

## Jennie C. Jones's Geometric Jazz

At Alexander Gray Associates, New York, the artist presents a suite of new mixed-media canvases that continue her formal and social investigations into geometric abstraction

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In September 1921, Aleksandr Rodchenko and four other Russian constructivist painters held an exhibition in Moscow, titled '5×5=25', in which they declared geometric abstraction dead. One hundred years later, it is common to talk in arch terms of 'zombie' iterations of the form. So, it is bracing to see a mid-career artist wring new life from monochromatic surfaces and understated facture, imbuing them with layers of subtle aesthetic and political signification. This is precisely what Jennie C. Jones has done over the past decade, with projecting polygons of alternately muted and Day-Glo finish stealing the show at group exhibitions or small surveys.

In her first solo show at Alexander Gray Associates, Jones adds smaller works on paper to a mix of her deftly executed mixed-media canvases, a suite of quiet surfaces that implies a year of intensive focus. Connections to the constructivists are ambient throughout the exhibition. The show's title, 'New Compositions', evokes the aural-visual confluences of earlier European modernisms as well as 'composed' mixed-media panels by El Lissitzky and Kazimir Malevich. Such artists' mergers of drawing and implied architectural form are evident both in Jones's use of matte-grey architectural felt as bounding line and the subtle vertical projection of works such as *Dark Glissando* (all works 2021). While press materials often point to Jones's reappraisal of 1960s minimalism, the latter's experiments with relief structures, industrial materials and 'real space' were, in the first instance, translated from the Russian.



Jennie C. Jones, *Deep Glissando*, 2021, architectural felt, acoustic panel and acrylic on canvas, 122 x 122 x 13 cm. Courtesy: the artist and Alexander Gray Associates, New York

There are nods to sculptural minimalism, too, in the visually piquant *Red Grace Note*, which channels Donald Judd's cadmium-red acrylics, or the Robert Morris-like diptych *Fractured Extension*, in which two planes are optically conjoined through a subtle application of paint to the top rail of the support. For all that, Jones has surpassed these precedents by building her works around acoustic panels that at once act on the soundwaves in the gallery and intone other elements of Black American life, notably the radical tradition of experimental music – from jazz to house to hip-hop. Although the scale of a Chelsea gallery disrupts the full multisensory experience of *Deep Glissando* and *Dark Glissando*, it's possible to infer how, in a smaller space, their absorption of light would be unnervingly amplified by their dampening of sound.

More recent, untitled experiments find Jones rotating and bending musical staff lines rendered in ink, into which she cuts sections of painted paper. Such collage refers again to earlier moments in avant-garde history, but also looks laterally to the visionary notational languages of American jazz composer Anthony Braxton or contemporary pianist Jason Moran, who coated his hands in pigment to register his movements across the keys on Gampi paper. In these ways, Jones's work is insistently referential, in dialogue with a gamut of technical and symbolic approaches. Nonetheless, her hypnotic compositions are distinctly her own.

