

GALERIE NATHALIE OBADIA

PARIS - BRUXELLES

Shirley Jaffe

Seeing

19 January - 2 March 2013

Gallery II

3, rue du cloître Saint Merri - 75004 Paris



Galerie Nathalie Obadia is delighted to present *Seeing*, the fourth exhibition by Shirley Jaffe in its Parisian gallery, after the shows in 1999, 2001 and 2008.

These six paintings from 2012, on view here for the first time, represent the latest and fullest development of the coherent visual themes that the artist has been exploring for some fifty years now. It was in 1963–64 that Shirley Jaffe began developing a visual language inspired by her immediate urban environment, a lexicon of colours and forms that she has developed and enriched continuously ever since.

Based on the idea of a movement as the starting point, Jaffe assembles signs within the frame of the canvas, tempering their individual energies and adjusting her palette in order to achieve the overall formal and sensorial equilibrium of the composition. Never overloading the canvas with material so as not to muddy its communication with the viewer, Jaffe makes works that are states of play, freeze-frames of a flux, immortalising fugacity, the frantic effervescence of mixed urban forms, isolating and adjusting them precisely on the canvas.

By controlling the interplay of forces between the lines, colour fields and their frontiers, the artist harmoniously builds an image which circumscribes a dynamic within its framework, the better to make the viewer aware of their own inner mechanism of possibility. While never abandoning the visual seductiveness of its bold colour combinations and familiar signs, the solidity of the composition enables the painting to exist in an autonomous, frontal relation to the beholder. Transgressing the foundations of verticality and horizontality, Jaffe manages to achieve an ideal ordering of motifs and achieve an intrinsic unity, an interplay that is never merely decorative.

The deployment of forms signals a movement, and each movement brings a “rupture” whose position the artist defines in advance. The movement is diffracted by a system of additions, subtractions, dispersions, associations, separations, contractions and extensions – in a word, of exchanges – of masses. The white binds together what is the only plane, and not a ground. The palette favours muted tones. Because the eye must not dwell on a part but take in the whole, the artist opts for a simultaneity of volumes which must not be figuratively identifiable. Such are the formal choices made by Jaffe so as to bring order to the apparent – but only apparent – disorder of her montages.

The interactions which develop according to their own laws between these measured, rational structures are the product of simple operations which give the painting its dramatic intensity, its pertinence and vitality.

Seeing, as its title implies, is an exhibition that invites the viewer to look attentively, and to observe that the signs are now separated by greater amplitudes on the surface of the canvas. The coloured system gains in clarity while the internal mechanics gain in complexity and the tension between the forms increases. The effect of disorientation is pronounced, yet the paintings continue to find their balance in this imbalance. The language of Jaffe’s architectures truly becomes the expression of a shared visual memory.

Born in 1923 in Elizabeth, New Jersey, Shirley Jaffe lives and works in Paris. She is an alumna of the Cooper Union School in New York (1945) and the Phillips Art School in Washington (1949).

A contemporary of Sam Francis, Joan Mitchell, Jean-Paul Riopelle and James Bishop, to whom she was close after her move to Paris in 1949 (they were both with Galerie Jean Fournier for several decades), Jaffe soon became known as an abstract expressionist. However, she abandoned this approach during a stay in Berlin in 1963–64, making a radical break in her practice, replacing gestural painting with an emphasis on movement in forms.

Seen as one of the most influential of contemporary abstract artists, her work has increasingly attracted keen interest from members of the younger generations such as Fiona Rae, Bernard Piffaretti, Peter Soriano and Carole Benzaken. In addition to a series of 9 nine stained glass works commissioned by the French state for La Funéraria, the side chapel of Perpignan cathedral, Jaffe’s work is held in many prestigious public and private collections, notably MoMA (Museum of Modern Art, New York), SFMOMA (San Francisco Museum of Modern Art), the Pompidou Centre (Paris), MAC/VAL (Vitry), the Fondation Cartier pour l’Art Contemporain (Paris), the Berardo Museum (Lisbon), and the FRACs of Auvergne, Brittany and Limousin.

Galerie Nathalie Obadia

Paris

Bourg-Tibourg

Fiona Rae

New Paintings

21 February - 25 April 2013

Enoc Perez

May 2013

Galerie Nathalie Obadia

Paris

Cloître Saint-Merri

Shirley Jaffe (Gallery II)

Seeing

19 January - 2 March 2013

Martin Barré (Gallery I)

April - May 2013

Rosson Crow (Gallery I)

June 2013

Galerie Nathalie Obadia

Bruxelles

Brenna Youngblood

Spanning Time

17 January - 6 April 2013

Pieter Schoolwerth

18 April – 1 June 2013

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