

FFOTO

Janet Jones: Artist Statement

Marshall McLuhan wrote that artists are the distant early warning systems of their time. I have always been fascinated with the future. The research that informs my practice centers on our experiences in contemporary, urban spaces: the overlay of real and virtual spaces in what has been termed cybercities; the techno-sublime - awe inspired not by nature but by technology; spectacle; and women's roles within these environments.

These concerns naturally influence the form of my paintings: the smooth, painted yet almost photographic surfaces, the 'unnatural' colours, and the glow from the high-key florescent colours on the edges of the stretcher bars, surrounding the paintings. In a recent catalogue essay, *Silent Light, Electronic Light, On The Paintings of Janet Jones*, the curator Stuart Reid writes:

... [Jones' large paintings] are like windows that open up onto an abyss. What they depict is a fantastic, dark, mysterious space illuminated with artificial light and colour. These paintings can be read as contemporary urban nocturnes in which we glimpse images of a futuristic metropolis. Jones' paintings allude to the imposition of technology on the urban sphere and transmit imagery through a techno-haze, the invisible silent network of signals, satellite relays and data exchange.

Unlike earlier, modernist abstraction that stressed 'purity' or painting as a self-referential, autonomous medium, my paintings consciously engage with other media: analogue film, photography, and digital media. This conscious referencing of the look of other media through the medium of painting is most apparent in the panoramic series of large-scale paintings *Nowhere Everywhere* (2000-2003), first exhibited in Europe at the Kunsthalle Erfurt, Germany and Faux Mouvement, Metz, France and now in the collections of the Tom Thomson Art Gallery, Rodman Hall Art Gallery and York University. It is in these earlier paintings that my practice of referencing photographs taken during 'drifts' in mega-cities is most apparent. I enact 'performative' research by immersing myself in the core of urban centres, through walking the streets in the financial district of Toronto, the Wall Street area of New York, the former East Berlin and the Las Vegas strip. The *A Las Vegas of the Mind* paintings, (Peak Gallery, Toronto ON 2009), now in the permanent collection of the Winnipeg Art Gallery, grew directly out of my nighttime street experiences.

In later work, I became increasingly interested in the relationship between the viewer as an embodied subject and the painting on the wall. In my Canadian touring, solo exhibition, *DaDa Delirium* (2009-12), which was accompanied by a fifty page catalogue, the size of the paintings in relationship to the viewer's body and the destabilizing, mesmerizing compositions, prompt the viewer to lose balance, to experience a sense of vertigo and delirium. These qualities are particularly evident in the large, vertical (54" x 96") *DaDa Delirio* series shown at the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, Toronto, ON and at Marine Contemporary, Los Angeles. In these works, the immersive and experiential encounters trigger not only an immediate physical reaction, but upon reflection, suggest a critique of our contemporary, everyday, lived condition.

The experiential nature of the present has been further imagined in my solo exhibitions *Joyride* Katzman/Kamen Gallery, Toronto, September 2012 and *Playtimes*, Katzman Contemporary, April-May 2015. *Hypno-Merge into Dazzle Daze*, a series of six paintings from *Joyride* that are now in the collections of BMO and TD Bank, suggest the experience of high speed, unrelenting flow, and the intermingling of the real and the virtual reflected in the title of these works. Richard Rhodes, the editor of *Canadian Art Magazine*, in a review of this exhibition wrote:

Yet while graphic and fun, the paintings suggest some deep thinking about the effects of the increasingly integrated fusion of representational space into abstract practice. All space is hybrid space at this point caught up in a flux of preplanned rationality interacting with partial passing perception. Jones has found a way to compress the discontinuities into paintings that are reassuringly stable in their instabilities. She is showing us the prevailing norm for social and psychic space.

In her current paintings and now in her hand-tinted, silver-based photograms, *Space Junk*, Jones is increasingly interested in re-envisioning notions of utopia within a contemporary context. In her series of paintings *Wall Street Boogie-Woogie*, in the collection of BMO, Janet 's interest in modernist abstract painters such as Mondrian, the Russian Constructivists and Moholy-Nagy, and their utopian visions of the world, is evident. An extended research trip to Moscow and St. Petersburg Russia and across Siberia via the Trans-Siberian Railway in 1992, a few months after the collapse of the Soviet Union and a subsequent visit to the Bauhaus in Weimer, Germany, sites of two very different utopian 'dreams', began her reflections.