

# Abstract Painting in Los Angeles

## 抽象绘画聚落 L.A. 大放异彩

撰文：大卫·帕格尔（克莱蒙特研究生大学艺术理论和艺术史教授，〈洛杉矶时报〉艺术撰稿人）

Written by David Pagel ( Professor of Art Theory and History, Claremont Graduate University; regular contributor to the Los Angeles Times )

编辑：徐申婷

Edited by Daisy Xu

迈克尔·金德里德·奈特 《咆哮》 布面丙烯  
BLUSTER by Michael Kindred Knight 104cm x 104cm  
acrylic on canvas 2017

图片由艺术家及路易斯·德·杰西画廊提供  
courtesy of the artist and Luis De Jesus Gallery



在加州洛杉矶，6月份是观看抽象绘画的好时机。作为二战之后南加州出现的两位最具影响力的画家，弗雷德里克·哈默斯利（Frederick Hammersely, 1919年-2009年）和卡尔·本杰明（Karl Benjamin, 1925年-2012年）的画展都于6月份向公众开放。这两位艺术家的展览都十分低调而好看，其中弗雷德里克·哈默斯利的展览在威尼斯城的L.A. Louver画廊举办，展出时间为4月26日-6月24日；卡尔·本杰明的展览则在西好莱坞的路易斯·斯特恩美术馆举办，展出时间为5月20日-7月8日。迈克尔·金德里德·奈特（Michael Kindred Knight, 生于1977年）和迪奥·约翰逊（Dion Johnson, 生于1975年）两位年轻艺术家也分别举办了个展，展出了自己最新的作品，前者的展览于6月3日-7月8日在卡尔弗城的路易斯·德·杰西画廊（Luis de Jesus）举办，后者的展览则于6月4日在洛杉矶市中心的西部计划艺术空间（Western Project）揭开面纱，展览时间将持续至6月28日。另外，福勒斯特·贝斯（Forrest Bess, 1911年-1977年）和琼·斯奈德（Joan Snyder, 生于1940年）的作品将在一场双人展中并列展出，这场双人展于5月13日到6月24日在Parrasch Heijnen画廊中举办。这六位艺术家均在画布或画纸上挥洒颜料，他们的作品让我们看到如此简单的材料可以造就怎样的艺术。更重要的是，这些同时举办的展览强有力地展现了颜色和形状两个基本元素如何为画家提供足够的空间，让画家得以创造出与众不同的作品。

这些展览在时间上的交叉是一个美丽的意外，最美妙的事情之一就是让观众在相似点之中看到不同。这六位艺术家中，每位艺术家都使用类似的材料、工具、格式和方式，凭着自己的感受、基调、情绪和意图创作出抽象画作。每位艺术家在自己的作品中所融入和体现的姿态和韵律让观众时而感到快乐，时而感到悲伤；时而沉浸于肉体的快感中，时而被理性所主导；时而觉得作品直

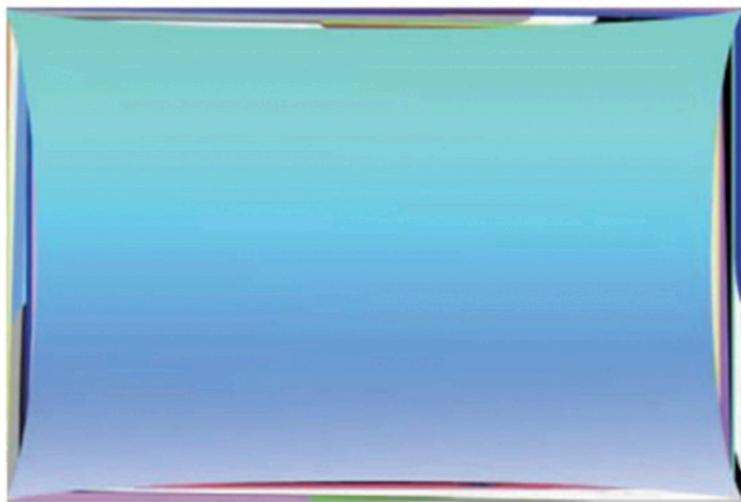
In Los Angeles, California, June turned out to be a great month to see abstract painting. Two of the most influential painters to have emerged from Southern California since World War II had quietly beautiful exhibitions: Frederick Hammersely (1919-2009), from April 26 to June 24 at L.A. Louver Gallery in Venice and Karl Benjamin (1925-2012) from May 20 to July 8 at Louis Stern Fine Arts in West Hollywood. A couple of younger painters, Michael Kindred Knight (b. 1977) and Dion Johnson (b. 1975), exhibited their newest works in a pair of dazzling solo shows, the first from June 3 to July 8 at Luis de Jesus Gallery in Culver City and the second from June 4 to June 28 at Western Project at Werkartz in downtown Los Angeles. Also downtown, paintings by Forrest Bess (1911-1977) and Joan Snyder (b. 1940) were juxtaposed in an insightful two-artist show from May 13 to June 24 at Parrasch Heijnen Gallery. The works by these six painters provided a lively survey what can be done with simple materials—paint on canvas or paper. More important, the concurrent exhibitions powerfully demonstrated how basic elements—color and shape—still provide painters with enough room to make them sing like nothing else out there.

