

MUTE

Suzanne McClelland

Marianne Boesky Gallery, 100 South Spring Street, Aspen, CO

January 22 - April 18, 2021

Marianne Boesky Gallery is delighted to present a selection of paintings from Suzanne McClelland's MUTE series, which will be on view on the first floor of our Aspen location from January 22 to April 18, 2021.

Systems of communication and exchange are at the center of Suzanne McClelland's practice. The artist explores the inherent interdependence between abstraction and representation as it appears in painting and the printed, written and spoken word. In large-scale canvases as well as collaborative books and prints, McClelland has opened new avenues for painting, investigating its linguistic and acoustic dimensions and reflecting our broader cultural and political concerns. Built from visual as well as auditory observations of this world, her works underscore the ways in which language itself is gendered and politicized by its context and therefore naturally infused with social commentary.

McClelland's MUTE paintings disassemble language. The series comprises 26 paintings, one for each letter of the Latin alphabet. Rather than representing the letters as we see them, each painting in its own way mutes the elemental components of language, so much so that these letters dissolve or melt into the unutterable. McClelland liberates language from an existential bind: severing symbols from their function, she prevents their vocalization and articulation. They exist now as solitary devices, allowing them to return to their potentiality. The MUTE series deconstructs symbols and structures into abstractions that manifest an alternate alphabet, which in turn demands a new context to acquire legible meaning. The result is an expression of language that cannot be spoken or read, yet demands to be seen, felt, and understood as present.

In the process of painting this work, McClelland engages with notions of control and doubt. The artist seizes on intuition as well as chance as powerful means of responding to systems of describing and naming, quantifying and predicting, categorizing and identifying. While their verticality is suggestive of portraiture, the abstracted compositions are formed by viscous spills: records of the pouring, staining, and hardening of pigments. The surfaces of these paintings – simultaneously sparkly, dusty, and inky – are encrusted with frozen sprays of glitter, charcoal, and dry pigments.