

JESSICA SILVERMAN GALLERY

For immediate release

David Huffman: Urban Vernacular

Jessica Silverman Gallery 2

March 15 – April 21, 2018

Opening reception: Thursday, March 15, 6-8pm

Jessica Silverman Gallery is pleased to present “Urban Vernacular,” an exhibition of new paintings by Bay Area artist, David Huffman.

Huffman’s energetic canvases and works on paper explore the street, popular culture, identity and community through multi-layered expressive mark making and stitch together a tapestry of eccentric and eye-popping gestures. Their forms and color sense make playful sidelong glances at Afrofuturism and the idioms of abstraction interrogating the politics of race, activism, and painting itself.

Glitter, stamping, colored pencil, acrylic, oil and spray paint punctuate each composition. Loose billowy brushstrokes spread across paper that the artist carefully cuts and collages onto the substrate. By contrast, hard edge gradient stripes in the vein of Victor Vasarely hug tightly to and move about the edges. These bold bands of color and energy, the newest addition to Huffman’s unique lexicon, evoke athletic wear or music posters from his youth during the 60s and 70s – two forms from which the artist often draws inspiration.

For *Afro Hippie*, a hot pink homage to cool attitudes and psychedelic postures that Huffman witnessed in his activist mother and her friends growing up in Berkeley, the artist stamped the name of the hit music-dance television program “SOUL TRAIN” vertically across the canvas. The iconic logo loops and hooks with itself as the image disintegrates into abstract graphic geometries. The use of appropriated text imagery and an attention to control and disorder also evokes the conceptual word-paintings of Glenn Ligon and Christopher Wool.

Chance and improvisation are integral operating principles for Huffman’s process. In *Abracadabra* basketball “color fields” are juxtaposed with repeated images of the cotton gin as a way to reboot and reconsider these icons of African American culture and history. The paintings in “Urban Vernacular” sample, remix, and repurpose gestures from previous bodies of work and result in a sort of call and response effect. Different voices are present within the work and each possesses a layered physicality as it excavates subjects of protest, race, and abstraction from their canonical forms.

Huffman (b. 1963, Berkeley, CA) has exhibited at the Studio Museum in Harlem; Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco; Museum of the African Diaspora, San Francisco; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Institute of Contemporary Art London; and the Watts Tower Art Center, Los Angeles. His work is in numerous public collections including San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Embassy of the United States Dakar Senegal, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, and the Studio Museum in Harlem. He lives and works in Oakland, CA.