One of the best things about the happy accident of these exhibitions overlapping on the calendar is that it lets viewers see differences within similarities. Using similar materials, similar tools, similar formats, and similar approaches, each of these six artists has made abstract paintings with their own feel and atmosphere, mood and meaning. The gestures and rhythms each artist has recorded and orchestrated in his or her own work produce experiences





迪奥·约翰逊 《化学和弦》 布面丙烯  
CHEMICAL CHORDS by Dion Johnson 101.6cm×152.4cm acrylic on canvas 2017  
图片由艺术家及西部计划提供  
courtesy of the artist and Western Project



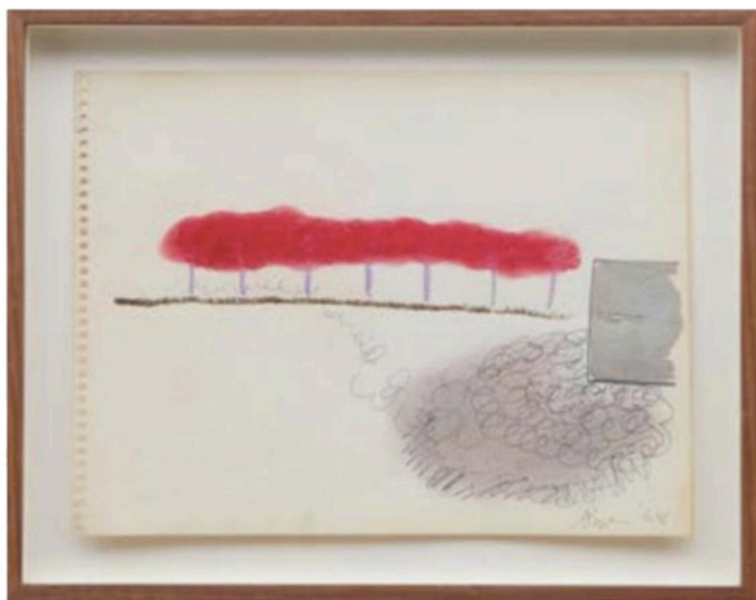
迪奥·约翰逊 《电霜》 布面丙烯  
Electric Frost by Dion Johnson 101.6cm×152.4cm acrylic on canvas 2017  
图片由艺术家及西部计划提供  
courtesy of the artist and Western Project

截了当，时而又觉得它难以捉摸；时而感到震撼，时而又被温柔的情感所包围。作品所引起的复杂体验令人难忘。而每位艺术家近乎天真地接受抽象绘画对材料和创作方式的限制，并进一步加强了这种效果。

这些画家的作品都十分直截了当，鲜明地体现出画家在限制之中寻找自由的矛盾性。在当今时代中，这种矛盾性显得更加深刻。现在生活的步伐如此快速，导致人们总是匆忙地给现实下定论，因而忽略了事物之间所存在的细微差别；人们从极端的角度理解事物，设定“非赢即输”的立场，认为这个世界非黑即白，好坏之间泾渭分明。与此相反，这六位画家的多元化作品表达了同一与差异之间的复杂关系。观看他们的作品让我们明白了两件事：1) 表面上的相似性让我们忽视了真正的差异；2) 这种差异不应该被夸大乃至与其他事物形成对立。整体上讲，这六位艺术家的画作强有力地论证了思想开明的必要性——我们不仅要学会与差异性和平共处（画作与人们之间，类别与抽象绘画之间），更要意识到这种差异性丰富了我们的生活，提高和加强了我们的感知和理解事物的能力。

哈默斯利和本杰明生前是朋友，两人的友谊始于1959年一起在洛杉矶县美术馆一场展览展出作品之时。这场经典的展览名为“四个抽象古典主义画家”，展出了哈默斯利、本杰明、约翰·麦克劳林（John McLaughlin）和

洛尔瑟·法伊特森（Lorser Feitelson）四位艺术家的作品。该展览由评论家朱尔斯·兰斯纳（Jules Langner）组织，他提出了“硬边绘画”这个新术语，用以描述四位画家作品中的那种细致、干净利落和明净。如今，看到“弗雷德里克·哈默斯利：纸上绘画和作品”和“卡尔·本杰明：字母表”展览隔镇相望，着实令人高兴。根据我在《画廊》杂志中读到的另一篇文章，哈默斯利的展览呈现了各种各样的习作、实验性的尝试和素描本风格的探索，此外还有摄影作品、点矩阵印刷品、水彩画、拼贴画和浅浮雕。作品的展示方式将哈默斯利两个标志性系列，即“有机”和“几何”抽象系列的私密性展现出来。相比之下，本杰明的展览则聚焦于一个鲜为人知的系列。该系列创作于1964年-1965年，包含了11幅适合挂在室内的画作（从尺寸来说），每件作品由两个、三个或四个颜色组成。本杰明用颜料堆砌起固体色块，使它们看上去像是——但又不完全复制——英语字母表中的字母。然而，比起与英语字母的相似之处，本杰明的作品更重要的意义在于它们与建筑学之间的关联，通过色彩的运用，艺术家俏皮地将这种关联展现出来——那是结构上而非形式上的关联。这种差异十分微妙，但意义重大。他的标志性符号都像我们身体一样呈左右对称；在这些符号中，块状形体的颜色模糊了空间感，生硬的形体彼此之间互相用力拉扯，这种肉体层面的较量甚至延伸到我们的身体所占据的三维空间中，在我们



