

EMPIRICAL



NONSENSE

GLASS DOOR PROJECTS

JEAN FOOS. *Convulsive Beauty in the Fur Teacup Bar*

1 February – 23 March 2019 . Opening: Friday, 1 February 6 – 8 PM

Empirical Nonsense Gallery presents recent work by visual artist **Jean Foos**, *Convulsive Beauty in the Fur Teacup Bar*, on view from February 1 through March 23, 2019. This concentrated new work, presented in an environment, demonstrates the artist's singular approach to materials, among them cardboard packaging and paint. In this installation, 10 sculptures by the artist will be shown together for the first time, stacked to form a totemic column, the latest extension of her sculptural endeavors.

Foos shifted into making sculptural pieces after decades of working as an abstract painter. The painted constructions started as private play in the studio and gradually developed into a sculptural practice. Foos eventually came to see them as fully realized works in their own right. The sculptures shed new light on the artist's ideas and present a different engagement with the same grid structure and tactile qualities of her paintings. Foos paints directly on found materials, most notably packing forms, a ready-made prompt for sculpture. "I find the shapes irresistible and I gather them as a diarist, weekly and monthly, considering them as aids to memory, as souvenirs." The artist systematically defaces the uncoated material, inscribing lines and painted patterns.

Born in Rochester, NY, Foos arrived at Cooper Union in 1971, where she studied art history with Doré Ashton and became immersed in painting. In 1977–78, she painted in Italy on a fellowship. Her MFA show was enthusiastically reviewed by Edith Schloss. On returning to NYC, she established her studio at Union Square and started attending events in the lofts, clubs, and galleries of the downtown art scene.

With her close friend David Wojnarowicz, she participated in the legendary artist takeover of Pier 34 on the Hudson River. They worked together on the design of *Tongues of Flame*, his first retrospective catalog. Her politically and existentially charged engagement of that era persists into the present, and her studio practice and design work reflect this. Foos continues to archive and elevate the work of her fellow artists—poets, painters, photographers, and performers, including dear friends lost to AIDS.

Her sculpture and painting are driven by the act of drawing. They mimic the abstracted nature of her repetitive mark making, which she has described as:

an activity that is “thinking” under and over, a crosshatched screen that evokes a veiling of power in the found components I work with. Drawing is the central intervention circulating through the work for 40 years.

The title of Foos’s new work evokes Méret Oppenheim’s surrealist objects and her thinking about the concrete realization of the dream or irrationality. With *Convulsive Beauty in the Fur Teacup Bar*, Foos pushes her sculptural work to a new threshold.

One wall of the Chamber at Empirical Nonsense becomes a small stage where sensuous transformations are set in motion. What remains is a full-frontal tower of woven lines and meshes.

Jonathan Weinberg, author of *Pier Groups: Art and Sex Along the New York Waterfront* (forthcoming, May 2019) writes that Foos’s technique

creates a kind of wholeness out of the struggle, out of the possibility of a kind of tearing apart. Foos creates these web-like images that hold together but you really feel the stresses. She’s an abstract painter, but you feel the stress that’s pushing against this sense of unity and organization.

THOUGH THE COUNTRY MAY BE GOING TO HELL IN A HANDCART, UNEXPECTED FUN IS ALWAYS JUST COMING DOWN THE STAIRS AT EMPIRICAL NONSENSE

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