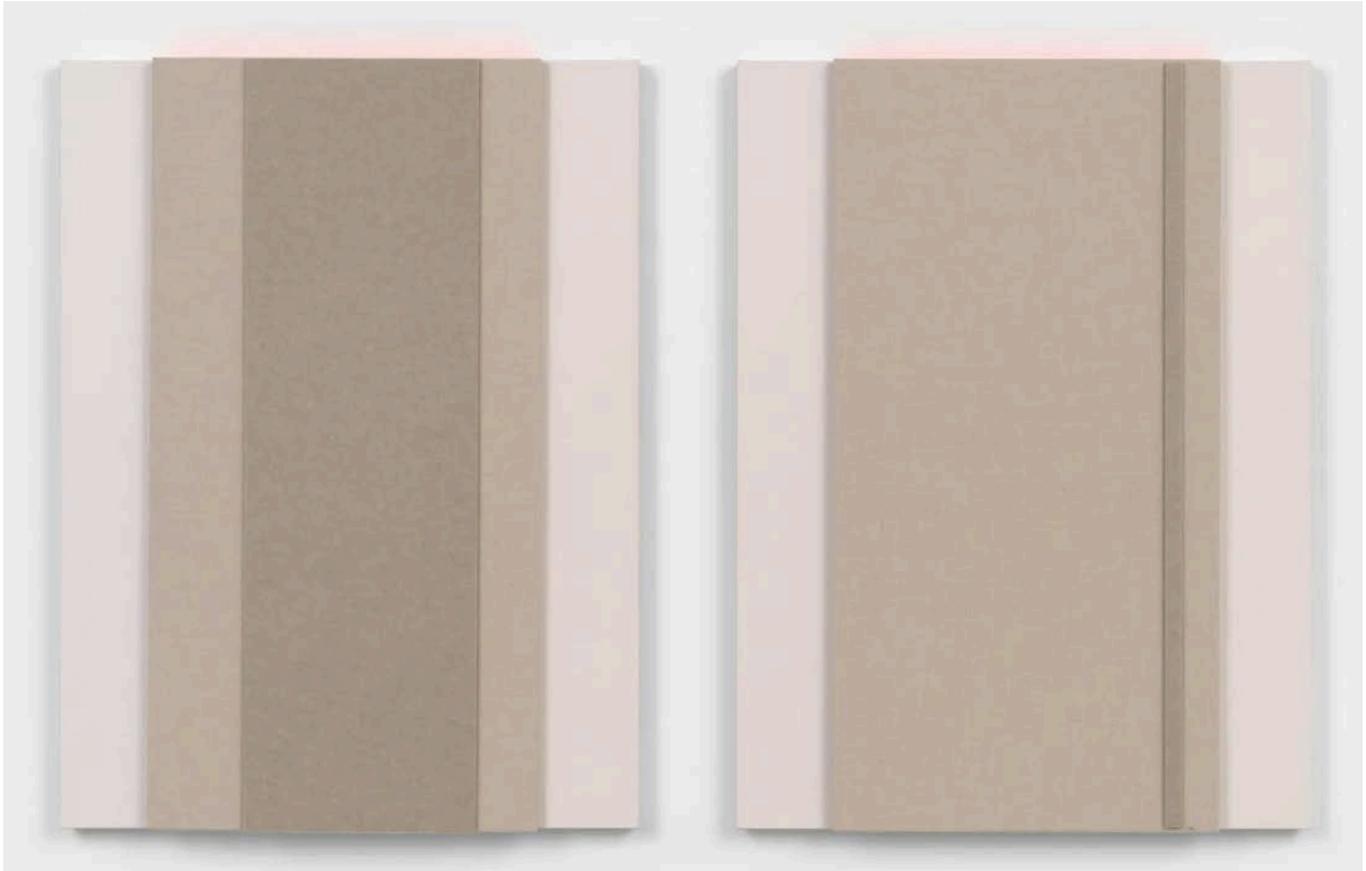


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Jennie C. Jones, *Neutral [clef] Structure 1st & 2nd*, 2021. Acoustic panel and acrylic on canvas, diptych, 48 x 36 x 3 1/2 inches each. © Jennie C. Jones, courtesy Alexander Gray Associates, New York, and PATRON Gallery, Chicago

Jennie C. Jones: Dynamics
The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum
1071 Fifth Avenue
New York, Upper East Side
Feb 4th — May 2nd

It's really challenging to do something new and innovative in reductive art. And so when an artist does, it's important to recognize that and give them the esteem they deserve. The Guggenheim's retrospective of work by Jennie C. Jones, "Dynamics," explores a selection of the Cincinnati-born, Hudson-based artist's output of paintings, drawings and aural work, which draws as much from music as visual art. Organized by Laura Hinkson, the show surveys Jones's revisions of Minimalism's lexicon—an especially important task as some of that movement's history was rooted in supremacism, such as the Italian Futurists, or what the artist David Batchelor describes as "chromophobia." Jones's "Dynamics" is powerful and interesting. And I wish there had been more.

