

artillery



Jennifer Bartlett: Recitative (Installation View) Locks Gallery, Philadelphia, PA, October 8 – November 27, 2021

OUTSIDE LA: Jennifer Bartlett | Locks Gallery, Philadelphia, PA

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Various sizes of square panels mostly covered with dots with groups of parallel lines and occasional fields of paint line the gallery walls of Locks Gallery in Jennifer Bartlett's installation "Recitative"—its title derived from a rhythmic free form vocal style of 16th-century Florence. Vertical groups of threes begin the left-to-right read and as the gaze traverses the arrangement, resonances build. The characteristic viscosity of enamel paint allows for different thicknesses and therefore different hues of blues, reds, yellows, greens—even as the palette expands. There is a rhythmic build as the eye tracks back and forth throughout the pattern overall, with single panels that emerge causing a momentary stoppage. The mix of making a process-based sequence that follows a rule-based pattern is highly satisfying to the eye and the mind. Bartlett utilizes this trope to create this monumental work that projects simplicity in everything except its reverberations.

Dot matrices are delineated in grids with only the variation of paint to distinguish one from the other. Elsewhere dots are placed within dots complicating the pattern and becoming targets. Dots move and in doing so become lines that create tangles that seem to be without preplanning. Finally, in one last explosion, the dots become a thick black line that marks off a very irregular squiggle drawn out across 24 overlapping plates. Clearly both the musical inspiration and the reductivist conceptual patterning lean into something other than just a process.



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Bartlett's work with steel plates has for many years followed a specific practice. The plates are painted in enamel and then silkscreened with the grid onto which the artist deposits paint. Much of that work is done by trusting that the irregularities of enamel will create differences in tonality and even drips. The grid is light but visible and the variances from the perpendicularity are the point of this technique. Difference emerges ineluctably and watching the smaller and larger square plates as they move up and down from a single horizon acts like a graph bar moving up and down but suddenly in the left or right progression there is a clot of colored plates all adamantly disobeying the previous arrangements.

The pleasure of this work has always been the interplay between expectation and perception. There is a prelude to the development overall but soon as a viewer traverses the sections, all of the minute differences rush to the fore obscuring the predictability of the pattern. It overpowers believability just like some types of music in which a single note builds overtones and undertones simply because it's being played over such an extended time.