

LISSON GALLERY

Press Release

Stanley Whitney: 'Radical Times'

20 May – 2 July 2016
52 Bell Street, London

For his first exhibition in London, Stanley Whitney presents a series of oil paintings and gouache on paper works made over the last few months in response to global events, literature and music, among other sources of inspiration. One of the American artist's new works, *Radical Times*, lends its name to the exhibition, suggesting both a portentous moment in history and the potential for political or social upheaval. *Deep Water* was painted in the wake of witnessing migrants arriving in Greece from a war-torn Middle East, while titles such as *Wandering and Wondering*, *Nightlife* and *Dreamtime* (all works 2016) point to moments of leisure, reflection and rest amid the chaotic nature of the world.

Whitney's unique ordering system revolves around his use of a loosely painted grid, which he has experimented with in various ways over the course of almost three decades. Within this abstract structure, made up of coloured blocks and lines usually in three or more stacks, Whitney sets colours against one another to evoke harmonious or contrasting relationships. The differing transitions and boundaries between these coloured elements allows Whitney to play endlessly with an infinite number of possible configurations, while the relative density, transparency and blurring of his rectangular shapes can also make or break the final composition of each work. He refers to this process of painterly tessellation as a form of continuous refinement akin to an athlete training to stay in shape – perhaps the truest definition of an artistic 'practice'.

There are strong connections to music in Whitney's work, from the performative 'dance' he enacts when working on each canvas, to the "call and response" technique that governs his decisions over neighbouring colours, mimicking the musical pattern of the same name. Examples of jazz and African music are often cited by Whitney as sources for his polyrhythmic, near-synaesthetic, all-over fields of paint, yet he is also indelibly tied to the history of painting and quotes as readily from Cézanne or Veronese as from Charlie Parker or Ornette Coleman.

About the artist

Stanley Whitney has been exploring the formal possibilities of colour within ever-shifting grids of multi-hued blocks and all-over fields of gestural marks and passages, since the mid-1970s. His current motif, honed over many years, is the stacked composition of numerous saturated colour fields, delineated by between three to five horizontal bands running the length of a square-formatted canvas. The cumulative effect of Whitney's multicoloured palette is not only one of masterly pictorial balance and a sense of continuum with other works in this ongoing series, but also that of fizzing, formal sensations caused by internal conflicts and resolutions within each painting. Taking his cues from early Minimalism, Color Field painters jazz music and his favourite historical artists – Titian, Velázquez and Cézanne among them – Whitney is as much an exponent of the process-based, spatially-gridded square in art as Josef Albers, Sol LeWitt, Agnes Martin and Carl Andre.

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Stanley Whitney was born in Philadelphia in 1946 and lives and works in New York City and Parma, Italy. He holds a BFA from Kansas City Art Institute as well as an MFA from Yale University and is currently Professor Emeritus of painting and drawing at the Tyler School of Art, Temple University. His major solo exhibition, 'Dance the Orange' was at the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York (2015) and he has been included in many group shows such as 'Nero su Bianco' at the American Academy in Rome (2015); 'Outside the Lines: Black in the Abstract', Contemporary Art Museum of Houston (2014); 'Reinventing Abstraction: New York Painting in the 1980s', Cheim & Read, New York (2013) and 'Utopia Station' at the 50th Venice Biennale (2003). He has won prizes including the Robert De Niro Sr. Prize in Painting (2011), the American Academy of Arts and Letters Art Award (2010) and was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1996. Whitney's work is included in public collections such as the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, the Philadelphia Museum of Art and Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven.

About Lisson Gallery

Lisson Gallery is one of the most influential and longest-running international contemporary art galleries in the world. Established in 1967 by Nicholas Logsdail, it pioneered the early careers of important Minimal and Conceptual artists, such as Sol LeWitt and Richard Long, as well as those of significant British sculptors from Anish Kapoor and Tony Cragg to a younger generation led by Ryan Gander and Haroon Mirza. With two exhibition spaces in London, one in Milan and a fourth to open under the High Line in New York on 3 May 2016, Lisson Gallery supports and develops artists globally, including Marina Abramovic, Allora and Calzadilla, Ai Weiwei, Gerard Byrne, Liu Xiaodong, Tatsuo Miyajima, Rashid Rana, Pedro Reyes and Santiago Sierra.

Opening Hours

Monday-Friday, 10am-6pm
Saturday, 11am-5pm

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