

We are pleased to announce the first solo exhibition of the New York based artist Joanne Greenbaum at Galerie Crone. The exhibition features twelve new, large-format works, painted in oil paint, ink, crayon and acrylic on canvas.

Joanne Greenbaum was born 1953 in New York and studied at Bard College, N.Y. She lives and works in New York, and regularly spends time in Berlin. Her work has been widely exhibited, among else at the Whitechapel Gallery, London, at the PSI, New York, at Kunsthalle Basel and at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. With her solo exhibition at Museum Abteiberg in Mönchengladbach in 2008, Greenbaum has made a name for herself in Germany. Her paintings and ceramic sculptures are part of numerous renowned private collections around the world. Art critics and curators often pigeonhole Greenbaum as a disciple of the New York School of Abstract Expressionism, which she herself denies. In the following interview with Günnar Lützwow, the artist casts a light on her intentions and inspirations.

How do you feel about your career making a great leap forward at this time in your life?

I've been working a long time, and my "career" has been a very slow climb. Recently I've been showing more and it's wonderful to have shows and also to have a wider audience for my paintings. I've always followed my own path without any expectations of a certain type of success, although one always wants to make a living from ones art, which I can now say that I do. In a way I feel that I am just getting started making work that is truly mine and that has something to say about painting. Most artists feel that they are under appreciated and that they want more, which of course I am one of those. However it's wonderful to have people that are interested in what I do, and that later in life I am not looking to any past glory, I am just looking ahead.

But isn't your gallery quite a name?

What I like about my Berlin gallery is that it's not just a painting gallery. I like to be seen in the context of more thought- based conceptual work. A lot of my paintings - although it is physical, it is material - the work is very much about ideas, even though I would never call myself a conceptual painter, which is bullshit at some level. People will say that to make themselves more relevant, to sell: Oh, that's conceptual painting, that's better than just regular old painting. I don't feel like I am making regular old painting but I would never be so presumptuous to say I'm a conceptual painter. My painting is about ideas but it is equally about the actual materials of painting, but also that I love painting, like I love it. I love to do it. I think a lot of the artists that call themselves conceptual painters don't really enjoy the mechanics implemented in the materials. Going to the art supply

stores turns me on. Going to Boesner, looking at the colors and spending money is my favorite thing - as you can see.

Speaking about ideas - could You name a few?

I think I come out of a love for modernism. And I'm not going to say that my work is postmodernism, but I'm interested in the kind of stereotypes of modernism - things like drips and smears and scribbles, all of these things that we've seen in art in the last one hundred years. I'm interested in using all of those things and re-interpreting them in a new way. I don't feel that my work is necessarily referencing modernism but there is so much to learn from Matisse, still - as old-fashioned as that sounds. Or even Picasso! I'm interested in Cy Twombly, Jean-Michel Basquiat - if I had to put a hashtag on my work it's almost freedom, in a way. If you take all the stuff that has happened in the past I don't want to have anything to do with that. However, I am going to use those tools to create something new without necessarily feeling indebted to, for example, the New York School of abstract expressionism. I couldn't care less about that. Even though I might use drips - or gesture. My work is not about the gesture, my work is more about the physical body making the painting. The American abstract expressionists were all about getting their emotions on the canvas. I don't come out of that at all. In a way, I come more out of a Sigmar Polke kind of heritage, or someone like Hans Hartung, Joan Mitchell who is grossly underrated - and Helen Frankenthaler also who was an amazing painter. And also Morris Louis. There is a lot of people that I revere - without trying to revive them. I actually believe that there is a lot of places in abstraction that - if you're true to yourself - would be new. A lot of people say "everything's been done, everything's been done". Well, no! How can everything have been done? Absolutely not!

Is there a certain rainbow element to your recent work?

Well, I brought some paints from home and I do keep a box of art supplies with a friend - but in a way I'm the kind of artist that will work with what is in front of me. Knowing I wouldn't need big tubes this time I actually bought an inexpensive paint set, it's very whimsical in a way. I'll just choose some stuff, but obviously I'm attracted to the full spectrum of color. I have no interest in making one-color paintings. I just like to use whatever is at hand and I have been exploring lately, just in the last year or so, the rainbow effect. I've used colors in the order that they came in the set - or for ink drips I've used all the different bottles that I have. I like a lot of color, I like bright color, I'm not afraid of color. I don't feel like: "Oh, you've got to choose your three colors - and they have to be the right colors." For me, there is no right or wrong. Just use whatever and the context will take care of itself. You make your context. The thing with color - I don't really go by the rules. I

mean, there are rules that you are taught in school. Certain colors are supposed to be next to other colors. I don't believe in any of that. I just tend to break the rules. For my recent paintings I've used these beautiful new Korean markers - markers that will not fade. That has changed my work, because now I can work with drawing and color at the same time - something that a long time ago that would have been unthinkable. In the last years I've been using a lot of drawing materials on my paintings and all of these things one can use in a painting. It doesn't have to be only paint.

Does the concept of associating freely play a role in your work process?

In the thirties there was this idea of automatic writing, automatic drawing where one wouldn't censor or edit oneself. I definitely work like that, although it takes a long time to unlearn what one has learnt. This is hard to admit but I turned 60 this year. However, I have never felt freer in terms of my work. There are no rules and there shouldn't be any rules although it takes a very long time to learn that - in a real way. There are plenty of artist that think: "Oh, I'm so wild, I'm gonna do all this stuff" - but that just wildness for wildness' sake. I'm not a wild person at all. I'm just kind of a loner - but however, this is what I do. And I'm not that egotistic to say that everything I do is great. Everything I do comes out of freedom - and if I don't like a painting I don't show it. Occasionally I'll have a painting that I'm not so sure about, but I won't destroy it. I'll turn it to the wall and say: "Okay - I am going to look at this in a month, or three months, or a year." I'll look at it again after some time and very often it's better than I thought it was. Or I was actually ahead of myself. I do have a lot of faith that sometimes when you don't know what you're doing that's a good sign. Sometimes working blindly is a great way to work.

Joanne Greenbaum talked to Gunnar Lützow in September 2014

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