



Installation View, Alexander Gray Associates (2013)

Jack Whitten

September 11 – October 12, 2013

Alexander Gray Associates is pleased to present an exhibition featuring new paintings by Jack Whitten, accompanied by a fully-illustrated catalog. The presentation highlights the most recent evolution of process in Whitten's nearly 50-year career dedicated to abstraction, manipulation, and subversion of traditional painting practices.

Scale, context, and history play equally integral roles in the group of paintings on view. With its alluring, slick black surface, the sprawling *Remote Control* (2013) is both seductive and intimidating, alluding to the appeal and threat of technology. In the massive *Crushed Grid* (2013), Whitten reinvents the modernist grid by immersing a distorted net of acrylic ribbons in thick layers of undulating paint. The varied effects of his material experimentation add a sense of tension, depth, and motion; the result is an array of illusory surface textures that seem solid and aerated, dense and viscous yet fluid.

The memorial and homage paintings in the exhibition further exemplify Whitten's innovative consideration of painting as object. Elements of three-dimensionality are applied to the canvas, such as the acrylic molds in *Nine Cosmic CDs: For The Firespitter (Jayne Cortez)* (2013). The radiant energy captured by Whitten's vivid palette provides insight into the fierce personality and artistic achievements of the late poet who inspired the painting.

About his recent work Whitten states, "I like the idea that people are suspended while asking questions about process. I like the idea that the viewer might be frozen by wonder. I have developed many conceptual and technical approaches over the past 50 years, and now, all I'm doing is going back into my toolbox and using them. I am dealing with the evolution of painting, Western abstract painting in particular. In this way, evolution is the symbol I am trying to capture. That's why each work is so different, it is still in the act of evolving."

Whitten's work has been exhibited in the 1969 and 1972 Whitney Annuals at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the landmark 1971 exhibition *Contemporary Black Artists in America* at the Whitney Museum of American Art; *Energy/ Experimentation: Black Artists and Abstraction 1964–1980* at The Studio Museum in Harlem, NY (2006); *High Times Hard Times: New York Painting 1967-1975*, organized by Independent Curators International (2006); *Blues for Smoke* (2012), organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; and *The Encyclopedic Palace* at the 55th Venice Biennale, Italy (2013). Recent solo exhibitions include P.S.1/MoMA Center for Contemporary Art, New York (2007); the Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, GA (2008); Savannah College of Art and Design, Savannah, GA (2012); Alexander Gray Associates, New York, NY (2007, 2009, 2011); and Zeno-X Gallery, Antwerp, Belgium (2011, 2012). Whitten's work will be the subject of solo shows *Light Years: Jack Whitten, 1971–1973* at the Rose Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA (2013); and *Jack Whitten: Evolver*, at The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, CT (2014). A retrospective exhibition of Whitten's work will be presented at the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, CA in Fall, 2014.