

ARTFORUM

CRITICS' PICKS



Jennie C. Jones, *Score for Sustained Blackness Set 2*, 2014, acrylic paint, collage, and pen on paper, 20 x 16".

HOUSTON

Jennie C. Jones

CONTEMPORARY ARTS MUSEUM
HOUSTON

5216 Montrose Boulevard

December 12, 2015–March 27, 2016

Amplification, absorption, reverberation, tone, displacement, diffusion—any encounter with the work of Jennie C.

Jones demands that a viewer repeatedly wrestle with transmutation, the

vocabulary from the science of sound doing double duty in the service of

ekphrasis. And the rabbit hole goes

deeper, as those keywords also describe

the dynamics of social change and race. Indeed, Jones encourages such readings with her punning titles, *Solo, Vertical, into Crescendo (Light)*, 2013, or *Score for Sustained Blackness Set 2*, 2014. Such is the sparkling noise of the artist's first mid-career survey, as curated by Valerie Cassel Oliver.

For all the sound, and talk about sound, though, it's a quiet show—a concerted, almost hermetic succession of series and suites. Jones's ongoing 2011 series "Acoustic Paintings," constructed with acoustic paneling, are well represented. Much is gained in viewing the artist's conceptually ambitious works in the context of a broad retrospective, as their sum total deftly knits together an array of sometimes convergent, but more

often divergent, social histories of avant-garde musical and visual traditions. Like the fabric used for pop filters and speaker grills, Jones's works sieve out particularly resonant sounds and materials. The effect is often a shimmy shake between critique and adoration. For example, the staccato scatting of Ella Fitzgerald is stretched to a high tone and capped with an almost campy canned sound of breaking glass in the audio collage *Ella, Scat, Shatter (Short Version)*, 2008. It references an almost certainly campy 1972 commercial for Memorex audio cassette tapes, wherein Fitzgerald hits a glass-shattering note at the end. Add fidelity to that list of words. Also: rarefaction (or what an artist does for a payday).

Shatter the glass again, Ella; play me out, Jennie.

— Andy Campbell