

Zeno X Gallery is very pleased to announce a solo show with American artist Jack Whitten (°1939, lives and works in New York). For his first solo show with the gallery, Jack Whitten will exhibit three paintings and ten works on paper.

Jack Whitten's earliest experiments with painting date back to the 1960s, a period during which he created dynamic works inspired by abstract expressionism. Noted for their raucous colors and density of gesture, combined with topical content, these artworks manifest emotionally complex meditations on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War.

Experimentation turned to abstraction for Whitten in the 1970s; a new method of painting developed, one that resonates more closely with photography. Gesture is removed from the making of the work; the paint and canvas are "processed", produced from large troughs of paint, which is dragged across the canvas with tools including squeegees, rakes, and Afro combs. This process yields palpable surface texture, line and void. Paint became a metaphor for skin during the 1980s when Whitten experimented with "casting" acrylic paints and compounds to create new surfaces and textures. In contrast to the narrative-based and didactic work made by many Black artists during this period, Whitten's works reintroduce gesture with aspects of sculpture and collage.

In the 1990s, Whitten's experiments with paint as a medium progressed further towards sculpture, as he transformed paint compounds into tiles, and applied them to the canvas as mosaics. These works allude to ancient architecture and murals, serving as both an homage to and memorial of celebrated public figures and intimate friends.

On view at the gallery are three new collage-paintings, build up piece by piece with acrylic tesserae and casts in intriguing forms and colors. In the work 'Cultural Shift (A.K.A. The Lena Horne Jubilee)' the grid-like background of black and white tesserae gives the impression of passing clouds on which small islands, made of all kind of bottle bottoms casted in cheerful, glittering colors, seem to drift. The work is a meditation on the tremendous changes taking place in modern society and is dedicated to the recently deceased Lena Horne, a famous Afro-American singer, actress and human rights activist. In the artist's words, 'the work is a celebratory attempt to come to terms with the enormous societal pressures on all of us'. 'Reclamation: For Roy DeCarava' is a second memorial work on view, in which Whitten pays homage to the Afro-American photographer, famous for chronicling the daily, specifically Afro-American life in New York.

Ten works on paper from 2010 are exhibited in the second room of the gallery in which Whitten experiments with dry pigment, graphite and oil stick, and creates grid-like compositions by

transferring the structure of objects, such as a radiator, directly onto paper with a graphite block. In the series 'Ode to Monet' rich oily stick and graphite rubbed into Japanese rice paper give an impressionist light bathed in the glow of modern technology.

Whitten's works has been the subject of recent solo exhibitions at P.S.1/MoMA Center for Contemporary Art, New York in 2007, and the Atlanta Contemporary Art Center in 2008. His work has been continually included in group exhibitions from the sixties onwards, such as the 1969 and 1972 Whitney Annuals, Energy/Experimentation: Black Artists and Abstraction 1964–1980 at the Studio Museum in Harlem in 2006, and High Times Hard Times: New York Painting 1967-1975, organized by Independent Curators International in 2006, amongst many others.

His work is in the permanent collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; the Birmingham Museum of Art, Harvard University Art Museums, the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, the Cleveland Museum of Art, and the Dallas Museum of Art.

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