

PAULA COOPER GALLERY

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JENNIFER BARTLETT

Grids & Dots

243A Worth Ave, Palm Beach

January 16 – February 7, 2021

PALM BEACH—Opening on Saturday, January 16, 2021 in Paula Cooper Gallery’s Palm Beach location is a focused presentation of work by Jennifer Bartlett titled “Grids and Dots.” On view will be five examples of Bartlett’s pioneering steel and enamel plate works, made between 1971 and 2011. Installed in an interior room of the gallery, the presentation is in dialogue with the concurrent exhibition “Sol LeWitt: Cubic Forms,” highlighting both artists’ parallel interest in geometric forms and programmatic strategies as the foundation for complex and exuberant works of art.

Bartlett first began making paintings on white enameled, square-cut steel plates in late 1968. The idea was born from her interest in the metal signs found inside New York City subway stations. “They looked like hard paper,” Bartlett explained. “I needed paper that could be cleaned and reworked. I wanted a unit that could go around corners on the wall, stack for shipping. If you made a painting and wanted it to be longer, you could add plates. If you didn’t like the middle you could remove it, clean it, replace it or not.”¹

Inspired by LeWitt’s application of the grid and serial systems, Bartlett begins with vertical and horizontal lines silkscreened onto the baked enamel surfaces. Using Testors brand enamel paint, she then plots out various dot patterns within the framework, following simple mathematical schemes. For example, in *Untitled (diagonals)*, the dots form diagonal lines that either shift incrementally across the grid or grow sequentially in length. In her 2010 work, *Fibonacci, 1-10*, Bartlett uses the Fibonacci series to determine the number of dots in a given hue, moving out clockwise from the center grid. Appearing as mechanically produced standardized units, the plates reveal the subjective touch of the artist’s hand upon close inspection and evoke associations with geometric stitching and number-based systems. Their hypnotic, cellular repetitions lead to a proliferation of formal and psychic effects—both lively and austere, lyrical and arithmetic.

Born in 1941 in Long Beach, California, Bartlett studied at Mills College and received her MFA from Yale University in 1965. By the mid-1970s, Bartlett had emerged as a leading American artist of her time—particularly following the landmark presentation at Paula Cooper Gallery of *Rhapsody* (1976), Bartlett’s magnum opus now in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York. In the spring of 2019, ahead of its historic reopening, the museum exhibited the work in its atrium, where it amounted to the second most visited ticketed show in New York City that year. “[*Rhapsody*] exemplifies the pluralism that MoMA needs to aim for in its next life,” wrote critic Roberta Smith.

Bartlett’s first survey exhibition was held in 1985 at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis and traveled to the Brooklyn Museum, New York and the Carnegie Museum of Art, Philadelphia, among others. In 2006, the Addison Gallery of American Art surveyed Bartlett’s early enameled steel plate paintings in

¹ “Jennifer Bartlett by Elizabeth Murray,” Interview in *BOMB Magazine* (October 1, 2005).

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the period from 1968–76. In 2013-14, Klaus Ottmann curated her second traveling survey “Jennifer Bartlett: History of the Universe—Works 1970–2011,” which visited the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and the Parrish Art Museum, New York. In 2014, the Cleveland Museum of Art united her three monumental plate pieces, *Rhapsody*, *Song*, and *Recitative* in the exhibition “Epic Systems.” Bartlett’s works are represented extensively in collections in the US and abroad including the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; the Israel Museum, Jerusalem; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the Naoshima Museum in Japan; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the Philadelphia Museum of Art; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Tate Modern, London; the Whitney Museum of American Art; and the Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven.

For more information and images, please contact the gallery:
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