

DIANE ROSENSTEIN GALLERY

Signal To Noise: Finding Form through Abstraction in an Undefinable Era

Curated by Michael Slenske

January 13 – February 17, 2024

Opening reception: Saturday, January 13th 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Diane Rosenstein Gallery is pleased to announce *Signal To Noise*, a group exhibition curated by Michael Slenske. The presentation will include paintings, sculpture, and drawings by twenty-two contemporary artists who explore the language of abstraction. *Signal To Noise* opens Saturday, January 13, 2024, with a reception for the artists from 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm.

Artists are: Yevgeniya Baras, Strauss Bourque-LaFrance, Pui Tiffany Chow, Kenwyn Crichlow, David-Jeremiah, Jonah Freeman and Justin Lowe, Daniel T. Gaitor-Lomack, JPW3, Michael John Kelly, Kyle Kilty, Seffa Klein, Erica Mahinay, Sean McGaughey, Jean Nagai, Maximus Oppenheimer, Vanessa Prager, Wilfredo Prieto, Cassidy Putnam, Edgar Ramirez, Lorenzo Hurtado Segovia, Richard Tinkler, and Naama Tsabar.

In his seminal text "Concerning the Spiritual in Art" the synesthetic painter Wassily Kandinsky delved deep into the transformative power of abstraction, noting the further we distance organic forms from the forefront of a composition, the more pronounced the attenuated abstraction becomes. In this process, any remaining representational elements are compelled to reach their "own inner tone and harmony." Another way to think of this is through the signal-to-noise ratio (SNR) which is employed in music recording, data analysis and image-making. In music, the signal is the intended, meaningful information, while the noise comprises any unwanted disturbances or random fluctuations that can degrade signal quality. A higher SNR indicates a stronger, clearer sound. When dealing in analytics, signal represents actual data whereas noise encompasses any informational errors. And in fields like photography or remote sensing, signal is the object of interest; noise the imperfections or distortions that reduce an image's fidelity.

From Kandinsky's *Composition VII* (1913) and Frank Bowling's aqueous *Palimpsest I - Mothers House DarkRedGreen* (1966) to Helen Frankenthaler's *Mountains and Sea* (1952) and Charline von Heyl's moving line (to create patterns and figures), the SNR lies somewhere between the coded signal elements (or what critics might call "the hidden object") to pure expressionistic noise gestures that meld the emotionally charged context to the grounding content. While discourse around this tension has been alive throughout the history of abstraction, the current moment finds many contemporary artists reaching more for this "inner tone and harmony" perhaps as a response (or phrase, to borrow a musical term) to the instability of the outside world.

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With prompts that include everything from articles of clothing, coded alphabets, the remnants of street games and hidden landscapes to wildlife migrations and self-portraiture—or even embedded instruments—these utterly synesthetic paintings created at one of the noisiest points in human history are being freighted with some of the most loaded signals to boldly comment on identity, gentrification, displacement, and the end of civilization as we know it. They are improvising the end times, teasing out meaningful information as a way to map the anthropocenic.

The question is: How does an abstract painting validate its mark-making in this era of social media tribalism, climate insecurity, racial and economic injustice, and war. "The signal is the truth. The noise is what distracts us from the truth," writes political forecaster Nate Silver in his book *The Signal and the Noise: Why So Many Predictions Fail—but Some Don't*. In it, Silver observes, "One of the pervasive risks that we face in the information age, is that even if the amount of knowledge in the world is increasing, the gap between what we know and what we think we know may be widening."

The key to SNR—in music, analytics or abstraction—is to find the right balance. One could argue that when compared with the Ab-Exers, the geometric abstraction of the Seventies, or the process-based works of the early Aughts (which a critic once jokingly argued, "was a movement that could have only happened under the relative calm of no-drama Obama") the works of this new generation of abstract painters might contain the most clarity-driven SNR of all, perhaps because these artists are competing with so much distorting information before they even make it out their door on a daily basis. Their signal simply has to be stronger in order to survive.

About the Curator:

Michael Slenske is a Los Angeles-based writer, editor and curator. He has curated the group show *L.A. On Fire* at Wilding Cran Gallery; *Object Lessons* with The Landing Gallery; *All Tomorrow's Parties* at domicile (n.) gallery and *Storm Before the Calm* at Praz- Delavallade as well as solo shows for Aryo Toh Djojo, Charles Arnoldi, Emily Marchand, Fawn Rogers, Hely Omar Gonzalez, and Martín Nuñez. Slenske is also the founder of The Street & The Shop, an artist-driven pop-up, which has been staged at various galleries, studios, and architecturally significant spaces including the Paramount Backlot as part of Frieze LA, Tin Flats, and the Bradbury Building.