

Stanley Whitney: *Paintings*

2 October – 13 November 2015
Via Zenale 3, Milan

“Creating space within colour involves experiments with density, vibrancy, saturation, and even with matteness. It is not just formal for me – colour has great depth, it can bring up great emotion and immense feeling... I want everything in the paintings – the complexity of the world.” Stanley Whitney, *Artforum*, 2015

The American artist Stanley Whitney makes his debut with Lisson Gallery Milan, in the country whose influence has proved vital in his five decade-long career. This exhibition includes new paintings and works on paper alongside earlier pieces by Whitney, a painter who is devoted to exploring the spatial, emotional and philosophical thrills of colour and whose canvases sing with a jostling vibrancy that renews the potency of abstraction.

Whitney's signature style – developed in the 1990s following time spent in Italy, where he continues to have a studio, and then Egypt – is an almost architectural approach to painting in which a grid composition supports lozenge-like squares, stacking single colours in a deliberately irregular grid. This combinatory improvisation, made possible through the repetition and subtle variation of a predetermined structure, has its musical counterpart in jazz, an abiding influence for Whitney, and allows for a rhythmic and lyrical space to be created. “Colour has always been about space for me,” the artist recently explained: “how could one create space in the colour on a grid? How could I lay two colours so close to each other and not trap them but rather allow air for the canvas to breathe?”

The vibrancy of Whitney's solution, what the critic Peter Schjeldahl has termed the “flustering magnetism of the colour abstractions”, fuses influences as diverse as Morandi, Goya, Velázquez and Guston with poetry, literature and music – snippets of which supply the evocative titles of the paintings. While his works seem to address all the senses at once, Whitney's painted elements are not held in equilibrium but rather seem to jar and elbow one another. This conflagration, evoked through layered saturated primary, secondary and tertiary hues, at once destabilizes the Modernist grid and describes a beauty that refuses to be stilled.

About the artist

Stanley Whitney has been exploring the formal possibilities of colour within ever-shifting grids of multi-hued blocks and all-over fields of gestural marks and passages, since the mid-1970s. His current motif, honed over many years, is the stacked composition of numerous saturated colour fields, delineated by between three to five horizontal bands running the length of a square-formatted canvas. The cumulative effect of Whitney's multicoloured palette is not only one of masterly pictorial balance and a sense of continuum with other works in this ongoing series, but also that of fizzing, formal sensations caused by internal conflicts and resolutions within each painting. Taking his cues from early Minimalism, Colour Field painters, jazz

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music and his favourite historical artists – Titian, Velázquez and Cézanne among them – Whitney is as much an exponent of the process-based, spatially-gridded square in art as Josef Albers, Sol LeWitt, Agnes Martin and Carl Andre.

Stanley Whitney was born in Philadelphia in 1946 and lives and works in New York City and Parma, Italy. He holds a BFA from Kansas City Art Institute as well as an MFA from Yale University and is currently Professor emeritus of painting and drawing at Tyler School of Art, Temple University. His major solo exhibition, 'Dance the Orange' is currently on display at the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York (until 25 October 2015) and he has been included in many group shows such as 'Nero su Bianco' at the American Academy in Rome (2015); 'Outside the Lines: Black in the Abstract', Contemporary Art Museum of Houston (2014); 'Reinventing Abstraction: New York Painting in the 1980s', Cheim & Read, New York (2013) and 'Utopia Station' at the 50th Venice Biennale (2003). He has won prizes including the Robert De Niro Sr. Prize in Painting (2011) and the American Academy of Arts and Letters Art Award (2010). Whitney's work is included in public collections such as the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, the Philadelphia Museum of Art and Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven.

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About Lisson Gallery

Lisson Gallery is one of the most influential and longest-running international contemporary art galleries in the world. Established in 1967 by Nicholas Logsdail, it pioneered the early careers of important Minimal and Conceptual artists, such as Sol LeWitt and Richard Long, as well as those of significant British sculptors from Anish Kapoor and Tony Cragg to a younger generation, led by Ryan Gander and Haroon Mirza. In addition to its two exhibition spaces in London, one in Milan and a fourth gallery to open under the High Line in New York in 2016, the *Lisson Presents* programme also extends a legacy of curatorial innovation beyond the galleries, working with institutions and artists to present new initiatives around the world.

Exhibition Facts

Opening Hours Mon-Fri 10am-6pm (closed 1-3pm) Sat by appointment

Location Via Zenale 3, 20123 Milan

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