

# What You See is What You Get

Pam Evelyn, Günther Förg, Giorgio Griffa,  
Mike Henderson, Spencer Lewis, Betty  
Parsons, Tariku Shiferaw, Lily Stockman, Xiyao  
Wang, Austyn Weiner

30.06.22

29.07.22

**MASSIMODECARLO is pleased to announce its next group exhibition, *What You See Is What You Get*, running from June 30<sup>th</sup> to July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2022 at Casa Corbellini-Wasserman in Milan and from July 5<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> in Paris, at MASSIMODECARLO Pièce Unique.**

This exhibition is the third chapter in the gallery's investigative series on painting throughout history. Following *MCMXXXIV* (1934) in 2019 and *Portraiture One Century Apart* in 2021, *What You See Is What You Get* brings together a curated selection of works by ten artists across generations, backgrounds and mediums, to address the state of abstraction today.

Artists Pam Evelyn (b.1996 Guilford, UK), Günther Förg (1952 – 2013), Giorgio Griffa (b.1936 Turin, IT), Mike Henderson (b.1954 Independence MI - USA), Spencer Lewis (b. 1979 Hartford, CT - USA), Betty Parsons (1900 – 1982), Tariku Shiferaw (b.1983 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia), Lily Stockman (b.1982 Providence, RI - USA), Xiyao Wang (b. 1992 Chongqing, China) and Austyn Weiner (b.1989 Miami, FL - USA) are brought together for the first time, creating a series of dialogues between these multiple, coexisting iterations of abstraction.

As Roberta Smith noted in a 2010 article for the New York Times: "it is worth remembering, when considering the ever-expanding definition of abstract art, that the term refers to the act of abstracting from reality". The exhibition's remit is indeed two-fold: on one hand, it is an invitation to take a step back *from* reality, guided by these artists' practices, on the other, it aspires to take a step further into understanding abstraction, which seems to elude the boundaries of a single, timeless definition. As each one of these ten artists finds their singular form of expression in abstraction, the variety of shapes that this results in is as exhilarating as it reveals its complexity.

Mike Henderson's multidisciplinary career spans across music, film and abstraction. Placing texture, form, and color at the heart of his compositions, the works presented in *What You See Is What You Get* exemplify the "instinct for improvisation" that underpins his production across mediums. A similar instinctive mark-making process is at the heart of Austyn Weiner's gestural abstraction. Drawing on

the intensity of contradicting sensations, Weiner creates large scale, fluid doodle-like compositions that process subjectivity, rejection, isolation and performance. Spencer Lewis' work on the other hand is less about combining sensations as it is about pouring himself physically into the canvas: his visceral, textured works are the result of an intentionally painstaking creation process. Pam Evelyn shares this approach to creation, letting each one of her works find its own shape, sense and composition, in an almost instinctive elaboration process that verges on a subconscious approach to painting.

Xiyao Wang is similarly concerned with translating her personal energy onto the canvas. Her ethereal large-scale compositions convey a sense of calm which is nevertheless highly informed by her awareness of the tension between her moving body in relation to the stillness of the canvas.

Lily Stockman, who shares a light pastel color palette with Xiyao Wang occupies the canvas in a completely different manner: her full, symmetrical, organic shapes translate her fascination and concern with structure and organizing principles – notions that interestingly, and with a very different result, are also a cornerstone in Tariku Shiferaw's geometric abstraction, who offers an understated comment on these very societal structures, and their invisible influence on our individual experience of reality. In his own words, "a mark, as physical and present as cave-markings... reveals the thinker behind the gesture— an evidence of prior markings of ideas and self onto the space."

From Betty Parsons, whose contribution and support of abstract expressionism cannot be understated, to Günther Förg's conceptualism all the way to Giorgio Griffa's large-scale, quasi-calligraphic works on linen, *What You See Is What You Get* seems to indicate that ultimately, abstraction is as informed by each artists' notion of reality, as it is a means to evade it, taking on the form of each one of its creators. As the title of the exhibition itself suggests, there is nothing more on each canvas than "what you see" – and yet what "you see" when you look remains as multiple, open, and individual as it is... mysteriously abstract.

**Pam Evelyn** (Guilford, 1996) - who lives and works in London - creates paintings that read as abstractions, however she incorporates a sensitivity and consideration towards figurative and landscape structures. As a painter she does not look to paint a varnished preserved view of the world, her focus is to let paint act from impulse, chance or even frustration, in an unedited display that rejoices and sometimes shakes.

**Günther Förg's** (Füssen, 1952 – Friburgo, 2013) artistic practice began in the early 1970s while still studying at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich with the grey, or 'Gitter' paintings. These monochrome works were the beginning of his multifarious career which spanned over four decades; they served as the foundation of his fascination with modernism during a postmodern period. Although Förg's oeuvre is formed of a diverse series of works, his entire artistic output is driven by an obsession with material, spatial and conceptual concerns.

**Giorgio Griffa** (Turin, 1936) has been closed to the Arte Povera artists and, by 1968 he began to create his own distinct visual language and method. Griffa's artworks are made on raw frameless canvas which he paints on the floor. His acrylic compositions are a perfect synthesis between improvisation and method; employing a performative approach, Griffa uses a visual alphabet composed of repeated pictorial symbols.

