

Interview with Jessica Stockholder | What is normal

On the occasion of the three solo exhibitions dedicated to the drawing of Silvia Bächli, Allyson Strafella and Jessica Stockholder in the spaces of the Galleria Raffaella Cortese in Milan in via Stradella 7, 4 and 1, we interviewed one of the most important and influential protagonists of the international art scene.

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Giuseppe Amedeo Arnesano



Jessica Stockholder - Studio Chicago 2021

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It all began in the everyday life of **Jessica Stockholder** (Seattle, 1959), when we were confined within the confines of private space. The *Corona Virus homeworks* series of 2020 was born from a necessity, from a manual skill made up of multiple gestures and actions that go beyond the two-dimensional boundaries of the sheet of paper and land on materials of various kinds. Fabric, markers, pencils, threads, tulle, shoe laces and others constitute the supporting structure of works that conquer portions of space in a composed and methodical way, until painting becomes a fundamental element of the three-dimensional component, sculpture. We discover *assemblage* materials that alter the measure and the disharmonious dynamism of the individual groups, the works of the famous American / Canadian artist are dancing bodies, colorful and alive like those that can be admired in the abstract paintings of Vasilij Kandinskij. Shapes and colors are transformed into architecture as in the case of *Holding hardware* (2021), an articulated composition installed on the wall with a steel skeleton, accompanied by soft blue and orange ropes that go from the ceiling to the floor, also exploring the next room. As Germano Celant reminds us, the works of Jessica Stockholder "can also be interpreted as a structural grid that rejects the boundaries - between material and chromatic, rigid and soft, artisanal and industrial -, feeding instead on their free geography based on the passage from one to the other ". We asked the artist a few questions about the latest exhibitions, the role of the curator today and the relevance and importance of his research.

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Jessica-Stockholder, What is Normal, 2021 - Installation view, Via Stradella 1 - Milan - Ph Lorenzo Palmieri

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During the group exhibition "Cut a rug a round square" at the Ogr in Turin, you were the curator of this specific project. Do you think that this role is in contradiction with the artistic practice or that the condition of the artist allows to go beyond the definitions of the case?

I'm interested in how perceptions and thoughts are determined by how we establish edge and boundary; I explore this question in all of the work I do. A single art work is contained by its frame, its pedestal, the room it's in, and by any works alongside it. A single art work is also in conversation with many different shared conventions, and history, as embodied by the work of others. I approached this curatorial venture from inside the trajectory of my own work which can, at moments, be understood to be a curatorial venture of its own, bringing together different kinds of objects and materials the design of which

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have been authored by others. Extending this project to include the works of other fine artists is a fluid stretch pushing at the boundary of my own work as I enter the realm of curator.

In your works we find everyday objects, fabrics, plastic boxes and various utensils, which dialogue with shapes and colors making the painting more and more alive, beyond the spatial dimension. What is painting for you? For you, is it an end or a means? Can we still talk about expanded painting or do we have something else?

I focus on the in-between, on interstitial spaces. These undefined spaces don't exist independently of the defined spaces and objects that bracket them. I understand Painting to be one of those: a defined space - a very useful convention / skill / idea that helps to order thinking. Paint is also a lovely fluid, plastic material that is endlessly evocative! In the end, I don't care if my work is understood to be painting, sculpture, or ephemeral installation; however, I make great use of Painting, in all of its iterations!

The Corona Virus homeworks series, presented at 1 Via Stradella and produced in 2020, addresses changes in the times and spaces of artistic production. Are drawing, sculpture, and painting democratically conceived and formalized elements, or is there a hierarchy related to form and content?

I don't experience hierarchy between artistic forms; they all offer up the possibility to make things, and have experiences, that are transformative. Always, form and content are inextricably woven together. Managing life with the Corona Virus involved changing many of the forms of day to day living; this created challenge and opportunity. In my work I embraced the shifting ground.

In a passage from Rosalind Krauss's book *Reinventing the medium*, the author reports in a footnote: "That is, as soon as Greenberg felt that he had isolated the essence of painting in two-dimensionality, he swung the axis of the field 90 degrees to the actual pictorial surface to place all the import of painting on the vector that connects the viewer to the object ". Is this concept still relevant today?

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Yes; surfaces everywhere have meaning inscribed upon them, and in so many ways generate fiction, or put another way, tell stories. As we've attended to the space outside of the frame, our bodies have become part of the equation, and remain so. Tending to relationships of all kinds is gathering steam. I remember speaking with Peter Halley once who, while wondering why painting remains compelling, suggested that it's because of their haptic qualities. I think that the fusion of paint's materiality with its capacity to create surface and illusion mirrors our sense of ourselves as body and soul, or mind.



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