

Press Release

Jacqueline Humphries

25 March – 24 April, 2010

Modern Art is delighted to announce our second solo exhibition with the American painter Jacqueline Humphries.

In this new body of work, completed in 2009-2010, Humphries continues her engagement with metallic silver pigment as a means to challenge conventional norms of painted space. The new paintings shimmer with lush reflectivity that changes dramatically as the viewer moves in relation to them. Her silver surfaces reference the contemporary abstract found in stray urban light, architectural chrome and glass, flat screens and cinematic space.

Compositionally Humphries asserts a volatile central image, such as a star burst or fanned geometry. These rapidly deployed masks and deliberately formed facets intersect one another, acting in concert with bold, more organic forms and flows of paint. Her marks and gestures are confidently introduced, obscured, and rebuilt in an electric exchange of form and ground dynamics. Her surfaces become taut with visual tension between a declared centre, its tangible or partial obliteration, and seemingly vagrant passages of colour and form which compete for attention. The complexity is both painterly and graphic as mass and weight conspire to optically undo blatant images, eventually allowing what is latent to insist.

Humphries is a major figure in the important new wave of what Bob Nickas calls "painted abstraction". This recent trend, which runs counter to the figurative, image-saturated art of the past years, offers an alternative in abstract painting, which, "has developed a rich complexity that, now more than ever, rewards intensive viewing."

Humphries' earlier bodies of work, such as the paintings shown at Modern Art in 2007, present complex and heavily worked surfaces that demonstrate a collision between flowing manual gestures and hard-edged geometric interference across the entirety of the canvas. In recent exhibitions Humphries has pushed the boundaries of spatial abstraction, including a site-specific installation of wall murals and paintings for *Prospect 1*, New Orleans, in 2008 and the 'Black Light Paintings' of 2005, which literally glowed and were painted to function within the wavelengths of black light.

In this current series on view, the paintings open themselves up, offering expansive fields in which Humphries knits antagonistic techniques into singular surfaces. "The paintings seem to switch on and off", Humphries has stated. Light reacts to the swathing metallic silver surfaces of her paintings and reflects back at the viewer, moving across the surface and constantly shifting the balance of light and dark – subtly always altering the appearance, and presenting the conditions for an arresting, yet unstable visual encounter that physically engages human presence.

Jacqueline Humphries was born in New Orleans in 1960, and lives and works in New York. Humphries attended Parsons School of Design, New York, in 1985, and the Whitney Independent study programme in 1986. Humphries' paintings are held in the collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, and the Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC. Recent institutional exhibitions include *Besides, With, Against, and Yet: Abstraction and the Ready-Made Gesture*, The Kitchen, New York (2009), *Prospect 1 New Orleans*, New Orleans (2008), *Affinities: Painting in Abstraction*, CCS Bard Hessel Museum (2007), and her work is currently on view at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Humphries has exhibited regularly in New York since 1989, and made her most recent solo show with Greene Naftali Gallery in 2009.