琼·斯奈德 《线上的红雾》 水墨纸本，粉彩，闪粉  
RED PUFF ABOVE LINE by Joan Snyder 29.2cm x 36.8cm ink, pastel, glitter, and paint on paper 1968  
图片由艺术家及 Perrasch Heijnen 画廊提供  
courtesy of the artist and Perrasch Heijnen Gallery

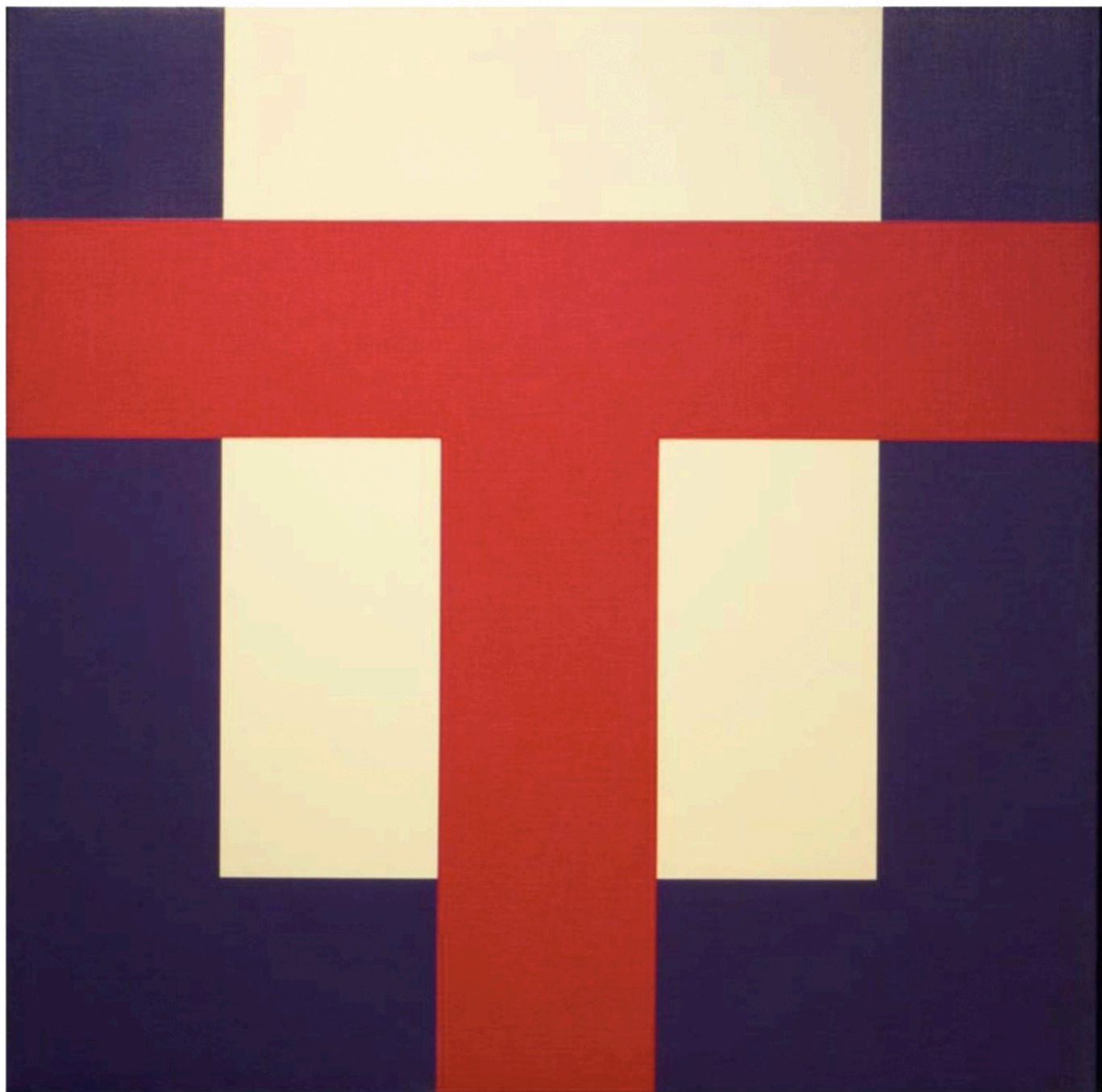
in viewers that are by turns joyous and harrowing, sensuous and cerebral, pointblank and elusive, stunning and lovely. That range is impressive. It is intensified by the stripped-down simplicity of each artist's embrace of abstract painting's disciplined repertoire of materials and maneuvers.

