

Systematic Renaissance

Emily Joyce at the David B. Smith Gallery, Denver, CO

Then Where Sun When There

February 15 through March 16, 2019

Then Where Sun When There, Emily Joyce's first solo exhibition at the David B. Smith Gallery in Denver, provides a comedic meander through mathematical play space, where pipe cleaners and classical Greek columns hold parallel conceptual weight. The show consists of fourteen paintings of various sizes hanging together in one large room: each with a distinct approach to a common theme, forming a dialog when hung together, a room full of humanist geometric emojis putting the "A" in STEAM. Seen through the gallery's large storefront windows, the paintings give off a warm glow with a tingly surface feel of magic eye posters. Joyce's agile, expert use of brightly colored flashe on canvas invokes antiquities boldly restored, and the incorporation of mixed media provides the viewer with a level of dimensional relatability with the use of mundane craft supplies stuck on, including pipe cleaners and tape, evoking a twinkle with the implication of multidimensional craft.

Archimedes and Narcissus (2015) consists of a black square with a delicately hand-painted white spiral in the middle, leading to a cheeky round mirror in the center of the canvas. *Famous Potatoes 6* (2015- 2018), the largest work in the show, includes nine balled-up rags each covered in digitally printed paint stains sewn into nine outlined quadrants painted in an Easter palette. Raw canvas occupies the majority of the composition, and the work's painted grid haphazardly delivers shallow perspective in some sections but not in others. Emily Joyce has a slapstick standup routine she performs infrequently that is Renaissance architecture specific, and this painting carries the room as court jester in her absence.

All works in the show tease out the third dimension in one way or another, and Joyce draws upon her past employment as a decorative painter to present a myriad of Renaissance trompe-l'oeil effects including Chinoiserie, marbleization, and faux bois. These historical visual anchor points take center stage in *Criss-Crossed Columns* (2018) and *Corner Columns Criss-Crossed* (2019), two stylistically diverse symmetrical graphical explosions of color in oil and flashe on canvas. Each distinct work includes a range of graphically presented techniques, temperaments, and shapes that imbue geometric abstraction with gestural painterly strokes and simultaneously imbue gesture with order. The viewer's experience is akin to that of a visual examination, in which brain and eye are tasked to soak in the entirety of the surface at once to revel the message, or to look at a patterned section and then to have a perceived projection of a pattern on a section that is all black.

This new body of work marks a shift in Joyce's representational toolbox: previous works were geometric, and flat. The majority of works in *Then Where Sun When There* layer thin transparent colors within geometric forms. This shift occupies a new and exciting conceptual cornerstone of the presentation, which becomes a multidimensional graphical user interface that functions as a narrative rather than a genre. Joyce references the work of Piero della Francesca throughout the show, and most directly in her painting *Milanese Pentagon* (2018), made after della Francesca's *Madonna and Child with Saints in Milan* (1472-1472). Joyce's work depicts the small sphere or egg that hangs above the Virgin and Child in della Francesca's altarpiece; Joyce leaves out the figures entirely in her version, but the art historical reference impregnates the sphere with gendered symbology.

Joyce's stated influences include two amateur mathematicians: Marjorie Rice, and Joan Taylor. Both women made astounding recent contributions to the field of mathematics through the invention of new geometric patterns, and in doing so garnered patronizing "San Diego housewife in her 50's" international media headlines. Similarly, Chris Kraus writes of Channa Horwitz, in *Social Practices* (2019), writes "A Los Angeles Times review of her work, Horowitz was to recall, was headlined 'Pretty Notations by a Valley Housewife,' (pg. 242). Horowitz was making heavy hitting systematic abstraction for decades before finally being taken seriously. Joyce's comic impulse, inside the work as well as outside, indirectly speaks to the "not being taken seriously" aspect of the experiences of women making art and math. Alongside a daily studio practice and her current day job as a bookkeeper, Joyce's standup routine embodies the historical fiction of

“Pierra EJ Nunca de Montepietro,” a smoking, drinking “Balkan chick” who hails “straight outta Padua” to deliver hilarious ruminations on life in Renaissance Italy.

Then Where Sun When There flattens the idea of craft with the inclusion of taped-on pipe cleaners, highlights painting as craft through trompe l’oeil, and uses conceptual layering to build a visual lexicon that critically engages gender inequity in science, technology, engineering, art, and math. In doing so, Joyce is creating a new pattern language in which kitchen sink math becomes a battleground where eggs are cooked and eaten and represented.

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