

# Alexander Gray Associates

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Alexander Gray Associates, New York presents Jennie C. Jones: *Tonal Center*, the artist's third solo exhibition with the Gallery. Turning to the geometry of musical notation, hushed colors often activated by red tones, and poetic language to create evocative abstractions, *Tonal Center* highlights Jones's ability to synthesize reductive compositional strategies and measured improvisation, crafting objects that bridge visual and sonic perception.

This new body of work expands upon the concerns of the artist's most recent New York exhibition at the Guggenheim in 2022. *Tonal Center* borrows its title from a recent piece of Jones's writing, wherein she describes her "search for a free and shifting tonal center with sound, paint, and collage." The term—a synonym for the key of a composition, or the note around which a composition's chords and melody harmonically meld—embodies the steady yet ranging deconstruction of modernist visual languages that Jones's practice embarks upon, making space for new meaning through, in the artist's words, "*the radicality of refusal and the courage that it requires.*"

In a departure from earlier *Acoustic Panel Paintings*, which were constructed from noise-absorbing fiberglass panels, Jones's recent canvases also employ architectural felt, an industrial material also known for its sound dampening qualities. Just as the use of felt pushes Jones's paintings into more sculptural, relief-like domains, so too does the mingling of fiberglass and felt allow each object to create its own hushed sonic environment. The artist wraps the sides of her recent canvases in felt, viewing this dynamic gesture as a simultaneous crescendo and diminuendo for the work. In this way, the felt both punctuates the canvas's relationship with the wall and allows the work to expand and diminish in impact as it reaches its visual conclusion. Bridging wall and floor, *Phrasing to the floor, softly (Active Pedal)* (2024) literalizes Minimalism's recasting of painting as object while subverting its art historical constraints, using built up geometries and monochromatic blocks of color. Its composition and that of other related works emphasize, per Jones, "a maximalist minimalist approach [which] means my practice is rich in metaphor, research, concept, yet paired down to its vernacular."

The exhibition's works largely diverge from the cool grays of Jones's characteristic palette; instead, they draw on a warmer variety of neutral hues made available by a specialty acoustic textile manufacturer. Activating contrasting visual echoes, Jones's tonal progressions create

alternating moments of dissonance and harmony through the counterbalance of serial repetition and rhythmic development.

*Tonal Center* highlights the interrelated visual chords that Jones's work has built over time, channeling through her hybrid objects the spirit and tradition of experimental music as well as its critique by Black sonic practitioners. Recent variations in the color, materiality, and architectural physicality of the work bring to a pitch evasive transformations within Jones's oeuvre—a series of slow transpositions that refuses to be codified.

Jones's solo exhibitions include *Jennie C. Jones: Dynamics*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY (2022); *Jennie C. Jones: Constant Structure*, The Arts Club of Chicago, IL (2020); *Compilation*, Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, TX (2016); *Absorb/Diffuse*, The Kitchen, New York, NY (2013); *Directions: Jennie C. Jones: Higher Resonance*, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC (2013); *Counterpoint*, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA (2011); and *RED, BIRD, BLUE*, Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, GA (2009), among others. Her work has been included in numerous group exhibitions, including *In With The New...*, Philadelphia Museum of Art, PA (2022); *Grief and Grievance: Art and Mourning in America*, New Museum, New York, NY (2021); *Prospect.5: Yesterday we said tomorrow*, New Orleans, LA (2020); *Ground/work*, Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, MA (2020); *Riffs and Relations: African American Artists and the European Modernist Tradition*, The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC (2020); and *The Shape of Shape*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY (2019), among others. She is the recipient of numerous awards, including the Anonymous Was A Woman Award (2017); Rose Art Museum, Ruth Ann and Nathan Perlmutter Artist-in-Residence Award (2017); Robert Rauschenberg Award (2016); Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant (2013); The Studio Museum in Harlem, Joyce Alexander Wein Artist Prize (2012); and William H. Johnson Prize (2008).