The paradox, of finding great freedom within such limits, is especially sharp in their straightforward works. It's even more poignant today, when so much of modern life moves so swiftly that subtle differences disappear in the rush to understand reality as an all-or-nothing opposition: a win-lose proposition that can only comprehend things in absolute, black-and-white terms, divided between good-and-bad, us-and-them, self-and-other. In contrast, the diverse works by these six painters articulate a more complex relationship between identity and difference. To see their works together is to come to understand two things: 1.) that superficial similarities blind us to the real differences; and, 2.) that such differences need not be exaggerated so that they stand in opposition to anything. Together, the paintings by these six artists form an eloquent argument for civility—for not only living with differences (between paintings and people, categories and abstractions) but for recognizing that such difference enrich all of life, enhancing our capacity to perceive and expanding our ability to

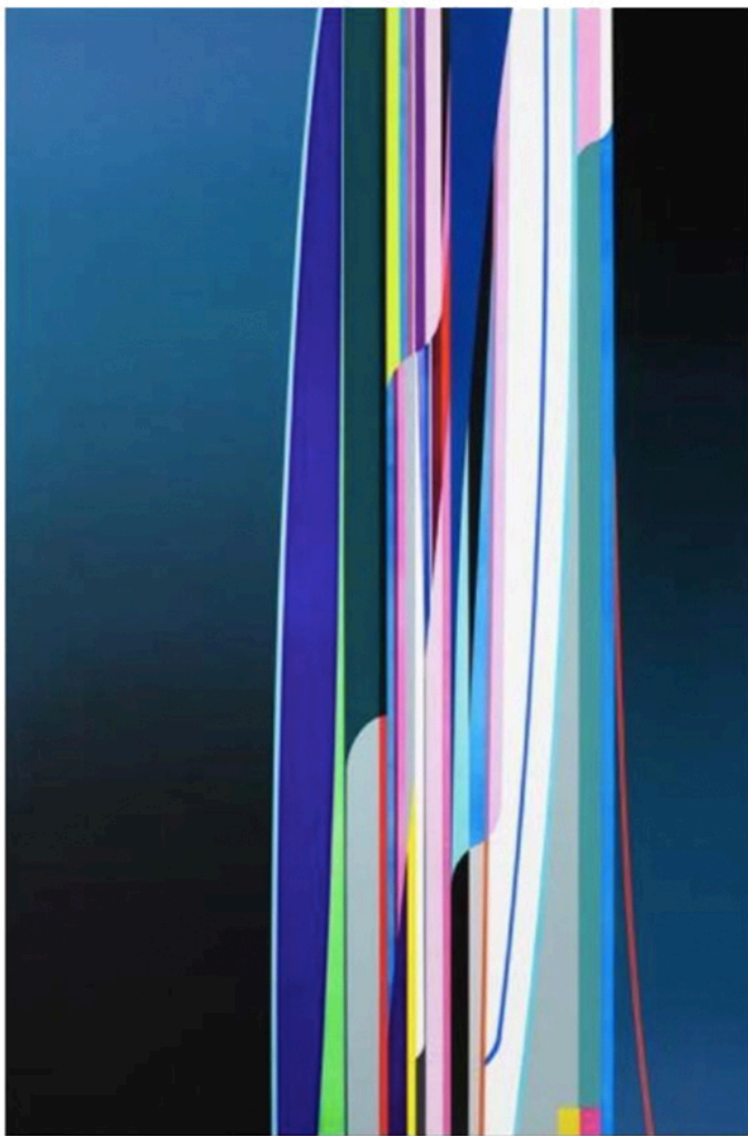
understand.

Hammersley and Benjamin were friends, ever since 1959 when they exhibited their hard-edged paintings alongside those by John McLaughlin and Lorser Feitelson in "Four Abstract Classicists" at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. The legendary exhibition was organized by critic Jules Langsner, who also coined the term "hard-edged abstraction" to describe the precision, crispness, and clarity of the four painters' works. Today, it's a treat to see "Frederick Hammersley: Paintings and Works on Paper" across town from "Karl Benjamin: The Alphabet." Hammersley's exhibition, which I reviewed in another article in Gallery Magazine, features all manner of studies, experiments, and sketchbook-style explorations—as well as photographs, dot-matrix prints, watercolors, collages, and low-relief sculptures. The installation brings out the intimacy of his signature series, his "Organic" and "Geometric" abstractions. In contrast, Benjamin's exhibition zeroes in on a little-known series he painted in 1964 and 1965. It includes 11 domestically scaled paintings, each of which consists of two, three, or (in one instance) four colors that Benjamin has composed in solid blocks so that they resemble—but do not exactly duplicate—the letters of the English alphabet. The similarities Benjamin's compositions





卡尔·本杰明 《#40》 布面油画  
#40 by Karl Benjamin 106.7cm×106.7cm oil on canvas 1965  
图片由路易斯·斯特恩美术馆提供  
courtesy of Louis Stern Fine Arts



迪奥·约翰逊 《伪装》 布面丙烯  
DISGUISE by Dion Johnson 182.9cm x 121.9cm acrylic on canvas 2017

