

Meditations on Impermanence



By Scott Ashley, Associate Director Perimeter Gallery

Janis Pozzi-Johnson's oil paintings possess a powerful sense of self-awareness; they are strikingly confident in their ability to remain calm. Her color-field canvases can at times feel stoic, other times illusive and yet always exist in a state of resolve. To view Janis's work is to view a meditation on landscape and of the experience therein. Her paintings suggest water, earth and sky though there is no representational evidence of those elements. Janis Pozzi-Johnson is able to capture the essence of the natural world and her own emotional experience in a way that is seemingly unfixed from time and as a result her personal experience becomes universal.

The reflective and subtly textured surfaces of her paintings interact with the viewer in the present moment. As one moves around these paintings the surface shifts, the colors change, light and dark succumb to each other. Her works engage the viewer in their constant search for stillness. Janis Pozzi-Johnson achieves this by creating a surface that is textured and reflective, comprised of hundreds of thin layers of color. The edges of the canvas are softened, almost blurred with the accumulation of paint, not through excess but through patience. The paintings textured, color shifting surfaces are constantly revealing subtle nuances. The works vary greatly in size, from small and intimate to large and commanding. Sometimes a single canvas is used, a resolved painting existing within a single frame. Other times, a single work is made of multiple canvases creating a more narrative tone. Each panel, resolved in its own right, is further activated by the next. Janis Pozzi-Johnson's paintings are at once aware yet still discovering; complete yet ever evolving.

The Dense Skin of Humanity



Invitation by Janis Pozzi-Johnson 30"x40", oil on canvas

“Subtle, Not Subtle” on view through June 5, 2015 focuses on four artists whose work displays a delicate complexity that is easily overlooked by the casual viewer. Marc Civitarese, Helen Schulman, Jonathan Prince, and Janis Pozzi-Johnson invite the viewer to join them in the act of contemplation and to explore nuance and subtlety in artwork. These artists reward the viewer with a powerful experience; emotional earthquakes that are anything but subtle.

One of the great expansions of art that occurred in the 20th century was the redefinition of art as object to art as action. In 1952, art critic Harold Rosenberg described the shift in his essay “The American Action Painters”.

“At a certain moment the canvas began to appear to one American painter after another as an arena in which to act – rather than as a space in which to reproduce, redesign, analyse or ‘express’ an object, actual or imagined. What was to go on the canvas was not a picture but an event. The painter no longer approached his easel with an image in his mind; he went up to it with material in his hand to do something to that other piece of material in front of him. The image would be the result of this encounter.”

This description applies directly to the work of Janis Pozzi-Johnson.

Janis Pozzi-Johnson paints hundreds of layers of color, slowly building up the surface over time to complete the work. The colors in Janis Pozzi-Johnson's *Invitation* move quietly down through the piece. Browns and golds give way to a faded cyan that erupts with texture. A gold edge wraps the piece and contains the flow of color. Thick layers form viscous color fields of emotional, earthy tones.

“The reflective and subtly textured surfaces of her paintings interact with the viewer in the present moment. As one moves around these paintings the surface shifts, the colors change, light and dark succumb to each other,” wrote Scott Ashley, the Associate Director of Perimeter Gallery in Chicago. “Her works engage the viewer in their constant search for stillness.”

Pozzi-Johnson makes these paintings “as a visual metaphor for the often ineffable experiences of the human heart.” Each layer of paint is like an experience. As these experiences build over time, they harmonize together in a dense skin of memory and identity. And it is in this sense that Pozzi-Johnson paints the human condition. Seen in this light, the rumbling texture, the changing colors, and the paintings as a whole are a powerful, compact mass of humanity.

-West Branch Gallery in Stowe, Vermont