

ARTPULSE

NO. 18 | VOLUME 5 | YEAR 2014 | WWW.ARTPULSEMAGAZINE.COM

HERMINE FORD AND JOAN WITEK

OUTLET Fine Art - Brooklyn

By Stephanie Buhmann

The recent paintings of Hermine Ford and Joan Witek made for an enticingly potent pairing. However, at first glimpse these works seemed to have little in common. While Ford covers her shaped panels with colorful patterns, Witek creates black and white compositions on canvas. Furthermore, Ford embraces biomorphism, whereas Witek draws from geometry. Nevertheless, together these two unlike bodies of work managed to thrive on their own as much as in each other's company. Installed cohesively rather than mixing them throughout the space, they kept their integrity intact. Slowly, a shared key concern emerged: both artists aim to capture a clear sense of rhythm and connectivity.

Ford's works navigate the fine line between painting and sculpture. Though they are mounted flat on the wall, their distinct physical appearance offers the illusion of three-dimensionality. Her shapes are largely inspired by nature, but her palette often draws from manmade sources, such as the artificial overlays that scientists use to diagram natural processes. It was after the events of 9/11 that Ford, who has lived and worked downtown for decades, found her forms becoming increasingly broken. To her, they evoke the debris of crumbling cities and she is interested in how they can become re-integrated into new structures. The city of Rome, where remnants of an ancient and modern

world not only harmoniously coexist, but also are meshed into a unique textural pattern, is one source of inspiration.

Ford's latest works incorporated a tiling motif found in a 19th century floor in Paris, which dates back much further and has also been found in different archaeological sites. Through its de-contextualization and by allowing it to take center stage in the composition, this visual theme was stripped of its distinct cultural reference. However, a sense of the familiar remained. Ford's works stand on their own as intriguing assemblages of invigorating forms, but they also remain conscious of being fragments of and connected to a larger whole.

Exclusively rendered in black and white, Witek's compositions ponder the interplay of differently proportioned masses and shapes in their purest form. Movement manifests either vertically or horizontally here, employing the grid as the overall structural backbone. This makes for a distinct aesthetic that harkens back to 20th century abstraction and the works of Franz Kline, Agnes Martin and Sol LeWitt, among others. Black might traditionally be associated with negative space and the absence of light and color, but in Witek's case it functions as the sole indicator of mark and form. One tends to read these works graphically, but Witek allows plenty of room for nuance and handmade imperfections. The longer one observes her compositions, the more they exhibit the freedom associated with handwriting. In her work, subtle expression is found in the outline of shapes, edges and curves. These compositions not only reflect a sense of movement, but seem to embody it, like the continuous flow of night and day. ■

(January 3 - February 2, 2014)



Hermine Ford, Paris, France, 2013, oil on cotton muslin on shaped panel, 47 1/2" x 73" x 7/8." Courtesy of OULET Fine Art, Brooklyn.