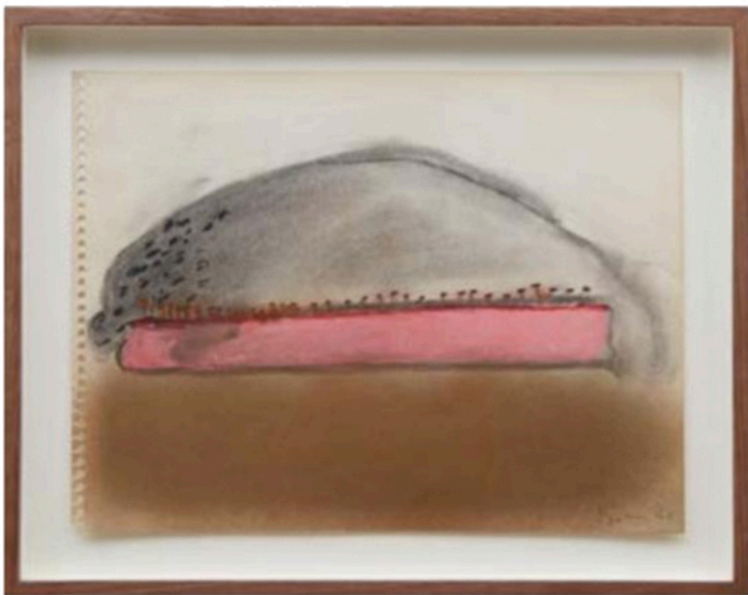
图片由艺术家及西部计划提供  
courtesy of the artist and Western Project

share with letters are less significant than is their relationship to architecture, a point the artist playfully makes by the way he uses color: structurally, not formally. The difference is small but significant. The colors of the blocky forms in his rock-solid icons—all but two of which are, like our bodies, bilaterally symmetrical—create great spatial ambiguity, their blunt forms pulling against one another forcefully and physically. That physicality extends into the three-dimensional space our bodies occupy, where we feel it in the solar plexus—well before we can translate it into language.

In a sense, Hammersley's and Benjamin's exhibitions invite us to think with our bodies as well as our minds. That's also true of the variously scaled paintings that make up "Dion Johnson: Color Chords" and "Michael Kindred Knight: Deep End." Johnson's 12 super-saturated abstractions are built—like Benjamin's—on interruptions. Every square inch of every painting Johnson has made over the last two years has been composed to accentuate and intensify the physical shifts our bodies and minds feel as they jump from one space to another, one color to another, one scale to another, one pattern to another. It's something like shifting gears in a high-performance automobile, only smoother and swifter and, when you stand back and take in the complex rhythms that Johnson has orchestrated, defined by a kind of simultaneity that is not possible in race cars, whose engines have gears that must be moved through sequentially. Too ambitious and sophisticated for such linear machinations, Johnson's HD paintings—particularly his wall-size whoppers—set your eyes free to careen and to ricochet, to slide and to glide, to slip and to shimmy, every which way, all at once. The dance is not random. But you have to be pretty quick on your feet—and intellectually athletic—to keep up with the freewheeling festivities his paintings unleash.

Where Johnson keeps handmade brushstrokes out of the picture—all the better to accelerate the pulse and throb of his sashaying shapes—Knight builds his compositions out of nothing but brushstrokes. In his hands, however, brushstrokes are not what they used to be. Rather than expressing the painter's inner sentiments, energetically and aggressively, Knight's brushstrokes





琼·斯奈德 《粉色平台 / 软云》 纸面粉彩喷漆  
 PINK PLATFORM / SOFT CLOUD by Joan Snyder 29.2cm×36.8cm  
 pastel and spray paint on paper 1968  
 图片由艺术家及 Perrasch Heijnen 画廊提供  
 courtesy of the artist and Perrasch Heijnen Gallery

能用语言表达出来之前，我们的心头已经感受到这股拉扯的力量。

从某种意义上讲，哈默斯利和本杰明的展览邀请我们用身体和大脑进行思考。“迪奥·约翰逊：颜色和弦”和“迈克尔·金德里德·奈特：困境”亦是如此，这两个展览由大小不一的画作组成。约翰逊在展览中呈现了12幅颜色过于饱和的抽象画作，与本杰明的作品一样，这些画作以打断观众的思维为初衷。约翰逊过去两年来创作的每件作品都意在突出和强化我们的身体和大脑从一个空间跳到另一个空间，一个颜色到另一个颜色，一个尺寸到另一个尺寸，一个图案到另一个图案的过程中所感受到的那种身体层面的变化。这感觉就像在驾驶一辆高性能汽车，但这过程比换挡要更加顺畅和快速。当你退后一步去体会约翰逊所编排的复杂韵律时，你会发现它们具有一种同时性，这在跑车中是不可能做到的，因为跑车的档位必须依次变换。他的高清画作——尤其是墙壁大小的作品——让你的眼睛忙得停不下来，不自觉上演斜看上看下看左看右看十八般武艺，且全部同时进行。这种节奏感并不是偶然的。但你的身体和大脑必须足够灵活，才能跟得上他的作品所释放出来的那种不受拘束的欢乐。

