

Jess Fuller

14th November 2018 - 9th February 2019

Jess Fuller tells me that this is mainly a show of her 'medium-sized' paintings, then laughs as she notes that others would probably still consider them large. But what might be forwards for Fuller is usually backwards for others in her unique, invented process of painting. It's a physical, performative painting in several acts – tearing, washing, layering, spraying and sewing. Canvas, for Fuller, is not something that paintings are made on, arriving pre-stretched and primed, but something her paintings are made with. It is as inherent a material as the acrylic and gesso; her compositions are made in consultation with the fabric's grain, which forms a patchwork cast of irregular-shaped characters. At times they lean on one another, square up to one another; often, they appear as if posing – poised in position like carefully arranged elements of a still life.

Recognisable or biomorphic forms emerge in Fuller's works, but they are not always intended as representational. As viewers or bystanders, we perhaps can't help but map shapes from our lives onto these abstract, wiggly cutouts. Yet, for the artist, they are representative of more than one specific moment or meaning, reflecting an ongoing personal narrative that might lie dormant until it reveals itself in the painting process. Her works' titles often come from snippets of overheard conversations or pieces of text that might flit by as she moves through the city – 'Application for After-Life Insurance', 'Lean on me', 'Love thy neighbor – Discreetly' – and are thus an appliquéd vocabulary as hodge-podge as the visual language within the works. Forms, like words, repeat through different paintings, developing a lexicon between marks and colours. As with the act of writing, Fuller is at once wielding control and relinquishing it, allowing room for surprising herself by what might emerge in the space. Working with the canvas directly on the floor permits a gestural act of assembling – two cutout pieces strewn about suddenly might appear in dialogue with one another, intuitively, as if by accident. Other decisions will be more deliberate, Fuller weaving threads of meaning between these sewn shapes gone askew.

Fuller's forms bear witness to this push-pull process that sits between intention and unintention, between painting and sculpture, between abstract and evocation. Fuller's layers push up against each other in overlapping, exaggerated drama, where awkward silhouettes wriggle and jitter in place. These piles of stitched gestures challenge boundaries and definitions, conjuring seemingly infinite combinations unique to both each work and each viewer. For Fuller, however, it's a continual experiment into the act of painting – the personal and political woven into materials, elicited in colours, stitched in the outlines of even the most abstract forms.

Text by Phoebe Cripps

Jess Fuller (b. 1972, Portland, Maine, US) lives and works in Brooklyn, NY

Selected exhibitions include: CANADA, New York (2017); *Fort Greene*, curated by *Adrienne Rubenstein*, Venus, Los Angeles (2016); *Re-Planetizer*, curated by *The Pit*, Regina Rex, New York (2016); *Inside Out*, Berthold Pott Gallery, Cologne (2016); *8 Femmes*, Office Baroque, Brussels (2016); *Fairy Smoke*, Herald St, London (2015); *I Can't Wait to Get Off Work*, Bannerette, New York (2015); *BFA Boatas*, São Paulo (2015); *Call and Response*, Gavin Brown's Enterprise, New York (2015); amongst others.