleidoscopic patterns and vibrant hues, which he uses to reflect the human condition. For Odita, color in itself has the possibility of mirroring the complexity of the world as much as it has the potential for being distinct. In his paintings, we see color interwoven and mixed, becoming an active agent in representing the essential power that light has in identifying the entirety of our world.

Carmen Herrera

Core to Carmen Herrera's (Cuban born American, 1915–2022) painting was a drive for formal simplicity and a striking sense of color: "My quest", she said, "is for the simplest of pictorial resolutions" (2012). A master of crisp lines and contrasting chromatic planes, Herrera created symmetry, asymmetry and an infinite variety of movement, rhythm and spatial tension across the canvas with the most unobtrusive application of paint.

Will Barnet

In his nine-decade long career, Will Barnet (American, 1911–2012) created carefully structured abstract and figural works of spacious monumentality and measured intimacy, in which the natural influence of color, shape, and the compositional life of the canvas are honored.

Stuart Davis

Stuart Davis (American, 1892–1964) is one of the preeminent figures of American modernism. With a long career that stretched from the early twentieth century well into the postwar era, he brought a distinctively American accent to international modernism. Faced with the choice between realism and pure abstraction early in his career, Davis invented a vocabulary that harnessed the grammar of abstraction to the speed and simultaneity of modern America. By merging the bold, hard-edged style of advertising with the conventions of European avant-garde painting, he created an art endowed with the vitality and dynamic rhythms that he saw as uniquely modern and American. In the process, he achieved a rare synthesis: an art that is resolutely abstract, yet at the same time exudes the spirit of popular culture.

Harriet Korman

Harriet Korman (American, b. 1947) is a New York City-based American abstract painter who first garnered attention in the early 1970s. Her work is characterized by improvisation and experimentation within a set of self-imposed constraints, including simplicity of technique, purity of color, and a firm rejection of illusion, naturalistic light, and space.

Ralston Crawford

Recognized as one of the great innovators of Precisionism, Ralston Crawford (American, 1906–1978) grew well beyond his early visions of America flexing its newly industrialized muscles. Working and reworking in various media, Crawford at mid-century produced semi-abstract compositions, always maintaining a strong practice of observation. He

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pioneered the use of photography both as a tool for the painter and as an abstract medium itself. His experiments with silkscreen and graphic arts helped him to clarify a slick, almost Pop quality, although his work reflected his interest in the cycles of entropy and renewal of the American industrial landscape.

John McLaughlin

Long acknowledged in Southern California as one of the most important artists of the postwar period, John McLaughlin (American, 1898-1976) created a focused body of geometric paintings that are entirely devoid of any connection to everyday experience, inspired by the Japanese notion of the void. Using a technique of layering rectangular bars on adjacent planes of muted color, McLaughlin creates works that provoke introspection and, consequently, a greater understanding of one's relationship to nature.