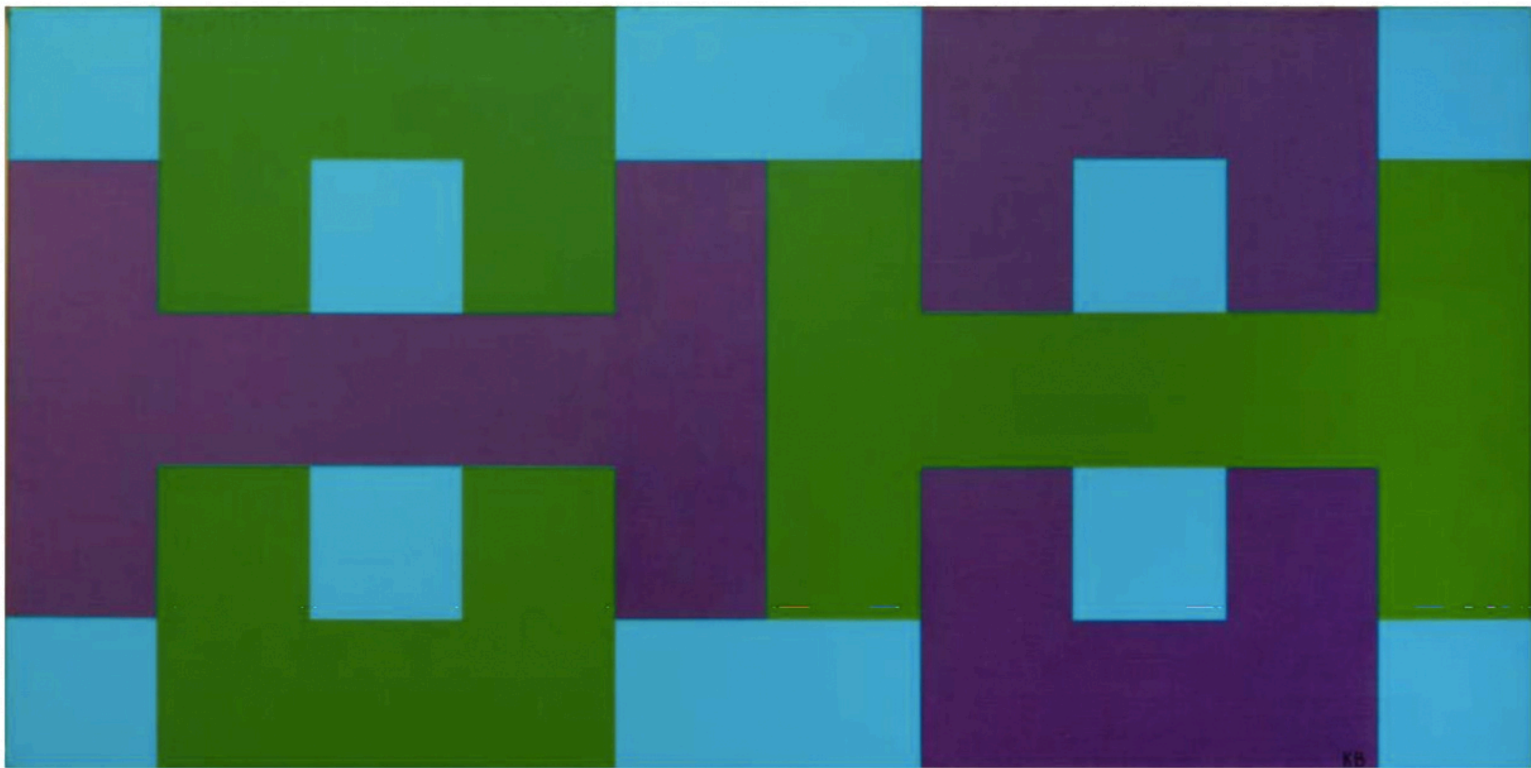
约翰逊的画面见不到任何笔画——他的画作充斥着各种舞动的形状，这更好地加强了这些形状的活力和流动性。而奈特的画作则全部由笔画构成，在他的手中，笔画展现了不同的姿态。其他画家通过笔画激情澎湃地表达内在情感，奈特的笔画则温柔而巧妙地开拓了空间。这些笔画显得沉着而随意，像哈默斯利“有机”抽象系列中的曲线形状一样，让我们感受到一种寂静。奈特的块状笔画几乎都呈垂直方向，就像书脊紧密地挨着彼此——偶尔会朝隔壁的书脊倾斜；它们不构成任何大体积的事物，更多地体现了风景画中那种开阔性——我们通常将这称为“负空间”，即存在于事物之间的“虚无”。在他那低调微妙

的画作中，这种虚无十分明显而真实，正面而强大。站在他的作品前面，你感觉自己似乎正对着地平线上的缥缈空间，无穷无尽的边际似乎触手可及。

“福勒斯特·贝斯 / 琼·斯奈德”展览同样建立起遥远事物之间的联系。第一个展厅中挂了10幅小型画作，这些作品创作于1967年-1968年，是斯奈德随意从活页素描本中撕下纸张作画的。第二个展厅挂了14幅创作于20世纪40-60年代的小型油画，由贝斯在画布和美耐森纤维板上创作。这些作品都有极大的野心，它们都属于抽象绘画，但又不全然如此。画面偶尔会出现意象的暗喻和空间深度的暗示。尺寸似乎处于变换之中——从小变大，从大变小；对两位艺术家而言，颜色的运用十分重要，尤其当粉与蓝、红与黑或棕与白色块互相融合之时。内在张力撕裂了构图，使得画面毫无和谐感。

