

Overduin and Kite is pleased to present “La Jennifer,” an exhibition of new paintings by Los Angeles-based artist Dianna Molzan.

Molzan’s new body of work draws from disparate cultural histories and personal influences focusing on a particularly American cultural heritage. With these new paintings, Molzan references touchstones in her formation as an artist. The color palette and physical form of the paintings embody a legacy of materials and movements that assume multiple readings through the lens of American iconography and entertainment.

Molzan’s work explores the range of possibilities within painting’s inherent limitations addressing the fundamental structures of the medium. In some works, Molzan unravels and reassembles canvas to mimic quotidian objects such as string, cans, and tassels. These objects function as structural and symbolic elements – the muted gray canvas cans are tied to the stretcher like cans trailing from the fender of a wedding car and reference iconic moments in American art such as the Campbell’s soup cans, Jasper Johns’ Ballantine Beer cans, or could be read as a visual pun on the Ashcan School. In another painting, canvas ruched over a stretcher frame evokes the pushed up sleeve of a black leather jacket (à la Marlon Brando), the iconic and clichéd uniform shared by various transgressive and mythologized American subcultures. A group of Barnett Newmanesque “zip” stick panels are adorned with jutting eyes and lips conjuring images of Ziegfeld Follies chorus lines, cigarettes, piano keys, and totem poles – a Cole Porter song as painted wall score.

Molzan’s practice engages both a range of possibilities in the physical rearrangement of the canvas and a more painterly interest in the revisiting of popular historical styles and motifs. A group of large double panel works engage various modes of painting popular in the decades of the artist’s childhood, taken from Monet blockbuster shows to 1980s geometric abstraction by way of Japanese import, to a piece resembling two abstracted De Kooning-esque eyes that are, in fact, a take on the flat-footed flaneur view in Edward Hopper’s works like “Nighthawks” and “New York Movie.” The two vertical panels of the latter painting create a binocular vision as they pair flush together to form a larger horizontal picture. All of the double panel works treats the internal edge as a compositional necessity. In one, a painted form crosses the inside border so slightly that it seems to have overstepped its physical bounds - in another work, a fanning right angle is placed so that the apex rests at the seam like an arrow pointing to the break, upsetting the illusion of the overall painting as a window and bringing the experience back to object awareness.

The exhibition title refers to the once ubiquitous name Jennifer, and the American practice of hybridizing names like LaShonda, LaRonda, etc. - a cultural phenomenon that takes a partially

borrowed import and transforms it into a distinctive export. The name Jennifer no longer figures in the top 100 where it once ruled for over a decade, marking a significant generational shift. Its potent memory as a once dominant cultural marker now out of fashion is one of the many American trends that shaped the artist's awareness of cultural identity as a young person. Molzan's use of diverse references comments on the cyclical nature of trends, good and bad taste, and vernacular language that allows past emblems of a zeitgeist to remain part of living history.

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