**Mike Henderson** (Marshall, 1944) is a pioneering African American artist, filmmaker and musician, whose dynamic practice has spanned more than fifty years. Born and raised in Marshall, Missouri, he moved to the Bay Area to attend the San Francisco Art Institute in 1965. Henderson received his MFA from the SFAI in 1970, and soon left behind his figurative style, turning his artistic vision increasingly towards abstraction. Today, he is known for abstract, highly gestural paintings that demonstrate a palpable connection to post-war abstraction and a defining instinct for improvisation.

**Spencer Lewis** (Hartford, 1979) is an American artist who lives and works in Los Angeles. Known for his gestural paintings on cardboard and jute, Lewis uses flashy bright and colorful notions executed through streaked lines, smears of paint and rough strokes that suggest the impulsive creative process underneath. His creative dogma originates from digital drawings and rigorous studies which escalate into explosive improvisations. Lewis' artworks, although colorful

abstract representations, unveil hidden human figures for their proportions and vertical impetus.

**Betty Parsons** (New York, 1900 - Southold, 1982) was an abstract painter and sculptor also known as a dealer of mid-century art. Throughout her career as a gallerist, she kept her artistic research going by creating works in a variety of media including paintings, sculpture, and works on paper.

**Tariku Shiferaw** (Addis Abeba, 1983) is an Ethiopian-born artist now based in NY. His practice of mark-making explores the metaphysical ideas of painting and societal structures and investigates cultural signifiers related to the black diaspora and the loaded histories of everyday objects. Taking the names of songs from Hip-Hop, R&B, Jazz, Blues, and Reggae music, Shiferaw makes paintings that embody the experiences and struggles expressed through music by Black artists and composers.

**Lily Stockman** (Providence, Rhode Island, 1982) lives and works between Los Angeles and Yucca Valley, California. She draws from her affinity for the natural world and interest in the organizing principles of structure – from poetry meter to musical form – to create arrangements of biomorphic shapes, planes, and borders.

**Xiyao Wang** (Chongqing, 1992) lives and works in Berlin. Renowned for her powerful, immersive paintings, Wang's distinctive use of color, volume and texture spells out her unique vocabulary. As a way for her to transfer experiences and feelings from her internal space into the external world, her work is highly informed by her personal awareness and sensitivity. Combining various techniques such as oil and acrylic painting, chalk, graphite and oil sticks, she seeks balance between the canvas and the body in physical displacement.

**Austyn Weiner** (Miami, 1989) lives and works in Los Angeles. She studied photography at the University of Michigan and Parsons School of Design prior to relocating to Los Angeles. Ranging from charcoal, house paint, oil paint, and oil stick, Weiner's diverse mark-making suggest a disposition of combative struggle and distressed victory. From small works on paper to large-scale canvases, her works touch upon the duality of forces that are influential and abject to the subjective mind; romance, rejection, isolation, and performance.

**MASSIMODECARLO** Gallery, founded in 1987, has been distinguished from the very beginning by its courageous and counter-current choices, offering visibility and support to artists such as John Armleder, Olivier Mosset, Steven Parrino and Carsten Höller. In the following years, the gallery's program saw the alternation of young artists and world-famous masters such as Alighiero Boetti, Cady Noland, Rudolf Stingel, Felix Gonzalez-Torres and Maurizio Cattelan.

For more than 30 years the gallery has played a central role both in promoting Italian artists to the European and American public, and in bringing the most interesting voices of American art to the attention of the Italian scene, encouraging the establishment of a stimulating dialogue between artists, national and international institutions, critics, curators and collectors. MASSIMODECARLO boasts of collaborating with over sixty multifaceted artists, internationally recognized, who combine a great variety of expression with an extraordinary combination of different languages such as painting, drawing, installation, sculpture, photography, performance and video.

The gallery's exhibition spaces are located in Milan, London, Paris, Hong Kong, Beijing and also virtually with the experience of VSpace.

MASSIMODECARLO VSpace has been conceived and built by innovative web designers and IT technicians using real-time technology. The 3D virtual reality real-time rendering can calculate an enormous series of 3D images at high speed, allowing the viewer to have a photorealistic and interactive experience, crossing boundaries between physicality and hyper reality. The result is an unprecedented experience in an engaging space, defining a complete new way to enjoy art from your home and at the same time a parenthesis for contemplation in the image-loaded realm of our mobile phones and desktops.

[www.massimodecarlo.com](http://www.massimodecarlo.com)

**MASSIMODECARLO Pièce Unique** opened on February 9th, 2021 in the heart of the Marais neighborhood in Paris. The gallery strives to offer a dynamic, upbeat program of single-work exhibitions, visible day and night through the space's vast glass window. The gallery came to life when De Carlo purchased "Pièce Unique" – a visionary exhibition space founded by Neapolitan gallerist Lucio Amelio in Paris in 1989. Designed with Cy Twombly and conceived as a 24/7 contemporary art vitrine, Pièce Unique challenged classical gallery formats by presenting one work at the time; and making art visible to everyone, and available on the street. MASSIMODECARLO Pièce Unique follows this same curatorial premise, propelling Amelio's project into the 21st Century. By giving a new life to Lucio Amelio's legacy, MASSIMODECARLO's new space, designed by architects Kengo Kuma and PiM.Studio, aspires to offer an alternative exhibition model for the contemporary art system.

[www.massimodecarlopieceunique.fr](http://www.massimodecarlopieceunique.fr)