

Modern Art

Jacqueline Humphries

3 June – 22 July 2023

Bury Street, SW1Y and Helmet Row, EC1V

Modern Art is pleased to announce a solo exhibition of new works by Jacqueline Humphries. This is Humphries' fifth solo exhibition with the gallery.

Over the past four decades, Jacqueline Humphries has been working through the question of what contemporary abstract painting can mean in a society mediated online. Excavating the limits of her medium, Humphries generates a density of languages, forms and gestures native not only to the history of painting but also the codes and aesthetic registers that belong to the endless scroll of data and commerce on the flat cold surfaces of screens. Using stencils, fluorescent paint and black light, to name a few of her materials, Humphries' work revels in its playful profanity, the pleasure of its sheer materiality seeping from its surface. Humphries describes her search as one for "a kind of psychological hook, as if there's almost suspense or a sense of something wrong". This nameless sensation creeps across much of her oeuvre; her large-scale, commanding paintings inviting close inspection, while at the same time eluding and confusing the ways in which their surfaces were worked by Humphries herself.

For the occasion of this exhibition, Humphries is exhibiting a new series which she has described as 'pre vandalised' paintings. Absorbing the recent shock tactics engaged by eco-activists, Humphries's latest works are repeatedly inscribed with motifs of vandalism, with paint apparently flung onto their surfaces as though to disfigure the artwork beneath. Yet Humphries is not simply simulating these marks of defacement or destruction – namely pea soup or black liquid splattered across masterpieces in museums. Instead, in repeating and working through them, her canvases seem to propose a curiosity about how we may consider these disruptive marks as active agents themselves, containing within them intelligence of media and attention economies. In so doing, Humphries's new paintings continue to locate a rupture between symbolic and real, or, in her own words "bring abstraction into a renewed confrontation with the actual world." Whilst Humphries is known to relocate previous motifs and signs from the matrix of her own oeuvre - her last exhibition at Modern Art even translated older paintings in their entirety through ASCII code - this latest series of paintings also now locate themselves through previous gallery inventory numbers, painted here as a part of their intrinsic subject and now existing within a displaced system of classification.

Shown across both galleries, Humphries' new body of work for Modern Art takes the form of individual or multi-panel arrangements of large-scale canvases. In it, she continues to wrestle in the conflict between erasing trace of the hand and reinstating it through mechanical means; a binary that is echoed elsewhere in her practice where precision meets accident and consideration counters intuition. The legacies of Abstract Expressionism are folded into her process, with paint applied in gestural homages to Jackson Pollock, Barnett Newman and Lucio Fontana. But the granular surface of Humphries' own iconic vernacular carries through the span of her recent work; her marked, gridded surfaces incorporating such quotidian signs as digital static and emojis: the visual fabric of our online existences.

Jacqueline Humphries was born in New Orleans in 1960, and lives and works in New York. A graduate of Parsons School of Design and subsequently the Whitney Independent Study Program, she has mounted solo institutional exhibitions at Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus (2021); Dia Art Foundation, The Dan Flavin Art Institute, Bridgehampton (2019); the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh (2015); and Kunsthalle Wilhelmshaven (2000). She has participated in recent group exhibitions at the Parrish Art Museum, Water Mill (2021); the Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, D.C. (2019); Museum Brandhorst, Munich (2019); Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo (2018); Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris (2018); and Tate Modern, London (2016). Her works are held in collections including the Dallas Museum of Art; Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris; the Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, D.C.; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; MoMA, New York; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; SFMOMA, San Francisco; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Tate, London; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Paintings by Humphries were included in the 59th Venice Biennale 2022, *The Milk of Dreams*, curated by Cecilia Alemani.

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