

:: GRANT WAHLQUIST GALLERY

Jennifer Locke: Grayscale

3/30/24 – 4/26/24

Grant Wahlquist Gallery proudly presents “Grayscale,” Jennifer Locke’s third solo exhibition at the gallery. The exhibition runs from March 30 – April 26, 2024.

Working in performance, video, installation, and photography, Locke creates physically intense sculptural actions that activate the relationships between camera, audience, and architecture. Her powerful meditations on intersubjectivity, spectatorship, and the construction of meaning have been exhibited widely nationally and internationally. “Grayscale” features two new major works, both created *in situ* over the course of an intensive multi-week residency at the gallery.

The exhibition’s namesake work is a large-scale performance-cum-sculpture that began as a response to Gutai artist Murakami Saburo’s 1956 work *Passing Through*. Locke created a freestanding rectangular structure out of lumber, drywall, and paint; taking advantage of the gallery’s lighting conditions and responding to its architecture, the structure stretches from near the gallery’s front windows to its rear alcove, evoking both the monolith of Stanley Kubrick’s *2001: A Space Odyssey* and Bruce Nauman’s 1969 work *Performance Corridor*. At the exhibition’s opening the artist activated the structure over the course of a roughly 40-minute performance, bashing a three and a half by two-foot hole with a hammer in the four-foot-wide wall nearest the gallery’s windows, uncovering a four by four-foot interior room. Stepping into this first room, the artist created a second hole and entered a second interior room; the artist repeated this action a total of six times until she reached the final room at the rear of the structure. The artist then painted the rear-most interior wall with pitch black paint, reversed into the volume’s prior chamber, and painted its interior wall a deep gray. The artist repeated this pattern of backing into and painting rooms progressively lighter shades of gray, exited the structure, and turned off the gallery’s interior lights, revealing a long interior tunnel or black hole that appears to extend into endless dark. *Grayscale* remains on view for the run of the exhibition under natural light, its contours and depths changing with the varying light conditions of Spring.

Grayscale is paired with *Frieze 2*, which also originated as a response to a key work for performance art, in this case Paul McCarthy’s *Plaster Your Head and One Arm into a Wall*, 1973. Locke writes that McCarthy’s piece “is exactly what it sounds like, the figure merged with the wall such that it appears decapitated with an amputated arm. The artist immobilizing himself this way has dictated the positioning of the body-sculpture-object we see in the image. The figure is bent over so the active arm—ostensibly used to do the plastering—is within reach of a plaster bucket on the floor, now a scaffold propped against the bent leg to support the torso’s weight in this uncomfortable hunched position. It’s messy and abject, but also beautifully elegant and formal.” As the body in relation to and disciplined by architectural space is an ongoing theme in her work, Locke created a direct response to McCarthy’s piece at Ingrams in Los Angeles earlier this year.

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Frieze 2 is a quiet yet breathtaking multi-channel video installation that takes this inquiry even further. To create each channel, Locke hammered holes in a single sheet of drywall attached to an armature in order to assume a pose inspired by the frieze in the base of the Pergamon Altar, a masterpiece of ancient Greek art depicting battles between the Olympians and the Giants that resides at the Pergamonmuseum in Berlin. An assistant plastered Locke into wall, started the camera, and Locke remained in position for approximately twenty minutes (plaster of paris generally takes 10 – 20 minutes to harden). Over the course of a number of days at the gallery Locke performed this action eight times. *Frieze 2* is presented in this exhibition as a six-channel, silent, color video installation on an array of monitors displayed on the exact wall that supported the armature on which it was created. The work is a feat of stillness, a rumination on the legacy of disparate strands of art history, and a stunning continuation of the artist's exploration of the body as sculptural material.

Thanks to Tad Beck, Luke Eder, Lucas Murgida, Chris Paddock, and Mark Steger, with extra special thanks to Keil Borrman, for their advice and assistance in the realization of this exhibition.

Jennifer Locke received a B.F.A. (1991) and M.F.A. (2006) from the San Francisco Art Institute. She lives and works in San Francisco. Her numerous solo and two exhibitions include: Grant Wahlquist Gallery; the Berkeley Art Museum; Rocksbox Fine Art, Portland, Oregon and Pontiac, Michigan; Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (collaboration with Tad Beck); Queen's Nails Projects, San Francisco; Hallwalls, Buffalo; Southern Exposure, San Francisco; and Kiki Gallery, San Francisco. Her work has also been featured in group exhibitions at venues including: the Berkeley Art Museum; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco; the Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach; the Havana Biennial; the Venice Biennale; the Busan International Video Festival, Korea; New Langton Arts, San Francisco; La Panaderia, Mexico; Kunsthalle Basel; Et al, San Francisco; Canada, New York; and Air de Paris, Paris. She was thrice nominated for the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art's SECA Award and is the recipient of a Fleishhacker Eureka Fellowship. Her work is in the collection of the Kadist Art Foundation.

The gallery is located at 30 City Center, Portland, Maine. Gallery hours are Wednesday through Saturday, 11 am to 6 pm, and by appointment. For more information, visit <http://grantwahlquist.com>, call 207.245.5732, or email info@grantwahlquist.com.