

Driven to Abstraction

1 Mar — 13 Apr 2017 at the Susan Eley Fine Art in New York, United States

28 FEBRUARY 2017



Melanie Parke, *Train Reaction*, 2016. Courtesy of Susan Eley Fine Art

We are pleased to announce the opening of *Driven To Abstraction*, an all-women exhibition featuring paintings and works on paper by Caroline Blum, Lori Ellison, Dana James, Melanie Parke and Lizzie Scott. The exhibition has been guest curated by Caroline Blum, a New York based abstract artist, and her husband David Reisman, a writer with *Frieze Magazine*.

The idea took shape for Caroline after reading recent criticism of mainstream museums and galleries for exhibiting more men than women. In response, Caroline chose to make a curatorial statement and feature five strong women painters. Making connections through social media and in galleries, Caroline identified a group of artists, leaders and innovators in contemporary abstraction, who would shine both individually and as a group.

Thoughts on *Driven to Abstraction*

Abstract art still has the ability to surprise people. At its best, it can provoke strong intuitive reactions and encourage meditative states of mind that suggest feelings of timelessness. By excluding direct representations of the outside world, the most satisfying abstraction has a self-contained visual poetry and physicality that offers a powerful alternative to other kinds of art, as well as other types of media. This exhibition brings together the artwork of a range of artists, who have each found ways of creating abstractions that are relevant and compelling at a time when we're all connected by Facebook and Instagram, and when an exponential influx of digital snapshots, videos, and memes competes for our attention.

Using strategies that are both traditional and innovative, their artwork expresses a sense of discipline, freedom, and aesthetic obsession through primary forms, gestures, and the physical and tactile qualities of their materials.

Caroline Blum, Lori Ellison, Dana James, Melanie Parke, and Lizzie Scott are very different artists, but maintain abstraction's tradition of creating alternatives to the more commercial and manipulative forms of imagery that are pervasive throughout our culture. Caroline Blum's paintings explore expressive interactions of simple shapes and colors, with rectangles and grids taking part in an internal dialogue, while other paintings refer to coded patterns or pages from books. Lori Ellison, who passed away in 2015, takes basic elements of form and a vivid limited palette, and through repetition and an extreme sense of focus creates maze-like patterns that are full of strength and poetry. Dana James and Melanie Parke use looser approaches to non-objective

art, with James’s imagery suggesting abstracted memories, and Parke’s having lyrical, daydream-like overtones. Lizzie Scott’s eccentric painted constructions and wall pieces employ both traditional and non-traditional art materials to create a playful tension between formalism and improvisation.

Driven to Abstraction shows that there are still things we can learn from abstract art -- that it continues to offer relief from other aspects of our culture, and can be an oasis of tranquility and reflection in the middle of the social and political stress and strain going on around us. That’s not to call it escapist – it gives us a chance to catch our breath before whatever happens to be our next battle, and encourages us to see that there are still unexplored areas of culture and experience waiting to be discovered, even in our own neighborhood.

Text by David Reisman

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Susan Eley Fine Art

Situated in an Upper West Side townhouse in Manhattan, the Gallery offers an intimate viewing experience, contrary to the more formal presentations of art in typical white box galleries.

Gallery profile

Location
New York, United States

Founded in
2006