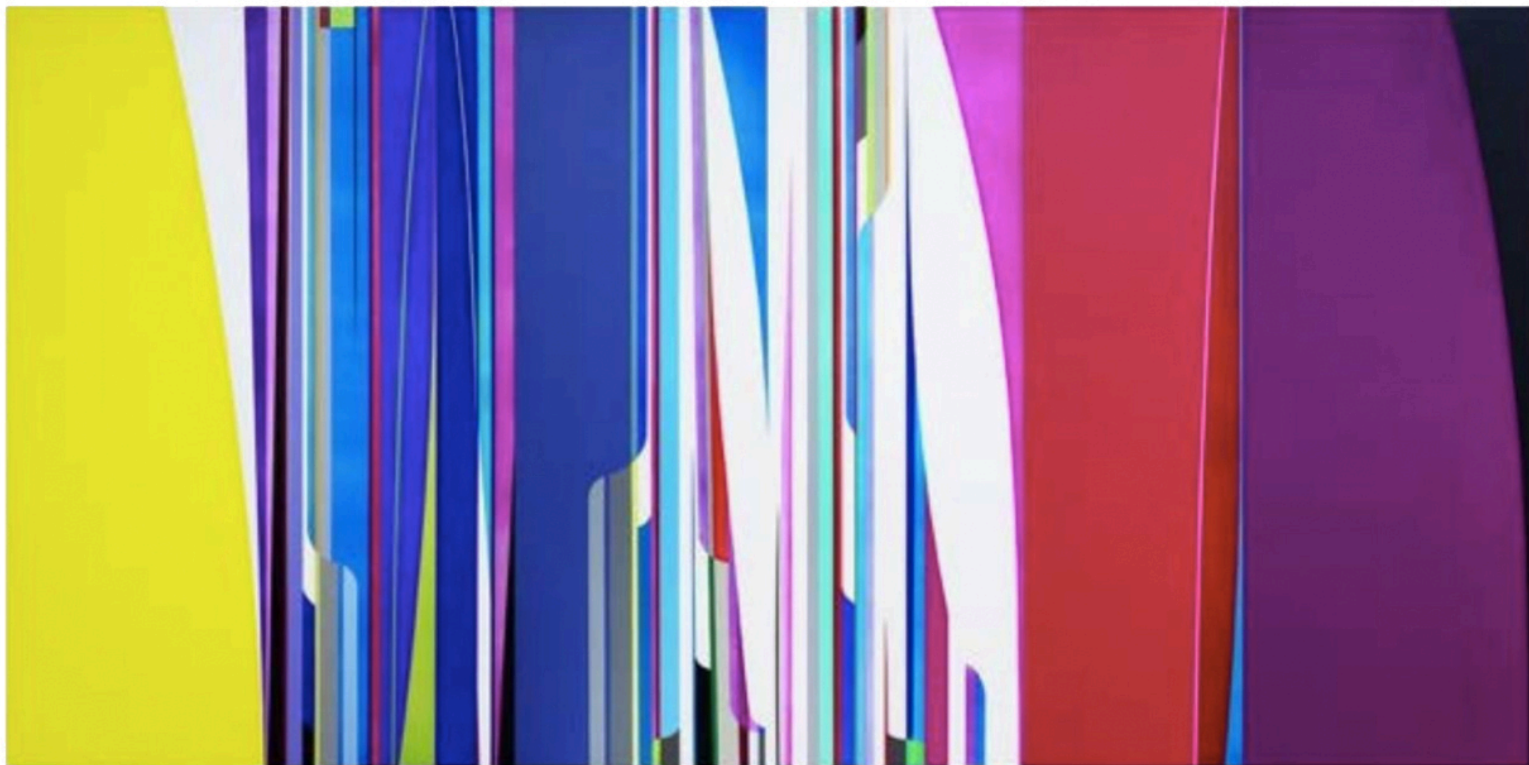
斯奈德的纸上绘画用喷漆、粉蜡笔、铅笔、炭笔和记号笔创作而成，这些作品表明仅凭任何一种材料或方式，根本无法捕捉现实的复杂性。她的抽象画作十分难懂，充斥着诸多可能性，让人难以下定论。贝斯的作品则正好相反。他的创作一方面根植于我们双眼所见到的现实，另一方面又根植于我们的灵魂所感受到的现实。艺术家固执地努力将这两者结合在一起。类似“曼陀罗”，“无题（粉色月亮）”和“The Noble Carbunkle”的作品确实做到了这一点，让人感到方钉似乎也可以放进圆孔中；而“家庭集团”“无题之六”和“无题（弯曲的彩虹）”等作品又暗示世界本身就不和谐，而且根本就无法修复，更别说救赎了。

