

Violet Dennison
24 Apr–30 May 2026
The Upstairs

Bortolami is pleased to present a solo exhibition of Violet Dennison’s new paintings, opening April 24 in the Upstairs. The exhibition brings together a suite of works, marking an incremental development to her signature, elastic visual language. Over the past several years, Dennison has devised a stylized, floral form deployed over diverse scales, chroma, and compositional frameworks. Rather than functioning as a stable motif, it operates as a mutable structure—one that accumulates, fragments, and recombines within and over each tableau.

The paintings’ visual language carries multiple meanings: the flora’s implied infiniteness lies in its capacity to remain recognizable while always in flux. Drawing from ornamental traditions such as Damascus tilework and Qing Dynasty ceramics, these references are neither illustrative nor symbolic, but structural—organizing principles that govern the transformation of the visual motifs. The floral form persists not as an image, but as a variable: stretched, compressed, and dispersed while retaining a residual legibility. Ornament, here, is neither decorative nor referential, but operational.

At the core of Dennison’s practice, painting and sculpture, is the tension between the physical quality of the artist’s hand and its tools, from brushes and squeegees, and their directive logic under a digital compass comprised of masking and vectors. Refusing resolution, each composition sustains these structures in counterpoint, generating a dense, artificial system. Within this particular body of work, iterative marks emerge within fields of steely washes, aglow in warm cerise and ochres. At times marks and motifs seem additive, as if the artist has simply copy and pasted, or stamped a flurry of blossoms; at other times, they stretch and disperse, their form extended to fill the limits of the canvas that holds them.

Trained as a sculptor, Dennison's transmedial approach to painting and installation is rooted in a formal language that entwines the mechanical, human, and digital. Her works—paintings and objects alike—function like screens, vibrating and pulsing beneath their surfaces. Compositions unfold through layered gestures that oscillate between control and collapse, as pigment is dragged, dissolved, or overwritten by technological processes. Embedded in these dynamics are questions about how ecological, social, and technological systems condition perception and production. Her recent works trace the shifting form of the Jacob's Ladder, a recurring floral cipher that mutates across media, standing in for the instability of language, memory, and code.

Dennison received her BFA from New York University in 2011 and her MFA from Bard College in 2018. Her work has been exhibited internationally since 2014, with recent presentations at Kiang Malingue, New York (2025); Tara Downs, New York (2024); Illenia, London (2024); Jan Kaps, Cologne (2023); Theta, New York (2021); Kunstverein Freiburg (2019); Kunsthalle Stavanger (2019); the Moscow International Biennale for Young Art (2018); and the New Museum Triennial: Songs for Sabotage, New York (2018).