Jones's paintings predominate in the show. In the High Gallery, near the bottom of the museum's spiraling atrium, are some of her most iconic works: Paintings that use a variety of materials, including canvases resembling or made from acoustic panels that dampen sound. To the *Pedal Point* (2021) is emblematic of some of Jones's finest experimentation. The work consists of three panels, one hung on the wall, another leaned against it just below, resting on the third. The top and middle panels are each painted a creamy white tone, the former with a brushy finish, the latter more mechanically smooth. The crimson panel at bottom, in two red hues, seems to run upward, over and onto the panel above it, and limn edges of both white planes. This and other works in the room use reflected light to spread color around, like an echo. There's a funny bit of play between absorption and reflection, with the panels' intention to soak up sound being offset by their use in broadcasting color.

Works like *To the Pedal Point* and *Phrasing to the Floor (Softly as in a Morning Sunrise)* (also 2021) share the strange relation between loud, dissonant music and what Steven Parrino called “deformalism,” or the disruption of formalist painting. Artists such as Parrino and Banks Violette have leaned and otherwise upset their paintings, while bands such as Sunn O))), who adore such work, celebrate Minimalism through their rolling hum, the collision of image and sound, and the violation of each medium’s tropes and assumptions. And no doubt, such lovers of punk and metal music might flip, as I did, for Jones’s nearby reference to the diabolic in chromatic scales: *Tritone (Dissonant)* (2015), a strict black-and-gray triptych.

There are a few polychrome, multipanel paintings—such as *Fractured Extension / Broken Time* (2021), with its varicolored layers of felt and more reflected glow—but the museum’s architecture makes it difficult for some of Jones’s more daring canvases to fit on its walls. While the diptych drawing *Graphite Movement #3* (Guggenheim) (2021) has a repeated swooping gesture that calls to mind the dancing twist of the museum’s ramp, she has previously made work that snakes around corners and fills space in even more dynamic ways. They’re absent, unfortunately.

Much of the show is also given over to Jones’s works on paper, most of which employ collage, printing and drafting. Two sets use linear elements that resemble musical staves, including three mixed-media pieces called *Grey Score (For Agnes)*, presumably for Agnes Martin, executed in 2012, the centennial of her birth. The works are spare and cool, and they have an effortless, decompositional look that only comes from being really comfortable with materials and the plane of the paper.

The show spirals up the Guggenheim awhile before the space is interrupted by another exhibition of work by Vasily Kandinsky. Seen one way, the pairing is smart and generous: Jones is exhibited next to a pioneer of abstraction who’s closely associated with the intra-artistic pollination between visual art and music. However, a lot of Jones’s work remains unexplored. Why omit, for instance, her sculptures or a more extensive back catalogue of her printmaking, which is barely represented, and leave room for museum mainstays like Kandinsky’s *Composition 8* (1923) again? Jones’s 3D works would fill the Guggenheim’s famously uncooperative space and provide a different vantage from which to understand her assemblage-like paintings. Her knotted, brightly colored patch-cable pieces are reminiscent of work by Maren Hassinger and Lynda Benglis. She has produced geometric sculptures rooted in amps and audio media packaging, such as gatefold record sleeves and the like. She has pressed 7” records of sound art. And she has made monumental sculptures drawing on the likes of Tony Smith.

Why wasn’t any of this included? And why was no exhibition catalogue produced? This work deserves such expansiveness.

As a kind of coda, the Guggenheim includes an enveloping installation and work of sound art by Jones at the apex of the rotunda. It is good that this tops out the space, rather than terminating with Kandinsky alone. There are plants, natural light, semicircular benches and chairs upholstered in fabric reminiscent of the acoustic panels downstairs. The ambient noise piece, called *Oculus Tone* (2021), thrums the space with a soft, meditative vibe—rather a rest from much of the remainder of the institution. One could be like Jones’s work, could absorb and reflect. Instead of hearing sound, or even trying to visualize it, as much of Jones’s work does, in the atrium, you could feel it and be in it. —Noah Dillon