一如既往，仔细观察和深入思考本身即是收获。6月份，在洛杉矶，你的仔细观察和深入思考会获得丰厚的回报。这五场展览的同时进行提供了至上的观展体验，让你永生难忘。📖



卡尔·本杰明 《#43》 布面油画  
#43 by Karl Benjamin 64.8cm x 129.5cm oil on canvas 1965  
图片由路易斯·斯特恩美术馆提供  
courtesy of Louis Stern Fine Arts

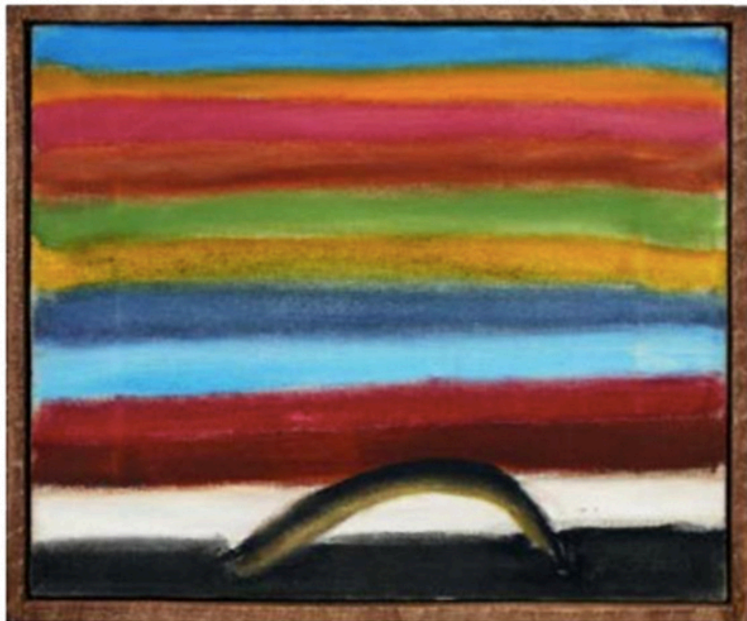




迪奥·约翰逊 《时光旅行者》 布面丙烯  
TIME TRAVELLER by Dion Johnson 152.4cm×304.8cm acrylic on canvas 2016  
图片由艺术家及西部计划提供  
courtesy of the artist and Western Project



福勒斯特·贝斯 《无题 No. 18》 布面油画  
 UNTITLED NO 18 by Forrest Bess 23.5cm×29.8cm oil on canvas 1952  
 图片由 Parrasch Heijnen 画廊提供  
 courtesy of Parrasch Heijnen Gallery



福勒斯特·贝斯 《无题 (弯曲的彩虹)》 布面油画  
 UNTITLED (RAINBOW WITH ARC) by Forrest Bess 25.4cm×30.2cm oil on canvas  
 图片由 Parrasch Heijnen 画廊提供  
 courtesy of Parrasch Heijnen Gallery

open up space, softly and subtly. Calm and casual, like the curved shapes in Hammersley's organic abstractions, they make room for stillness. Almost always oriented vertically, like the spines of books snugly abutted on shelves—and occasionally leaning, at rakish angles, against their neighbors—Knight's blocky brushstrokes do not have the presence of weighty objects so much as they embody the expansiveness of the open spaces in landscape paintings—what we often think of as "negative space", as the "emptiness" between things. His wonderfully understated paintings make such nothingness palpable and present, positive and potent. To stand before his gentle pictures of nothing in particular is to feel as if you are face-to-face with the airy atmosphere above the horizon line, within arm's reach of the endlessness beyond that.

"Forrest Bess/Joan Snyder" similarly brings distant things into contact with one another. In the first gallery hang 10 little paintings Snyder made in 1967 and 1968 on pages unceremoniously torn from a spiral sketchbook. In the second gallery hang 14 compact oils Bess painted on canvas and Masonite in the 1940s, 50s and 60s. They have lots in common. Both are intimate. Both are ambitious. And both are abstract but not purely so. Hints of imagery occasionally appear, along with the suggestion of spatial depth. Scale is ambiguous—shifting from cellular to cosmic, and back. Color counts for both

artists—particularly when solid chunks of pink and blue, red and black, or brown and white—grind together. Compositions, riven by internal tensions, keep harmony and resolution out of the picture.

Snyder's works on paper, made of spray paint, pastel, pencil, charcoal and marking pens, suggest that no single material—or approach to mark making—has the capacity to capture the complexity of reality. Masterpieces of possibility, her elusive abstractions make a virtue of keeping one's options open. Bess's dense compositions move in the opposite direction. With one foot firmly planted in the reality we see with our eyes and the other firmly planted in the reality our souls sense, his stubborn pictures strive to hold both together. Some, like "Mandala", "Untitled (Pink Moon)" and "The Noble Carbunkle" succeed, making it seem that square pegs sometimes fit in round holes. Others, like "Family Group", "Untitled No. 6" and "Untitled (Rainbow with Arc)" intimate that the world is out of sync with itself—and that there may be no hope for repair, much less redemption.

As always, looking closely—and thinking deeply—is its own reward. In June, in Los Angeles, those activities paid off in spades. The fortuitous confluence of five exhibitions compounded the pleasure and made for a month that might be unforgettable. 🍷