

# WHITE CUBE

## Inside the White Cube

Harmony Hammond

12 September – 3 November 2019

White Cube Bermondsey

North Galleries

White Cube is pleased to present an exhibition by Harmony Hammond at Bermondsey. Her first solo show in Europe, it features early and recent works, ranging in date from 1971 to 2019.

Artist, curator, author and activist, Hammond was born in 1944 in Chicago but has lived and worked in New Mexico since 1984. A pivotal figure in the feminist art movement in New York during the 1970s, her early work combined gender politics with both a minimal and post-minimal understanding of materials and process, a focus that continues to this day. Frequently occupying a unique space between painting and sculpture, Hammond's abstract, monochrome oil on canvas paintings incorporate additional materials such as fabrics, push pins, metal grommets and rope into their compositions, creating active, textural surfaces that appear to refute inherent notions of monochromatic purity. She says: 'I've always been interested in bringing sociopolitical content into the world of abstraction. Incorporating materials and objects, with their geographies, histories, and associations, is one way of doing this.'

While Hammond's recent 'near monochrome' large-scale works emerge from the trajectory of modernist abstraction, at the same time they question and disrupt it, evincing how paint in itself can be a carrier of meaning and how the canvas can be a site of 'indexical intent'. Hammond's earliest work in the exhibition, entitled *Bag VI* (1971), takes the form of a handbag made from painted and layered strips of cloth, which the artist refers to as three-dimensional brush strokes. Made from materials recycled from women friends while Hammond was living in New York in the 1970s – a time of heightened political consciousness – the works reference the gendered body, women's traditional textile arts and creative practices of non-Western cultures.

The notion of recycling materials into new structural or metaphorical capacities continues in recent work: warm-white monochrome canvases are composed with grids of grommets, burlap, rope, push pins or straps, all overlaid with thick layers of paint. Showing ruptures and seams, the agglomerated material elements appear to emerge from and disappear into the canvas, creating a sense of three-dimensional relief, casting a shadow on the off-white coverlet below. Punctuated with protrusions, holes, seams and fraying edges, they foreground notions of suture and concealment – of hidden layers, spaces or narratives that lie beneath the surface.

In the work *Chenille #7* (2018), for example, a composition created from burlap coffee sacks cut open and collaged to the stretched canvas, a frayed flap of the burlap hangs slightly away from the painting surface, revealing what might be a raw wound underneath. The flap is flanked on either side by pieced and patched panels of grommets and canvas with trails of paint-encrusted rope hanging down. Similar concerns are explored in *Bandaged Quilt #1* (2018–19), a dynamic, geometric composition created from overlapping strips of burlap and canvas, applied from the edge of the work towards its centre, in a basic pieced quilt pattern. Repeatedly overlaid, the material, suggestive of bandages, does not quite cover the entire surface, leaving an exposed blood-red slit or wound at the painting's centre. With paint accumulating around the edge of each strip, the effect is of a rippling and receding cuboid space that in turn creates a poised and palpable tension between the irregularity of its soft material and overall geometric arrangement.

For Hammond, the canvas can be considered a metaphorical body, a place where surface and skin meet. 'Monochrome refuses disembodiment,' she has said. 'It allows one to escape figuration but presence the body. All painting is about the skin of paint. The skin of paint calls up the body, and therefore the painting body. At their best, the paintings transmute the painting field into the body.'

#### BIOGRAPHY

Harmony Hammond lives and works in Galisteo, New Mexico. She attended the University of Minnesota from 1963 – 67 before moving to New York in 1969 where she co-founded A.I.R, the first women's cooperative art gallery in New York in 1972. Hammond taught at the University of Arizona, Tucson from 1989 – 2006 and has been published widely including her seminal book *Lesbian Art in America: A Contemporary History* (2000). Solo exhibitions include The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, Connecticut (2019); RedLine Art Space, Denver, Colorado (2014); Center for Contemporary Arts, Santa Fe, New Mexico (2005); SITE Santa Fe, New Mexico (2002); Museum of Contemporary Art Tucson, Arizona (1999); and P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, Long Island City, New York (1979). Selected group exhibitions include Brooklyn Museum, New York (2019); New Mexico Museum of Art, Santa Fe (2016); Museum of the City of New York (2016); Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna (2016); Rose Art Museum, Waltham, Massachusetts (2015); National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, DC (2011); Vancouver Art Gallery, British Columbia, Canada and MoMA PS1, Long Island, New York (2008); Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2007); Museo Tamayo, Mexico City and Neue Galerie Graz, Austria (2007); The Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (1996); New Museum, New York (1982); Downtown Whitney Museum, New York (1978); and Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota (1968). Hammond is represented by Alexander Gray Associates, New York.

White Cube Bermondsey is open  
Tuesday–Saturday, 10am – 6pm and Sunday, 12 – 6pm.  
Admission is free.

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