

Suzanne Jackson: NEWS!

November 20, 2019 – January 25, 2020

Ortuzar Projects is pleased to present **“NEWS!” Suzanne Jackson** (b. 1944)'s first solo exhibition in New York. In a career spanning more than five decades, Jackson has worked experimentally across genres including drawing, painting, printmaking, bookmaking, poetry, dance, and theater and costume design. The exhibition follows Jackson's recent career retrospective at the Telfair Museum of Art in Savannah, Georgia, and primarily focuses on her painterly abstractions, including a group of large-scale, semi-sculptural works freed from any external support.

Built up in layers of pure acrylic, Jackson's colossal “anti-canvas” are partially structured with netting, rods, and paper fragments, and strewn with cast-off color and other prosaic elements: peanut shells, bamboo, bells, loquat seeds, leather string. The artist's handmade gestural impressions—pinching, crimping, and pleating—occur within a material transparency that lends each composition a uniquely lyrical and luminous dimensionality.

Jackson's process further develops methods and techniques explored in acrylic washes in the early 1960s in a more figurative idiom. Her constellations of bodies, birds, botanical and marine life have since exploded the spatial constraints of the flat canvas to embrace the architectural scale of the gallery. Strongly rhythmic expressionist motifs recur across and reverberate through densely layered topological surfaces—as informed by balletic choreography and the drapery of the proscenium stage set as any history of Western painting. On Jackson's aesthetic and intellectual independence, art historian Kellie Jones has remarked: “In the tradition of black migrant women before her, she . . . remade the West in her own image. It was a specter of freedom, evincing ‘female self-invention,’ . . . [and] a threat to the patriarchal order.”

Suzanne Jackson (b. 1944, St. Louis, Missouri) first moved westward with her parents to San Francisco, after which the family continued north to Yukon Territory. She came of age in the remote natural environment of pre-statehood Alaska, later returning to the Bay Area to study painting and theater at San Francisco State University, and dance at the Pacific Ballet. She settled in Echo Park in 1967, where she worked as an artist and teacher, and attended Charles White's drawing class at Otis Art Institute. Jackson engaged a community of artist and activist peers—including David Hammons, Timothy Washington, Alonzo Davis, Dan Concholar, Senga Nengudi, George Evans, Gloria Bohanon, Betye Saar, and Emory Douglas—through Gallery 32, which she ran from her studio in the Granada Buildings near McArthur Park from 1969 to 1970. Her first solo exhibition in Los Angeles was held at the Ankrum Gallery in 1972.

Jackson works in Savannah, Georgia, where she has lived since 1996. She is a 2019 recipient of the Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters & Sculptors Grant and was recently the subject of a major retrospective exhibition and monograph, “Five Decades,” organized by the Jepson Center for the Arts, Telfair Museums, Savannah, Georgia (2019). She has exhibited solo projects at O-Town House, Los Angeles (2019), Danville Museum of Fine Arts, Danville, Virginia (2010), and Fashion Moda, New York (1984). Her work has featured in institutional surveys and historic exhibitions including “Life Model: Charles White and His Students,” Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles (2019); “West by Midwest,” Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2018–2019); “Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power,” Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, New York (2018–2019); “Now Dig This! Art and Black Los Angeles 1960–1980,” Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2011–2013); “Gallery 32 & Its Circle,” Laband Art Gallery, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles (2009); “Synthesis,” Just Above Midtown Gallery, New York (1974); “Directions in Afro American Art,” Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York (1974); and “Black Mirror,” Womanspace Gallery, Los Angeles (1973).